

Mounds Improve Environments - 1

The Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands are located in the far north west corner of South Australia and form part of the south western sector of Central Australia. The climate is very arid and the environment in which communities have been established is often dry and dusty. It has been a challenge to create micro-environments around houses and public buildings to reduce the effects of air borne dust.

M.W.Last *
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In October 2000, a mound building program was embarked upon to improve the living conditions within the local environment at Pipalyatjara. The results have been impressive and a more detailed article is available from The APY Land Management Office at Umuwa. This fact sheet provides some information for those interested in building mounds.

1. Building Mounds



Many environmental improvement programs have been initiated on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands and mound building would have to be one of the most successful. The crescent shaped mound which was being built in this picture was designed to fill an area 40 metres long by 12 metres wide. The volume of soil required was 180 cubic meters. Everybody became enthusiastically involved including the school children. The flat top on the mound (one metre high), provided a new venue for people to sit and talk. Half loads of soil were tipped on the inner side of the mound from which an undulating floor was shaped. These mounds eliminated motor vehicle access to the median strip.

2. Mound Shapes



This picture illustrates some of the shapes that can be achieved when building a mound system. A drum oven was installed on the inner side of the crescent shaped mound in the centre right and was used to cook the evening meal for the workers building the mounds in this stage. This mound provided a semi private venue in which to cook food and boil "billy" tea. People sat around the mounds at different times of the day talking with friends as well as being able to communicate with others through the use of hand signs.

Trees were planted on the inner side to provide future shade and shrubs were grown on the outside slope of each mound.

* Acknowledgement: This fact sheet has been generated out of a Nganampa Health Council Project on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands.

3. Mounds for Meetings



Mound systems are very popular in public places especially around the community office. Communication within the community is enhanced because community members enjoy congregating in the new improved venues provided by mounds. The gentle slope which can be produced on the inner side of the mound, provides a micro-environment in which people can sit and talk privately about issues of concern.

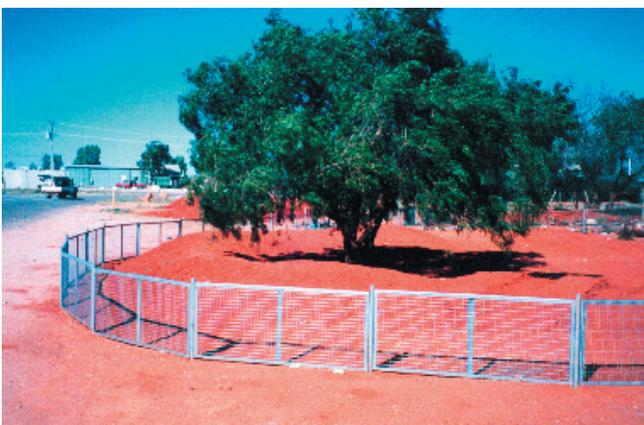
The building of a larger amphitheatre within the mound system provides an excellent venue for public meetings.

4. Low Profile Mounds



Low profile mounds were very popular at Kalka because people sitting within them could watch their children who may be playing some distance away. The mound in this picture surrounds an outside shelter which is used as an extra living area located outside the house yard. Mounds help define living areas reducing the overall environment to a series of micro-environments which are easier to rake and keep clean. The volume of soil used to build these smaller mounds varied between 80 and 100 cubic meters, while the larger mounds in front yards required 120 to 160 cubic meters.

5. Mounds for Extra Living Areas



Mound systems were very popular when built in the front yards of houses. In this picture the front fence was removed and a primary mound was built around some mature peppercorn trees which had been grown in the median strip. Some low undulating secondary mounds were built inside the primary mound, providing an overall venue for outside living. Visitors were able to camp in the mound system while the extended family were able to take advantage of the new user friendly environment. They sat and talked amongst themselves as well as to those walking along the road.

A new circular fence was erected around the mound system providing some security for the occupants.