



LICOLA WILDERNESS VILLAGE

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C.E.O. Annual Report, April 2016 – March 2017

Another year is behind us and one with its fair share of challenges. Lions Village Licola (LVL) has remained in the black for the year in cash terms, just, and this against the backdrop of a phenomenal \$200,000 of capital improvements to the site. We have had more ongoing projects this FY than in any other since inception, and this has to be the stand out message of the year.

I often ask myself what is “success”, what is a “successful year”?

- By the large numbers of disadvantaged, disabled, and disengaged children that have been on one or more camps this year, we have doubtless achieved significant “*Social Success*”. Consider our Statement of Purpose and Mission Statement.
- Reflecting on the number of projects that have been finalised this FY we have also certainly achieved a high level of “*Capital Improvement Success*”.
- Another area would have to be “*Financial Success*” – the ability to return a modest (operating) surplus. It is good to be able to report again, even when excluding the \$138K external capital funding, \$65K of share donations and the appreciation of investments of \$23K; we still did, but only by a narrow margin.

Our Lions Sponsored Camps (eight to 11 years), Special Needs Camps (all ages) and Wild4/ Youth at Risk Program (12-15 years) continued to deliver with some wonderful feedback and real good news stories. Some months after one LSC this year a mum phoned the Camp and said;

‘Since the death of [my son’s] father, who suicided, he had become withdrawn and was “getting behind” at school. After his Camp at Licola he returned back to his usual self and caught up with his school work. Not only that but he gave a presentation to his whole year group on the wonderful experience that he’d had. Thank you’.

I enquired why it was that he had shown such an improvement and mum believed it was simply because he shared the camp with other children experiencing their own challenges. I believe the LSCs help kids realise that they are not alone in the difficulties they may be facing.

Programs & Camp Use

In addition to our varied sponsored camps we need to fill the site as much as possible to underpin the charities work. The market for school camps is becoming increasingly difficult with new outdoor education players in the industry. The upside to our efforts is that weekends are far exceeding expectations with many small family bookings and more weekends being fully booked for sole use with the largest returning client being a fully catered weekend of nearly 300 guests.

The LSC’s went well, as did the Special Needs programs. In December we again ran “Wild4” – the 2016 Program for disengaging boys. This year, for the first time, we expanded the ongoing support in the Wild4 process. Three boys returned as Student Mentors for the new batch of Wild4 participants, having completed the course themselves in 2015. In addition one boy was

invited back to Licola as a Volunteer Youth Leader on a Lions Sponsored Camp. At the end of the week he said it was the “*best week ever*”. He may join us again in December for Wild4 – 2017, as a Student Mentor.

Our user groups have been happy but why listen to me when you can hear it straight from their own mouths;

Monash Law: “*Thank you so so much, from the bottom of our hearts (committee and students included), for taking care of us and feeding us this weekend. Like always, we had a wonderful and memorable time and you guys played a huge part in making this happen. Hopefully our kids left the place in good condition! As we discussed before we left Licola, we'd be very excited and appreciative if you'd have us back next year!*”

Traralgon High School: “*Can I please take this opportunity to once again thank yourself and all of the amazing staff at Licola Wilderness Village who were super helpful towards everyone from TC and really engaging when working with the kids. We appreciate how easy you guys make running a camp for a group this size. Thanks again.*”

Personnel

Your full time team in Licola is now comprised of;

- Adam Wake (CEO/ Operations Manager) – E: manager@licola.org.au
- Rob Strachan (Camp Manager) – E: camping@licola.org.au
- Sharna Jolliffe (Program Manager/LSC Coordinator) – E programmanager@licola.org.au
- Ben Newman (Maintenance Department)
- Jodie “*Casper*” Scanlon (Cleaning Department)

These staff are backed up by part time, contract and casual staff including;

- Cherry Wake (Training and LSC Volunteer liaison) – E: programs@licola.org.au
- Dan Byrne (Program guru)
- Liv Kearny (Chef)
- Jess “*Lil J*” Hercott (activities and kitchen)
- Mick “*Horrie*” Allman (maintenance)
- Greg “*Greasy*” Fluck (maintenance)

Maintenance

In 2016-17 Capital Improvements have included;

- Kitchen improvements with a new industrial dish washer (keeping our scullery volunteers happy... you know who you are), a rebuilt walk in freezer, three new ovens in the self-catering area.
- The Giant swing – improved disability access & dismount.
- The Flying fox – new dismount system removing the ladder and increasing safety.
- The Leap of Faith – introducing a new belay system reducing group wait time.
- Canoe river access – a truly innovative and awesome set of removable steps and ramp with mechanical winch for disabled participants. This has improved safe use of the river but made access so much easier even for those with the most severe of mobility impairments.
- Restumping has progressed with another house completed.
- A new bathroom in cabin 11 with another being currently worked on in cabin 8.
- A new multi-sided climbing tower with Quick Jump addition.
- A new covered deck and entertainment area at the rear of the self-cater kitchen.
- The recapping of the swimming pool.
- A new activity – GaGa.

Lions & Lionesses

I repeat myself every year so why should 2017 be any different?

“Licola is your jewel so come here and experience it for yourself!”

It is usually difficult to single out any Club from the so many that assist in one way or another but this year the job was made easier by one record breaking donation from the Lions Club of Reservoir. With this we renovated the swimming pool surrounds and built the much needed, multi-sided climbing tower complete with “Quick-Jump” activity. This facility helps us continue to compete on the schools market with one of the best towers in the business and the Quick-Jump helps to continue attracting new weekend groups as one of the market leaders in the variety of options LVL offers.

I apologise if I have omitted to mention your Club when you have assisted so kindly of your time and funding but there are just so many individuals and Clubs that enjoy input in some way or another – we thank you all.

The LC of Myrtleford spent a great many hours designing, seeking funding, and then building the new river access area. I urge you to look at this on either YouTube or our Facebook page being used by inspiration for the project, Josh, Cerebral Palsy suffer and long-time fan of Licola.

The LC of Wangaratta both funded and built a new activity, the GaGa pit which has been one of the biggest successes ever, particularly with our Lions Sponsored Camp children.

The LC of Stratford hired a cherry picker and repainted the whole of the chapel. With three weddings booked in for 2017 an important job on this historic landmark.

The LC of Leongatha have been amazing to work with during their continued efforts in restumping and house work.

With donations from the LCs of Morwell, Vermont, Whittlesea and Wheelers Hill and another generous offer from Geoff Dahlsen we created the new covered rear deck and entertainment area behind the self-catering kitchen. We have already fielded one inquiry specifically in order to use this improved area.

Donations from various Clubs made the Wild4 – 2016 possible so specific thanks must go to Lara, Geelong & Corio Bay, Traralgon, Box Hill, Trafalgar, Heyfield, Wheelers Hill and Simpson & District Lions Clubs and also the Rotary Club of Sale Central.

Working Bees

Numbers have been good at 20-25 and consistent enough throughout the week long working bees. This is a nice number to steadily tick along with jobs all over LVL. That said, if you really must, we'll let you come along as well to join in the great camaraderie. Just give us a call.

Thank you to all the house sponsoring clubs who have been active this year.

In line with last year's planned projects, Operation Restump has continued with cabin 8 and cabin 11 and the next already being planned.

Kurnai College with their VCAL students have continued to deliver with two visits this year completing projects including the self-cater rear deck, fixing a significant problem beneath

house 1 and lifting a corner of the diner replacing bearers, stumps and joists. This is a great relationship and one that we aim to continue.

Publicity/ marketing 2016 – 17

- LVL featured in the Country Style magazine.
- Our Facebook page reached 1,500 followers – are you a friend of Licola on Facebook?
- We have taken over the writing of and sending out of the Licola Corner.
- We continue to have a prime advertising position on the ACA website and also the People Outdoors website.
- The Wellington Shire's *People's Choice Tourism Awards* saw us with another win this time in the category of "Best Self-Contained/ Apartments/ Backpackers".
- LVL also featured in the RACV's Royal Auto magazine as part of Lions 100.
- Our website is in the final stages of a complete revamp – watch that space!

Other

The drive to move to an alternative & renewable energy source is on hold for the time being to be looked at again perhaps in 2018-19. Quotes that were received were extremely high with a back drop of rapidly changing and improving technology. The current systems looked at did not allow for the complete shutdown of generators for any significant period of time and diesel costs have remained low again this year. It is expected that as technology continues to improve and a likely rise of diesel will drive the need to put this back on the table in the future.

New Child Safety Standards came into effect on 1 January 2017 and we were well ahead of the industry standard by having our new guidelines in place well before the end of 2016. Should anyone wish to see these they can request a copy.

The new owners of Glenfalloch Station, the Paul family and overseers, have continued to support LVL.

Proprietors of the General Store & Caravan Park, Darren and Tracy, are going well.

This year marked the 10 year anniversary of the fires, mudslide and floods. That was tough time for all concerned and a period of time that will forever be etched in some people's memories. I am of course very, very happy to say that the phoenix (LVL) has well and truly risen from those literal & metaphorical flames. The Licola Community Representative Group held an evening of celebration for all those that assisted in that time and to a community that has proved its vibrancy and resilience.

Fulham Prisoners continue to come out and work on general maintenance and relationships with the Wellington Shire, DELWP, WGCMA, and Parks Victoria all remain positive.

Major aims for next year include:

- Continue growing the Wild4 Program to and beyond December 2017 in every aspect.
- Continue the support of all other Sponsored Camps (both special needs and eight-11 year old main stream).
- Continued cabin improvements through Club sponsorship arrangements in particular bathrooms.
- Continuing with Operation Restump.
- Continue to beautify by carving tree stumps into works of art that bring visitors in their own right (two sculptures were done this FY).

- Licola Staff to take on the role of LSC coordinator so that there is one central location for Clubs, families, volunteers, and bus companies to come to.
- Growing our winter & in particular our weekend business in order to secure the long term future of the charity.

Thank you to all Lions, Lionesses, The Board of Directors and corporates or individuals who have sponsored LVL or children in one way or another. Anyone that has sent a child, children, or funding please know in your hearts that it is a life changing experience for some but just wonderful for all. Don't underestimate the value that the Camp adds to some of these kids' lives.

Adam Wake



CEO/ Operations Manager

Lions Village Licola Inc.

