



# Strategic Plan 2020 – 2024

## DRAFT

### WHO WE ARE

Creeds Farm Living and Learning Centre (Creeds Farm) is a purpose-built neighbourhood house in Epping North established in 2011.

We provide a gathering place with a community focus for the residents of Epping North and Wollert. We provide opportunities for life-long learning, skills development, information sharing, social and recreational activities and community development. We support local community groups with low cost meeting and function space.

In the last five years our centre users consisted of diverse linguistic and cultural groups, religious gatherings, early childhood activities, art and craft activities and wellbeing activities such as yoga and dance. Creeds Farm is also used by education and employment services.

In that time, we have strengthened our community development focus. We established and continue to support our women's group, craft group and mental health self-help group who all meet regularly to connect, learn and create. We run a homework club. We provide safe spaces locally where young people can have fun and interact with their peers such as through gaming and coding workshops. And with an increase to our base funding, in 2019 we created a permanent community development worker role.

We are governed by a voluntary committee of management and supported by local and state government. Built using sustainable residential design concepts under the Greener Houses Initiative, we use environmentally sustainable practices in all our operations. Our community garden continues to draw people together, including the participation of our local kindergartens.

## OUR COMMUNITY

We are a diverse and growing community. When the centre opened in 2011, Epping North had a population of 7,596. In 2019 the Epping North and Wollert population was estimated at 35,262 people and is forecasted to grow by about 4,000 people by 2023. New housing continues to be approved and forecasted growth is for about 57,000 residents in Epping North and 35,000 residents in Wollert by 2040.

Half of our community are couples with children, with 30 per cent young families with children under 11. Our residents are young (median age of 30) and well-educated (40 per cent hold a university or vocational qualification). Many residents participate in new parent's playgroups and arts and cultural groups.

Forty-three per cent of our community was born overseas and 57 per cent speak a language other than English at home. Seventeen per cent of Epping North and Wollert residents are recent overseas arrivals. For some residents, including women who are staying at home to manage the family and older people, this means issues in accessing and navigating support services and the potential for increased isolation. More generally, there are a range of services our residents have difficulty accessing including financial and legal support services and mental health services. Other services our residents would like include libraries and children, youth and family services.

Almost 60 per cent of residents have a mortgage and many residents experience financial insecurity, including mortgage and rental stress.

Just over half our residents work in health care and social assistance, retail, transport, warehousing and manufacturing and construction. Epping North and Wollert is still poorly serviced by public transport and most people need to travel outside of the municipality for work. About 30 per cent need to travel more than an hour each way to work. With a growing population and increased traffic congestion, our residents spend a lot of time commuting and have less time to spend with family, friends and on leisure activities.

People under 17 are one of our fastest growing populations, and almost 30 per cent of our community will be under 17 in the next 10 years. There is a need for safe spaces for young people to meet locally and socialise, be active, complete homework, access services and get support for starting a project or business. There are also a lack of employment opportunities and pathways for young people to create their own future.

Our residents have said they would like more neighbourhood level activities, be empowered to facilitate and run these activities and would like more ways to create connection and social inclusion.

### **2019 Creeds Farm community survey**

Identified four key community values:

- Connected and engaged community
- Welcoming community spirit
- Proximity and convenience to shops
- Pleasant and clean environment

Assets and skills in our community include cultural diversity, leading learning programs and facilitating art, craft and wellbeing activities.

People would like to:

- Engage in physical exercise and activities for the whole family
- Participate in art, craft, dance and music activities to connect, learn and have fun
- Attend events and activities that help them connect with others in the neighbourhood, are family friendly and to have more activities at the weekend and on school holidays
- Attend inclusive social groups
- Attend playgroups and groups and workshops for new mums

## OUR PHILOSOPHY

We believe in the power of community led activities and in working with our community to create a vibrant, connected neighbourhood.

## OUR VALUES

<b>Connection</b>	We connect with each other and connect people to opportunities, support, learning and community.
<b>Empowerment</b>	We enable community participation and support self-awareness and people taking action to meet their needs.
<b>Diversity</b>	We celebrate people's strengths, skills and potential, learn from each other and promote inclusiveness.
<b>Welcoming</b>	We are positive, kind and bring good will and good humour to all we do.

## OUR PRIORITIES

To develop our new strategic plan the committee of management and Creeds Farm Manager analysed and considered the outcomes from our 2019 community survey, our draft community development plan, past successes and challenges, issues for Creeds Farm now and in the future, our 2020 marketing research report, future directions and challenges for the Epping North and Wollert community and spoke with key stakeholders and users of Creeds Farm. We also considered the impact on our community and our operations of the Covid-19 pandemic.

From this, we determined our priorities to guide Creeds Farm activities over the next four years. We then invited our community to provide feedback on the draft plan.

**Community connection and social inclusion.** We know there is a need for increased social inclusion and community connection at the neighbourhood level and residents would like more neighbourhood level activities. There are also services people have difficulty accessing in Epping North and Wollert. We want to build on our community development focus over the last five years. We will:

- support local initiatives and enable people in our community to develop programs
- ensure the sustainability of our current community groups and sustainably increase our community development activities

### Marketing research report

This report was to help us understand what people know about Creeds Farm and how we can best reach and inform our community so we can have a greater impact in supporting our community. It found:

- Most people heard of Creeds Farm through word of mouth and Facebook.
- People who attend our centre do so for connection and well-being activities.
- Many people don't attend activities at the centre because of timing.
- Many people in our community don't know what Creeds Farm does and aren't aware we're a neighbourhood house.
- We have a good social media presence and there is opportunity to better use our website and social media to explain who we are and what we do.
- There are opportunities to provide information to our culturally diverse community in their languages.

- develop partnerships with other organisations to connect people to services to meet community needs
- promote Creeds Farm activities and facilities to the community.

**Wellbeing and lifelong learning.** The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic will be felt over the next few years, particularly in mental health and wellbeing, employment and financially. We want to support and build community resilience and provide opportunities for formal and informal learning. We will:

- provide safe, welcoming spaces for gathering and learning
- run no or low-cost wellbeing and sustainability activities
- investigate how we can better connect and learn online
- build people's capacity to facilitate activities
- promote partnerships with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, employment pathways and emergency relief.

**Good governance and sustainability.** Creeds Farm owns its building, a significant community asset that needs funding for ongoing maintenance and repair. The Covid-19 pandemic will affect our hall hire revenue in the short to medium term. And with only two permanently funded staff we need to consider how we build capacity and skills to meet current needs and future plans. We will:

- develop long-term financial forecasts to support Creeds Farm operations and building maintenance and repairs
- explore how we diversify our funding streams
- investigate options to expand our capacity and skills including how we use and support volunteers.

## GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

Creeds Farm is an incorporated community managed organisation.

Our Manager is responsible for the day-to-day management and operation of our centre. Centre operations are supported by a community development worker, regular and local volunteers and university student placements, who report to the Manager.

The Manager reports to the voluntary committee of management who are responsible for the strategic direction and good governance of Creeds Farm. Our Committee is elected from and reports to our members at our Annual General Meeting. Anyone who supports our purposes can become a member. The Committee consists of a Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and up to four general committee members.

### Decision Making

Decision making at Creeds Farm is done inclusively with our community members who are affected by the issues to be decided about. For example, decisions impacting on our community garden are done in consultation with our community garden group.

The Manager reports to the Committee and puts proposals to the Committee. Likewise, the Committee reports to our members and puts proposals to our members for approval.

### Rules and Regulations

Creeds Farm exists within and must abide by relevant government legislation and regulations. This includes tax law, WorkCover and Working with Children Checks.

Creeds Farm is incorporated in Victoria under the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012* and we report annually to Consumer Affairs as part of this. We also follow the guidelines and obligations agreed with our two primary funding bodies.

We are a not-for-profit organisation. This means that any income that we have cannot be paid to our Committee or members, except as a genuine fee-for-service. Instead, all money raised goes directly back into programs for our community.

We are registered with the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission.

A copy of our Rules can be found on our website.

### **Funding**

We are audited every year and report to our funders who require us to meet service agreements for the money they provide us. Our main funding is the Neighbourhood Houses Co-ordination Program of the Department of Health and Human Services. Whittlesea City Council provides annual neighbourhood house funding too. We also receive one-off grants for specific projects from other funding bodies.