

## TOP VOLUNTEER AWARD FOR GOLDEN VALLEY TREE PARK FOUNDERS

Balingup locals, Dr Chrissy Sharp and Andrew Thamo, have been recognised by Parks and Wildlife Services for their near 40 years of volunteering, service and commitment to Golden Valley Tree Park.

In a ceremony in Perth on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2018, attended by 120 people from all over the State, the Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Stephen Dawson, MLC, jointly awarded them the 2018 “Top Volunteer of the Year” Award.

The event gave recognition and thanks to Parks and Wildlife Service volunteers for the contribution and support they provide to the Department’s wide-ranging environmental and conservation work. Eleven Outstanding Service awards were presented, along as well as 19 long-service presented to volunteers who have each contributed over 20 years of voluntary service.

Chrissy and Andrew’s joint major award recognises their passion, dedication, imagination, and perseverance in working to create a beautiful arboretum in Balingup. They have also led a volunteer management committee and community supporters in the same pursuit over many years. In fact, they have devoted a very large part of their life to Golden Valley Tree Park.

Chrissy and Andrew came up with the arboretum proposal for the site in 1979. With strong community support, it was adopted by the Minister and Forests Department in 1980. The local community has continued to support the Tree Park with an enthusiasm that has been sustained for 40 years. Adding to the existing trees planted by early settlers, new trees have been planted over time, starting with the first Busy Bee in 1981. Many of these trees are now maturing. Busy Bees are still held regularly in the Park and many people sponsor trees or support the Park as a Friend or volunteer.

The Park is visited by growing numbers of local, national and international visitors, is a vital part of the Balingup community and a tourist asset for the Shire. A community Spring Picnic has been held every year since 1982. The tree collection has grown over the years to a significant arboretum, some trees rare or endangered, from around the world and Australia. With climate change, it is increasingly becoming an education and information hub for the growing and preservation of species. This knowledge has been built up over time by Chrissy and Andrew and others associated with the Park.

Chrissy and Andrew have contributed significantly to the growth and maintenance of the harmonious relationship between GVTP and Parks and Wildlife Service in managing land that is owned by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

A very well-deserved award for their outstanding lifetime effort.

