



# LICOLA WILDERNESS VILLAGE

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## **C.E.O. Annual Report, April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 – March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019**

Lions Village Licola Inc. (LVL) is on the cusp of great things. With a grant of \$360,000 and up to an additional \$100,000 being put forward by the Board of Directors as part of the grant agreement, all to be invested in or around the dining hall, the last of our major infrastructure projects will soon be completed.

With a firm commitment to move away from diesel power generation and into the brave new world of renewables, your Licola will soon be silent most of the year round with the majority of our power coming from the sky above. This is possibly the single most significant decision made by the Board of Directors since Licola's inception some 50 years ago and should set LVL up for another 50.

Over the past 12-months to 31 March 2019 we enjoyed the company of 824 disadvantaged, deserving, disabled, and disengaged children, with over 150 volunteers making it all possible. The programs comprise of the Lions Sponsored Camps (LSC - for 8 to 11-year olds), the Wild4 Program (for "at risk" teens), and various Special Needs programs sponsored or subsidised in one way or another through Lions Clubs and Districts, notably V3, V5 and N4. We have continued to add to our improvements around camp and have, again, returned a modest surplus, before depreciation. LVL is in the "black" again for the 7<sup>th</sup> successive financial year.

Our prediction for the next financial year 2019 – 2020 is that we will have more camp booking generated income in a single financial year than ever before in Licola's history.

### **SPONSORED CAMPS**

- LSCs – Nuala Cunningham has continued to do a wonderful job as LSC coordinator, largely on-site but also from off-site utilising the Licola LSC mobile. Nuala's passion to do a good job has led to great experiences for these LSC children. For the 1<sup>st</sup> time our September LSC eclipsed the 100-participant mark.

We have continued to provide a T-shirt to every LSC child leaving them with a memento of the special time they had in Licola. All kids & volunteers can be seen a mile off at bus drop off points.

The Lions Club of Geelong Corio Bay reached 1,000 children sponsored this year through external organisations. This is a remarkable feat and one headed by Lion Brian Edward.

The Gippsland Country Music Club, led by Rod and Rhonda Owen, have continued to come to various LSCs through the year. Type "*Licola Music Program*" into your search engine and check it out on YouTube.

The 123Read2Me project has continued to provide hundreds of books to the children that come. This continues as a very worthwhile extension to the program.

- Special Needs – While the canoe ramp continues to receive good use and great reviews this is still “yesterday’s news”. The V3 SN Camp had a bumper year in 2018 and both kids and adults enjoying all of the work we have put in to provide a better facility for those with special needs.
- Wild4 - In December we again ran this unique program for disengaged/ disengaging teenagers, or for those considered at an increased risk. This year changes included the penultimate day of river rafting (sports kayaks – 2-man inflatable rafts) all the way back in to Camp... an iconic journey into Licola.

21 boys out of the 21 allocated places turned up on Day 1 this year which, was actually one more than planned as it is never expected, given the demographic, that all those offered a place actually turn up! Two of these were returning as Student Mentors to the first-time participants, having completed the course themselves in 2017.

Each year a suggestion is made to the boys to bring \$50 of their own money to contribute to their program and to ultimately pay the way for another boy in a future year to attend. This is “facilitated” by telling them they will get more out of the program if they contribute and also, how good it is to help someone else get the opportunity next year. Many of the boys put in this year and it is close enough to pay for someone out of these contributions in December 2019.

Despite two last minute shifts in location (first due to low water at Lake Glenmaggie and the 2<sup>nd</sup> due to a blue green algae outburst in Lake Wellington) the water-ski day went off again thanks to Maffra Lions Club and Frog Water Ski. As a reminder, the Wild4 boys return to Gippsland a few months post-course as an informal wind-up to their program with Licola. They water ski, wake board and biscuit.

Without donations from various Clubs and organisations Wild4 – 2018 would not have been possible. Thank you to The Paul Family Foundation and Lions Clubs; Geelong & Corio Bay, Wheelers Hill, Sandringham, Boroondara Central, Rye, Maffra, Vermont, Simpson & District, and Underhill birthday present.

### **Other Programs & Camp Use**

Open 365 days, we underpin the charity by filling the Camp with a great number of other types of booking. Again, these bookings have seen us through the year in the black. We did have a hitch with the largest of the Vic fires this season starting quite close, effectively closing our doors to normal operations through the whole of March (usually one of our busiest months of the year). The fires never really got any closer, instead moving away from us and we were never under any real threat, despite what you may have heard through some media channels. The fires were monitored daily, reaching a total size of 80,579 Ha, with frequent communication with the authorities. Whilst challenging at times we negotiated our way through with some fire fighters staying on site helping with the hole in the finances, and usual bookings mostly rebooking for later in the year.

In September, and for the first time in Licola’s history, we had 145 students across 9 expedition groups in the High Country. This included a section of rafting on the mighty Macalister River. A mammoth undertaking with credit for the success and rebooking of the client down to colleague and friend, Dan Byrne. To say he (along with others) worked hard is the grossest of under statements. They worked and worked and worked to ensure this and your Licola was a success.

Getting feedback, both constructive and positive, is an important measure on how the charity is tracking in the eyes of those we aim to help. Here are a few of the comments received in the past 12 months;

- from a school involved with referring children on the Wild4 program: *“Hi Adam, I thought you would be pleased to know that upon returning, (Student) decided to apply for school captain. He was not successful but did get the Vice-Captain role for 2019. I think it is a great stepping stone for him. I think the fact that a team of people have invested time and belief in him has allowed him to develop a much higher opinion of himself! Thank you for being a part of setting him on this journey. I hope we can see more students achieve a similar outcome! Happy 2019, Nathan”*
- from a brand-new school in 2018: *“Hi Cherry. Just wanted to say a big thank you to you and the team for an amazing two weeks. The students are smiling and already we can see a greater sense of connectedness with each other. The experience on camp was great for so many of our kids (especially those who were unsure at the beginning) and provided them with an opportunity to challenge themselves in a supportive and fun environment. It seems that the general consensus is that the big swing and canoeing were the two best activities. The vast majority of the students appreciated or enjoyed the hike. The lazy ones thought it was hell on earth.”*
- from an LSC volunteer: *“Hi Cherry, I just needed to message a massive thank you to you and your amazing team. You guys have gone above and beyond for those kids, and for us volunteers! I truly admire you - your enthusiastic spirit, selflessness, empathy, kindness and love is something to aspire to attain. Your leadership and guidance are not something that can be taught as it is so entwined with your inherent humanity. Your team really reflect those same qualities and I'm incredibly grateful to have been a part of this camp. Those kids changed me, and I already miss them so much. Cherry, thank you. Kindest of regards”*
- about LSC children: *“My daughter wants to go back, thanks so much for the opportunity as she has had an awesome time - thanks to all involved ❤️💕”*
- *“My son has said he made amazing friendships and wishes it could go for 3 weeks!! Thank you all so much!!”*
- *“Congratulations and thank you Licola Village for your inspiring dedication”*
- The attached letter from the Principal of Sorrento PS, received in April this year, pretty much sums up the importance of our LSCs. Read this and never forget.

### **Staffing**

The full-time team this year in Licola comprised of;

- Adam Wake (CEO/ Operations Manager) – E: [manager@licola.org.au](mailto:manager@licola.org.au)
- Daniel Byrne (Programs)
- Melanie Davey (Program Manager) – E: [camping@licola.org.au](mailto:camping@licola.org.au)
- Cameron Stroud (Maintenance Department)
- Jodie “Casper” Scanlon (Cleaning Department)

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

- Cherry Wake (Training and LSC Volunteer liaison) – E: [volunteerslicola@hotmail.com](mailto:volunteerslicola@hotmail.com)
- Nuala Cunningham (Program Mgr/LSC Coord) – E: [campcoordinatorlsc@outlook.com](mailto:campcoordinatorlsc@outlook.com)

- Mick “*Horrie*” Allman (Maintenance)
- Greg “*Greasy*” Fluck (Maintenance)
- Colin Mathies (Finance) – E: [colinm@dcsi.net.au](mailto:colinm@dcsi.net.au)

### **Maintenance**

In 2018-19 Capital Improvements have included;

- New swimming pool vinyl/ liner – a deeper blue – looks awesome
- Huge 9m x 14m shade sail erected over the incredibly popular GaGa Pit.
- Complete new floor coverings in Cabin #1 thanks to Lions Clubs Morwell and Torquay (with a little financial help from the Board of Directors).
- Restumping has progressed with another house completed (Cabin 4 – thanks LCs Leongatha, Waverly, Korumburra).
- The new bathroom and kitchen area in Cabin 8 have been completed with an accessible toilet soon to be added.
- The old asbestos was removed with the new colour bond roof fitted to the dining hall as part of the big refurbishment project being completed in 2019-20.

Working bee’s have had their lowest attendance this past year for various reasons, and without the numbers we will not be able to keep holding them.

**Lions & Lionesses** – remember “*Licola is your jewel so come and experience it for yourself!*” Each year I’m aware that I may forget to mention a Club or an individual when you have assisted so kindly of your time or funding but there are just so many individuals and Clubs that enjoy input in some way or another – we thank you all.

House Sponsorship continues to evolve. Whilst it is sad to see long standing Clubs such as Warrandyte handing over the reigns of “their” Cabin sponsorship, it is then lovely to welcome a new Club come on board. Diamond Valley LC are now officially the sponsor of Cabin #12. There are some possibilities of cabin co-sponsorship arrangements with one or more other Clubs. Please contact the office if you’d like to discuss this.

### **Working Bees**

With hugely declining numbers in attendance we have pulled these from the Licola annual schedule until such time that there is popular demand to have once again. In order to make the catered working bees viable we need to have more than just a few people in attendance.

Kurnai College with their VCAL students have continued to deliver with one or two visits this year completing various projects. A great bunch of kids.

### **Alternative Power**

Work towards a more sustainable future with renewable power has surged forward this year as planned. After meeting with local “mover & shaker”, Julie Briar, and energy efficiency specialist, Ian Martin, we invited the latter to speak with the Board of Directors. With appetites suitably whetted Ian moved us into the next stage with an introduction to Peter McKernan, another specialist in the field. The Board have accepted the beautifully presented suggestion and a steering committee from the Board of Directors set up. More will be reportable on this in the next financial year end.

### **Publicity/ marketing**

- Kate Underhill has taken the Licola Corner to new heights. *If anyone would like to be added to the emailed distribution list, you should advise the Licola office.*
- See LVL’s video clips on YouTube. Simply type “Licola YouTube” into your search engine and start clicking.

- Our Facebook page reached 2,500 followers (500 up on last year) – are you a friend of Licola on Facebook? A simple thing you can do to help spread the good word of Licola is to **Like** us on Facebook (get your Club/ District signed up if you are not already) and Share our more interesting posts. This is a free, simple, quick and efficient way of spreading our news.
- Gippsland Country Music Club had a lovely YouTube Clip produced, and in Chairman, Rob Kann's words "*everyone in the world should see that!*"
- Pictures/ advertising was placed on the side of the Hiace Van which does turn heads.
- We continue to have a prime advertising position on our accrediting body's website.
- LVL featured heavily in the 2018 Wellington Shire's People's Choice Awards and took out the title for "Best Visitor Attraction".

### **Significant other**

A grant of \$361,290 was awarded through the Latrobe Valley Authority to renovate and improve the dining hall.

A \$5,000 grant was received from Latrobe Power Hub to set up power monitoring to assist us in the early stages of moving to a more sustainable future.

My best steak of the year was after I presented at a Zone Meeting in Tongala at their local pub. I like to think I know my steaks and this place is worth a visit!

The owners of Glenfalloch Station, the Paul family and overseers, have continued to support LVL with monetary contributions to Wild4 and in allowing us access to the awesome property that they own.

Geoff Dahlsen has continued to be a great supporter – thank you.

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

### **The year's stated "major aims" were:**

- Continue developing our programs to make them the best that they can be.
  - *We have worked hard to do this and brought in our first full expedition program for a large school booking as well as brought rafting in on the final day of Wild4. This was a very successful improvement.*
- Continued cabin improvements through developing Club sponsorship arrangements.
  - *Achieved in many areas. This will remain ongoing and evolving from year to year.*
- Continuing with Operation Restump.
  - *Another house was completed this year.*
- Find funding to renovate and renew our aging dining hall facility.
  - *A grant of \$361,290 was achieved through the Latrobe Valley Authority.*
- Restart our consideration of renewable energy sources.
  - *After many meetings and consultations, we now have a commitment from Licola's forward-thinking Board of Directors to make the switch.*

### **Major aims for next year include:**

- Switching to renewable energy for most of our power generation.
- Complete the dining hall refurbishment to a high standard.
- Operate a viable and "in the black" overall operation.
- Benefit kids' lives.

Finally, I must use this opportunity to say thank you and good bye. Cherry and I started thinking about a change and when the best time might be, knowing that it would be unfair to the boys if that time was after they started secondary school. An opportunity came up and I accepted a role at another not-for-profit that offers life changing experiences to disadvantaged children. In fact, their stated objective is synonymous with Licola's.

This relocation comes at a time which is right for our little family for many reasons. The last 11 years have passed by with frightening speed. Every building and structure in Licola has been improved in this time, we have built a new 5-sided climbing tower and quick jump, a new low ropes course and river access. We added GaGa, Frisbee golf, giant games, abseil, bouldering and an obstacle course. We developed a new double all-access accommodation unit. Significant energy efficiency improvements have been made through various grants and we "won" \$360,000 for our dining hall renovations. Many important policies protecting the integrity and finances of the organisation have been developed and needed, and we safely negotiated our way through two significant bush fire events, a major and damaging wind storm and one teacher strike. We've sealed roads and pathways, replaced the dining hall balcony, restumped cabins, added new bathrooms.

Weekend bookings have gone from virtually zero to c. \$300,000 every year. The last 7 years have been in the black. All debt is paid off. We have won 6 tourism awards. Numbers of children attending a Sponsored Camp have doubled and we have developed an extension program for at risk teenagers, Wild4. Work has already begun to move from diesel to renewable power – amazing. Licola has never been in a better position to move forward into the next 50 years.

Cherry & I married here, and both Casey Luke and Harrison Charles were born. We have spent time with so many wonderful people through this decade long journey and we will miss you all... well most of you! During this process of the last few weeks I have reflected on our years' here and simply put, there is not enough space to write all the memories I have. So many memories.

I know I can fairly speak for all my family; myself, Cherry, Casey and Harry, when I say that Licola has a warm place in all our hearts and will do forever more.

I will close in a similar manner to many times before. 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, funding, or given of yourself in any way, please know in your hearts that it is an amazing experience for all sponsored kids who come, and a life changing experience for some. Don't underestimate the value that the Camp adds to some of these kids' lives.

Cheerio...

**Adam Wake**



**CEO/ Operations Manager 2008- 2019**

**Lions Village Licola Inc.**



Wild4 boys enjoying their post-course debrief.