

Rhonda Daly

MILGADARA, YOUNG, NSW

RHONDA DALY'S PASSION for the soil began as a death-bed epiphany 12 years ago. After a seven-week illness, she was finally diagnosed with chronic spinal meningitis and doctors did not expect her to live. "I was lying in my bed waiting for the doctor when I heard a voice," she says. "It told me that I had to heal the soil and help others."

Rhonda, now 60, survived the ordeal, but never forgot the voice or its message. Once well enough, she began transforming the soils of the 1200-hectare sheep and cereal-cropping property, Milgadara, which she runs with her husband, Bill.

Compost and organics became her mantra. Her mission was the organic carbon in her soil. "A lot of people thought I'd lost my trolley, but we believed we needed to restore life to the soil," she says.

In 2002, she and Bill established a business, YLAD Living Soils. Today, they have helped establish 44 more composting operations around the country.

"Often the darkest hour in your life is about change for the better. Listening to that voice all those years ago was the best thing I've ever done," says Rhonda.

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