

Bulletin

GSDC Medal awarded to NRM stalwart

Woodanilling farmer's dedication to NRM research is acknowledged by his peers



NRM Medal winner Russel Thomson

Russel Thomson has won the 2008 Great Southern Development Commission (GSDC) Medal for Excellence in Natural Resource Management.

Mr Thomson was presented with the medal at a formal dinner held at Carlyle's Function Centre in Albany on 11 June.

Now in its seventh year, the prestigious award recognises achievement beyond daily work commitments and rewards outstanding efforts in natural resource management. The award includes a \$10,000 grant to support further work in Russel's chosen field.

Russel Thomson is a Woodanilling farmer and previous 2005 and 2006 GSDC Medal finalist. He is a pioneer in landscape drainage and has a passion for understanding recharge

landscapes in his region.

He is an outstanding example of long term commitment to community landcare, having made his farm available for trials since 1974 and offering support to landcare professionals operating in the Wagin/Woodanilling Landcare zone.

Russel was the winner of the 2008 National Landcare Program Individual Landcarer Award.

As a major contributor to the creation of the Blackwood Basin Group (BBG) since 1991, he secured \$20 million of funding for on-ground landcare works in the Catchment and helped the BBG become the first Australian organisation to win the Theiss International Riverprize in 2001 for outstanding community management of river systems and innovation in NRM.

Russel has raised the profile of NRM through his extensive involvement with government agencies, regional NRM groups, scientists and Local Government, including his current role as President of the Shire of Woodanilling.

His leading and trialling of innovative NRM practices, such as designing and implementing raised bed technology, tramline cropping and establishment of perennials shows his capability as a leader who is widely recognised and respected in the community.

Russel says he has used agricultural science to challenge scientists and bureaucrats, describing himself as a 'go-between' and a 'doer', who can 'talk lay language'. Russel has inspired others by demonstrating environmentally and financially positive results by gradually improving his yield and the value of the land.

Mr Thomson's challengers for the Medal were Jerramungup farmer Linda Lee and Walpole ecotourism operator Gary Muir.

Ms Lee has been instrumental in changing attitudes to NRM in the community through her practices on her own farm and as the Project Manager for the Fitzgerald Catchment Demonstration Initiative.

Mr Muir has established a national ecotourism model with his company WOW Wilderness, led research into the impact of fire in the Walpole Wilderness Area and coordinated the award winning UR Walpole ecoeducation program.

Russell Harrison, Chairman of the GSDC, underlined the importance of effective NRM in the region "As part of the

Commission's strategic focus, the GSDC is keen to ensure that our region becomes a world leader in sustainable natural resource management.

"With our agricultural sector increasing its contributions to our regional economy, effective natural resource management remains one of the Commission's four corporate goals. Our aim is to take a partnership approach to support and promote best practices and foster further innovation investment in this field," he said.

Russel Thomson was modest in his acceptance of the award, but took the opportunity to urge fellow NRM practitioners to "focus on the light on the hill and go hard."

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inside this issue:

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Russel Thomson wins NRM Medal.. | 1 |
| Harboursound encore | 2 |
| Organic growth at dairy | 2 |
| Walk of the decade | 3 |
| Wine producers in cyberspace | 4 |
| Biodiesel the way to go | 4 |
| Walpole wilderness marketing..... | 5 |
| Fishy business at Boat Shed | 5 |
| Local global investigation | 6 |
| Expanded guide for Mt Barker..... | 7 |
| New staff profile..... | 7 |
| Farmers' Market the best | 8 |

Harboursound Music Festival back for encore

Creative Albany enlivens Albany's CBD

An annual Harboursound Music Festival is back on the cards in Albany after the event's successful return to the city with a weekend series of concerts and workshops during May this year.

The festival was managed by Creative Albany, a recently-formed community group concerned to invigorate cultural life in the city, and programmed by local musician and original Harboursound impresario Rod Vervest.

"It is now recognised that a place's artistic and cultural life is an economic driver in many ways," said Sally Malone, Chair of Creative Albany, "the way in which Albany's businesses have partnered with us to help produce this festival clearly demonstrates that they appreciate this relationship."

The Great Southern Development Commission provided major sponsorship to Harboursound to assist in advertising, promotion and venue hire.

Creative Albany transferred the festival from its previous location at Middleton Beach

into the Central Business District to enable musicians and the public to interact in a number of ways.

Concerts in the Town Hall Theatre allowed the musicians to perform with the support of a concert quality sound system, buskers were able to entertain street-side restaurant patrons and the Kwela band was able to get into the crowds at the Farmers' Market.

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Andy Rigby and his Kwela band at Harboursound

Over The Moon Organics off to flying start

Organic dairy expanding range and markets

Over the Moon Organics (OTMO) has gone from strength to strength since the small Marbellup dairy commenced operations in November 2007, and has now expanded its range to satisfy customer demand.

After initially only producing fetta cheese, the popularity of that product and interest in organic food has allowed OTMO to now produce camembert and brie style cheeses, ice cream, milk and yoghurt.

Juliet Bateman and David Schober are the driving force behind OTMO and are committed to an organic production regime which should see their farm granted full organic certification in the near future.

"Organic certification is an involved process," said Juliet, "but we were lucky in that the previous owners of the farm hadn't used chemicals, so we could get started on the process straight away."

"Our business plan was always informed by our passion for organic food and premium produce and our commitment to sustainable agricultural practices to produce competitive marketplace advantages," said David.

The couple bought the property five years ago and have had support establishing the dairy through the Regional Development Scheme, administered by the Great Southern Development Commission, and through the Food Processing in Regional Australia Programme administered by the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

OTMO cheese is now available from over fifty locations locally and in Perth and is also used by local restaurants and wineries. "Products other than cheese, due to their organic status, don't have a particularly long shelf life so they are only available locally." You will always know that it's fresh!" said David.

"We are currently involved with the new Boat Shed Markets, where committed and innovative Great Southern producers are offering produce from the land and the sea, so that is fantastic for us all," he said.

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Bibbulmun Walk 2008 – the journey of a decade!



Pleasures of a coastal walk

Celebratory walk begins in Albany

Saturday, 13 September 2008 marks the tenth anniversary of the opening of the Perth-to-Albany Track, now well known as the Bibbulmun Track. The milestone will be celebrated by a group of walkers who will walk the 965 kilometre track end-to-end.

This group of walkers, including the Bibbulmun Track Foundation's events manager Steve Sertis and Chairman Mike Wood, left from Albany on Wednesday 16 July and aim to arrive in Kalamunda on the Track's anniversary date.

The Albany celebrations involved an official 'send off' at the Town Hall at 9.15 am, followed by a parade down York Street to farewell the walkers from the Track's southern terminus outside the Visitor Centre at 10 am.

Community walkers joined the official party for the first few wet and stormy kilometres of the trek before returning to town by bus.

The walkers will be joined by others along the way, and community celebrations will coincide with the group's arrival in Denmark, Walpole, Northcliffe, Pemberton, Balingup, Dwellingup and Kalamunda.

The idea of the Bibbulmun Track was first brought to the government's attention in 1972 by Geoff Schafer, an avid bushwalker, who was keen to encourage

urban people to get out into the bush. The original Bibbulmun Track was officially opened as part of Western Australia's sequicentenary celebrations in 1979.

In 1988, the then Department of Conservation and Land Management significantly overhauled and realigned the Track, and extended it to Walpole.

Another major upgrade was proposed in the mid-nineties. The upgrade included a radical realignment and a significant extension to take the southern terminus 200 kilometres further east to Albany, which fulfilled Schafer's original dream of a 'Perth-to-Albany' walk.

The Bibbulmun Track is now recognised as a significant recreational resource for West Australians and a major tourism draw-card which attracts walkers from throughout Australia and overseas.

"The anniversary event is an opportunity to thank all those who were involved in the initial building of the Bibbulmun Track and those who maintain it," said Linda Daniels, Executive Director of the Bibbulmun Track Foundation, "we would love to encourage as many people as possible to become involved by joining in the community events planned for each town, walking a section, or signing up for a Virtual end-to-end walk."

The Virtual Walk challenges participants to emulate the actions of the end-to-end walkers without having to spend a

single night under the stars. The aim is to complete an average of 10,000 steps per day for eight weeks. More information about this challenge is available at www.walkingwithattitude.com.

Virtual walkers, schools, families and other interested parties will be able to follow the progress of the walkers online as their experiences and photographs are uploaded to the web on arrival at each town.

The Bibbulmun Track Foundation is a not-for-profit community organisation set up in 1997 to support the Department of Environment and Conservation in the management maintenance and marketing of the Bibbulmun Track.

Over the past 10 years the Bibbulmun Track Foundation's marketing efforts, free information service and events calendar has encouraged thousands of West Australians to venture out onto the Track and brought significant economic benefit to tourism-related businesses in the area.

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Discover Great Southern wine online



The new Great Southern Wine Producers' Association web site

Great Southern wine producers launch new website

The Great Southern Wine Producers' Association (GSWPA) has taken steps towards marketing their world-class products in cyberspace with the recent launch of their first web site.

The production of the web site was an initiative of the GSWPA who developed it with the assistance of a Regional Development Scheme (RDS) grant administered by the Great Southern Development Commission (GSDC).

The RDS grant also provided funds for the design and manufacture of outdoor signage identifying the beginning of the Great Southern winegrowing district along Albany Highway.

John Sprigg, the recently retired President of the GSWPA, launched the web site at a function held at the GSDC offices in Albany.

"Having a centralised information source has proved invaluable for members of the Producers' Association and for the region,"



John Sprigg, Alison Naylor, Ian Mayo and Angelo Diletti at the web site launch

said Mr Sprigg, "we've seen international interest directed through the web site and the benefits of cooperative marketing are obvious."

The website development comes on the back of the launch of the region's Five Virtues Shiraz last year. The display of a 290 litre bottle of Five Virtues drew considerable

attention in New York last year.

In a further profile development exercise, the GSWPA has arranged a link exchange program with the regional portal, Albany Gateway, and a partnership with the Albany Maritime Foundation's Festival of the Sea.

"Both of these new arrangements also act to enhance our visibility both locally and further afield," said Mr Sprigg.

The GSWPA web site provides information on the five distinct wine growing sub-regions in the Great Southern: Albany, Frankland, Mt Barker, Denmark, and the Porongurups, a viticultural history of the region and links to member web sites.

The web site also ties into the tourism potential of the region by providing a list of regional events and links to Visitor Centres and Tourism Associations.

Contact: www.greatsouthernwines.com.au, Ian Mayo, ph: 9851 3150

Cranbrook looks to Renewable Fuel Future

Biodiesel production plant provides direct benefits to the region.

After two years of research and seeking business and environmental approvals Southern Renewable Fuels (SRF) has commenced production of environmentally-friendly biodiesel at its newly established production plant in Cranbrook.

SRF has adopted a regional business model which acts to lower Cranbrook's carbon footprint by selling their product in the region, by reducing transportation emissions through using locally grown canola as the raw material, and by lowering the plant's own carbon emissions by using gravity

and the sun to power processes wherever possible.

The project is the brainchild of chief executive Daniel Barbour and his business partner Stuart Robson whose shared environmental conscience is the driving force behind SRF.

"The environmental benefits of biodiesel are substantial, and part of our philosophy is that we analyse the environmental impacts of everything we do," said Mr Barbour, "our market lies with people and

organisations who are environmentally conscious and want to reduce their impact on the environment."

Biodiesel produces between 70 and 80 per cent less emissions than normal diesel, and also extends an engine's life and reduces maintenance costs. "Using our product also gives you the knowledge that you are using a domestic product which has more price stability," said Mr Barbour.

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Walpole Wilderness to be Exposed

GSDC supports cooperative marketing initiative

The Walpole Wilderness Area (WWA) has received a welcome boost with the establishment of a new marketing group to focus on promoting the jewel of the southern forests.

The group, comprises of officers from the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), Visitor Centre Managers from Walpole/Nornalup, Denmark, Pemberton, Manjimup, Northcliffe, representatives from the City of Albany, the Great Southern Development Commission, Australia's South West and Tourism WA.

The WWA comprises 363,000 hectares of natural, wild landscape embracing Western Australia's southern forests

and coastline. The marketing group aims to have the WWA recognised as an international biodiversity hotspot, where natural and cultural values of the wilderness, tingle forest, old growth forests and wetlands will be maintained and enhanced for future generations.

Peter Bidwell, District Manager, DEC said "The aim of the group is to coordinate a whole of Wilderness marketing focus for the region to best capitalise on the uniqueness of the Wilderness for tourism purposes.

"The group members are committed to linking the WWA into marketing initiatives and forming a stronger alliance with one another to take

advantage of a fantastic product for the tourism industry.

"Tourism trends show a greater demand for eco-tourism experiences, and the Wilderness is well placed to deliver them."

The DEC have recently published a new map of the area. The map, 'Exploring the Walpole Wilderness and surrounding areas', identifies attractions, hikes, drives and camping grounds in the Wilderness Area. It is available from Visitor Centres in the region.

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Celebration Of Maritime Heritage

Festival of the Sea aims to become major tourism event in Albany

The inaugural Festival of the Sea drew a crowd of thousands to the Albany Boat Shed on Easter Saturday and this initial success vindicates the organiser's desire to put a new event on the region's tourism calendar.

The Albany Maritime Foundation (AMF), Festival organisers and managers of the Albany Boat Shed, received financial support from the Great Southern Development Commission to provide advertising and publicity for the Festival.

The Festival celebrated Albany's historical connection with the sea and promoted the South Coast fishing and aquaculture industries.

The Festival provided a full day of family fun involving historical displays and fishing workshops, wooden boat races, music, story telling, drama workshops and a pirate invasion.

AMF Chairman Lawrence Cuthbert also took the opportunity to press gang a heavyweight crew including City of Albany Mayor Milton Evans and ACCI CEO Graham Harvey to take the AMF's whaleboat replica *City of Albany* for a row on Princess Royal Harbour.



L-R GSDC CEO Bruce Manning, ACCI CEO Graham Harvey, Hon Dr Sally Talbot MLC, City of Albany Mayor Milton Evans, Hon Jon Ford MLC, Peter Watson MLA, AMF Chairman Lawrence Cuthbert.

The fishing industry promoted the value of its produce through a fish and aquaculture market, by preparing a locally masterminded herring 'boatshed baguette' and through sales of a specially compiled local seafood recipe book.

GSDC CEO Bruce Manning congratulated the Albany Maritime Foundation and Albany's fishers on providing a great day out which also addressed serious issues facing the local fishery.

"Sustainability is a significant issue in the fishing industry throughout the world, so efforts to reconnect people with often overlooked but potentially valuable and

productive sectors of the Albany fishery can only be applauded," he said. The Festival received support from other Great Southern producers including the Great Southern Wine Producers' Association, Tanglehead Brewery and the Great Southern Distilling Company.

The core activities of the Albany Maritime Foundation are wooden boat building and restoration, training courses for local students, and promoting Albany's maritime heritage.

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Great Southern Producers look to North Asia



Mr Yukimitsu, president of Ikari, and Murray Montgomery of Montgomery's Hill



GSDC Tradestart Export Advisor Kate McKenzie with Mr Tanuie of KP Orchard and a range of Harewood Estate wine.

GSDC supports international trade activity.

A number of Great Southern business people visited South Korea and Japan on a marketing and fact finding mission earlier this year. They travelled with the support of the Great Southern Development Commission's previous Tradestart Export Advisor, Kate McKenzie.

"The objective of the visit was to build existing relationships and seek new opportunities for Great Southern business," said Ms McKenzie.

"Relationship building is particularly important in these markets," she said, "regular contact helps us address any developing issues and gives opportunities to identify new initiatives for promotion."

Great Southern produce from a range of businesses including skin care, grain marketing, beef feedlots, and wine were presented.

Wine formed a substantial focus of the tour. The visit saw the launch of Harewood Estate wines into the Japanese market through the KP Orchard supermarket chain and gave Murray Montgomery of Montgomery's Hill the opportunity to meet Mr Yukimitsu, the President of Ikari Supermarket which markets Montgomery's Hill wine in Japan.

Wines from Plantagenet, Alkoomi and Wignalls were also seen on display at regional trade markets in Osaka and Fukuoka.

The visit to Korea was the direct result of Mr Martin Walsh, Austrade's Senior Trade Commissioner based in Seoul, visiting the region late last year. South Korea is Western Australia's third largest export market.

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Michael Rapattoni, CEO Harvey Beef, and Paul O'Meehan of O'Meehan & Co, with Western Australian beef ready for processing in Japan

Fresh view for Mount Barker Tourists



Shire of Plantagenet President Kevin Forbes, Mt Barker Tourist Bureau Secretary Larissa Seah, and Mt Barker Tourist Bureau President Scott Drummond at the official visitor guide launch.

Tourist Bureau revamps its promotional material

The Mount Barker Tourist Bureau has recently launched a new visitor guide to help market the region's outstanding walks, wines and wildflowers to visitors.

The brochure is the result of an action plan formulated during a strategic planning workshop sponsored by the Shire of Plantagenet which addressed an urgent need to reinvigorate tourism marketing in the area.

Major financial support for the project came from the Shire of Plantagenet, Mr Tony Smith, and through the Regional Development Scheme administered by the Great Southern Development Commission (GSDC).

There was also considerable community support during the production phase and advertising space was quickly purchased by local tourism operators, wineries and other businesses.

The visitor guide provides a far-reaching introduction to the attractions and tourism infrastructure in Mt Barker and the surrounding areas of Porongurup, Narrikup, the Stirling Range, Kendenup and Frankland River.

As well as celebrating walks, wine and wildflowers, the guide also provides an introduction to heritage attractions in the area, drive trails through the Stirling Range and the region's annual festival and event program.

GSDC CEO Bruce Manning said that the GSDC was pleased to support a project which had galvanised the community and produced such an attractive and authoritative document. "It will certainly encourage visitors to enjoy the many attractions of the area," he said.

Larissa Seah, Secretary of the Mount Barker Tourist Association, said "The publication is full of information and beautiful images and presents the best we have to offer in this beautiful region."

The guide is available from the Mount Barker Visitor Centre located in the renovated railway buildings in Mount Barker, and at Visitor Centres in the metropolitan area and the Great Southern.

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New Staff Profile

We welcome our latest new staff member, Heidi Fisher, to the GSDC. Heidi is no stranger to us as she has been working in Pymont House for over a year in an administrative support position with Landcorp. She previously worked with the Migrant Publication Service in Albany.

Heidi has filled the administrative assistant's position recently vacated by Debbie Johnston, who has sought a lifestyle change in Perth.

Heidi set out with a backpack from her home town in Austria and discovered Australia - and her future husband - in 1989. After living and working throughout the country, Heidi, her husband and two children settled in Denmark (the town!) in 2003 where they enjoy a healthy, organic lifestyle on a small property with lots of chooks.

Swimming and reading, and a new found passionate interest in surfing take up much of Heidi's time outside the GSDC.



Heidi Fisher

Albany Farmers' Market a winner

Best in Australia for local marketplace



Food education starts early at the Farmers' Market

The Albany Farmers' Market received Australia-wide recognition when it received the award of 'Best Farmers' Market' at the Vogue Entertainment and Travel Awards in Sydney in May.

"To be the inaugural winner of this award is a great achievement and thrilling for everyone associated with the market," said Market Coordinator Ian Haines.

The Albany Farmers' Market has operated every Saturday morning, rain, hail or shine, since April 2002. Established under the auspices of the Great Southern Region Marketing Association (GSRMA), the Farmers' Market aims to answer community needs that are in danger of being lost in the contemporary food distribution and retail system.

The Albany Farmers' Market creates an opportunity for customers to purchase fresh, local, seasonal produce direct from the producer and to learn about how it is grown and processed. Over the life of the Market, the number of participating producers has grown from eleven to between twenty five and thirty.

The Market has a regular and constantly growing local customer base and is becoming a tourist attraction in its own right. It is a regular feature of tourism- and food-related media articles and promotions about the region.

The Great Southern Development Commission (GSDC) has been committed to the concept for a number of years and provided funding through the GSRMA to support the development of the Market.

Recently the GSDC assisted in the movement of the expanded market from Aberdeen St to its current location in Collie St.

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