

Benambra Intentional Community – 10 Year Anniversary

Ten years ago Jackson West, Daniel Connaughton and Ben Pattrick moved into their own homes in Benambra Intentional Community in Phillip.

Imagined, lobbied for, created and maintained by parents this is a significant achievement. It was 11 years in the development and establishment, and it has been 10 years in supporting the community to continue its tradition of neighbourliness.

We didn't do it alone – Housing ACT, Disability AT, Hartley, Legislative Assembly members and many other supporters and allies.

Hartley was a staunch advocate for and ally of the families before Benambra opened and Hartley is still there as a major player in ensuring Jackson, Daniel and Ben have the support they need to live good lives.

Karen Connaughton and Sally Richards liaise with Housing ACT and have established a (somewhat intermittent but strong) relationship with them. Housing ACT has been and continues to be supportive and is keen to play its part to keep the harmonious nature of Benambra thriving and to ensure the original philosophy and intention of Benambra is not diluted or corrupted.

Karen and Sally meet prospective tenants, show them around, answer any questions and make sure they are a good fit for Benambra and that Benambra is a good fit for them. The final decision is Housing ACT's.

The past 10 years have seen many changes. Ben and Daniel have both had several changes in their co-residents and the community has seen many members leave and others arrive.

We have seen babies born, babies grow up, toddlers go to high school, high school students get jobs, families grow and transfer to larger homes. We have had weddings and divorces. We have had one of our valued and loved residents get very ill and subsequently die.

We have had musical evenings and afternoons, weekends at the beach, ukulele concerts, a little library launch, gardening days, garage sales, good neighbour days, lunches, dinners, games nights, bush dances at the Yarralumla woolshed, birthday parties and too many bar-be-ques to count. And of course, the highlights of each year – the Easter egg hunt, Halloween trick or treating and Christmas with Santa and gifts.

The Benambra community is wonderful for Jackson, Dan and Ben. They are well-known by all the residents, and they know that if they need help they only have to knock on a door nearby. It is a safe, warm and friendly place to live.

The Benambra community is wonderful for the other residents. They also only have to knock on a door if they help, a dog walked, a lift to the doctor, someone to buy milk or a chat. For them it is also a safe, warm and friendly place to live.

We look forward to the next 10 years and hope the community prospers.

Sally Richards
9 November 2023



Murrumurang in the early days



Jackson's 30th birthday bush dance