



# Mount Leura & Mount Sugarloaf Management Project

Commenced in 1991 by the Town of Camperdown Council, with additional financial support from the National Trust, the Mt Leura Advisory Committee undertook community consultation and guided the initial master plan which was created by a team of consultants and completed for adoption in December 1994.

Since 1995, this Committee has received invaluable financial and resource support from Corangamite Council and many other organisations. Council's provision to the Committee of an annual budget allocation has allowed the Committee to undertake the implementation of the Mt. Leura & Mt. Sugarloaf Management Plans and to fund the employment of a part-time (1 day/week) Project Officer. The importance of the role played by the part-time Project Officer cannot be overstated.

This ongoing support has allowed the Committee to work with the community and other organisations to develop extensive visitor facilities, provide educational, recreational and tourism opportunities and indigenous revegetation outcomes across the reserves. These have all combined to benefit the profile of Camperdown as well as the local community's health and well-being and also the local environment. This document is a summary of the Committee's major achievements and plans for future management and development of the Reserves.

The Mt. Leura and Mt. Sugarloaf Development Committee (now Management Committee) was established in 1994 to manage the Mt Leura and Mt Sugarloaf Reserves, both of which are recognised as nationally significant on the Register of National Estate through their location within the Leura Maar Complex.

The role of the Committee is the continued implementation of the 'Mount Leura and Mount Sugarloaf Management plan 2013-2018' having already implemented the previous 'Mt. Leura and Mt. Sugarloaf Landscape Master Plan and Management Plan'(1994) which aimed *"to enhance the visual, recreational, educational, cultural and environmental qualities of the reserve through sensitive revegetation and the provision of appropriate facilities."*

The outcomes of these actions over the past 22 years have seen many significant improvements to our two local reserves - both of which are important natural assets. The photos below highlight one such example.



Changes to Lower Shelter area of Mt. Leura (left to right/ top to bottom: May 2000; September 2000; January 2003; December 2010; October 2010; September 2015)

# **KEY SUCCESSES AND ACHIEVEMENTS:**

## **1: Additional Funding - Value Adding to Council Funds.**

### **Funding sourced by the Committee:**

- Successful grant applications from local, regional, state and federal sources have attracted a total of over \$290,000 over the past 20 years.

### **Funding sourced by OTHER groups:**

- \* The Committee has also received an estimated \$35,000 in financial support from other community groups in the area such as Camperdown Rotary Inc., Lakes and Craters Environment Group, Friends of Mt Leura Inc.

### **In-kind contribution to the project by committee members and other volunteers:**

- Since records began in 2002, more than 27,000 volunteer hours have been contributed – an average of about 1,800 volunteer hours per annum. In dollar terms, calculated at \$25 per hour, this amounts to over \$670,000 in just the years up to 2016. This represents an enormous financial contribution/saving to the Committee and to Council.



Left: 90 Pine trees were removed from Mt. Sugarloaf with funding from Council and grants from the 'Craters to Coast' Gas Alliance and Second Generation Landcare Grants. Right: The Information Shelter near the Upper Carpark was built with funding from by Camperdown Rotary Club.

## **2: Development and enhancement of facilities and infrastructure**

- Installation and development of the Volcanic Education Centre.
- Stone wall entrance to Lower Shelter area.
- 3 information shelters
- 14 information boards.
- 3 picnic areas with seats/picnic tables.
- 5.6 km of walking trails.
- 8 additional walk trail seats plus 1 additional walk trail shelter
- 4 sets of steps for walking trails
- Directional signage for walking trails.
- Continued mowing and maintenance of walk trails.
- Car park at Lower Information Shelter.
- Installation of geocache sites for use by school/scout groups and tourists
- Replaced boundary fencing
- Assisted in establishing Camperdown College Nursery for the propagation of seedlings to be planted on the Reserves and for students' curriculum.
- Risk assessment of reserves undertaken annually and issues addressed.
- Development and implementation of Fire Management Plan for the reserves in partnership with Shire and local CFA, including establishment of 3 emergency egress tracks and gateways.

### **3: Enhancement of Natural Environment**

A key component of the initial Management Plan was the establishment of indigenous plants across the reserves. Successes include:

- Indigenous revegetation successfully established – approx 35,000 trees and shrubs plus over 60,000 grasses planted.
- Habitat creation and biodiversity expansion/enhancement resulting in the return of koalas, wallabies, kangaroos, bats and many bird species to the reserves.
- Creation of ‘Lower Shelter Display Garden’ – over 20 species of herbs and grasses that are indigenous to the local volcanic plains.
- Creating an example of Scoria Cone EVC restoration for other groups to visit and learn from
- Pest plant (eg blackberry, ragwort) and animal (rabbit) control.
- Use of cypress from site for infrastructure projects.
- Installed rainwater trough, nesting boxes on-site for wildlife.
- Commencement of monitoring program of selected revegetation sites.
- Visual improvements through removal of exotic species – over 500 pines and cypress (costing over \$100,000) and the re-establishment of a natural Australian bush setting/landscape.
- Introduction of works of art /sculptures on site.

### **4: Education & Awareness-raising**

The Committee has promoted the project and reserves at a local, regional, national and international level. The volcanic features of the western district are well known but these reserves are unique in that they are located within a township and have vehicle access to the top.

- Established ‘Friends of Mt Leura Inc.’
- Numerous workshops, field days, guest speakers and working bees, such as bird watching, planting, fauna monitoring (eg Bat survey in 2012), bus trips to sites of interest, and seed propagation workshops (held twice annually since 2008 in February and April).
- Tours for local, national and international groups across the reserves.
- Creation of Demonstration Indigenous Garden at the Lower Information Shelter.
- Website ([www.mtleura.org.au](http://www.mtleura.org.au)).
- In partnership with ‘Friends of Mt Leura Inc.’ have established ‘Friends of Mt Leura’ Facebook page
- Production of information booklet – ‘The Volcanic Edge’ (Editions 1 and 2).
- Various media releases and newsletter articles.
- Production of walking trail notes and brochure.
- Design, preparation and printing of indigenous garden brochures.
- Between 2001-2004, mammal trapping surveys were undertaken to monitor native fauna in partnership with Camperdown College; resumed in 2016 with Geelong Field Naturalists.
- Installation of motion-sensor cameras to monitor fauna.
- Developing the reserves as a Nature Play Space ‘site of excellence’.
- Design and production of project-focused banners, posters and other interpretative information – displayed at community events etc.
- Incorporated Mt. Leura & Mt. Sugarloaf Reserve activities into the curriculum at Camperdown College and provided extra curriculum opportunities for students from many schools on the reserves. For example construction of infrastructure by VCAL students as well as seed collection, propagation, weeding, geocaching, plant propagation etc to other classes across the years.
- Contribution to the Channel 9 “Postcards” program (2004).
- Production of Volcanic postcards in partnership with Corangamite Arts.
- Contribution and membership to the then Kanawinka Geopark Project.
- Development of herbarium of plants from reserves with Camperdown College Environment Group.

## **5: Strong community partnerships and engagement.**

- The project has provided an excellent opportunity for people to participate in an environment project at a local level – encouraging the “think Global – act Local” ethos.
- Volunteers and participants have been offered a variety of tasks that offer achievable outcomes and the opportunity to develop practical skills while gaining vital environmental knowledge. Participants have had the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills in a very wide variety of elements. These include: plant propagation; establishment of indigenous trees, shrubs, herbs and understory; weed management; publicity and communication; plant and animal identification; design and construction of infrastructure; as well as the gaining and strengthening of social networks.
- The construction, in partnership, of a nursery at Camperdown College in 1994, and the ongoing collaborative relationship between the Committee and the College, has been a critically important community partnership. Almost all of the indigenous trees, grasses and herbs planted on the Reserves have been grown in this nursery by students and community members. The nursery is still used today for this project.
- Volunteers and/or staff from the following organizations have participated in work on the project since 1995:
  1. Camperdown P-12 College
  2. National Trust
  3. CORE workers
  4. Friends of Mt Leura Inc.
  5. Camperdown Rotary Inc and Rotaract
  6. Camperdown Lions
  7. Camperdown Apex
  8. Greencorps Australia
  9. Green Army
  10. International Student Volunteers
  11. Heytesbury District Landcare Network
  12. Lakes and Craters Environment Group
  13. Corangamite Catchment Management Authority
  14. Conservation Volunteers Australia – Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers
  15. Department of Sustainability and Environment
  16. Camperdown Scouts
  17. Mercy Regional School, Camperdown
  18. St Patrick’s Primary School, Camperdown
  19. Bellarine Secondary College
  20. Seventh Day Adventist Church Group – Melbourne
  21. Colac Special School
  22. Geelong High School
  23. Gilson College
  24. Gnurad Gundjid Leadership School
  25. Federation University (Ballarat)
  26. Community Jobs Program and other unemployment schemes
- Also, **MANY** local **individuals/residents and visitors** to the area have participated and provided essential assistance.

**Engaging the community** has hopefully led to a changing of attitudes and the raising of awareness regarding the values of indigenous vegetation and the significance of our local volcanic landscape. Improved landcare skills and knowledge have also been positive outcomes of our (joint Mt Leura and Mt Sugarloaf Development Committee/Management Committee and Friends of Mt Leura Inc.) program of activities.

**It has also demonstrated that a community driven project, with clear goals, strong coordination and leadership as well as a willingness to engage the community, can achieve great outcomes.**

## **6. Risk assessment policies and practices**

These have been introduced and carried out on a regular basis.

## **7. Fire management policies and strategies**

A Fire Management Plan has been implemented. Emergency entrances/exits have been created for CFA and other emergency vehicles.

## **FUTURE PLANS...**

While much has been achieved over the past 22 years, with the continued financial support from Council, the committee's work will have TWO KEY COMPONENTS to the continued implementation of the current Management Plan.

### **Component 1: Ongoing management of 'on ground' and 'off ground' works including:**

- Weed control and contribution to weed research.
- Mowing and maintenance of the walking trails.
- Maintenance of existing infrastructure.
- Maintain existing promotional resources and programs.
- Continue workshops, onsite tours etc.
- Maintain important view lines.
- Maintain Fire management and Risk assessment practices - undertake necessary expenditure.
- Fauna and vegetative monitoring continued.
- Complete pine and other exotic tree removal from Sugarloaf quarry.
- Continued development and management of the indigenous demonstration plant garden.

### **Component 2: New projects relating to further facility development, monitoring, promotion and an increased community use of the Reserves through additional educational, recreational & tourism opportunities.**

- Creation of geological learning opportunities on the reserves (i.e. Geo-Trail interpretive signage).
- Replacement of old interpretive signage.
- Development of the Reserves as a 'Nature Play Space' destination with associated equipment, facilities and programs.
- Equipment for flora and fauna monitoring.
- Additional infrastructure including additional picnic facilities at Lower Shelter/VEC area.
- Continue to host regular community events and workshops in partnership with Friends of Mt. Leura, Mount Elephant Committee eg NAIDOC Week 2017; Geelong Field Naturalists.
- Investigation of electricity supply for the VEC - including solar panels.
- Investigation of composting toilet for the reserves.
- Upgrades to the website and additional information on the Shire website.
- Investigate working with private and public landholders to create vegetated links between Mt. Leura and Mt. Sugarloaf Reserve and other nearby areas of native vegetation to facilitate the movement of wildlife. --- creating a Leura Biolink.
- Continue to strengthen and build relationships with relevant organisations eg Federation University.

**NB.** *Achieving success across both of the components detailed above is however, very dependent on the Committee's ability to continue to employ a part-time Project Officer for a minimum of 1 day per week.*

**Mt Leura and Mt Sugarloaf Project - a project that adds value and value adds.**

**Date: March 8<sup>th</sup> 2017**

**Graham Arkinstall (Chairman); On behalf of Mt Leura and Mt Sugarloaf Management Committee.**