

APPLICATION for MEMBERSHIP of GLOBAL ECOVILLAGE NETWORK AUSTRALIA



Jagera EcoCommunity has been accepted as an accredited member of Global Ecovillage Network (Australia), *“This marks the village or community as a genuine ecovillage or intentional community as described by GEN International.”* www.genaustralia.org.au

Our responses to the questions they asked us show how we meet ecovillage criteria.

Social Dimension

How many community members do you currently have? *

5 community members plus many active supporters in the wider community (the edges of our ecocommunity are fuzzy, not simply defined by the edges of the property. We are part of a larger eco-neighbourhood, and a hub for like-hearted people in the wider local community.) We are actively seeking new members as construction of community infrastructure will begin mid to late 2019.

Please provide an overview of your community's governance structure, including your current decision making processes *

Currently collaborative decision-making is facilitated by co-founders, who are experienced in participatory and collaborative planning, along the lines of "sociocracy" in face to face meetings or online. We have been in the planning, design and engineering phase, managed by an experienced ecovillage planner and educator, including negotiations with Council for planning permission, so most decisions have been made by professional consultants with community members being informed along the way through a private facebook group and asked for feedback. As we move into the next (exciting!) phase of community formation, decisions will be made through sociocracy and facilitated by various members of the community.

Please outline the legal structure(s) in place for the ownership and management of your community's assets and land (e.g. Strata Title, Land Lease community, Co-operative, etc) *

Community Title (NSW Community Title Act, 1979) with Neighbourhood Management Statement (11 private residential lots with one shared community lot with community buildings, water tanks, ring road, gardens, orchards, rainforested creek and river viewing area)

What regular shared activities do your community members participate in? *

- community meals
- working bees on your common land and/or property
- decision-making meetings
- journeys together to other places
- spiritual gatherings
- events and celebrations

All of the above except "journeys to other places".

Economic Dimension

How does your community provide equitable and sustainable housing for its members? *

The cost of purchasing residential lots in our community is higher than we initially intended, due to costs of development and Council contributions etc, but is still within the range of other residential lots within the township of Maclean, and will be far cheaper than conventional housing lots in the Northern Rivers coastal region of NSW. There are aspects of our community, however, which reduce the economic costs of living for our community dwellers: 1. Walking distance to centre of traditional rural town and shops (cheap goods and services; reduce vehicle costs). 2. Neighbourhood Management Statement encourages small dwelling size, with guidance as to sustainable (including cost efficient) construction materials and methods (including owner building), and net present value (NPV) costs will be reduced. 3. We encourage tiny houses, expanded dwellings and shared ownership of residential lots. 4. We are researching possibilities of some individual lots being purchased by conscious community investors entering into a contract with a long term lessee/dweller who could be engaged in planning and construction of the dwelling and have tenure (BEV model on individual lot level). 5. In our larger eco-neighbourhood, on the neighbouring property of Foresthaven, there are also 2 cottages available for rent at below market rents involving work exchange on the land and buildings. 6. Using a Community Title legal structure means that: a) community members are able to borrow money from a financial institution to support the building of their home and lifestyle improvements; and b) if and when they come to leave the community at some point in the future, their investment has kept pace with the surrounding mainstream property market meaning they are not financially disadvantaged by being part of an ecocommunity, and can leave when they want/need to rather than be "stuck" in a living situation they don't want to be in, avoiding potentially tense community dynamics for all.

Please describe any internal employment or exchange systems that operate in your community *

1. We are not yet living on the land, but envision that there will be a diversity of community members in terms of age, fitness, financial status, and consistency of dwelling there. The maintenance of the shared areas of the property (including community buildings, orchards, gardens, water systems) will be a shared responsibility and will be managed by our Core Team (body corporate). Although community work days are - and will continue to be - an important part of our community glue, monetary exchange for some of these activities is a likely part of the mix. 2. Community members so far have a range of regenerative living skills and expertise, ranging from sustainable building, collaborative planning, permaculture design, food growing and preserving, to ecopsychology, yoga and shamanism. We are exploring the idea of a Jagera/Foresthaven exchange currency that could be used within our eco-neighbourhood and perhaps beyond with like-hearted sustainability oriented crew in the local area. We are also advocates for the "gifting economy" and recognise multiple forms of "capital". 3. We have approval from from NSW electricity authority to develop a microgrid system where we share solar generated power amongst our households as needed. 4. If the neighbouring property Foresthaven grows as an eco-retreat and workshop venue, then Jagera community members could rent rooms or tiny houses on their lots to workshop participants. 5. See dot-point 5 in previous question. This could also be extended to similar arrangements within the Jagera community itself if some houses, rooms or tiny houses are rented out.

How do you generate financial returns to your community? *

1. Community members so far have a range of regenerative living skills and expertise, ranging from sustainable building, collaborative planning, permaculture design, food growing and preserving, to ecopsychology, yoga and shamanism. These sustainability related skills could be collected under one brand and marketed within the wider local community. 2. Most of our existing community members are also educators, and so a range of workshops and training programs in regenerative living, including ecovillage design, could be offered by community members and held at the neighbouring Foresthaven eco-retreat and workshop centre (pending approving from Friends of Foresthaven Inc and Clarence Valley Council). We could become a form of "communiversity" (we even have the domain name!). Open Days could be held at Jagera, and develop eco-living skills for potential residents. 3. Educational tourism, ecotherapy / "forest bathing" and deep nature connection could form a part of this mix. 4. We have approval from electricity authorities to develop a microgrid system where we share solar generated power and feed excess power back into the grid. This will provide a "trickle feed" of money back into the community.

Ecological Dimension

Please describe your site (e.g. land size, location, ecology - any historic degradation, natural assets etc) *

The property on which our ecocommunity is forming is 5 acres of north facing slope, zoned residential on the outskirts of the rural township of Maclean, on the Clarence Coast inland from Yamba, Northern NSW. We are in Yaegl Country, and are nestled in a hidden valley above the town, surrounded by regenerating eucalypt and rainforest. The property bounds the Ayr St Reserve to the south, Foresthaven wildlife sanctuary to the east, and suburban backyards to the north and west. The ecocommunity land was a totally cleared paddock in the 1970's and became overgrown with woody weeds, pioneer black wattles and is regenerating with some 80 mature rainforest trees of different species, and numerous seedlings coming up amongst native grasses. The two flora communities that are regenerating are native pine and subtropical rainforest. We have some endangered species, swamp wallabies, possums, native rates and antechinus, microbats, water dragons, goannas, snakes and a multitude of bird species including wonga pigeons, rainforest doves, kingfishers, grey shrike thrush, and yellow robins are common inhabitants. Cane toads are a recent problem, having appeared in the area within the last 4 years. Special areas of the site include a rainforested gully and creek flowing through the bottom of the property, and a high, sandstone area overlooking the mighty Clarence River. Both areas have ecological and cultural value.

How are you implementing best practices in your use of water, energy, food, materials and waste within your community? Please provide examples *

We are building a community title development based on minimising resource use and, in terms of ecological footprint, aiming to settle 11 ecohouseholds on the land with an impact of 2 standard households. Rigorous research, calculations and modelling (including the likely impacts of climate change) have been conducted to develop our strategies and design. Our community will be as "off grid" as possible within an urban residential zone, and yet have the advantages of connection to reticulated urban utility systems on a community level if required.

1. Water supply. Each household will have its own rainwater tanks and roof area calculated for adequate supply for its number of residents (including climate change modelling). This will be supplemented by harvesting of stormwater from the internal ringroad, filtered through reed bed systems, collected in tanks at bottom of the hill and solar pumped to water tanks at top of the hill for use for community gardens, orchards and landscaping. This will be supplemented by one connection to townwater, for use in the community buildings, supplementary landscaping, and 4 fire hydrants.

2. Energy. a) Solar. Each household, and the community buildings, will have its own solar panels and batteries which will be connected to the main grid and able to receive a "trickle feed" of energy to top up the batteries when low. (Our whole community of 11 ecohouseholds will be able to import and export the equivalent of 2 standard households in this regard. This will encourage us to be frugal with our energy use, while having the ability to top up without using generators.) Infrastructure will be put in place to allow a microgrid to

operate between households, sharing power between households in the community prior to exporting excess to the grid. b) Passive heating and cooling. Buildings will be designed to take advantage of the north facing aspect of all lots, and the summer breezes which flow from the river and through the rainforest. c) Heating in winter, as well as cooking, can be augmented by the use of senescent black wattle timber felled from onsite during construction. (We have calculated that we have 20 years supply.) In times of high creek flow, microhydro could also supplement our solar power; and we are also researching the viability of biogas. d) Use of private vehicles will be discouraged by using a small solar powered electric vehicle (eg., golf cart) to bring shopping up our hill from the base of our community, from where town is a flat walk or bicycle ride away. We might also invest in a shared, solar powered electric roadworthy vehicle (eg., a solar ute would be great!).

3. Food. a) Our internal ringroad will be lined with suitable subtropical orchard trees (including endemic bush foods of davidson plum, macadamia, black apple, finger limes, lilly pillies, and lemon and aniseed myrtle). Our central, flat community area will also have room for a shared community garden and chickens. This will be supplemented by community members' private food gardens and orchards (lot sizes of between 600 and 1400m² enable this). Gardens and food systems will be designed in detail using permaculture and collaborative principles, and will also evolve over time with our community. The neighbouring property of Foresthaven has been trialling many different orchard trees over the past 25 years and can be used to determine which varieties are likely to be successful in local conditions. If Jagera runs out of land to grow enough food, arrangements could be made with suitable agricultural area of Foresthaven and other neighbouring properties currently being used for hobby farming. b) We support the local farmers markets in Maclean and Yamba, as both vendors and customers. c) Shared meals, communal cooking and food preservation, will be encouraged through our Neighbourhood Management Statement and the construction of a camp kitchen connected to our central community building. A shared pantry/cellar could be constructed into the hillside to the rear of the community building. A pizza oven is also on the wish-list!

4. Materials. a) Our Sustainable Building Guidelines encourage the use of sustainable building materials including recycled materials, hempcrete, and rammed earth, and aerated concrete; and the sourcing of materials as locally as possible. b) In construction of the community and servicing infrastructure including roads, earthworks will be "neutral" in the sense that all the "cut" will be used as "fill" in other areas of the site. We are investigating the use of recycled road building materials, pipes and bridge materials. c) We also intend to minimise the loss of any organic matter from the site, for example, any trees that need to be felled will be retained onsite as landscaping or construction timbers, mulch or stored as firewood. d) Sharing tools and other mechanical equipment will minimise our use of material resources, and we are designing community sheds for this purpose.

5. Waste. a) Our community is connected to town sewerage, but the Neighbourhood Management Statement ensures that each household will only install composting toilets. This is estimated to reduce our load on the centralised system by a minimum of 80% water and 30% nutrient load. Compost will be used to fertilise the fruit trees and food forest. b) Greywater systems will be installed to reuse household water, and stormwater from the ring road will be treated and reused for landscaping purposes. c) Household food wastes can either be composted on a household level or added to the community level composting system, which could be used for fertilising community gardens and/or biogas generation. d) Building

waste will be minimised on a community and individual household levels, as described in our Neighbourhood Management Statement. e) We also intend to reduce household recycling and garbage generation through community support and by keeping Council recycling and garbage bins at the bottom of the hill, some distance from the houses, to discourage their use!

How is your community protecting your site's natural and cultural values? *

1. Natural values are being protected through minimising impact during construction, improving biodiversity, pest and weed management, and the protection of particular areas of ecological and cultural value. Rigorous flora and fauna assessments were conducted prior to development application process, approved by Clarence Valley Council, and used as a basis for the development of our concept and landscape plans, weed management and biodiversity enhancement strategy, as well as our Neighbourhood Management Statement. Highlights include: a) mechanical removal of woody weeds including lantana, tobacco bush and *ochra cerrulata* which dominate the site, without chemical spraying; b) "no dogs and cats" policy; c) rainforested creek and high sandstone areas protected in shared ownership with management plans; d) retention of most regenerating native pine and rainforest trees, and when pioneer senescent black wattle need to be felled, those with hollows will be retained, resurrected or used for landscaping; e) flight paths of microbats, birds and "runs" of terrestrial vertebrates will be retained during construction where possible; f) rainforest regeneration and cane toad musters as community activities. (It should be noted that some of these plans must be negotiated in relation to bushfire protection requirements.)

2. Cultural values. We are collaborating with Yaegl Traditional Owners, including elders and friends, in order to ensure respect for Yaegl culture and country. For example, Yaegl consultants were engaged for the Cultural Heritage Assessment of the land, and we will be guided by local elders and Yaegl TOAC during our construction phase to ensure no damage is done to cultural assets; smoking ceremonies will be held by local elders at appropriate times in the community's development; Yaegl people are currently and will be employed in construction of community infrastructure and maintenance of the land.

Worldview Dimension

What is your community's stated common purpose and/or vision? *

Because we have been focussing on the "nuts and bolts phase" of community development, we have not finalised our community vision statement as this must be done collaboratively and we plan to hold a face-to-face visioning workshop to do this. Our DRAFT mission statement is: *"The ecological footprint of the typical Australian lifestyle is quite literally "costing the Earth" and stealing from our future generations. At Jagera, we believe that we each need to "do our bit" to reduce resource use and our impacts on climate change, and that we can do this in a creative, collaborative, mutually supportive, socially just, and joyful way. We are co-creating a sustainable and regenerative lifestyle in symbiosis with each other and the natural systems of which we are a part. In a practical sense, we aim to develop 11 ecohouseholds within a community title, with the impact of only 2 regular households."*

In what ways does your community share this vision more broadly? *

As mentioned previously, all our existing community members are actively involved in the sustainability movement in some way, and most are educators and communicators, so we do individually share this vision more broadly. We are actively sharing our dreams and visions, and practical opportunities amongst our friends, colleagues and communities.

As an emerging ecocommunity, however, we are sharing our vision on two websites www.ecocommunity.org.au and www.sustainablefutures.com.au/econeighbourhood. Cofounders Eshana Bragg and Peter Cuming (Directors of Sustainable Futures Australia) have shared the vision of our community at sustainability gatherings and conferences including Triple Ecology gathering 2016, Renew 2018 and Newkind 2019, and various Facebook pages and groups.

We would like GEN to help us spread our vision.

How does your community currently collaborate at a global level? *

At this stage, our community as a whole is not collaborating at a global level. We would like to, which is part of why we are interested in becoming a member of GEN.

Jagera cofounder Peter Cuming is on the Australian and International Executives of EAROPH (Eastern Regional Organisation for Planning and Human Settlements) as an environmental representative. Peter is acknowledged professionally as a sustainability planner and strategic planner, ecovillage designer and educator, and has been engaged internationally to facilitate the development of sustainable cities. He is sharing the Jagera project with colleagues at regional, national and international symposia. Jagera cofounder Dr Eshana Bragg collaborates internationally in the field of ecopsychology, and is the cofounder of small global non-profit startup The Joyality Project for Personal and Planetary Wellbeing www.joyality.org. Peter and Eshana also collaborate internationally with clients and communities through their consultancy group Sustainable Futures Australia www.sustainablefutures.com.au.

Community member Mike Lowe has worked internationally with Initiatives for Change, including running leadership development programs for youth who are now adult leaders of today (and creating initiatives such as ecovillages!).

Active supporters of Jagera ecocommunity collaborate internationally and are connected with Gaia Education, Local Futures and the OM (Organic Matters) Foundation.