

# Daylesford District Community News Association

## Annual Report for the 2022-23

The main business of the association is to publish The Wombat Post. We have now successfully completed our fourth year of publication.

The [Wombat Post](#) is an online, community controlled local news and information service. It fills a gap created by the decline of local print news.

Our aim is to inform the Daylesford and Hepburn Springs about news and events that contribute to community building and community well-being. We want to promote a positive image of the local community, to contribute to the historical record, and to provide a medium for business, clubs, associations, services and trades to promote themselves to the community.

### Community support

We continue to be supported by the community. Membership and subscribers remain strong. We have 670 subscribers to the weekly update for the Wombat Post and 84 financial members.

A number of organisations now regularly send us media releases and news letters. we monitor regional releases for stories that are relevant for Hepburn Springs and Daylesford. Submissions and stories are collected and edited during the week by the editors and the editorial committee.

We have had excellent support from the Community Bank for the Daylesford District. The bank provides ongoing financial for the Wombat Post through its sponsorship. A number of local organisations and businesses advertised through the Wombat Post this year. We regularly receive letters from community members on local issues.

We thank our many sponsors, contributors and advertisers. Local contributions are vital for our success.

### Initiatives

Over the past year we have maintained our events calendar, letters page and deaths page and added a jobs board for local employment opportunities. We continue our partnerships with the Daylesford Neighbourhood Centre and the Hepburn Community Radio and we are a member of the Community News Association of Victoria.

We have revised and created a linked website for our local business and organisations directory. The directory now has 152 local businesses and organisations listed.

This year we have also recruited part time administrative assistance provided initially by Sandy Jennings and now Melissa Scott. We would like to thank Sandy and Melissa for the excellent support they have provided to the voluntary board and our contributors.

The website for the Wombat Post is provided through the Wordpress platform hosted on xhost solutions. They have provided technical support and additional memory for free when we needed it. Additional specialist technical support was provided by Website Warriors to deal with technical issues beyond the capability of our voluntary team.

## Social Media

Our social media presence has grown. The Wombat Post facebook page now has a Facebook 924 followers (up by 14% over last year), 742 likes (up by 13% over theyear). Our post reach has gone up from about 500 per week last year to around 2000 per week this year.

Our facebook gender balance continues to be strongly gendered. About 70% of our Facebook followers are women and 30% men. About 80% of followers are over the age of 45. Our social media audience is strongly local, but there is a significant group of Melbourne followers.

## Governance

The Wombat Post is published by the Daylesford District Community News Association Incorporated. The members of the DDNCA Community Board are:

Hal Swerissen	President
Mark Rak	Vice president
Kate Redwood	Treasurer
Dudley McArdle	Secretary
Tim Bach	Member and editor
Celia Waldron	Member and arts editor
Robyn Rogers	Member

The board met three times during the year, supplemented by planning meetings that included a wider group of board members and regular contributors.

We have maintained our public liability insurance and met our obligations for registration as a not for profit incorporated association. Our banking is provided by the Bendigo Bank and we use the internationally respected Stripe payment gateway for our online financial Transactions.

This year Kate Redwood will retire from the Board. Kate is a foundation member of the Association and one of the key advocates for establishing a local community news services

for Daylesford and Hepburn Springs. She has been a driving force of initiatives, ideas and community connections. We thank her for her contribution and wish her well for the future.

## Financial Report

This is the fourth annual financial report for Daylesford and District Community News.

At the date of writing (12 November 2023) the balance in the Daylesford Community Bank account was \$12,894.27

For the financial year 22/23 the opening balance was \$8559.98 and the closing balance was \$11,528.82

Major expenses for the year were \$2940 paid to Sandy Jennings for admin support for the Wombat Post, and \$2863 for systems development and maintenance for the Wombat Post website.

Income has continued on a slow growth path, with most income from membership and local advertising. We are particularly grateful for the sponsorship of \$2500 from the Daylesford and District Community Bank.

These figures demonstrate a sustainable pattern of financial operations over time. However it should be noted that, with the exception of part time admin support all activity is voluntary. If this is costed at an estimated 20 hours per week editorial and systems maintenance work, plus 10 hours per week writing articles at a conservative \$32 farm labourer rate per hour, and assuming that the Wombat Post is issued 50 weeks per year, then the notional uncosted figure of volunteer input is \$48,000 in a financial year .

This is not to suggest that the Wombat Post should increase its income and pay out the volunteers, but rather to acknowledge the contribution in kind behind the scenes, which is necessary to deliver the weekly e-news at the high standard that the Wombat Post regularly achieves.

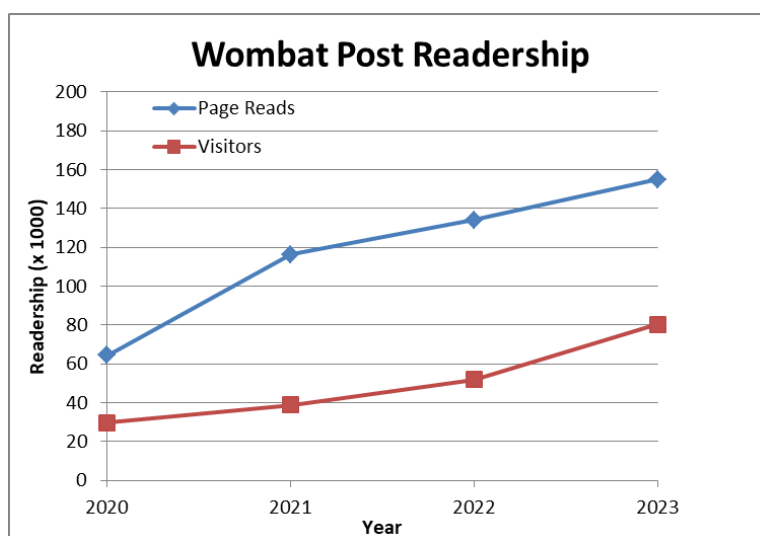
It has been a huge pleasure to contribute in a small way to the Wombat Post. As I pass on the Treasurer's baton to the next incumbent, may I express my admiration to all who have contributed to this wonderful local news outlet. May it continue to thrive for many years to come.

Kate Redwood  
Treasurer  
Daylesford and District Community News

## Editor's Report

### Readership

To date this year, we have had 80,000 visitors and 154,000 page reads. This represents a 70% increase in visitors and a 27% increase in page reads over the same period last year. Overall, readership is increasing.



### Most popular stories over the past year

Our top stories and the number of page reads for each are indicated in the table below. There is interest across the whole range of news and feature stories.

Local Man Charged with Murder and Arson	2,621
Jimmy	2,435
Savoia Hotel in the Hands of Mortgagees	2,041
Local Luxury Tourist Operator fined \$2500 for Harassment	1,963
Winter in the Garden	1,327
Hotel Frangos Operators Address Fair Work Allegations	1,309
Road Death in Bridport Street	1,064
We Salute Our First Responders	927
Swamp Rats in Your Garden?	909

### Contributions

Contributions come from the community, local politicians, Hepburn Shire Council, regular columnists and editorial board members.

We have a good relationship with Hepburn Shire Council. We receive regular media releases and their Communications team is very responsive to our requests. The Mayor, Cr Brian Hood, contributes a monthly column in the week of regular Council meetings. Cr Lesley

Hewitt (week before Council meetings) and Cr Jen Bray (week following Council meetings) are also contributing regular columns about Council matters.

Our regular feature contributors include Petrus Spronk (art/ philosophy, 1<sup>st</sup> Friday), Victor Szwed (weather update, 1<sup>st</sup> Friday), Raquel Stevens (Burrow Banter, usually twice monthly), Tanya Loos (Nature Diary, 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday) and Dudley McArdle (Notes from the DNC, weekly). Dudley also contributed a series of articles on local emergency services which was widely read.

We have recently been joined by Clive Hartley with a monthly wine column on the second Friday of each month. Indre Kisonas, a local designer, has started contributing a monthly column on building and design on the fourth Friday of each month. Dianne Beddison is contributing a popular gardening column on a seasonal basis. Mark Rak has started regular reports on local planning applications highlighting some controversial matters that are referred to Council. Morgan Williams, the director of the Radius Art Space in Hepburn has just started a monthly column on local artists and galleries.

We have started linking more of our stories to podcasts on the Hepburn Community Radio Soundcloud including interviews with visiting musicians, Lesley Hewitt's HCR book review and Raquel Stevens burrow Banter interviews. Trevor Shard has taken responsibility for editing the podcasts and covering the technical side.

We are very grateful to all of our regular contributors who provide a wonderful and reliable variety of local colour and content.

## Website

We had difficulties with our website or a few months this year. Readers and contributors (and editors!) were frustrated by frequent website crashes. Jennifer Saunders of Website Warriors responded very promptly and professionally to our request for assistance and was able to resolve these problems. The website has been running smoothly since then. We hope to spend a bit more time with Website Warriors working on site design issues. If you have suggestions for how the site could be improved in terms of usability or presentation, please pass them along.

## Operations

Our Editorial Committee meets weekly by Zoom to consider articles that have been submitted, issues that need to be investigated and articles that we would like to recruit. Members of the Editorial Committee include Tim Bach, Hal Swerissen, Mark Rak, Raquel Stevens, Celia Waldron, Dudley McArdle, Robyn Rogers and Trevor Shard. Until very recently, Kate Redwood was also a member of the Ed Committee. The Wombat Post could not function without the hard work and dedication of these people.

Hal Swerissen and Tim Bach do the bulk of the editorial work in preparing and scheduling articles each week. We need to upskill our Editorial Committee members to do some of this work or recruit an additional editor to ensure resilience of the publication.

Tim Bach  
Editor

## Next Year

Last year we concentrated on consolidating our finances so we can support our volunteers. Putting in place administrative and technical support was a key element of that strategy. Our membership, donations, sponsorships and advertising made that possible.

This year we to strengthen our financial position further through advertising, sponsorship and grants to support our volunteers and expand our community initiatives. We plan to:

- Continue to develop specific themes including indigenous culture, heritage and language
- Provide opportunities for young people in journalism and writing
- Introduce additional regular columns on topics of community interest