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## Community Development Champion to lead Bush Tucker Research

The Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) has appointed a community development champion from rural South Australia to lead its research into bush products.

Born, bred and based in Port Augusta, Ms Jenny Cleary manages a national team of researchers working on a wide range of projects aimed at strengthening the bush foods industry across desert Australia.

The Bush Products Project contributes to the development of this emerging industry in areas such as horticulture and wild harvest of bush foods, wood, fibre and craft products.

Ms Cleary said the research seeks to boost the dollar value from bush products and the number of desert people, especially Aboriginal people, making a living from the industry.

"It is one of seven core research projects of the Desert Knowledge CRC and investigates the economic benefits desert people and their communities may derive from this growing industry and the capacity they need to support it.

The project involves research on market and industry development, branding and policy related matters, on how to attract investors, the diversification of bush livelihoods and the creation of Aboriginal enterprises," she said.

Ms Cleary joins the nationwide research network from Rural Solutions SA, a South Australian Government owned consultancy business, where she was Program Leader Community Development.

Her passion for building sustainable desert communities has seen her and her team accomplish several successful initiatives.

Among them are *Outback Connect*, a project funded by the Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Training (DFEEST) which trains people from rural and remote communities in internet use, and a multi-agency partnership that developed an electronic tool for these communities to self-assess their capacity to take part in natural resource management.

With considerable experience in program management, community health administration and vocational education, Ms Cleary is currently completing a Masters Degree in Human Services Management and Policy.

She has presented internationally on her research interest, the development of community capacity and engagement strategies, and in 2005 undertook a study tour to Canada to share with and learn from other practitioners in this area.

"Jenny's extensive networks and relationships in the South Australian desert will ensure that this region is well represented in the growing bush products industry," said the Desert Knowledge CRC's Managing Director, Ms Jan Ferguson.

"Her appointment is indicative of our ongoing development of partnerships in South Australia.

It strengthens our collaboration with the SA Government and we are particularly pleased that the Outback Areas Community Development Trust, which plays a major role in supporting desert communities, has agreed to provide the funds necessary to keep Jenny based with Rural Solutions SA in Port Augusta.

It also complements the recent appointment of respected Adnyamathanha leader, Ms Glenise Coulthard, to our board. Both will enrich the work of the Desert Knowledge CRC."

Ms Cleary said: "The CRC has much to offer desert communities and their ongoing social, environmental and economic development. I am excited by the challenges that come with a role at the national level and the opportunity to do this from within the region."

The Desert Knowledge CRC is a research network with 27 partners nationwide that contributes to thriving knowledge economies sustaining Australia's inland.

For more information go to [www.desertknowledgecrc.com.au](http://www.desertknowledgecrc.com.au).

**Media Contacts:**

Jan Ferguson, Desert Knowledge CRC, 0401 719 882

Jenny Cleary, Desert Knowledge CRC, 0429 699 387

Mark Sutton, Outback Areas Community Development Trust, 08 8648 5171

Elke Wiesmann, Desert Knowledge CRC, 0427 009 240