

OLD BEECHWORTH GAOL

November 2016

Frequently Asked Questions

What's the vision for the Old Beechworth Gaol site?

The community consortium is committed to transforming this highly valued heritage site into a thriving community space for the social and economic benefit of the region.

Using a social enterprise model our mission is to build a thriving rural Australia by igniting entrepreneurship in young people and their communities and position this region as the southern hemisphere's premier cycle tourism destination.

What is a social enterprise?

Social enterprises trade to tackle social problems, improve communities, people's life chances or the environment. They make their money from selling goods and services in the open market, but they reinvest the majority of profits back into the business or the local community. And so, when they profit, society profits.

What do the plans for the site involve?

An integrated master planning process is underway for the site, including the old walled section and the 3.95 acres of land at the rear of the Gaol. Proposed uses for the site are:

- A centre of excellence for rural entrepreneurship, housing the Social Enterprise Academy Australia and the Australian Centre for Rural Entrepreneurship (ACRE)
- Heritage – honouring the heritage of the site and the role it has played in local history through the Kelly story
- Visual arts, entertainment, film, culture, music and events programming
- Hospitality and retail - showcasing regional beer, food and wine
- Flexible co-working and collaboration space for small businesses and artisans
- Luxury and mid-range accommodation focused on cycle tourism and cultural heritage visitors

- A bicycle training and development centre
- World class cycling tours and experiences tailored to individual needs
- Bicycle school including youth based skills development program
- Wellness centre and conference facilities
- Possibly residential development

Has anything like this been done successfully elsewhere?

Sites like the Old Gaol are difficult to save because they require significant investment to restore and maintain. In other parts of the world they have been saved through a social enterprise approach to community ownership. This involves co-investment by the local community, government and business.

Critically, these sites need an economically viable use that enables them to be re-purposed for a contemporary operation and mostly this means developing a multi-use precinct.

Two examples of the social enterprise approach to re-purposing community assets are the Abbotsford Convent in Abbotsford and Sovereign Hill in Ballarat. Both projects combine community, government and business investment to develop precincts which offer significant social and economic benefits.

How will development of the Gaol site proceed?

The next step is to develop a fully integrated master plan for the site. This process will take into consideration existing requirements such as the heritage overlay, infrastructure and service needs and determine how best to deliver the aims of the project while considering environmental and other needs. It will also inform how the plan will be funded.

Master planning is expected to take 12 to 18 months. During this process the community will have opportunities to be involved.

Who is behind the project and how much did they raise?

The Old Beechworth Gaol was purchased by 49 individuals, families and philanthropic organisations. The group is being led by Matt Pfahlert, co-founder and CEO of the Australian Centre for Rural Entrepreneurship (ACRE).

Investors have been attracted to the project for a range of reasons including an interest in:

- Developing tangible opportunities for our children to build meaningful careers in rural and regional communities
- Rural community re-generation through the collaborative buy-back of community assets, combining commercial and community benefits
- Social enterprise and entrepreneurship

- Cycle tourism
- History and heritage protection, including the history of the Kelly gang
- Community development

Local leadership saw more than \$1.7million raised out of the local community, which enabled philanthropic Trusts and Foundations to also support the project, raising a total of \$2.5million.

Who are the philanthropic supporters?

The project already has significant partnerships in place with the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, the Yulgilbar Group, the June Canavan Foundation and the Into Our Hands Community Foundation.

How can I be involved?

Master planning is expected to take 12 to 18 months. During this process the community will have opportunities to be involved.

If you would like to receive updates about the project, please email info@oldbeechworthgaol.com.au and your details will be added to our mailing list. Project updates will be provided every two months.

Will this project be good for Beechworth?

The project is designed to provide community and economic benefits for Beechworth and the broader region.

The immediate benefit to Beechworth will be firm plans to preserve the Old Gaol. Once the master planning process is complete, the project is expected to attract more tourism and people moving to the area for lifestyle change. Tourism North East research shows that a 10% increase in recreational cycling visitation would generate an extra \$28.9million in regional output.

This project is expected to create 70 to 100 jobs in the first three to five years.

The entrepreneurship programs and opportunities offered through ACRE are targeted at young people and the broader community, so that an enabling environment for entrepreneurship can be fostered over time. With many rural communities having between 20 – 50% youth unemployment, these programs will support young people across the region.

Why couldn't the Old Gaol just be used as a museum or for history tours?

The site needs significant investment to be maintained and improved for contemporary uses, therefore no single use for the site would make it a sustainable enterprise. In the years when the site was sitting idle, Beechworth residents were concerned it was deteriorating and wanted it saved. The multiple uses planned aim to ensure this is a bustling hub of activity that generates interest and business in the town and region.

What is ACRE and who is involved in it?

The Australian Centre for Rural Entrepreneurship (ACRE) is a not-for-profit organisation headquartered in Beechworth committed to building a thriving rural Australia through igniting entrepreneurship in young people and their communities.

ACRE was co-founded by Matt Pfahlert, CEO and Clayton Neil, Strategic Projects Manager. Peter Sacco is the Program Manager and Caz Humby the Operations Manager.

You can read more about ACRE and its programs on the website:

<http://www.acre.org.au/>

ACRE has also been piloting the globally recognised entrepreneurship programs developed by the Social Enterprise Academy (SEA). Originating in Scotland the SEA programs are now in 9 countries with expansion plans into 11 more. ACRE now holds the social licence agreement for the delivery of Academy programs here in Australia.

You can read more about SEA and its programs on the website:

<http://www.socialenterprise.academy/aus/>

As part of this agreement ACRE have been piloting the Social Enterprise in Schools program in 14 schools throughout north east Victoria. To learn more about this program take a few moments to watch this Vox Pop and hear from the kids themselves:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sHwgj7OFjWs>