

Y WATER

DISCOVERY CENTRE

@ YEA WETLANDS

Strategic Plan 2017-21



BUSINESS NAME: Y Water Centre Association Inc.

Trading as Y Water Discovery Centre

BUSINESS STRUCTURE: Incorporated Association

NUMBER: A0060209C

DATE REGISTERED: 8 November 2013

ABN: 33 438 294 569

BUSINESS ADDRESS: 2 Hood Street, Yea, Vic, 3717

POSTAL ADDRESS: PO Box 178, Yea, Vic, 3717

Email Address: association@ywatercentre.com.au

WEBSITE: www.ywatercentre.com.au

PRODUCTS and SERVICES: Visitor Information Centre (accredited)

Educational visits and guided tour experience for all visitors Inc. school groups

Retail outlet offering locally made products and other gifts

Venue hire for meetings and other community events.

Meet the 2017 Y Water Centre Association Executive

Chair - David Anderson

- 12 years teaching experience as Senior History teacher at Canberra Grammar School
- Owner/operator commercial Hereford cattle breeding business since 2001
- Past member Victorian Committee of *The Queen's Trust for Young Australians* and the *Foundation for Young Australians*
- Numerous appointments at Rotary International including District Governor, Zone Training Coordinator and International Assembly Training Leader



Deputy Chair / Treasurer - Don Knight

- 30 years retail experience at corporate management level
- 15 years owner of shop fitting business.
- 12 years owner/manager of an Alpaca Stud
- Numerous many executive and committee positions for the last 45 years.



Secretary – Ian Marshman

- 25 years senior executive experience in higher education including 15 years as Chief Operating Officer at University of Melbourne
- Member /Chair of not for profit boards in higher education and health
- Chair, Headspace Youth Mental Health Foundation & Melbourne Dental Clinic
- 25 years of part-time farming and residence at Limestone, Yea
- Qualified as lawyer



Member - Russell Wealands

- Retired Civil Engineer with 36 years' experience in managing Victoria's water resources including 18 months as Australian River Expert Indonesia, 10 years Exec Officer, Upper Goulburn at Goulburn Broken CMA
- Chairman, Yea Wetlands Trust, Chair (10 years) and Member Yea Wetlands CoM
- Founding Director, Yea & District **Community Bank®** Branch



Member - Stuart Oddy

- Retired Real Estate Agent 17 years experience in Rural and Metropolitan areas
- 12 Years in retail as owner/ operator newsagent/Tatts Representative
- Former Bank Manager



Minute Secretary - Lisa Cornwall

- Owner/proprietor Beaufort Manor
- Retired Secondary School Teacher
- Weekly volunteer at Y Water Discovery Centre



THE Y WATER CENTRE ASSOCIATION

The Y Water Centre Association Inc. (YWCA) is a community based organisation established in June 2013 to manage and operate the Y Water Discovery Centre. It comprises a small group of dedicated, professional and experienced volunteers who meet monthly to plan, manage and oversee the strategic development and growth of the Centre.

Its purposes are to:

- develop, manage and market the operations, facilities and services of the Y Water Discovery Centre at the Yea Wetlands in order to:
 - promote and attract increased visitation to Yea, the Murrindindi Shire and the surrounding region; and
 - provide unique and participatory learning opportunities that increase the public's understanding of the value of water resources and wetland ecology; and
- develop and implement strategies that ensure the longer term financial viability of the Y Water Discovery Centre.

The Association operates within a **Memorandum of Cooperation** with the Yea Wetlands Committee of Management (a S. 86 Local Government Committee) and the Yea Wetlands Trust, both key organisations who contribute to the well-being of the Yea Wetlands.

The Centre and the immediate crown lands are leased from Murrindindi Shire Council. The responsibilities of each body are set down in a **Memorandum of Understanding**, an appendix to the lease.



YWCA Executive Members – March 2017

*Russell Wealands, Don Knight, Ian Marshman, Stuart Oddy,
Lisa Cornwall David Anderson*

THE Y WATER DISCOVERY CENTRE

This multi-purpose, award-winning Centre offers an iconic entrance to the popular Yea Wetlands at the eastern edge of the town. With engaging interpretive displays and integrated learning programs about the Wetlands' natural assets and ecosystems, the Centre is much more than a resource for tourists and other visitors to our region. It is a gateway to building greater awareness of water, our most precious natural resource, and one of Australia's environmentally and economically important river systems, the Murray and Goulburn River catchments.

The Centre provides:

- a fully accredited Visitor Information Centre (VIC) servicing Murrindindi Shire and beyond;



- environmental learning programs focusing on water and its importance to the local community and Australia as a whole;
- a showcase and retail facility for local artisans and businesses, and
- modern meeting facilities for community organisations, corporate groups and for other events.

Strategically sited at the intersection of two popular touring routes, the Melba Highway and the Goulburn Valley Highway, and with close proximity to Melbourne, the Centre is ideally situated to serve its various tourism and environmental education roles.



YWCA –Best Community Project
River Basin Management Society

OUR VISION

To develop pride in the **Y Water Discovery Centre** as a unique, valuable and sustainable community asset, with a distinct and memorable experience.

OUR MISSION

To manage the Centre responsibly and sustainably delivering rewarding experiences for all.

OUR PROGRAMS

The Centre delivers our Vision and Mission through three programs:

1. Visitor Information Centre (VIC)

One of two accredited VICs within the Murrindindi Shire, the Centre opens from 9am to 5pm, seven days a week, providing tourism services to some 3,000 visitors per month. Visitors benefit from friendly advice learning about the many attractions within the Murrindindi Shire and neighbouring regions. This service is delivered by two part-time Shire staff and a dedicated band of some 40 trained local volunteers who give freely of their time at the Centre. Visitor reviews reveal high levels of satisfaction with the services provided and amenities available at the Centre.



2. Education

The on-ground learning opportunities available in the adjoining Yea Wetlands are interconnected with the Centre's engaging interpretive displays and curriculum based educational programs. Together they provide appealing learning opportunities for teachers, students and community groups to discover information about our precious water resources and the natural environment. These programs are actively marketed to local, regional and metro schools and community interest groups. The educational programs are well supported by volunteers, several having teaching qualifications.



Students from Sacred Heart Primary, Yea
Test their knowledge about water

3. Community Engagement

With its attractive wetlands backdrop, the Centre has a reputation for well-appointed meeting facilities and a venue for community social and cultural events. The facilities are also available for private hire.

The Centre is also becoming a central site for celebrating the history and culture of the indigenous inhabitants, the Taungurung people.



2016 NAIDOC Week Celebrations
Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation

Success in delivering our programs is dependent on these foundational supports:

- an effective and ongoing relationship with the Yea Wetlands Committee of Management and the Yea Wetlands Trust,
- a long term mutually beneficial relationship with the Murrindindi Shire Council that promotes good and effective governance as per the Memorandum of Understanding
- further development of the Centre's infrastructure, its immediate surrounding landscape and the broader amenity of the wetlands
- development and implementation of a financial strategy that ensures longer term sustainability
- an effective and coordinated marketing and communications program that engages visitors and local community; and
- a strong and engaged membership base.

OUR RESOURCES

The Centre is managed by two (1.1FTE) Council employees, assisted by some 40 volunteers under the guidance of an Association Executive of six volunteer Members.

Centre maintenance responsibilities are set out in the lease with Council executed on 20 January 2015.

The Association maintains a wide range of merchandise for purchase in the Centre. Retail sales form an important income stream that helps offset operational expenses.

The *Memorandum of Understanding* contains an understanding that the Association may be approached, should it become self-sufficient in the future, to contribute funds that assist Council with the future renewal of the Centre.

The Association is responsible to source capital funding necessary for additions or upgrade/replacement of infrastructure and landscaping. Council's prior approval is necessary as such works may add to Council's asset base.



*Y Water Discovery Centre - MSC Staff
Centre Coordinator - Julie Blyth
Customer Service Officer - Pauline Roberts*



*Our Staff & some of our Volunteers with Yea **Community Bank**[®] Branch Manager, Lyn Southurst at the recent Defibrillator and CPR Training Day*

EXTERNAL RESOURCES / PARTNERSHIPS

The Association's vision for the Centre continues to enjoy strong support from the Council, Goulburn Broken CMA, Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, Upper Goulburn Landcare and the Yea Wetlands Committee of Management.

Other industry-based bodies such as Murrindindi Inc and Goulburn River Valley Tourism have also been very supportive of the Centre and its activities.

Financial support has been provided by the Yea Wetlands Trust, Yea & District **Community Bank**[®] Branch together with donated goods from businesses (ReneSola and Landmark) and several philanthropic gifts/donated goods. With its deductible gift recipient status, the Trust is recognised as a potential source of external funding for projects that support the purposes set down in the Trust's Deed.

The Association's Executive works closely with funding bodies such as Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal and Regional Development Victoria and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning to source external funding to realise common goals.

Kate Heston, Financial Planner generously assists the Executive with financial reporting on a pro bono basis.



ReneSola donated a 4.5kW Solar System significantly reducing power costs



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: 2017- 2021

Five priority actions building on existing core activities have been identified through to 2021.

These are:

1. AN OUTSTANDING VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE

- 1.1. Initiate a plan that attracts sufficient trained VIC volunteers so as to ensure two persons are on duty at all times the Centre is open..
- 1.2. Develop appropriate means to recognise volunteer and staff contributions.
- 1.3. Expand and make accessible information about local tourism attractions and businesses.
- 1.4. Develop and implement a structured digital marketing program.
- 1.5. Proactively promote the YWDC and Murrindindi region at tourism industry events.

2. THE WETLAND'S EDUCATIONAL & CULTURAL EXPERIENCE

- 2.1. In collaboration with the Trust, seek the resources to engage a dedicated education coordinator to manage development of curriculum materials and facilitate school visits.
- 2.2. Attract a sponsor for engaging specialist marketing services to grow visitor numbers to the Centre and students participating in the educational programs.
- 2.3. Explore options to offset the transport costs for school visits to the Centre.
- 2.4. Increase the marketing to local schools (i.e. within the Murrindindi Shire), aiming for a 200% increase by year end 2018.
- 2.5. Develop and implement a marketing strategy aimed at increasing participation of community groups, e.g. Probus, Scouts and Guides, Field Naturalists etc., with the Centre and its surrounds.
- 2.6. Seek to collaborate with all regional water authorities to explore opportunities for the Centre to be a public gateway into understanding water management and natural resource sustainability issues.
- 2.7. Encourage university study and research of the Yea Wetlands and its ecology.
- 2.8. Collaborate with the Taungurung people in efforts to raise visitor understanding and appreciation of the region's Indigenous Australian culture and heritage.

3. GOVERNANCE AND PARTNERSHIPS

- 3.1. Build effective relationships and shared expectations with Murrindindi Shire Council on future directions.
- 3.2. Utilise the Memorandum of Cooperation to increase the level of collaboration and promote a framework within which activities of the Yea Wetlands Committee of Management and Yea Wetlands Trust can be promoted and conducted.

- 3.3. Develop and maintain a rolling five year financial plan that seeks to increase longer term sustainability while ensuring that essential operating contingencies are appropriately covered.
- 3.4. Develop and implement a membership expansion strategy that seeks to encourage participation from business, individuals, and other organisations, in part through offering some incentive for their engagement.
- 3.5. Develop and maintain an Executive Committee succession plan that ensures continuity of a skills-based Association.
- 3.6. Develop and maintain regular communication with the broader Association membership, key partners and external stakeholders.
- 3.7. Affirm the respective roles and responsibilities of staff, the Executive Committee and ensure the Association's systems and processes support agreed arrangements.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1. Establish and implement a membership structure that encourages a broad and expansive community, business and corporate membership.
- 4.2. Establish a coordinated annual calendar of events in collaboration with the Yea Wetlands Committee of Management, other authorities and other local community organisations.
- 4.3. Develop and implement a marketing and communications strategy targeted at increasing local community awareness and participation in Centre events.
- 4.4. Seek to increase private use of Centre facilities by local associations and community members.
- 4.5. Explore feasibility of conducting regular '*Made in Murrindindi*' or similar local interest events as a means of increasing community participation.
- 4.6. Collaborate with other community organisations around utilising the Centre and its surrounds as a preferred venue for other community events.

5. FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

- 5.1. Progress and implement the '*5 Year Rolling Priority Projects program*' for the further, achievable development of the Centre, its facilities and surrounds.
- 5.2. Secure Council support through direct funding, in kind and external grant sponsorship support for future development of the Centre's infrastructure.
- 5.3. Enlist the support of Yea Wetlands Trust in accessing external funding to support major components of the Priority Projects Program.
- 5.4. Establish a capital development sub-committee seeking to draw on local expertise and contributions to deliver on Priority Projects Program.
- 5.5. Explore all appropriate avenues to generate revenue that support the core activities at the Centre.

APPENDIX

5 Year Rolling Priority Projects Program

Murrindindi Shire Council handed over operational responsibility for the Centre to the Association in August 2014. The finite amount of capital funding available at that time has meant that some of the approved building and landscaping remained incomplete.

Notwithstanding these capital inadequacies, over the past 2½ years the Association has been able to successfully market and operate the Centre ahead of most projections used in the original financial model for the Centre on which Council based its decision to approve the project.

Fulfilment of the physical infrastructure and amenity envisaged for the Centre has now been effectively handed over to the Association to plan, secure finance and deliver.

The Association has developed a rolling five year Priority Projects Program both to address those deficiencies and to add new assets that address previously unidentified needs. The program has been designed to be mindful of Council's concerns that any growth in its asset base must also be sustainable from an operational budget perspective.

Aware of Council's finite ability to contribute capital funds and the limited funds otherwise available in the Centre's initial years, the Association is keen to explore alternative funding sources for this program. The Association seeks to pursue the funds for these programs in close collaboration with Council and in partnership with the Yea Wetlands Trust. The Association is aware that from time to time a range of external funding opportunities present, necessitating a degree of adaptability and nimbleness in matching grant or other funding to specific capital planning priorities.

The **5 year Rolling Priority Projects Program** set out below identifies and provides estimated costs of those actions identified by the Association as necessary to realise the strategic priorities contained in this Plan.

Y Water Discovery Centre - 2017-2021 Strategic Plan
5 Year Rolling Priority Projects Program

Project Description	Need	Priority	Estimated Cost	Financial Year				
				2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Strategic Priority #1. An Outstanding Visitor Information Centre				5 Year Program				
1.1. Interpretive Display Instructions a. Finalize draft with brand, b. print and fold brochures c. Buy acrylic holder for brochure / explanation d. Use simple wording, cost and create plastic adhesive explanatory plaques.	To assist visitors, volunteers and staff to understand, operate the interpretive elements and release their embedded information	0-1 yr	\$500	\$500				
1.2 Local Photo Images for VIC wall area and Touchscreen. a. Source & secure approvals of high quality images b. Order and install images	Draw visitor attention to key local attractions encouraging longer stays	0-1 yr	\$2,000	\$2,000				
1.3 Renew & expand brochures on local attractions a. Stocktake existing brochures (eg Maps/ Artworkz) b. Identify and fill/resource gaps c. Compile revised brochures in branded hard copy and electronic formats d. Print and load on website	Create new and update/align existing brochures about local attractions using common brand suitable for display and uploading	0-1 yr	\$10,000	\$2,000	\$8,000			
1.4 YWDC Town Signage a. Design & site draft signage b. Seek Council / VicRoads approval c. Print and erect signage	Key marketing opportunities are being missed by not having permanent signage at Town Entry points and at Public Toilets (Bowls Club/Railway Stn)	0-1 yr	\$3,000	\$3,000				
1.5 Develop Kinglake/Yea Tourism App a. Collect/collate information b. Source funds/sponsors c. Engage app developer, graphic designer and professional writer	Ready access to local tourism information available using modern mobile media players (Smart phone/tablet/pc).	3-5 yr	\$50,000		\$10,000	\$40,000		
Strategic Action #1 - An Outstanding VIC			SubTotals	\$7,500	\$18,000	\$40,000	\$0	\$0

Strategic Priority #2. Expanding the Educational & Cultural Experience

2.1. Fix Interpretive display deficiencies a. Rectify disabled access issues for Wetland and Water Wall b. Create, purchase, attach signs to better inform/engage users.	Small and wheelchair based visitors have difficulty accessing / viewing Wetland and Water Wall displays. Visitors are also unsure how to use/operate interp displays or their purpose	1yr	\$6,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$4,000		
2.2. Secure major sponsor for 3 years a. Prepare prospectus b. Canvas suitable sponsors	An external sponsor is required to support the operation and renewal of the Interpretive displays and development /delivery of Education Programs	1-2 yr	\$2,500	\$2,000	\$500			
2.3 Engage adequate staff resources a. Quantify staff resource necessary to organize and deliver environmental learning programs b. Secure funding to engage c. Determine most effective employment/engagement arrangement	Additional resources are needed to coordinate, organize and deliver quality educational programs	1-2 yr	\$45,000		\$45,000			
2.3. Finalise Internal Taungurung Display a. Determine and agree with TCAC / Museum Vic on display space requirements/needs b. Order and arrange installation	To build collaborative relations with TCAC and display Indigenous heritage and cultural materials in an informative and respectful manner	0-1 yr	\$10,000		\$10,000			
2.4. Australian Icon Water Features a. Research and procure features b. Collect and secure in place	Procure and locate iconic Australian water features (windmill, Furphy tank, stock trough, hand pump) and scatter among landscape to demonstrate historical importance	2-3 yr	\$3,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000		
2.5. Update Interp displays	The interpretive displays will need routine updating to remain appealing and present important learning messages and retain interest	3-5 yr	\$90,000		\$45,000		\$45,000	
2.6. Education Resource Cabinet a. Remove and relocate Picnic Table b. Design & build cabinet c. Purchase educational resources d. Purchase 2 tables 10 chairs e. Refurbish signs and displays on existing shelter walls	<i>Subject to endorsement by MSC to 5.1</i> To provide a secure, undercover cabinet to service the educational needs of groups of 10-15 students visiting the wetlands (including ponding equipment, binoculars, sound recording equipment, microscopes etc)	0-1 yr	\$16,300					\$16,300
Strategic Action #2 -Expand Educational & Cultural Experience			SubTotals	\$3,000	\$101,500	\$1,000	\$45,000	\$16,300

Y Water Discovery Centre - 2017-2021 Strategic Plan
5 Year Rolling Priority Projects Program

Project Description	Need	Priority	Estimated Cost	Financial Year				
				2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Strategic Priority #3. Strengthening Governance & Partner Relationships								
3.1. Sponsor Acknowledgement Plaques a. Yea Wetlands Trust b. Yea Community Bank c. ReneSola	To duly acknowledge donors and sponsors who have contributed to the Centre’s development	0-1yr	\$600	\$600				
3.2 Collaborative Marketing Campaign a. YWCA to auspice discussions with Businesses keen to develop packages.	Generate mutual benefits for local businesses/community by identifying / developing collaborative marketing opportunities	3-5 yr	\$10,000		\$3,000	\$3,000	\$4,000	
	Strategic Action #3 - Strengthen Governance & Partnerships SubTotals			\$600	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$4,000	\$0

Strategic Priority #5. Expanding The Centre's Learning Facilities & Amenities

5.1 Learning Room Extension to Interp Wing a. MSC to consider and advise decision b. Engage Architect to design / Plans c. Source Funds d. Engage Builder	the lack of internal/undercover learning area is impacting on growing the educational programs. Additional storage space for retail product and educational equipment is needed. Potential additional use as theatre <i>Supersedes Project 2.6 if MSC endorse this project</i>	ASAP	\$139,800		\$132,000			
5.2 Shelter/Shade for Verandah a. YWCA has made temporary shade available b. Research and obtain quotations	Shade/shelter required over deck to make area usable. Sketch design for butterfly roof to replace wires. Retractable café curtains. Needs costing.	0-1 yr	\$27,800		\$27,800			
5.3 Indigenous Fence / Screen (northern) a. Raise funds via Pillars #2 to raise \$10k b. Source tree skins & indigenous artist c. Design and construct	To restrict access to/from the carpark (north) encouraging visitation via the Centre. To provide an informative, respectful, high quality depiction of Aboriginal heritage and culture	0-1 yr	\$15,000	\$15,000				
5.4 Viewing Platform & Amphitheatre a. Secure funds b. Construct Viewing Platform c. Earthworks & Amphitheatre	To provide students/visitors convenient, reliable safe access to water in the wetlands enabling groups of 10-15 students to gather, listen and reflect on learnings from lesson plans. To provide a platform and informal seating for artistic performances at the Centre.	0-1 yr	\$19,500	\$19,500				
5.5 Landscaping Bed at Front Entrance a. Design planting layout b. Prepare Garden bed c. Procure/place materials & plan	To create a feature garden bed at the Centre's entrance that reflects the Centre's water focus and attracts increased visitation.	0-1 yr	\$4,500	\$4,500				
5.6 Finish Hard-standing Landscape Area a. Finalise design b. Excavate and construct	To increase the functionality of the educational and visual external aspects of the Centre for educational and event purposes.	2-3yr	\$11,000	\$11,000				
5.7 Modify Meeting Room Cabinet a. Resolve desired use of space and design modifications b. Order and arrange installation	Make better use of space, storage for learning materials and improve access to equipment and meeting room facilities	1-3 yr	\$2,000	\$2,000				
5.8 Secure environmental water entitlement a. Confirm possibility / regulatory processes. (GMW, DEWLP) b. Source & procure water entitlement c. Install diversion / pumping equipment	Enhance learning and visitor experience / enhance aesthetic values by maintaining water in wetland / water supply for water feature around Centre.	3-5yr	\$5,500		\$5,500			
Strategic Action #5 - Expand Facilities & Amenities SubTotals				\$52,000	\$165,300	\$0	\$0	\$0

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Strategic Action #1 - #5 Totals	\$60,100	\$186,300	\$43,000	\$4,000	\$0
Total Cost of 5 Yr Works Program	\$293,400	With Learning Room Option		\$177,700	
Additions to Council's Capital Assets Totals	\$50,000	\$159,800	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total of 5 Yr MSC Asset Program	\$209,800	With Learning Room Option		\$94,100	

Notes:

1. The above program is subject to availability and timing of suitable funding programs.
2. Projects requiring MSC endorsement before funding can be sought are shaded pink