



TOOWOOMBA & REGION ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL
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World Environment Day Special Event

Land Clearing Film-Maker to Visit Toowoomba

Celebrated *A Million Acres a Year* documentary co-writer and narrator Keith Bradby will visit the Toowoomba region on World Environment Day, this Thursday 5 June. This special visit has been organised by a coalition of conservation groups including the Toowoomba and Region Environment Council (TREC) Inc., The Wilderness Society, World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF) and Queensland Conservation Council (QCC).

A Million Acres a Year tells the story of how the southwest of Western Australia, a region now recognised as one of the top 25 biological hotspots on the planet, was opened up for broadacre farming, unleashing an environmental and social nightmare. Fifty years of agriculture effectively undid three billion years of evolution.

“The sort of devastation that Keith Bradby saw in Western Australia has also been underway in the regions west of Toowoomba. Biodiversity loss on a massive scale, land degradation on a massive scale, and salinity on a massive scale. Keith wants to see this environmental destruction for himself.”

Through the voices of people on the land, the compelling *A Million Acres a Year* documentary tracks the history of the WA land clearing disaster and reveals the impact it has had on them, the landscape and Australia’s unique flora and fauna. It also gives us glimpses of the stunningly diverse bush remnants they have saved and outlines their case for a “land ethic”.

As one farmer puts it: “I have a responsibility to repair the damage my family have done”.

For more information:

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A Million Acres a Year

The southwest of Western Australia is one of the world's most biodiverse areas. But in the last 50 years it has been the scene of environmental destruction on a massive scale. *A Million Acres a Year*, which screened on SBS on Friday, March 7th, 2003 at 8.30 pm, tells the story of how a region now recognised as one of the top 25 biological hotspots on the planet was opened up for broadacre farming, unleashing an environmental and social nightmare.

After World War II, successive governments sold off and encouraged the clearing of less viable areas for agriculture. During the 1960s a million acres a year were opened up.

Much of the land was unsuitable for farming, yet the new landholders were obliged to bulldoze and burn the native bush or risk losing their allocation under the 'conditional purchase scheme'. Most were eager to do so and pressured the government to release even more land. The long-term consequences have been devastating, with industrial farming and salinity turning most of this priceless natural heritage into a biological desert. Fifty years of agriculture had effectively undone three billion years of evolution.

Many farmers are caught in a financial catch 22: unviable farms force them into debt and this prevents them investing in more sustainable systems. However, there are others who are trying to turn around half a century of gross mismanagement.

Through the voices of people on the land, this compelling documentary tracks the history of this ecological disaster and reveals the impact it has had on them, the landscape and Australia's unique flora and fauna. It also gives us glimpses of the stunningly diverse bush remnants they have saved and outlines their case for a "land ethic".

As one farmer puts it: "I have a responsibility to repair the damage my family have done".

A Million Acres a Year was written and directed by Frank Rijavec (the award-winning *Exile and the Kingdom*, *Requiem for a Generation of Lost Souls* and *The Habits of New Norcia*), co-written and narrated by Keith Bradby and produced by Snakewood Films in association with SBS Independent, developed with the assistance of the Australian Film Commission and financed with the assistance of the Australian Film Finance Corporation.

Tape sales from Film Australia: Tel (02) 9413 8705, Fax (02) 9416 9401, Email sales@filmaust.com.au, www.filmaust.com.au