



**Media Release**

**23rd July 2015**

## **Communities dig in for 20<sup>th</sup> year of Planet Ark's National Tree Day**

This year Planet Ark is celebrating 20 years of planting trees and is urging Australians to take part in the celebration by digging in at National Tree Day on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> July and Schools Tree Day on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> July.

National Tree Day is Australia's largest tree-planting and nature care event. Each year over 300,000 people take part in National Tree Day events at 3,000 sites organised by councils, schools, businesses, communities and Toyota Dealers across the country.

Since Planet Ark launched National Tree Day in 1996, more than 3.5 million participants have planted over 21 million native trees, shrubs and grasses.

"We are thrilled to celebrate this 20-year milestone with Australia – especially those who have been involved year after year since the campaign's inception," says Debbie Agnew, National Tree Day Manager. "The fact that we're able to continue growing our community and increase participation every year is testament to those who get involved, as it means more and more people are understanding just how valuable preserving our natural environment is."

This year the National Tree Day theme, "You Can Grow So Much", focuses on the wealth of opportunities engaging with nature brings to individuals, communities and the environment.

Findings of independent research\* commissioned by Planet Ark over the last five years has found that contact with nature provides a range of happiness, health and wellbeing benefits, but our outdoor time is being eroded by increased screen time, longer working hours and shrinking backyards.

"Our research shows that you can grow happier by getting outside and connecting with nature, as outlined in our new report *Needing Trees – The Nature of Happiness*," says National Tree Day Manager Debbie Agnew. "Nature has the ability to influence happiness because it has direct and positive effects on the brain, so getting involved in National Tree Day is a free and easy way to boost these good feelings."

As well as planting trees and grasses at new sites, participants can green their communities by planting vegetable and bush tucker gardens and visiting former National Tree Day sites to undertake weeding and maintenance.

Individuals are also able to organise personal activities at home with family and friends in backyards, on balconies, or even along neighbourhood nature strips or streets (council permitting).

National Tree Day is organised by Planet Ark in partnership with Toyota and its Dealer Network, which provides on the ground support at local community tree planting sites Australia-wide.





To find out more about National Tree Day or Schools Tree Day, please visit [treeday.planetark.org](http://treeday.planetark.org), call the Hotline on **1300 88 5000** or visit your local participating Toyota Dealership.

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**\*A series of independent reports about the environmental, health, financial, social and community benefits of nature commissioned by Planet Ark can be found at [treeday.planetark.org/research](http://treeday.planetark.org/research).**

#### **About Planet Ark**

Planet Ark Environmental Foundation is an Australian not-for-profit organisation with a vision of a world where people live in balance with nature. Established in 1992, we are one of Australia's leading environmental behaviour change organisations with a focus on working collaboratively and positively. We help people, governments and businesses reduce their impact on the environment in three key areas: sustainable resource use; low carbon lifestyles; and connecting people with nature. We promote and create simple, positive environmental actions – for everyone.

**For all enquiries about Planet Ark, National Tree Day, and local case studies please email [pr@planetark.org](mailto:pr@planetark.org) or contact:**

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#### **For more information:**

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