



MEDIA RELEASE

Explorers Garden opened for children at the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden

With technology embedded in our lives, outdoor play, discovering the natural world and real experiences is more relevant to children than ever before.

Recognizing the need for children to freely explore natural landscapes, the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden (AALBG) has created an arid-landscaped themed nature play space, the Arid Explorers Garden, which will officially be opened today.

The garden has been designed by AALBG gardener Ryan Hayward with the assistance of a small group of parents who provided ideas for the site in the planning stages, with many of those ideas included in the final design. A mini-bird hide, 'big red' sandpit, explorers track, wooden tee-pee, mini hill and rocks are some of the features of the garden, with plants from Australia's low-rainfall regions showcased throughout the area.

The project has been strongly supported by the Friends of the AALBG, including providing almost \$55,000 towards the project (total project cost is \$65,000) as well as hundreds of volunteer hours assisting in the construction of the garden.

Vice-president of the Friends of the AALBG said the group's financial contribution to the project was made possible due to the support of its corporate members, many of them local businesses, and its Friends members.

"We sincerely thank all of the supporters of the Friends of the AALBG whose memberships and donations have been used to support the new children's garden," Mr Reichelt said. To date, Mr Reichelt said the Friends have contributed almost \$1million towards garden projects.

Donations made by visitors to the site have also been used towards the project, with the project delivered as part of the existing AALBG budget.

Mayor Sam Johnson said the new fully-fenced garden is a wonderful place for families to spend time and will continue to grow visitation to the AALBG and Port Augusta (Visitor numbers in 2016 were 94,000, up from 90,500 in 2015 and about 65,000 in 2013).

"The Arid Explorers Garden is an asset for Port Augusta and highlights the calibre of projects that can be delivered when Council and community groups work together," Mr Johnson said.

"We thank the council staff involved in the project and the Friends for their ongoing support."

Mayor Sam Johnson and Dr Lucy Sutherland, Director of the Botanic Gardens of South Australia, will officially open the Arid Explorers Garden at 11.30am today.

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For further information please contact PACC Manager of Media and Communications, Cherie Gerlach, on 0427 413345.

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