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Green Connect recognised as global leader in sustainable development

Wollongong social enterprise Green Connect has been recognised by the Commonwealth for global leadership in sustainable development, for its urban permaculture farm.

In partnership with its local community, Green Connect has transformed 11 acres of wasteland into one of Australia’s leading examples of urban agriculture and one of the largest urban permaculture farms in the world.

The farm is one hour south of Sydney and employs young people and former refugees to grow chemical-free produce using organic and permaculture principles. Its transformation has taken eight years and has now attracted international recognition.

Green Connect is one of 15 international recipients – and the only Australian winner – in the Commonwealth Secretary-General’s 2021 Innovation for Sustainable Development Awards, announced today.

The Governor-General of Australia, His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd) spoke with the Green Connect team and congratulated them on the significant achievement.

“Green Connect is an outstanding initiative – over the last decade they’ve built an impressive, innovative model that reduces waste, improves sustainability and increases connection in the community. They are a local group that is now having an international impact and, on behalf of all Australians, I congratulate them for the award and thank them for their inspirational work,” the Governor-General said.

Green Connect General Manager Kylie Flament says she hopes international recognition for the farm will inspire similar projects around Australia and the world.

“The Green Connect farm was built by the community for the community to create jobs, reduce waste and grow fair food, and is now being highlighted at a global level as an example of best practice in sustainable development.

“This award recognises almost a decade of tireless work; in licencing the land, in attracting millions of dollars in funding and trade revenue, in creating a space for local food, community, jobs and inclusion.

“What’s unique about this project is that every step of this transformation from wasteland to thriving farm has been shaped by community need.

“We took on the farm to create employment opportunities for former refugees in our community experiencing unemployment, and farming was something they were skilled at

and wanted to do. As a result, we've had some of the best farmers in Australia working at the farm.

"We then extended that opportunity to young people who were also experiencing high unemployment. Over the years we have had many people work here and flourish in a supportive outdoor environment."

The farm produces fruit, vegetables, herbs, eggs, honey and free-range meat for the local community. It's open for tours, workshops, corporate days and volunteer opportunities.

In the last 12 months, the Green Connect farm has sold 35,000kg of fair food, fed 155 families per week, employed seven people permanently and more than 30 people casually, and run tours and workshops for more than 1,900 visitors.

"Fair food is at the heart of what we do," Ms Flament said.

"This means the people who grow it are employed in meaningful work and paid fair wages; the people who eat it are consuming healthy and chemical-free fruit and vegetables; and the planet benefits from increased biodiversity and decreased chemicals and pollution.

"We've made our corner of the world a better place and in doing so we have – hopefully – created a blueprint for others to do the same. "

Green Connect creates jobs and employment pathways for young people and former refugees in work that helps the planet and the community. As well as the farm, we run an op shop, provide gardening and landscaping services, zero waste services at events, and staffing solutions to businesses and government projects.

The Sustainable Development Goals are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere. The 17 Goals were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which set out a 15-year plan to achieve the Goals.

The Commonwealth Secretary-General's 2021 Innovation for Sustainable Development Awards ceremony was held virtually on 28 September 2021.

Visit the [Green Connect website](#) to find out more.

Read about the [Secretary-General's Innovation for Sustainable Development Awards](#).

Photos of the Green Connect farm can be accessed via [Dropbox](#).

Please note Green Connect General Manager Kylie Flament is available for interview on Thursday between 9 - 10am and 3 - 4pm.

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