

Annual Report 2009

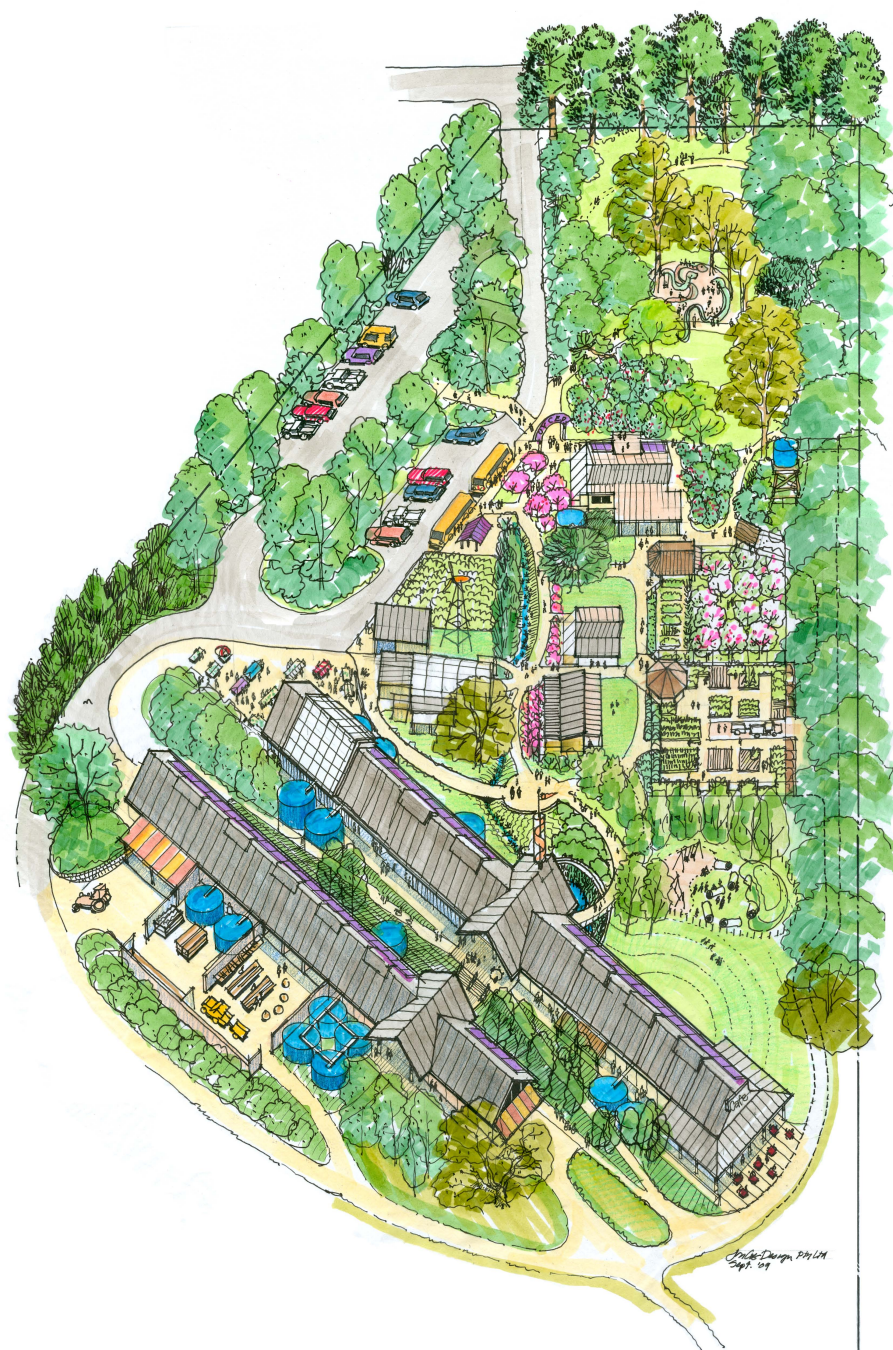




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About Upper Yarra Community Environment Park Inc.



Upper Yarra Community Environment Park Incorporated (UYCEP) is an incorporated association supporting sustainable living solutions in the Yarra valley through being a vibrant and innovative *Community Environment Park*.

UYCEP is located on a beautiful 7.5 hectare rural property at Wesburn, about 65 km east of the Melbourne CBD. The objectives of UYCEP are to harness the creative energy and vision of the local community and engage key partnerships in developing the site and providing learning opportunities in sustainable living. UYCEP is **inspiring** by practical example, **informing** by providing practical information, and **enabling** by providing effective and continuing support in putting change into practice. Through encouraging community participation and **strategic partnerships** we are advancing **food and water security** and **self sufficiency**, exploring **green technologies**, developing **sustainable land management and farm practices**, balancing bushfire preparedness with natural habitat restoration, and providing a centre for crafts and arts. In doing this the UYCEP is becoming a knowledge centre and community hub that is enriching the culture of the region and beyond.

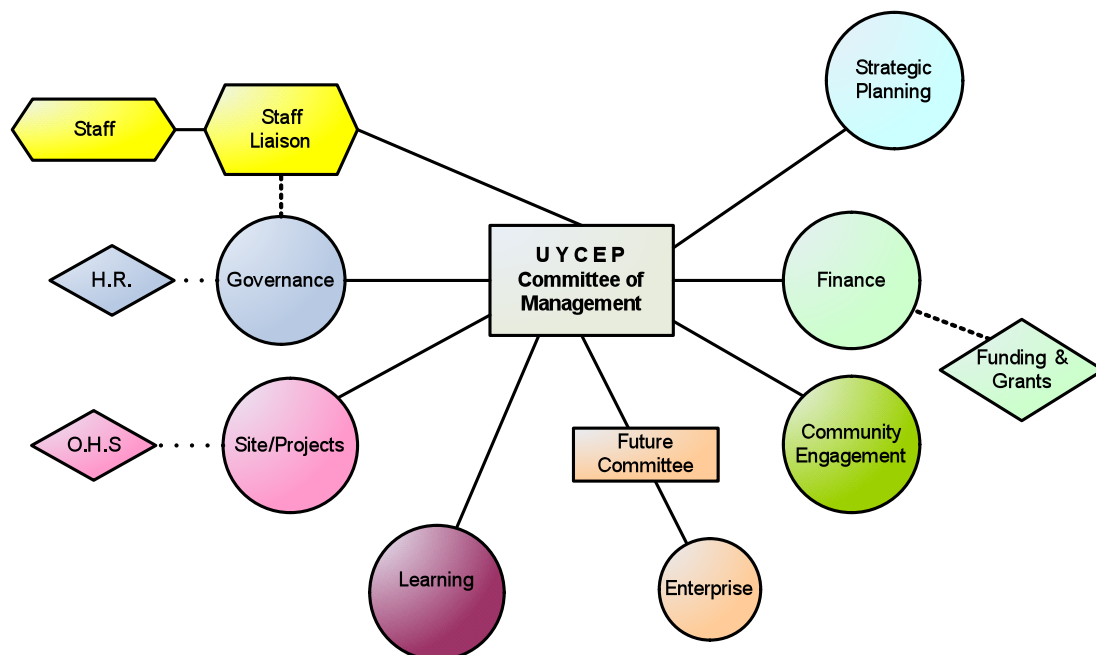
UYCEP Inc. formed in 2007 to take up a lease over a property owned by the Shire of Yarra Ranges (SYR) that had been since 1994 a training facility of the Upper Yarra Community House. UYCH is a registered training organisation that had been offering accredited courses in horticulture and supported a bush food cooperative. UYCH has become a key partner of UYCEP through its capacity to deliver a broad range of courses and workshops and its knowledge of the regional market for these services. The property had been farmed for over 90 years including as a poultry farm in more recent times. The farm cottage has been renovated and is being retrofitted as an environment-friendly dwelling that is providing offices, meeting spaces and a training venue. There remains other modest farm infrastructure including the basic structure of two poultry sheds, each about 100 meters long, which will become the future site hub as identified in the 2009 Master Plan.

UYCEP Organisational Structure

UYCEP operates as a non profit organisation and is managed by a voluntary Committee of Management (the Committee). The Committee comprises a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, up to six ordinary members and



two representatives appointed by SYR. Two part-time staff manage some of the operational functions whilst five sub-committees report to the Committee. The sub-committees are working groups that make recommendations to the Committee. The Chairperson of each sub-committee is nominated from the Committee members. Some sub-committees give rise to teams with specific objectives, such as Occupational Health & Safety (OHS). With time the Committee will be occupied with strategic planning and governance of the organisation, however at this present stage of development the operational functions are shared with staff. The structure below represents a broad picture of the Committee structure.



Our People

Committee of Management

President: Grant Eastwood, *previously Keith Jesse (July 2008-May 2009)*

Vice President: Margret Leslie

Secretary & Public Officer: Joe Butler

Treasurer: Paul Jenkins, *previously Geoff Vickers (July 2008-June-2009)*

Kim Swinson, SYR Representative

Bernie Lobert, SYR Representative

Sally Brennan

Ian Cuming

Michael Zaar

Robert Hay

Graeme George

Sub-committee members (other than Committee members)

Stuart Ryder, Julie Davison, Tristan Black, Peter Lorback, Jeff Isaac, Jon Coe.

Staff

Keith Jesse, Community Engagement & Sustainable Development Project Worker

Carole Ann, Community Engagement Project Worker.

Project Coordinators

Judith Thoma, Community Gardeners Group

Sioux Dolman, Community Artists Group



President's Report

The past year has come in three distinct phases and I'm glad to say we're finishing on a very high note. The success of the November Open Day has been the reward for much effort by many people on every level.



The seeds of this success were planted at the October 2008 Planning Session when the sub-committee structure was conceived. Simultaneously we had received funding for a Master Plan, a major milestone. We came back from Christmas ready to launch into a new year and then the bush fires swept through the Valley, completely disrupting life as we knew it. The community was focussed on urgent matters of safety and survival and UYCEP was not alone in losing momentum for some months. This created challenges for the Master Plan process and for the consultants which tested everyone's resolve. All the while the sub-committees were finding their feet, the Committee was refining its practices, and the farm cottage was transforming into a very comfortable, effective and respectable hub. Funding for our foundation staff arrived, another significant milestone, which significantly changed our organisational landscape though gradually at first.

With the coming of Spring the Master Plan was finally completed to universal commendation. A new phase, and a simple poster designed by Jon & Susan Coe captured the imagination of the community. It was as if for the first time everyone could now see the vision that the Committee had held.

The artists group and others completed works to the Artists Studio, the Community Gardeners Group formed and began creating a no-dig garden patch, a group of volunteers were bringing the grounds back to their former glory and some, work on a pizza oven began, all of which were transforming the grounds surrounding the cottage. The recent Master Plan presentation to the Shire of Yarra Ranges Council Forum was received with unanimous support of the Councillors, another milestone.

I approach the New Year with great optimism. The Committee has been tested and is stronger and clearer for it. Recognition and support within the community is growing. We have begun to impact the culture of the Upper Yarra Valley in positive ways, yet the optimism is still largely based on seeing the potential. Our community is beginning to believe that we can achieve this bold vision, and with that come expectations. The community hub has begun. Now we must begin to deliver on *sustainable living solutions*, of which delivery of training and education opportunities and establishing a sustainable community farm are integral to our vision.

Finally, a sincere thank you to my fellow Committee members, to our sub-committee members, our staff and volunteers for the time, effort and inspiration they contribute.

Grant Eastwood

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Grant Eastwood', written over a light blue horizontal line.

President

Strategic Planning



The October 2008 Committee planning session gave formation to the present sub-committee structure. At that time the Strategic Planning sub-committee (Strategic Planning) was briefed on developing a comprehensive Master Plan that will guide the site development of UYCEP. The foundation members Keith Jesse, Kim Swinson, Joe Butler, Geoff Vickers and Sally Brennan set out to engage and manage consultants to prepare the Master Plan. Grants from Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) (\$30,000), following the successful nomination of UYCEP as a priority project of Upper Yarra Community Building Initiative (CBI), and Upper Yarra Community Enterprise Ltd (UYCEL) (\$5,000) were secured at this time. After a vigorous tender process David Locke and

Associates (DLA) were appointed in December. The first Community Consultation scheduled for February 2009 was postponed due to the bush fires that had disrupted life across the Yarra Valley. What was to be a three month process became a 9 months. Jon Coe, an experienced planning consultant specialising in zoological parks, joined Strategic Planning with immediate and positive effect.

In this process we have successfully engaged the community and key stakeholders and believe we have received a Master Plan of high quality that represented excellent value for money and which will be a key document in funding applications for the development of the site.

The Master Plan was adopted by the Committee in September, and received support at the SYR Council Forum in November. This fulfilled a condition of the SYR/UYCEP Partnering Agreement. The 2009 SYR “Vision 2020-Community Plan” is well aligned with our purpose and objectives throughout, and especially on ‘environmental, social and economic sustainability, stronger, waste minimisation, energy efficiency, renewable resources..., healthier & connected communities...environmental stewardship...living & learning communities,...sustainable farming practices, food miles, farmers markets, community gardens...’ and more. We will be a leading showcase of this vision.

The Master Plan will provide the Committee with a ‘concept plan’ that will prove to be a catalyst in the development of the site, much as the 1997 CERES Site Development Plan did for their site and organisational development. It will provide a framework for planning,

development and context for the Business Plan. Amongst the many pages of the Master Plan are some critical strategic arguments to which we draw attention to:

- I. The discussion of UYCEP in the context of the site in the Planning Scheme (3.6). This section demonstrates that “the Community Environment Park proposal actually supports the key sustainability objectives of ‘Green Wedge Zone A’”,
- II. That the existing permit for a “Horticulture and Business Training Park” constitutes ‘existing use rights’ (3.6.1), and that Horticulture and Business Training Park is “classified under the Planning Scheme of Victoria as an ‘education centre’”.

With the completion of the Masterplan, Strategic Planning has redefined its objectives and is currently focussed on

- a (Strategic) Business Plan;
- Implementation Plans including ‘precinct plans’ that identifies the processes and timeframe for achieving the goals and objectives identified in the Master Plan and Business Plan;
- Implementation Guidelines that qualify the Master Plan with broad statements about sustainability, education/learning, etc;
- Partnership Agreements that will be a statement of shared objectives and commitment to action and include contractual agreements as relationships develop (SYR agreement is complete; UYCH agreement is close to completion; and affirmative discussions with Yarra Valley Permaculture (YVP), CERES, Live & Learn, and Little Yarra Steiner School have commenced);
- a Funding strategy.

Keith Jesse has taken the lead on Partnerships and Funding since completing the lead role of liaison with DLA. Grant Applications have been submitted with the Sustainability Fund, and Helen Macpherson Community Alliance, and Smart Water. The immediate target is to submit further applications to the Jobs Fund for development of the Community Hub and Sustainability Farm, and the Smart Water Fund.

A review of the priority Actions set out in the 2008-2009 Strategic Business Plan found that all four objectives have been achieved: develop a comprehensive Master Plan; secure funding for the recruitment of a project coordinator; develop and implement community engagement strategies; and establish a clear governance structure. The Strategic Planning sub-committee considers with confidence that the Committee and sub-committees have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience, and support from the community, SYR and other key stakeholders to realise the UYCEP objectives and concept plans indicated in the Master Plan.

Thanks to many: Kim Swinson, Jon Coe, Grant Eastwood, Graeme George, Bernie Lobert and the entire Committee. The Master Plan was made possible through the support of Anna Lottkowitz at DPCD, Geoff Vickers at UYCEL, and Jenny Donovan and team at DLA.

Keith Jesse

Community Engagement

A key objective of UYCEP is “to harness the creative energy and vision of the local community in the development of sustainable living solutions”. In broad terms this means that the UYCEP is committed to ensuring local and wider community involvement in the park. The Community Engagement sub-committee is integral to realising that aim. The work of the sub-



committee has been made easier by the appointment of Carole Ann in June as the Community Engagement Project Worker. Her drive has contributed to the development of a number of community initiatives.

Over the last 12 months a grant provided by the Shire of Yarra Ranges facilitated conversion of the old ‘green room’ to an Arts Space which will be made available to any arts groups in the area. This was officially opened by Cr Chris Templar at the Open Day on November 15. Recently a space has been allocated for community garden plots and a small group of gardeners have begun preparing beds. It is expected this group will rapidly grow as there are currently approximately 15 plots available.

The precinct plan for the Village area of the park also includes a cob oven, kitchen garden and gazebo. An Upper Yarra Community Enterprise grant has enabled a landscape gardener to work with a group of volunteers who are landscaping the area immediately behind the cottage, including the kitchen garden.

The Community Engagement sub-committee has also been working on the development of the UYCEP website over the last 12 month period. It is hoped this will go live very soon. On November 15 the first Open Day was held at the park. This was an opportunity to showcase to the community the current developments as well as the future plans for the park. It was a successful day with approximately 100 people attending.

It is hoped that the community participation in the park will continue to expand in 2010. Sincere thanks to Carole Ann for her dedicated approach to Community Engagement and to Margret Leslie for her work as chairperson of the sub-committee.

Joe Butler

Learning

Since the employment of two part-time employees UYCEP has made significant and visible progress. Throughout the year UYCH conducted an accredited course in Horticulture. Yarra Valley Permaculture conducted their first course at UYCEP. In September 2009 the Committee of Management initiated a Learning Sub-committee in recognition of that all activities on the UYCEP site have a learning purpose.

The role of this group is to identify and enable learning opportunities and build relationships with partner training organisations, groups and members. The sub-committee's goals for 2010 includes delivering accredited training through a partnership with a registered training organisation (RTO) such as Upper Yarra Community House (UYCH) and offering short environment courses aimed at fee-paying participants delivered by the UYCEP or other partners. There is also a plan to offer workshops or 'working activities' which contribute to the site development. These will be particularly aimed at members or potential members and could include courses such as energy saving, weed control, building a cob oven, planning and building vegetable gardens, preserving food and so on.



This sub-committee envisages a major expansion of its activities as the Master Plan is gradually implemented over the next few years and school groups, tertiary institutions and research organisations become increasingly involved at the site. Thanks to the Committee of Management members and others involved in establishing this sub-committee: Margret Leslie (Chairperson), Sally Brennan, Grant Eastwood, Graeme George, and Keith Jesse.

Joe Butler



Site

By the time of the Open Day on 15 November the Site sub-committee was in full flight. It seems so long ago that for the first six months of the year Site was involved simply on completing the first stage of renovations to the farm cottage and occasionally slashing grass. In October 2008 grants for the Master Plan presented the Committee with the opportunity to thoroughly investigate and report on the potential of the site. Meanwhile renovations to the cottage such as re-fitting a second-hand kitchen, laying second-hand yet commercial quality carpet, floorboards were stripped and polished, office furniture donated, and the inside given a paint throughout, mostly on Committee working bees. Although in need of insulation, the cottage has become a very comfortable and pleasant 'home base' from which to contemplate, plan and launch new projects. It has also become a welcome 'club house' for the growing number of volunteer groups that have developed.

In October 2008 a capital grant from SYR of \$25,000 launched the beginning of renovating one of the out-buildings for the purpose of a community artists studio. This brought with it a process of community consultation and managing expectations whilst giving due attention to building regulations. After more than 12 months the Artists Group put the finishing touches to the mosaic on the new patio in time for its official opening by Cr Chris Templer at the Open Day.



As this project has come to a completion three new projects have come into being in the grounds immediately surrounding the cottage. A Community Gardeners Group, formed by Judith Thoma, is creating a cluster of no-dig garden beds, an outdoor pizza oven is under construction. Through a grant from Upper Yarra Community Enterprise Ltd (UYCEL) Julie Davison, a landscape gardener, has been engaged for four hours a week and has become a coordinator of a growing number of volunteers in beginning to transform the grounds surrounding the cottage. We have also been fortunate that the UYCH Horticulture class have throughout the year applied their learning in landscaping, pruning the fruit trees and clearing weeds.



All these activities have required the Committee to address a host of governance issues such as Risk Management assessment and procedures, Volunteer policies, and devising project management systems.

The significant task of controlling the numerous and abundant weeds on the property has begun with the formation of an 'action group' which has identified a wide range of

weeds on site and is developing a plan to control them. UYCEP has adopted organic land practices in line with its sustainability guidelines which will present both a challenge and an opportunity to demonstrate chemical-free methods of control to the general community. Cattle belonging to the rear neighbour have been allowed to graze over the southern end of the property in return for maintaining fences, an arrangement that is likely to be formalised until such time as the 'sustainable farm' is ready to commence.

The Site sub-committee will continue to coordinate basic maintenance and weed control, and continue to develop the 'village precinct' according to plans being developed in concert with the Master Plan. Site has identified the need for paid staff to oversee and coordinate many of the functions of the sub-committee. Site will also find ways to be resourceful in the installation of water tanks, as the primary stage of the emerging 'Water Strategy', for the purposes of watering the community garden plots, cottage garden and fruit trees.



Thanks to Ian Cuming who is on leave from but soon to return, Peter Lorback from UYCH, Jude Thoma for coordinating the Gardeners Group, Sioux Dolman and the artists group, Alan Seppings and the pizza oven builders, Carole and Keith for their coordination and advice, and to the growing number of volunteers who are making Thursdays a very busy time at UYCEP.

Bernie Lobert

Human Resources

In early 2009 UYCEP received a \$40,000 grant from the Helen MacPherson Smith Foundation. This enabled the Committee to employ a Project Worker for 20 hours a week for 12 months. The Project Worker's role was to include implementation of the Master Plan, promotion of the Park and its objectives, identification of and application for funding and identification of learning opportunities at the Park. Keith Jesse was duly appointed in April 2009 following an extensive recruitment process and at this time the Human Resources sub-committee (HR) was formed to provide systems, direction and support. Keith has since worked very effectively to objectives of the role, bringing extensive project management and community facilitation experience with him from his 15 years at CERES Environment Park. He has worked tirelessly to facilitate the Strategic Planning sub-committee whilst submitting a number of major funding applications.



Once Keith was appointed HR focussed on setting up the office at the site and establishing appropriate workplace policies. The office was equipped with a laptop computer, the internet, a phone, printer and photocopier as well as desks, a filing cabinet and stationery. Work began on several policies: Volunteer, Site Usage, Conflict Resolution and Sole Worker. Yarra Valley Security was contracted and sensor lights fitted.

Not long after Keith's appointment an opportunity arose to employ a second Project Worker through a government employment initiative called a Training and Support Grant. Under this Job Network scheme the government basically provided 80% of an employee's salary for 6 months. Carole Ann was appointed and started work in June for 15 hours per week. The focus of Carole's role was Community Engagement and to this end she began work on encouraging Arts groups to become involved in the Arts space and local gardeners to commit to the Community Gardens space. She has also worked on the website as well as sending out regular newsletters and encouraging volunteer participation. The park is now often a hive of activity.



HR is now working with Jobs Services Australia to initiate a program at the site where long-term unemployed people will be selected to work at the site as Work Experience Volunteers. It is hoped that there will be 3 people appointed to work on the grounds and general maintenance at the park for 2 days a week for 6 months. The skills they gain during this period will potentially assist them in the job-seeking process. In the meantime there are increasing numbers of volunteers from the community making a very positive contribution to the state of the park.

I would like to thank Grant Eastwood and Bernie Lobert for their positive and untiring contributions to this sub-committee. And of course our sincere thanks to Keith and Carole for their professional and unstinting commitment to their jobs at the park. They are significantly contributing to the realisation of our vision for the UYCEP.

Joe Butler

Governance



After the formation of sub-committees at the October 2008 planning session the Governance sub-committee began work on the systems and processes that will ensure the overall direction, effectiveness, supervision and accountability of the organisation. The foundation of a Policy Manual for all governance and operational matters is now in place. A document “Governance & Structures” has been created to define how the Committee operates within UYCEP’s constitution. It also details the role, structure, functions and processes of the Committee, the sub-committee and their members.

“Governance and Structures” was adopted by the Committee after which Governance embarked on writing a new constitution to replace the Model Rules, primarily to reflect the nature of the composition of Committee. This is now largely complete and a Special General Meeting will be called in early in 2010 to propose its adoption. Governance has reviewed the effectiveness and efficiencies of the Committee and sub-committees, surveyed Committee members, and instigated the November Planning Day.

With the development of the sub-committees many more skilled, knowledgeable and committed people have become involved at what is now the hub of planning and implementation of UYCEP’s vision and objectives. It is envisaged that staff positions will be created to assume the implementation and management of many of these areas though the immediate future will, until funding becomes available, involve a combined effort on the part of existing staff and volunteer Committee members.

Several changes to the composition of the Committee occurred throughout the year. Grant Eastwood replaced Keith Jesse as President when Keith accepted our foundation staff position at UYCEP, Margret Leslie becoming Vice President. Paul Jenkins came onto the Committee and replaced Geoff Vickers as Treasurer, and Robert Hay (Masters Environmental Science) and Graeme George (principal, Yarra Valley Permaculture) joined the Committee.

Governance wishes to thank all the Committee and sub-committee members for their tireless commitment, and for the harmonious manner in which they have applied themselves. Thanks to the Governance members: Bernie Lobert and Ian Cuming, both of whom have a great depth of experience and knowledge in community building initiatives.

Grant Eastwood

The Year Ahead

In the year ahead UYCEP will continue to develop as an organisation that has the capacity to uphold its responsibilities in respect of managing the site. It will aim to provide opportunities to deliver a broad range of training and education programs that promote sustainable living solutions in the Upper Yarra region, begin development of a sustainable community farm, and source funding required to expand its staff and further develop infrastructure according to indications in the Master Plan and Business Plan. The Committee will approach the New Year with great optimism: it has been tested and has become stronger for the experiences, and recognition and support within the community is growing.

UYCEP has identified management of the grounds is a significant priority. As the year progresses UYCEP will increasingly deliver on its training and education objectives, initially through developing partnerships with local organisations such as UYCH, Yarra Valley Permaculture and others. UYCEP has the required skills and knowledge to continue applying for the significant funding that will be required to realise the vision the site, of creating a community hub, of delivering sustainable living solution and addressing the issues that threaten this in practical ways .

The 2009 Open Day was a successful trial for the more ambitious Earth Wise Festival to be held at multiple locations throughout the Upper Yarra at Easter 2010. UYCEP will continue to develop relationships with key stakeholders and attract new partners toward achieving shared and mutually beneficial outcomes.



Financial Performance

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, 2009 and its cash and balances as at that date.

Dated: *November 18, 2009*


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

Upper Yarra Community Environment Park Inc.

Statement of Income and Expenditure 1 July 2008 - 30 June 2009

| Income | | 2008/09 |
|---|--|-----------------|
| Fees/subscriptions | | 308 |
| Grants (Government/Corporate) | | 45,000 |
| Sponsorships | | 12,000 |
| Total Income | | 57,308 |
| Expenditure | | |
| Rent/hire | | 213 |
| Gas, water, electricity, insurance, etc | | 5,440 |
| Salaries and wages | | 8,155 |
| Office expenses | | 1,292 |
| Security | | 203 |
| Maintenance | | 1,077 |
| Total Expenditure | | 16,380 |
| Surplus for Year | | \$40,380 |

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2009

| Assets | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Current: | Cash in hand at bank | 45,778 |
| | Debit card account | 65 |
| Non-current: | Property, equipment & furnishings | 4,080 |
| Total Assets | | 49,923 |
| Liabilities | | |
| | Uncleared cheques | 346 |
| Total Liabilities | | 346 |
| Net Assets | | \$49,577 |

Acknowledgements

Upper Yarra Community Environment Park thanks all its financial supporters that have made possible the great progress to date and for providing the foundation for future development.

Principal Partners:

Shire of Yarra Ranges

Upper Yarra Community House

Financial Supporters:

Upper Yarra Community Enterprise Limited

Department of Planning and Community Development

Helen Macpherson Smith Trust

BBM Office National

Supporters: Upper Yarra CBI, Jon Coe Design, Yarra Valley Permaculture,
CERES Environment Park, Live & Learn, My Environment



Helen
Macpherson
Smith
Trust



2009 Annual Report contributors:

Joe Butler, Grant Eastwood, Paul Jenkins, Keith Jesse, Bernie Lobert

Thanks to Jon Coe of Jon Coe Design, Sarah Rees of I I Butterflies Design,
and Jenny Donovan of DLA for the use of their images

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