

New year greetings to Soil Selfies contributors and supporters

Who said "*I am married to my soil*" and "*I come from dirt*"? - Quite a challenge to the way most of us think about soil! It was in one of 21 new **Soil Selfies** added to the website in November-December. This time last year, this was a concept, now this volunteer project has **65 Soil Selfies on-line**, with more in progress. Unfortunately, I had so much on in the last 2 months of 2015, that I didn't have time til now to do an update and tell you about these new Soil Selfies from South Australia, new urban gardens, France, Outback Australia and Kenya.

The Soil Selfies webpages are organised into these **regions**: Wimmera-Mallee has 25, elsewhere in Victoria 13, NSW 6, SA 5, Qld 3, Tas 2, Global 11 (Europe has 7 in English with 3 repeated *en français*, and 1 from Kenya). The **index page for each region** groups Soil Selfies under these **uses**: food for the World; food for a family; natural environments and biodiversity; recreational places; buildings and infrastructure. Each Soil Selfies has a **photo icon** and **short description** with its page **hyperlink** here. On each Soil Selfies page, links to **further pages** have been added at the bottom. During the year, I wrote **introductions** to uses, values and issues for many Soil Selfies as **Linked-in Posts**. Direct hyperlinks to them are on this new index page at <http://soils.enviroed4all.com.au/soils-in-stories/In-soil-posts/>

Thank you to all who inspired me to keep going with this project with wonderful things to **share about your soils**, and to the **IASS** for supporting the concept as a display for **Global Soil Week in Berlin**- making it also possible as a display for events in Victoria and a physical resource ready for use in local schools.

Victoria's **World Soil Day** weekend event held in **Fed Square** was a fantastic experience. Its activities included making a huge soil sample map of Victoria, over the 2 days, soil artworks and of course delicious soil cakes! I was kept busy engaging mainly family groups in the **Snooping into Soils** activities. These showed the key components of soil, physical differences between sands and clays, and some little life (native cockroaches) that lives in our soil, along with the Soil Selfies on display. I am very grateful to the Australian Soil Scientists for inviting me and providing calendars and Connies soil cards to go to the Wimmera schools, and to the local (Warracknabeal Herald) and regional (Wimmera Mail Times) papers for printing World Soil Day articles so that the Wimmera was a part of this Day too.

The last session of the **Wimmera Soil Education Project** went to most schools in November - *Caring for our Soils* was described in my last update. It was followed by a survey of the **200 children and teachers** as an **evaluation** of the project. The average result for each of the 9 classes was that they **learnt a 'fair bit' or 'lots' about soils**. The teachers' statements showed great value in this program - also wonderful feedback for the **Wimmera Catchment Management Authority** who funded the school session time. The big surprise was in what participants thought they would most remember- yes, the **Soil Stars** artwork was the most popular, then soil changing colour in **pH tests** - but then almost every activity from the year's four sessions, had at least someone saying that it was what they would most remember!

I hope I have helped raise your awareness of the diversity of soils, their values, and issues too. I aim to continue to grow this resource and uses for it. I am open to any opportunities to run **Snooping into Soils** activities or **Soil Selfies displays** in new venues - so please contact me if you have any ideas or offers, especially if they come with funding! I think **soil still needs a voice**, so I plan to: 1 tweet weekly from the Selfies collection; 2 create web and sessional resources/activities integrating Soil with these UN global projects: 2016 IY **Pulses, Sustainable Development Goals**, and decades of **Family farming** and **Biodiversity**; 3 continue updates!

With thanks for your support in 2015 and best wishes for your activities in 2016
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