 **Landcare Broken Hill Inc**

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

ABC Radio interview No.19 – 3 September 2019

**LANDCARE AUSTRALIA’S 30TH ANNIVERSARY – A HISTORY**

Today in Wentworth a ceremony will take place to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the national launch of the Landcare Broken Hill by the late Bob Hawke, Prime Minister of Australia, in 1989 .

The Federal Minister for Agriculture, the Hon. Bridget McKenzie, will be joined by Bob Hawke’s granddaughter, Sophie Taylor-Price, who has been appointed a national Landcare Ambassador, and the Mayor of Wentworth Shire Council, Melisa Hederics, at the ceremony.

**Why Wentworth?**

It was at the confluence of the Darling River and the Murray River (where the rivers meet) in Wentworth, that Bob Hawke announced the then Federal Government’s “Decade of Landcare Plan” and committed $320 million to fund the National Landcare Programme.

**How did it come about?**

The original concept and term ‘Landcare’ grew from an initiative of Joan Kirner (then the Victorian Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands) – before she became Victoria’s Premier – in November 1986. Joan Kirner had embraced the suggestion of proactive ‘balanced’ rural land management which was promoted by Heather Mitchell, the then President of the Victorian Farmers Federation. They launched the first locally based Landcare in St Arnaud in Central Victoria, bringing together farmers, conservationists and rural community groups.

I was Chairman of the National Trust of Victoria at the time and we embraced the concept, developing a sustainable farm management plan, protecting natural biodiversity, for our grazing property ‘Mooramong’ near Skipton. I remember sharing a speaking platform with Joan Kirner in 1986, talking about our vision for a nature reserve we had set aside on the property and then a couple of years later, after Joan Kirner had become Premier, releasing an Eastern Barred Bandicoot into the wild (of our reserve) with the new Minister for Conservation – the first example of re-wilding of native fauna in Victoria.

At the national level, a campaign partnership was formed in the mid 1980s between Rick Farley, CEO of the National Farmers Federation, and Philip Toyne, the CEO of the Australian Conservation Foundation (from 1986-92). At first it was a partnership focussed on achieving better land management through soil conservation initiatives, extending from there into the area of responsible native vegetation management. Farley and Toyne joined forces and together lobbied the Federal Government, highlighting the Victorian precedent, convincing Bob Hawke that it was in the national interest. Their efforts eventually led to the announcement at Wentworth on 20 July 1989.

**The most outstanding significance of this national Landcare launch was that it fully embraced by the lead environmental and farming organisations in Australia – effectively a joint venture. And, it also had bipartisan political support – across all the political parties in Canberra.**

Of course, many farming communities and many environmental groups had been talking about the need for Landcare-type approaches for years and in many local areas there was a record of sound ‘balanced’ land management going back to the 1950s. In fact, many of the Landcare groups were formed out of or on the foundations of earlier environmental community groups in various places across the nation.

As the Landcare Australia website proudly records:

“*What has transpired since is remarkable; Landcare groups have formed all across Australia, and in over 20 countries around the world. The cornerstones of Landcare are being community owned and driven, being bi-partisan in nature, and encouraging integrated management of environmental assets, including productive farmland and a sustainable approach to private land management*”.

Today there are some 6,000 Landcare (which includes Rangecare, Dunecare etc) groups across all states and territories in Australia. The volunteers across all these groups extend into the 100,000s of people.

**PM Bob Hawke’s launch – some key words**

**“….** the degradation of our environment is not simply a local problem, nor a problem for one State or another, nor for the Commonwealth alone. Rather, the damage being done to our environment is a problem for all of us – and not just governments – but all of us individually and together”.

The second reality is that the solutions - just as we have witnessed with the land rehabilitation programs in this region – are to be found through co-operation at all levels of government and by community groups who care for the land, who want to repair our damaged environment.

It is to the future, to our children, that the statement I am launching today is dedicated. Through the measures announced in the statement and through the co-operation of all Australians, we seek an ecologically sustainable future. That simply means we have borrowed from our children part of their natural heritage and the time has come to repay the debt.

Environmental problems today, more than ever, are global. In just over 200 years since the Industrial Revolution, human activity has significantly increased the earth's temperature, threatening the onset of the greenhouse effect. Huge areas of the world's tree cover have been destroyed and we are obliterating thousands of living species. We have polluted the world's oceans, seas and rivers, degraded the earth's soils, damaged the fragile Arctic and Antarctic environments.

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None of Australia’s environmental problems is more serios than the soil degradation in this region and over nearly two-thirds of our continent's arable land.

Accordingly, we are declaring next year the Year of Landcare – it will be the first year in a Decade of Landcare that will provide as never before a focus for protecting the most fundamental ingredient both of our natural environment and of our agricultural prosperity - our soil.

Today, I am committing $320 million to a package of measures to apply over the Year and the Decade of Landcare”

**The next public meeting which will provide a full overview of *GREENING THE HILL MK.2***

**it will be Landcare Broken Hill’s Annual General Meeting**

**Centre for Community, 200 Beryl Street, Thursday 26 September 7.00pm**

Email: **LandcareBrokenHill@gmail.com**

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