



Creeds Farm Living & Learning Centre Annual Report 2013 / 2014

Chairperson's Report

It is my pleasure to present to you the 2014 Annual Report for Creeds Farm Living and Learning Centre. It has been an interesting and overall positive year for all of us who have been involved with the Centre. We have had a change in manager with Claire Butler finishing up in September this year. We are glad to have Max Sargent who joined us in October, and comes with ample experience in the sectors and in other neighbourhood houses.

We have now settled into our routine of opening hours which involves a mix of volunteers' and manager's time. This has worked well in so much as we have been able to keep the centre open for a greater span of hours, thereby creating further opportunities to serve the community and its needs.

I believe I would be justified in making the assertion that Creeds Farm is now an established community centre in the immediate Aurora community and more broadly in the City of Whittlesea. I would also assert that we are here to serve the needs of our local and broader community, this is central to our operational and strategic mission. While we are still some way from offering the services that one would expect from a fully fledged centre, we are well on the way to providing and meeting many of the local community's needs. The manager's report provides further details of the specifics in relation to our programs, events and initiatives in 2014 which have helped us move in the right direction in relation to our strategic goals and objectives.

We continue to see the "living and learning" aspect of our mission as central and we continue to plan for and implement initiative that will allow us to move in this direction, in-line with community needs and expectations.

In terms of our strategic direction we continue to be guided by three key areas. These are – a) to be a well managed and governed organisation, b) to focus on connecting our diverse community, c) building partnerships and optimal utilisation of the centre space. In 2014, we have been able to meet our expectations and hopefully that of the community in relation to these three key areas of our operations.

The precinct within which we are located has dramatically changed over the last year, with the introduction of the school as well as the childcare centre. We are excited about both these developments and look forward to forming long-term, productive, and interesting partnerships with these organisations.

This year we embarked on an ambitious "Co-working" project with the City of Whittlesea. Co-working is an exciting and interesting initiative that allows the local community to utilise the facilities available at Creeds Farm to hire their own "office space" and to network with, and develop ideas with other "co-workers". We thank the City Whittlesea for their support and sponsorship of this project and look forward to working with them into the future on this and other projects.

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In terms of financial performance, the committee constantly cognisant of the fact that we are a not-for-profit, nevertheless we have been actively managing our finances and consequently we are in a relatively stable position. For the first time this year the committee undertook the task of designing the budget for the 2013-14 financial year. If our estimates materialise then we envisage continuing our position of stability into the next financial year and the near future.

In terms of governance, I can confidently assert that we have also complied with all legislative and good practice requirements in relation to the Department of Human Services, City of Whittlesea and other funding providers and bodies. As part of these requirements we undertake an annual risk management process to ensure that all areas of our operations can continue effectively and efficiently into the future.

I am stepping down as Chairperson at this year's AGM. It has been a privilege to Chair the Committee meetings and to work with a generous and competent team of Committee members. I look forward to being involved with Creeds Farm in some capacity or other and I'm sure that the Committee's efforts to date have created a strong platform for the Centre to be even more successful in the future.

Finally, I would like to thank our volunteers as organisations like ours would not function without their generous contribution of time and effort. I would also like to thank the local and broader Whittlesea community for their participation and engagement with the Centre in 2014, long may this continue.

Dr Venkat Narayanan

Chairperson – Creeds Farm Living and Learning Centre

On behalf of the Committee

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Treasurer's Report

2013/14 has been characterised by the achievement of another successful year, with Creeds Farm Living & learning Centre (CFLLC).

It is with much satisfaction that I present CFLLC's annual accounts for 2013/14. These statements have been prepared with a view to the transactions carried out as a consequence of CFLLC's activities over the twelve months from July 2013 to June 2014.

My sincere thanks to Eugene Odachowski ACA for his oversight in auditing CFLLC's financial statements again this year and I am happy to declare that the 2013/14 accounts have been confirmed as reflecting a true and fair view of CFLLC's financial position as at 30 June 2014 and that the accompanying statements have been prepared in accordance with the prevailing accounting standards.

CFLLC's focus has been sharpened in the last year as a result of the completion of Strategic Plan prior to the financial year. Competition within the not-for profit sector has risen in recent times and it is worthy of recognition that CFLLC has maintained its revenue streams in highly competitive environment. We were successful in getting few more grants during the financial year for various projects. Following are some highlights of the financial year 2013/14.

- Cash reserve has increased by 69%.
- 8% drop in operating loss after depreciation.
- Operating income has increased by 4% and it's mainly from daily operations.
- 1% increase in operating expenses mainly due to building maintenance works.

These achievements weren't possible without the effort and dedication from Claire Butler (former manager) and the volunteers. I wish to acknowledge and thank for their valuable support. I also thank to Peter Drinan (Finance Officer) for his accounting and IT support for the year. I extend my sincere thanks to our following funding partners.

- City of Whittlesea
- ACFE
- DHS
- FaHCSIA

Finally I thank my fellow committee members for their continued support.

Upul Sathurusinghe

Treasurer



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Attachment: Audited Financial Statements

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Manager's Report

Creeds Farm LLC has continued to become more and more fully utilised in 2013 / 2014. We see Creeds Farm LLC as a shared space where amazing things can happen. This has shown in the increase of nearly 20% in our room bookings for 2013/2014 compared with 2012/2013. Additionally, in terms of large public events, we ran two very successful events – both with the Aurora Community Association – which had over 200 guests. These events were a significant milestone in our maturation as a Living & Learning Centre.

With the Board of Management, we continued to focus on 3 of the 5 Key Directions outlined in our Strategic Directions, namely:

- Connecting our diverse community
- Building partnerships to address community need and ensure optimum utilization of the Centre, and,
- A well-managed and governed organisation.



Connecting our diverse community

- Events

In 2013 / 2014 we hosted 7 Centre-wide events:

- Afternoon Market in July 2013
- Epping Kids & Babies Market in December 2013
- Our second “Annual Holiday Celebration” in December 2013
- Part of the Clean Up Australia Day event in March 2014
- Neighbour Day on 30 March 2014 (part of March Away From Gambling)
- Mum’s Night In on 11 May with the Family Engagement Facilitation Project (City of Whittlesea)
- Multicultural Celebration with the Aurora Community Association and the Whittlesea Multicultural Communities Council on 25 May 2014.

These events are part of an ongoing calendar of events held by the Centre to further achieve our aims. We are proud to say that the Epping Kids & Babies Market and Multicultural Celebration had attendances exceeding 200 at each event. This was great news for us, and we look forward to running more such events in the future.

- Publicity

The Centre mainly used web-based publicity methods in this financial year. We have continued to keep our new website at www.creedsfarm.org.au up to date, adding new features and a new page for the Creeds Farm Community Garden. We sent 11 e-newsletters to a list which grew to over 200 members in this year. Our newsletters have a 47% “open rate” compared with an industry average of 18%. We re-invigorated a *Facebook* page with regular postings, and we currently have over 200 people who “like” the page. We have experimented with paying for further Facebook reach, but despite the low cost and the reach to nearly 5,000 people, we have not found this increases attendance at events. The manager also became an administrator for a local “Epping Community Group” on Facebook which increases our reach even more.

Further work continues to establish a solid offline presence and to reach those who do not regularly use the internet. We have participated in several “mail drops” organised by the Aurora Community Association where we co-deliver flyers to the local housing estates of Aurora and Lyndarum.

- Hiring the Centre for private parties

There is no doubt that important connections are made at social events. While it is the aim of the Centre to be fully utilised by groups conducting community activities, when it is not booked for such activities, it is available for casual hire for private events. This has proved to

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be an attractive venue for people in our local community, and 16 events were held here in the last financial year.

Building partnerships to address community need and ensure optimum utilisation of the centre

- City of Whittlesea

We maintain strong connections with staff at the City of Whittlesea, namely with these departments:

- Community Services and Health, including:
 - Ongoing liaison with the Community Development Officer for Epping North, Kathy Pompetti
 - Family Engagement Facilitators Katherine Ball and Fiona Miller.
 - The Elders Making A Difference (EMAD) program on Wednesdays and Thursdays from February 2013
 - Baseline youth services program
- Sustainability Planning
 - Sustainability Outreach Whittlesea has run workshops with the Community Garden.

- Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres ANHLC

We actively participate in networking sessions with 5 other neighbourhood houses and learning centres in the City of Whittlesea and the North East Neighbourhood House Network.

- Whittlesea Community Connections

Whittlesea Community Connections has proved to be an excellent partner in providing many referrals for volunteer hosts as well as basic information provision – the many pamphlets and written material which you will see here at the Centre.

- Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and Training Providers

WE have built successful partnerships in the last year with Community West, who has been delivering English as a Second Language classes here, and our close relationship with Northern Care First Aid, under the helm of Ian Rimmer, has continued and grown.

A well-managed and governed organisation

- I continue to work closely with the Centre's Finance Officer, Peter Drinan, whose knowledge of the Centre and its operations since it began has been invaluable. Please refer to the Treasurer's report and the Financial Audit for information relating to financial matters.
- The Board of management grew to 5 members this year, and has met approximately every 6 weeks and also held a budget planning summit ahead of the new financial year.

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- I am very grateful of the support I receive from the Board members, who are also volunteers:
 - Venkat Narayanan, Chairperson
 - Upul Sathurusinghe, Treasurer
 - Karen Rosenberg, Public Officer
 - Ian Rimmer
 - Sharyn Tambo

Other key directions:

Providing our community with formal and informal opportunities for learning and personal growth

- Volunteer Hosting Program

The key to any organisation's success is its people. One of the challenges of running a living and learning centre is staffing. This Centre has the capacity to be used over 90 hours a week, but the staffing budget is for 20 hours a week. With a successful new Volunteer Hosting program, started in February 2013, we have consistently been open to the public over 4 days a week. Volunteers commit to working here 4 hours each week. We currently have a crew of 9 Volunteer Hosts. These are:

- Margaret McBean (15 hours a week)
- Anna Conversano
- Ibrahim Peasell
- Ian Rimmer
- Amanda Rogers
- June Radford
- Zeinab Hamad
- Sallee-Anne Cronan (Matchworks work-for-the dole volunteer at approximately 15 hours per week)

Hosts greet the visiting public and answer telephone enquiries. They also maintain a welcoming space. Hosts have been involved in training in google applications, web, social media and photo manipulation and help with the publicity of the centre. Many have also helped out at our events. Their commitment and enthusiasm is commendable and they are truly "worth their weight in gold."

- Programs run by volunteers:

The Centre is very lucky to have volunteers who run a variety of activities. There is sometimes a small charge for the participants but the organisation and commitment these volunteer leaders put into these groups is exceptional.

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Who	Volunteer leader	Audience	Type of activity	Total
Creeds Farm Community Garden	Brad Costin and a leadership team	Adults (generally)	Monthly working bees and occasional workshops	11
Playgroup	Milenda Schaedler, contact	Parents and children under 5	Parent run informal playgroup	40
Sew Happy Craft Group	Wendy Harrison	adults	Skillshare / social	40
Hope and Faith Group	Dimitri Demech	adults	Social and support group	40

- Programs put on by others:

The vision for the Creeds Farm Living and Learning Centre is:

To provide communities access to high quality learning services and activities, enabling them to achieve their full potential and contribute to the success of the community

Among other things, it exists to:

- *Build individual and/or community capacity*
 - *Fill the gaps in existing learning provision and community activity programs*
 - *Support people in Epping North and surrounding areas to enhance their skills and capabilities.*
 - *Provide flexible, accessible and tailored learning that meets the needs of the community*
- (Creeds Farm Living & Learning Centre Strategic Plan, 2012)*

How do we do this? In addition to the volunteer programs run above, there is a very diverse group of people who regularly hire space in the Centre to run their programs. In addition to one-off events from strategic planning days to meditation retreats, the Centre has a group of ongoing hirers which deliver activities for people of all ages and abilities.

Regular Ongoing Hirers in 2013 / 2014:

Who	What	Audience	Type of activity	Total (approximate – typically attend a session)
All Dance Company	Kinder dance class	Children aged 2 - 5	Fitness / arts	20
Tiny Tutus Dance	Preschooler's dance classes	Children aged 2 - 5	Fitness / arts	10

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Karma Dance	Children's Indian Classical Dance classes	Children aged 4 - 9	Fitness / arts	20
Elders Making a Difference	Planned Activity Group for older Aboriginal people	Older adults	Fitness / arts	10
Hatha Yoga	Adult's yoga class	adults	fitness	10
Somali Cultural Group	Arabic lessons	Children aged 6 - 15	education	30
Epping Maktab	Arabic Koran lessons	Children aged 7 - 8	education	10
Wild@heART Community Arts	Arts program for people with intellectual and/or physical disabilities	Youth – 12 - 21	arts	20
Future City Church	Youth program and faith based program	Youth – 12 - 21	Faith based / social	24
Living Water Community Church	Youth program and faith based program	Youth – 12 - 21	Faith based / social	18
Northern Care First Aid	Courses in first aid, CPR, anaphylaxis and asthma	adults	classes	21
Community West	English Classes	adults	education	15
Impressionable kids	Baby mementoes	Sole partner business / franchise; customers are adults with babies < 1 year.	business	20
Aurora Community Association	Community Association	Generally adults	Community issues / social events	20

Key Direction 2

Environmental stewardship and leadership

- **Maintaining a 7 Star Eco-Living Centre**
Creeds Farm LLC has been designed as an “eco-living centre” and this affects all everyday decisions about the building and facilities. We spent less on repairs and maintenance (just under \$3600) in the 2013 / 2014 financial year. Our underfloor heating system working is finally working properly. We continue to maintain the centre with environmentally friendly cleaning materials and have contracted an environmentally friendly cleaning company called “Earth Friendly Cleaning” on a weekly basis. Centre users are pretty good about keeping our “green bond” and doing the right thing when using the centre; it is often a talking point for conversations about sustainability.

Of special consideration is the Creeds Farm Community Garden which is auspiced by us. They have done exceptionally well with their workshops for children and the community and have a good turnout at the monthly working bees. They are a partner with Food Connect and run food swaps as part of this program.

Looking towards the future

- **Co-working –** The CoWorking Pilot Program started at Creeds Farm for the financial year 2013 / 2014 and has its own comprehensive project management plan. The program is sponsored by the City of Whittlesea and in total is a near \$20,000 commitment. Co-working takes place on a Tuesday and a Friday and a variety of networking events and online systems have been put in place to both manage and promote the Centre as an innovative alternative to the “office cube” and the response has been positive, if slow to start, so far. A page on our website is dedicated to the Co-working project.
- **ACFE Community of Practice –** In August we heard from Adult , Community and Further Education that we were successful in a grant where we are the lead agency (working with other Learn Local organisations) in a Community of Practice for professionals in our sector interested in embedding Education & Training for Sustainability in Learn Local Organisations. Work has begun on a series of seminars and a dedicated website, and Creeds Farm is well placed to lead this exciting initiative.

I write this report shortly before my departure as Manager of Creeds Farm Living & Learning Centre. I have thoroughly enjoyed my two years here, and, like so many of the local residents, it is only economic pressure that has prompted me to seek fulltime work. I do hope to continue my



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association with Creeds Farm Living & Learning Centre either professionally or personally and wish the Centre every bit of luck as it continues into maturing as a vibrant organisation.

Claire Butler

Manager