

Down's Estate Community Project

third Annual Report

Covering period from 1st July 2018 to 30st June 2019

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Key Dates since inception

29 September 2016,	formal registration as an incorporated association
1 April 2017	month by month licence signed with FCC for access the Down's Estate site
6 September 2017	permission received from FCC to establish a garden
4 January 2018	12 month licence signed including access to the shed
12 February 2018	members attend Michael Ableman's masterclass - "Street Farming"
1 March 2018	first Annual General meeting
8 April 2018	first major event at Downs "Celebrating Timor Leste's Food Future"

Mileposts for this Annual Report period

23 August 2018	Grafting workshop - Apple scion + rootstock with Heritage Fruit Society
10 September 2018	FCC approves collaboration between DECP and the University of Melbourne.
10 November 2018	second Annual General Meeting
25 November 2018	Permaculture Picnic Day with Permaculture Victoria
February 2019	agreement with 'Farmer Incubator' to have the garlic grower training on site
March 2019	3 workshops on community based Environmental Monitoring by Malcolm Legg
17 March 2019	Heritage apple tasting at Down's
24 May 2019	Council advises we can no longer use shed for shelter in inclement weather
26 May 2019	Dirt Day public event day at Down's with Mary Cole
3 June 2019	Council resolves \$350,000 budget for improvements to site
20 June 2019	Workshop by FCC on the Environmental Management Plan for the Down's site

Management

- Committee meetings, fortnightly
- working bees at the site, weekly

Regular community and network engagements

- Frankston Environment Friends Network meetings, monthly
- Seaford Farmers Market community stall, monthly
- University of Melbourne liaison committee, frequent meetings
- Frankston Council staff, frequent meetings
- Frankston Food Access Network, frequent meetings
- Frankston Community Garden network, periodic meetings

Committee 1 July 2018-30 June 2019

Maree Vinocuroff	Co-chair	Pat Bentley	ordinary member
John McKenzie	Co-chair	Rod Fedley	ordinary member
Maureen Griffin	Secretary	Gillian Collins	ordinary member
Robyn Erwin	assisting Secretary	Kylie Shaw	ordinary mem., resigned Jan'19
Andy Nelsson	Treasurer	Jasmine Fullard	ordinary mem., resigned Jan'19

Down's Estate Community Project

We present our 3rd Annual Report for the Down's Estate Community Project.

Our aim as stated in the Association mission statement is to encourage sustainability through the care of the natural environment and strengthen community skills and attitudes. We undertake activities to acknowledge heritage, foster connection between people and their environment and develop organic food production.

ACTIVITY AND EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Saturday Garden & Food Growing Working Bees,

Every Saturday morning is a busy, productive and re-energising time of the week with an enthusiastic group of people working in the garden. The garden is steadily being improved with crops planted every season. Nearly every week harvests go home with volunteers, are shared with local community kitchens or traded with local organic green grocers New Harvest and Edithvale Grocer. We regularly have visitors drop in to see what is happening and how to be involved. We are expanding our gardens to include indigenous bushfoods, a heritage fruit orchard and are presently developing more garden beds.

Farmer Incubator Pop Up Garlic Farm Program

Four members were interested to grow garlic with the Farmer Incubator program so an area was set aside and we started our first exploration of growing a substantial crop. The Farmer Incubator group provided mentoring, training workshops and visits to other garlic growers. The crop has grown strongly and looks like it may become a great success.

Soil Analysis and Dirt Day Event

World renowned soil expert Mary Cole visited Downs Estate to talk to the committee and gardeners and then conducted an extensive analysis of Downs soil at her laboratory "Agpath". She presented some interesting advice:

- The fungal pools is good but not active, so there is a good population to activate.
- Soil too dry for good activity. Aerate soil to allow water penetration.
- No earth worms were seen in sample.
- There is some plant available N being produced but not sufficient for vegetable growing.
- Add organic matter to build soil structure, increase water holding capacity.
- Bacterial activity low, feeding necessary. Apply molasses, fish and kelp in compost tea or clean water after aeration.

Mary returned to Downs as the guest speaker at a highly popular community education event 'Dirt Day' with around 80 attendees inspired by her knowledge, advice and personal journey of improving soil health around the world. We are incredibly grateful for her generosity to DECP.

Environmental Monitoring workshops.

Three community events were presented on techniques for Environmental monitoring as a citizen science activity. These were a forum at Frankston Library and two training days at Down's. The program utilised the South Australian Environmental Monitoring toolkit and presented examples of environmental monitoring including marsupial counts with automatic night cameras, insect counts on sticky paper, birds counts and pollution monitoring.

The lead presenters was: Malcolm Legg, local ecological consultant with guest presenters:

- Geraldine Davis, Citizen Science coordinator, EPA,
- Karen Thomas, Regional Ag. Facilitator, PPWCMA
- Darren Quinn, Coordinator, Birdlife Australia

Much appreciation goes to volunteer Samantha Liston for arranging the program and to the State Government DELWP for providing a grant to support it. .

Vintage Apples

Two workshops on heritage apples were presented by John Pinniger from the Heritage Fruit Society.

A Grafting Workshop was conducted in August with 50 different varieties of scion being grafted onto rootstock, and a tasting afternoon with 15+ different varieties from Petty's Orchard was held in March. John provided an excellent running commentary on the history, varieties, cultivation and uses of apples. We will soon have another 20 seedling trees ready to plant out.

Permaculture Picnic

In late November the Down's Estate hosted a family picnic day for the members families and friends of Permaculture Victoria. It was a day of talks, activities and displays. Talks included Natural Bee-keeping, Permaculture in East Timor, and Permaculture as essential in our human future. Activities and displays included site walks with Reade Smith edible weed expert, orchard netting, scything demonstrations, various plants and produce, and kids picnic games.

Reality Bites Project

DECP has played a strong part in facilitating and participating in the Reality Bites Project, an initiative of Frankston Food Access Network, to raise awareness of local residents, organisations and all levels of government about the challenges and solutions to local food security. Starting in 2018, this project involved 20 local participants/groups, culminating in an exhibition at Cube 37 of the photos and stories collected which depict this issue, in late June. The launch night was also used to publicise the book Reality Bites, which compiles a range of the stories from this photo-voice project.

The 2018 Annual General Meeting was held on the 10th of November attended by 30 people. The Annual Report was accepted and elections for the new Committee held. Updates on current and future projects were provided and tours of the garden were held.

Visit by the Minister for the Environment

The Hon Melissa Price, Minister for the Environment and the local federal representative Chris Crewther visited Downs Estate on the 13th March. Chris had given strong support to the Down's project since we started on site in 2017. He helped planting trees and guided us through two Strengthening Community grants. The grants have been critical in helping open the site for public use. The visit was an excellent opportunity to promote the project. Showing the guests around were committee members Rodney Fedley and Maree Vinocuroff, and Colette Day from Uni of Melbourne.

SITE DEVELOPMENT

Improved sanitation - We have a toilet !

After much discussion, an offer of \$70,000 budget from the council and a few weeks work by contractors in June and July, a disability access composting toilet is now on-site. It is a big price tag but a great improvement on the builders' portaloos we had to use for the past year and a half.

Masterplan Development

In early 2019 Council contracted a landscape architect to draft a plan for the site and we assisted with provision of ideas and a preferred vision for the development. Based on the landscape plan Cr Bolam negotiated funds be available in the Council's 2019/20 budget. This was initially expected to be \$150,000 but increased to \$350,000 on the night the budget was passed.

The priority items for these funds has been a challenging negotiation for DECP. Our preference has been to use it to allow community use of the shed but that has not been agreed to by Council. Items discussed for use of this budget include:

- Verandah and paved area along the east side of the shed;
- Disabled access and improved entry to the shed by removal of the step barrier improving access for people using mobility aids;
- Planning for restoration of the shed to allow use for community events; and
- a new large rain-water tank and a few additional items.

DECP express our sincere thanks to Councillor Kris Bolam for his work in securing funding from Frankston council to enable these works to proceed.

Water supply

The site is not connected to the mains and is reliant on the rainfall caught on the shed roof and stored in the tanks. So far this has been a sufficient supply for the gardens. Drip irrigation pipes have been trialled successfully in the garlic beds and will be added in other beds. A further large tank is being discussed with Council to allow the garden area to expand.

Environmental Management

Our licence covers only the area between the bike path and Old Wells Road but we are eager to understand the wider ecology including the Ramsar wetlands. We attended the Council's workshop on 3rd June on developing an environmental management plan for the western block.

The Council have been trialling the pumping of water from Wadsley drain into the north of the Down's block since mid-2017 and proposed this continue as a long-term arrangement. They proposed the site become 1/3 water, 1/3 reeds and 1/3 slashed grasslands.

The DECP committee questioned the proposal's long-term viability based on water being pumped kilometres and we proposed it be reconsidered. We questioned the defining of the original ecology as open wetlands and proposed the open wetland had come about from the 150 years of white settler land use. We proposed a better depiction of the original ecology was the painting by James Curtis - "Lagoon in the Carrum Carrum Swamp – evening 1872. After the workshop we made a written submission raising these and a number of other concerns we had with the proposed management plan.

Our licence area has blackberries emerging and the environmental management of this will need more attention. We have applied for a CEP grant to undertake some of that work.

University of Melbourne

Our collaboration with UoM has continued strongly. Their commitment to assist with the Business case continues and they have recently contributed \$25,000 to match the FCC contribution for this work. Together we will explore the viability of creating a food and science hub at Down's Estate.

The UoM was successful in gaining a \$90,000 grant from The Helen Macpherson Smith Trust trust to create a Sustainable Indigenous Agriculture project (SIA) with food growing trials on site at Down's Estate and community workshops on using indigenous foods at various local venues in 2019/2020.

We believe we have established a very productive working relationship with UoM over the past year bringing together Uni expertise with community knowledge and experience to advance the aims of these projects.

MANAGEMENT

The land is owned by FCC and DECP holds a license to use the site.

The project continues to be guided by a dedicated committee of local residents and supported by a diverse range of volunteers participating in working bees and events.

Some special contributions to mention:

- Maree Vinocuroff one of our founding co-chairs for 3 years of leadership and contribution of steady and practical attitude and focus on community learning to launch the project;
- Sarah Francis for her great photos and facebook post management across the year;
- Mary Cole for her advice and generous contribution on Soil Day; and to
- Sam Liston and Malcolm Legg for their work on organising and presenting the Env Monitoring workshops.

Thanks also to Scotsburn Nursery, Noel Tudball and the Seaford Community Committee for their on-going support.

We need to acknowledge the valuable contributions of all those who have worked on the Downs Estate Community Project. Each person who has engaged and has given this venture the benefit of their unique talents.

Our working relationship with Frankston City Council has continued to strengthen this year and we would like to express our thanks to those Officers we are working with to progress DECP and to the Councillors, who have supported us with budget allocation and other motions.

We wish to express our sincere appreciation and thanks to Belvedere Community Centre and its manager Meredith Mackenzie for their wonderful support of DECP by offering our group a friendly and welcoming space for our meetings for the last 5 years. We have had the chance to create a strong relationship with BCC, another local community organisation.

The DECP committee meet fortnightly to organise and manage the project activities. There are also meetings of working groups, countless extra meetings for planning, document writing, addressing specific tasks or to prepare for communications with Council Officers and Councillors, UOM and other groups. Practical actions are a welcome break from sitting at meetings. The volunteer hours in management tasks would number in the thousands.

CHALLENGES

There are many challenges on-site we are working to address. We need sustainable solutions for increased water infrastructure, and if possible some off grid power provision. We would like to see the house and shed renovated to serve useful purposes and be a resource for the Project rather than continue to deteriorate.

No all-weather venue for community events and workshops. DECP hope to see the shed and house restored to maximise and support community activity on site.

Rabbits and Snakes To protect garden beds from rabbits we are trialling basic fencing to keep them out. For the snakes the Council are doing the much appreciated work of mowing the site and hopefully the area mown will expand as we remove debris that can act as snake habitat.

Dangerous Trees. There is at least one old pine tree dead and with many borer holes that is marked and people need to stay clear of.

Vandalism and security – Incidents have markedly decreased and we hope that this will continue with improved CCTV from the Council budget.

Finances

During the term of this report no direct grants were received into the DECP account. The Council's budget is held in their accounts and the contributions and grants won by the University is held in their accounts.

In previous years we have had success in gaining a number of grants and donations and used them to make positive changes to activate the Down's Estate. These outcomes are due to the significant long term efforts of many committed locals, with support from Frankston City Council and Council Officers. We look forward to continuing to work productively with them in the future. Also the support of Federal MP Chris Crewther, State MP Sonya Kilkeny and Cr Kris Bolam has been greatly appreciated.

We would especially like to thank Peter Douglas and Scotsburn Nursery for their ongoing support with seedling and compost donations.

Future Planning for DECP Committee

- Growth of Membership and expanded committee to participate in developing the site.
- Collaboration with University of Melbourne in drafting the Business case and implementing the SIA.
- Further work to facilitate community use of Shed and restoration of house on site as community assets.
- Improved communications with members and the wider community.
- Participation with FCC in the development of a site master plan for environmental restoration and management of the western side of the Down's Estate.

CONCLUSION

Overall we are very pleased with the progress this year and the strong community connections we are making with many local groups, small businesses and interested local residents. We thank them all for their encouragement, participation, generosity and support.

We continue to be inspired by the potential of the depth and breadth of Down's Estate and welcome community members to help us create a place which will provide support and inspiration for all the community.

DECP Committee

Prepared by Executive- John Mckenzie, Andy Nelsson, Maureen Griffin, Robyn Erwin
Maree Vinocuroff (Co-Chair) has been on leave from June 30, 2019

November 23, 2019

Finances

For the period 1 July 2018 - 30 June 2019

For Down's Estate Community Project

Registered Association no. A0097150A Australian

Business Number 61545960722 DECP banks with the

Bendigo Bank in Carrum Downs.

Income Statement

Revenue

Grants received	0	
Donations and Gifts	0	
Legacies & Bequests	0	
Income	1112	
Investment income	0	
total revenue	1112	

Expenses

Project implementation	5725	
Administration & Operating costs	1550.63	
Publicity & Fundraising	0	
total expenses	7275.63	

excess of revenue over expenses - 6163.63

Balance Sheet

Current Assets as at 30 June 2019 (end date last reporting period)

cash	5,011	
tools, materials & equipment	1,000	total Assets
6,011 Current liabilities		
None		
Projects/Grants completed	5,725	
Alan Richards Trust	2010	
Stronger Communities 3	1825	
AHA	900	
DELWP	990	
Net Assets (funds available for future use)	5,011.83	
Total Equity		5,011.83

Cash Flow Statement

cash receipts in course of operations	1,112
cash payments in course of operations	7275.63
bank interest received	0
cash at the beginning of the period	11,175.46
balance at the end of the report period	5,011.83

Committee Declaration

The Committee members declare this financial statement gives a true and fair view of the financial position of the association as at 30th June 2019 and its performance since it's commencement of the reporting period on 1st of July 2019. Treasurer Andy Nelsson 22/11/19 John McKenzie (Co-Chair), 22/11/19

