

Urban Coup Newsletter

December 12, 2013



Who are we?

Urban Coup is a group of people who are preparing to purchase land close to the Melbourne CBD and build a sustainable inner urban cohousing community. We intend to build a community of 30 households, six of which will be social (affordable) housing and the remaining 24 will be private dwellings. There will be a mix of one, two and three bedroom self-contained residences, a common house with shared kitchen and dining, shared garden and orchard, music room, 2-3 rooms for guest accommodation, car sharing, and other shared facilities. We hope to purchase land and begin to build in 2014 with the Women's Property Initiatives (WPI), a housing association that will act as our project developer, to buy the land and finance the building that each of us will then buy 'off the plan'.

What are we up to now?

It can be hard to put the essence and fabric of cohousing into words. In his article in The Age of February 10th, 2013, Neil McMahon described Urban Coup as an 'owner-driven co-operative housing project' of 'like-minded investors' with a dream of a 'self-designed urban apartment complex'. These concepts are useful summaries of our make-up and process. We would also add our commitment to sustainable design.

And for the essence of Urban Coup cohousing, we must refer to McMahon's paraphrasing of one of our founding members, Alex Fearnside, regarding the time needed to "*settle on community and vision*", and the work involved in resolving all the legal and financial issues.

Our social housing component will be made up of residents drawn from the list of the Women's Property Initiatives (WPI) with whom we have just finalised a partnership agreement, just one of the things we have achieved this year. It has taken five years progressing through the financial, social, legal and structural processes to ready ourselves to purchase land and develop it according to our needs and desires. This seems a long time, but there is a lot at stake.

Buying a house is daunting enough for anyone; a building project is even more challenging; for Urban Coup, preparing to develop a strata titled complex of 30 units to the specifications of our diverse group, there is a lot that needs to be done in readiness to buy land.



A year's work

Urban Coup doesn't demand any more from members than that which they freely give. According to our talents and the ebb and flow of life's circumstances, each of us does that which we can. For some of us that has involved helping out with a co housing weekend workshop or common meal. Whatever the engagement, be it with organisation, networking, food, music or socialising, it strengthens our bonds and moves us closer to our goal of sustainable living in an inner urban development with many shared facilities.

We also need to acknowledge that we wouldn't have come this far without the enthusiastic and professional commitment of our most active members. They deserve our appreciation.

Many thanks are due to

- Urban Coup committee members,
- Members participating in our monthly general meetings
- Working Group enthusiasts
- Our information technology and web design wizards.

We are very grateful to Joel Cranshaw, Clearpoint Counsel, for his pro bono legal assistance in reviewing the Cooperation Deed with WPI.

Here are some of the year's milestones that were reported at our AGM:

February 2013

- Successful stall and panel discussion at Sustainable Living Festival attracting new members
- Article by Neil McMahon in the Age
- Social Sauntering led by Terry where everyone was enthused with a possible Coburg site
- The Recruitment team creates first draft of the amended Joining and Leaving Policy
- Ongoing discussions with WPI about how they might become partners in an Urban Coup development

March 2013

- Well attended weekend concept design workshop at Common Ground with Paul Downton, architect of Christie Walk (cohousing in Adelaide) filmed by visiting Welsh film maker, Helen Iles.
- Recruitment/info session at Richmond Library – lots of interest and some new members

- First draft of Cooperation Deed received from WPI's lawyers
- Paul Downton Concept Designs presented by Brenda & Andrew in Places Victoria meeting
- Short film clip received of our weekend at Common Ground
- Alice and Josqui leave the fold for a family home in Eltham
- Proposals tabled for amendments to Joining and Leaving Policy and switching bank account to MECU and being able to use term deposits
- Discussions with WPI continue

April 2013

- Decision on MECU passed, discussions continue on Joining and Leaving Policy
- First committee meeting for 2013
- Discussion begins around formalisation of working groups
- We trial different meeting venues – Andrew's, Fiona and Lane's, the multicultural hub, Ross House.
- Discussions begin on the upgrade of the internal website
- Brenda becomes treasurer
- Discussions with WPI continue

May 2013

- Discussions continue on Joining and Leaving Policy
- Brenda reports that we have \$30K in the bank and \$20,000 placed on 3 month term deposit with BankMecu
- Discussions with WPI continue

June 2013

- Fiona starts blogging on external site
- Discussions continue on Joining and Leaving Policy
- Planning for Winter Common Meal underway
- Discussions with WPI continue
- Working group structure formalized

July 2013

- Discussions continue on Joining and Leaving Policy
- Terry and Brenda provide comprehensive overview on progress with WPI
- Nathan convenes and organizes our Scottish themed Winter Common Meal – Burns night, at Murundaka (co-housing by Common Equity Housing Ltd for a social housing development for tenants- only 'affordable' co-housing) Lots of old and new faces there with alumni and new and prospective members as well as Murundaka friends

August 2013

- Discussions continue on Joining and Leaving Policy

September 2013

- Amended Joining and Leaving Policy passes!
- Presentation on WPI partnership – nearly up to final steps in finalising the agreement

October 2013

- Premiere at the Abbotsford Convent of Helen Iles' film, 'Ecovillage Pioneers' combines with Urban Coup Q&A and showing of Helen's clip of the Urban Coup Concept Design Workshop at Common Ground
- Intrepid UC members sample the delights of Balaclava pubs ☺
- Major Decision Proposal tabled for finalising the agreement with WPI
- New Rules for The Urban Coup Inc. - in keeping with new corporations' law - tabled for passing at Special General Meeting contiguous with Annual General Meeting in November

November 2013

- AGM at South Melbourne Town Hall
- Major Decision Poll on agreement with WPI finalised

December news – partnership with WPI signed off

The partnership with WPI has been formalised with Brenda, Terry and Andrew with assistance from Lane working closely throughout the year with WPI. Discussions have been characterised by a high degree of cooperation, trust, alignment of values and mutual benefit. Urban Coup was represented at the signing by Alex, Terry, Lane, Alesha and Brenda and WPI by Carmel McCormack (board member), Jeanette Large (CEO and board member) and Caroline Larcher (project and development manager). Alex and Brenda signed on behalf of Urban Coup.



Thanks to Alesha for the great photo and thanks to Alex for bringing his fountain pen so we could sign in style

End of Year Party

Sunday, December 15, 11:30 am - 2.00 pm
Ceres Organic Cafe, Stewart St, Brunswick East. Buy your own food at the Café and come and find us!!

