 **Landcare Broken Hill Inc**

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

ABC Radio interview No.25 – 15 October 2019

**FOSTERING GOOD HEALTH**

**HEALTH BENEFITS OF WORKING WITH LANDCARE**

As a component of Landcare Broken Hill’s ***Greening the Hill Mk2*** Initiative we have often spoken about beneficial health aspects of a number of our projects, so today I’m going to focus on “Fostering Good Health”.

In short, there are many health benefits in being an active participant in Landcare activities. Working on Landcare projects combines the benefits of physical activity with the goodness of fresh air, natural light and connection with nature.

Let’s look more closely at these benefits

**1. Mental health benefits**

**provides a supportive friendship base** of people with similar interests. For people new to town or perhaps older people on their own or people who have just left the workforce it is a chance to meet and work collaboratively with new people on projects that are helping the community and the environment.

**enhances self-esteem** as you learn new skills. For instance, this weekend we are inviting Landcare members to participate in a plant survey in the Regen belt. Participants don’t have to know the names of plants – part of the purpose is to teach our members some of the different indigenous plants that grow on the edge of town. This type of activity not only expands people’s knowledge but also adds to the enjoyment of future bushwalks. In other projects we will be carrying planting activities which also fosters self-esteem by knowing that one is doing something useful for the community, the environment and the future.

Numerous studies have shown that exercising outdoors in a natural environment **is mood enhancing – you feel happier** being outdoors enjoying the natural environment. And it doesn’t have to be tiring, sweat inducing exercise – it can be light to moderate activity, all of which is proven by health professionals to be beneficial.

Exercise produces endorphins which reduce pain and increase our sense of pleasure. Conversely poor mental health can be a risk factor for chronic disease.

A related benefit of a pleasant and attractive environment, is the **beneficial psychological impact on mood, peace of mind.** Many scientific studies have shown that a more aesthetically pleasing environment has a tangible impact on people – they feel happier, they enjoy life more, they have a brighter attitude. So if Landcare projects result in a greener city, with many more attractive trees and plants growing, our reserves and parks improved, more attractive naturestrips, it is entirely likely that the mood of mmany in the community will be improved.

2**. Physical health benefits**

Gentle outdoor exercise is **good for keeping us fit and reducing weight**. Statistics show that approximately 7 in 10 people (70.6%) in BH are overweight or obese which is considerably higher than the state average of 52.7%. The Prevention Tracker Community Snapshot for Broken Hill also tells us that 2 in 3 people in Broken Hill (66.1%) do not do enough physical activity. So we want to encourage people to join us in our outdoor activities.

If you are busy doing an enjoyable and constructive activity like gardening then exercise becomes a pleasure rather than a chore. It’s much more interesting exercising in a green space than exercising on a treadmill! And you don’t need to buy expensive gym equipment!

To encourage people to exercise outdoors, it is important to have shady street trees and attractive inviting parks. Landcare is working with Council to develop strategies for protecting our existing street trees, improving canopy cover in the City and making the parks more sustainable and attractive.

**3. Fresh fruit and vegetables are also great for diet – being good for our health and our weight**.

Being aware of these facts, Landcare has instigated a number of programs that encourage growing fresh food either in the home garden or in a community garden. As listeners know, we propose to eventually have a number of community gardens in different districts of the City, so as many people as possible can grow fresh food – and growing it together as part of a community activity makes it even better!

These are really important initiatives that Landcare is promoting because the statistics for this town are concerning. NSW Population Health Surveys conducted over three years, in each of 2014, 2015 and 2016, discovered that In Broken Hill 3 out of 5 or 57.1% of people do not eat the recommended amount of fruit for good health. Worse still, 93.1% of people in Brokewn Hill, or 9 out of 10 people, do not eat the recommended amount of vegetables for good health.

One of the cuttings we handed out at our Backyard Bush Nursery giveaway, which was run in conjunction with BH City Council, were cuttings from a fig tree that grows in the community garden. Growing fig trees is just the start, the very first step, in encouraging people to grow their own fruit.

**4. Reducing airborne dust has significant health benefits**

I’ve mentioned before that one of the underlying objective of many of our revegetation projects is to keep the topsoil in the ground and thereby reduce the instance of airborne dust. Getting more plants and trees in the ground, increasing ground covers, discouraging people to simply adopt a gravel as a surface material on their blocks or on their naturestrips, are all aimed at reducing dust. The more dust we can keep contained, the the greater the health benefits.

We know that airborne dust in Broken Hill is to be avoided not only for the usual reasons to keep lungs clear and avoid people getting respiratory problems like asthma, but also to limit lead being breathed in and absorbed. High lead levels in the soil is a legacy of more than a hundred years of old mining methods, which have created a potential hazard in Broken Hill, particularly in children, that needs to be carefully managed.

Landcare proposes to collaborate with the Broken Hill Lead Centre in whatever ways may be beneficial. Specifically, over time, we hope to develop revegetation projects for areas that still require careful management.

**FINAL WORD - So we in Landcare Broken Hill say to everyone: come along and join in our activities and reap the health benefits.**

Specifically, this coming Sunday morning, 20 October, come and join in the plant survey in the Regen. For details see our Facebook site and contact us for more details via LandcareBrokenHill@gmail.com

**The next public meeting of Landcare Broken Hill will be its ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**at the Centre for Community, 200 Beryl Street, Thursday 31 October 7.00pm**

**when we will present the 6 month Report on *GREENING THE HILL MK2***

Email: **LandcareBrokenHill@gmail.com**

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