

Sue Girak PhD Visual Arts Specialist City Beach PS, Perth, West Australia - Research project

“Walking Together with Pride is a collaborative installation that represents society’s ecological footprint. The initial phase of this project took place at City Beach Primary School in 2016. City Beach Primary School is a small government primary school located in Perth, Western Australia. Approximately 160 students attend the school which is situated in an affluent beachside suburb. Our local beaches are pristine, so it is very easy for children to underestimate the environmental degradation that is caused by plastic pollution in our oceans. As a means to highlight the growing dependence on plastic and its associated problems, the older children and I came up with the idea to make a large-scale installation artwork that would highlight the negative impact single-use plastic bags are having on the environment. When we first exhibited our eight footprints the younger students wanted the project to continue, so we invited others to add more footprints for a second showing in 2018. There is an associated research component that accompanies the project. My colleague Dr Jackie Johnson and I are interested to know if reusing discarded materials in art-making will make a difference to artists and crafts people’s environmental attitudes and behaviours. The Wanneroo Rughooking group was the first group to participate and make a start. They are using the proddy (proggy) hook method to make a pair of 180cm (6’) footprints made from salvaged plastics. As well being involved with the Wanneroo Rughooking group, Jo Franco is a member of the Western Australian Fibre and Textile Association (WAFTA). WAFTA have decided to work with my school as part of their community engagement initiative in 2017/18 and to teach rug making. I want to use old t-shirts to highlight the environmental problems associated with fast fashion. Further afield, Mandurah City Council is interested in extending the footprint project. Mandurah is a city 72 km (45 miles) south of Perth, and they want to work with their schools and community groups to produce pairs of footprints, which will be exhibited at the Drift Exhibition in May 2018. This means the footprints made by the Wanneroo Rughooking group will be exhibited twice next year. Finally, in August 2017, I presented the project at the International Society for Education through Art (InSEA) conference in Korea. The response was positive, I have schools in Beijing and Slovenia who wish to do their own footprint project and inquiries from Deakin University (Melbourne, Australia) to incorporate the concept into a community arts program.”