



*Media release*

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**Goldfields Esperance communities to plant more than 30,000 seedlings and street trees**

Nine Local Governments in the Goldfields Esperance region will undertake the planting of more than 30,000 trees and seedlings with the aim of enhancing the urban canopy and increasing biodiversity. This initiative seeks to bolster economic, environmental, and social resilience, while also improving community health.

The reduction in canopy cover and biodiversity adversely affects public amenity and health. Supported by a grant of \$573,000 from Lotterywest, this ambitious project will focus on socially vulnerable and heat-exposed areas within the Shires of Wiluna, Leonora, Laverton, Dundas, Esperance, Menzies, Coolgardie, and the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

Lotterywest CEO Colin Smith said increasing canopy cover and enhancing biodiversity and green spaces across Western Australia play an important role in improving community health.

"This grant of \$573,396 will help plant trees and seedlings, particularly in vulnerable and heat-exposed areas," Mr Smith said. "We've had an incredibly hot January across the State, which highlights how important this project is for WA communities."

The Goldfields Voluntary Regional Organisation of Councils (GVROC) Chair and Shire of Coolgardie President, Malcolm Cullen highlighted the importance of the Lotterywest grant in addressing the growing impacts and costs associated with climate change. "This collaborative project assists our Local Governments in tackling rising temperatures and climate impacts, while providing shaded recreational spaces, cleaner air, and dust suppression," Mr. Cullen stated.

The tree planting efforts will be concentrated in parks near schools and central town areas with high pedestrian traffic. In collaboration with Aboriginal organisations, the WA Local Government Association (WALGA), Water Corporation, and the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority (BGPA), GVROC Local Governments will educate communities on the benefits through planting days and an Adopt a Tree program.

Resilient and waterwise plant species will be selected based on advice and guidance from BGPA, drawing from knowledge gained through extensive ex-situ conservation collections as well as research and trials conducted in the Western Australian Botanic Garden. An online publication is anticipated for 2025.

The targeted native seedlings will be cultivated and distributed annually from 2025 to 2027 as part of the Adopt a Tree Program. Local plant nurseries will produce endemic plants for more than ten community planting days, engaging schools, Aboriginal rangers, and Local Government staff.



In 2021, the GVROC Councils established a Regional Climate Alliance to address climate change. Increasing tree canopy was one of the key recommendations from a 2023 Climate Risk Assessment and Adaptation Plan.

In 2024, GVROC received a grant through the National Disaster Risk Reduction Program to create a decision-making framework aimed at improving community assets in preparation for climate change impacts such as bushfires, flooding, drought, and heatwaves. The results of this study are expected to be published in early 2025 and will assist the GVROC Councils in implementing further adaptation programs.

Mr Cullen emphasised that climate change is already affecting community assets and wellbeing across the region. “Our Local Governments have a shared responsibility to better prepare our communities for the predicted increases in more impacts in the coming decades,” he affirmed.

***Comments attributed to Member for the Agricultural Region Hon Shelley Payne MLC:***

*“The recent heatwave across the Goldfields Esperance region and wider WA has shown us the importance of canopy-cover in our urban areas.*

*“The benefits of this project go beyond increasing the number of shaded areas in our communities, also promoting better health, environmental and economic outcomes.*

*“I am proud to see the Shires of Wiluna, Leonora, Laverton, Dundas, Esperance, Menzies, Coolgardie, and the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder receive this sizeable Lotterywest grant for such an ambitious project, and I look forward to seeing it come to life.”*

***Images 4928 and 4929:*** Chair Malcolm Cullen received a Lotterywest recognition certificate from MLA Ali Kent for the grant in Kalgoorlie on Friday at the GVROC meeting.

***Images*** The trees will be grown by local nurseries. Pictured is Kim Eckert from the Kalgoorlie Boulder Urban Landcare Group (***Image 4408***) and Rick Graham with some of the trees sown as part of the project at Esperance Native Nursery (***4777 and 4778***).

***For media Enquiries and higher resolution images, please contact:***

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