 **Landcare Broken Hill Inc**

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

ABC Radio interview No.9 – 25 June 2019

**Community Plant Nursery for Broken Hill**

One of the confirmed projects of ***Greening the Hill Mk.2*** is to re-establish a community plant nursery in Broken Hill, so that we can start growing native vegetation that comes from this region as soon as possible.

It will be our first on-the-ground project to kick off this year.

Landcare Broken Hill used to have its green houses located at the back of Robertson College, but they were dismantled last year and moved to the rear the Centre for Community, which is nice central location where the propagation nursery is to be re-established.

We already have the green houses and all the equipment necessary to establish a modest size propagation facility. It is essential that we get underway with a month, so that we’re ready well ahead of Spring. We have quantities of potting mix, growing racks, seed trays, potting tubes and pots ready to go.

Whilst I’ve been in Melbourne over the fortnight, I took the opportunity to spend some time at the Bayside Community Nursery within the City of Bayside, studying their management approach. It has been an outstanding success in its 30 plus years of operation.

This Community Nursery has a small core paid staff retained by the Bayside Council, but the bulk of labour is provided by a team of volunteers who contribute in differing ways, depending on their skills and experience. Amongst the volunteers there are people with much expert knowledge who, via a Nursery Steering Committee, set the forward plans. These volunteers are the driving force behind the vision and success of the nursery.

The Community Nursery is laid out in plant groupings from say large trees to ground covers. All are well identified, with helpful botanical notes describing growing habit and giving essential information, such as the amount of water each plant species requires.

The Nursery produces publications, including an extensive illustrated plant list catalogue giving the reader all the information they might require. There are also environmental management booklets and booklets on the various parks and reserves in the district, which the reader is encouraged to visit. A quarterly newsletter in the form of a well-illustrated magazine called ‘Banksia’ is produced by the Council in association with the Nursery giving information on Friends Groups of all the parks and reserves in the district. Also, this newsletter contains interesting articles about flora and fauna seen in the district, highlighting such things as the best plants to grow to attract birds into the garden.

It can be seen that this Community Plant Nursery is a hub of many related activities within the district, linking to other volunteer activities involving projects to look after the environment. I could see Landcare Broken Hill’s Community Nursery performing a similar function, rather like a visitor information centre for environmental attractions in the district.

Given the level of interest in publications and the public sales traffic at the nursery, an adjoining house had been purchased by the Council to be used in association with the nursery. The house appears to perform the function of a volunteer hub as well as the ‘shop front’ of the nursery.

The Nursery opens for retail sales twice a week, during which time members of the volunteer team who have expertise are available to answer questions from the community wishing to buy their plants.

The range of plants extend from tube stock to well-advanced trees. There is no concern about such a Community Nursery competing with mainstream commercial nursery businesses in the district, as the nursery exclusively produces native plants from the district, with a real focus on indigenous bushland plants. Mainstream commercial nurseries produce and sell the full range of exotic plants, fruit trees, flower and vegetable seedlings, which would never be produced in such a Community Native Plant Nursery. My expectation is that would be the same in Broken Hill.

The watering system was a sophisticated one involved automatic processes, so some of the more boring tasks like plant watering, is lessened for the volunteer team.

The nursery produces over 100,000 plants annually, with the plant selection depending on the identified needs. So if they are approached by one of the local golf courses for a major revegetation project, they will produce the plants to meet the expected orders. My guess is that in Broken Hill such a Community Plant Nursery could be a great resource for the mining companies who have land rehabilitation requirements.

In Bayside a large proportion of the plants go to maintaining the bush reserves in the district, such as along the foreshore of Port Phillip Bay. There are also a number of heathland reserves to be maintained. Obviously in Broken Hill, the Regeneration Belt would greatly benefit from the re-establishment of a Community Nursery.

In Bayside the Nursery Steering Committee has determined a need to maintain the plant stock of the more endangered plants in the district, so a Rare Plants Group of locally rare plants are propagated so that the species in question don’t die out. The role in maintaining the biodiversity of the district is considered to be a very important function performed, on behalf of the community, by this Community Nursery.

 **Next public meeting THIS WEEK to provide a project update on *GREENING THE HILL MK.2***

**Centre for Community, 200 Beryl Street, 7.00pm Thursday 27 June**

***COME ALONG !***

Want to become a Landcare Broken Hill member?

**WANT TO HELP BUILD THE GREEN HOUSES?**

**LandcareBrokenHill@gmail.com**