

\$1.6m grant for Upper Torrens landcare project

By MAX OPRAY

THE Upper Torrens Land Management Project was recently awarded a \$1.6-million Federal government grant to improve grass cover in the region.

Project manager Gerry Butler said the money would be used during a six-year timeframe to identify and revegetate areas with native grasses, daisies and lilies.

"We've identified eight conservation clusters in the Upper Torrens area where we can work with landholders to improve integrated land and replace weedy exotic species with native grass covers while retaining an open grazing landscape," Mr Butler said.

"If we don't act, there will be more weedy species dominating the land, and more risk of fire due to rank stands of phalaris, cocksfoot, and fog grass which provide a lot of fine fuel to bushfires.

"So, in effect, this is also a bushfire prevention strategy."

An event recognising the local governments support in the fight against exotic weeds, salinity and bushfires in the Upper Torrens region was held at Mount Pleasant on July 31.

The meet-and-greet was part of a lead-up to the National Landcare Awards to be held during Landcare Week on September 4 in Sydney.

The Upper Torrens Land Management Project has been nominated in the Local

Smart facts

- ▶ Project nominated for national award
- ▶ Local council involvement commended
- ▶ Federal grant to improve grass cover

Government Landcare Partnership category and is one of seven vying for top honours at the event.

Delegations from the Barossa Council and Adelaide Hills Council were taken to see the work under way at the 20,000-hectare land management project, a visit Mr Butler hoped would reinforce the partnership between government and Landcare.

"The Barossa and Adelaide Hills councils for 13 years now have been providing governance and admin support to the project, as well as participation on the steering committee," he said.

"We're keen to show the importance of their commitment to Landcare, and by shoring-up support for the work being done, we can then do our own things with landowners and be close to the 'coal face' instead of worrying about bureaucracy and financial management."

Mr Butler has been working on the project since a small pilot program was established in 1998. The program today reaches out to 560



Upper Torrens Land Management Project project manager Gerry Butler, Barossa Council mayor Brian Hurn, Adelaide Hills Council mayor Bill Spragg (holding the project's award for Local Government Landcare Partnership) and Upper Torrens Land Management chairman Barrie Spencer.

landholders and five townships, with a three-member project team working to protect biodiversity, halt salinity and manage soil quality.

To complement this, the Upper Torrens land management project has been undertaking a collaborative project with the five CFS Brigades in the project area to link bushfire awareness with good land management.

Mr Butler is quietly confident of their chances at the national landcare awards.

"Some of our staff and the chairman Barry Spencer will be attending, along with present Adelaide Hills Councillor Kate Hosking," Mr Butler said.

"We're up against seven other good finalists from across the country, but I have confidence our longevity and grass-roots nature give us a good chance at the title."

Barossa Council Mayor Brian Hurn is delighted that the council is part of the award. "The Council congratulates the Community

Steering Committee, landholders and its staff members Ian Baldwin, Gerry Butler and Kim Thompson on this award," mayor Hurn said.

"The Council has continued to support this award-winning project as it brings significant investment into the region and implements key parts of the Councils Strategic Plan."

Adelaide Hills Council mayor Bill Spragg complimented the longevity of the landcare project.

"The elected members and staff have been pleased to be involved in a professional and well-focused project with the committee, project staff and the Barossa Council," Mayor Spragg said.

"Our increased activity in supporting the financial administration of this project has been an acknowledgement of the recognition the Council has on the rural environment and the protection of our natural resources."

• Need to know more? www.torrenslandcare.org

Foodland celebrates golden moment

Independent supermarket group Foodland turned 50 this year.

Foodland was formed in May 1962 when 38 independent supermarkets banded together under the Foodland Boomerang logo. Since then, the group has grown to 115 stores across South Australia and two more interstate. Foodland chief executive officer Russell Markham said the company was celebrating the occasion with a number of events, including major charitable promotions. Promotions will be unveiled during the course of the year and prize give-aways include cars and shopping vouchers. "During its 50-year history, Foodland has supported thousands of schools, sporting clubs, kindergartens and charities across South Australia."



Mr Markham said. "Some of this support has been donated by the Foodland group itself, but far more

has gone to the community through the direct involvement of store owners with local organisations." Mr Markham said Foodland continued to add new supermarkets to its group each year while existing stores had been undergoing renovation using international best-practice. "Today, Foodland stores rank extremely highly among independent supermarkets in Australia based on sales volume. It records more than a million transactions a week from its supermarkets and employs more than 10,000 South Australians."

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