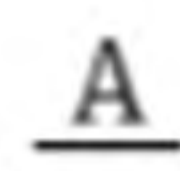



Warrawong's Green Connect farm set to farewell popular manager



Agron Latifi

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 Green Connect farm manager Cal Champagne is ending his eight-year-stint with the Warrawong social enterprise, in the coming weeks.

Cal Champagne will end his eight-year stint with Green Connect in the coming weeks.

Losing the farm manager is a big blow for the social enterprise.

Mr Champagne's effort and energy over the years has helped turn what was 11 acres of Warrawong wasteland into a thriving permaculture farm.

He's moving down to Bega, where he and his wife grew up, to take up another opportunity at the end of September.

"A move    the coast has always been in our future, and with our son growing up so fast, the timing feels right," Mr Champagne said.

"Just as importantly, the growth and sustainability of Green Connect farm and fair food, and particularly the growth in the people involved, has given me complete confidence that what we have created has the legs to continue to thrive into the future without me."

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Mr Champagne can still remember the day in 2013 he started working for Green Connect.

"I rode the exact same bicycle route everyday. From my share house in Keiraville I rode through Coniston, down Masters Road, bumped the curb to race across Springhill Road, slugged it up Cringila hill, came through the gates of Warrawong High School and past their legendary living classroom garden - arriving at this 11 acre valley full of endless possibilities," he said.

"My team and I carry out our work with such pride and honour, all because we know how valued it is by the people we grow for and the community who supports us."

Cal Champagne



"We now call this patch of land Green Connect Farm."

When writing Green Connect's vision and mission statement, Mr Champagne and others set it in stone that the farm would create jobs and employment pathways that would contribute positively and meaningfully to people and to planet.

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"For the last eight years, striving towards this vision, I mostly measured our success or failure through the lens of numbers: how many units of veggies produced, how many boxes sold, how many young people and former refugees engaged, how many employed, how many tonnes kept out of landfill etc

"But our real success at creating a sustainable enterprise was highlighted to me last week when speaking to our farm team about what they valued about

Green Connect, and what they wanted to ensure remains in the farm's future," Mr Champagne said.



"We've built a culture in our team and in our community that truly respects people, respects the work that they do, and respects their contribution to the big picture vision that we are all working towards.

"It's one thing to give someone a job or to give someone work experience. It's another thing entirely to give them the dignity that comes with the acknowledgement of and respect for the work they are doing and the impact that it is having on the world.

"Green Connect fair food has always been about using food as a vehicle for building connection between the people who grow the food, the people who

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