



THE GROVE IS OPEN COOP

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ANNUAL  
REPORT

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2020-2021



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## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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The Grove is open.

We welcome you to a people and a place - a space to connect with nature, to ourselves and to each other.

In the midst of transforming systems, we stand together for:

- holding space for people to bring their whole selves
- working in a way that honours power, love and nature in all aspects of life
- practicing three-fold respect - self, others, earth - in all decision making
- healing to integrate our light and dark
- restoring balance for thriving systems
- building capacity to act as a collective in service of the whole.

We invite you to be in practice for a new way of being, to step boldly into the unknown, to map the path as we walk it.



# A REPORT FROM THE BOARD

BY MARK SPAIN

In February 2020 The Grove is Open Coop was formally set up as a non-distributing co-operative without share capital. The primary activity of the coop is to *facilitate and host events, workshops, programs and consulting for people to practice ways of learning, leading and living to cultivate community and transform organisations for a thriving world*. The membership is based on active participation of members and agreeing to work towards the Guiding Principles above.

The new board of The Grove has avoided a 'power over' approach to governance in order to operate in a way to meet the minimum legal governance requirement and leave maximum power with the members. The minimum requirements are to ensure that The Grove is solvent, completes its annual reporting and hosts an annual general meeting.

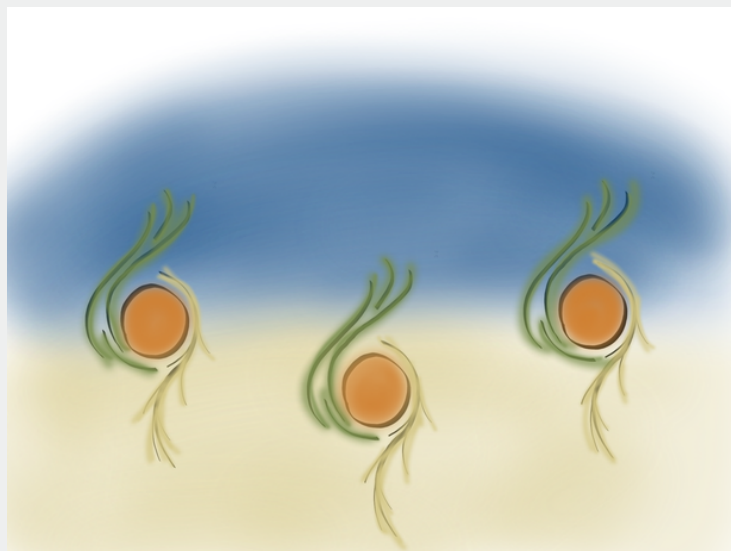
This has been successfully achieved as the Board has met only once and it was a celebration party and 4D human sculpture at Bridget's home in Redfern on the afternoon of 4 Dec 2020. After a spacious check-in of breathing, meditation and movement the questions explored were;

- What can we achieve together that we cannot achieve alone?
- How do we want to be and work together?
- Collectively, what need are we serving as the Grove?

The Finance and Governance Committee (David, Robyn, Bridget and Theresa) has successfully met our regulatory requirements by opening bank accounts, reconciling bank statements, making payments, keeping track of expenses and ensuring safe custody of our money. The Finance Report is in a later section, and we thank Theresa for producing this. On a happy note, we are solvent and have 34 paid members at the end of 2020-2021 Financial Year.

All work that has been done on, or in The Grove to date has been volunteered in a gift economy. There is much change and transformation happening at all levels in Australia and The Grove has anticipated the uncertainty and the need for creative emergence in work, life and community in these times. Our guiding principles are a compass for what lies ahead. The future will involve high quality experiences and ways of being, engaging members to bring and be their best in co-created activities and projects initiated by the members.

Additionally we hope members will partner and collaborate with each other to design and offer high quality products and services for people and organisations in Australia inspired by our guiding principles. One intention is to create the conditions for members to initiate projects where they can sustain a livelihood and be part of co-creating a new wellbeing economy.



Seed dispersal, Vanessa Alexander

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GROVE

BY MONIQUE POTTS

All founding members of The Grove might have slightly different version of this story as history is always documented from the particular perspective of the observer/writer. This, however, is my version of some of the key events and happenings that planted the seed for The Grove to grow into the dynamic network of change makers it is today.

## *Preparing the soil*

In 2017/18 a few of us were at events attended by members of the Enspiral network from Aotearoa/NZ including the *Creatives Get Cooperative* hosted by Mercury Coop in the UTS Hatchery. At this event, Josh Vial, a co-founder of Enspiral talked about their vision in creating a coop of like-minded freelancers wanting to do more 'stuff that matters'. At the time there were some vague ideas floating around UTS Innovation and Creative Intelligence unit where I worked around what an 'Open Value Network' might look like. Vanessa Alexander and Peregrin Chiara hosted the two and only workshops of *The Doughnut Collective* exploring this idea with members of the university and community. In March of 2018 Richard Bartlett and Natalia Lombardo from Enspiral hosted a workshop called *Patterns of Decentralised Organising* exploring processes and inspiration for setting up and running decentralised creative networks. At this workshop we were invited to self-organise around ideas or projects we might like to work on and I distinctly remember sitting at a table with David Pointon who said with great clarity, 'We need to work out what *'it'* is!' And so the journey began...



Dojo #4 Compassion matters, February 2019

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GROVE (CONT)

## *Planting the seeds*

Following this event a number of people got together at a warehouse in Glebe called The Works hosted by Vanessa Alexander who had a workspace there. We had some excited conversations about how we might start to work together in a decentralised network of creative change makers. We came up with a tagline which reflected our interest in humanising work, *Power, love and nature at work*.

These conversations developed into a core group of 7 or 8 of us who met regularly over the next year and plotted and planned a series of events called *dojos*, which were a place of practice for new ways of working, being and thinking together. The first *dojo* held at The Works in August 2018 was *How We have Conversations Matters* inspired by an article written by Peregrin Chiara about the qualities, conditions and ways of being in conversation at the personal and collective level.

In the summer of 2018/19 we spent a weekend at the North Head quarantine station on a 'collective vision quest' to try to articulate the purpose of The Grove. We walked and swam and dreamed and talked for three days. By the end of the three days we felt no closer to defining our purpose and in one final attempt with desperation and tears the words flowed through Ruth McCance that became our Guiding Principles.

## *Growing the seedlings*

Over the next twelve to eighteen months we formed a tight-knit core collective organising a range of events and *dojos* supported by an supportive and growing community of practice. We grew our connections with other 'sister ship' transformative organisations such as The Presencing Institute at MIT, Enspiral and other local and international networks.

In May of 2019 we suffered a great loss when one of our founding members and dear friends Ruth McCance died in a mountaineering accident in the Himalayas. We grieved together as a community and held each other close as we tried to come to terms with this great loss. The Ruth McCance fund was created to contribute to the work of The Grove, its members and community.

## *Space for saplings*

Building on from these wonderful formative events and a growing network it was decided to formalise the organisation of The Grove as a cooperative. This work was led and facilitated by one of the founding members David Pointon in collaboration with the core team.

## **The Grove Dojos and Events 2018-21**

**Dojo 1:** How we have conversations matters, August 2018

**Dojo 2:** Longing to belong? Resilient communities matter, October 2018

**Dojo 3:** Calling the collective; everybody matters, November 2018

**Dojo 4:** Compassion matters; heart practice in turbulent times, February 2019

**Dojo 5:** Equity as a path to equality, why does it matter? With special guest Eileen Reed, April 2019

**Dojo 6:** Livelihood with meaning and purpose - it's all of our business, May 2019

**Ulab - Societal Transformation Lab:** Transforming education and decolonising the mind, May 2019

**The Grove Retreat 2019:** Wilton, August 2019

**Dojo 7:** Warm Data Lab: What is learning in a rapidly changing world? How do we relearn, November 2019

**The Grove Resilience Lab:** UTS, February 2020

**Dojo 8:** Living the future now: manifesting new ways for a post-covid world, May 2020

**The Grove Retreat 2021:** Katoomba, May 2021

# FORMATION OF THE GROVE COOP

When the Grove is Open Co-op was formed it was also the time of the devastating fires down the east coast of Australia and the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Board members were elected at The Grove is Open Co-op Ltd formation meeting at Balls Head in Waverton on 29th February 2020. The first board members nominated were Vanessa Alexander, Nick Callahan, Pere Chiara, Robyn Katz, David Pointon, Mark Spain and Bridget Wardlaw. Following on from the formation of the co-op was a time of consolidating and reaching out and welcoming 34 new members.

During the establishment of the Co-op and following the guidance of Sam Byrne from the Co-op Federation, we realised we needed a membership model and system. A workshop was conducted at Circular Quay facilitated by Vanessa and others to discover what our community wanted from The Grove as members.

Using the harvest from the workshop, David, Mark and Bridget formed a team to develop rules, policies and procedures for accepting membership applications, welcoming new members and introducing them to the people, culture and collaboration tools of The Grove.

This involved relational experiences of sharing, listening and decision making and practice using collaboration tools like Slack, Trello, Google Docs, Zoom and other apps. The importance of relationships, power sharing, culture, and self-organisation are powerful underpinnings of the unique value proposition of The Grove.

34 members have signed up, two Onboarding Forums, and two Offers and Needs Market Places have been conducted. There are Trello Boards for “Members” and for “Offers and Needs Marketplace”.



Coop formation celebration, Balls Head, Waverton,

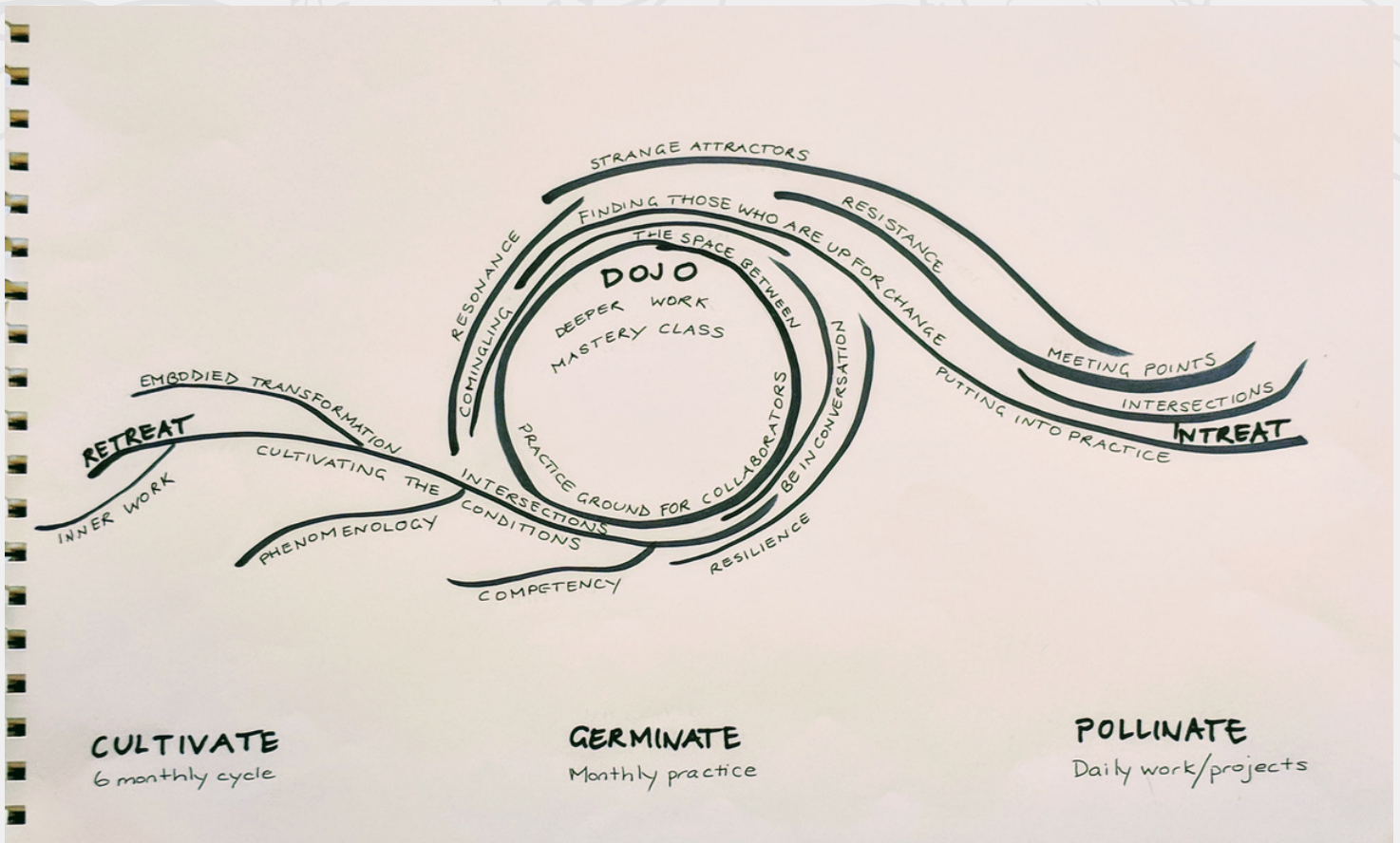
POETIC AND VISUAL SCRIBING

‘In the spirit of learning  
 sensing what’s spoken  
 being human  
 turning up  
 for a worthy practice  
 that’s needed in these times  
 a community practice  
 the grounding energy of circle  
 the beauty of diversity  
 of understanding boundaries  
 the gift that I needed right now  
 being moved to tears

Holding space  
 for love  
 with the window wide open  
 for the ebb and flow  
 in touch with the unifying feeling  
 of the act of compassion  
 sealed with a song...’



Vanessa Alexander (poetic scribing from Compassion Matters dojo)



Model of practice in The Grove by Vanessa Alexander

# THE GROVE ACTIVITIES & MEMBERS PROJECTS 2020-21

## COVID Virtual Series

An extract from *The Grove is Online: A reflection* by Robyn Katz.

When the COVID shutdown started to move across the globe to Sydney, our place-based community of practise, The Grove, was in the midst of several projects. We had plans to congregate at libraries and collaborative workspaces to deliver Labs, Workshops and Dojo's.

With lockdown came a fear of disconnection, isolation and loneliness.

In response The Grove recognised we had the skills and resources to offer online gatherings. To invite individuals to join us for gentle, regular check-ins. This rhythm became positive scaffolding for an experimental four weeks when the quarantine felt intense and the uncertainty palpable.

People showed up with varying needs: to experience online spaces in preparation for their own organisational pivots; to connect human-to-human while trapped in isolation; to stay tuned in to others, and to receive support and solace from The Grove.

The borders blurred, people joined us from regional parts, different States and overseas. We started to see opportunities previously invisible. A new era seemed to have begun.

What's next we start to wonder. What's on the horizon now? Will our aspirations expand or change? Are place and space interchangeable? Does The Grove spawn into new locations once we're free to gather in person again?

By this prototype we have gained and been graced with new friends and greater capacity, our work resonating and sense of call certainly louder, if not clearer. The Grove going online served an important purpose in shifting our view and opening us further.

## The Triangles Game

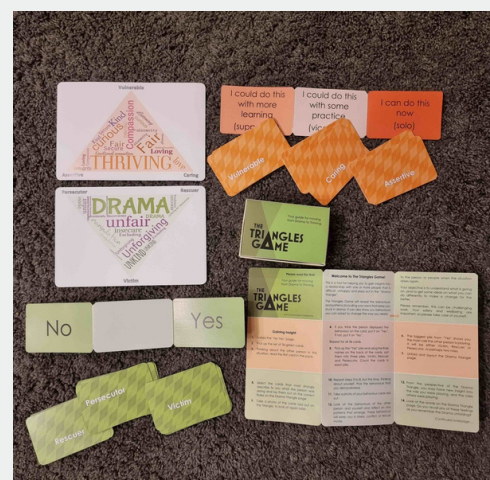
by Bridget Wardlaw

The Triangles Game is a tool for analysing, understanding and moving out of dysfunctional situations and conflict in any relationship, within families, work teams, communities, schools, organisations and governments.

The concept of the game is a legacy of the wisdom of Ruth McCance and builds on the existing idea of a Drama Triangle with the 3 roles of Persecutor, Victim and Rescuer. The innovation in the game is the additional concept of the Thriving Triangle with the 3 roles Assertive, Vulnerable and Caring, and allowing the participant to understand the roles of others in a Drama, discover their own behaviours and beliefs, and to move from a life in Drama to a Thriving life.

Packs of cards, game boards, instructions and packaging have been developed as a prototype and tested in online and face-to-face sessions. The next iteration will be published in spring 2021 and will be for sale on The Grove website. It is hoped it will bring richness to people's lives, (world peace?) and a modest income to The Grove and the Team members, Bridget, Mark, Vanessa and Peter Hill.

Importantly this team is also testing an economy model for sharing the proceeds of this collaborative work in a way that is open and transparent in the Grove community. This prototype is an important framework for others in the Grove to use and further develop to create livelihood in ways that model abundance rather than scarcity in co-creating a new economy.



The Triangles Game pilot set



# THE GROVE ACTIVITIES AND MEMBER PROJECTS

## 2020-21

### **Finding New Ground**

The Finding New Ground Project is another example of a small team in the Grove creating a product or service that can be offered to Grove clients and create livelihood for Grove members and will be available from the Grove online shop. Finding New Ground is a structured and reliable, facilitated consensus building process that involves people creating their own worst case and best case scenarios if they do or don't come to agreement in their contested unsatisfactory situation.

### **EarthChair**

Conceived by founding member, David Pointon, The Grove was invited to prototype EarthChair, a practice to invite the voice and presence of Earth into our meetings and circles. The feedback from sharing this original and powerful possibility at The Grove retreats has been overwhelming. May this simple yet profound practise continue to enrich our thinking, widen our view and support us to be good custodians.

### **Operating Rhythms**

Key to establishing both directional and relational priority at The Grove we pay attention to the forming, norming, morphing, dissolving and reforming of operating and meeting rhythms. Initially with the priority to 'do the groundwork' the host team committed to meeting monthly in circle to explore the question; What are we noticing about the way we do things and the emerging Culture at The Grove?

In addition, once projects began to take shape, regular meetings were set up to support discussion and decision making critical to forward movement. An image of two trees growing strong and tall at our gateway was envisaged. These trees work in harmony, being equally important. They are the trees of Direction and Relationship.

### **2021 Retreat**

The 2021 Retreat on 27-30 May was a highlight in terms of face-to-face gatherings and being together to embody the principles and strengthen our practices and culture. We heard from local elder Mai-Lynn Elliot about how to relate to a learn from the land. Some of the key outcomes from the retreat that are shaping the future are the collective statements from 18 members about the Worst Possible Outcome for The Grove and the Best Possible Outcome for The Grove. Developing the beliefs, behaviours, strategies and actions to steer towards the best possible outcome and being conscious and intentional of the fear of the worst possible outcome will shape our work for the future.

### **The Grovettes**

Coming out of our work in the 2019 retreat a group of women got together to respond to the question 'How might we support each other in personal practice for collective wellbeing?'. This group has continued to meet and support each other past two years in our individual and collective practice.



Elements in nature, Vanessa Alexander



Ruth's rainbow, photo: Peregrin Chiara

# FINANCIAL REPORT

## Operating Statement for year ended 30 June 2021

	2021	2020
<b>Income</b>	\$	\$
Retreat	6,931	
Dojos	255	
Membership	1,377	
Miscellaneous income	455	
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>9,018</b>	
<b>Expenses</b>		
Retreat costs	(6,967)	
Dojos costs	(375)	
General operating expenses	(142)	
Insurance	(608)	
Software subscriptions	(291)	
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>8,384</b>	
Income Tax Expenses	-	-
<b>Net Profit / (Loss)</b>	<b>633</b>	-

## Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2021

	2021	2020
<b>Other Assets</b>	\$	\$
Cash and Cash Equivalents	5,140	
Investments	6,003	
<b>Total Other Assets</b>	<b>11,143</b>	
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>11,143</b>	
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Sundry creditors	-	-
Current tax liability	-	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>		
<b>Net Assets Available to Members</b>	<b>11,143</b>	-
Allocated to Members' Accounts	(11,143)	

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS

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To all the members and friends who have contributed their time, energy and resources to help build The Grove - THANK YOU!

- Sam Byrne - Co-op Federation - advice and assistance
- Andrew Ward - advice and assistance re Co-op establishment
- Susan Basterfield - advice from Enspiral
- Finance Committee - for doing that which no-one wants to do
- The Grove Board for not wielding power over
- Retreat Organising teams 2019 and 2021
- Membership System Team
- The Covid 19 virus for causing us to pivot
- People who just kept turning up
- Mother Earth and the lands on which we meet, work and play.

### INAUGURAL MEMBERS OF THE GROVE IS OPEN CO-OP

Vanessa Alexander

Paul Atkins

Peregrin Chiara

Leonie Cutts

Catherine Donnelly

Melisah Feeney

Dan Ferreira

Sunny Goddard

Trent Goldsack

Sam Graham

Ben Hughes

Miriam Jones

Robyn Katz

Kylie Kirshnan

Jeff Knowles

Lina Mbirkou

Rukia Modi

Andrew Mula

Theresa Nguyen

David Pointon

Dawn Pointon

Monique Potts

Royston Rodrigues

Mark Spain

Vivien Sung

Liz Tilley

Nicole Toohey

Jacqueline Vaughan

Sean Walsh

Bridget Wardlaw

Maggie White

Kerri Woodburn

Gina Yallamas



4D mapping of education system



Collective vision quest at North Head

On Tuesday 27th July as we were finalising this report we got a message from Ruth's partner Trent saying he had found a message from Ruth. We figured given the timing it was for all of us. Trent's message read, 'I got a message from Ruth today. I was cleaning up some things and a note she wrote fell out. When I get these messages from her they are always at the right time. I am still thinking about what it means for me but it was on Grove 'note to self' paper so I thought it may be for The Grove rather than me. It had tape on it so I know it was important to her as at one point she had it stuck up although I do not recognise it....

Note to self:  
"The journey of healing will last my whole life  
True compassion is to love all of myself  
just as I am now -  
that's all I need to do"



The Grovettes gathering, 2020