 **Landcare Broken Hill Inc**

***Greening the Hill Mk.2***

ABC Radio interview No.5 – 29 May 2019

**Tree choice**

Today’s talk is about ‘Tree Choice’

I want to talk in pragmatic and practical terms.

**Benefits of Trees**

**Trees provide shade**. As such they not only provide cooler spaces but they perform a protective shield against the harshness of sun. They provide a shield from UV rays from the sun and so protect those who take advantage of the cover provided by them.

Studies have proved that trees have a **micro-climate impact** – they lower the ambient temperature within their vicinity. In a harsh climatic environment such as Broken Hill experiences, adopting all means to lower the temperature should be embraced.

**Trees absorb carbon dioxide**, one the Greenhouse Gases, and gives out life-giving oxygen. The more trees we have, the greater our capacity to counter-balance, or off set, some impacts of climate change. The term “carbon sink” can be used to refer to the collective impact/benefit of many trees in an area absorbing GHGs.

**Trees also provide habitat** for other life, such as birds. They are critically important to safeguarding the biodiversity of a region. If the biodiversity in a region is balanced, not stressed, then it is an indicator of a healthy environment. Flowering trees produce nectar which attract bees, that are then pollinated. Pollinated plants thrive and reproduce, whilst the bees produce honey. Nature is in balance.

**Trees can provide food**. There is great pleasure to be gained from having your own lemon tree, or a couple of olive trees, and harvest your own produce. Providing one has obtained good advice on tree selection, there is a wonderful range of fruit trees that grow well in Broken Hill. For instance, I’m aware of a prolific peach tree in one garden. And I know of a prolific grapefruit tree in another property. I’m sure many Broken Hill gardeners know of the whereabouts of many wonderful, thriving fruit trees in this district.

**Trees are aesthetically pleasing**, as all the artists that have been drawn to Broken Hill over the decades have ably demonstrated. Being aesthetically pleasing is just part of the benefit, as there have been many studies by psychologists and sociologists that have established that **trees can provide calming relief** – they actually cause a positive psychological reaction in most human beings.

**Trees can provide privacy** in the urban setting. In fact, designing a home on a block where trees are retained and are taken into account in the landscape design, can achieve far better and more attractive outcomes than starting with a ‘clean slate’. A cleared block is just barren, whereas a block with **trees often provides a real opportunity** to achieve a better landscaped outcome.

Landcare Broken Hill is going to explore whether its ***Greening the Hill Mk.2*** can be recognised as a **carbon offset project**. One kind of carbon offset project is where the loss of vegetation in one location, say in a new subdivision area in outer Sydney, can be offset by the planting of trees in another location, we would suggest Broken Hill. Such arrangements have different descriptions or terms depending where you are in Australia, but the term “net gain” will be known to some listeners. Effectively it means that in order to secure planning or development approval in one location, the compensation for removal of trees in that location must be new plantings in multiples greater than the original removal. Landcare Broken Hill believes that if ***Greening the Hill Mk.2*** was able to be accepted as a carbon offset project, we might secure the resources to truly make all aspects of our initiative achievable.

**Choosing the right tree**

In an arid and semi-arid zone environment, which recurrently experiences extreme droughts, such as we are experiencing now, choosing the right tree is critical. You have to be practical.

First, nature can teach us many things, not least being to understand that over millennia plants adapt to their environments. They become resilient to prolonged drought and can cope with extreme heat and scorching sunlight. So, in selecting a tree in this district, first preference should be given to a tree that naturally grows in this district. In reality, such a tree specie has been ‘tried and tested’ by nature and consequently, as a survivor, is likely to be your best choice.

When Albert and Margaret Morris studied the trees and plants that survived and thrived in this environment, they were studying nature’s lessons. And the message they heard was that the most successful planting would be when trees and plants from the district were selected for regeneration.

We know that some trees are thirstier than others. Unless one’s got a plentiful supply of affordable water, it is just senseless to plant trees in this environment that will struggle to survive or will absorb every bit of moisture in the soil to great depth, thereby making other dependent plants more vulnerable.

So with the backyard, the choice of a tree to plant should be one known to live without too much water required. Always be water-wise in your selection of a tree for a Broken Hill garden.

You must consider the size of your block and its aspect. From which direction will the sun be at its hottest, indicating where you might plant a shade tree. The larger the block, the greater the flexibility to select a larger tree.

With the popularity of solar panels in Broken Hill, you must be aware not to lessen the hours of solar exposure of your panels, or sometimes the exposure of your neighbour’s solar panels.

Some trees drop their leaves. These deciduous trees provide you with mulch material which can be placed in a compost bin. On the other hand, some deciduous trees can block gutters. Some trees drop berries that can stain, so in locating your tree, avoiding a place which overhangs where you park your car is sensible.

In the native plant reserves, such as in the Regeneration Belt or the Riddiford Arboretum (across the road from the Plaza Shopping Centre), there should be a more rigorous focus on only planting the plants that make up the natural and original ecological biodiversity of those areas. Such plants will more likely survive and more likely assist each other to survive, due to the dependent interconnection in a natural ecosystem. So when Landcare Broken Hill sets out to assist Broken Hill Council to maintain these natural areas, we’ll be reinforcing that ecosystem. That is the only sensible and responsible approach to take.

But away from those special natural areas, especially into one’s own backyards, far greater options or choice for tree selection is available. Your backyard and your neighbourhood is already a greatly modified environment, that gives the owner choice. Nevertheless, good sense should guide the plant selection. Landcare Broken Hill intends to be a source of good advice to assist people to understand what will be a more viable plant or tree to select.

**Public meeting to discuss *GREENING THE HILL MK.2* at the Centre for Community at 200 Beryl Street at 7.00pm Thursday 30 May**

Want to express interest? Want to become a Landcare Broken Hill member? **LandcareBrokenHill@gmail.com**