

Barossa Enterprises help KI bushfire recovery

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Rick Mierisch, Special Projects Coordinator; Stephen Kernich, participant; Marie McAvoy, Barossa Bottling; David Leske, participant; Cindy Dodd, Support Worker; Prue Henschke, Henschke; Ken Hill, Support Worker; Rex Parmiter, participant and Laura James, participant.

Barossa Community Enterprise members, based at Barossa Enterprises in Nuriootpa, have been busy doing something for others the past few months.

The group have made a quantity of pygmy possum boxes, kangaroo pouch hanging stands and microbat boxes to be sent over to Kangaroo Island to help with bushfire recovery.

Mr Rick Mierisch, the Special Projects Co-ordinator at Barossa Enterprises, explained that the boxes provide vital protection and shelter for animals.

“When our team came back from Christmas they were devastated at what had happened and at the impact of the bushfires. They really wanted to do something to help,” said Rick.

“After much planning, we’re working with the Kangaroo Island Wildlife Network and UniSA’s nesting box programme to see what their biggest needs are.”

Kangaroo Island Wildlife Network President, Ms Katie Welz explained that kangaroo pouch hanging stands are one of their most needed items, and they are so grateful to receive them from Barossa Enterprises.

"It's been amazing working with people who don't actually have a direct relationship with KI, but can see how precious and unique our wildlife is," said Katie.

"For them to put so much time and effort into helping us and others has been a real joy."

Associate Professor Topa Petit, who is co-ordinating UniSA's Vice Chancellor's Fund for Wildlife Recovery on Kangaroo Island, was enchanted with the work produced by the employees of Barossa Enterprises.

The team have built 300 pygmy possum boxes and over 30 microbat boxes.

"It was an easy connection with Rick, who immediately understood what we needed. The guys at Barossa Enterprises did an absolutely awesome job building the boxes," she said.

"The recycling of wine boxes was a great part of the effort and we hope that pygmy possums will be happy with their fancy accommodation when populations start to recover."

Each of the kangaroo pouch hanging stands and the microbat boxes have been created using donated materials from Barossa based businesses.

Barossa Bottling, Nuriootpa have donated a large amount of pallets for the project, and Henschke, Keyneton have given their non-required Henschke boxes.

For Ms Marie McAvoy of Barossa Bottling, being part of this recovery project has made her so happy.

"I absolutely love it. Seeing something be recycled, like the timber pallets, and turned into something so valuable is a win-win," said Marie.

Mrs Prue Henschke, of Henschke, agreed.

"It's great to see the community participate and think outside the square," she said.

"This is a wonderful process of tweaking something like our Hill of Grace boxes and turning them into a nice animal hotel."

As well as helping the wildlife in Kangaroo Island, Barossa Community Enterprise is focusing on the flora side of recovery.

Working with the Trees For Life scheme and Barossa Bushgardens, they are hoping to source Kangaroo Island specific seeds to help get them growing into healthy seedlings by around May next year.

“The Barossa community is really coming together. And we hope that as it grows, we’ll get more businesses on board, perhaps some freight companies,” said Rick.

“I think it’s very satisfying to know there’s so much support within the region for this kind of initiative.”

Plans are underway for Barossa Community Enterprise participants to travel to Kangaroo Island next year. The trip will be a great opportunity to see their efforts in person.

“Our participants really enjoy being able to help someone else,” said Rick.

“They understand this issue and they’ve embraced the opportunity to assist others in need. It’s energising and empowering for them.”



Harry the Tammar Wallaby using one of the pouch hanging stands in Kangaroo Island