



Media release – for immediate release, Monday 5 June 2006

Attention: news editors, environment writers

LOCAL ENVIRONMENT GROUP WINS UNITED NATIONS AWARD

A local environment group that has played a leading role in transforming a former quarry and tip into one of Melbourne's best bushland reserves has received a United Nations World Environment Day award.

The Darebin Parklands Association, the 300 member "friends" group for the Darebin Parklands, on the Ivanhoe-Alphington border, jointly won the best community-based environment project or initiative category of the national awards.

The Darebin Parklands Association (DPA) is one of the oldest and largest environmental friends groups in Australia. For almost 35 years, the association and its forerunner organisations have worked actively with the park's paid rangers and the community to care for the Darebin Parklands.

"The transformation of Darebin Parklands from a barren, degraded, weed-infested blight into one of Melbourne's best known and loved urban bushland parks is one of Victoria's most inspiring examples of citizen led environmental rescue," DPA president Graeme Martin said.

"When our organisation was formed more than 30 years ago the Darebin Creek was regarded as an open drain and the park site was earmarked for industrial development or a freeway.

"Through vision, commitment and tenacious lobbying, early members of the organisation secured this area as open space. Today the DPA continues to help maintain this unique wildlife haven less than 10 kilometres from central Melbourne."

Judges from the United Nations Association of Australia (Victoria) described the DPA's achievement as inspirational and commended the group for its long-term strategic planning and community focus.

In accepting the award at a ceremony last Friday night, Mr Martin paid tribute to the founders of the organisation, who remain actively involved in the DPA.

"This award is dedicated to all those people who have given their time to restore the parkland, and in particular to Ivanhoe residents and founders of the DPA Sue and Laurie Course and those other farsighted people who sought to make the land a public resource and started the DPA on this journey."

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Note: digital photographs are available or photographs can be arranged on site. Background including the DPA's award submission is available at www.dpa.org.au.



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