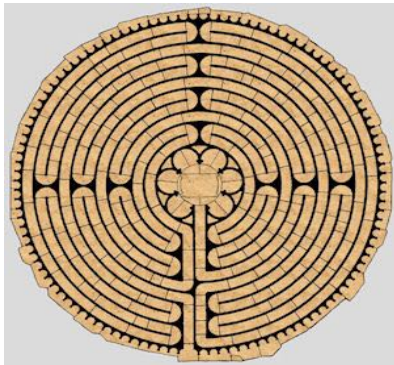


# community labyrinth

royal park, parkville.



Chartres Cathedral Labyrinth Replica France, 1201 AD  
Erwin Reißmann [www.blogmymaze.wordpress.com/](http://www.blogmymaze.wordpress.com/)

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April 2012

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## **Proposal: A Community Labyrinth in Royal Park.**

It is proposed the labyrinth for Royal Park be based on the 11 circuit pattern found in Chartres Cathedral in France. 1201 AD. The labyrinth would be accessible for people with disabilities.

We believe it is appropriate to have a labyrinth as the centre piece of the restored parkland in Royal Park because labyrinths provide peaceful places for reflection and contemplation. As a multi purpose community facility labyrinths invite participation across the spectrum of the creative arts, promote good mental health and wellbeing and encourage a focus to the care of the environment.

This proposal, for a labyrinth on the grounds of the old children's hospital site, presents a wonderful opportunity for the labyrinth to be embraced by both the users of the park and the hospital. The proposal provides a unique opportunity to further develop the vision for the new parkland.

Reflecting on the important objective, that this new park will become both a gateway and a destination to Royal Park, the preferred materials for the construction of the 18 metre diameter labyrinth and its surrounding area are natural sawn sandstone and bluestone. An alternative would be to use polished concrete with pigmented polymer concrete detailing the labyrinth's pattern. The latter method was used to construct The Children's Hospital at Westmead in New South Wales.

The proposal is to create a labyrinth in a natural woodland with layered plantings to attract birds and wildlife. It is envisaged that the sculptured landscaping around the labyrinth, forming a natural amphitheatre, would incorporate water sensitive urban design and include a meandering path linking the labyrinth to the gateway entrance to the park and also to the hospital.

Art elements, being creative, therapeutic and educational are considered important components for this community space. This could include artistic expression of an acknowledgement of Country, equinox/ solstice points, indigenous art depicting the seasons and hunting, dreamtime stories including the stars and the planets. Interpretive signage is envisaged for telling indigenous stories, labyrinth history as well as a guide to walking the labyrinth.

## **What is a Labyrinth.**

“A labyrinth is an ancient pattern, an archetypal image that has been passed down through generations and cultures as a form of reflective tool. Over the last thousand years or so these fascinating patterns have often been constructed as pathways on the ground big enough for us to enter and walk.

The classical, Roman and medieval designs have one path only. Unlike the later development of mazes with their many dead ends and constant choices of paths, walking the one simple and winding path of a labyrinth has the potential to help us release and quieten our minds. We don't have to think where we go next. We don't have to think at all! We just place one foot in front of the other and walk.

Slowly walking the single path, step by step, to the centre of the labyrinth, enjoying the space at the centre and then retracing the same path back out, gives enough time to unwind and let go of every day concerns in order to renew some sense of inner calm, balance and perspective.

In the fast paced world in which we now live, we need simple, beautiful places like labyrinths that draw us in by the attraction of their pattern to slow ourselves down, still our busy mind and connect us again with our deep inner resources”

“Many today would claim no religious connection but are aware of their own need to nourish their soul as well as their mind and body. The labyrinth is a unique place where people of diverse beliefs and lifestyles walk a common path together ”.

**Source:** “Labyrinth – landscape of the soul”.

By Di Williams, MBE United Kingdom,

Master Teacher for Veriditas.

Website [www.diwilliams.com](http://www.diwilliams.com)

## **The Labyrinth is a Multi Purpose Space.**

While there are some established traditional uses of labyrinths, each one starts as a blank slate. As such, it can be used for a wide variety of purposes. Those who have a religious preference, can use the labyrinth in the context of that belief. Instead of generic meditation, it may be prayer, or the repetition of a mantra. The labyrinth is ideal for rituals and ceremonies of all kinds, from butterfly releases to weddings to memorial services. It can be used by schools, tai chi, yoga and healthy ageing.

### **Ways the Labyrinth can be used**

- Walking meditation.
- Dealing with grief, bereavement or loss, calming, healing and balance.
- Releasing what no longer serves in our lives.
- Pilgrimage or quest, celebration, commemoration or Giving Thanks.
- Enhancing creativity for writers, painters, musicians, etc.
- \* Focussing intent (wish making etc)
- Communicating more effectively with Spirit .
- Problem solving.
- Enhancing feeling of well-being.
- Trust building, Community and group building.
- Ceremony and ritual – Marriage, Naming Ceremony, Rites of Passage, Divorce or separation.
- Environment /Climate Change.
- Global Healing Response to world events.

### **The labyrinth builds community.**

When walking a labyrinth with others, a joining takes place. Donna Schaper writes, "The labyrinth lets people walk together and separately without agreeing on anything. The labyrinth brings us together." In a neutral space such as a public park, diverse groups are more likely to come together and share this powerful experience, providing opportunities for community engagement and healing. The community built by the labyrinth extends beyond walking it together. Labyrinths have an effect on the space they occupy. Dedicating space to a place designed for inward reflection makes a profound public statement about what is valued in that community. **Source:** Paula McLeod's presentation Health Parks, Healthy People Congress Melb. 2010.

### **About Labyrinths in Park Settings .**

As the centrepiece or destination point for serene settings in public parks, labyrinths provide a quiet oasis where people can pause, step out of the frenetic pace of life, and take time to rejuvenate. While labyrinths maybe new developments in modern parks, the need for contemplative spaces in community parks is well established. People have always visited parks for rest, renewal and introspection, but restorative environments are needed today more than ever before.

Labyrinths are both contemplative tools and restorative environments that help people to respond to the complexities of modern life. When incorporated into public spaces they revitalise or add beauty to the surrounding area. Labyrinths in parks provide opportunities for both passive and active recreation for people of all ages and abilities, they support positive interaction of mind and body spheres, and its treatment within a place-making context of physical and mental health. Labyrinths in park settings, increase connectivity, provide a gathering space for events and performances, build community and contribute to civic pride.

**Source:** The Labyrinths Society, Inc. <http://labyrinthssociety.org/labyrinths-in-places>

### **Labyrinths in Australia - 87 listed on the World Labyrinth Locator 29 of these in Victoria**

**Parks settings:** Three new labyrinths have been constructed in Victorian parks; Healesville, Dunkeld and Langwarrin. Another permanent labyrinth is to be constructed in Centennial Park in Sydney, New South Wales.

**Health Settings:** Labyrinths are now reaching the health sector in Australia. e.g Rural Health Academic Centre, University of Melbourne, based in Shepparton, The Children's Hospital at Westmead in New South Wales, The Gawler Foundation in Yarra Junction in Victoria. A labyrinth has now been approved for the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital in Heidelberg, Victoria.

### **Where to find a Labyrinth to Walk in Australia and around the World.**

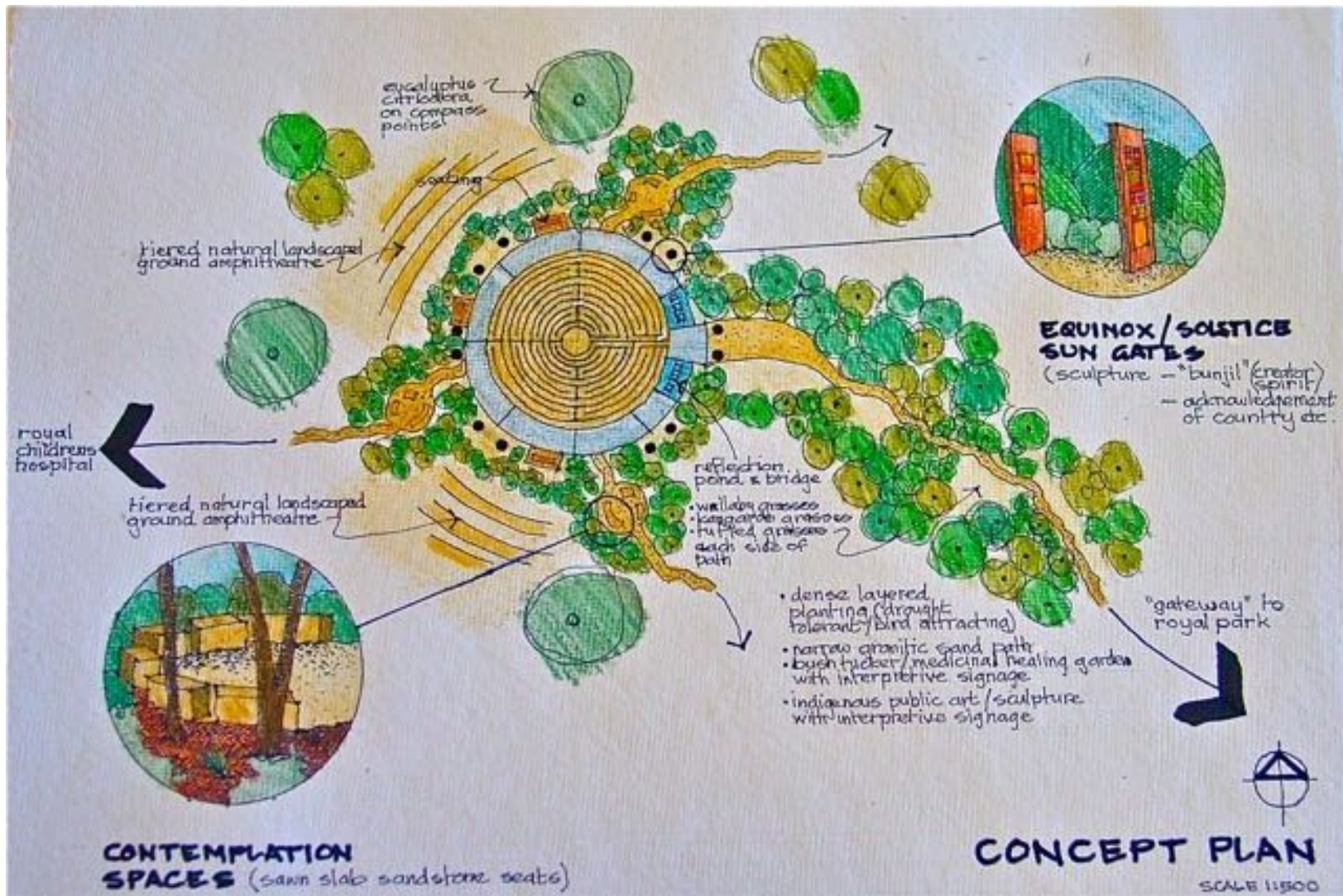
The Australian Labyrinth Locator [www.labyrinthlinkaustralia.org/find\\_labyrinth/VIC/index.htm](http://www.labyrinthlinkaustralia.org/find_labyrinth/VIC/index.htm)

The Worldwide Labyrinth Locator <http://labyrinthlocator.com>



Site plan of stage two redevelopment showing the potential location of the labyrinth.









## **Research into the benefits of walking labyrinths.**

**The Labyrinth Society Research Committee** is chaired by Dr. Diane Rudebock. A bibliography of studies related to labyrinth research is sorted by the author, and categorized by type – doctoral dissertation, journal article – as well as by topic. To download the Bibliography go to this website:-  
<http://labyrinthsociety.org/research-bibliography>

**Art Therapist** In 2002, Cedar Prest from South Australia was granted a Sir Winston Churchill Memorial Fellowship to study contemporary techniques for working in community arts with a focus on practices which promote art as healing and which concentrate on the development of personal creative expression as a means of blocking chronic pain and increasing the quality of life.

### **Findings:**

“I believe that there is a real need for the type of services, which I wish to offer to hospices, hospitals and old people’s homes. It feels as if the time is right, for Australia to embrace the positive and cost effective use of Art Therapy and the labyrinth, in lifting the spirits and enjoyment of daily life, of those facing pain and death. At present it is not accepted that we need to support people to make a good journey from this life, and that we need to provide the “shut – Ins” with facilities like meditation rooms and labyrinths to help support their spiritual progress, this is the work I will do”. Down load Cedar’s report here: `  
[www.churchilltrust.com.au/fellows/detail/2625/cedar+prest](http://www.churchilltrust.com.au/fellows/detail/2625/cedar+prest)

## **Research at The Rural Academic Health Centre, University of Melbourne.**

The Reverend. Dr Helen Malcolm, Senior Lecturer at the Rural Health Academic Centre in Shepparton, having installed an 11 circuit tiled Chartres Labyrinth in March 2011 is researching the benefits of labyrinth walking.

## **Benefits of Labyrinths in Health Settings – Patients, Families and Visitors.**

Robert Ferre not only pioneered and built labyrinths in health settings in the USA he created an extensive website as a free community resource. [www.labyrinthproject.com](http://www.labyrinthproject.com) Robert recently was commissioned to create a labyrinth for The Children’s Hospital at Westmead, New South Wales. This is the first hospital in Australia to have a permanent labyrinth.

Robert’s passion for labyrinths in health settings saw the development of a list of reasons why they are needed. He says that “A labyrinth offers many benefits and can be a support for patients who are able to walk or ambulate by wheelchair. Those who are not ambulatory can experience the same benefits by using a hand-held finger labyrinth or one carved into a vertical or horizontal surface. Walking a labyrinth can reduce the stress related to being ill and improve attitudes about coping with ill health. Another benefit is an interest in participating in treatment with the return of hope or the inner peace as one prepares for life’s ending are just a few of the responses possible for patients”.

### **Robert lists the other benefits:-**

1. it provides families and visitors a place to retreat, regroup and renew.
2. a place where the simple act of walking offers a proactive way to ‘do’ something towards getting better.
3. an inviting way of getting exercise outdoors in nature.
4. clearly a non-medical environment where patients can share time with family and friends.
5. patients can let go of the issues related to illness and injury.
6. patients can express intentions and hopes for the future.
7. a perfect area to have a “get well” ceremony.

### **Benefits of Labyrinths in Health Settings - Medical, Allied Health Professionals.**

Robert Ferre says a labyrinth also provides a clear-cut employee benefit; enhancing any health and wellness programming by offering a quiet haven where staff can deal with work pressures in a positive way by:-

1. walking a labyrinth prior to operating or caring for patients provides a way to clear the mind and focus.
2. a place for healthy 'time out'.
3. personal space after being with many people.
4. a calm environment in which to prepare for dealing with challenging situations.
5. a place to regain balance and perspective.
6. a tremendous resource for pastoral care ministries.

### **About the Labyrinth Experience by Robert Ferre.**

“The benefits of walking a labyrinth have attracted researchers looking to quantify the effects. Robert Ferre says from his observations of the experiences people have when labyrinth walking is that the power of the labyrinth comes from the invitation one receives to slow down and go within to a place where science and technology end; a place where one has access to their “inner healer”, and return to wellbeing is placed back in the hands of the one who desires to heal”.

“The labyrinth experience is best described as being able to go deep within ourselves where we can find inspiration, clarity and insight; where as we spend most of our life dealing with superficial issues of our day to day lives. Walking the labyrinth is time out from our daily schedule and is a gift we give to ourselves. During the walk, we can relax our mind but we still must remain alert, to follow the path. This state of relaxed alertness enables us to be open to inspiration and creativity”.

## **About the Labyrinth Experience by Rev. Dr Lauren Artress.**

The Reverend Dr. Lauren Artress is a psychotherapist, an Honorary Canon of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco in USA and the Founder and Creative Director of Veriditas. Lauren is the author of the books “Walking the Sacred Path – Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool” and the “The Sacred Path Companion – A Guide to Walking the Labyrinth to Heal and Transform”.

Lauren says “that the labyrinth is a spiritual tool that has many applications in various settings. It reduces stress, quiets the mind and opens the heart. It is a walking meditation, a path of prayer, and a blueprint where psyche meets spirit. The extent to which labyrinths are considered effective is directly connected with the experience they engender; the emotions and insights they ignite, the sense of calm or presence they evoke, the depth of solace they bring and the activation of our interior they stir”.

The vision of Veriditas is to activate and facilitate the transformation of the human spirit. The work of Veriditas centres around the Labyrinth Experience as a personal practice for healing and growth, a tool for community building, an agent for global peace and a metaphor for life. Veriditas is a not-for-profit organisation incorporated in the State of California in 1995.

Lauren Artress, last year speaking at a fundraising event supporting the Olivia Newton John Wellness Centre in Heidelberg, drew our attention to the need to bring into our consciousness the critical voices that prevent us from being our authentic self and the need to learn how to dis-empower them. She said “the labyrinth is like mirror reflecting where we are in our lives. It is when our inner world (thoughts and feelings) connect with our outer world (an acknowledgement that change needs to occur) and we take action, this is the transformational practice of labyrinth walking. To see a short video recorded at the Olivia Newton John public lecture please click this link. [www.laurenartress.com/author-speaker-teacher](http://www.laurenartress.com/author-speaker-teacher)

**Training in the art of facilitating labyrinth walks.** Walking the labyrinth is being embraced as a spiritual practice throughout the Western world mostly because of Veriditas trained facilitators. The Veriditas Facilitator Training - which began in 1997 -- remains the most rigorous and comprehensive training offered. Training Programs have been held in Melbourne in 2008 and 2011. This year training will be held in October and November in Perth and in Brisbane. About Training: [www.veriditas.org/programs/training.shtml](http://www.veriditas.org/programs/training.shtml)

**Acknowledgements.** We are thankful for the nature and support we have received over the past 10 years from peak international labyrinth organisations, networks and members; especially Lauren Artress, Robert Ferre, David Gallagher, John Rhodes and Jeff Saward for their guidance. This proposal has been possible due to the commitment of the labyrinth community across Australia and especially the following people:-

Dr Michael Stevens, Pediatric Oncologist, Veriditas Facilitator.  
Dr Margaret Rainbird, General Practitioner in Palliative Care, Veriditas Facilitator  
Dr Angela McKenzie Pediatrician, Veriditas Facilitator  
Rev.Dr. Helen Malcolm, Senior Lecturer in Rural General Practice, Certified Veriditas Facilitator  
Paula McLeod Psychologist, Veriditas Facilitator  
Leonie Brien Psychologist, Veriditas Facilitator  
Robyn Reid Social Worker, Veriditas Facilitator.  
Alison Merentini, Psychotherapist , Veriditas Facilitator  
Dr Lisa Shortridge, Chiropractor, Veriditas Facilitator  
Rosemary Mangiamele, Occupational and Art Therapist  
Elizabeth Cerda Pravia, Certified Veriditas Facilitator  
Rev. Siobhan Christian, Youth Advocate and Multi Faith Minister, Veriditas Facilitator  
Jenni Harris, Art Therapist  
Cedar Prest, Art Therapist, Veriditas Facilitator  
Carol McDonough, Permaculturist, Veriditas Labyrinth facilitator  
Christina Rowntree, Arts Development Officer, Veriditas Facilitator  
Jo Cook, Tasmania Master in Education, Recovery of Eating Disorders, Certified Veriditas Facilitator  
Merran Macs, Rivendell - Mental Health Service, Social Worker  
Trudy Sebaly, Reiki Therapist  
Rhonda Dingle, Pastoral Care  
Emily Simpson, Certified Veriditas Labyrinth Facilitator  
Robin Pryor, Retired Minister Uniting Church, Veriditas Facilitator  
Shirely Nash, Hospital Chaplain  
Deidre Ragless, Hospital Chaplain, Veriditas Labyrinth Facilitator  
Libby Delbridge, Anglican Vicar, Veriditas Facilitator  
Sue Oakley, Reiki Therapist, Veriditas Facilitator.