

## **History of the Para Wirra Study Centre**

The project began around 1971. A former Headmaster of Elizabeth West High School, Mr. B.D. Hannaford, had the idea of asking for a section of the Para Wirra National Park to be set aside for the exclusive use of the four high schools representing the Munno Para District at that time (E.W.H.S., Craigmore, Smithfield Plains and Gawler High Schools).

The Park was seen to offer a unique educational resource for a highly urbanised group of students.

Mr. Hannaford, together with a representative from the Munno Para Council approached the National Parks and Education Departments and final approval was given in June 1972 for a three stage project:

1. Immediate use of an area (1 mile as the crow flies) along the South Para for ½ day or 1 day exercises
2. Provision of an on-site classroom in 1973
3. Provision for sleeping accommodation in 1975

In late June 1974 it was learnt that the overdue classroom was still a long way off and an application was made to the Schools Commission to fund the building. This was resubmitted in November 1975 and was successful in February 1976. Funding was for half the original amount so a decision was made to provide a log cabin type shell 26ft x 56ft, which could be furnished later by an effort from the four schools. Building commenced in Term 3 1976 and continued in 1977. With the exception of the roofing and concrete floor, the building was erected by students from the four schools.

Ten beds were added in 1979 and another 10 later, along with paving, cupboards, a ventilator and dividing wall.

A committee of eight (two from each of the member schools) managed the study centre. A 0.8 time co-ordinator acted as the executive officer for this committee. After years of valuable use under the leadership of David Larritt, the Education Department withdrew funding for the co-ordinator position and the Centre was no longer maintained, falling into disrepair.

Trinity College, Gawler, had used the site for Year 6 environmental study camps in the late 1990s and an enthusiastic teacher from the College, Mrs. Chris Leckonby, persuaded Trinity Headmaster, Mr. Luke Thomson, to consider leasing the site from the Department for Environment and Heritage. The lease came into effect on September 1, 2004.

Trinity College has restored the centre and has begun to manage it for its own students as well as for those of other schools and organisations in the Northern region.