



Trees are better for us than we realise

17 October 2023

The University of Adelaide's Environment Institute and Green Adelaide will host an evening with pioneering environmentalist Jon Dee, highlighting the health-giving potential of trees.

Mr Dee will deliver a lecture at Unleashing the Power of Trees for Healthier Communities, held on Wednesday, 25 October, which will be followed by a Q&A panel session.

As the co-founder, alongside Olivia Newton-John, of National Tree Day and One Tree Per Child, Jon is an international expert on community tree planting. He is also Chair of the Forest Stewardship Council in Australia and New Zealand.

"Jon has done some outstanding work on social and environmental issues to empower communities into positive action," says Environment Institute Interim Director, Professor Andrew Lowe. "His speech will be of interest to anyone who wants to see more trees being planted in Adelaide and surrounding areas." Among Jon's other credits are his successful campaigns to ban incandescent bulbs; phase-out of phosphates in laundry detergents; phase-out of plastic microbeads in personal care products; and ban plastic checkout bags. He also co-founded the well-known environment group Planet Ark with Pat Cash.

"When it comes to our health, trees improve air-quality and boost our mental well-being. There's also been an increase in public awareness about the broader benefits of trees and the habitat they provide for the wildlife that shares our cities," says Mr Dee.

"Around the world, cities are experiencing more extreme heat events, which directly puts people at risk. This has led to governments recognising that trees can play a role in providing shade and lowering temperatures in our concrete-clad cities."

The current focus in popular culture on wellbeing makes it a particularly important moment to consider the ways trees and nature can improve our health

"There are a range of physical and mental health benefits we get from spending time in nature, including immune function stimulation, stress reduction, wellbeing, and a sense of place," says Professor Lowe.

"As the global head of One Tree Per Child, Jon is also working on tree-planting initiatives which align well with the Environment Institute's Sustainable Urban and Regional Landscape Theme, Urban Greening Initiative and Trees for Good project."

Professor Lowe will join Mr Dee for the Q&A panel, alongside Professor Veronica Soebarto, lead of the Environment Institute's Sustainable Urban and Regional Landscapes Theme; and Dr Sheryn Pitman of Green Adelaide.

"Green Adelaide support and partner with us on a range of programs through their Grassroots Grants and broader strategic initiatives. We've worked with them on projects such as habitat restoration, urban greening, bird surveys, coastal restoration, and work sensitive urban design," says Professor Lowe.

Mr Dee hopes his lecture and the panel session will inspire thought as well as action.

"After my speech, I'm hoping that parents and grandparents will plant a tree with their kids and grandkids. That can create a special lifelong memory for the kids, and as they grow, their tree will grow with them," says Mr Dee.

Mr Dee is also calling on South Australians to volunteer with local tree planting initiatives throughout Adelaide.

"Getting involved with Trees For Life - a South Australian initiative that's grown tens of millions of trees - Landcare, Bushcare and council-linked tree planting activities is a great way to make a big difference for wildlife and the environment," said Mr Dee.

Unleashing the Power of Trees for Healthier Communities is a free event happening at 5:30pm on Wednesday, 25 October at The Braggs Lecture Theatre. To reserve a seat, visit the [Environment Institute's website](#) or [Humanitix](#).

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