 **Landcare Broken Hill Inc**

***Greening the Hill Mk2***

ABC Radio interview No.44 – 25 March 2020

**A new World**

Our world around us has changed dramatically and Landcare Broken Hill has had to adapt.

The good news is that **we are here to stay**. Landcare Broken Hill will remain as a guiding voice, the provider of sound advice and as a beacon of hope for a brighter future.

Like everyone else, we’ve **cancelled our public meeting programme** until further notice. We’ve made this decision with a heavy heart as we had lined up excellent speakers for many months ahead. The good news out of this is that the speakers have all confirmed that they’ll be back and ready to speak when we “open up shop again”.

The Landcare Broken Hill Executive Committee met by teleconference on Monday night and we made a number of important decisions.

First, we see **no reason to abandon our Greening the Hill Mk2 projects**. We will just reallocate our time into more ‘backroom’ planning – to determine our strategies, work out logistics, identify funding sources – basically we’ll be using the time to prepare for the good times when we emerge from our respective isolation once COVID-19 is behind us and seize life and all its opportunities with renewed enthusiasm. So for a while we won’t be so visible ‘on the ground’ meaning that all original timeframes are now extended, but we are determined to press ahead.

Secondly, we’re going to **ramp up our use of social media**. We’re posting up photos of our local native plants on a daily basis – sometimes just because they are attractive; or sometimes to give some good advice, which may be horticultural, botanical, scientific or just good sense. We are inviting our members to participate in online conversations, to share their experiences and put their questions in for our expert Landcare team to answer.

Thirdly, we’re going to **focus on some of our campaigning strategies**. Clearly when governments are so hard pressed at the moment, it will not be the time to lobby and press for action in one way or another. However, that doesn’t mean we will remain mute once the current crisis is over. We will have prepared ourselves for action – to be implemented in the future when COVID-19 is well behind us. One of the campaigns we’d really like to press when the time is right is the **Community Tree Care project**. We’re really looking for people who care about our City’s trees to come forward and volunteer how we can take our campaign out into the community and encourage people to join what we hope is a new movement – Community Tree Care.

**Set back – not successful with our grant application for North Broken Hill Landcare Hub**

Landcare Broken Hill suffered a serious set-back last week. For unknown reasons the State Government decided NOT to give Landcare a grant under the Stronger Country Communities Fund for its proposed North Broken Hill Landcare Hub at Jubilee Oval.

Despite this project being at the heart of Greening the Hill Mk2, combining a proposed community garden for North Broken Hill and a major community native plant propagation nursery. Both these elements were to provide vocational training for young Broken Hill people who might be interested in careers in agriculture, horticulture, botany and ecology.

The proposed community native plant propagation nursery was to grow local indigenous plants for all the land rehabilitation works in the district and become the feeder for so many of our other projects, such as the Street Trees Project, the Green Schools Project and the rejuvenation of tired parks and reserves around the City.

In the context of our extreme drought, the need to battle climate change by planting more trees to green the City was critical. Unfortunately, the State Government failed to identify the importance of this project for Broken Hill. They couldn’t see the value in the vision which was to give this community hope in the face of so many challenges. The drought may have largely broken over in the East where the bulk of politicians live, but **here in the Far West where the drought is as severe as ever, there appears to be no interest in improving our ‘green lungs’ by supporting this inspirational project.**

But Landcare Broken Hill is determined to press ahead. Our progress will now be slow and we will have to cut down the grand vision, but nevertheless we will try to proceed. We will try and raise some money ourselves, we will try and find some private sector sponsors. And bit by bit we will proceed. Our community will just have to be patient.

In the meantime, we intend to ramp up our gardening/growing facilities at the Centre for Community in Beryl Street. Although our space is limited at the Centre as we can’t interfere with the area required for the popular Community Markets, we will fill up the available area with as many community gardening beds and nursery plots as we can fit in.

Out team at the Centre for Community gardens have started preparing 20 new wicking garden pods. These pods will be available for the community to acquire or have allocated to them within the gardens. These pods will be able to planted and then watered with the most efficient water management approach – utilising the wicking method.

We are not sure how much area we can allocate to the actual nursery part of our operations at the Centre for Community, but we are determined to press ahead and try and propagate more of our local indigenous plants for planting on.

We also think the time is approaching to consider another round of Backyard Bush Nurseries – where the community was encouraged to come and collect supplies to help Landcare by growing seedlings in their own backyards, for later community planting projects.

So, all in all, there is every reason for Landcare Broken Hill to remain positive, despite the setback with the State Government not awarding us grant funds. Landcare Broken Hill does not want to let this City down. Our vision for the City is still as vital and vivid as it ever was.

**All public meetings cancelled for the foreseeable future due to COVID-19.**

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