

Cheerio Newsletter



January - February 2021



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CEO Report

Josh Fergeus,
Chief Executive Officer

As I write this, we are once again in a state of lockdown. KHG remains an essential service, although on-site attendance is limited to essential service delivery staff and program participants.

Our 2021 TAFE classes have commenced and despite a rocky start I know they will have an excellent year. I hope that as the year progresses we will be able to re-commence our range of specialist programs. I especially miss cooking and the occasional snacks which made their way to my desk!

We continue to have vacancies at both Doncaster and Coburg for our core Saturday program. There are also opportunities for

participants wishing to develop skills in hospitality to join the Peppertree Place Café team. If you are interested in either of these opportunities please contact our Client Services team at clientservices@kevinheinzegrow.org.au.

And finally, we are very pleased to be welcoming Tracy Ellis back to the team! Tracy returned to KHG at the start of January in her new role as Principal Practitioner. She will be taking a leading role in promoting a learning culture, integrating evidence-based practice and critical reflection. Her goal will be to ensure the quality and consistency of practice across the organisation.

I know we are all deeply tired of the pandemic and the constant changes to our practice and routines it requires. It's hard to say what 2021 holds for KHG, but I know that we will face the challenges and share the celebrations together.

Client Services

Anita Mitchell,
Manager - Client Services

Welcome to 2021! In 2020 we were so fortunate to stay open all year and to consistently provide support to participants who were able to attend. Beginning a new year has brought new participants, placement students and even some volunteers back. The garden is buzzing with activity. We are delighted to welcome James and Matt more regularly after they completed a transition



Xi working with a participant in the GROW Well program



Participants undertaking TAFE Certificates in partnership with Box Hill Institute

from Eastern Ranges School at the end of last year. We have also welcomed Josh C, Liam B, Jack D and Dwayne to the crew. Brigitte is our first regular Saturday morning participant. Some participants who were away for several months last year have finally been able to return, meaning that some days, we look to be bursting at the seams! Fortunately, we have fabulous support staff and the sea of purple, with staff sporting their KHG shirts at the morning meetings, is very pleasing to the eye. And that is just Doncaster!

At Peppertree Place, we have also had some new starters with Declan, Jordan, Robert, Darrell and Troy all starting this year. Melody was a Doncaster participant a few years ago, and it is wonderful that she has returned – this time to Coburg. Welcome back Mel!

Almost every day we are taking enquiries and processing new referrals as the reputation of our service spreads through the community. I want to thank my amazing team: Xi, Gem and Amy for the incredible work that they do behind the scenes to ensure that all these new beginnings and transitions are the best possible experience for our participants and their families.

This year, seventeen of our participants are enrolled in two certificate courses running in partnership with Box Hill Institute. This has been a wonderful partnership; seven of that cohort are currently completing their Certificate II in Work Education with a focus on Horticulture. The other ten make up the class for the Certificate I in Work Education. These wonderful people work very hard to earn their certificates and we are extremely proud of them all.

Our Grow Well program is also starting to expand. Our very own Xi Ma coordinates this program which is tailored specifically for children and young people who may have an intellectual disability, ASD, mental health challenges or those who have experienced trauma. If you happen to pop by the nursery on a Saturday morning you might be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of some very happy children racing through the centre.

We are looking forward to a year of consolidation in 2021 with a possible increase in numbers accompanied by quality and outcomes as we strive to provide the very best support staff and service to our participants.

Doncaster

*Brenna McIntyre,
Site Manager - Doncaster*

Doncaster is once again a thriving hive of activity in 2021, but not without stops and starts thanks to the various lockdowns and restrictions that we have unfortunately become accustomed to.

It has been great to welcome old and new participants onsite for the new year, who have adapted well to the continued social distancing rules even during extreme weather conditions including heavy rains, scorching heat and everything in between. Both staff and participants have been working very hard and their adaptability is to be commended.

Earlier this month we farewelled our resident turtle, Shredder, and adopted an Eastern Long Neck turtle rescued by Reptiles Victoria from a gutter in Blackburn. Our newest addition to the KHG turtle tank is now affectionately known as Kermit Shelly, who looks tiny in comparison to Shredder!



Victor, Shannon and Kasey in the GROW on the Go program

And a big congratulations to long-term KHG participants Victor Sham and Shannon Finnerty who are our very first Grow on the Go graduates! Having completed their training, Victor and Shannon have now secured part-time jobs in garden maintenance. This is a huge step forward and we congratulate them on their dedication to their learning, hard work, commitment and enthusiasm!

Shredder's Story

Back in 2015, when he was only the size of a 50c piece, Shredder and his sister Edwina were sold (incorrectly) as Eastern Long Neck turtles to Tracy as a present for her son's birthday. After several years, it became increasingly difficult to look after them at home and they were transferred to their new residence at Kevin Heinze Grow Doncaster.

A fabulous enclosure was built for them with a small pond and landscaping throughout. They spent many years here but were rarely seen as they spent their time exclusively in the pond. During this time, they had grown to the size of a bread plate.

One year, when cleaning out the pond, staff



Resident KHG turtle Shredder in 2019

discovered that Edwina had flown the coop and was nowhere to be found! She had escaped and hopefully found better pastures elsewhere. It was then decided to bring Shredder inside the building where he lived in a large fish tank. Once we received clearer instructions on what and how often he should be eating, he quickly grew to the size of a dinner plate. Various outdoor “swimming pools” and enclosures were built over the years and Shredder was given regular access to these for sun and fresh air.

Late last year, it was discovered that Shredder had not been brought in the night before and was missing. A day of searching ensued with both staff and students scouring the site, but he was nowhere to be seen. The following day, there were serious concerns for his health, as he would have been without water for many days. Upon another lap of the site, he was found in a small box of irrigation parts and rushed to his tank. He recovered well and everyone was elated.

However, this was not the end of Shredder’s adventures! A few days before KHG closed for the 2020 year, the big step was taken to

leave him in one of the newly-built outdoor enclosures for the weekend. The enclosure was dug into the ground with rocks surrounding the edges and a secure gate in place.

First thing Monday morning, staff went to retrieve Shredder from his outdoor tank and just like the previous time, he appeared to have vanished! Theories relating to foxes, owls and theft were discussed. The participants’ last day of the year was spent predominantly hunting and hoping, yet they were farewelled for the year thinking he was gone forever. The following day, staff continued to search, but hopes were fading. It felt like a final blow at the end of a very challenging year and spirits were low.

Shredder ... appeared to have vanished! Theories relating to foxes, owls and theft were discussed.

Then, a phone call was taken in the office. The woman on the end of the phone prefaced her question with embarrassment, but asked “Do you own a turtle?”! She was told yes,

but he was missing. She then proceeded to explain that she lived in an adjoining street and that her neighbour's son had seen a turtle crossing the road and had stopped to save it.

He was visiting his mother and wanted to keep the turtle locally in case someone had lost it. He noticed the turtle was comfortable around people, which made him think Shredder must be a pet. He set Shredder up in his mum's bath and proceeded to call the local council and wildlife organisations who all insisted he was wild and would not be able to help. Unsure what to do next, they began door knocking the local neighbourhood but had no luck.

The woman on the phone then explained that at 3am the night before, she had to call the neighbour's son to come and collect Shredder as his mother, who experiences dementia, could not remember why there was a turtle in her bath and she was becoming very distressed. At this point, Shredder was

transported to an apartment in Blackburn. Once advised, KHG staff quickly collected Shredder (who looked very tired and dehydrated...) and returned him to his tank. He recovered quickly – it was our end of year miracle! Since then, we have learnt that Shredder is in fact a Murray River turtle and that despite all the love and attention we'd given him, his tank and enclosures were significantly inadequate for a deep diving turtle like him. Thanks to the assistance and support from the dedicated volunteers at Reptiles Victoria, Shredder was rehomed again, hopefully for the last time, to a private pond in Whittlesea.

Since then, we have repaid the favour and adopted a new, diminutive in comparison, turtle, currently named Kermit Shelly who is an actual Eastern Long Neck turtle. At the end of February, we had Simon from Reptiles Victoria visit KHG to talk to us about how to care for Kermit and we hope to adopt a friend for him soon. Stay tuned for the next turtle stories at KHG!



Simon from Reptiles Victoria, giving a presentation on turtle husbandry at KHG Doncaster



Tracy Ellis along with participants and staff from Kevin Heinze Grow were delighted to accept a cheque for \$34,822 from Ian Goldsmith, Chair of the Bendigo Bank Foundation, Geoff Roberts, Vice Chair of the Bendigo Bank Foundation and Lilian Gomes, Branch Manager Bendigo Bank Templestowe Village.

Thank you from KHG!

The KHG 'We Need The Toilet' fundraising campaign has now concluded, and from all of us at KHG, we want to say a HUGE thank you!

Along with donations received over the phone (adding on to those raised online via Chuffed.org) our campaign raised over \$11,000 – a truly fantastic result! Again, a sincere and heartfelt thank you to all of our wonderful donors!

We are delighted to announce that when the Doncaster East & Templestowe Village

Community Bank Branches of the Bendigo Bank heard about our fundraiser, they wanted to get involved to help us reach our goal. We are thrilled that they have decided to donate the remaining \$29,859 to take us up to our target of \$40,000 for this effort!

To the team at our two local Bendigo Bank branches and to all of you who decided to make a difference by donating to our campaign, we really cannot thank you enough! We look forward to keeping you updated with development and construction of the facility over the coming months.

Peppertree Place

Samantha Dunn

Site Manager - Peppertree Place

It's been a wonderful time at Peppertree Place! We've had a bountiful crop of fabulous fruit and vegetables including peaches and tomatoes. The produce grown in the garden has provided the Hospitality Program team with some wonderful fresh ingredients to cook into delicious tasty treats. The peach crumble in particular was a staff and participant favourite!

We've also been doing a lot of work in the garden - thanks to the continued rain throughout this La Nina summer, there's

been plenty of lawn mowing, line trimming and leaf blowing to be done.

Our Horticulture team have been busy working on mass propagation to supply native plants to the Coburg Rotary Club and taking cuttings of the extraordinarily beautiful Black Salvia (Salvia Discolor), a very unusual salvia, with an exquisite perfume.

We've also been doing some pre-planting in preparation for the commencement of our GROW Community program, a social gardening group for Refugees and People Seeking Asylum. The Malabar/Ceylon Spinach and Molokhia/Egyptian Spinach look great and are flourishing in this fabulous growing weather. If you're interested in finding out more about this program, please send us an email at isabella@kevinheinzegrow.org.au.

We'd also like to say a special thank you to Coburg Bunnings for their donation last week



Joe in the hospitality program at Peppertree Place

- a handy supply of brooms, dustpans and gardening gloves were a welcome addition to KHG in Coburg.

It's that time of year now where we see the garden transition from early summer to late summer plantings, with a key focus on leafy greens and annual herbs like coriander. If those crops are anything like our earlier crops, they'll be leaping out of the ground before we know it...



The stunning black Salvia (*Salvia Discolor*)



We had hoped to bring you a KHG Autumn Fair this year but unfortunately the ongoing restrictions regarding large numbers of people and social distancing requirements are making it impossible for us to proceed with planning for this popular event.

We will however be having a two week plant sale at the KHG Peppertree Place nursery in Coburg where you will find 50% off plants between Monday 15 March - Saturday 27 March 2021!

This is a great opportunity for anyone in the KHG Community who hasn't yet visited our Coburg site to head on over to the north and see this little urban oasis for yourself. Grab a coffee while you're there from the Peppertree Place Cafe and say hello to Michelle, Alex, Samantha, Ian and the gang.

Peppertree Place Plant Sale

15 - 27 March 2021

Monday - Saturday: 9am - 2:30pm

512 Sydney Rd, Coburg VIC 3058



Moreland Men @ Peppertree Place

Weekly Men's Group in Coburg

Moreland Men @ Peppertree Place is a weekly group for men facilitated by a qualified Social Worker and Tradesperson at the Kevin Heinze Grow Coburg gardens – Peppertree Place.

Each week, the group will undertake a range of practical activities such as garden maintenance tasks and small-scale construction projects. The group also aims to provide professional, confidential therapeutic support and social connections for men who may be experiencing mental health challenges resulting in exclusion or isolation.

The aim is to encourage participants to develop a strong connection to nature and the outdoors whilst engaging in meaningful, practical activities which improve skills and focus. Moreland Men @ Peppertree Place aims to provide participants with:

- Skills development
- Team-work
- Peer support
- Inclusive, calming & natural environment
- Opportunities for non-judgmental, confidential discussions
- Advice regarding on-going support services (as required)

Food is available for purchase from the Peppertree Place Cafe. Participants are invited to eat lunch together following each session.

What: Weekly men's group with morning tea provided

Where: 512 Sydney Rd, Coburg VIC 3058

When: Tuesdays from 9am - 12pm

Cost: Free

To register, please contact Justin at justin@kevinheinzegrow.org.au or call us on 0484 017 119.



This project is funded and supported by Moreland City Council.



After a brief closure due to Stage 4 lockdown in February, our nurseries are back open again!

Nursery

News

Lilli Johnston,
Lead Trainer - Doncaster

We hit the ground running at the beginning of the year, jumping straight into the new plan for the core program that runs daily at KHG.

The days are now structured to include a mix of three main areas of focus:

- Nursery (maintenance, potting up, propagation);
- Garden maintenance (focussing on

specific areas of the garden to plan, plant and maintain) and lastly;

- Food production (working on soil, weeding and crop rotation of seasonal edible plants).

This plan has provided more structure for the participants and staff, and assisted trainers to ensure all elements of the site are being attended to. Of course, much of the structure goes out the window in days of extreme weather - but that is the nature of working outside!

Unfortunately, we have cancelled our Autumn Fair for 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions, but we will be running a 50% off plant sale at our Coburg site from the 15th to the 27th of March. After more than a year of cancelled plant fairs, we will certainly be planning a huge Spring fair this year... Stay tuned!



GROW Glen Eira participant Liam hedge trimming the gardens at Caulfield Park in Caulfield North.

GROW Glen Eira

The GROW Glen Eira program is well underway, with three participants currently completing their horticulture training across our two work placement sites.

If you've visited KHG Doncaster in the past few months, you may have seen GROW Glen Eira trainees Max and Monica working hard in the nursery. Liam, a GROW Glen Eira participant, has been working with Council's Parks and Services team in Caulfield North since the start of the year to maintain Glen Eira's green spaces.

We are excited to be partnering with Rippon Lea Estate to establish a third work placement site, with a fourth participant to commence in the coming weeks. This placement will focus on developing skills in plant care and garden maintenance.

There are still spaces available in the program. KHG will be hosting an information session for interested applicants on Tuesday 30th March at 4pm at Carnegie Library and Community Centre, 7 Shepparson Avenue, Carnegie. Please email Isabella at isabella@kevinheinzegrow.org.au to register your interest.

The program is open to young people with a disability aged 15-35 years old living in the City of Glen Eira who have an interest in horticulture. For more information, visit www.kevinheinzegrow.org.au/programs/grow-glen-eira/

GROW Glen Eira Information Session

Tuesday 30 March 2021

Carnegie Library and Community Centre

7 Shepparson Avenue, Carnegie VIC 3163

Nanette Aron 1925 - 2020



Nanette Aron
1925 - 2020

It is with great sadness that we advise the KHG community of the passing of Nanette Aron.

Nanette or 'Nan' was actively involved at the centre as a participant for many years and according to her family members, Nan held fond memories about the time she spent at the Kevin Heinze Garden Centre here in Doncaster.

Nan was a popular and friendly face in the KHG Community over many years and no matter what was happening, she loved to be the centre of attention.

On her passing, Nan left a generous bequest to KHG and her other favourite charities. Afternoon tea and cake was a much-treasured part of Nan's routine so in consultation with her family, we thought it appropriate to use these funds to help set up our on-site heritage tram which will eventually be used to house a café and hospitality training program for people with disabilities.

KHG Volunteering

Amy Piesse,
Community Liaison Officer

We sure did miss our volunteers during lockdown last year!

And we are so glad to be able to welcome back volunteers. We are proceeding with caution due to the limited number of people we can have onsite each day, especially on days of extreme heat or rain. Over the last

few months, we have also received many new expressions of interest from community members wanting to volunteer at KHG. Thank you to everyone who got in touch with us. We are developing some engaging volunteer opportunities, which we hope to recruit for soon. Watch this space!

Great Ocean Road Running Festival

KHG Staff have decided to get a team together for “Australia’s most stunning running event” - the Great Ocean Road Running Festival which is taking place on the weekend of 15 & 16 May 2021.

Alongside the fun and fitness, we are going

to raise funds for KHG and The Wilderness Society! Events include marathons and runs of various distances and 5km or 10km walks.

If you would like further details please check the website at <https://greatoceanroadrunfest.com.au/events/> and contact Georgia T for information on how to join Team KHG georgia@kevinheinzegrow.org.au. Early bird registration closes 16 March so get in quick if you’re keen to be part of the action. ALL WELCOME!

If you’d like to support our efforts with a donation, please email Georgia T (we’re just in the process of setting up the appropriate links which we’ll share with you over the coming weeks).



Rotary AFL Footy Tipping

KHG is delighted that our local Rotary Clubs are joining forces for their 2021 AFL Footy Tipping Competition with proceeds coming our way!

They are extending an invitation to join the comp to anyone in the KHG Community so

if you’re looking for a tipping comp this year, look no further!

For further details about the competition including how to join, rules and prizes, please contact michael.mimmo@gmail.com