

MEDIA RELEASE

23 October 2014

Engaging young people with nature: mentors required for The (re)Generation

Mentors of all ages are being asked to join *The (re)Generation*, a new project to inspire young people to enjoy and care for nature.

The initiative was recently launched by Macquarie University, in partnership with Oz Green and funded by the NSW Environment Trust. It was developed to address the growing disconnect between urbanised young people and the natural environment, as the shift towards busy and virtually connected lives grows.

Ten groups of 15-25 year olds have now been selected to join the project. They have come up with project ideas they believe can motivate and communicate with other young people in NSW and stimulate interest to explore nature, fall in love with it and look after it.

Wendy Goldstein, leader of the project and lecturer of Sustainable Development at Macquarie University, is testing the idea that the way to engage young people in nature is to ask them how to do it.

Goldstein said they are now looking for mentors with project management and communication skills to support the projects. "This would require support during the strategy development workshops 13 and 16 November, and at the two-day reflection workshops in April," she says.

Mentors of any age will also be required to provide some support while the groups test out their projects between November to April.

"The ideas we will be working with are created by the young, for the young and implemented by the young, in the hope to stimulate a movement to enjoy, respect and care for nature," Goldstein said.

"Visiting natural areas has been shown to improve one's emotional, mental and physical state and there is evidence that if young people develop a relationship with nature early in life they are more likely to care for nature and protect it as adults.

"This seems to be vital because if young people don't visit and connect with nature, what is the future of human wellbeing, as well as that of the natural environments?" she said.

Sue Lennox, Co-Founder of Oz Green, has also worked with young people for over 20 years and emphasises how important it is to mentor the young people as they plan and implement their projects.

She explained how *The (re)Generation* and its mentors will run workshops to assist the young people in putting their ideas into practice and undertake research to explore how to change attitudes and behaviours.

"What is really exciting is that some of the young people will be attending the IUCN World Parks Congress in Sydney in November to exchange ideas and share their projects with international participants" Lennox said.

"The Congress is only held every 10 years and this year it is being held in Sydney."

Anyone interested in a mentoring role should email janecrowley87@gmail.com or visit [facebook.com/theregeneration.inspirenature](https://www.facebook.com/theregeneration.inspirenature). The closing date for applications is 31 October 2014.

Media Contact:

p: (02) 9850 1039 e: joanna.wheatley@mq.edu.au

A copy of this release will be available online at www.mq.edu.au/newsroom