



**NARARA**  
Eco Living Network Inc.

**Network News December 2018**

## **Breaking news!**

### **First House completed and occupied (see Farrell's story)**

#### **CONTENTS**

- Project Director's News
  - Convenor's Message
  - Open Days and Visitors' Experiences 2019
  - Farrells' first house on the block!
  - Candy's Earthship workshop
  - Where are they now?
  - Tiny Homes Presentation
  - Narara Ecovillage Case Study
  - Overwhelmed by Climate Change?
  - In Defence of Dandelions
  - Richard & Joan's Climate Action
  - An Advent of Kindness
  - New Year's Eve at The Entrance
-

## Project Director's News by John Talbott



John Talbott (JT) spreads festive cheer

This past year has been a remarkable one for Narara Ecovillage. Just 12 months ago we had about a dozen issues that were unresolved with Council relating to getting our stage 1 subdivision approved and registered, and no clear pathway as to how to break the impasse.

Then in early January a brave group of Nararians attended a Council meeting. They didn't say anything, but they were identified as from the ecovillage. The next day things started to shift and by mid-March we had our subdivision approval. Then a few more months to get our registration complete with the State – we made it in time to be able to transfer nearly all the titles for Stage 1 to our Merry Members, just at the close of the financial year!

Our 18 'town houses' cluster project got a shock in May with a very high final price and it looked pretty dire. After looking at cost savings to bring the prices down we finally had to take the bold step of finding another builder after more than a year of negotiation with the tender winner. In what can only be described as an amazing turnaround, within a month we found one that met our criteria of cost and quality, made some other savings along the way and voila - all full steam ahead.

Site works have begun and we will be seeing a number of houses sprouting up in the next couple of months. And speaking of building, 12 months ago we lodged the first individual house DAs and started getting speedy approvals and only a couple weeks ago the first house received its occupation certificate! There are another half dozen in various stages of completion.

To top it off NEV Water received Ministerial consent to turn our water and sewer services on in the nick of time to allow houses to be occupied, and NEV Power issued its first customers their first bills.

Only a few of the many highlights of 2018 – but the real physical transformation of this beautiful site into our ecovillage is just getting started. We look forward to showing you some amazing wild and wonderful eco buildings in the coming year.

---

## Convenor's Message



This year the Network hosted a range of great events: nature walks, natural building workshops, festival stalls, and monthly Village Open Day talks on a range of topics, from owls to windows, and tiny houses to 'greeny flats'.

There's still time to register for our last event of 2018, a **rainwater harvesting workshop** this Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> Dec – this is free to Network members (link <http://neln.org.au/2018/10/16-dec-2018-water-tanks-workshop-by-john-caley/>)

We are really looking forward to next year, when we will revamp our website and offer readers more opportunities to get involved in the ecovillage and work together to help realise our vision of a sustainable world.

The latest news about global warming is alarming indeed, but the good news is that together we can help create a future that is safe and just – more about that next year.

Also stay tuned for our two signature events planned for 2019:

**Mad about Dirt** (11<sup>th</sup> May) <http://neln.org.au/mad-about-dirt-sat-11th-may-2019/> "Mad About Dirt" will be a day dedicated to celebrating and discovering all about "Dirt" (mainly, but not only, soil). Soil is the miraculous carpet of life that covers much of our planet – **yet we often "treat it like dirt"!**

**Sustainable House Day** (in September: date TBA) – This is your chance to visit a number of newly-built natural and sustainable houses, and meet the owners, builders and architects. There will also be site tours, children's activities, and talks on related topics.

So, have a lovely Christmas and New Year, and see you in 2019.

---

## Open Days and Village Experiences 2019

The Village will be welcoming visitors for both monthly Open Days and seasonal Village Experience weekends in 2019!

The Open Days kick off for the year on Saturday, 26<sup>th</sup> January. They include a guided site tour and a presentation about Narara Ecovillage.

The Seasonal Open Days are happening each quarter, the first being on the 23<sup>rd</sup>/24<sup>th</sup> February. The weekends will offer various activities, presentations and experiences for those interested to immerse themselves deeper into community vibes and atmosphere. Check [neln.org.au](http://neln.org.au) for more details throughout the year.

---

## Farrells - first house on the block!



*Hello from the Farrells' new house!*

Tony and Teresa Farrell are so happy their newly built home has turned out to be just what they wanted. Teresa says: "In fact it exceeds expectations. Tony added: "We're happy to have it finished. We're in!" "Seeing other houses coming along adds to the excitement and positive feeling," said Teresa. The village has really started!"

The Farrells joined in 2015, chose Lot 30, and started playing with designs based on previous house features now incorporated in their house. Teresa said they were confident in their design, with spaces they knew they enjoyed living in.

- Practical use of space
- Good northern aspect
- Well insulated, well-sealed house
- Summer shading and good winter sun
- Open plan living
- Downstairs living space connected to the garden
- Size and flow of spaces

The contract to build with Living Green Designer Homes was signed in May 2018 but with a few holdups, the house wasn't started until July and completed in 4.5 months.

The build came in on budget, though Tony says: "We added a few things, making changes along the way and ending up costing \$3,300 per sq metre".

The Farrells' advice for other builders is - plan well, make as many decisions as possible prior to the build so not to be time pressed.

Teresa added: "Sometimes you might want to hold off making a final decision. For instance, we deferred a decision on our kitchen glass splashback, wanting the rest of kitchen installed first. Most things we knew beforehand, such as tiles, floor and carpet. We listened to professional advice, for instance with the white tiles in the bathroom, the tiler suggested grey instead of white grout. He said white will yellow, grey won't. They had their lighting designed professionally, costing \$300, which was deducted when they purchased lights from the store.

Teresa says: "Now we have moved in, it's good to be doing less travelling, and I'm looking forward to having a better rhythm of life. Now we can do little bits and pieces, say 15 minutes of weeding as I go past and do more at the village; instead of flogging ourselves on a day visit. We're looking forward to being part of this community."

---

## Green Drinks at the village



*Where's these green drinks then?*

The Network (NELN) hosted 14 members of the Central Coast Environmental Educators for a tour of the ecovillage and "Green Drinks" on Thursday 22 November. NB "Green Drinks" refers to the interests of the participants, not the colour of the drinks!

We exchanged news and views about the variety of environmental education initiatives on the Central Coast and at NEV, from Nick Carson's award winning Tuggerah Lakes education kits, the Council's community consultation about climate change, Dan Mohr and Megan Wallace's visions for children's nature based education at the village, to the original and innovative "Mad About Dirt" day being planned for Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2019 at the Narara Valley High School and the Narara Ecovillage.

The site was looking green after the recent rain and a cool breeze made it a pleasant tour. Two White-necked Herons put on a spectacular fly past to salute the group, and our new resident, Biskit the Black shouldered Kite, was in attendance on the mulberry tree, waiting for the evening rodents to appear.

---

## Candy's Earthship workshop



*Candy's earthship workshop crew*

Recently held at Narara Ecovillage, 15 willing workers helped to produce and pack out with cob the earthship building's tyre walls in readiness for rendering. Starting early on the first of the three days, the crew were introduced to the project by Australia's most experienced earthship builder, Sean Bozkewycz, with a talk about the progress so far of the natural build.

Candy met Sean at a three week earthship build in Tasmania that he was leading last year, one of many he had been involved in over the years and she asked him to be involved on her two bedroom earthship build at Narara Ecovillage.

Years ago, Candy's had visited a number of other ecovillages in NSW, Queensland and Tasmania and liked Narara the best. She said: It suited me in so many ways; most of all because there was already an established membership here and I was interested in the way infrastructure had been established."

Candy said she particularly wanted to build an earthship because she loved recycling, upcycling and reusing which could all be utilised in her build. She had been a fan of USA architect and earthship designer Michael Reynolds since the 1970's. Findhorn Ecovillage in North Scotland was also a major influence and now 45 years later Candy gets to do both.

About the workshop, Candy said: "It's been amazing to be on site with all these great people, helping to build my house and be part of my life during this time. Several family members, some from the USA, have come to help me: my son, brothers, sister-in-law, nephews, granddaughter and my sister all helping to build my house, incorporating their love and commitment in its very walls".

Now a rammed earth wall and timber framework is now going up in preparation for the installation of a steel roof. Candy's architect Martin Freney will be conducting a strawbale workshop (dates to be announced in 2019).



*Making cob together*

You are cordially invited to participate in that weekend at Narara Ecovillage as part of a team of keen natural builders (with free camping). In addition, you'll be treated to ex café owner Candy's delicious cooking and have lots of camaraderie and outdoor fun. Or come to an Open Day! Enquiries: [candydisch@hotmail.com](mailto:candydisch@hotmail.com)

---

## Where are they now?



*Katie Shannon and Greg Wright with sons Jamie and Angus*

"We joined the ecovillage in late 2013 and were involved for a year or so.

We heard about the village through a friend of a friend who had previously worked with Dave Parris in renewable energy.

Many things drew us to the project. Firstly, our children - we wanted them to have freedom to roam, learn about, respect and find out about themselves in nature. Also, to be part of a true community where people are really living with integrity with the environment and each other. We wanted our children to be around awesome people who are making a difference so they might be inspired, especially when there are so many challenges we face with our planet.

We moved up to the central coast to be close to project. But we left the ecovillage, mostly for financial reasons. We had always planned to be at home with the kids in their early years and the stress of a build on one income felt like too much.

We fell in love with the beautiful Central Coast. So much natural beauty on our doorstep! It seemed the best place to bring up kids. We bought a house in Terrigal and stayed in touch with the village through the mothers and families who were my first "tribe" on the coast. We attend a weekly playgroup at the village and the families there are certainly our closest friends, some of our kids going to preschool and soon school together too. I have got to know all the subsequent families that have joined.

Lessons from the village. Even though only a few members live on site so far, we have watched the village community grow and seen what amazing things happen when people are working together. We have seen the hard work, excitement, and tension that is created as decisions big and small are made and followed through. It seems you can't avoid the struggle-y bits and I'm seeing people lean towards them and bringing their best. Maybe not always getting it right but that's ok too. Not many have done this before. Everyone is learning to live together... together!

What's next for us? We intend to sell our house and rejoin the village!"

(Editor's note: Yippee)

---

## **Tiny Homes Presentation**



*Ellie presents her tiny house ideas*





*Measuring space in a tiny house*

An excited crowd of about 60 people gathered last Visitors' Day for the Network talk on Tiny Homes. Member Ellie Moss gave a fantastic promotional talk for Tiny Homes, including showing the designs for the home that she and partner Sammie are planning. Ellie noted that while tiny homes are booming in the USA, there are still regulatory hurdles to be overcome in Australia before they become legal for permanent occupation.

Ellie was supported by Chris Wenban, the President of the Australian Tiny House Association, who was staying for a few days at the ecovillage (<https://australiantinyhouseassociation.org.au>).

Actual size floor plans of several tiny homes had been drawn in chalk on the road outside the VC to help people envisage living in one.

---

## Narara Ecovillage Case Study



This paper, presented by member, Professor Rosemary Leonard at the November **ANZTSR Conference** [www.anztsr.org.au/news/](http://www.anztsr.org.au/news/) provides examples of creative strategies being trialled at Narara Ecovillage by demonstrating more socially and environmentally sustainable ways of providing income for their members.

Says Rosemary: “The paper started from the idea that only after we have a functioning eco-system can we have a functioning society and only after we have a functioning society can we have a functioning economy and asked how we were implementing the triple bottom line at Narara”.

“We found that the economic aspect was valued for our survival, for local employment to reduce commuting, and to model a mixed-use village. In all the 12 projects we examined, there was a pro-environmental component but it varied in terms of how central it was. Most, but not all, had an obvious social component too. The economic aspects varied from being very important to being indirect or of small or doubtful return”.

---

## Overwhelmed by Climate Change?



Donna Carey, member, scientist and concerned citizen gave a talk at our recent Members' Meeting and asked: “What can we do to make changes, right now? Climate change is the biggest threat that humanity faces. If we don't tackle it, the consequences are grim. But pretty much all of us want to make changes to protect our loved ones, our homes, our livelihoods, and to build a better world”.

Donna suggests some simple important things we can do right now:

- Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose, Recycle. Refuse
- Eat less meat – particularly beef
- Transport – drive/fly/cruise less
- Plant trees

Vote for climate action - Demand a plan from Scott Morrison now - [act.gov/actplan](https://act.gov.au/act/actplan)

---

## In Defence of Dandelions!



Who remembers when growing up, pretending to tell the time via the dandelion's seed laden puffball? Not very accurate of course!

Nev Sweeney of [underthechokotree.com](http://underthechokotree.com) tells us more. "The dandelion (*taraxacum officinale*) is a wonderful, multi-purpose plant which virtually grows itself, it is such a shame that we classify it as a 'weed' and immediately try to eradicate it from our lawns and gardens.

The dandelion has smooth dark green leaves which have jagged margins with backwards facing teeth, in fact the name dandelion is a corruption of the French *dente di leone* (tooth of the lion). The flower stems are straight and hollow leading to a yellow flower which matures into a puffball on fertilisation. The leaf and flower stem oozes a milky sap when cut and the plant produces a long white, edible tap root.

The dandelion contributes many things to you and your garden –

The edible leaves are rich in vitamin A, C and K, they can be cooked, but somewhat bitter and benefit from blanching. The root is also edible and can be boiled and eaten as a vegetable (but tends to be a bit bitter and fibrous) or roasted and ground as a coffee substitute. The leaves can be dried and used to make tea.

A dynamic accumulator – the dandelion plant, by virtue of its tap root, can access soil nutrients below the root zone of many vegetables and accumulate these in its leaves. The leaves can be cut and used as mulch, as a component in weed tea or placed in an extractor which collects these nutrients as the plant breaks down.

Elements accumulated include calcium, potassium, phosphorous, copper, iron, magnesium and silicon.

Insectary plants – providing food for bees, lacewings, ladybirds and hoverflies, attracting useful species where they can assist by pollinating productive plants or working to curb pest species. This improves garden biodiversity.

Medicinal properties – used in tincture, infusions and salves to treat skin conditions and sore muscles, or as a tea for constipation or as a diuretic.

Dandelions act as diggers or miners, sending taproots down to loosen the soil and improve penetration of air and water more deeply into the soil.

---

## Cassels on Climate Action



*Richard and Joan Cassels, as concerned grandparents, observed the recent school children's strike for climate action:*

"The Prime Minister told the kids to stop being parliamentarians, and the kids told the parliamentarians to stop behaving like kids.

It was Friday, 30<sup>th</sup> November and an enthusiastic crowd of some 3,000 school and tertiary students in Martin Place rocked the concrete canyons of the CBD with their chanting, "Climate action now!"

Of many cutting and apt banners, we thought this was one of the best: "You get the profits, we pay the price". So appropriate for politicians, businesses and the older generation who get the cash from mining and burning coal; for NSW and Queensland landowners who get the cash by clearing and deforesting land, all thus depriving future generations, and the rest of the global community, of the benefits of a stable climate, a sustainable weather cycle, healthy soil, clean air and carbon capture.

Go, you good young people and the Australian Youth Climate Coalition!"

(Editor's note: also as concerned citizens, Donna and I attended the Stop Adani rally at Sydney Town Hall on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> December. We took the train from Gosford and on the return journey, arriving at Gosford station (wearing our *Water not Coal* t-shirts), we waited to alight from the train amongst a group of teenage school children. Seeing our t-shirts, they said they wished they had known about the rally as last week they had been at the school rally at Martin Place. I said: "Thanks for doing that as I don't think the politicians are listening to adults but surely they will listen to you". We gave them some leaflets about future climate change events. One girl said: "And thank you for thinking about our future.")

---

## An Advent of Kindness

# DECEMBER 2018

<b>1.</b> GIVE SOMEONE A HUG OR COMPLIMENT	<b>2.</b> LET SOMEONE IN FRONT OF YOU IN LINE	<b>3.</b> BUY A FRIEND OR COLLEAGUE COFFEE	<b>4.</b> HOLD THE DOOR OPEN FOR SOMEONE	<b>5.</b> GIVE A FRIEND OR LOVED ONE YOUR FULL ATTENTION
<b>6.</b> DONATE A CHRISTMAS PRESENT TO A CHARITY	<b>7.</b> TELL A JOKE TO MAKE SOMEONE SMILE	<b>8.</b> DO SOMETHING KIND FOR YOURSELF	<b>9.</b> HIDE A HAPPY NOTE FOR SOMEONE TO FIND	<b>10.</b> DONATE UNWANTED BOOKS TO CHARITY
<b>11.</b> TAPE SOME MONEY ON A VENDING MACHINE	<b>12.</b> SMILE AT A STRANGER OR 2, OR 15	<b>13.</b> GET IN TOUCH WITH AN OLD FRIEND OR RELATIVE	<b>14.</b> LET A CAR IN FRONT OF YOU IN TRAFFIC	<b>15.</b> WRITE OR SEND A THANK YOU NOTE TO SOMEONE
<b>16.</b> SMILE AND THANK SOMEONE WHO SERVES YOU	<b>17.</b> TELL SOMEONE YOU LOVE THEM	<b>18.</b> PAY FOR A STRANGER'S COFFEE	<b>19.</b> OFFER TO HELP SOMEONE	<b>20.</b> FEED ANIMALS (BIRDS, DEER, ETC.)
<b>21.</b> DONATE UNWANTED CLOTHES TO CHARITY.	<b>22.</b> DO SOMETHING UNEXPECTED FOR SOMEONE	<b>23.</b> GIVE A TREAT TO YOUR POSTAL CARRIER	<b>24.</b> DO SOMETHING KIND FOR YOURSELF	<b>25.</b> REFLECT AND RECORD HOW MUCH JOY THIS SEASON BROUGHT YOU

## ADVENT OF KINDNESS



## New Year's Eve at The Entrance



## See you at the ecovillage!

Linda Scott

**Editor**

BA (Communications) UTS, Sydney

Grad Cert Design & Technology

[network.news@neln.org.au](mailto:network.news@neln.org.au)

---

### Contacts and More Information

- The Narara Ecovillage project currently comprises two entities. The Narara Eco Living Network Inc. is a not-for profit incorporated association that promotes sustainable living. It serves as a “Friends of the Narara Ecovillage”. Its brief is both local and global.
- Membership is open to all, and costs \$20 an individual or \$40 a family for 12 months. Membership gives free admission to all Narara Ecovillage Open Day tours and talks, and provides discounts on special workshops and tours. The Network organizes regular talks, tours and events. You can join at any Open Day, or on-line anytime at: <http://neln.org.au/join-us/>. Narara Eco Living Network Inc. <http://neln.org.au> and Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/nararaEcoliving>
- The Narara Ecovillage Cooperative Ltd. Is a Co-operative formed to develop the Narara Ecovillage.
- Membership costs \$30,000, and requires the intent to purchase a lot at the ecovillage and to contribute a minimum number of working hours.
- Contacts: Narara Ecovillage Co-operative Ltd. <http://nararaecovillage.com>, and <https://www.facebook.com/groups/43471726786>, or email: [network.news@neln.org.au](mailto:network.news@neln.org.au)
- The Narara Ecovillage is located at [25 Research Road, Narara, NSW 2250](#).