



## Project Overview Handbook 2020

SUSTAINABLE SETTLEMENTS

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# Introduction

## Acknowledgement of Country

The Witchcliffe Ecovillage is located within the traditional lands of the Wardandi and Bibulmen/Pibelmen peoples. We acknowledge the Wardandi and Bibulmen/Pibelmen peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the land, we respect their continuing connection to land, water, spirit and community, and we honour their unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land. We pay our respects to their ancestors and Elders past, present and emerging.

## Vision

The Witchcliffe Ecovillage is a unique residential development in regional Western Australia, which aims to create a highly sustainable, self-reliant community incorporating the best of 21st century technology and human settlement design, which will enable the Ecovillage community to:

- be 100% self-sufficient in renewable energy, water and organic fresh produce
- care for the local environment
- generate ongoing economic and social opportunities for the area
- be socially and demographically diverse
- be carbon negative

## Objective

Our objective is simple: to create the most sustainable, fully featured ecovillage possible.

Utilising best practice human settlement design, state-of-the-art renewable technologies and cultivating a diverse, healthy and cohesive community, our goal is to minimise our environmental impact while maximising human prosperity and resilience.

The Witchcliffe Ecovillage demonstrates what can be achieved in a residential subdivision with good planning, strong environmental principles, sensible financial management and technological innovation.

We hope it will become a model demonstration site where people from all over the world will come to learn how to live more sustainably.

## Project History

The Ecovillage site was previously occupied by two farms: an organic vineyard owned by Cape Mentelle, and a hobby beef cattle farm. Ecovillage Founder, Mike Hulme, first identified the Ecovillage site in 1994 but it wasn't until 2010 that his company, Sustainable Settlements, and joint venture business partners, the Perron Group, purchased both properties with the intention of developing a model ecovillage.



## Project Structure

### What is an ecovillage?

Robert Gilman, one of the founders of the Global Ecovillage Network, described an ecovillage as a “human-scale, full-featured settlement in which human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world in a way that is supportive of healthy human development, and can be successfully continued into the indefinite future” (Gilman, 1991).

To enlarge upon this definition, an Ecovillage is a human settlement that is large enough to support environmentally sustainable economic and social activities for its residents, but small enough to ensure that everyone in the community can participate in decision making and community activation if they want to, typically no more than 150 people ([the Dunbar number](#)). Community interaction is key and this is facilitated through design features such as clustered homes, low fences, community gardens, and sharing of resources and infrastructure.

It provides for as many of its residents' needs as holistically and sustainably as possible onsite: e.g., renewable power and water, organic food, low impact transport, community networks and activities, recreation, education, employment, physical and emotional health, resource and waste management, accessibility and inclusivity, etc. Ideally, it further provides a living model to educate others and provide knowledge and inspiration for future Ecovillage projects.

There are a number of successful, long running ecovillages around the world, with the most famous being Findhorn in Scotland, and several small ecovillage developments in Australia, notably Currumbin Ecovillage in Queensland and Narara Ecovillage in New South Wales.

Learning from these shining examples and utilising the most up-to-date renewable technologies and design innovation, the Witchcliffe Ecovillage will set a new standard in modern sustainable living.

## Land ownership model

The Ecovillage is a unique development of multiple clustered survey strata schemes surrounding community gardens, united by joint custodianship of Ecovillage Common land, and bound by Ecovillage management statements and bylaws.

>> Read more in the Land Ownership Handbook.

## Development Team

The Witchcliffe Ecovillage is a wholly privately funded 50:50 joint venture project between Sustainable Settlements Pty Ltd and Perron Developments Pty Ltd, and the culmination of a 20-year business partnership between Mike Hulme and the late Stan Perron. Director of Sustainable Settlements, Mike Hulme, together with his partner, Michelle Sheridan, leads a small project management team in key roles in the delivery of the project.

>> [Read more here.](#)

## Location

### Western Australia's South West: Margaret River Region

The Margaret River region is a biodiversity hotspot blessed with abundant natural assets and a mild Mediterranean climate. Its relatively small local population swells seasonally as domestic and international tourists discover its pristine white beaches, towering Karri forests, and clean rivers, not to mention its world class wineries, restaurants and premium food destinations and events.

No-one is better placed to share the boundless beauty and unique features of this magnificent corner of the country than the region's tourism board, [margaretriver.com](http://margaretriver.com) in its delightfully laidback "Rediscover Margaret River" campaign.

>> [Click here](#) to view the video.



## Living in Witchcliffe

The rural village of Witchcliffe is located just 8km south of Margaret River. It sits within the South West Boojarah, which are the traditional lands of the Wardandi and Bibulmun/Pibelmen peoples. The South West Boojarah encompasses the towns of Capel, Margaret River, Witchcliffe, Augusta, Windy Harbour, Northcliffe, Pemberton, Manjimup, Bridgetown and Nannup, and covers about 10,085 km<sup>2</sup>. For more information, visit <https://www.noongarculture.org.au/south-west-boojarah/>.

The Ecovillage is nestled in a rural and natural hinterland, immediately adjacent to the Witchcliffe village centre, with significant remnant bushland to the east, west and south. Witchcliffe is a sleepy village, with businesses on the main street offering an eclectic mix of farm services, bespoke and artisanal services and products, casual eateries, an electric bike shop, and up-cycling boutiques. Straight down the road to Redgate Beach, a popular surfing, swimming and fishing spot, and the location of the famous 1876 wreck and rescue of the SS *Georgette*. The Ecovillage's winter creeks form the headwaters of three small tributaries, which flow to the Chapman Brook, which then flows south east to join the Lower Blackwood River. Witchcliffe is also home to some of WA's most endangered species: Baudin's White-tailed Black Cockatoos; Western Ringtail Possums; and a tiny little froglet called *Geocrinia alba*, the White-bellied Frog, which is only found in the Witchcliffe area.

[>> Read more here.](#)

## The Site

The 119.1ha Ecovillage site runs parallel to Bussell Hwy between Mill Road to the north and Davis Road to the south. Purchased in 2010 by the Ecovillage developers, the site was considered ideal for many reasons.

Firstly, it is big enough to achieve significant scale, which is important when providing expensive shared sustainability infrastructure to a community, such as microgrids, batteries, dams and a wastewater treatment facility. It abuts the Witchcliffe townsite, which creates an ideal pedestrian and bike friendly connection with the existing community and perfect placement for commercial enterprises along the Bussell Hwy interface, plus it's in easy commuting distance to the employment centre of Margaret River.

Having been primarily used for agriculture in the past, almost no further land clearing was required. It has gently undulating topography, pockets of treed conservation areas and rich loamy soils. Witchcliffe's plentiful rainfall, the sites natural springs, streams and creeklines, and opportunities for water storage in dams were also considered vital in the creation of an ecovillage.

## Site Design

The Ecovillage has been masterplanned to create a highly sustainable village that provides for as much of the community's day-to-day needs as possible. It responds to the site's location, topography and environmental features, and retains and conserves the land's remnant bush and creek lines.



Working within local and State planning requirements and best practice sustainability outcomes, it provides for:

- Approximately 360 residential lots, ranging in size from 360m<sup>2</sup> to 2000m<sup>2</sup>, arranged in clusters around central community gardens.
- 11 community gardens with productive landscaping and shared amenities.
- Optimum solar orientation to all residential lots, with guaranteed solar access to the living rooms of all homes.
- A Village Square with café, tavern, creative hub, backpacker's accommodation, childcare centre, nature playground and outdoor meeting places.
- 13.75ha of organic agricultural lots available for sale to residents for small scale, high value horticulture enterprises.
- Aged care and affordable housing.
- Commercial lots for retail, hospitality, food processing and value adding.
- Tourism lots for holiday homes.
- A playing field and community hall.
- 32.58ha of Ecovillage community owned land, including three dams for storage of stormwater for irrigation as well as three dedicated conservation areas.
- Pathways connecting all community gardens and open spaces to promote an active healthy community.

## Lot Types

As part of our efforts to ensure a diverse and socially inclusive community at the Ecovillage, we have created seven different residential lot types, plus commercial and agricultural lots, to ensure there is something to suit everyone's budget and lifestyle.



Each of the residential clusters include a mix of Groupies, Cottage and Family lots with the balance of the lot types (Tourism / Short Stay, Mixed Use, Lifestyle, and Aged and Dependent) sited across the Ecovillage.

All lots within the clusters have additional designated Exclusive Use Garden Areas (EUAs), which form part of the central community garden and give residents ample productive garden area with access to abundant clean water from the dams. There is a plethora of sustainability features included with every Ecovillage lot, which is summarised below in 'Lot Inclusions'.

## Groupie Lots

The Groupies are the smallest and most affordable of the lot types within the clusters and are typically 360sqm (in Stage 1) excluding driveways and EUAs. These additions bring the total land area up significantly. There are five Groupie lots per cluster. They are ideally suited to singles or couples with a maximum occupancy of three people due to rainwater catchment provisions. The lots are designed to accommodate a house of up to 100sqm in size. We are creating several affordable, sustainable house design options for these lots as part of our costed House and Land Package offering, which will include a full sustainability package (e.g. solar energy system, rainwater tanks, heat pump, etc). The dwellings on Groupie lots are designed to be a very sustainable small home with low ongoing living costs, suitable for someone with a lower asset base or income. They feature the same high standard of building quality and sustainability as houses throughout the Ecovillage and will have access to all of the benefits of Ecovillage life, including connection to the community microgrid and battery bank, and dedicated food growing areas in the adjacent community gardens.

[>> Read more here.](#)

### Groupie Lot Eligibility

Our intention when including these smaller lots in the Ecovillage masterplan was to provide lot diversity and create opportunities for people who might otherwise miss out on being a part of the Ecovillage. To that end, we have created five Groupie lots in each cluster, of which one lot in each cluster is a potential investment property, to ensure that some small and affordable rental opportunities are available.

To be eligible to purchase a Groupie Lot in Stage 1, you must be able to answer "yes" to the following questions (in your purchaser category).

#### A: OWNER/OCCUPIER:

1. I don't currently own a property OR I am selling my existing home to buy into the Ecovillage.
2. I plan to live permanently in my Ecovillage home.
3. My household income is within the allowed limits of less than \$85,000 (singles) or \$110,000 (couples).
4. My household assets are valued under the allowed limit of \$500,000 (singles) or \$600,000 (couples and over 55's).

#### B: INVESTOR

1. I do not plan to live in my Ecovillage investment house.
2. I will commence building within 24 months of settlement and offer the home for long term (min. 12 mths) rental within 36 months of settlement.

If you do not strictly fit our eligibility requirements but feel that extenuating personal or financial circumstances mean that you are suitable candidate for a Groupie lot, please contact us. We reserve the right to decide eligibility for Groupie lots on a case by case basis.

## Cottage Lots

The Cottage lots are sized between 432sqm to 634sqm in Stage 1, excluding EUAs. Suitable for couples, small families and empty nesters, these lots are a versatile size that can also accommodate an ancillary dwelling of up to 70sqm in size in addition to the main house. We will have homes designed for the Cottage lots available in our suite of House and Land Packages.

[>> Read more here.](#)

## Family Lots

Ranging in size from 827sqm to 1,252sqm in Stage 1, excluding generous EUAs, these spacious lots provide plenty of room for your average family home, rainwater tanks, shed, carport, chicken coop, optional ancillary dwelling and more. They are the largest lot size within the clusters and will also have a range of house designs included in the House and Land Packages.

[>> Read more here.](#)

## Lifestyle Lots

At 1,500 – 2,600sqm, the limited Lifestyle lots are the largest we have available in the Ecovillage and are designed for people who need or want more space, such as tradespeople or business owners who need to store gear. There is ample room for sheds, storage, private orchard, extensive gardens, an ancillary dwelling etc. These lots are located at either end of the Ecovillage along the highway and do not connect to a community garden.

[>> Read more here.](#)

## Mixed Use Lots

These fantastic 240sqm “shop top” lots are located directly on the Village Square and are designed to have residential living above and retail / studio / gallery space on the ground floor. Zoned Village Centre and uniquely positioned to take full advantage of village social life, these limited lots would be suitable for artists, professionals, makers who may want to live above a studio or office space. We also envisage these being popular with investors who may wish to operate short stay accommodation upstairs and a business below.

[>>Read more here.](#)

## Tourism / Short Stay Lots

Pending zoning approval from the Shire, these approximately 450sqm lots will be dedicated short stay accommodation and are dotted in small groups across the Ecovillage. Suitable for investors as an income generating tourism chalet or owners looking for the ultimate sustainable holiday home.

[>>Read more here.](#)

## Aged and Dependent Lots

These easy care cottage size lots are approximately 300sqm and designed with small north-facing courtyard gardens and shared raised beds for veggies and herbs. Right in the heart of the community and a short walk to all amenities, these lots are designed for small homes (100 sqm maximum floorplan) built with all of the Ecovillage sustainability features and conforming to Australian standards of accessibility.



## Lot Inclusions

The Witchcliffe Ecovillage is far from a standard residential subdivision. If you're considering buying a residential lot in the Ecovillage, we want to ensure you understand you're buying a lot more than simply a piece of dirt on which to build a house.

Our goal has always been to be as sustainable as possible while doing our utmost to keep lot prices affordable and the Ecovillage accessible to everyone. To that end, we have included many sustainability features into the residential lot price and are sourcing significant bulk discounts on mandatory items like world leading solar panels, heat pumps and rainwater tanks. For example, we have done a deal to buy our PVs direct from German solar manufacturer SolarWatt who have the world's leading 30-year PV warranty. We're able to purchase these and pass them on direct to households for about 68 cents per watt (including GST).

Lot price inclusions for Stage 1:

- Exclusive Use Garden Area (EUA) – every lot in Stage 1 (Family, Cottage and Groupie) has access to its own irrigated EUA in the adjacent community garden ranging in size from approximately 65sqm to 250sqm.
- Access to affordable, abundant, clean water supply / irrigation for community gardens, EUAs and streetscaping from the Ecovillage dams.
- Free connection to your cluster's solar microgrid.
- Free connection to your cluster's 232kWh Tesla Powerpack battery, which enables self-sufficiency in renewable energy.
- 50kW Electric Vehicle (EV) fast charger provided in every cluster.
- Sufficient excess solar energy produced to provide the average household with the ability to charge an EV for local daily use.
- NBN Fibre to each home.
- Share of approximately 1ha of central community garden and all its facilities including a community building / tool shed / meeting place, netted orchard and children's play area.
- Share of 42.95ha of Ecovillage Commons (land owned collectively by Ecovillage residents), which includes three dams, irrigated agroforestry area to provide mulch to the community gardens, 3ha of irrigated avocado orchard, and beautiful bushland and riparian conservation zones. This equates to approximately 50% of the entire Ecovillage development in open space and community gardens.
- Free connection to community-scale Ecovillage sewerage service and on-site infrastructure, which means there's no need to purchase a \$15,000 stand-alone septic system as required elsewhere in Witchcliffe.
- Free access to professional Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) software by eTool to ensure every Ecovillage home complies with the Witchcliffe Ecovillage Sustainability Building Design Guidelines and is as sustainable as possible (low embodied energy and carbon negative). Every house will be able to undergo an LCA free of charge.
- Bulk purchase discounts provided by the developer (Sustainable Settlements) for key sustainability features such as solar panels, rainwater tanks, locally milled plantation hardwood, etc.
- Sustainability Building Design Guidelines and the advice of our Ecovillage Design Team to help you build a sustainable, carbon negative home.
- Every house in the Ecovillage is required to meet Silver Liveable House standards to ensure accessibility for all.

There are countless intangible benefits to living in a resilient, caring, environmentally conscious community surrounded by like-minded people. Indeed, this social capital is one of the driving forces behind the entire Ecovillage concept, which embraces the whole Witchcliffe community and the wider region. That's why the Ecovillage is not just for residents; we're also providing an incredible array of public amenities including:

- A dedicated Village Square with tavern, cafe, backpackers, community hall, Creative Hub, adjacent commercial lots and Food Hub that will ensure employment opportunities and future amenity to Ecovillage residents and the wider community.
- Landscaped winter creeks / living streams flowing throughout the Ecovillage collecting stormwater for re-use in the Ecovillage dams.
- Ecovillage Public Open Space including the Village Square, playing fields and playground is being built up-front in Stage 1.
- Pedestrian, bike, pram and wheelchair friendly path networks throughout the Ecovillage.
- Productive landscaping on verges wherever possible throughout the Ecovillage.

## Community

The formation of a tight knit, highly sustainable and resilient community is the backbone of the entire Ecovillage concept. The most successful ecovillages around the world tend to attract residents who have a shared belief system, which unites people and gives them a sense of belonging and purpose. Modelled on the permaculture principles of "earth care, people care and fair share", the Witchcliffe Ecovillage will attract people who are interested in practicing environmental and social responsibility in all aspects of their lives.

We have deliberately sought to encourage a diverse demographic through a variety of lot types and shared infrastructure, and envisage a caring, respectful and interesting community of people where everyone contributes in their own way.

The Ecovillage's 11 unique community garden clusters have been carefully designed to maximise social interaction and encourage neighbourliness in a myriad of ways. Together with the exceptional array of shared facilities and public amenities in and around the [Village Square](#), we have endeavoured to create a physical environment in which a socially diverse community can truly flourish long into the future.



In addition, the Ecovillage will foster a range of economic opportunities that offer people in all stages of life a way to make a living, which is vital for a fully functioning and well-balanced lifestyle. This is particularly important in a regional, semi-rural area like Witchcliffe where fewer employment opportunities exist than in urban zones.

## Employment & Business Opportunities

We recognise that creating employment and [business opportunities](#) is an integral part of the success of an integrated ecovillage community. Retail, commercial, office, tourism, manufacturing and agricultural business opportunities within the Ecovillage will offer residents a sought-after work life balance.

- Mixed use lots on the Village Square will offer ground floor retail / office /studio with residential above.
- The tavern, café, backpackers and child care centre will be significant employers of staff.
- 15 commercial lots (zoned Village Centre) along Bussell Hwy plus the Food Hub offer a plethora of opportunities to enterprising businesspeople.
- The Creative Hub will become home to mobile businesses, creative arts and more.
- Dedicated tourism chalets will require management and servicing.
- Home businesses know no limits.

Every home and business at the Witchcliffe Ecovillage will benefit from high speed internet via connection to NBN fibre to the premises. In keeping with the best renewable technology innovations throughout the Ecovillage, this connection will facilitate flexible and fast working options no matter whether you work from home, a shared or mobile office, or establish a business within the Ecovillage.

## Education

This region is blessed with ample high quality public and private education options from early learning through primary and secondary schooling to adult education at the TAFE college and university campus in Margaret River. A comprehensive school bus service links many of the smaller towns and rural areas including Witchcliffe where the bus stop is located in town on the highway.

Parents of primary school aged children in particular will find several excellent and diverse choices for schooling including:

- **[Rapids Landing Primary School](#)**  
Opened in 2018, this independent State Government primary school caters to residents in a catchment area south of Margaret River, incorporating Witchcliffe and the Ecovillage. Its new, modern campus is large and fit to grow like the community around it. The school's core aim is to achieve excellence in all facets of each child's intellectual, physical and social development, inspiring them to be motivated and engaged learners who will successfully adapt to an ever-changing world.
- **[Margaret River Montessori School](#)**  
Adhering to the Montessori educational philosophy of a child-centred, individualised approach, this small, private primary school located in Margaret River offers an educational alternative to the mainstream. Montessori classrooms provide a prepared environment where children are free to respond to their natural tendency to work and where independent thinking and learning is strongly encouraged. MR Montessori was born from a desire to nurture the natural environment and is located on 2 acres of bushland and natural wetlands, which play an integral role in the children's learning.
- **[Margaret River Independent School](#)**  
This small private school is located in a bush setting south of the Witchcliffe Ecovillage along Bussell Hwy. MRIS offers Kindy to Year 6 and focuses on "nurturing and developing the whole child" and fostering close family involvement in all areas of the school. "We provide a dynamic learning environment which is purposeful, challenging and connected to a student's experience, stage of development and background."
- **[St Thomas More Catholic Primary School](#)**  
Located on Wallcliffe Road in central Margaret River, this single stream, co-educational Catholic primary school teaches "the life-long skills of respecting the dignity of each human person, caring for others, becoming responsible stewards of our planet all whilst developing the spiritual growth and strength of character of each child." The school operates Kindy to Year 6 classes and also offers a community playgroup and a Before and After School care service.

For high school students in years 7 to 12, the local choice is [Margaret River Senior High School](#), an independent public school centrally located on Bussell Hwy in Margaret River. The school is regularly placed in the "top performing schools" awards that recognises schools in Western Australia with exceptional student achievement in both tertiary and non-tertiary pathways of study. The MRSHS curriculum is diverse, challenging and caters for the wide range of our student needs including a full suite of ATAR (direct university entrance) subjects as well as Vocation and Education Training Certified courses. The school's recent \$30 million upgrade to facilities will allow it to cater for more than 1,200 students as the region's population continues to grow.

The [Margaret River Campus](#) is a joint initiative of the Margaret River Senior High School, Department of Training, South Regional TAFE, Curtin University and Edith Cowan University. It allows learners at secondary, vocational and tertiary levels to seamlessly transition through various courses that begin at high school and can culminate in post-doctoral studies. The campus has a commercial kitchen, restaurant, fully equipped winery and a library resource centre. Training and short courses are offered in a range of areas including viticulture and wine making, business, education, ageing support, commercial cookery, visual arts and digital media technologies.



The Ecovillage itself will become a living educational resource in the areas of sustainable living, permaculture, environmental studies, natural building, organic food production, renewable energy technologies and so much more. There is endless scope for residents and the wider community to teach and learn through courses, workshops, formal study and research projects, as we envisage education will become an important part of the Ecovillage fabric.