# **Di Haggerty & Heidi Mippy - Grounded Festival 2025 - BCC - 24 September 2025**



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**Barry Green:** And you're listening to it on Donnybrook- Balingup Community Radio Business and Community Conversations, sponsored by Harvest Highway. Com.au. This week's program is all based around conversations with presenters at the Grand Festival in Bridgetown on the weekend. My next guests are Di Haggarty, who with her husband Ian, was a West Australian winners of the Australian Year Award. And uh. And Heidi Mippy's, a Noongar lady and both of them spoke at uh at the conference or the festival and uh, and on one occasion they spoke together. So. G'day, Di and Heidi.

**Di Haggerty:** Good morning Barry.

**Heidi Mippy:** Good morning.

**Barry Green:** Good morning. So, um, I guess first up, uh, di, you and Ian spoke about the effect of being, uh, winners of the West Australian, winners of the Australian of the year award. How that had opened doors for you. So maybe we talk about that first, and then we can talk about, uh, the fact that you and Heidi did a joint presentation on the on the work you're doing with Heidi in terms of understanding the indigenous perspective on the land that you farm. So do you want to talk about the the doors that the Australian of the year Awards has opened for you and, and regenerative agriculture generally?

**Di Haggerty:** Yeah. Thanks. Barry. Um, absolutely. I guess the exposure that the award provided and the opportunity to meet such a vast range of people, particularly in Canberra, I think with the event there, um, there was a lot of alumni persons there who've done incredible things, um, in their lifetimes, people that, you know, don't say no to a challenge and just get on with stuff. And it was really great to mix with those people. But also from a community perspective, there was a lot of people at a local level coming forward and just saying they didn't, you know, hadn't really had it pointed out how clearly human health is related to the quality of the foods that we're able to, um, access, but ultimately to what our landscape provides, our whole environment. If our whole environment is sick, um, you know, with lots of toxin levels and all sorts of things, um, it can't function appropriately. And it is our broader landscape that provides, you know, the foods that we eat, the clean air that we would like to breathe and clean water to drink. And, you know, I guess First Nations of people have been aware of this for many, many, many years. And we've come along and, you know, broken down a lot of that ability within our landscapes and also broken down the food system and consequently, you know, having some big health issues, um, developing not only in humans but at a planetary level. And yeah, people have been coming forward willingly and saying, please, we want to know more, we want to share, we want to contribute. So, um, yeah, really gave us a kick along to say, we we better keep moving hard in this direction.

**Barry Green:** And the winner of Australian of the year award, who was at our listeners and the reason he was nominated?

**Di Haggerty:** Ah yeah. Well well known um, person on the track is Neil Danaher. You know, for his huge amount of work that he's done since he was diagnosed with MND. And, you know, generated a lot of public awareness, a lot of community engagement and supporting research into, you know, trying to find cures and treatments for MND. Um, and we did have some discussions with the family whilst we were in Canberra about the, you know, prevention of a lot of these chronic diseases, whether it be MND or Parkinson's or autism or dementia or whatever it might be. There seems to be a lot of research indicating strong linkages, um, to the health of our environment and the health of our foods, um, you know, as precursors to some of these diseases. So it really does need to be looked at closely.

**Barry Green:** So, Neil, as I understand, it's involved in agriculture and, you know, the possibility that it's industrial agriculture chemicals that have contributed to his problems.

**Di Haggerty:** Um. Their family? Yes. Were from farming families. And and it's, I guess just an interesting point that there has been recognized that, um, that location has had quite a number of cases of MMD being recognized. Um, and I guess it's in similar in other parts of the country as well, where there's been clusters of Parkinson's disease and so forth. So I guess, yeah, these things coming forward and being recognized, um, does help reach searches, start to ask different questions.

**Barry Green:** It all starts with a question. Yeah. And, uh, so last week was a big week for region AG in Western Australia with the region AG conference in Perth. But also you organised an event to, um, about soil health and human health. Do you want to talk a bit about that?

**Di Haggerty:** Yeah, we were fortunate enough on the Monday evening that the governor and Mrs. Dawson, um, actually invited a number of people, for us to one talk about natural intelligence farming, but also be part of the launch of the Alliance for Human and Planetary Health. Um, so a lot of different people were brought together for that. People that are working either in medical research, Landcare, First Nations, ourselves, um, and people that have got that genuine interest in how we can actually work together to bring some of these things to fruition. Um, just trying to build those alliances for those genuinely interested in human health and, you know, the long term outcomes of that with looking after our planet and biodiversity and our environment.

**Barry Green:** And you and Ian are farming in a big way. Do you want to give our listeners a bit of an overview of your farming operation?

**Di Haggerty:** Yeah, we've been fortunate over the time just to slowly build up to being care carers for about 60,000 acres now in the North Wheatbelt, some of that land we leased, some of it we've purchased um, and just fortunately been able to piece bits together that are conjoined. So the opportunity to look at biodiversity and habitat, um, from a true perspective, is enhanced because you can have parts of the bush that join up. We're very fortunate the lands that we've been able to, you know, live and work with have got a fair bit of remnant bush on them. So they're not excessively over cleared like some parts of the land. So that creates wonderful opportunity in itself.

**Barry Green:** And you've been working with Heidi for bringing an Aboriginal perspective, uh, to your land management. Uh, Heidi, do you want to talk about working with, uh, Ian and I?

**Heidi Mippy:** Yeah. Well, I guess we, um, di Ian and myself took the opportunity while we had, um, so many people together over the duration of last week to maybe talk on a more practical level around, um, the relationships and how we can start to bring the knowledge systems together from Noongar and, um, and other people who are caring for country or, um, stewarding country. So that was the basis of our, our shared panel or yarning circle. The other day at grounded was to share some of those experiences and, and maybe give people a starting point on, um, where to get started on doing this on their own properties or in their own regions.

**Barry Green:** Oftentimes we don't know what we don't know, but people know things that they know intuitively, but it's hard to measure. Um, and I guess this is what, uh, you know, you're recognizing in Aboriginal people and their intuitive knowledge of the landscapes.

**Di Haggerty:** Absolutely. I mean, that's been a huge awakening for us personally and trying to learn how to integrate that within our own land management certainly got an enormous amount to learn and understand there. And it's just been wonderful, you know, with people such as Heidi, with the generosity of her spirit to, um, come and be on country with us and just enjoy that, because, I don't know, it's just a great feeling and a sense of companionship. And yeah, just being together and looking forward has been a lovely thing, and we're really looking forward to going a lot further along that track, because you just see so much of what that landscape can offer. And yeah, certainly that First Nations wisdom is immense, and there's just so much we've missed, um, by not recognising that early enough, but we need to just make movements now.

**Barry Green:** This adds another element to the sort of symbiotic relationships that we have in the soil, doesn't it, as, uh, different perspectives. And, uh, Peter Andrews, who's, uh, been a pioneer in landscape management, his, uh, his understanding came from growing up with Aboriginal people around Broken Hill. And when I first met Peter, he was explaining his understanding of soil or water management in terms of Aboriginal art, which at that time sort of got him dismissed out of hand. But when you look at it further, you start to understand the the hydrology and how freshwater sits on top of saltwater. So there's so much that Aboriginal people intuitively knew. We're now starting to be able to scientifically quantify some of these things. Do you want to comment on that?

**Di Haggerty:** Di yeah, absolutely. And it is, um, you know, certainly that the science is there, that it's getting recognised now. But, you know, that wisdom has always been there and quite remarkable, you know, wisdom.

**Barry Green:** Do you want to say something on that, Heidi?

**Heidi Mippy:** Um, yeah, just probably more that, um, like the way that I see that. Is that it really when we connect in this way on country, um, it just helps to put things into perspective that that we are just such a, um, a small part of the universe and and the whole system, uh, even though we see our small part seems to be responsible for so much, um, damage, whether intentional or unintentional. But I think what it what it also brings is just a shared understanding immediately when people start to see. So we start, you know, we experience things together and we start sharing on country together. And, and that that opportunity in itself creates the relationships and trust to have more and more conversations. And I think that's something many people in the wheat belt or, um, Abuja have been scared to do is to sit and yarn. And, you know, one of the biggest messages that we were, um, passing the other day was just to take the fear away and let's just connect and start the relationship and see where that takes us.

**Barry Green:** Yeah. That's why conversations are so important, because you never know. You never know other people's perspective until you have that conversation. Um, but community radio, we have bills to pay. So we'll run a few sponsor messages and a song and then come back and continue the conversation.

**Speaker4:** The Newlands Haul, Trash and Treasure Markets will be held on the second Saturday of each month from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.. There is a wide range of second hand goods, including tools, clothes, antiques, candles, honey, ornaments and much more. We are located on South Western Highway in Newlands. All proceeds go directly towards restoration of the hall. Come and get a sausage sizzle and a drink and meet our social club members and have a chat. All welcome.

**Barry Green:** You're listening to Donnybrook-balingup Community Radio, proudly sponsored by Donnybrook Farm Services, Donnybrook community op Shop, Donnybrook Historical Society, Cafe Tiffany's and the Balingup Bushfire Brigade Dbca. Putting the comms back into community. That's Fleetwood Mac and well, turning on business and community conversations. It's now 1118. My guests this morning with presenters at the Grand Festival in Bridgetown on the weekend. And Heidi, Heidi Murphy, you spoke about what drives you and it's concern for your future generations. And understandably, you were a bit emotional about that when you were talking about it. You want to talk a bit more about that.

**Heidi Mippy:** Thank you. Um, yeah, I did get a bit emotional, I think, this morning, I, I sit here in a little bit of a different space, a bit less emotion, which is good. Look, I think when we're having these conversations and, and we get all this science and data presented to us about the reality of climate and country. Um, we don't even need the data. I mean, we can already feel that country is, um, hurting and it's not healthy. And we know that many people in the community are not healthy. Um, and having a range of issues as well. And I think the bottom line, what drives me in the work that I do is, you know, I really want to see cultural revival and cultural survival. So and for Nyungar and to have that, we need to be able to connect to country and connecting to country that is degraded is not the best feeling. So being able to connect to restored country or regenerated country or being part of the process of regeneration, um, is especially important. And to be able to do that with younger people, I think, um, you know what I was sharing the other day as a 46 year old is that I just would like for the future generations, my own kids and my grandkids, not to have the burden of the responsibility that we're currently about. You know, we are going to leave on them. Um, so I think we collectively today have have the responsibility to take that burden off them, uh, as much as we can and just free them up to be the little people or the young people coming forward that they are strong in themselves, strong in their identity, strong in their culture, strong in their wellbeing and spirit. And so that's what drives me in everything I do, whether it be in restoration, conservation or in this, um, ag space or any other space. And yeah, that's what that's what keeps me going every day.

**Barry Green:** And I guess that's, uh, not exclusive to Aboriginal people, I guess. You know, I have concerns for my kids and grandkids if we don't, uh, start looking after the planet better and producing food that's more fit for human, the human biome. And, uh, and that's sort of where you come at it from. So there's this, you know, there's all this division we're told about on race, but in reality, we all have the same or very similar goals and ambitions.

**Di Haggerty:** Yeah. Um, Barry. It was really interesting. You mentioned a little bit before, you know, about that relationship within the soil and the symbiosis that occur there. And, you know, when you look at it, we are all more microbes than we are actually human. Um, and I think that's the thing, the commonness and connectedness between us all and our landscape and directly into the soil is there. It is a part of us all. And, you know, we are all in this together. And I think, um, yeah, like Heidi saying it, you can feel where the country isn't feeling right and isn't, you know, being at its optimum health. And yeah, that's not a good feeling. So I think when we can we get a lot personally um, and as a people, as a community, uh, by looking after those things and just trying to share that with others. And I think that's that's the case. We need to be sharing that with more parts of the community, whether it be providing food or even just the opportunity to be on country and and caring for it, like Heidi was saying.

**Barry Green:** So we've sort of, uh, stable system needs a feedback loop. The feedback loop between farmers and eaters has largely been broken by the supermarkets. But, you know, and what you're seeing in regional Australia, the population is declining. But, uh, we need people back in there. And I've been involved in tourism, and I see tourism and agri tourism has a big place to play. And getting people, people of all walks of life back on country and connecting, because at the moment so many decisions are affecting vast areas of the Australian landscape, are made by people in suits looking at spreadsheets in the city, uh, and they have no ecological literacy. Um, and so you were talking about ownership and, uh, you know, Aboriginal people with that. Even where they've got Aboriginal land, there's limits to what they can do. Um, but, uh, in your case, I, you know, you have to the ownership allows you to make decisions. If you don't have ownership, it's very hard to, uh, make long term decisions. But of course, in the greater scheme of things, uh, we're all only temporary, uh, you know, so the land was going to go on much longer. Hopefully. So that's a bit of a conundrum, isn't it? How what's between the two of you? What's the conversation you had about that at the at the festival? Di do you want to talk on that?

**Di Haggerty:** Well, yeah, it's been an ongoing issue. Um, in, in our history we've had a lot of different arrangements. I think we've tried to care for about 40 different properties in our, um, last 30 years. And a lot of that's been leasing and then might be taken away from you or whatever. And there's been no real capacity except for the last, you know, a little while that we can have that continuity. And I guess that's such an important thing when you're trying to care for a landscape. It is ongoing. It's way beyond any one individual's lifetime. And I think, yeah, looking at that whole ownership model and having capacity for land to be cared for in perpetuity by those that truly and genuinely want to and can. Um, and part of that is, is such a re reintroducing the opportunity which is vast amongst that landscape for lots of different things. You know, we've narrowed it down too much with, um, I guess, that white man view of, you know, you can produce this, that and the other, you know, 4 or 5 things off a landscape when there was just hundreds and thousands of different, um, foodstuffs and parts of that landscape that support physical and mental health, um, that we can enjoy. But yeah, just needs that continuity of care. As you know, First Nations people did.

**Barry Green:** So. So, uh, Joel Seldon's book Fields of Farmers talks about that. You know, the problem we have, you know, a generation of farmers all getting old with a big asset. Um, but the young people, because of what's become of agriculture, people don't want to go into agriculture. That is a huge problem. And you were saying Dai or Ian was saying, you know, the situation is you can get foreign buckets of money, come along and buy farmland to whatever it is they want to do with it. But, you know, they haven't got the the commitment to the land that is needed for the long term.

**Di Haggerty:** Yeah. No. That's right. Barry and I think that's where we need to be looking at completely different relationships and models going forward. You know, it needs a fair bit of shift.

**Barry Green:** Okay. So thanks. Your time, ladies. Anything you want to. As a parting message, Heidi.

**Heidi Mippy:** I'm not sure I've got any parting words of wisdom, um, at this stage of the week, but, um, look, I've received a lot of contact since, um, grounded, which has been really filled my heart with hope, actually, because often we go to things and we talk, and you don't know how effective, um, you know, the talking is or if people are even listening. But there's a lot of people who've already been reaching out. And I think that's because, um, the way that we were able to have the yarn together collectively, as you know, Farmer Nyungar um, and open up the invitation to people to speak. So I just, you know, really want to say keep doing that. And I'm happy to connect people with others, um, nearby to them and, um, hope this relationships, the relationships continue right through our country.

**Barry Green:** Very good. Heidi. Thank you. Thanks for your leadership and Di.

**Di Haggerty:** Yeah. Thanks, Barry. And. Yeah, absolutely. And I think if we can keep working together, we can keep changing models and the way things are done, you know, nothing's insurmountable. It's just a case of more and more people coming together with, you know, the right intentions there and the right vision. And, yeah, anything's possible.

**Barry Green:** Absolutely. And optimism feeds optimism. It feels much better to be optimistic than pessimistic. So let's move forward on that basis. Thank you both so much.