



CERES **STRATEGY** **2021-22**

Pocket Guide

CERES

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people as the traditional custodians of the land on which CERES stands. We pay our respects to Elders, past, present and future. We honour their leadership in caring for Country and support their right to continue to do so.

This booklet

This Pocket Guide to the CERES Strategy 2021-22 is for our community, members, volunteers, partners, staff, managers and board members.

Strategy is a constantly evolving and adaptive process. The intent of this Pocket Guide is to help us focus and deepen our work.



How can you use this Pocket Guide?

Understanding where you fit

No matter what role you play at CERES, you should be able to see where your work fits and how it builds toward the greater impact we are all working to create. If you aren't sure where you fit, please ask!

Making better decisions

If you are making a decision, whether large or small, you can ask: 'Does this decision take us closer to or further away from our values?' and, 'Would this decision help us to deepen our impact?'

Ideas for improvement

With a clear understanding of our big picture, you may spot opportunities or have ideas for ways to deepen our impact consistent with our values and priorities.

Understanding how to partner

With a good understanding of how CERES operates, you may identify opportunities to work together to make a bigger difference.



The context of our times

In order to understand what is not going well in the world we used an 'iceberg'¹ model of systems change.

The top level shows the events that we can see happening around us, with deeper layers showing underlying contributing factors.

Compounding disasters: Storm; bushfire; habitat loss & extinction; pollution; pandemic; poverty; illness & suffering.

EVENTS

Intersecting crises: Global climate and ecological crises; economic exclusion & social isolation; political polarisation and civil unrest.

PATTERNS

Extractive systems: Growth paradigm; extractive economies; industrial agriculture; fossil fuel technologies; globalisation; inequity & loss of social cohesion.

SYSTEMS

Stories of separation: Mechanistic worldview; journey of separation of human from nature, masculine from feminine, inner from outer; disconnection & loss of meaning.

MENTAL MODELS

When bringing about change, the more deeply we work, the more powerful the leverage point.

This means that we can make an impact at the events and patterns levels, but it's more effective and powerful to work on changing systems and mental models.

1. Adapted from Donella Meadows' 'Iceberg Model for Systems Change'. See www.donellameadows.org

CERES helps people fall in love with the Earth.

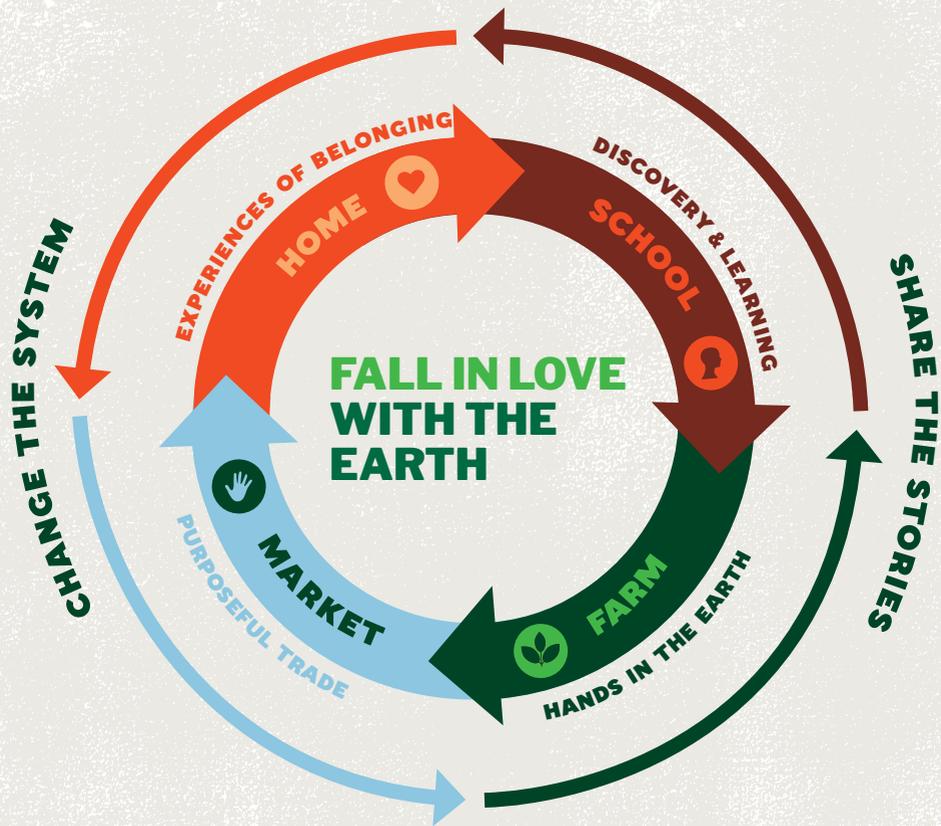
At the deepest level of all our work is a desire to counter the prevailing story of separation with stories of connectedness and love. That's why we help people fall in love with the Earth again.

This approach is deeply grounded in the theory of systems change. All of our work is animated by the fundamental insight of the importance of connection.

Connection can take many forms - gardeners with plants, parents with children, bees with pollen - but it's really about understanding our lives within the context of the human and ecological systems that sustain us.

And from that realisation, our ability to find meaning and purpose in service of others and the Earth.





What do we do?

We help people fall in love with the Earth through work in our five areas. We are a:

Home for nature and people

We care for our places and foster experiences of belonging through our Staff and Volunteers, Members, Board, Site Groups, Places, and Venue Operations.

School for discovery and learning

We facilitate discovery and learning for all ages through our School of Nature and Climate, which includes Student Programs, Teacher Programs, and Adult Learning Programs.

Farm with our hands in the earth

We support a more regenerative food system through our Honey Lane Farm, Joe's Market Garden, Microgreens, Community Garden, and all our growers and suppliers.

Market for purposeful trade

We are building a market for purposeful trade through our Nursery, Fair Food, Grocery, Bakery, Merri Cafe, Fair Wood, Consulting, and by supporting SENVIC.

Story of change and hope

We share stories of change and hope through our Communications, Events, Consulting and Partnerships.

Areas of impact

Through all our activities at CERES we are contributing to system change. We want to help build four larger systems:



Healthy ecosystems

We know from experience that people can have a regenerative effect on land, water, plants and animals. We are working to improve our local ecosystem as well as educate others on how to improve theirs. Together our efforts have the power to address the climate and ecological crisis. All of our work speaks to this in one way or another.



Resilient communities

We help communities prepare for change, whatever the future may hold. Through creating a sense of belonging and feeling of home, we use our places and programs to connect communities, embrace differences, equip people with knowledge and skills, and enable them to bounce back from the shocks and stressors inherent in modern life.



Regenerative food systems

Regenerative farming has a vital role to play in creating healthy ecosystems and resilient communities. By supporting farmers who use methods that care for the soil and by reconnecting people to food ecosystems, we aim to demonstrate a sustainable future for our food supply, landscape, our health and our Earth.



Local wellbeing economies

A wellbeing economy presents an alternative to the endless growth model. It includes ideas of nested systems, cooperative relationships, wellbeing, justice and participatory governance. All of the social enterprises in the Market area of our work engage in purposeful trade to build our local wellbeing economies that support these values.



Our model for change

We applied the same 'iceberg' model to explain how CERES is responding to the context of our times, and creating change on multiple levels.

EVENTS

CERES experiences: Moments of magic & love; participation & belonging; discovery & learning; social enterprise & meaningful employment; local action.

PATTERNS

CERES activities: Home, School, Farm, Market, Story.

SYSTEMS

Regenerative systems: Healthy ecosystems; resilient communities; regenerative food systems; local wellbeing economies.

MENTAL MODELS

Stories of connectedness: Systems and complexity worldview; journey of connection; service to Earth and community; sense of purpose.





Values

Our values lie at the heart of our work, and help us hold on to what is important. They remind us how we behave and help us evaluate decisions. For any decision, we can ask: 'Does it take us closer to or further away from our values?'

While all of CERES shares these overarching values, some areas may have their own additional values.

We're part of a bigger story.

The Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people took care of these lands and waters long before colonisation. We recognise indigenous sovereignty, and our efforts to cultivate ecological regeneration are interwoven with this work. We also acknowledge that CERES is not working for a better world alone, and that we benefit from the work of previous generations as well as people working alongside us now.

Generosity.

We want to give to the Earth what she gives to us, and to offer the same kindness, reverence, respect, and love that sustains life. We have a responsibility to share what we have and look after each other, following the example of the Earth who is always generous.

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Values

Everyone is welcome.

We seek to be a place of unity and invite all cultures, nationalities, abilities, world-views and thought systems. We work to make space for multiple voices, and recognise that there is strength and joy in diversity.

We practise what we teach.

Engaging the whole person - head, heart and hands - lies at the roots of our approach to education. We strive to equip people to think differently, take local action and be resilient and responsive global citizens. We aim to demonstrate what we stand for and share our learnings transparently and accessibly.

Our hope is grounded in action.

Climate and ecological crisis is an urgent and imminent threat to life. Despite that, we have hope that change is possible. This hope is grounded in the knowledge that local, practical, community-based action, on a global scale, is where change starts.

We work with love.

It is our belief and experience that love for the Earth and each other is the motivating force that enables real change. Love can be fierce, urgent and transformative, and inspires us to keep going when the situation seems hopeless. Some of us use different words to describe this force.





What's most important this year?

There are always a lot of moving parts at CERES. Each year we nominate a few areas as the most important in order to focus our work.

1. Engage with First Nations communities and knowledge systems

Respectfully engage with First Nations Peoples of Australia, and develop actions that support First Nations rights, self-determination and sovereignty, while remaining committed to CERES' purpose.

2. Strengthen and deepen our food systems

Demonstrate how urban agriculture can anchor a community and contribute to the local economy, and grow our leadership in the sector.

3. Build our local wellbeing economy

Improve our own financial resilience as an organisation, as well as support the local community to participate more meaningfully.

4. Celebrate our 40th year

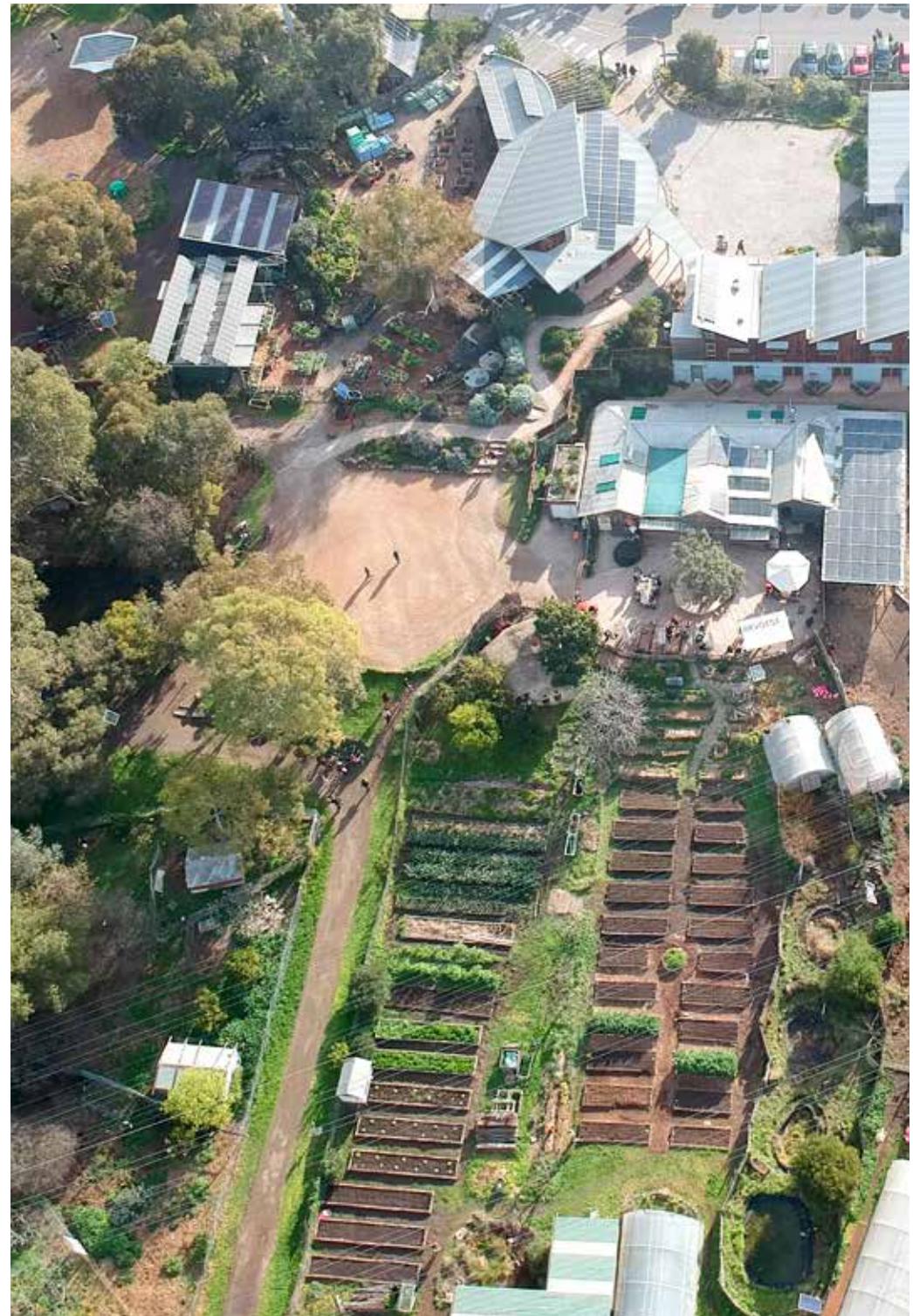
Share stories of the impact of 40 years of CERES, and dream into the possibilities of the next 40 years of our work.

Process

We created our 2021-22 Strategy by collaborating with our community in multiple ways over 12 months.

We generated themes, tested ideas and checked our analysis through workshops, in-depth interviews, research, surveys and feedback sessions. We included our community, volunteers, partners, staff, managers and board members.

This process was made possible with the support and guidance of Melbourne-based consultancy Hinterland Innovation.



Overview

Diagnosis | What's going wrong in the world

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MENTAL MODELS

Responses | How we are responding

EVENTS

CERES experiences: Moments of magic & love; participation & belonging; discovery & learning; social enterprise & meaningful employment; local action.

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Thank you to staff, board members and community who contributed their time, thoughts and energy to this process.

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