

Down's Estate Community Project

first Annual Report

Covering period from commencement on 29 September 2016 to 1st March 2018

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Key Dates

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 license signed including access to the shed

Committee Members during the period

Maree Vinocuroff	Co-chair
John McKenzie	Co-chair
Maureen Griffin	Secretary
Gillian Collins	Treasurer
Pat Bentley	ordinary member
Robyn Erwin	ordinary member
Michael Rohan	ordinary member
Victoria Clarke	ordinary member, resigned 5April'17
Jack Lucas	ordinary member, resigned 16Feb'17

Down's Estate Community Project

Annual Report for AGM March 1, 2018

We are very pleased to present our first Annual Report for the Down's Estate Community Project Inc.

Background- When Frankston Council began community consultations in 2011, hoping to find the best use for this iconic site in Seaford, we could not have imagined the remarkable journey that would lead us to the Project we are implementing today.

The aim in all our efforts is to activate our Mission Statement. This prioritises sustainability through care of the natural environment and development of organic food production with accompanying skills building. Equally important, is acting to strengthen our community with activities to acknowledge our heritage stories, build resilience, foster connection between people, and with their environment.

Present Position-This grassroots community project, guided by a committee of 7 local residents, John Mckenzie, Maree Vinocuroff, Maureen Griffin, Michael Rohan, Robyn Erwin, Gillian Collins and Pat Bentley have worked to gain a 12 month lease with Frankston City Council for the designated area east of the Shared Path. We have access to the large Shed for equipment storage, newly installed picnic settings and a quickly developing food garden with water infrastructure. This area contains various garden beds and plots using different construction techniques. We are sharing our vegetable harvests with local community members and organisations.

DECP as it exists today was incorporated as an Association on September 29, 2016 and since that time has made strong community connections with many local groups, small businesses and interested local residents. We thank them all for their encouragement, participation, generosity and support. Thank you especially to Belvedere Community Centre for hosting us tonight and for providing us a regular, welcoming meeting place.

We have participated in and supported many local events and undertakings including the Council "Think Big" project and community and other Council Plan submissions. We maintain active membership of the Frankston Environmental Friends Network and have maintained a monthly presence at Seaford Farmers Market for many years. We have been featured in the Frankston City news and local media.

Our involvement in special events has included the FFAN Food Fest, NAIDOC week, the Mayor's Picnic and Westernport Biosphere and National tree planting days. Recently, some of the garden team attended Urban farming workshops at CERES, Brunswick and as a result have created an urban farm network with other participants. Down's Estate was also used as a case study for a local permaculture Design Course last year.

Finances- We have achieved success in gaining a number of grants and donations and then used them to make positive changes at Down's Estate with pathways, picnic tables and the garden establishment. These outcomes are due to the significant long term efforts of many committed locals, with support from Frankston City Council and Council staff, we look forward to continuing work with them in the future. Also the support of Chris Crewther and Sonya Kilkenny has been greatly appreciated.

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

Since January 2014, there have been weekly or fortnightly meetings of our working group, and countless extra meetings for planning, practical actions and document writing, now numbering in the thousands of volunteer hours.

We need to acknowledge the valuable contributions of all those who have worked on this Project Committee since 2012. Each person who has engaged, has given this venture the benefit of their unique talents. We greatly appreciate the contribution of Noel Tudball who has assisted us long term by recording the history of this project on the Seaford Community Committee website and other digital platforms and social media.

One exceptional person who deserves our deep appreciation is current Committee member, Pat Bentley. Pat has attended almost every Committee meeting since 2014 and continues to give insight and creativity to any issue we address. She is a great networker and team player. Pat is inspired to bring the story of Harry Down, the last owner of the farm, and the history of the local Indigenous community, to life. We and Frankston owe Pat a large debt of gratitude for her tenacity and belief in making Down's Estate an iconic and vibrant community space now and into the future. So, Thank you Pat. You are at the heart of this Project.

A valuable spin off from our work so far has been the establishment of relationships and cooperation with surrounding groups such as the motor cycle club, BMX club and the model Aero club, we feel that we are forging a real community involvement precinct.

Future Planning- Looking ahead, we plan to continue our weekly community Gardening Bees, hold seasonal special events, provide workshops on specific topics and conduct other activities as they emerge from community interest or need.

We will expand our gardens to include indigenous bushfoods, a heritage fruit orchard and build garden beds to suit people of varying abilities. We are working on a plan to maximise the benefit of our plantings.

We are also pursuing our engagement with Nairm Marr Djambana (NMD) and look forward to engaging with this community during the year.

We will be hosting a DEWLP community skill building grant program for monitoring various elements at Down's Estate.

We are very open to local school engagement and have already had visits from Patterson River Secondary College students. We aim to further develop this engagement with young people in skill building, volunteer and passive recreation activities.

We will continue to support the environmental restoration of the majority portion of the Down's site and work as a 'friends' group with the Frankston Environmental Friends Network.

Challenges- *We have many challenges onsite we are working to address. We need sustainable solutions for increased water infrastructure, a toilet facility and if possible some off grid power provision. We would like to see the House onsite renovated to serve a useful purpose and be a resource for the Project, that it not continue to deteriorate.*

These factors currently limit our offerings to the community

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

