***Backyard Bush Nurseries kick off this Saturday***

This Saturday morning **Landcare Broken Hill** will kick-start the next one its community projects as part of its ***Greening the Hill Mk2*** Initiative. A true “by the community, for the community” project, people interested in participating in a plant nursery project will be invited to do their bit to make our local environment better. But this plant nursery project has a big difference to normal nurseries: it will eventually be based across hundreds of private backyards with the private owners working together to make it happen.

Simon Molesworth, the President of Landcare Broken Hill, said: “*Our Backyard Bush Nurseries Project is a really exciting, innovative concept. It is not only a first for Broken Hill; as far as I know, this is the first time this approach to creating a plant nursery has been trialled anywhere*”.

Since its launch four months ago, one of the corner-stone projects within Landcare Broken Hill’s ***Greening the Hill Mk2*** Initiative has been the proposal to establish a major community-based native plant nursery, focussed on growing indigenous plants from this region. That native plant nursery has been planned to be located at a single permanent location, managed by Landcare experts and staffed by community volunteers. In proposing that project, Simon Molesworth had studied community nurseries in other parts of Australia, in order to come up with the best model for Broken Hill. In particular, he was really impressed by the City of Bayside’s community nursery in the Melbourne suburb of Sandringham. That community nursery produces between 100,000 and 130,000 plants a year for the local district and has been operating successfully for over 30 years.

However, to establish such a large single-site nursery will only be possible at a substantial capital cost – it will take time to plan and establish. Substantial grant funds will need to be sourced. Once established, there would be a lead time of more than a year before propagated plants will be large enough and strong enough to plant on into our Broken Hill district’s reserves, parks and other community places. Mr Molesworth said: “*We are still intent on setting up such a nursery at some stage, the sooner the better, but realistically it will be some time off”.*

With the many dozens of new Landcare members keenly wanting to get on with growing plants, to help battle the extremes of our worsening drought, the idea of the Backyard Bush Nurseries project was born. Simon Molesworth said: “*We thought: why not enlist the help of the Broken Hill community* ***right now****, to effectively create a dispersed nursery and get going in people’s backyards this very week? Ideally, we will eventually have hundreds of people growing plants in their own home gardens. People need only volunteer for what they think they can cope with, perhaps getting going with just a dozen or two*”.

The Backyard Bush Nurseries project will see 1000s of plants grown with the community’s help. The project has many, many, benefits:

\* it will educate people, enabling them to acquire new plant propagating skills (as expert Landcare members will provide training);

\* it will generate real community spirit, through their involvement, with hundreds of people collaborating to make this City a better place to live;

\* it will create a real sense of ownership, as people see their own home-grown plants planted out in the parks and reserves that they love – the growers will have a true connection to the success outcomes of their growing;

\* and it will help achieve all the good environmental objectives that Landcare has set out to achieve via the ***Greening the Hill Mk2*** Initiative. **A true win-win for everyone!**

Mr Molesworth said Landcare Broken Hill was grateful that the City Council decided to join Landcare as a partner to kick-start this community-wide project.Council has funded the purchase of the first 100 plant propagation kits which will be given out free to members of the community who wish to volunteer to be part of this new ***Greening the Hill Mk2*** project. Each kit will have the capacity to grow approximately 15 plants each.

The kits will be allocated on a first come first serve basis. Each volunteer grower can choose from a Landcare selected range of plants and will be asked to raise 15 provided seeds or cuttings in their own backyards, before returning them to Landcare for planting in regeneration areas, nature strips, community gardens, and other ***Greening the Hill Mk2*** project sites.

The free Backyard Bush Nurseries propagation kits will be available for collection at 10.00am this Saturday, 31 August, outside the front of the Council Admin Building at 240 Blende Street. Mr Molesworth said that if more than 100 people come to collect the free planting kits, then details will be taken down and the extra people can get their kits at the next round of the Backyard Bush Nurseries project.