



Lainie Anderson

lainie.anderson@news.com.au

Follow Lainie@anderson_lainie

Actions prove we are the Kindness State



HUMBLING: Winemakers Darren and Lucy Golding were inundated with offers of help after the bushfires.

A RED Cross survey out this week proved what many of us already know: Adelaide is the kindest city in Australia.

It wasn't news to Lucy and Darren Golding, of Golding Wines, in the Adelaide Hills, who were inundated with kindness after losing their vineyard in December's Cudlee Creek bushfire.

"We literally had thousands of beautiful, caring South Australians send us messages," Lucy said. "It was one of the most humbling experiences, and I'm tearing up again now just thinking about it."

It probably wasn't news to firefighter Ray Jackson, either. He saved his home in the Adelaide Hills but couldn't protect his surrounding farmland, and was flooded with offers of help.

"We decided to have a working bee and over 50 people turned up from Adelaide, Waikerie, Pinnaroo and the Mid North. They pulled down fences, put some up and cleared trees – on our property and on three neighbouring properties, as well."

In the Barossa Valley, tourism stalwarts Kym and Steve Brown put out a call for donations in the wake of the Kangaroo Island bushfires and, in no time, had goods packed to the ceiling of their tourist bus.

In Adelaide, Steve Testar and Kelly Noble were inundated with offers of assistance for their SA4SA bushfire appeal gala dinner, sold 1400 tickets in a week and raised \$400,000.

In the Hills, friends caring for 120 heat-stressed flying foxes have been overwhelmed by the generosity of strangers who've supplied boxes of fruit and even a mobile fridge to keep the tiny animals alive.

Kate Jordan-Moore, who's as wise as she is generous, has a theory on our caring nature. "I think South Australia has time and space to still be a community," she says.

And another thing ...

■ Political kudos this week to Premier Steven Marshall who showed he's capable of acting the statesman, with a \$350 million economic stimulus package announced for SA before the Prime Minister came out with his national plan.

Wouldn't it be great if some of that money was injected into scaling up our waste-recycling infrastructure so we emerged from this crisis with less rubbish diverted to landfill and a new nation-leading, job-generating industry sector?

■ It was fantastic to see more than 85,000 people at the MCG last weekend for Australia's win over India in the ICC Women's T20 World Cup.

What a game-changer and a sign of good things to come for other women's sports fighting for recognition and respect.

"Once you, as an individual, are exhausted by busyness, you run out of headspace for compassion."

After living in the frenetic cities of Melbourne and London, I'm at one with that view. I also think it comes down to 180 years of cherishing and espousing religious freedom, cultural tolerance and social reform – a perfect example in recent years being the wonderful Welcoming Australia program for refugees, which began in Bowden and is now national.

Think about it: shock jocks who dominate

angry airwaves in the eastern states wouldn't last a month in SA. It's not that we're naive do-gooders, it's just that we cherish light and shade, take pride in the good while showing a healthy interest in the bad, and are smart enough to see through cynical, nakedly self-interested negativity.

Of course, there are exceptions to the generosity rule. When you're trying to merge in Adelaide traffic it's pretty hard to believe that 93 per cent of us like the idea of doing one kind thing every day.

But when you cast around, compassion abounds. A friend told me this week how the West Coast community of Cummins came together when her baby son had a brain tumour removed years ago, with someone praying every single minute of every day for a fortnight in a powerful show of love and unity.

Another told me how, 10 years ago, he returned to work after taking time off when his father died. He'd had two weighty cookbooks on lay-by at Imprints bookstore, and a colleague he didn't really know had paid for them and popped them fully gift-wrapped on his desk. ("Made me cry. Still does. A beautiful act that still has an impact on me today.")

It's self-evident the world would be a better place if kindness was king.

That's why it's so bewildering to see buffoons with empathy bypasses in positions of power. That's why I tell my sons they can't go wrong if they show respect and kindness to others and to themselves.

It made my heart sing to learn this week that Year 5/6 students at Lockleys North Primary School created a R.A.K. (Random Acts of Kindness) Calendar for every day in February, as part of a wider focus on the topic of empathy.

The gift of kindness: what a superb subject to teach young South Australians.



Nick Ryan

Follow Nick @nickryanwine

You're so vain – an anthem that perfectly sums me up

VANITY stalks us in many ways, forever looking out for sneaky entry into our psyche. For some, it strikes early. These are the early developers.

The toddlers who fly through toilet training because they're too proud to sit around in a fog of their own filth, the dozens of child actors turning up to auditions for toothpaste commercials, the kids who master the violin by the age of six and can recite their NAPLAN results in four different languages.

But this is more genetic inheritance than product of individual development.

It's what happens when people see their children as expressions of their own sensibilities.

For most people, vanity enters their lives holding hands with puberty, a dangerous pair who come bearing the seeds that sprout into lustful thoughts and the obsessive preening and primping you hope will help you act on them.

This is vanity as instinct, co-pilot to the biological urge to perpetuate the species.

It's also what drives the cheap aftershave, acne cream and padded bra industries.

It's ironic and cruel timing to have this new-found interest in how we're perceived at a time when most people aren't really sure how they see themselves.

But it digs its claws in deep.

It sends people out into nightclubs when they'd be better off home in front of the TV, and it causes many to spend hours agonising over an outfit, the ultimate aim of which is to end up crumpled in a pile on somebody else's bedroom floor.

Some say once it serves its purpose – the joining of two people in loving union – that it starts to fade away, but I'm not so sure.

Those days are well behind me but vanity remains.

Only now it's morphed into a very peculiar strain of "middle-aged man with a higher opinion of his own worth than is justified" vanity.

This is the kind of vanity that infects a man who once every couple of months has someone kindly tell him how much they enjoy his writing and instead of simply being grateful anyone bothers to read him, he just wonders why it doesn't happen more often.

The kind of vanity that infects a man who recently sat on a small plane with a famous chef, a radio announcer and a prominent publican and wondered which of them would be listed first in newspaper reports should they all be killed in a fiery crash.

It should be expected from a man whose mental picture of himself is far more flattering than what others see.

A man who only checks his social media feeds to see what his professional peers are up to and worry if it's better than what he's been doing.

Even when he knows he'd never concede it was better anyway.

A man who has always hated that small photo that sits above these words and wishes the powers-that-be would change it.

The same man who doesn't realise that any photo taken now is highly unlikely to be any better.

At least that youthful vanity had a purpose.

This is the vanity that comes purely from distorted self-regard.

And it's the vanity I think I'm stuck with.