 **Landcare Broken Hill Inc**

***Greening the Hill Mk2***

**MEDIA RELEASE**

Far West Local Health District and its Lead Health Program was today heartily congratulated by Landcare Broken Hill’s president, Simon Molesworth AO QC, for supporting Landcare’s ***Greening the Hill Mk2*** Initiative.

“*The most tangible support of our greening projects from partners and sponsors is the receipt of funds and/or essential materials to enable our Landcare volunteers to effectively work on the projects that extend across the City. Today the Far West LHD has transferred to Landcare a good supply of mulch, wetasoil and fertilizer – all essential for getting more plants in the ground*” Mr Molesworth said.

The donation comes from the Far West LHD’s Lead Health Program and consists of approximately 24 bags of mulch, approximately 20 bags of five-in-one organic fertilizer and 10 bags of wetasoil.

“Our objective is to encourage the community to green bare areas of dirt to reduce dust,” said Ms Vilmae Appleton, Senior Health Education Officer, Far West LHD.

“Reducing dust around the home and in the community helps to reduce blood lead levels in children,” she said.

“We believe Landcare’s re-greening project for Broken Hill is very important and we’re very happy to donate products to this worthwhile initiative. We’re confident that Landcare will put the donated items to good use in its endeavours to help re-green our city,” said Ms Appleton.

The connection between good health and gardening and other outdoor activities, such as revegetation projects, has been proved by medical practitioners decades ago. First, it encourages people to physically exercise; secondly, it is good for peace of mind to be doing something for the community for which one is appreciated. People gain a sense of wellbeing and belonging; and thirdly, more plants covering open ground help contain the dust, especially lead dust from early mining which can be harmful, which is a particular objective of Far West LHD. **“*Landcare Broken Hill is very pleased to be joining forces with the Lead Health Program to work towards improving the health of our local community*”.**

Due to the usual extremely hot and dry climatic conditions in the Far West, combined with

the worst recorded drought ever experienced in this region, it is essential that we get as many plants and trees in the ground as possible – but at the right time. There is actually a very narrow ‘window of opportunity’ to put new plants in the ground here in Broken Hill as it is senseless to try plant anything between late October and late March. That challenge is made worse if there’s been little or no rain. **So the receipt of the materials this week from Far West Health District to help Landcare members during the forthcoming planting season from March to May is timely and welcome.**

 “*Landcare has been working with Broken Hill Council and the whole local community to encourage the planting of as many new plants and trees as possible. So now that Far West LHD has joined with us as a supporter, with their generous gift of essential materials this week, we’ll be one step closer to realising our vision”.*

Mr Molesworth also observed that it was a natural fit for Far West LHD and Landcare Broken Hill to be cooperating.

“*Science has proved that the more trees and vegetation then the greater the chance in keeping the temperature of urban areas cooler. In our climate, reducing the heat of our City is critical. Earlier this week the National Rural Health Alliance, comprising doctors from across rural and regional Australia, met in Parliament House Canberra and reminded politicians that the extreme weather conditions associated with climate change give rise to serious health concerns in rural and regional communities*”.

We are reminded that trees provide much needed shade, which makes for a more liveable City. It is more pleasant to walk along a shaded street. Trees ensure we have a healthier environment, as shady tree cover protects us from dangerous over-exposure to sunlight. Trees and plants break the wind, slows it down and traps the dust. That’s better for our health as it lessens the impact on those who suffer from asthma and other breathing ailments. They help shield us from the worst effect of dust storms which are now so commonplace. Far West LHD is a natural partner in Landcare Broken Hill’s endeavours to create a healthier environment for all in our community.

Ms Appleton said the Lead Health Program continues to work closely with the community to offer advice as well as environmental assessment of homes and blood lead monitoring of children.

**Far West LHD representatives and Landcare Broken Hill representatives will gather at the Landcare community gardens at the rear of the Centre for Community, 200 Beryl Street, Broken Hill, at 11.30 am on Thursday, 20 February to mark this demonstration of support for *Greening the Hill Mk2*. All are welcome.**

**Simon R. Molesworth AO, QC**

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