

MEDIA RELEASE

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Beswick oasis offers unexpected backyard bounty

It is an inviting oasis that contrasts the surrounding ochre landscape and provides skill development and a bountiful, backyard source of fresh produce to the residents of Beswick.

What started as a Roper Gulf Regional Council Community Development Program project has quickly evolved into a source of pride in the community, which is about 110 kilometres east of Katherine, as participants nurture and cultivate a diverse range of fruit and vegetables for their friends and families to enjoy.

CDP participant Ray Ashley said he enjoyed the challenge presented by growing produce one would not usually find in Beswick.

“It’s good looking after the garden and nursery, and planting new growth,” he said.

“I also like knowing we’re helping feed the community.”

Recycled materials sourced from the community landfill were utilised during the construction of the Beswick Nursery, including discarded fridges that have been transformed from eyesores into novel pots adorned with hand-painted art, and unwanted bed frames that now act as trellises for succulent tomatoes.

The Council’s CDP Regional Manager, Janelle Iszlaub, explained that the keys to offering a well-supported project were community engagement and skill development.

“With the CDP program, it’s incorporated with work-for-the-dole, so we have to find activities on community that benefit the community,” she said.

“So, with this, we’re having a wonderful turnout, because it’s an activity that’s involving the whole community.

“It’s giving skills to the jobseekers, and it’s involving all the jobseekers.”

Chief Executive Officer Michael Berto congratulated staff and participants for developing a project that delivered a genuine benefit to Beswick, adding that he believed it proved the Council was leading the way with CDP innovation.

“What we’ve got here is something that’s making so much difference to people in Beswick,” he said.

“Not only is it creating engagement and skills participants didn’t have before the nursery opened, it’s also creating a sustainable, local and cost-effective way for community members to access fresh produce.

“These type of exciting projects show Council is breaking the stereotypical mould of work-for-the-dole programs by offering a way for participants to really learn new skills as they try to find employment.”

The Council delivers CDP projects in 10 communities on behalf of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The Federal Government initiative assists jobseekers in remote communities to find employment as they contribute to their communities and gain new skills in the process.

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For further information, please contact the Communications Co-ordinator on 0419 891 666 or at roper.governance@ropergulf.nt.gov.au.