

Bringing nature indoors – an engaging, sensory play space



Artificial blue gum tree for new childcare centre

Natureworks loves turning children on to the magic of nature, so when we were asked to create an artificial gum tree for an indoor play space we readily embraced the challenge!

Our authentic life-sized blue gum replica forms the focal point of an innovative nature play area inside the Goodstart Early Learning Centre in Adelaide Street, Brisbane.

A collaborative project

For this project, Natureworks was contracted by construction company ATG, who worked with architects Gray Puksand, landscape designers Greenedge Design and various other contractors to realise the client's vision.

Our role was to design and create the artificial gum tree, integrating a hollow base for children to play in. To provide additional stimulation for young minds, we also supplied sculptures of Australian birds and animals that could be hidden around the tree ready to be discovered!



The natural-feeling interior space and landscape features were designed by Gray Puksand and Greenedge Design (Image: Christopher Frederick Jones)



Hollow base provides a play space

Animal & bird sculptures in the tree

"This magnificent tree is the centrepiece in our level 1 playground. There is a hollow space at the bottom for children to get in and explore – it is sure to be a hit!"

Goodstart Early Learning



GRAY PUKSAND





Promoting sensory nature play

Goodstart Early Learning and the project designers were keen to provide children with a multi-sensory environment that would encourage them to explore natural elements.

To achieve this aim, the play space blends natural plantings, timber and stone with replicas of nature such as our large artificial blue gum tree, faux rocks and mounds of artificial turf.

(Images: Christopher Frederick Jones and Greg Thomas)



View of the play area, with tree in the background



The gum tree extends to the ceiling of the play area

"The indoor play space incorporates natural planting, timber, stone and artificial turf to provide a space symbolic of the outdoors. It offers a multitude of activity areas in a 'sub-tropical rainforest' setting."

Greenedge Design



A girl peers into the tree, looking for animals



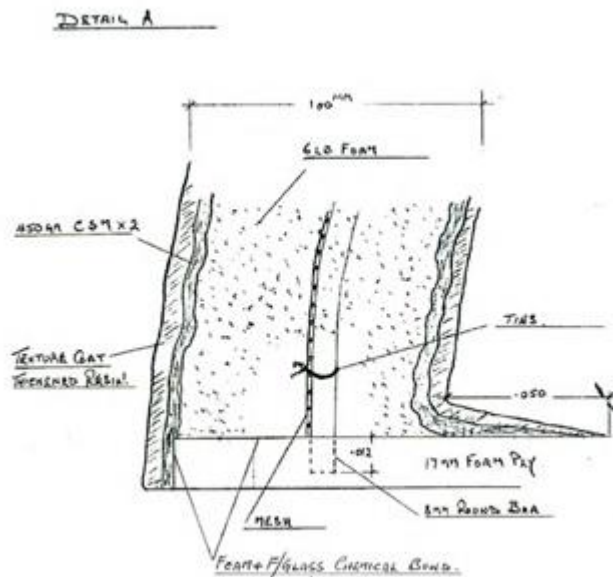
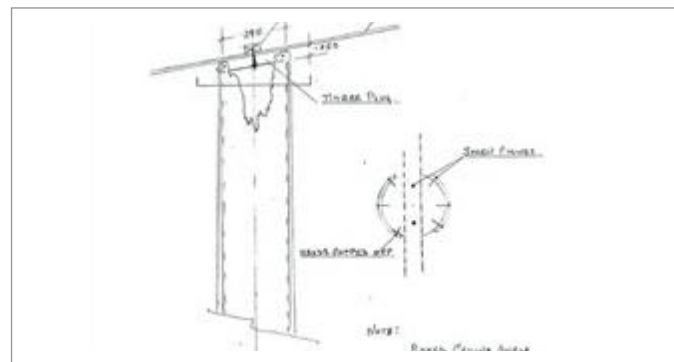
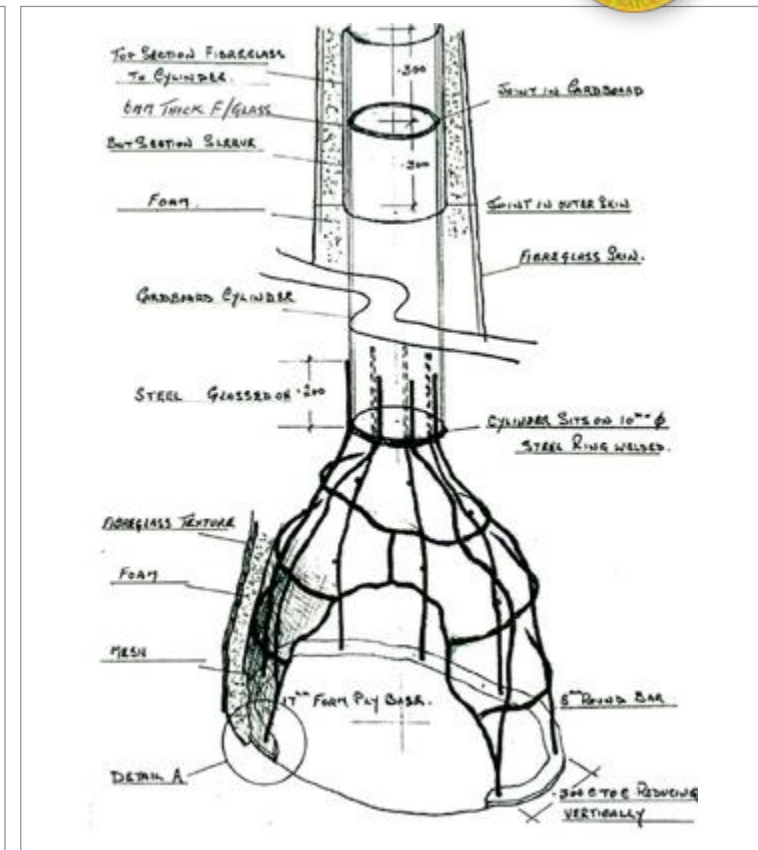
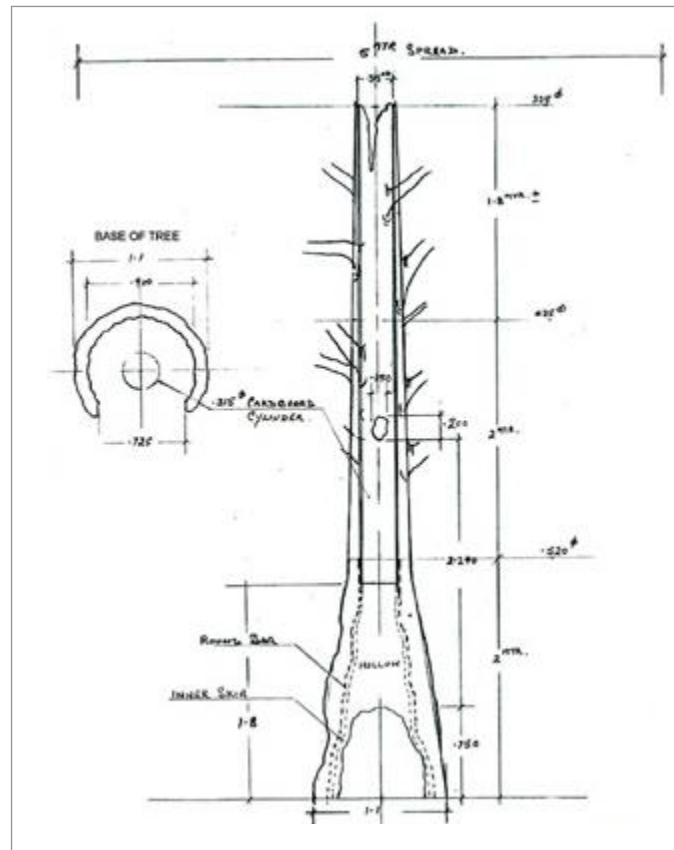
Design and planning

Our team worked with the client's engineers and designers to ensure the artificial gum tree met the design and engineering requirements and could be produced and installed cost-effectively.

This involved a lot of detailed planning and calculations, as you can see from the diagrams.

The images on this page show some of the design sketches, production drawings and material specs for the blue gum tree.

Please note these may not represent final production details. All drawings are copyright © Natureworks Pty Ltd.



Weight Estimates for Goodstart Early Learning Centre Tree

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. Base Board 17mm Form Ply 1.1 Sq Mtr | 10 KG |
| 2. Cardboard Cylinder 4 Mtrs x .315 Dia x .010mm wall thickness | 10 KG |
| 3. Mild Steel 8mm round rubber | 15 KG |
| 4. Metal fly screen Mesh 5 Sq Mtrs | 5 KG |
| 5. Spray Foam 96Kg/Cub Mtr @ .6 Cub Mtr | 60 KG |
| 6. Resin | 60 KG |
| 7. Fibre-Glass CSM 56 Sq Mtrs | 28 KG |
| 8. Wooden Natural branches 9"x Av 5 KG each | 45 KG |
| 9. Artificial Foliage estimate | 5 KG |

238 KG



Building the tree in the Natureworks studio

The blue gum tree was made with a fibreglass outer layer applied over a steel frame and mesh substructure covered with foam. Our artisans sculpted the base and trunk in great detail, emulating natural gum tree features.

The artificial trunk was combined with real hardwood branches (attached via an inner PVC pipe and blended with fibreglass and paint) to create a highly naturalistic result.

Once the structure was complete, our artists applied a realistic paint finish to reflect the colours of natural blue gum bark, followed by a final protective coat. We then affixed artificial eucalyptus leaves to complete the effect, and added some small animal and bird sculptures.



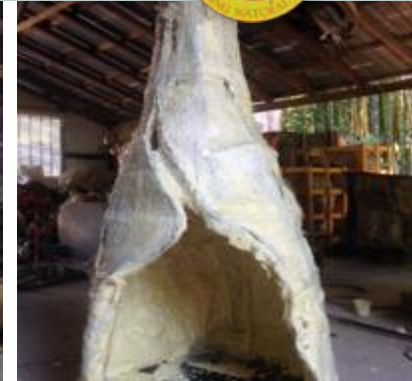
Building the steel frame



Steel framework



Layer of fibreglass



Trunk with foam and fibreglass



Sculpting trunk details



Working in the hollow tree base



Close-up of bark finish



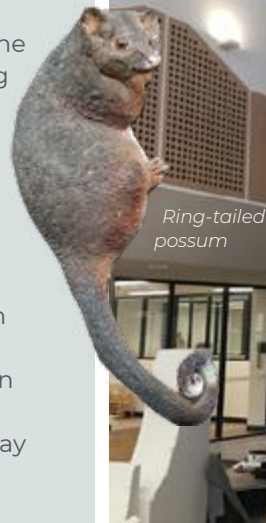
Moving the tree into the building vi crane, and adding branches, foliage and animals.



A creative, engaging nature play space

This project shows how an exciting nature play experience can be created inside a building in the middle of a city. It's a great example of engaging children in nature-based exploration while creating a serene environment. As a result, we hope it stimulates children to explore nature in the outside world.

Full kudos to Goodstart Early Learning for having the vision to create such an engaging space, and to the various design and production teams for making it happen. The project was shortlisted for the 2018 Australian Interior Design Awards and was a finalist in the 2018 Interior Design Excellence Awards (IDEA) – well done Gray Puksand and Greenedge Design!



The tree in situ



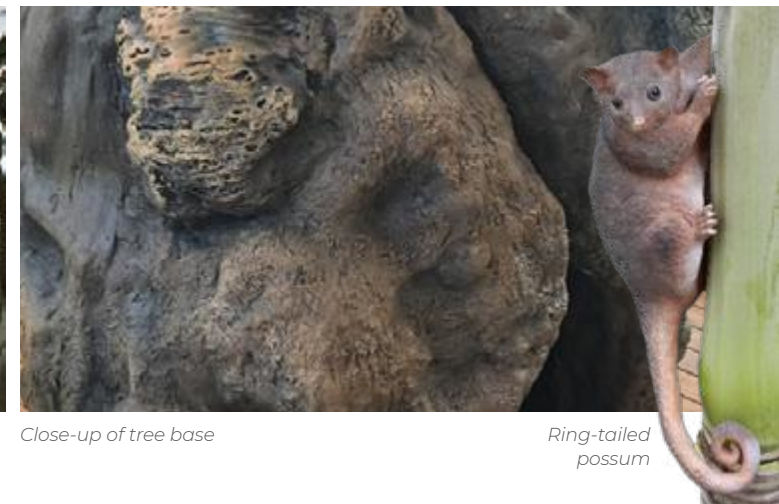
Close-up of trunk and branches



Animals hidden in the tree provide interesting elements for children to explore.



Birds and animals in the tree during installation



Close-up of tree base

Ring-tailed possum



From natural inspiration at our studio...



...to natural magic at the childcare centre!



Nature theming elements for play areas

As well as making custom artificial trees, Natureworks can supply a range of ready-made artificial rocks and plants for landscaping and design projects.

For nature-based children's play areas, we offer a range of pebble seats and climbing rocks. We also have thousands of delightful animal sculptures and imaginative playground theming elements.

Contact Natureworks to bring your project to life!