



GARDENS | Port Augusta's special attraction

Arid lands flora in a tourist showcase

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RURAL EDITOR

NEARLY 30 years since the concept was born for the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden at Port Augusta, it has become a key Outback attraction for South Australia.

More than 50,000 people from Australia and around the world visit the 200ha site - of which 80ha is actual gardens - each year to see its remarkable collection of inland flora.

The garden was on the itinerary of Governor-General Michael Jeffery on his Back to the Bush tour of Outback SA this week.

In attracting so many visitors, the centre is proving a real asset for Port Augusta and its city council, which started developing the gardens in 1983 and has since spent \$3 million on them and a new upmarket visitor centre.

The garden lies in a beautiful area overlooking Spencer Gulf with the Flinders Ranges in the distance. While the visitor centre has become a popular dining spot for locals, the dryland gardens are unique for their varied collection of plants.

Featuring vegetation from

PORT AUGUSTA

different regions including the West Coast mallee, the Gawler Ranges, the Flinders Ranges, central Australian highlands and starting a Great Victoria Desert garden, it represents the best collection of SA plants in one location.

The garden also includes a significant Aboriginal trading site, destined to become an important educational area for visitors.

Port Augusta City Council parks technical officer Deon Schumann said the garden was a step into the Outback where people can see a wide range of plants and birds from the region. He is hoping this year will provide a sea of wildflowers in spring following early rains and attract good crowds.

Mr Schumann said the garden was also particularly popular with birdwatchers and included two bird-hides as well as hosting 6am birdwalks with 90 species of birds found.

The gardens have just been awarded a \$500,000 grant from the SA Tourism Commission with improved walking tracks, interpretative signage, development of the lookout car park,



POPULAR: Deon Schumann at the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden, Mammal and Reptile Park, in Port Augusta. Picture: MARK BRAKE

road access to the cliffs and eremophila garden extension.

Mr Schumann said the city had also just received a \$50,000 grant to establish a series of water wise display gardens to showcase different watering systems, water use and plant varieties for home gardens.

School children are also benefiting through the School Community Arid Land Project, where school children work at the garden for several hours a week. "It means local school students will be involved in helping to maintain the gardens as part of their environmental studies with their contribution marked and going towards their Year 12 results," Mr Schumann said.

"The best one or two students each year will then be offered traineeships by the city council."

STATEWIDE Dairy forum

THE future of the state's dairy industry will be examined by farmers and service industry representatives at the South Australian Dairy Outlook forum on May 30.

That follows the release of the national Dairy Situation and Outlook Survey results.

Speakers include Minister for Primary Industries Rory McEwen, DairySA chairperson James Mann, SA Dairy Association president David Basham and Horizon Farming consultant Rick Jordan.

Forum registrations close on Tuesday, May 23. Further information can be obtained from DairySA on 08 8766 0127.

HAWKER

Day at races

THE Flinders Ranges is the backdrop to Hawker Cup Day on May 27.

A mixture of social event and Outback adventure, the day is full-on right from the start.

When the horses are not pounding down the track, there is enough action trackside to keep everyone happy.

That includes Fashions on the Field, a live band, free rides, food and activities for children.

 <p>Mitcham Girls High School</p>	<h2>Open Day</h2>
	<p>Mitcham Girls High School, a State school, an unzoned school, a progressive learning community dedicated to providing outstanding education opportunities for girls from all over Adelaide.</p>
<p>Wednesday 17th May, 9-11am and 5.30 - 8pm Kyre Avenue, Kingswood Ph 8272 8233</p>	 <p>Government of South Australia Department of Education and Children's Services</p>



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