

# Oases Graduate School

## DEEPENING ECOLOGICAL CITIZENSHIP

**Facilitators: Peter Cock and Sean O’Sullivan**

### Outline

This unit explores reasons for and processes for deepening our partnership with Gaia. The intention is to deepen consciousness and action in order to become a life-serving member of our species.

Two fundamental questions we aim to address are

What kind of societies and lifestyles fit with such aspirations?

and

What are our rights and responsibilities as earth citizens and what does being a member of communities mean?

We will also examine the role of spirituality in ecological citizenship, and conclude with an exploration of the politics and ascetics of action.

This unit is premised on participants owning their membership of the earth’s ecology and recognizing the power of the earth to reshape us.

### Methodology

To explore the issues of practical eco citizenship we will:

- Brainstorm creative ideas; use role-play; and confront the contradictions of these experiments.
- Actively and compassionately work with the gaps between our intentions and practice and explore the role of emotions such as hope, fear, despair and guilt in shaping motivations.
- Think, feel and act together to examine connections between partnership with the earth, with each other and our own inner work.

This work will deepen possibilities for ecological citizenship, contribute to the regeneration of hope, and facilitate transformative action.

### Weekend Intensive

The core experiential component of this subject involves a long weekend. We will be centered in the Moora Moora Lodge\*\*, a community building with sleeping facilities, kitchen, toilets, showers and a large meeting and eating space. Participants will have the option of either sleeping in bunkrooms or of bringing their own tent to camp in the grounds around this building.

This location will enable participants to begin to address the issue of ecological citizenship through their connection with the Moora Moora intentional community. This will be combined with simulation exercises and the monitoring of their own participant 'community' through the experience of living and studying together. Participant engagement with their own social group will be drawn upon to explore their own challenges and learning's.

This chosen location overlooking Melbourne on top of Mount Toole-Be-Wong facilitates exploration of the issues in the context of seeing the structures and pressures of urban life, yet without the participants being enmeshed in it.

The course will make use of the Moora Moora Community as a case study of what partnership-building can doesn't and should mean. Together with relevant literature, the experiences and ideas of the participants will be drawn on to explore other experiments in ecological living such as the Transition Towns movement.

\*\* Moora Moora is a residential, cooperative community of 70 people working to live in ecologically sustainable ways where humans live alongside wild species in relative harmony. Its infrastructure includes solar and wind power generation systems, earth-built houses and over two hundred hectares of hilly forest terrain. Its place on the urban-rural fringe encompassing intentional human settlement with wild habitat offers a particularly supportive educational environment.

## REVIEWS

Each participant will be expected to:

### **Prepare a media review**

Write a 1,500 word review of a relevant book, film or article in the context of a particular website that has moved you. Describe and evaluate intellectually and emotionally.

### **Make an oral presentation**

Give at least one oral presentation. This can be an oral presentation of a paper (equivalent of 1,500-words) on a particular issue; a preview of their research project; or a review of some of their practical work.

### **Carry out practical activities**

Write up two practical activities (of approximately 1,000 words each).

Practical 1. "Identify and describe the state of your ecological citizenship". This should respond to issues such as how you live and its reflection of your ecological citizenship; and what you have done and are now doing that acknowledges your citizenship. This activity is considered to be part of the preparation for the weekend intensive and therefore should be submitted before the weekend intensive.

Practical 2. "Deepening my ecological citizenship". What will I do now that I wasn't doing before? This could be an outcome of the weekend intensive, as a consequence of your experiences and \ or contributions made during the journey or it could be about an action derived from this unit.

If opportunity allows the practicals could be presented as the required oral presentation.

Participants will be encouraged to propose their own practicals and discuss them with the facilitators.

### **Propose a research project or write an essay**

The participant's can propose their own work or alternatively consider these:

1. Test your comfort zone with your ecological citizenship by making an experiment that involves engaging in a trial action. Evaluate its effectiveness for the earth, for society and for yourself. Review it with reference to the relevant literature.
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of violent action, non-violent action, civil disobedience in facilitating social change on behalf of the earth and the human species.
3. Consider the barriers to deepening human societies and your ecological citizenship.

### **Maintain a course journal and an overall review**

This journal is to record reflections of your personal journey through the unit. It is to include class content summaries, reviews from sessions and from the field trip. It is to include your reflections on what you felt during aspects of the unit and what you learnt. Conclude this with an overview of your journal, its content and with your own evaluation of the course.

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## **Intensive Programme**

### DAY 1 EVENING (e.g. Thursday)

- Welcome and administrative briefing; tea and coffee etc.
- Participant’s sharing circle – brief introduction; how they view their current connection to nature?
- Overnight task / questions - What do you think ecological citizenship is? Where do you see yourself as an ecological citizen?

### DAY 2 (e.g. Friday)

- MORNING - 3.5 hours, 9 – 12. 30 with morning tea.
  - Theme – The human / nature dialectic.
  - Participant’s sharing circle – deepening their personal introduction – responses to last night’s questions – life stories.
  - The power of nature as a transformative agent – presentation, discussion. (Peter C) - ‘It isn’t all in our hands’ – the physical behaviour of Gaia has transformative effects on human societies and individuals.

- Discussion if time.
- AFTERNOON - 2.5 hours, 2.30 – 5.00.
  - Theme – The psychological and spiritual – Nature nurturing ecological citizenship.
- EVENING – 1.5 hours, 7.30 – 9.00.
  - Theme - Society games and simulations.
  - Overnight question – what would your preferred earth partnering community be like?

### DAY 3 (e.g. Saturday)

- Theme – Earth partnering societies, communities and lifestyles.
- What kind of societies and lifestyles fit with such aspirations? What does being a member of communities mean?
- MORNING - 3.5hours, 9 – 12.30 with morning tea.
  - The context of earthy / human partnership – what is earth partnering? Human fulfilment?
  - Transition towns movement.
  - Earth governance and cooperation.
  - Participant’s contributions
  - Discussion
- AFTERNOON - 2.5 hours, 2.30 – 5.00
  - Moora Moora tour focused activities – physical structure, social structure, politics and decision-making, the group versus. the individual.
  - Working with the gaps between what is and what needs to be.
- EVENING – 1.5 hours, 7.30 – 9.00.
  - Fun and Play activities with an ecological focus - animal role play, the animal most identified with and the animal most feared (Peter), systems games (Sean), Participant’s suggestions.

### DAY 4 (e.g. Sunday)

- Theme – citizenship responsibilities and the politics and ascetics of action.
- MORNING - 3.5hours, 9 – 12.30 with morning tea.

- Ascetics of action – beautiful and meaningful actions that call for and demonstrate a earth partnering way of being and empowers the individual activist. Examples: Ghandi, Mandela. Participant contributions. Grief and Empowerment -- Joanna Macy.
- Power and the politics of what is possible now, and the path ahead.
- Looking after your ability to respond creatively.
- Maintaining your activist energy for the long haul.
- Working in groups – you cannot do it alone.
- What is an effective ecological citizen?
- AFTERNOON – 1.5 hours, 2.00 -- 3.30.
  - Personal Reflections on the workshop.
  - Personal reflections on Where to from here
- FINISH – 0.5 hours, 3.30 – 4.00.
  - Closing ritual ‘being held and holding’.
  - Closing, administration questionnaire and sharing.
  - Clean up and departure.