 **Landcare Broken Hill Inc**

***Greening the Hill Mk2***

ABC Radio interview No.36 – 29 January 2020

**COMMUNITY TREE CARE**

**Last week I outlined some of the priority Greening the Hill Mk2 projects for 2020.**

**As I said last week, we are now all witnessing appalling summer conditions which daily reinforce the need for us all to do more to protect our environment. So much has been lost across Australia, which means that which remains is all the more precious.**

**Last week I mentioned Greening the Hill Mk2 project #6 – Street Tree Project**

Well today, on this programme, I’m going to re-badge Project #6 and announce our intention to launch **COMMUNITY TREE CARE**

One of the great successes in Australia a few decades back was the creation of the community initiative **Neighbourhood Watch**. That was an initiative where communities across Australia, street by street, suburb by suburb, worked together to make our communities safer. The police in every town, city and state remained the primary entity responsible for citizen security, but the Neighbourhood Watch initiative showed that a caring community, a selfless community, can work together for a safer community.

An extension of that initiative was the setting up of the **Crime Stoppers hotline** to the police. Crime Stoppers succeeds because good minded members of the community help the police carry out their tasks more effectively. Thousands of examples across Australia demonstrate how effective are efforts where the community works together demonstrating, yet again, that the broader community is largely caring and selfless.

There are a great number of other wonderful examples of communities working together: like Clean Up Australia Day or Keep Australia Beautiful or Tidy Towns. But this year of all years, let me highlight the magnificent, selfless, fearless community members who make up our **volunteer fire fighters**. This summer, where would we be without our volunteer Rural Fire Service, putting their lives on the line to save their communities? 74,000 NSW community members, willingly volunteering their time for their communities.

**So let us launch another opportunity for we in Broken Hill to prove that we care about our community – COMMUNITY TREE CARE - I hope that it leads to a national trend**

In encouraging Broken Hill citizens to help look after the City’s trees in streets and public places, Landcare Broken Hill says Mayor Darriea Turley has got it right.

This City’s trees are clearly struggling in the worst recorded drought ever experienced in this region. Large numbers of trees are stressed and many have died, but by **working together, we can all help save the trees that remain**. We support the Mayor’s call for people to help care for our City’s trees. **Hence we are launching our Community Tree Care initiative – CALLING FOR NEW KEEN BROKEN HILL VOLUNTEERS TO HELP SET IT UP.**

**It may be challenging, but it is not impossible**. There are some wonderful community-minded people in this City who have already shown the way by caring for the trees outside their homes or businesses. Just travel around Broken Hill and you’ll see nature-strips where the trees in them are surviving because the people nearby have decided to help look after them. These thoughtful and caring people have shown the way – so everyone should try and follow their lead.

It is amazing how just a little water, every now and again, can make the difference between saving a tree or watching it sadly die. It is **best to allow water to slowly trickle** around the tree, so that it sinks in. Spreading a bit of **mulch around a tree** helps keep the soil moist.

**Re-using grey water is a really good idea**. Grey water is water you’ve already used, that can be re-used. Put a few buckets in your shower recess, or in your bath, or put a plastic container in your hand basin and capture your washing water. Then carry your bucket of grey water out to a nearby tree and plant so as to help it live.

It is **easier to keep an existing living tree alive than trying to start again** with a newly planted tree. Of course Landcare will be working with Council to ensure that, over time, as many new trees are planted as possible, but when you’ve got an existing tree you’ve got a real head-start, it’s there, it’s living, and it’s cheaper to keep it going than starting over again – especially in the climatic conditions we are now experiencing.

**Why should we care about trees in public places and along our streets?**

* Science has proved that trees keep the temperature of urban areas cooler. In our climate, reducing the heat of our City is critical.
* Trees provide much needed shade, which makes for a more liveable City. It is more pleasant to walk along a shaded street.
* Trees ensure we have a healthier environment, shady tree cover protects us from dangerous over-exposure to sunlight.
* Trees bind the soil, because their roots hold it together. Keeping our soil together is critically important in keeping the dust down.
* Trees lessen run-off, because they lessen the impact of strong rain, obstruct the flow of surface water and the roots absorb more.
* Trees contribute to the City being more pleasant, more attractive – from an aesthetic perspective our City looks better. A more attractive City is a better place to live in and encourages visitors to appreciate and enjoy the place even more.
* Trees break the wind, slows it down. That’s better for our health, our properties and the environment. They help shield us from the worst effect of dust storms.
* Broken Hill is Australia’s first National Heritage Listed city. Its character was recognised as having that of an oasis – an isolated, remote and resilient City in the midst of arid lands. So the trees of the City are an important part of its heritage character. They deserve to be protected
* Finally, with the horrific losses across Australia this summer due to the bushfires, our environment needs to be cared for. Every tree is part of our green-lungs as it helps to purify our air; it’s a home for birds, it’s a key part of our environment. We’ve seen too many special and beautiful places destroyed this summer for us to stand-by and see more trees die. Every remaining tree in our City needs to be safeguarded – they are precious.

**The next public meeting of Landcare Broken Hill will be in February - TBA**

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