 **Landcare Broken Hill Inc**

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

ABC Radio interview No.6 – 4 June 2019

**Trees for Travellers**

In order for Greening the Hill Mk.2 to succeed, Landcare will need an army of enthusiastic volunteers. We will also **need money for plants and other capital costs** of our many proposed projects. We’ll grow many plants ourselves, but the demand will be great and we could very soon run out of stock. Raising funds for our work in the traditional ways could well fail in a place like Broken Hill. There are so many good local causes deserving support that Landcare does not want to undermine anyone’s fundraising.

**A new and different approach is needed. An approach directly connected to our projects.**

**Carbon offset for travellers**

Whenever I fly, I take up the voluntary option of paying the airline an extra sum of money to offset the effects of my flight on the environment. So, for a Qantas flight from Melbourne to Sydney, the offset payment costs me 0.95c extra. A tiny extra cost.

Many travellers will be familiar with the offered option of paying a tiny bit more when travelling via commercial airlines. Do people ever read the detail of their offset payment?

Qantas explanation:

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| *We all want to pass on a healthy and stable planet to our children, and by choosing to offset your flight, you’re helping make this happen.* |
| ***Where will your money go?*** |
|  |  |
| *Fly Carbon Neutral is not-for-profit, so you can be rest assured your money is going towards government accredited projects making a real difference.* |
| *Qantas invests your money into more than 40 accredited projects, at home and around the world. With your help:** *7,000 hectares of native Tasmanian forest is still standing and protected into the future;*
* *50,000 years of knowledge is being used by Indigenous rangers to prevent wildfires in the North Kimberley;*
* *812 wind turbines are providing clean, renewable energy to communities in Southern India.*
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| ***How does your action add up?*** |
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| *You’re not alone - a Qantas customer offsets a flight every 59 seconds.* |
| *In fact, since Qantas started offsetting a decade ago, more than 3 million tonnes of carbon pollution has been taken out of our skies through our investment in carbon offset projects. That’s the equivalent of 1.1million cars off the road - or all of the cars in South Australia.* |

That shows what just one airline can achieve with a carbon offset programme. All major airlines have a carbon offset programme nowadays.

What about Rex – Regional Express, the sole Airline servicing Broken Hill? No offset is offered to customers.

**An offset programme for travellers to and from Broken Hill**

**So let us focus on people travelling to and from Broken Hill**. They will have a wonderful time once here, admiring the stark beauty of the Outback. To get here they will have travelled great distances. The carbon footprint of their journey getting to Broken Hill is not small. **We’re going to invite our travelling visitors to give us the means to ensure our beautiful, but harsh and vulnerable, environment is as good as it can be. A voluntary donation of funds to grow or buy native vegetation for planting in one or other of Broken Hill’s reserves or public parks is proposed.**

**A New Zealand precedent - Kaikoura**

In a previous interview I’ve spoken of a **New Zealand precedent** we wish to follow.

At **KaiKoura** on the NE of the South Island. A beautiful place being progressively made better by their Trees for Travellers programme. In their Trees for Travellers, they speak of protecting and improving the biodiversity – the more trees and shrubs planted which are native to that district, the more the native birds and animals will return and increase.

The New Zealanders also stress the need to do something about climate change and so offset the carbon emissions associated with their travel to Kaikoura.

Their Trees for Travellers programme is promoted online, with travellers invited to buy a tree prior to travel when booking (just as one buys a carbon offset when you book your flight). They can of course buy their plant in Kaikoura, or after they have left having been inspired by their visit.

**Who will Landcare Broken Hill approach?**

We will approach Regional Express airline, the company which has the monopoly of air travel to and from Broken Hill.

We will approach the coach line companies that bring people to and from Broken Hill by road on the Adelaide, Mildura/Melbourne and Sydney routes.

We will approach the train companies with services to Broken Hill – the Indian Pacific.

We will approach the tourism companies and travel agents operating out of Broken Hill

We will approach the online travel booking companies

In all instances, our approach will invite the companies to offer a **voluntary option** to their customers, to make a small extra payment to offset the environmental foot print of their travel to and from Broken Hill.

**Broken Hill Council will have a role.**

The Council operates the Visitor Information Centre. That Centre would be the perfect place for a display of a range of plants that a traveller may select for planting in one or more reserves/parks. The plant range could visually beautify the VIC whilst performing the duel function showcasing the plants of the district.

Display boards could identify the reserves and parks in which the plants may be preferentially planted. The traveller could complete the transaction at the Visitor Information Centre. As the plants in question would assist in maintaining and improving the Council’s own reserves and parks, they should be supportive of this proposal.

**Not just trees – plants of all types and sizes**

In an arid zone locale like Broken Hill, Landcare Broken Hill expects that a range of preferred plant options will be offered to the traveller for selection. All the plants should be from the region – tried and tested for natural resilience to survive our harsh environment. The plants will not be restricted to trees, they could bushes or even ground covers like Sturt Desert peas.

The biodiversity of our region is rich and diverse. That diversity should be reflected in the range of plants on offer to the traveller to select. It would be fatal to the programme to offer travellers inappropriate plants that might be vulnerable to the harsh conditions. Nothing would destroy the reputation of the initiative for plants to be seen to fail and die. So careful plant selection will be a key to this initiative succeeding.

**Where will the plants be planted?**

In partnership with the Council, Landcare Broken Hill will identify the many reserves and parks within the City and its immediate region that would benefit from new plants being planted in them.

The traveller will be given the option to express a preference where their plant might be planted. They might have had an interesting time at the Riddiford Arboretum; they might have had a thrilling walk around the Sundown Trail; they might have experienced an inspirational botanical talk in a guided tour of a part of the Regen Belt; they might have walked up to the Sculpture Symposium and been awestruck viewing the sunset from there; or they might have had a relaxing time in Sturt Park.

The concept is to foster a relationship between the visitor and their chosen plant and the reserve/park they have preferentially nominated. Landcare Broken Hill hopes that relationship will establish a connection that is maintained when they leave the City. For some travellers, it might provide a reason to return to the City sometime later to see how the tree they purchased and donated is progressing. Or it might provide a reason for the traveller to return to the City to revisit the reserve or park in whiich they had a memorable experience and which they chose to improve or safeguard by their plant/tree being planted there.

Modern technology might provide a means of ongoing tracking – monitoring from afar – by a GPS based smart phone Ap, so that the visitor can electronically revisit the reserve or park and receive a report on how Landcare Broken Hill is progressing in protecting or improving that part of Broken Hill’s environment.

**Next public meeting to discuss *GREENING THE HILL MK.2* projects**

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

Want to express interest? Want to become a Landcare Broken Hill member? **LandcareBrokenHill@gmail.com**