

Registration No: A 00 482 97P

2023/24 Annual Report

To be presented at the Annual General Meeting, Prelude 13th
November and 5th December 2024

Contents

- 1. Committee of Management
- 2. Chair's Report
 - 2.1 Thanks to Committee, Staff and Volunteers
 - 2.2 Staff Report
 - 2.3 MASG Operations: The circular economy
 - 2.4 The MASG Strategic Plan
 - 2.5 ZNET 2030 programs and projects
 - 2.5.1 MT Alexander Bionergy (MAB)
 - 2.5.2 Zero Emissions Retrofit in MT Alexander Shire (ZERMAS)
 - 2.5.3 Regenerative Agriculture
 - 2.5.4 Healthy Soils Project
 - 2.5.5 The Zero Net Emissions Working Group (MANZWG)
 - 2.5.6 Wash Against Waste Trailer
 - 2.5.7 Castlemaine Repair Café
- 3. Financial Governance
- 4. Treasurer's report for MASG
- 5. Treasurer's report for Mount Alexander Bioenergy
- 6. MASG Accounts
- 7. Bioenergy Accounts

The Mount Alexander Sustainability Group

Location: 30 Templeton Street, Castlemaine Post: PO Box 1043, Castlemaine, 3450

Website: masg.org.au Email: <u>info@masg.org.au</u>

1. Committee of Management

Members of the committee as at 30 June 2024 were as follows:

Chair (Acting) Neil Webster
Chair (Acting) Michael Lewin
Secretary Melissa Pollock
Secretary (Acting) Neil Webster
Treasurer Maurice Molan
Committee member William Grant
Committee member Chris Hooper

There have been some changes to the Committee during the 2023/24 year, as follows:

- Melissa Pollock resumed partial Secretarial duties during the year
- Neil webster became Chair, following Mick Lewin acting as Chair

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2. Chair's Report

2.1 Thanks to the committee, staff and volunteers

The Chair wishes to thank the committee, staff and volunteers for their work throughout the year. MASG runs on volunteer power, from the Committee of Management to people picking up tea towels on the Wash Against Waste trailer. In between all of that volunteers contribute to key projects, make the monthly e-news happen, maintain the MASG web site, run the repair café and generally make things happen.

Each year the demands on the committee members and staff are significant as we strive to be more effective in reaching the organisation's objectives. All committee members take an interest in all activities of MASG. By necessity, however, committee members undertake a degree of specialisation in projects and activities. Table 1 outlines the main activity streams, the work stream leaders and the allocation of main activity by committee members for 2023-24. It goes without saying of course all committee members devote some time to all activities.

MASG activity stre	ams and Com	mittee Mem	ber interest ·	- 2023-24			
	MASG operations (circular economy)	Wararack Initiative	Bioenergy (MAB)	Regenerative agriculture & Healthy Soils	Housing retrofit project	Admin and Finance	Comms
Bill Grant	Υ	L	Υ	L			Υ
Melissa Pollock	Υ						
Mick Lewin			L		Υ		Υ
Maurice Molan	Υ			Υ	Υ	L	
Neil Webster	L		Υ		Υ		Υ
Chris Hooper	L						Υ
Project Leader							
Deane Belfield			Υ	L			

Note: L denotes stream leader. Y denotes very significant time spent in stream.

We would welcome members to become more involved, whether as a volunteer, a committee member or an advocate for all things sustainability in our community. We have lost key players and experience from the Committee of Management through this year and in the future we will need a range of skills and experience. A diversity of views is needed and. participation can be greatly rewarding.

We recognise the time constraints that most people have, so our aim is to provide opportunities for people to connect, contribute and then step back as needed. Our priority is for MASG to operate in a way that is sustainable for the people involved, so that we can be sustainable and effective as an organisation. For example, the Committee of Management will move from monthly to quarterly meetings in 2025. It's believed that this will make involvement with the committee more sustainable for the people involved, and more appealing to others.

2.2 Staff Report

MASG has two staff members, Kieran Blain, who undertakes administration and bookkeeping tasks and Wendy Hopkins who coordinates the Wash Against waste Trailer. All other tasks are undertaken by volunteers with some expenses picked up where appropriate. In addition to the Committee members, these include:

- Tom Danby Wash Against Waste
- Sue Thom E News
- Gary Schurr MASG Website

We would like other volunteers to assist with all MASG projects and programmes.

- Wash Against Waste can use more event day volunteers
- Social Media maintenance
- Web Site maintenance

2.3 MASG Operations: The circular economy

MASG has four key areas of focus, being waste reduction, renewable energy, energy efficiency and agriculture. All of these contribute to the overall goal of net zero emissions from Mount Alexander Shire by 2030.

MASG activities essentially are those arising from the concept of the circular economy where materials are kept in use as long as technically feasible by recovery, re use and extension of the life of products. The recovered materials can be returned to nature to ensure material production productivity, thereby completing the circle, or used to produce products such as bioenergy. Alternatively, materials can be repaired, refurbished, recycled or reused in new products.

The core circular economy projects and initiatives undertaken by MASG are:

- the Castlemaine Repair Café where residents can come together to extend the life of a wide variety of household items;
- the operation of the Wash Against Waste Trailer, that supplies events with all the utensils they need that are then collected at the end of the event, washed and then reused;
- Recycling initiatives;
- constant communication efforts to encourage waste reduction in the Shire;
- regenerative agriculture through the Regen Ag program; and
- Healthy Soils program
- support for the Yes In My Backyard (YIMBY) community composting initiative.
- Green energy from organic wastes (Bioenergy) where wastes are part of regenerating cycle.

2.4 The MASG Strategic Plan

In March 2023 the Committee of Management (CoM) held a strategic planning session with the aim of clarifying our objectives, and then identifying our priorities and how we achieve them. The process recognised all that has come before since MASG first started in 2006. The background and history about MASG and projects undertaken in the past was very informative for everyone, especially those newer members, and provided a foundation for us to build on.

Strategic planning process

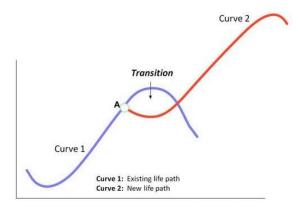
The group used the 'Now, Where, How, planning process that uses a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) to clarify where MASG is now, identify stakeholders and start to clarify what success looks like in five years time.

It also involved prioritising areas of focus for the CoM, and clarifying SMART goals, actions, accountabilities and timelines. Roles and responsibilities were discussed, including recognition of the number of groups and people within our community but outside of MASG who are contributing to the achievement of similar, if not the same, goals as MASG.

This is an ongoing process that MASG will use to review and reset its direction over time.

Context

Neil described the sigmoid curve below and its description of the typical life cycle of organisations. The group discussed where MASG sits and agreed that we are in the transition zone.



• When MASG first started there was strong interest in our community about sustainability. Since, that has grown with an increased sense of urgency about climate change, technology rapidly changing, renewable energy options emerging and the population of Mount Alexander Shire changing, both in number and demographics. As a result, there are a number of organisations and groups that exist, which is terrific in terms of the level of motivation and activity. The down side is that all of these groups are competing for attention, members and resources.

MASG SWOT ANALYSIS (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)

The SWOT process was used to brainstorm ideas about where MASG sits today, that is, it's NOW position. The following was captured.

Strengths

- Brand equity and track record built over 18 years
- Local sustainability legends have been involved in MASG over time
- Successful partnerships and relationships
- Willing helpers, allies and volunteers
- Talent, expertise and project experience
- DGR (Deductible Gifts Recipient) status
- Level of activism in Mount Alexander Shire, especially in relation to climate change and energy

Weaknesses

- Current strategy is lengthy with many parts and hard to describe easily
- Talent and expertise gaps
 - Comms / marketing

- Admin
- HR / volunteers management
- DGR status
- Lower profile within the community than it has had in the past
- Heavy reliance on volunteers
- Engaging youth, who are active in our community
- Lines of accountability, clear roles and responsibilities
- Connectivity with like-minded groups impacted by Covid

Opportunities

- Engaging youth in Mount Alexander Shire
- Level of activism in Mount Alexander Shire
- Planned succession and regeneration to bring new people in to MASG
- Influx of new people to this community
- Other organisations have emerged with similar goals
- Relationship with Mount Alexander Shire Council could be strengthened

Threats

- People's time constraints
 - Makes it challenging for those involved
 - Can be a barrier to others to getting involved
- Identity crisis
 - O What does MASG stand for and how do we communicate that?
 - Are we known by the Mount Alexander community?
 - O How do we fit with other groups?
- Other organisations with similar goals
 - Can be a positive, but also splits the effort making all groups struggle
 - Can work at cross purposes if not well connected and aligned
- Funding security with government funding constrained post Covid
- Loss of key people and a lack of succession and regeneration

STAKEHOLDERS

MASG has people involved in many ways, including as members, volunteers, Committee of Management members, staff, project partners and the wider community. We have an email list of more than 800 people, which speaks to the involvement of many people over time.

A second 'Connect Event' was held by MASG in the middle of the year to bring together stakeholders and like-minded groups and individuals. The aim is to build and rebuild relationships within our community to better understand who's doing what and what our aspirations are. The tangible outcomes sought by MASG are alignment and coordination of effort, especially in relation to seeking funding and support from government for key projects and initiatives, and identification of opportunities for groups to collaborate. It was well attended and seen as worthwhile by those attending.

Key stakeholders for MASG include

- Community groups, e.g. West End Resilience group
- Mount Alexander Shire Council
- CVGA (Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance)

- State govt departments
 - Sustainability Victoria
 - o Catchment Management Authorities
 - o DEECA VIC Dept of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
 - Environment Protection Authority
 - o SEC
- Coliban Water
- Local industry, including agriculture
- Local businesses
- The Hub Foundation / YIMBY
- Warawack Initiative
- Net Zero Action Group
- Castlemaine Institute
- Renewable Newstead
- Wilderhoods
- Castlemaine Community House
- Nalderun
- Connecting Country
- Friend of the Box Ironbark Forest
- Hepburn Wind
- ADAPT Loddon Mallee
- Other Sustainability Groups
 - 1. Bendigo
 - 2. Geelong
 - 3. Macedon
 - 4. Goldfields
 - 5. BREEZE
- Castlemaine Health
- Schools / Education providers

What does success look like in five years time?

The following were the product of a quick brainstorm. It is not a definitive or agreed list of measures of success, rather a collection of ideas. It is also recognised that MASG is not solely responsible for achieving these, rather they would be the result of the efforts of a number of organisations and people, either collectively or otherwise.

- We will see uptake of renewable energy happening faster in Mount Alexander shire
- The bioenergy project is operational and achieving significant emissions reductions
- MASG is self-funding
- Sustainable solutions will be available and more affordable for everyone in our community
- Innovation in the renewable energy sector will be seen
- Retrofit program is scaled up, possibly with the creation of a co-op
- Emissions are cut through energy efficiency, less waste and green transport
- MASG doubles its active membership

- MASG Committee of Management is humming with portfolio approach various ages and diversity evident
- MASG is a key stakeholder with influence
- MASG will be recognised and trusted by businesses, households and relevant Federal, State
 and Local governments as being a go-to organisation in our community on how to achieve
 zero net emissions.
- MASG will have young people involved and leading.
- We will be harnessing the labour and intellectual capacity of our community.

MASG should maintain its current focus on changes that can be made within and by our communities, rather than by large scale political lobbying for national systemic changes. The organisation will achieve this by

- Being clear about which activities it will be leading or supporting.
- Being strategic in its fundraising, that is., our planned activities drive our grant applications, not the availability of grants driving our activities.
- Being a catalyst to harness community, business and household support for activities that lead to zero net emissions.
- Staying abreast of changes to legislation and technology so that opportunities for our communities can be exploited.
- Supporting research on ZNET issues.
- Broadly communicating what we do, and by strategically using successes to raise our profile.
- Collaborating with organisations that have similar objectives.
- Engaging with the various communities, using agreed community engagement processes.
- Advocating to partners and agencies for change and collaborating with the changes.

2.5 ZNET 2030 programs and projects

Because of the threat to our way of life not to mention the planet, MASG has been broadening its portfolio of activities over the last half dozen years to focus on CO2 emission reductions. As reflected in our branding, ZNET by 2030, this is the current core objective of the organisation and each year we apply our energies to increase the credibility of activities in terms of reaching that objective.

MASG is still kicking goals in its effort to achieve zero net emissions and aid Mount Alexander Shire in achieving its ZNET 2030 aims. All the projects listed below contribute in some way to reducing emissions and informing the community of the benefits of changing their use habits.

All members of the committee are committed to the organisation and work very hard towards achieving the vision(s) of the members. Those committee members that drive particular projects do so with an amazing amount of passion and enthusiasm, which is to be commended. MASG is a community organisation with many worthwhile projects on the go, all of which can only help in our efforts to make our shire a better place in the face of the current climate situation.

2.5.1 Mt Alexander Bioenergy (MAB)

This project is under a confidential Due Diligence with a consortium which will be able to deliver advanced Anaerobic Digester technology.

We are assisting with the firming up of sufficient feedstock to render the proposed facility viable.

The plan is to source this from central Victorian enterprises.

We expect this, the first phase of the due diligence to take up to January 2025. The following phases will be largely out of our hands and should not take more than a few months more.

Once due diligence is completed, we will be able to announce the party contracted to build, own and operate the facility. At this time regulatory permits will be sought from the EPA and the Mt Alexander Shire Council.

Technology Overview

This is primarily a renewable energy project, producing some 270,000GJ of renewable energy. The intent of renewable energy is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing our reliance on fossil fuel generation. By removing waste from landfill and using it as the source, we can make this renewable energy project doubly efficient, with an anticipated Greenhouse Gas saving of 88,500 tonnes CO2e. The technology below, and the selective control of the feedstocks, will ensure that no unwanted emissions result and that is genuine "GREEN" energy. The facility will divert approximately 36,000 tonnes of organic waste from landfill annually.

To put this in its context, the shires total emissions are estimated as 283,000 tonnes CO2e. These are made up of:

- 18,500t Waste
- 58,000t Agriculture
- 59,400t Residential
- 147,100t Commercial industrial and government

Anaerobic Digester

The biogas facility will use wastewater and organic waste from Don Smallgoods as well as suitable wasted 'wet' organics to produce biogas using anaerobic digestion. The biogas will be used as natural gas substitute at Don Smallgoods. The wet organics streams at the site will include wasted food organics/by products from food and beverage manufactures and retailers, food waste from cafes/restaurants, grease trap, and potentially poultry shed wastes and biosolids from wastewater treatment facilities, currently spread on farmland. These materials will be transported in accordance with EPA prescribed waste transport regulations, meaning they will be in sealed and odour-containing vehicles. The facility will upgrade Don Smallgoods wastewater and organic waste systems, reducing odour from existing management facilities. It will also reduce traffic and odour risk from these vehicles from the site. The materials will be received in a negative pressure sealed receival building where air from the building will be pumped to air filters to remove odour. The nutrient-rich sludge (digestate) from the AD tanks will be converted into fertiliser by blending with biochar or being dried and used in the pyrolysis plant.

2.5.2 Zero Emissions Retrofits in MT Alexander Shire (ZERMAS)

Mount Alexander Sustainability Group has set a target of Zero Net Emissions (ZNET) by 2030. While it has a number of projects underway in other sectors, the aging rural housing stock must be brought up to a low emissions standard to enable us to achieve this. The focus is not on cost payback but on emission reduction, although the cost effectiveness of measures will inform the retrofit choices made.

In keeping with a ZNET strategy, we would be looking to move households away from gas wherever possible, or at least, to create a viable path for them to make this move in the near future. The gas supply charge, typically about \$350 per year, would thus be saved. Disconnection costs are one-off and are capped at \$220.

We have sought 5 sets of data to enable us to plan this.

- 6. DELWP Scorecard data for central Victoria
- 7. REMPLAN community census data
- 8. MASG Renew Survey
- 9. Sustainability Victoria's Comprehensive Energy Efficiency Retrofits to Existing Victorian Houses
- 10. Mount Alexander Shire Development Services data

This has enabled us to identify a population of houses we can draw-on, identify the likely retrofits they would need and develop a budget to enact such retrofits.

We have also consulted widely with experts within Sustainability Victoria, DELWP, BZE, NatHERS, and experts in this sector, Alan Pears and Euan Williamson.

We maintain that if we can bring poor performing houses up to NatHERS 6 Stars (approximately 6 stars or more under the Residential Efficiency Scorecard (RES)), then the addition of Solar PV on these can bring them to a near ZNET target rating of 9 or 10 RES.

The houses assessed in SV's study on the Energy Efficiency Upgrade Potential of Existing Victorian Houses, found an average NatHERS star rating of 1.81 for pre-2005 houses, and an average rating of 1.57 for the pre-1991 houses.

From 1991, houses will continue to be poorly insulated and generally energy inefficient despite some BCA standards applied. However, there are 2 major steps in the energy efficiency of the housing stock after this. These are the introduction of mandatory 5 Star NatHERS rating in 2004, 6 stars in 2010 and 7 stars in 2024.

Based on SV and DHHS studies, we have arrived at what seem to be reasonable assumptions for energy usage in unrenovated rural housing. An assumption is made for an average household of 59,800 MJ/yr for natural gas and 4,160 kWh for electricity. The ghg coefficient for electricity is declining and now sits at around 1.03 kg/kWh, and the coefficient for natural gas is 0.05543 kg/MJ. A house with this level of consumption would produce around 7.6 tonnes of CO2-e per year at the moment.

We are not seeking to replicate the studies already undertaken, but to embark on a project to apply the knowledge already documented by Sustainability Victoria to the task of raising the standard of the Shire's existing housing stock. The SV project did not model every upgrade possibility and we would seek to expand this to achieve the higher performance.

Following the retrofit there will be a range of savings "streams", including:

- Energy bill savings: If you undertake a comprehensive upgrade to the building shell (insulation and draught sealing), major appliances such as heating and water heating, and add rooftop PV this energy bill saving could be very large.
- Improved thermal comfort and thermal safety: A comprehensive building shell upgrade should significantly improve the natural thermal comfort of the home in winter, and should also improve the thermal comfort in summer as long as it has good shading. This would be expected to translate to a significant health benefit and reduced medical costs for the households, especially the low-income households in the least efficient houses – some of this will reduce household medical expenses and some will reduce government health costs.
- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions: The on-going greenhouse gas savings due to the
 energy savings have an economic value. One issue is that over time Victoria's electricity
 supply will become much less greenhouse intensive, so the greenhouse savings from
 efficiency upgrades that reduce electricity consumption and the greenhouse offset
 provided by the rooftop PV system will reduce over time. On the flip side, the economic

value of the greenhouse gas savings – expressed in \$ per tonne of carbon-dioxide equivalent (CO2-e) will increase.

Get off gas: Shortfalls have been predicted in Victoria's natural gas supply as early as 2025.
 Measures that significantly improve the efficiency of gas use (e.g. building shell and heating upgrades), or the replacement of gas appliances with high efficiency electrical ones could be one way for Victoria to reduce it's gas demand. Note there is no clean way of producing and delivering gas likely to be available in the life of this project and as usage of gas drops in industrial use, we would expect it to become more expensive to the householder.

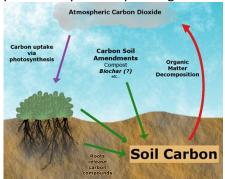
A pilot has been under-take as a proof of concept. 10 lightweight/WB or brick veneer houses have been retrofitted. The processes, trades and costs are being reviewed following this. These houses have been done in conjunction with CEHL for the Forest Creek Cooperative Housing. CEHL is the owner of the properties and have sourced most of the funding. It had been hoped that the tenants of these properties could contribute as a supplement to their rents, however this proved impossible under existing tenancy regulations.

MASG was able to secure an Innovation Grant of \$50,000 from the Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation which support this. The overall budget for the Pilot was assessed as \$246,000 as outlined below.

This was completed in September 2023. We are progressing now in developing a financing model to be the basis for undertaking the full project, targeting 50 houses initially.

2.5.3 The regenerative agriculture project (MARAG)

Regenerative agriculture is a group of farm practices which focuses on improvements in farm productivity from topsoil regeneration by a range of actions including composting, bio-stimulants,



dung beetles, changed stock management and grazing and crop management practices, increasing biodiversity, improving water flows, building productivity and landscape function.

An important by-product of this is carbon sequestration and reduced consumption of fossil fuel (direct and indirect) on farm – scope 1,2, and 3, which in some cases can lead to 'a farm being certified "carbon neutral" under the Federal Government's Climate Active Carbon Neutral program.

Deane Belfield has long been a vocal advocate for

regenerative agriculture and indeed practices what he preaches on his own farm (the first farm in Victoria registered under the CFI's 2014 Soil Carbon Methodology). Deane (as MARAG facilitator), has continued the program initiated with NCCMA support, to work with local farmers to accelerate the take-up of regenerative agriculture practices within the local region. As part of this Deane has involved MASG in supporting the MARAG project and has developed an integrated Regen Ag curriculum to which he regularly involves high quality guest speakers and mentors. Which now has circa 70 registered members, about 25 active members along with a very proactive 'Whats App' group.

MASG was able to draw on a \$100,000 grant to continue this *applied-learning* program into a fourth year. The grant has funded on-going activities that assist local farmers to apply their regenerative farming practices, learned through program participation, and sharing experiences with other participants. A core component is to measure, monitor and build soil carbon (the apex soil indicator) through sequestration (drawing down atmospheric CO2).



The Project will also monitor the success of the participating farmers in building soil carbon which, in the medium term, will hopefully encourage other farmers to follow. Additional soil carbon can be monetised (carbon credits) if undertaken via a registered carbon project (refer Federal Government).

MARAG members are committed to sharing resources including monitoring and measuring equipment, foliar spray units, electric fences, seed, DIY workshops and laboratory testing

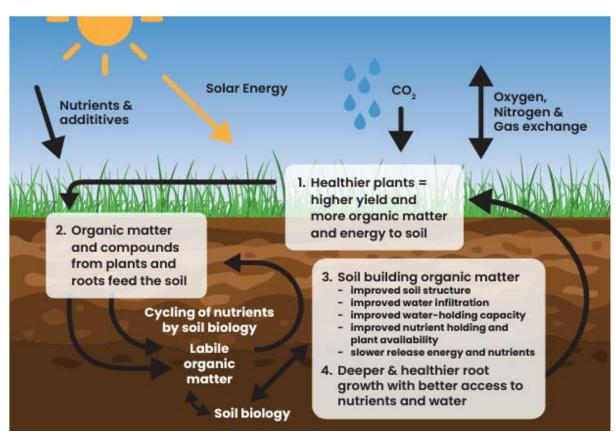
equipment. This is hugely valuable to all involved. By participating in MARAG our members are increasing farm profitability, building a community of practice, producing food for the local community, creating an opportunity to be paid for increases in soil carbon and be recognised for achieving carbon neutral status, as well as helping increase net primary productivity across the region. A tow and fertiliser spray trailer, for sharing amongst farmers, that would otherwise not be within their individual budget, has been purchased to help accelerate the program outcomes.

This project has the potential to make a significant contribution to the ZNET 2030 goal, as evidenced by recent follow-up verified soil carbon increases within the region.

2.5.4 Healthy soils project

The Healthy Soils Project was completed in September 2024 with the completion of the Soil Health, Nutrition and Organic Management Guide. The Healthy Soils Initiative will continue as a MASG program promoting soil health and sustainable farming systems. The Guide provides information for landholders to assess and monitor their soil health and adopt practices that address constraints to the Healthy Plant \leftrightarrows Healthy Soil cycle. This approach focuses on ensuring plants can grow deeper and healthier roots have access to the nutrients needed to sustain the yields being removed by farming, as well as management of pasture and crops to ensure sufficient biomass is returned to the soil to maintain healthy soil biological function and a friable soil structure. The Guide also recognises our variable and often dry climate as a constraint to soil health and focuses on protecting soil health during climate extremes and making the most of good seasons to build soil health.

This project was delivered under a \$197,300.00 grant from the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment's Smart Farms Small Grants Soil Extension program to promote more sustainable soil management by farmers in a region ranging north-south from Elmore to Musk and east-west from Kilmore to Newbridge. The project was conducted in partnership with Federation University. Commencing in March 2022, the project worked with existing and new grower networks and communities of interest to assist farmers to develop Soil Health, Nutrition & Carbon Management Plans. It worked with a core of farmers to develop management plans, as well as developing factsheets and planning tools and the Guide. Soil assessments and management plans were developed for 21 properties. Farmer information sessions and field days have been conducted, and further events will be held in 2025 under the Healthy Soils Initiative banner.



The Health Plant D Healthy Soil Cycle promoted by the Healthy Soil Initiative

2.5.5 The Zero Net Emissions Working Group (MAZNWG)

The role of MANZWG:

MANZWG positions itself as a communicator of news and information that
will encourage the use of renewable energy and sustainable practice widely applicable to
businesses of all sizes, primarily within Mt.Alexander Shire.

Regular meetings:

• MANZWG meets monthly, interested visitors are welcome (by arrangement).

Public Film Night at the Phee Broadway Theatre (Dec 14th, 2023):

- Film screening two films produced by MANZWG on the subject of local businesses that have successfully shifted to renewable energy for their enterprise.
- Six guest speakers.
- Question and Answer session and discussion.

Liaison with Mt.Alexander Council (ongoing):

• Brendan Garrett, Mt.Alexander Council Environmental Office attending our next meeting.

A new film in planning:

- Subject business selected.
- Liaising with local film makers prior to production.

MANZWG website:

- Our website comprises a body of stories (text with pictures, and films) that are contemporary
 and generally concern businesses, Schools and people of the Shire who are actively working
 towards the use of Net Zero Emission energy and otherwise adopting sustainable practices
 for their activities.
- https://mtalexnetzeroworkinggroup.org/

2.5.6 Wash Against Waste Trailer

This custom-built trailer is equipped with all that is necessary to take to public events and displace the use of disposable crockery and cutlery with those that are washable and reusable. It is generally staffed at the events by the event organisers under the supervision of a trained MASG operator. This has proved very popular over a number of years now. Volunteers are sourced by the event organiser and supplemented by MASG volunteers. The collaboration has a community feel and participants have an enjoyable experience and food vendors are only too happy to work with the team. A new trailer (with a dishwasher!) was developed in 2020, replacing one that had proved too heavy for many of the available vehicles. The new trailer was constructed with funding supplied by the Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation.

2.5.7 Castlemaine Repair Café

The Repair Café is still going strong. Basic bicycle maintenance is offered at each Cafe as well as the ongoing appliance and sewing repairs. Mobile phone and Apple Mac help is also now offered at each Cafe. The Mending Circle – darning, hand sewing, crochet etc, - continues as part of the Repair Café services.

Toward the end of this year the Cafe is trying the repair of small wooden items plus tool and knife sharpening with a new repairer. There are new repairers, more helpers on reception and serving tea and coffee.

The Cafe seems to be getting busier, maybe pre COVID numbers now. The Repair Café would like to take this opportunity to thank the generosity in spirit and donations of all the participants and attendees, it gratefully accepted and appreciated.

3. Financial Governance

Managing potential conflicts of interest

MASG is an incorporated association with a volunteer Committee of Management and, as at 30 June 2024 is operating with only one part time administrator and bookkeeper. Committee members are not paid for their time on the Committee but may be paid for other services in specific cases.

The Committee acknowledges the potential for a conflict of interest in such cases and recognises the need to properly manage this. During 2023/24, the following potential conflict of interest issues were identified and managed.

MOUNT ALEXANDER SUSTAINABLITY GROUP INC (MASG)

Management of Regen Ag program – Eco2Sys Australia Pty Ltd (Deane Belfield)

This project was initiated by Deane Belfield and then brought into MASG as it aligns with MASG objectives. The project has been funded in two parts – firstly by NCCMA, and secondly by a donation from DON facilitated by a court ruling that DON contribute to this project as recompense for a breach of its EPA licence.

1. Regen Ag

The Regenerative Agriculture project has run for four years. The project funder (NCCMA) granted the funds in the expectation that Deane will manage the project. The Committee agreed that Deane run this project (and receive payment) without competitive quotes from the market, on the basis that he is an acknowledged expert in the field and the funder has granted funds in the expectation of his involvement. During 2023/24, MASG paid Deane's company, Eco2Sys, \$11,660 for this. The Committee recognises that this payment does not cover all the effort and time that Deane has committed to this program.

The funding, provided by Don Smallgoods late in 2022, allowed a continuation of the Regen Ag project. The Committee set up a subcommittee to manage this on its behalf. The Subcommittee members were three Committee members (Melissa Pollock, Terry White and Gerry Egan) and three industry people were Tim Read, Jason McAinch and Katie Finlay. The project management role was advertised, and Deane Belfield was the only applicant. As he is very well-credentialed to manage this, the Committee accepted this offer in August 2022. The contract is for a total of \$24,400 over a period of 21 months. In this period Eco2Sys has been paid \$4059.90.

2. Management of Healthy Soils program – Bill Grant

The Soil Health, Nutrition and Carbon management project is being funded by the Commonwealth of Australia through the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, under the Smart Farms, Small Farms grant program. MASG has been awarded \$197,300 under this program.

The project manager is COM member Bill Grant, who is conducting the work as a Research Fellow at Federation University. COM decided in January 2022 that he is the best person to manage the project because he initiated and submitted the grant application, his expertise has been important in obtaining the grant, and he is nominated in the grant offer. The contract is for a total of \$119,850 over a period of about two years and will be paid to Federation University. Bill's wage at Federation University is funded separately, and he receives no additional stipend or payment for conducting the work. Bill's employment as a Research Fellow at the university allows him to commit more time to the project than was initially anticipated and expand the research component of the work. No payment was made to Bill under this contract in 2023/24.

3. Repair Café - Chris Hooper

A single payment of \$196.80 was made to Chris Hooper as reimbursement for costs associated with running the café.

MOUNT ALEXANDER BIOENERGY PTY LTD (MAB)

MASG is the sole shareholder of MAB.

Payments to Chairperson (Mick Lewin)

In March 2020, Directors resolved to make a payment of \$1,200 per month to Mick Lewin as Chair in partial recognition of the large amount of work he is doing, and MASG, as shareholder, agreed. Payments were made from January 2021, but ceased in June 23. Directors recognise that these director fee payments never covered all the effort and time that Mick has and is committing to this program.

In September 2022, directors resolved to make a further payment of \$50,000 to Mick if and when the bioenergy project reaches financial close, provided that MAB receives investor funds to allow such a payment. This decision was taken because Mick has done substantial work over the five years of the preconstruction phase and also prior to that. This work has been vital for keeping the project going – the project would have foundered without it. The project will, if it reaches financial close, bring enduring value to MASG. It is appropriate to financially reward Mick's work, if possible, with the payment amount calculated on the basis that 50% of his work be regarded as voluntary.

The MASG Committee, as shareholder, agreed to this payment.

Contract for preconstruction services with Eco2Sys Australia Pty Ltd (Deane Belfield)

In 2018, Directors resolved that Deane was vital to this project due to his expertise and his industry connections, and a Pre-construction Consulting Agreement with Deane's company, Eco2Sys Australia Pty Ltd, was executed in 2018.

This Agreement was revisited in April 2022 and revised in May 2022 to recognise that:

- External factors have prevented the achievement of a number of milestones (including financial close), and have required significant extra work on other achieved milestones.
- MAB has paid Eco2Sys only \$76k out of the possible contract sum of \$190k; and
- Eco2Sys has expended effort valued well in excess of the total paid.

In recognition of that situation, MAB agreed to pay eco2Sys a sum of \$142,000 (plus GST) subject to the condition that payment will only be paid if, and when, funding becomes available that would permit such payment.

In addition, ongoing work was changed to be on a time basis.

During 2023/24, MAB paid \$5,857.50 to Eco2Sys.

Bioenergy structure

MASG is the sole shareholder of a special purpose vehicle (a separate legal entity), Mount Alexander Bioenergy Pty Ltd ("Bioenergy"). The purpose of this company is to develop a project to obtain energy from waste.

Currently the directors are Michael Lewin (chair), Neil Webster and Maurie Molan.

All Bioenergy Board members are MASG Committee of Management. We believe MASG interests are secured in this arrangement.

4. Treasurer's report for MASG

Notes to the Financial Accounts for the Year ended 30 June 2024

MOUNT ALEXANDER SUSTAINABILITY GROUP INC Registration No: A 00 482 97P

1. Basis of Preparation

This financial report is a special purpose report (prepared for use by members) as the Committee of Management has determined that the entity is not a reporting entity.

The financial accounts have been prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and have been prepared on an accrual basis.

2. Income Tax

Mount Alexander Sustainability Group Inc is a not-for-profit entity and has been granted exemption from income tax as a charitable institution under Sec 50-5 of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997. For the 2024 Financial Year the organisation remains entitled as an endorsed organisation, as the status of the charity has not changed.

3. Goods & Services Tax (GST)

Revenue, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of goods and services tax (GST). Receivables and payables are stated inclusive of GST.

Statement by Members of the Committee

MOUNT ALEXANDER SUSTAINABILITY GROUP INC.` Registration No; A 00 482 97P

The committee has determined that the incorporated body is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose financial report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1 to these financial statements.

In the opinion of the committee, the Profit & Loss Account and Balance Sheet and notes to the financial statements -

- 1. Present fairly the financial position of **Mount Alexander Sustainability Group Inc** as at 30 June 2024 and its performance for the year ended on that date; and
- 2. As at 30 June 2024 there are reasonable grounds to believe that the incorporated body will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the committee and is signed for and on behalf of the committee by;

Maurice Leslie Molan, Treasurer

1 November 2024

Treasurer's Report for the year ended 30 June 2024

Mount Alexander Sustainability Group Inc.

Registration No: A 00 482 97P

Financial Performance as at 30 June 2024

The 2024 Financial Statements will be posted on the web site (as part of this annual report) and will be available to all members.

An audit of the Financial Statements will be completed by Daniela Arceri, Public Accountant, IPA, and will be available on the website, when completed.

Comment on Profit and Loss Account

A summary of total Income and Expenses and Net Position is set out in the table below.

Income & expenses	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
Income from all activities	\$78,688	\$17,963	\$45,227	\$84,817	\$68,662
Expenses from all activities	\$24,688	\$63,271	-\$57,910	-\$78,265	-\$85,513
Profit (Loss)	\$54,000	-\$45,307	-\$12,674	\$6,553	-\$16,851

Income has increased by \$60K. The Retrofit Project is the major contributor to this increase 29K, with Healthy Soils and MARAG also contributing 23K. It's pleasing to note that interest received now factors on the Balance Sheet, 7K and the Wash Against Waste Trailer is being hired more regularly.

Costs decreased by \$39K, mostly as the MASG committee agreed not to employ any additional staff momentarily. MAB Pty Ltd received a grant of \$6K to cover general expenses incurred.

MASG receives significant grants, sometimes in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, to administer projects to achieve the organisation's goals. However, these tied grants provide very little income to MASG for administration. The Profit and Loss Statement does not reflect the gross amounts of these grants and the small amounts of income declared in the Profit & Loss Account are shown in the right hand column of the table below.

MASG Projects	Item	Paid	Received	Balance Sheet	Income to MASG P&L
Regen Ag	Balance 30 Jun 2020			\$26,705	
	NCCMA 2020/21		\$25,000		
	Paid 2020/21	\$37,534			\$1,614
	Balance 30 Jun 2021			\$14,171	
	NCCMA 2021/22		\$32,000		
	DON 2021/22		\$100,000		
	Paid 2021/2022	\$17,926			\$1,680
	Balance 30 Jun 2022			\$128,245	
	Paid 22/23	\$30,588			\$1.680
	Balance 30 Jun 2023			\$97,657	
	Paid 23/24	\$47,822			\$0
	Balance 30 Jun 2024			\$49,835	
Healthy Soils	Balance 30 Jun 2021			\$0	
	Grant 2021/22		\$123,750		
	Paid 2021/2022	\$2,000			\$2,000
	Balance 30 Jun 2022		\$121,750		
	Grant		\$73,550		
	Paid 22/23	\$16,304			
	Balance 30 Jun 2023			\$178,996	\$0
	Paid 23/24	\$149,821			
	Balance 30 Jun 2024			\$29,175	
Recycling advocacy	Balance 30 Jun 2020			\$0	
	Donation 2020/21		\$25,000		
	Paid 2020/21	\$4,813			\$1,724
	Balance 30 Jun 2021			\$20,187	
	Paid 2021/2022	\$6,238			\$722
	Balance 30 Jun 2022			\$13,948	
	Paid 22/23	\$2,591		\$11,357	\$0
	Balance 23/24			\$11,357	\$0
Housing Retrofit	Balance 30 Jun 2020			\$0	
	Grant 2020/21		\$50,000		
	Paid 2020/21	\$0			\$0
	Balance 30 Jun 2021			\$50,000	
	Paid 2021/2022	\$9,060			

MASG Projects	Item	Paid	Received	Balance Sheet	Income to MAG P&L
Housing retrofit (Cont.)	Balance 30 Jun 2022			\$40,940	\$0
	Paid 22/23	\$2,540			
	Balance 30 Jun 23			\$38,400	\$0
	Paid 23/24	\$38,400			
	Balance 30 Jun 2024			\$0	\$0

Full details of income and expenses are set out in the Profit & Loss Account contained in the attached financial accounts. A Treasurer's Report and a copy of the financial accounts for Mount Alexander Bioenergy Pty Ltd are also included later in this report.

Comment on Balance Sheet

Full details of the Assets and Liabilities are contained in the attached Financial Accounts. A summary of the position is set out below.

	2024	2023	2022	2021
Assets				
Cash at hand	\$145,447	\$344,372	\$332,405	\$136,046
Less Funds in Trust for Specific Projects	\$91,249	\$334,771	-\$306,744	-\$90,358
Untied Cash at Hand	\$54,198	\$9,601	\$25,661	\$45,688
Other Current Assets			\$2	\$14,598
Non-Current Asset MAB – refer note	\$2	\$2	\$27,362	
Office Equipment and WAW Trailer	\$24,975	\$30,303	\$35,631	\$40,515
Total Assets	\$79,175	\$39,906	\$88,656	\$100,801
Liabilities				
Creditors/ATO/Provisions	-\$7,976	-\$3,253	\$190	-\$339
Net Assets	\$97,160	\$43,159	\$88,466	\$101,140

Net Assets have increased to \$97K, as two specific projects, Healthy Soils and MARAG are substantially completed and a lot of the project costs have been expended. In doing so, auspicing fees due to MASG have been released into general revenue. Of the \$145K in cash, \$91K is still committed to carry out the terms of the grants, details of which are set out in the table above. With the sequestering of auspice fees MASG now has \$54K available for running expenses.

Over the years MASG has received income from administration of the bioenergy project undertaken by its subsidiary Mount Alexander Bioenergy Pty Ltd (MAB). MASG had raised an invoice for \$27,362 which MAB has been unable to pay. Consequently, with the agreement of MAB directors the Committee has agreed to not require payment and the accounts have been amended. It is agreed that the invoice will be raised if and when the project reaches financial close.

The investment in the subsidiary, Mount Alexander Bioenergy Pty Ltd, is represented in the balance sheet at its face value of \$1. The value of the Bioenergy Project in Mount Alexander Bioenergy Pty Ltd has been separately valued by the company directors at \$1,559,254 which represents the actual costs of the project to date, including funds provided by Federal and State Governments, Dons Smallgoods, Coliban Water, McKinnon Foundation, MASG, plus the value of considerable in-kind contributions. The value has been increased by cash and in-kind contributions amounting to \$203k, by the aforementioned parties over the last financial year. However, as a matter of conservative accounting practice, the MASG committee has chosen not to revalue the asset in the MASG financial accounts.

Maurice Molan,

Treasurer, Mount Alexander Sustainability Group Inc

1 Nov 2024

5. Treasurer's report for Mount Alexander Bioenergy

Mount Alexander Bioenergy Pty Ltd

Registration No: A 00 482 97P

Treasurer's Report for the year ended 30 June 2024

Financial Performance as at 30 June 2024

The 2024 Financial Statements will be posted on the web site (as part of this annual report) and can be accessed by all members.

Comment on Profit and Loss Account

Full details of Income and Expenses are set out in the Profit and Loss Account contained in the attached Financial Accounts. A summary of total Income and Expenses and Net Financial Position is set out in the tables below.

Income & expenses	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
Income from all activities	\$6,000	\$91,687	\$123,776	\$90,019	\$26,032
Expenses from all activities	\$8,554	\$87,049	\$155,449	\$70,576	\$14,412
Profit (Loss)	-\$2,554	\$4,638	-\$31,674	\$19,443	\$11,620

All of the income this year was a grant from MASG, used to advance the project until a financial backer is secured. Expenses this year were mainly for project management by Eco2Sys, technical consultants, insurance and filing fees.

Comment on Balance Sheet

Full details of the Assets and Liabilities are contained in the attached Financial Accounts. A summary of the position is set out below.

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Assets	2024	2023	2022	2021
Cash at hand	\$2,373	4,141	\$25,718	\$7,626
Intangible Asset Bioenergy Project Development	\$1,559,254	1,559,254	\$1,355,329	\$927,000
Other Current Assets	\$344	628	\$3,812	\$39,068
Total Assets	\$1,561,971	1,564,023	\$1,395,859	\$973,694
Liabilities				
Creditors/ATO/Provisions	\$1,260	758	\$13,795	\$15,647
Deferred Creditor (MASG)	\$0	0	\$27,632	\$0
Net Assets	\$1,560,711	1,563,265	\$1,354,702	\$958,047

The Intangible Asset value of \$1,559,254, consists of the preconstruction work done previously by contract and by in-kind effort from MASG and Don. The In-kind contribution has been calculated based on the time donated and work performed without charge by highly qualified Engineers and other experts.

Notes: Contingent Liabilities

1. Two parties have been very significantly involved in progressing the bioenergy project over the past nine years but because of financial constraints they have not been commercially rewarded. The company has reached an agreement whereby additional reward for time expended will only be payable if financial close is reached with a financier unless other unconditional funding becomes available.

The additional amounts and parties involved are set out below:

- a. Eco2Sys Australia Pty Ltd Project Manager /Consultant \$142,000
- b. Michael Lewin Chair of Board and Project Director \$ 50,000
- 2. Don Smallgoods has advanced a total of \$146,000 to the project to achieve certain milestones.

MASG, by virtue of the agreement between MAB and Don Smallgoods, has agreed that this money only be paid when financial close is reached with a financier.

3. MAB has a contract with Eco2Sys Australia Pty Ltd to provide project management services and has been paid \$59,035 in the period 1 July 2022 up to 20 June 2024. It is estimated that Eco2Sys has provided service to the value of \$10,850 which the company is not in a position to pay. It is agreed between the parties that an invoice will only be raised if funding is received on financial close or earlier if unconditional funding becomes available.

Maurice Molan,

Treasurer, Mount Alexander Bioenergy Pty Ltd

1 November 2024

6. MASG Accounts

Balance Sheet

Mount Alexander Sustainability Group Inc

For the year ending 30 Jun 2024

, ,	Total	
	Actual	Last Year
Asset		
Bank Australia	29,848	259,611
Bank Australia Regen Ag	1	69,672
Bendigo Bank Account	1,230	4,444
Bendigo Bank Public Fund	10,608	10,541
MECU - Term Deposit 138334338	103,609	0
Petty Cash	151	103
Non-Current Asset		
MASG Renewables Pty Ltd	1	1
MASG Renew Pty Ltd Investment Trust	1	1
Wash Against Waste Trailer	53,245	53,245
Trailer Accumulated Depreciation	-28,270	-22,942
Tow&Fert Spray Trailer	10,909	0
Total Non-Current Asset	35,886	30,305
Total Asset	181,333	374,677
Liability		
Current Liabilities		
Grant MAS Council Website	0	1,860
The Big Switch Project	1,782	6,500
Regenerative Agriculture Project	49,835	97,657
Recycling Grant	11,357	11,357
House Retrofit Project	0	38,400
Healthy Soils Project	29,175	178,996
Trade Creditors	4,763	0
GST Collected	3,920	4,008
GST Paid	-16,762	-7,261
PAYG withholdings payable	103	0
Total Current Liabilities	84,174	331,518
Total Liability	84,174	331,518
Net Assets	97,160	43,159
Equity		
Retained Earnings		
Retained Earnings	43,159	88,467
Total Retained Earnings	43,159	88,467
Current Earnings		
Current year earnings	54,000	-45,307

Total Current Earnings	54,000	-45,307
Total Equity	97,160	43,159

Mount Alexander Sustainability Group Inc Profit & Loss Report

For the period 01 Jul 2023 - 30 Jun 2024

•	T	otal
	Actual	Last Year
Income		
Public Fund Donations	30	457
Donations	121	70
Regenerative Agriculture Administration	9,640	1,680
Regenerative Agriculture Grant for Equipment	10,909	0
Healthy Soils Salary Contribution	0	11,032
Healthy Soils Project Administration	12,500	0
Retrofit Project Administration	29,463	0
Recycling Can & Bottles	402	0
MASC Website Income	1,860	0
Repair Cafe	175	420
The Big Switch Income	325	0
Sponsorship	800	0
Fundraising - Catering	180	949
Party Hire	114	218
Memberships	2,046	1,946
Interest Received	7,096	392
WAWT - Hire	2,529	800
Consulting Income	500	0
Total Income	78,688	17,963
Gross Profit	78,688	17,963
Expense		
Accounting Legal	956	980
Audit Fees	600	500
Public Notices	343	0
Bank Charges	5	1
Merchant Fees	0	228
Depreciation	5,328	5,328
GST Adjustment Expense	0	-190
Rent/Electricity/Water	400	1,114
Retrofit Project Extension	420	0
Web Hosting	1,320	310
Repair Cafe Expenses	352	127
Consultants	392	0
Office Supplies	126	136
PO BOX RENEWAL	316	139

Catering	95	0
PL and Product Insurance	586	582
Volunteers Accident Insurance	650	655
WorkCover Insurance	-235	220
Oxfam donation - Bendigo Bank	0	2
WAW Trailer Repair and Maintenance	534	417
WAW Trailer Registration	65	62
Grants paid to Mt.Alexander Bioenergy Pty Ltd	6,000	0
Superannuation expense	628	2,714
MAB Services Fee Written Back	0	24,875
Wages & salaries	5,806	25,071
Total Expense	24,688	63,271
Operating Profit	54,000	-45,307
Other Income	0	0
Net Profit	54,000	-45,307

7. Bioenergy Accounts

Balance Sheet Report Mount Alexander Bioenergy Pty Ltd

As at 30 Jun 2024

	Total	
	Actual	Last Year
Asset		
Intangible Assets		
Bioenergy Project Development	1,559,254	1,559,254
Total Intangible Assets	1,559,254	1,559,254
Current Assets		
Bank Australia 12100320	2,373	4,141
Total Current Assets	2,373	4,141
PAYG Tax Instalment	344	628
Total Asset	1,561,971	1,564,023
Liability		
Current Liabilities		
GST Collected	1,565	1,565
GST Paid	-305	-808
Trade Creditors	0	1
Total Current Liabilities	1,260	758
Total Liability	1,260	758
Net Assets	1,560,711	1,563,265
Equity		
Retained Earnings		
Retained Earnings	4,010	-627
Total Retained Earnings	4,010	-627
Current Earnings		
Current Year Surplus/Deficit	-2,554	4,638
Total Current Earnings	-2,554	4,638
Issued Shares	1	1
Valuation Bioenergy Project	1,559,254	1,355,329
Increased Valuation Bioenergy	0	203,925
Total Equity	1,560,711	1,563,265

Mount Alexander Bioenergy Pty Ltd Profit and loss report

For year ending - 30 Jun 2023

,	Total	
		Last
	Actual	Year
Income		
Don Smallgoods	46,000	45,000
Loddon Mallee Waste and Resource Recovery	0	18,739
MASG Administration Fees Reversed	24,875	0
Sustainability Victoria	20,000	50,000
DonationGift Income	0	10,000
Interest Received	37	37
Consultancy Fee Refund	775	0
Total Income	91,687	123,776
Gross Profit	91,687	123,776
GIOSS FIORE	31,007	123,770
Expense		
ASIC	580	552
Accounting Tax Advice	7,000	0
Audit Fees	1,000	1,500
Advertising & Marketing	0	222
Consultants	0	9,319
Admin Mt.Alexander SG Inc	0	24,875
Eco2Sys - Consultant	53,700	40,850
Website Hosting	0	190
Inoplex Pty Ltd - Consulting	8,970	59,170
General Expense	116	0
Wages & Salaries Expenses	11,916	13,125
Work Cover Premiums	220	226
Superannuation	1,251	1,313
Income Tax Paid	0	1,867
Pro Indemnity Insurance	2,295	2,240
Total Expense	87,049	155,450
Operating Profit	4,638	-31,674