

RE GEN

Newsletter

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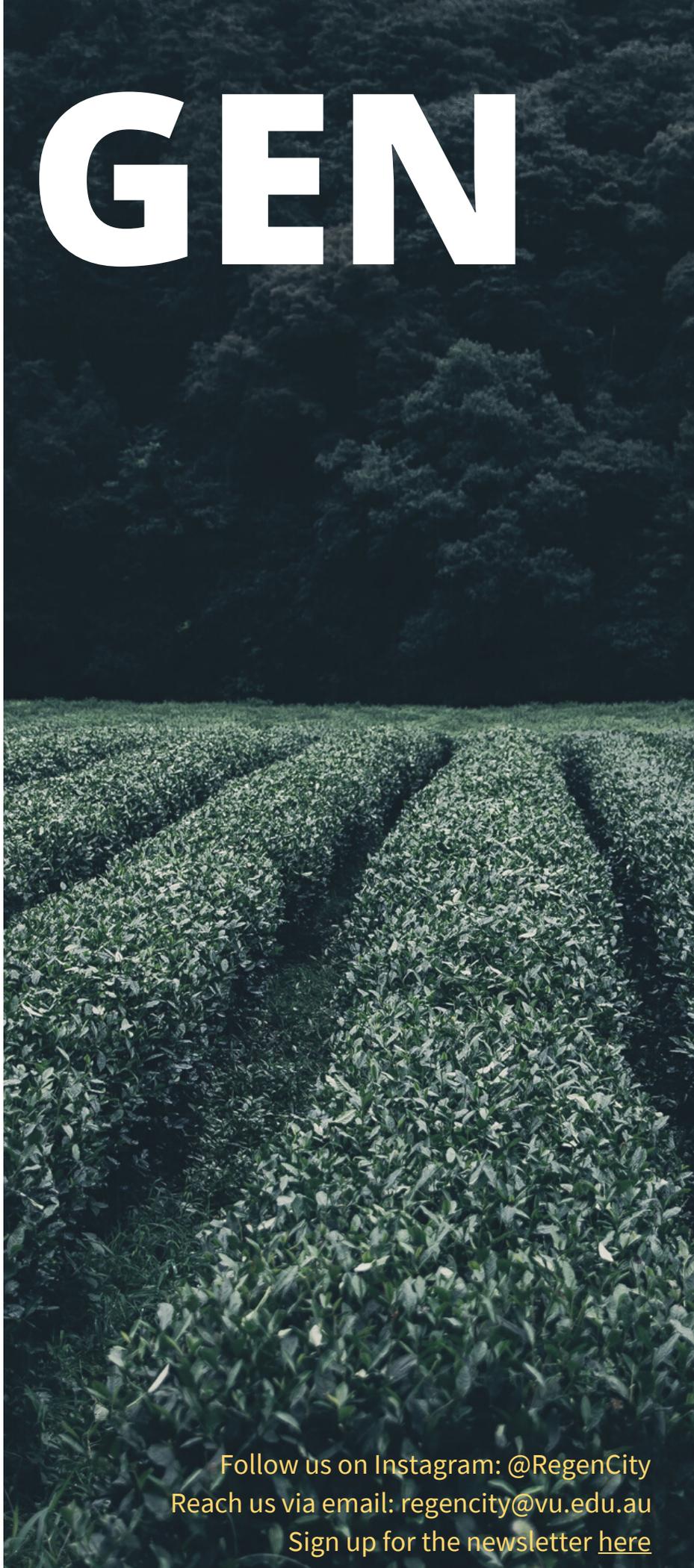
REGENERATIVE CITY
LIVING LAB

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VU RISE
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY



An acknowledgment
from KJ

The RCLL team acknowledges, honours, recognises and respects the Ancestors, Elders and families of the Boonwurrung, Woiwurrung (Wurundjeri) and Wadawurrung (Wathaurung) people of the Kulin Nation as the custodians of the land on which university campuses and STREAT are located.

"It is important that staff, students and visitors understand and respect the significance of recognising the traditional owners of University land. This is important because 'White Australia has a Black History' and Aboriginal people had a sophisticated set of laws and governance arrangements for many thousands of years before being invaded by the British. There were 500 language groups in Australia and each language group had and has a deep spiritual and physical connection to Country.

Country takes in everything within the landscape – landforms, waters, air, trees, rocks, plants, animals, foods, medicines, minerals, stories and special places. People have custodial responsibilities to care for their Country, to ensure that it continues in proper order and provides physical sustenance and spiritual nourishment. These custodial relationships may determine who can speak for particular Country".

(VU Acknowledgement of Country)

We recognise Indigenous knowledge and practice as central to protecting Country. As a place based project, we seek to create opportunities for critical place inquiry that involves engaging with Indigenous knowledges, culture, and history.

WELCOME TO REGEN CITY

The Regenerative City Living Lab (RCLL) is part of Victoria University's VU RISE program encompassing projects in Recovery, Innovation, Sustaining and Evolving. Alongside three other sub-projects in the Stronger Communities Hub, the RCLL engages VU students in imagining and co-creating a regenerative and resilient City. Grounded in a commitment to planetary health and protecting Country, the RCLL seeks to leverage regenerative food systems to innovatively grow ways of belonging, nourishing, learning and thriving.

Working with award winning social enterprise, STREAT, the Living Lab includes a series of projects and initiatives that engage VU students and young people in new ways of learning to equip them with the skills to become future innovators and empowered to contribute to environmental action and change.

Did you know you may already be part of the Living Lab?

Urban greening projects are already underway, including at Footscray Park Campus.

Many people will benefit from the outcomes of the Lab. Regeneration contributes to healthier living environments, provides opportunities for learning more about local horticulture and reduces build-up heat in urban areas.

You may soon be able to pick a tomato to add to your lunch or pick a few mint leaves for a cup of tea at the Footscray Park Campus.

MEET THE TEAM

THE VU TEAM

The Regenerative City Living Lab's VU team is multidisciplinary, reflecting the complexity of living labs in the context of urban greening. The team takes responsibility over leading the RCLL, supporting students involved in the Lab, and undertaking research into the processes and outcomes of the Living Lab.

Prof Debra Smith
A/Prof Alison Baker
Dr Amy Quayle
Dr Jean Hopman
Dr Daniel Ooi
Dr Jora Broerse
Karen Jackson
A/Prof Thinh Nguyen
Jaime Cuellar Sarmiento
Laura Main



[Hear from us](#)

THE STREAT TEAM

STREAT is a food system social enterprise dedicated to helping young people who need a hand through vocational training and holistic personal support. STREAT has a strong focus on environmental action and urban regeneration strategies. In 2021, the STREAT team have been working with students involved in the Planetary Health Sustainability Challenge, Open Sauce, and Urban Agriculture.

Fiona Meighan
Rebecca Scott
Dr Kate Barrelle
Laura Main

Along with the STREAT team, students have also had the opportunity to connect with friends and partners of STREAT as part of the RCLL.

PROJECTS IN

REGEN

- Baseline Waste Audit ([Moving Feast](#))
- Open Sauce Alchemy

Open Sauce

Urban
Agriculture:

Urban Agriculture -
Footscray Park Campus

Regreening
and Edible
Gardens

Urban Agriculture - with
marginalised young
people

**RCLL
FOCUS
AREAS AND
STUDENT
PROJECTS**

Community
Tables

- Cooking on Country
- Tales from the Table
- Food stories with Aydin
- Aby's Bees

Planetary
Health
Hackathon

- The VU Sustainability Collective
- Art Bin Project
- Coffee Ground Composting
- Zero Food Waste
- VU Planeteers

- 13 Placement students
- 03 Students doing research
- 16 Students collaborating on Urban Agriculture
- 14 VU students participating in student-led initiatives
- 10 Students participated in Planetary Health Sustainability Hackathon



Photo Credit: Diana Rodriguez

STUDENTS **IN** REGEN **56**



Photo Credit: Ruby Di Lallo

- Community Development
- Criminal Justice
- Youth Work
- Psychology (Honour's)
- Community Psychology (Master's)
- International Community Development
- Built Environment (Building Surveying; Construction Management; Building Design)

OPEN SAUCE



ABOUT

The Open Sauce project is led by STREAT and involves two VU placement students. The aim of the Open Sauce project is to work with food system social enterprises in open innovation activities to contribute to preventing and repurposing waste in impactful ways.

VU Placement students have supported the STREAT team in collecting and analysing interviews with social enterprises and designing educational material about repurposing food waste. Students have been part of a real-life employment setting in which they work with and for a team of professionals.

1 OPEN SAUCE GROUND ZERO: involves auditing of the food waste streams of STREAT's Moving Feast partners and considering how these streams can be changed to create circular economies.

HOW MUCH WASTE DO WE PRODUCE?

2 OPEN SAUCE ALCHEMY: involves turning food waste into treasure by working with food technologist and food waste experts to create delicious circular economy products.

HOW CAN WE REPURPOSE WASTE?

3 OPEN SAUCE STORYTELLING: Each of the products designed by food experts (e.g., pickled cucumbers, pesto made of the carrot greens), has a story behind it. Why is this product important and how does a consumer contribute to a circular economy by buying a product?

HOW CAN WE ENGAGE CONSUMERS?

URBAN AGRICULTURE



Urban gardens are an intrinsic part of regenerative cities. Urban gardens offer a space where community members can meet and create a sense of belonging and connection to both place and people. It is also a way to learn about different cultural food and gardening practices thereby creating opportunities for intercultural connection. Urban gardens have also been recognised as important for COVID-19 recovery and climate change mitigation.

The Urban Agriculture project comprises two streams of students working on designing and developing urban garden/s at two different sites:

- VU's Footscray Park Campus
- Gardens for marginalised young people

Students on placement as part of the Urban Agriculture team have been in the research phase (discover, define, develop) which has involved conducting research to understand the needs of those who will use the gardens and developing a prototype for the garden.

In December 2021 students will be presenting their brief to VU facilities to share their ideas for a garden on campus.

As part of the Living Lab, students have shared their own insights, stories, images of their regenerative efforts, including their gardening endeavours. Pictured here, are some images shared by Siobhan:

"If I don't have plants around me I don't feel like myself, So, I think making a community garden is a fabulous idea!!"



Photo Credit: Siobhan Erwin

What did the VU Community say?



As part of the discovery phase, the Urban Agriculture on VU Campus students identified key stakeholder (students, staff, VU leadership, experts) user needs through a number of interviews and a VU community survey (181 responses).

This survey was developed by 3rd year psychology student Aisha Syed Masood in collaboration with VU researchers and sent to the VU community (staff and students) to gauge interest in the creation of edible gardens on campus and related activities and the perceived benefits of such spaces. Additionally, the survey provided an opportunity for the VU community to share insights, ideas, suggestions (e.g., type of plants) and raise any concerns they might have.

Below, we provide a snapshot of results from the qualitative data collected through the survey regarding the perceived benefits of an on campus community garden. Of the 181 responses to the survey at least 135 provided qualitative responses to a number of questions.

PERCEIVED BENEFITS



A SPACE TO GATHER AND CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Socialise; Get out of the office for meetings; Bring people together- 'like minded', culturally diverse, staff and students



CREATING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY & BELONGING

Sense of connection and belonging on campus; Make VU a more inviting and welcoming space; Shared purpose



ACCESS TO FRESH, NUTRITIOUS FOOD

For lunches (e.g., add herbs); for the food insecure (with dignity); nutrition- for students surviving on 2 minute noodles etc.



ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS/AWARENESS

Reduce food waste and food miles; cleaner air; increased biodiversity; mitigate effects of urban heat island; awareness of where food comes from



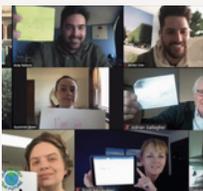
A SPACE FOR LEARNING AND SHARING

Gardening skills; Indigenous plants and knowledge- Connection to Country; Cross-cultural- culinary knowledge, experience and food; Nutrition; Sustainability



FOSTER SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT AND PRIDE

Sense of achievement in growing plants; instilling a sense of pride as a VU staff/student



VU VALUES REFLECTED IN A TANGIBLE WAY

Commitment to staff, student, community wellbeing and to Planetary Health and Protection of Country



CONNECTING WITH NATURE FOR WELLBEING

A calming place to relax or study- de-stress; gardening and green spaces as therapeutic; Connecting with Country/Place/Earth

URBAN AGRICULTURE



Collaboration with the Built Environment

An exciting part of this project has been the collaboration with students from a first-year unit, *Built Environment Communication and Skills (NBD1100)* developed in partnership with Zora Vrcelj, Hing-Wah Chau, Mengbi Li and Shiran Geng.

The Urban Agriculture students from both streams had the opportunity to collaborate with these students to help develop their plans for their urban gardens.

This involved Urban Agriculture students attending a number of sessions to provide the briefs to the Built Environment students based on the information gathered through the discovery phase. Students also had the opportunity to hear from guest speakers including Megan O'Shea from Iramoo, Realm architects, and guests from Brimbank council who were involved in the landscape architectural design for Hampshire Road Plaza and the Industrial Design of the planter boxes.



A FOOTSCRAY PARK SITE VISIT

While it has been unfortunate that students have not been able to be on campus as they imagine and plan a garden for this site (given COVID restrictions), we did have the opportunity to bring all Urban Agriculture and Built Environment students, the STREAT horticulture team and VU staff together on campus towards the end of the unit to meet and scope the proposed site. The students presented their final designs at the culmination of the unit (online via Zoom).

Did you know? Some VU students had never visited Footscray Park Campus due to COVID-19 lockdowns! Time for a site visit!

URBAN AGRICULTURE



Gardening with marginalised young people

STREAT has a partnership with various community organisations who work with at risk youth.

The establishment of green outdoor spaces and an edible garden with educative purposes is part of the partnership. The aims of the Living Lab-STREAT project are to connect community members to each other and gardening, and create a green space of learning on the precinct.

Two placement students (Criminal Justice) have been working closely together with STREAT's team in the realisation of the gardens.

The placement students have been responsible for the identification of needs and interest of youth as well as contributing to the the design of the gardens. The students considered appropriate plants in the context of weather, use and maintenance needs. Produce such as tomatoes can be used in the community kitchens and (products made from) produce could potentially be sold at farmers markets. This extends the learning and real-life employment potentials of the project.

An educational tool is in development that will become part of the schooling and outdoor recreation time of the young people involved.



COMMUNITY TABLES



The Community Tables initiative invited students to develop individual or group projects that could foster belonging and intercultural dialogue about food and place including land, sustainability and regeneration.

Weaving together food, story, and place, as part of this collective, students were tasked with creating meaningful food experiences/resources/events that:

- celebrate the diversity of Melbourne's west,
- promote intercultural and/or intergenerational connection and dialogue, and
- foster peoples' critical reflection on, understanding of and connection and belonging to place.

All through the medium of food, practices around food and knowledge of food systems.

The four projects currently being undertaken as part of Community Tables are:



ABY'S BEE KEEPING

- A YouTube channel about bee keeping, making honey, and facts on healthy bees = healthy planet.



TALES FROM THE TABLE

- Gathering VU students stories about food that connects and food that sustains (during the pandemic).



COOKING ON COUNTRY

- Bringing students together to learn about Indigenous plants, cooking and connection to Country.



AYDIN'S FOOD STORIES

- A 3 episode podcast about healthy eating, stories and intergenerational connection through food.

PLANETARY HEALTH HACK-A-THON PROJECTS



The Challenge was an extra-curriculum, 4-week program aimed at up-skilling students in creative design thinking, problem-solving and innovation for the good of the planet. Teams of students worked together to develop solutions that would make the campus and community more sustainable. The VU Sustainability Collective was the winning team and have since continued, making their proposal a reality.

OBJECTIVE:

To engage VU students in taking agency and creating impact to develop and deliver sustainability projects and green nudges on campus.



1. **VU Sustainability Collective (4 students)** - The VU Sustainability Collective (VUSC) is a student-led, university-supported, sustainability-focused community of practise. The VUSC comprises people who share the common concerns about our wasteful behaviours impacting the health and wellbeing of our community and planet. We come together to fulfil our individual and collective commitments to improve the health and wellbeing of our local communities and the planet.



2. **Art Bin project (1 student)** - Utilise campus bins as touch points for engaging and informing the campus community about waste practises and sustainability.



3. **Coffee Ground Composting on Campus (2 students)** - Compost coffee grounds from the Footscray campus cafes on-site at the SLUGG garden. Use the compost to regenerate soil on campus and surrounding parks.



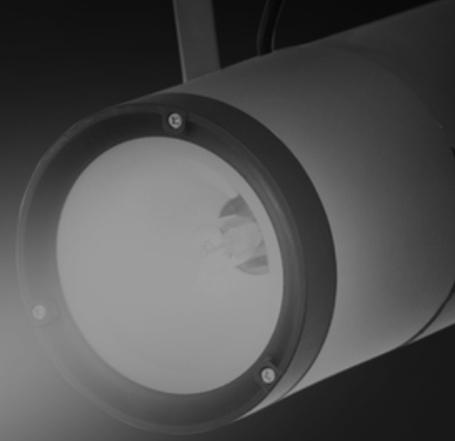
4. **Zero Food Waste (2 students)** - create a cooking website that focuses on zero waste cooking.



5. **VU Planeteers (2 students)** - Create a Facebook presence specifically for the VU Community to share ideas and knowledge in sustainability and planetary health.

Since completing the challenge, many of the students have continued working on their project as part of the Regenerative City Living Lab.

SPOTLIGHT: THE SUSTAINABILITY COLLECTIVE



Could you briefly describe your regenerative project?

Virginia and Al: The VU Sustainability Collective (VUSC) is a student-led project that is creating a transformative sustainability development program for VU Students. The program is designed to develop VU graduates with an understanding of sustainable and regenerative practises, equip and enable them with resources and tools to take individual action and contribute to positive collective impact.

In alignment with the VU Strategic Plan 2022-2028, this program aims to enact Victoria University's commitment to improve the health and wellbeing of our local and global communities, and the planet that we share. VUCS is anticipated to be a free, interactive and engaging sustainability program for current VU students commencing Semester One, Block 1 2022 .Once students have completed the requirements, the Sustainable Graduate Program will be included on a student's VU Extra Transcript.

What motivates you to be part of the RCLL?

Virginia: the opportunity to partake in evidence-based collaborative design thinking processes as well as gaining a sense of belonging to a group devoted to social and ecological change.

Al: Make the change we want to see in the world. We are privileged. And I think this means that if we can recognise issues, we also have a responsibility to give back to the world. And how to do that? Truth, I'm learning. Engaging in different groups and opportunities gives insight to know how to apply our own skills in more effective ways. And then we can take action in doing what we can, even just a step (or a stumble) in a direction that enriches the world around us.

What inspired you most during the 4-week course to take action?

Virginia: The chance to contribute to a group that is genuinely committed to creating lasting systemic resilience in the local and VU community inspired me to take action.

Al: I was inspired by learning more about how to make change, and how people can come together to create change collectively. What can be done and what can I contribute to that process? Sustainable living is so important; we have been conditioned to live at a pace that consumes. In the course we took time to have a good old look at that honestly.



Photo Credit: Natasha Crosset

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