



Sustainable Living

EDITION 6 • DEC 2011

INDEPENDENT LIVING COMMUNITIES
EMBRACING SUSTAINABILITY SAFELY

Welcome

Welcome to our sixth and final edition of *Sustainable Living*.

Our first edition of *Sustainable Living* was launched in June 2009 to introduce the project. Since then we have published newsletters six-monthly – in June and December each year – to keep residents informed, and share ideas and experiences.

We face a very different environment now than we did at the beginning of 2009.

We experienced heatwaves and devastating fires in the summer of 2008/2009. Rainwater catchments were at record lows, and as a result water restrictions were being enforced and the government was running ongoing campaigns about saving water.

By contrast, at the end of 2011, some communities are still recovering from the impact of last summer's floods and water restrictions are being scaled back.

Residents have shown a great depth and breadth of interest in sustainability issues, and the Sustainable Living Project has attempted to respond to these interests. Of course, we have had to do so while also considering issues relating to safety, budgets, and timeframes which has meant that we have not been able to respond to all issues raised by residents. Nevertheless, residents have been very supportive of the project and have said they feel more informed about safety and sustainable habits.

It has also been great to see the vast range of sustainable activities that residents were already involved in before the project.

In responding to sustainability challenges (posed by variable and changing weather conditions), we encourage residents to continue to do so safely, keeping their health and wellbeing in mind at all times.

Stephanie Webber, Chief Executive Officer

Growing vegetables and herbs

Many residents are experienced and successful gardeners, and had well-established individual vegetable and herb plots before the Sustainable Living Project.

During the Sustainable Living Project we were able to support some residents in taking their love of vegetable and herb growing further, with the introduction of raised beds which allow residents to grow produce more easily and also emphasise a community approach.

Residents at Tarrangower Village and Heatherlie Homes were already using raised beds to grow vegetables and herbs. Residents at Crawford Court, Cornwall Flats, Kirkside and Daniel Gunson Memorial Homes now also have access to growing and sharing a diverse range of vegetables and herbs.



Gallena, Crawford Court



Paul, Daniel Gunson Memorial Homes



Kirkside



Cornwall Flats

Composting made easy

Again, prior to the Sustainable Living Project, a few residents were using individual or shared composting arrangements to add to the health of their gardens (Berry Homes, Cornwall Flats, Tarrangower Village).

As part of the Sustainable Living Project we have been able to support resident composting initiatives by providing shredders (where necessary), worm farms

and self-aerating compost bins to reduce the need to churn and turn the composting pile (Berry Homes, Cornwall Flats, Daniel Gunson Memorial Homes, Heatherlie Homes, Tarrangower Village).

Residents at two communities with appropriate space have also established open air composting sites (Crawford Court, Daniel Gunson Memorial Homes).

Daniel Gunson Memorial Homes.



Conserving water

The importance of using water wisely is something residents were well aware of before the Sustainable Living Project. Many residents were collecting 'grey' water for their garden. The Sustainable Living Project has clearly conveyed to residents the potential risk involved in carrying containers of water and has advised against such behaviour.

Individual residents had installed a variety of rainwater tanks to decrease their reliance on mains water (Berry Homes, Daniel Gunson Memorial Homes, Sweetman Court Village, Tarrangower Village). One resident who was concerned about the quality of water coming from the roof of a community situated on a busy main road even established a small rainwater catchment area for his garden by directing water to flow onto a shade cloth and into the garden (Hazelmere Homes).

Rainwater tanks have been on the top of the sustainability wish list for many communities. While the cost of rainwater tanks has meant that it has not been possible to introduce

them in all communities, the Sustainable Living Project has provided a rainwater tank in communities where raised vegetable beds have been installed. This has been the case at Cornwall Flats, Crawford Court, Daniel Gunson Memorial Homes and Kirkside. Funding was also made available to Tarrangower Village to reduce the cost of a rainwater tank.

These initiatives have been low cost and energy neutral. Not having a pump means no ongoing electricity costs will be incurred. It also means that the rainwater from the tank will not overpower the vegetables and herbs but rather trickle softly. The success of this initiative will be measured over time.

Reusing tanks

The 1,000 L rainwater tank installed at Cornwall Flats is also an international phenomenon. The 'kubik' concept – as recently seen at Birrarung Marr (Music Week November 2011) – originated in Berlin in 2006 and uses the water tanks to create a light show through



Jean (Berry Homes) installed her rainwater tank before the Sustainable Living Project.

electronic beats (<http://balestraberlin.com>). The versatility of these rainwater tanks makes them truly sustainable objects.

Seeking additional funding

Applying for future grants for rainwater tanks is also a possibility. A successful submission was made to the State Trustees on behalf of Burwood Heights, resulting in one rainwater tank with a pump being installed at either end of the community. Burwood Heights residents and management would like to thank the State Trustees for this support.

Energy usage

The need to use energy wisely and reduce energy costs has been high on the agenda for residents and management. Two residents at Mundarlo Units had already installed hot water solar panels prior to the Sustainable Living Project.

While beyond the scope of this current project, residents have indicated they would appreciate any future projects involving energy use.

Thank you

A very big **thank you** to all residents who have been involved in the Sustainable Living Project. Many residents have been directly involved, sharing their skills, knowledge, experience, time and effort, while others have contributed by providing information through surveys and interviews. Your interest in responding safely to sustainability challenges is to be applauded, admired and encouraged.

A special thank you to two residents: Vincent, a keen vegetable grower from Crawford Court, and Don, a worm farm expert from Daniel Gunson Memorial Homes. Both men were actively involved in their communities and sadly passed away before the project's completion.

Many thanks to the Victorian Government Sustainability Fund for funding this worthy initiative and to the Project Reference Group, particularly resident members Roma, Stan and Carol.

Independent living communities embracing sustainability safely

- Berry Homes, Wandin North
- Burwood Heights, Burwood East
- Crawford Court, South Melbourne
- Daniel Gunson Memorial Homes, Bruthen
- Gardiner Retirement Lodge, Glen Iris
- Heatherlie Homes, Warrnambool
- Hazelmere, Horsham
- Kirkside, Ormond
- Mundarlo Units, Wangaratta
- Sweetman Court Village, Rupanyup
- Wangaratta Wesley Homes, Wangaratta
- Wesley Court, Ivanhoe
- Wesley Grange, Sandringham
- Chapel Court, Moorabbin
- Cornwall Flats, Prahran
- Tarrangower Village, Maldon

Avoiding, reducing, reusing and recycling

In an effort to support residents in cutting down on waste – whether by avoiding, reducing, reusing or recycling – the Sustainable Living Project has provided:

- education and information sessions
- small boxes to recycle batteries (in areas near battery recycling centres)
- small kitchen containers for use prior to composting
- reusable water bottles
- information about initiatives such as national recycling week, carbon reduction labels, useful websites, food waste, plastic bags and bottled water
- smaller, more manageable recycling bins
- access to and/or information about insulation, draught proofing, water efficient shower heads and energy efficient light globes.



Roma (Kirkside) finds the 120 L recycle bin easier to wheel.

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