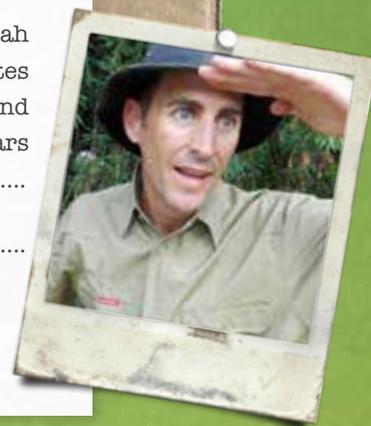


CASE STUDY 10

Leading Children Into Natural Spaces, And Facilitating Stronger Natural Connections

Nature Play QLD Activity Provider:..Sparky Do Dah
Contact:Nigel Coates
Location:South East Queensland
Age of Children:..... 5 to 10 years
Number of Children Involved:
Up to 1,000 per week (during school holidays)
Nature Play QLD Involvement:
Nature Play Passports, 'Things to Do' lists, website event listings, Forest Learning Workshop, Nature Play QLD Activity Provider, Forum Panelist, Nature Play Award Finalist, networking



Who Is Sparky Do Dah?

Sparky Do Dah (Nigel Coates) is an official Nature Play QLD Activity Provider who has engaged thousands of children across South East Queensland in healthy, developmental, outside play.

Sparky Do Dah events target children from four to 10 years, as well as their parents. Mr Coates says, "This is such a crucial time of development for children, with the opportunity for unstructured outdoor play a new experience for many."

Sparky Do Dah gatherings draw people to a variety of outdoor spaces, including discovery centres and botanical gardens, and encourage them to look beyond the fantastic plastic playgrounds of suburban parks, to explore the areas that are most often overlooked.

Nature Play Passports

Mr Coates provides all attendees with Nature Play QLD resources so that families are well prepared to enjoy nature play in their own time.

"I give the passports to the kids and they absolutely love them, with most people surprisingly saying that they already have one," says Mr Coates.

"The kids aren't as keen on the lists, they like the books to flick through, especially when I say there are stickers in there and that they have to figure out which sticker is which activity," he says.

"When I became a Nature Play QLD activity provider, it totally changed the dynamic of my business. Having the approval of an industry leader opened doors and gave me an enhanced level of credibility."

How Nature Play QLD Facilitates This

"I felt quite alone as Sparky Do Dah, until I met Nature Play QLD. Their philosophies were so eloquent, and their resources just perfect. It made me feel like I was part of something bigger," he said.

"Hyahno [Nature Play QLD Project Manager] has enabled my business to thrive by introducing me to several regional councils. When I first speak with them, I'm not having to prove myself. I just have to explain what I can do for them," he says.

"It totally changes the dynamic because they've heard of me through a third party who is an industry leader."

Mr. Coates' program and delivery is both unique and in demand, with regular Sparky Do Dah events for Gold Coast, Brisbane, Ipswich, Redland and Logan City Councils.

Nature Play QLD Things To Do Lists

"The ones for parents are definitely the lists because it makes more sense to them," says Mr Coates, adding that they provide parents with easy activity ideas for maintaining their children's outdoor adventures.

"Some of them actively get involved, but then there's the parents that either sit under a tree on their phone, or follow us around with a sour face and crossed arms," he says.

"The lists enable parents and show them it's not too difficult, even if they're not nature lovers or that way inclined. They explain and show to them how simple things can be," he says.

Why Nature Play?

Mr Coates says the outcomes for children who attend his programs are life-changing and that his enthusiasm for nature play encourages kids to spend less time on screens and excites them into following their own passions.

"Nature play promotes health benefits, including cognitive, social and emotional development, and it builds resilience and creativity as well. Experiences in nature as a child can also lead to environmental awareness and stewardship later in life," he says.

The Results

When these same families return to the parks, the feedback is that the children care little for the plastic playgrounds and the parents have the confidence to let them explore the wild spaces that surround them.

Mr. Coates says that his activities and the Nature Play QLD resources help parents better understand the practical implementation of nature play, and provide them with more confidence in allowing their children to self-assess risks. They are reminded of the freedoms of their childhood and many resolve to loosen their grip on their children's continual safety as a result.