



*Media release*

**24th July 2015**

## **Students dig in for the 20<sup>th</sup> year of Schools Tree Day**

Students and teachers nationwide will escape the classroom for Schools Tree Day today, getting their hands dirty and helping to celebrate 20 years of planting trees for the much-loved event.

Each year, approximately 280,000 students at 3,000 schools across Australia take part in Schools Tree Day, when students learn how to plant and care for the seedlings they grow. Schools Tree Day often marks the beginning of a long-term environmental program, engaging students in a fun, hands-on activity that can reinforce their environmental, maths, science and creative arts learning or simply contribute to creating beautiful school grounds and learning areas.

“This year we are celebrating 20 years of greening the places where Aussie kids grow with students and teachers across the country,” says Debbie Agnew, National Tree Day Manager. “Schools Tree Day is an important tradition to celebrate as it has for so long focused on the health and wellbeing of kids as well as the environment.”

An independent survey commissioned by Planet Ark last year found that many Australian parents consider natural school grounds with real grass, trees and gardens to be as important as good academic outcomes and reputation when selecting their child’s school.

Research has shown students learn better when they can see trees from the classroom and green time fosters happiness, intellectual development, imagination, an appreciation of nature and healthier growth. In fact, children who engage in just one third more outdoor activities than their peers grow up to be happier adults.

This year, the theme is ‘You Can Grow So Much’, which focuses on the wealth of opportunities engaging with nature brings to young people, communities and the environment.

Schools don't necessarily have to plant trees to take part in Schools Tree Day. Students and teachers could grow a vegetable garden, weed a previously planted area, add shrubs to the building surrounds or venture out to the local bush to lend community groups a helping hand.

Teachers and coordinators needn’t be experts as Planet Ark provides ideas and assistance. By participating in Schools Tree Day coordinators will be joining thousands of individuals in making a difference, connecting people with nature, beautifying neighbourhoods and inspiring positive environmental change.

To find out more about National Tree Day and Schools Tree Day events, visit [treeday.planetark.org/schools](http://treeday.planetark.org/schools), call the **National Tree Day Hotline on 1300 885 000** or follow the campaign hashtag **#NationalTreeDay**.

National Tree Day is organised by Planet Ark in partnership with Toyota and its Dealer Network, which provides on the ground support at local community tree planting sites Australia wide.



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**\*A series of independent reports about the environmental, health, financial, social and community benefits of nature commissioned by Planet Ark can be found at [treeday.planetark.org/research](http://treeday.planetark.org/research).**

**For all enquiries about Planet Ark, National Tree Day, and local case studies please email [pr@planetark.org](mailto:pr@planetark.org) or contact:**

Sara McGregor  
PR and Media Manager, Planet Ark  
Planet Ark  
P: 02 8484 7205 | M: 0424 591 241

Emily Donnelly  
PR and Media Coordinator  
Planet Ark  
P: 02 8484 7204 | M: 0423 159 473

**For more information:**

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