



CERES
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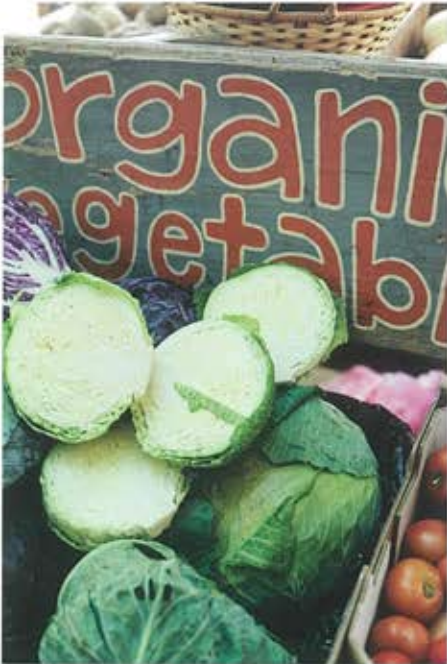


“Increasing urban density means it’s important to retain a place of refuge for city-dwellers, where they can spend time in nature.”



From tip to green tourism tipoff

Located on a former tip site in Brunswick East, CERES (Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies) has evolved into one of Moreland's biggest environmental tourism success stories.



CERES aims to attract visitors who are interested in community-based learning and environmentally focused action, says CEO, Cinnamon Evans.

CERES is spread across 4.5 hectares along the Merri Creek. A wasteland when it was established in 1982, today it's a booming hub of social enterprise and beautiful parkland that attracts more than 400,000 visitors a year.

It's a popular destination for the Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) demographic – locals bringing their visitors to places of interest in their area.

"We have a pretty unique and hopeful story – from desolation and waste this beautiful shared place has sprung up," says Cinnamon Evans, CEO at CERES.

"Many local people feel proud that their community has achieved such an unlikely feat, and want to bring friends to show it off. We regularly host international visitors who want to understand how we managed to turn this former tip site into such an oasis, and think about how they might do the same."

CERES raises 95 per cent of its income from social enterprises and educational services, which include expansive venue and conference facilities, an organic

grocery and a café, with each business attracting a slightly different target market.

Historically the plant nursery was focused on permaculture and bushfood plants, but a growth in the interests of its customer base in indoor greenery has seen it expand its range of indoor plants.

CERES is one of the largest sustainability education providers in Victoria. Every year, 60,000 school children attend programs onsite, where they learn about energy, waste, water, biodiversity and culture through hands-on experience.

The diverse venue is also reducing resource use through experimental working demonstrations, and ongoing creative initiatives like its solar thermal dish and biogas plant, as part of achieving a zero-emissions target by 2025.

"We aim to be a place of community-based learning and action for environmental sustainability. We want to attract visitors who are interested in expanding their knowledge in that area, or looking to connect with others who share those values," Cinnamon says.

One of the most recent – and popular – projects at CERES is its Tamil Feasts program.

"It's a tangible way for people to show their support for refugees and asylum seekers over dinner. The team cook delicious traditional Sri Lankan food three nights a week, and share stories of seeking asylum in Australia for participants who are invited to start conversations over their shared tables."

Continuing to regenerate and beautify the CERES site for visitors to enjoy is an ongoing focus. With the help of volunteers, CERES plants around 3,000 native plants per year.

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