



**MEDIA RELEASE**

**29<sup>th</sup> July 2016**

**International Student Collaboration to Protect our Biosphere Waterways**

Students from Somerville Secondary College and Zhongce Vocational School in Hangzhou, China spoke for the first time via Skype on 29 July 2016 as part of a Western Port Biosphere water stewardship initiative in conjunction with Water Stewardship Australia.

This initiative will allow students to share project experiences and data on water saving, water protection and water monitoring activities in their respective school grounds and local water catchments with the help of translators, including Water Stewardship Australia's Asia-Pacific Manager Zhenzhen Xu, who was in Australia to help finalise arrangements.

Somerville Secondary College is one of the first organisations to be involved with Western Port Biosphere's Water Stewardship Project which facilitates collaboration between major water users, the community, water agencies, local government and other stakeholders through its *Building a water stewardship community in Western Port* project funded by the Helen MacPherson Smith Trust.

The Biosphere's Water Stewardship project was the first to recognise that schools have an important role to play in the water stewardship process.

Schools, as well as businesses, can help build a water stewardship community. It is a great opportunity for students to learn about better water management as well as to assist community partners in planting trees, and undertaking biodiversity works and water quality monitoring.

Somerville Secondary College have an extensive program underway to protect, enhance and manage the school's onsite Yumarrala Wetlands and water resources which incorporates a bird hide and mural which was officially opened on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2016. The school is developing a Site Water Stewardship Plan with help from the Western Port Biosphere Water Stewardship Project.

Zhongce Vocational School in Hangzhou has participated in water protection and conservation activities with Canada, India, the Philippines, Ireland, Ecuador, Malaysia and Singapore.

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**Further information**

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