 **Landcare Broken Hill Inc**

***Greening the Hill Mk2***

ABC Radio interview No.42 – 11 March 2020

**Conservation Gardens Project**

Yesterday Landcare Broken Hill received the good news that it has been successful in its application for a grant under the 2020 SureGro TreeMax Landcare Grant scheme which is administered by Landcare Australia (the national Landcare entity).

**Conservation Gardens - location**

The project to be funded is the reinstatement and restoration of the Conservation Gardens in Broken Hill. The Conservation Gardens adjoin Lions Park, opposite Broken Hill’s Visitor Information Bureau, and is near the Kintore Headframe. It is a very visible location passed by thousands of tourists a year. It sits on the corner of Bromide and Beryl Street, just along from the Railway Museum. It is truly in the midst of Broken Hill’s most active tourist precinct.

***Greening the Hill Mk2* Project #14**

When Landcare Broken Hill launched its ***Greening the Hill Mk2*** Initiative just over ten months ago, the Conservation Gardens Project was our Project #14 of our announced 39 projects. As I have often said, most of our projects require Landcare to secure funding before they can proceed, so with this grant we can now proceed.

**Original objective of the Gardens**

The original objective of the Conservation Gardens, when they were established 20 plus years ago, was an interesting one. The current large sign in the Gardens facing the street intersection explains the original objective. The selection of plants, both native and exotic, was intended to demonstrate the differing capacities of a range of plants to survive in the Arid Zone conditions of our region, indicating which required less or more water than others. The objective was essentially educational: to give guidance to Broken Hill citizens as to which plants may or may not be desirable to plant in their own gardens if they wanted to adhere to water-wise principles.

**Objectives of the ‘new’ Conservation Gardens Project**

With the loss of greenery in our City due to the extreme drought there is an urgent need to rehabilitate the Conservation Gardens as many of its trees and plants have died and many of the beds have fallen into disrepair – some are virtually denuded of plants. So this new Project is to:

* Educate the community on the environmental and aesthetic benefits of growing drought tolerant native plants, particularly indigenous species;
* Demonstrate water-efficient gardening techniques;
* Provide microclimate benefits (including shade and dust suppression);
* Attract wildlife, particularly birdlife;
* Enhance the site for tourism, reinstating an attractive aesthetic place to stroll, sit and contemplate. Such pleasant places within a community have flow-on benefits for the local economy.

The educational and tourism objectives will be met with new informative signage and every plant will be named, with information accessible with all the particulars of each plant’s growing habits, preferred conditions and relevant advice.

**In summary, the anticipated outcome of this Conservation Garden Project will be a healthy low-maintenance drought tolerant garden that showcases local flora and educates the community on the benefits of growing local plants as well as contributing to the improvement of the urban environment and the tourist-related local economy.**

The Project will commence by April and is expected to be finished within 7 to 8 months. Landcare Broken Hill must lodge its project completion report by 10 December 2020.

**A partnership project with the Council**

The Conservation Gardens are one of the City’s public gardens under the management of Broken Hill City Council, so Landcare Broken Hill is very pleased to partner with the Council on this project. The **Council has committed the funds to reinstate the irrigation system** so as to ensure the Gardens are once again watered, ensuring that the existing plants to remain are reinvigorated and the new plantings in accordance with Landcare’s proposed landscape design will be given more than a fighting chance to survive.

Once the Gardens are reinstated, the Council will have the primary responsibility for their on-going maintenance however, with the watchful attention of Landcare’s members, our experts will readily offer their advice whilst other volunteers will keep a watchful eye that all is in order.

**Important art works to have their surrounds improved**

The Conservation Gardens contain two important works of art: one of Pro Hart’s famous outdoor sculpture’s “The Ant”. The sign on this Ant sculpture says: “***Dedicated to the workers of Broken Hill and their struggles to extract the wealth we all live from***”. Another sign by The Ant says: “*This sculpture, made by Pro Hart in 1983, was originally located at Stephens Creek Hotel, 17 km north of Broken Hill. It was donated to the City of Broken Hill in 1990. The sculpture represents the dedication that each miner must show to his mate. Underground he is important only as a member of a team working as closely together as ants in the common interests. No matter what a miner’s personal feelings towards another miner, he cannot let them interfere. In this way he learns tolerance. This sculpture was inspired by Proverbs VI, V1: ‘Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise’*.”

The other very interesting work art in the Conservation Gardens, designed and crafted by students of Broken Hill’s Technological College, is of a giant cluster of mineral crystals.

**Landcare volunteers’ roles**

Landcare’s experts with knowledge of local botany and the skills to grow native species will contribute their expertise whilst members will volunteer the necessary labour for site preparation and planting. At the last Landcare public meeting, a number of individuals volunteered to work on this project **and more volunteers will be greatly welcomed**.

**The next public meeting of Landcare Broken Hill will be Thursday 26 March**

**7pm at the CENTRE FOR COMMUNITY, 200 Beryl St, Broken Hill**

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**WEBPAGE:** [**www.LandcareBrokenHill.com**](http://www.LandcareBrokenHill.com)

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