



Annual Report 2010





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Our Vision

A vibrant, resilient and sustainable Yarra Valley community.



Yarra Valley ECOS (formerly UYCEP) is located on 7.5 hectares of beautiful land in the Yarra Valley region (Wesburn), 50k's east of Melbourne.

We are a community organisation with a global agenda to tackle the big issues of climate change, renewable energy, sustainable living solutions and building community resilience and connectedness.

Our aim through education, demonstration projects and community engagement is to:

- advance food and water security and self sufficiency
- explore green technology
- develop and demonstrate horticultural and organic agricultural and farming practices
- be a major centre for ecological education and innovation
- promote creative problem solving to global issues on a local level
- blend arts with horticulture and lifestyle

Our new name...



We have long been wanting a more concise, professional and marketable image at the park as we move to the next stage of our development.
Michael Hibbert (Marketing consultant)



with the support of Hailey Cavill (consultant) offered to facilitate a full day Branding workshop. After a long day of creative brainstorming, discussion and review,
Yarra Valley ECOSS emerged as our preferred new identity. Yarra Valley

ECOSS... (*Sustainable Living and Learning*) communicates our mission to engage our regional community and participate on a national and global level in creating and teaching sustainable living solutions.

The committee of management have since endorsed this rebranding / renaming of UYCEP. Logo design is now complete and we are ready to go forward with our professional new look.

This is an exciting time as we lift our image and ramp up our marketing activities. We trust everyone will embrace the name and logo as we move into the next stage of development at the park.

2011 will see the next stage in marketing and promoting Yarra Valley ECOSS through our website and all publicity material.





Presidents report

The past year at **ECOSS** has seen some important achievements, and the entire membership, staff and wider community should be immensely proud of them. We have made modest but substantive gains in developing a strong foundation on which to build in the coming years. I am most grateful for the immense contribution by so many: our staff, volunteers, members & partner organisations

Having missed out on the windfall of the Federal Stimulus Package (that helped launch our city cousins such as CERES into the stratosphere), we went back to basics in our Funding Strategy, with regular if modest successes. I am grateful to the **State Department of Planning & Community Development (DPCD)** for its support: it was a pleasure to host the Minister, **Lily d'Ambrosio** when she personally announced a one year extension to the **McPherson Smith Community Alliance grant**. This secured our first steps towards **ECOSS** creating staff-resourced management with volunteers providing a supporting role. Establishing and extending the staff base is critical to our ongoing sustainability and development. Attracting and retaining the staff we need is another step on our learning curve that we have now embarked upon. Thanks to **Sustainability Victoria** for their belief in and commitment to **Ecoss** and providing on-going employment security into 2011. We changed our name! Upper Yarra Community Environment Park, whilst being pretty self explanatory, was a rather big mouthful: you could almost

hear a person's mental cogs at work the first time they heard it. **ECOSS** is a much more dynamic name and easier to repeat. The new name implies, in a rather poetic way, that we are about Ecology. We have also updated our Vision & Mission statement to reflect our greater clarity, and chosen a logo to help promote our renewed persona.

Twelve months ago the Committee & Staff were involved in an annual Planning Day and remarkably we identified that one of our greatest assets and points of distinction is that we're sitting on a Farm! We have enormous potential to address Food Security issues and speak to Regenerative Farming practices, both of which have significance within our local community and beyond. Since then there has been much planning and the first stage, our Community Health Garden, is underway. This is a marvelous interpretation of the Community Garden concept for a rural community where most people have space at their own back door for a kitchen garden, but where the most vulnerable amongst us and those with serious health issues, can be supported in an organised & reliable manner. I look forward to this initiative extending into our Community Kitchen in the coming year. Even more inspiring is that this project is almost entirely volunteer-managed. Thanks to the **Shire of Yarra Ranges** and the **Salvation Army** for providing funding for this initiative.

UYCEL - (Upper Yarra Community Enterprise) - have provided seed funding

to establish the Sustainable Food Enterprise Project in the coming year. This will have a three-fold benefit: it will enhance sustainability in ways that are fundamentally practical to all, enhance our training & learning initiatives, and provide the beginning of **ECOSS's** goal towards financial sustainability through developing Community Enterprises.

During the past year **ECOSS** entered into a formal partnership with **Upper Yarra Community House** as a Community College to deliver sustainable horticulture training programs. I am especially excited about their partnership with another Community College, Education College Gippsland, to offer a Diploma for Sustainable Agriculture at **ECOSS** in 2011. All concerned anticipate that this will be the first of a suite of training programs to be offered at **ECOSS** in the coming years.

Other activities to enhance the spirit of community at **ECOSS** have been the building of a pizza oven by local restaurateur **Alan Seppings** and friends; and the beautification of the Arts Studio by **Sioux Dollman** and her mosaic arts collective. Now that we have endured the longest, wettest winter in recent memory, I expect these resources will be enjoyed by many and will provide a backdrop for inspiring conversations and fuel the seeds of future action. The 'village hub' as we call it has certainly become an inviting place to meet up.

The greater traffic passing through **ECOSS** has motivated us to continue cleaning up our 7 hectare site, a considerable task achieved largely by volunteers, making it a safer & more appealing place to visit. Thanks to **Jude Thoma**, **Julie Davison** and their team of volunteers for their efforts earlier in the

year. Our goal is to be an inspiring and safe venue for our March Expo, and with all the rain promoting virulent growth of late, our Grounds-person is always open to offers from volunteers to help out.

This is the end of my term as President. Though I'm excited about what the future holds for **ECOSS**, I'm under no illusion that if we as a community want this project to realise its potential, a great deal of inspiration and good old fashioned yakka is required from many of us. I look forward to contributing to **ECOSS's** evolution in other ways, but for now I wish to thank all who have supported the Vision during my term. Thanks foremost to our staff: its not easy when the task is so bold and the resources scarce. Thanks to our volunteers, the most dedicated being those willing to attend regular meetings as Committee and subcommittee members: its been at times frustrating (and who really wants to join a committee anyway), but until **ECOSS** has the resources to become staff-managed there will be much to do in our spare & not-so-spare hours. **Joe Butler**, I miss your caring spirit and selfless efficiency. I wish you well on your journey and hope that you can rejoin us soon. **Keith Jesse**, your inspired commitment has kept my own flame alight though many a meeting. Finally, I thank the **Yarra Ranges Council** for believing in our vision and providing the site, a modest stipend, and ongoing support through their Community Development workers who are often personally engaged beyond the scope of their brief.

Grant Eastwood
President

Strategic planning report

Objective:

*To plan and implement **ECOSS's** vision through a range of innovative and practical strategies and programs.*

Strategic Plans

The primary aim of the Strategic Planning group through 2009 was to create the Master Plan framework for the physical planning and development of the park. The Master Plan is consistent with the Shire's 2020 Vision and sustainability objectives.

The creation of our Illustrative Concept Plan by **Jon Coe** became our touchstone for the past year as it has inspired many people to 'put their shoulder to the wheel'.

With the Master Plan, and Illustrative Concept Plan in place (and our re-branding as **EcoSS** underway), we have focused on the development of a comprehensive Business Plan that will engage EcoSS in the Yarra Valley and beyond.

Strategic Partnerships

Partnerships and effective resourcing have been identified as two critical elements in successfully developing the park over the next decade. The Sustainability Partnerships Framework was developed to facilitate relationships with a range of potential project partners. The Shire of Yarra Ranges and the Upper Yarra Community House were recognised as our foundation project partners whilst other organisations were approached to engage in a Sustainability Network Partnerships. These included CERES Environment

Park, Swinburne University (Lilydale Campus), Community Colleges Victoria (CCV) and the National Centre for Design (Swinburne University). The 'Travellers Guide to Eco-Centres' identified the development of a network of centres as a crucial step in community sustainability. To this end we have developed strong connections with CERES Environment Park, Port Philip Eco-Centre, Iramoo and Banksia Gardens.

The EcoSS Farm

The **EcoSS Farm** is set to become a focus for research and demonstration of Ecological Agriculture. CCV are planning a range of sustainable agriculture courses to be run out of **EcoSS**. We are also exploring opportunities for soil regeneration and carbon sequestration.

Strategic Sustainability Projects

Our Creative Climate Communities Program (recently funded through Sustainability Victoria) will engage the Yarra Valley region in creative responses to mitigate and adapt to climate change, including on-site climate friendly demonstrations. Under this program we will also establish a Creative Sustainability Knowledge Bank. The Sustainable Food Enterprise Project (sponsored by UYCEL) will see the beginnings of 'Sustainable Community Enterprise' at **EcoSS**. Through our Strategic Sustainability Projects we are expecting great things from the **EcoSS Farm** and Community Hub Projects over the coming year.

Community engagement

Objective:

To harness the creative energy and vision of the local community in the development of sustainable living solutions

Community Health garden

After a successful planning forum in October followed by a working bee, the community garden working group is up and running! The concept of a health garden to support people needing local organic produce to assist their recovery from illness has strong



support. The vision for the garden includes a combination of individual plots and a collective community working area. Design sessions are being planned and garden fencing and soil preparation are about to start. 2011 looks like a very promising crop!.

Community Arts Hub

This beautiful Arts Hub has been created by a group of local artists.



The walls and front porch area have been enriched with a magical rendered serpent and sun mosaic. Already we have community groups booked in, making use of this wonderful and inspiring space.

Pizza oven

The pizza oven has created its own little hub when its cooking up a storm! As many can attest - the pizza's are great at **ECOSS!** In fact the Minister for the Department of Planning and Community Development took a moment to add one of the bricks as it was being constructed. Thanks to **Al Seppings** for his work on this great community eating facility!

Information Kiosk... watch this space!

Have you seen our wonderful information kiosk? At the entrance to our main building you will find a wonderfully constructed information board made



primarily out of 'found materials' right here at the park. Thanks to **Michael Hibbert** for the initial concept, **Jon Coe** for the

creative design and **Tyrone Jaspers** for the expert workmanship on creating a kiosk where “what’s on” will be on display for everyone visiting **ECOSS**.

Successful Events:

Sustainable House Day

The Sustainable House Day in the Yarra Valley was instigated and organised by **Grant Eastwood**. Three local houses were showcased this year with an overwhelming response from the visitors and the local community. This will become an annual event on **EcoSS's** calendar. (for more information on this Victoria wide event visit: <http://www.sustainablehouseday.com>)

Songs from the Valley:

Writing Chops - a day of writing, reading, eating and singing.

EcoSS hosted a successful creative community day organised by **Santha Press**. Thirty singers, writers and readers set up camp on the lawn for the day and created through voice and spoken word. This project will come to fruition in the Songs from the Valley performance on the **EcoSS** Open Day in March

Community Garden Forum

Over twenty people gathered to discuss and plan the community garden and share their vision for sustainable and healing food production. **Andrew Laidlaw** facilitated the evening, **Jon Coe** shared the plans and site development and the Community Health Garden working group was formed.

Japanese Ecological Charcoal Making Workshop

Hideshi Mizoguchi, a renowned Japanese environmentalist visited **EcoSS** on Sunday 10th October (.350 Global Work Party) to share his plans to introduce this charcoal making technique to Australia and to demonstrate how to make 'ecological charcoal' for soil improvement and water purification. **EcoSS** will become a demonstration location for this and other charcoal and biochar production techniques in the future. Hideshi will return next year to conduct more charcoal making workshops.



Learning

Objective:

To identify and enable sustainability learning opportunities as well as building relationships with partner training organizations, groups and members.

Learning continues to be at the core of Ecosse's vision and objectives. It is intrinsic to everything that occurs at the Park.

Sustainability learning occurs at both the formal and informal level through activities on the site. Over the last 12 months informal learning opportunities have included building a pizza oven, garden maintenance, art activities such as the rendering of the arts space and planning for the community gardens.

Partnership agreement with UYCH

A Partnership Agreement has been formalized with the UYCH Learning

Centre. UYCH Horticulture Training Coordinator, **Peter Lorback** has been developing a learning environment at the Park through a range of programs including ; sustainable living short courses and accredited training courses such as Certificate 2 in Horticulture. .

Future partnerships await...

It is expected that the Partnership Agreement forged with East Gippsland Community College will enable courses such as the Diploma in Organic Farming among others to be run through UYCEP

We are planning learning programs which will involve local schools, VCAL students, researchers and, of course, the local community in multi-layered learning experiences. Thanks to all the Committee of Management members who have contributed to this sub-committee.



Site

Objective:

to sustainably maintain and develop the Ecosystem site



Site achievements

With the main Master-Planning process completed, Ecosystem entered a new phase of development during this year. The Site Group has been active in maintaining and ensuring the site is accessible, safe and functional. With the acquisition of hand tools and a mower, it is now possible to keep the site clear and clean. The planning and carrying out of this work has only been made possible by our part time staff and trusty volunteers. Further maintenance away from the house and into the farm still needs outside help. With funding from the Shire of Yarra Ranges, we have taken an important step and converted an old farm shed into a space where community artists and the Stepping Out Group (Melba Support Services) can create and store their materials.

Community Farm and Gardens

Funding and volunteer help has enabled the development of the first stage of the community garden near the house. We envisage that the community gardening group will bring many more people and local interest into Ecosystem and its ideals of producing food in a sustainable, low cost, social and educative manner.

This year saw the development of a comprehensive site plan for the farm, based upon food production in both the garden and orchard. This includes the development of a water strategy for the whole site, which addresses the collection and storage of water for sustainable food production.

Administration

Objective:

to create a sustainable and successful organisation through effective and progressive organisational infrastructure



Funding & Human Resources

Early in 2010 it was decided to reduce the number of sub-committees by combining Human Relations, Finance and Governance into “Administration”. The obvious overlap and synergy in these 3 committees made the amalgamation a logical one.

Most of the committee's pre-occupation over the last 12 months has been in the areas of **ECOSS'S** personnel, both voluntary and paid, and in sourcing funding to provide salaries for current and proposed future employees. A lot of work has been done by our Treasurer, **Paul Jenkins**, to ensure we did not exceed our limited budget.

Volunteer Policy Manual

There have been a number of people making major contributions to **ECOSS** in the last financial year, many of them volunteers. As a result the

Administration committee developed a Volunteer Policy Manual to assist in the tasks of supporting and supervising the volunteers. This detailed policy manual is an important guide to inducting volunteers and future work activity people and ensuring our employer responsibilities are fulfilled.

From December 2009 **ECOSS** was fortunate to gain the services of **Jude Thoma** and **Agi Pavlikova** as Volunteer Site Managers. Their drive created very positive outcomes at the Park. In February Upper Yarra Community House (UYCH) appointed **Peter Lorback** as a 'resident trainer' 2 days a week at the Park. His role was also to foster sustainable training opportunities at UYCEP. In 2009 **Carole Ann** was successful in getting funding for a short Grounds Project of 4 hours a week and so **Julie Davison** was employed to facilitate this. She encouraged volunteers to assist in maintaining and developing the grounds. We are currently working with **Sarina Russo Work Placement Agency** to secure experienced volunteers for the site.



2011 - our future looks bright...

2010 has been a year of consolidation for ECOSS and we are now in a strong position to take advantage of the many opportunities that lay ahead. Our funding, whilst never taken for granted is far more secure and we are now ready to commence a number of inspiring projects that have long been on the drawing board.



March 12th 2011 - our upcoming Expo & community event day
We were successful in gaining \$5,000 from the Shire of Yarra Ranges towards a community event day that engages people in the work and future plans of **EcoSS**. We have joined forces with "Songs from the Valley" where performance, art and celebration will combine with showcasing and demonstrating on-site horticulture and agriculture innovations and plans.

Creative Climate Community Project

This newly funded project through the Dept of Sustainability and Environment will provide seminars and demonstration workshops and contribute to the collation of a knowledge bank. Workshops and seminars will explore climate change action through: the arts; sustainable food and water strategies; green technology.

Training and education

Horticulture, agriculture, sustainable skills and climate change education.... a busy training calendar will be coming out in the new year!

Site plans

The community garden site is well under way with plans in place for our first crop. The chicken sheds will be the target for infrastructure grant writing in coming months.

Sustainable Food Enterprise

A Sustainable Food Enterprise Project Coordinator will soon be employed to drive this new project

Membership drive

We are renewing our membership drive alongside the marketing of our new name ECOSS.

Creating a Community Kitchen

Hands-on food preparation, helping cancer survivors and their families learn new tastes and easy food preparation skills - this is our vision from garden to plate.

Financial Statement

Upper Yarra Community Environment Park Inc
T/As Yarra Valley ECOSS
as at 30th. June 2010

Income	Amount \$
Trading receipts [sales,rental etc]	900
Member fees	444
Grants	22496
Sponsorships	12000
Total Income [A]	\$35,840

Expenditure

Utilities [water, gas,electricity etc]	4960
Employment [wages,super,contractors]	57320
Office [internet, phone, post etc]	1870
Security	836
Development	5439
Maintenance	904
Other	1288
Total Expenditure [B]	\$72,617

Surplus [A-B] **-\$36,777**

Assets

Cheque account	5408
Debit account	161
Equipment, furnishings	7065
Total Assets [C]	\$12,634

Liabilities

Uncleared cheques	211
Total Liabilities [D]	\$211

Association's Equity [C-D] **\$12,423**



Auditors Report

UPPER YARRA COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT PARK INC.

Registered No. AA0043655B

INDEPENDENT AUDIT REPORT

To the members of the Upper Yarra Community Environment Park

Qualification

As is common for organisations of this type, it is not practicable for the Upper Yarra Community Environment Park Incorporated to maintain an effective system of internal control over donations, subscriptions and other fund raising activities until their initial entry in the accounting records. Accordingly, my audit in relation to donations and fund raising was limited to amounts recorded.

Qualified Audit Opinion

In my opinion, subject to the effects of such adjustments, if any, as might have been determined to be necessary had the limitation discussed in the qualification paragraph not existed, the financial report presents fairly in accordance with the cash basis of accounting, the payments and receipts of the Upper Yarra Community Environment Park Incorporated for the year ended June 30, 2010 and it's cash and balances as at that date.

Dated: August 31, 2010



Russell Quick CPA FTIA
P o BOX 7052
Geelong West. Vic. 3218



Our People

Thank you to the many people who contributed to the Ecss project over the past year:

The Committee of Management

Grant Eastwood - President
Marg Leslie - Vice President
Michael Zaar - Secretary
Paul Jenkins - Treasurer
Joe Butler
Sally Brennan
Ian Cuming
Bernie Lobert
Michael Hibbert
Kim Swinson (retired)
Graeme George (retired)

Sub Committee members

Jon Coe
Stuart Ryder
Carolyn Suggate
Agi Pavalikova

Staff

Keith Jesse
Simon McLachlan
Donna Swan
Carole Ann (past)
Julie Davidson (past)

Volunteers

Jude Thoma
Kristina Greenwood
Carole Seppings
Alan Seppings
Tamara McCarthy
Dakini Maddock
Sioux Dollman
Andrew Mackie
Jess Baillie
Ann Lazzaro
Peter Wadsworth
Reymond Voitier
Anna Rispoli
Brigitte Kupfer
Jude Barley
Vassili Yovanovic
Andrew Laidlaw
Tyrone Jaspers
Mark Stellar
Kathy Ashton

And to the many others who have contributed to the development of this project in big and small ways.

Our Partners and Sponsors

Thank you to our funding partners who make this inspirational project possible...



Shire of Yarra Ranges



***Upper Yarra Community House
(UYCH)***



***Upper Yarra Community Enterprise
(UYCEL)***



Helen McPherson Smith Trust



Sustainability Victoria

The Salvation Army



***The Department of Planning and
Community Development***

Special thanks also go to...

Jon Coe - John Coe Design.

Hailey Cavill - Cavill & Co

Ric Butler - BBM Office National

Michael Hibbert - Shortlist Marketing

Sioux Dollman - Magic Creations

Marius Nicolae - Smartsolutions

2010 Annual Report contributors:
Joe Butler, Grant Eastwood, Paul Jenkins, Keith Jesse, Bernie Lobert,
Donna Swan, Margret Leslie, Ian Cuming, Michael Hibbert.

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