

Annual Report

2019-20



PORT PHILLIP
eco centre

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Vision:

An empowered community actively cultivating long-term environmental wellbeing.



Mission:

We build relationships to inspire, educate and demonstrate sustainable environmental practice and strengthen people's connection to the natural world.



Values:

- Respect for our First Peoples and their cultures
- Integrity
- Inclusiveness
- Reciprocity

Outcomes:

From 2018–2021, we are striving to achieve four outcomes:



Connect

People are more connected with, value and interact with their local ecosystems.



Act

Individuals and groups take action that protects and restores their environment.



Transform

Our partnerships and networks influence positive systemic environmental changes.



Enable

The EcoCentre is an efficient and effective, forward thinking organisation with an excellent reputation.



President's Report



During this past year we have lived through the unprecedented, devastating and largely unpredicted occurrence of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. Port Phillip EcoCentre has responded through reimagining and adapting our work and community connections, while continuing to achieve outcomes for the environment and sustainability.

What we do at the EcoCentre and with our partners is ever more crucial because of the accelerating climate crisis, which in Australia manifested itself most starkly in the unparalleled intensity and reach of last summer's bushfires.

In response to these two global challenges, our long-held motto to *think global, act local* is even more relevant. At the EcoCentre we continue to recognise the importance of doing things with others, of networks and of social connectedness, and of uniting diverse organisations and communities.

The EcoCentre's vision of **An empowered community actively cultivating long-term environmental wellbeing** continues to inspire us. Our Mission holds good in these troubled times: **We build relationships to inspire and demonstrate sustainable environmental practice and strengthen people's connection to the natural world.**

You can learn about more about our programs, activities, outcomes, successes, and partnerships in the following pages of this Annual Report but here below I would like to highlight some important results. During this past year:

- We saw a record-breaking 21,021 volunteer hours of work, including in community gardening, citizen science, governance, and administration, despite the lockdown for many months.
- We worked with 27 affiliate organizations and 300 program partners.
- Our partners included 162 schools and early learning centres, where we supported 574 teachers to design and deliver environmental curriculum and hands-on projects.
- We had 15,035 participants in programs, and in total 73,434 direct physical and digital service users.

In our program design and evaluation, we are guided by a theory of change, encapsulated by the words **CONNECT ACT TRANSFORM ENABLE**. Following are examples of the many activities which supported each outcome.

CONNECT –

We facilitate people to become more connected with, value and interact with their local ecosystems

- Our **Expert In Residence** program tailored curriculum to each school's learning priorities, interpreted through local landscapes.
- The **Nature Play** programs and online trainings, for over 300 Early Years educators and families, developed confidence in nature play and understandings of its benefits to childhood health and brain development.

ACT –

We help individuals and groups take action that protects and restores their environment

- Our **Citizen Science** work, conducted in partnership with university research labs and community groups like Scouts Victoria, included nearly a thousand field surveys and sample collections, and individually classifying 13,279 microplastics from rivers.
- A calendar of **Living Water Workbees** installed over 8,200 plants to help waterways, removed four tonnes of litter and raised funding for 57 school toilets to be plumbed for flushing with recycled rainwater.

TRANSFORM –

We work with partners and networks to influence positive systemic environmental change

- The **Multicultural Bay Ambassadors** program nurtured emerging leaders in coastal and environmental action, enhancing inclusion and sharing cultural knowledge.
- Strategic **advocacy** included written submissions, expert testimony and serving on consultation panels for a range of topics including climate action, the circular economy, Port Phillip Bay health and environmental protection laws.



ENABLE –

We aim to be an efficient and effective organization with an excellent reputation

- The **Redevelopment** of our premises is a key priority for us and our major partner, the City of Port Phillip. We worked together to complete a world-leading sustainable redesign, gain community input and seek financing.
- The **Community Enviro Fest** celebrated the EcoCentre's 20th Birthday, with over 2,000 friends, members, volunteers, partners and Affiliates in the St Kilda Botanical Gardens.

Our success is enabled by support from many people and organisations who are listed from page 49 onwards. We are most grateful to our major funder and partner, the City of Port Phillip. Council provides a building at minimal rental cost, financial support for programs and operations, and has pledged funding for a new building, subject to receiving matching funding.

The Australian Government, the Victorian Government, Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust, the City of Bayside, the City of Stonnington, South Melbourne Community Chest, RMIT University and numerous other organisations have provided financial resources. So too have many individual donors. Many thanks to you all for your generosity and support. Our gratitude also extends to our remarkable partner organisations, as together we can expand our perspectives, reach and impacts.

The staff of the EcoCentre is the not-so-secret reason for our success. They are all dedicated, expert, resourceful and generous. The staff is led by the Executive Officer April Seymore, who works effectively and inspires us with her ideas, intellect and tireless capacity. Thanks too to Karen Jones, our outgoing Education Manager, and welcome to Dr Cecile van der Burgh, the new Education Manager. Thank you to all the staff for all the great work you do.

There are many volunteers at the EcoCentre and every year the numbers grow. There are our regular and reliable teams, such as those who work in the community garden or who sort and catalogue microplastics. Many other individuals and groups show up in countless ways and contribute immeasurably to the success of our outcomes for the environment. A thousand thanks to each of you.

Thanks also to all the members of the EcoCentre Committee of Management and particularly those who have finished this year after dedicated service. Sadly, our much loved and exemplary Secretary of 15 years, Tony Flude, died in early September 2020. Read our tribute to Tony on page 55. Keith Badger retired after eight years as our dedicated Treasurer. Keith provided enormous support to the Executive Officer and Committee and has left us with robust financial management systems and a solid financial base. Anne Callaghan was a member of the Committee for 10 years and as well volunteered in a number of capacities. Anne brought integrity, flair and strong connections to local community. Joanne Wallace served for two years and applied her policy and analytical expertise to strengthen our governance policies and practices. Our full Committee membership is listed on page 54.

This Annual Report shows again the incredible variety, responsiveness and reach of the social and environmental work of the EcoCentre. In this time of COVID-19, our renowned network of connected people and wide-ranging expertise is able to meet the considerable challenges for households, workplaces and communities. We are delivering innovative, redesigned programs that restore and enhance the environment, demonstrate ways to make the world more sustainable, and always support and look out for each other.

Thank you to everyone who collaborates with us on this journey of positive change and development.

Pam O'Neil

President

Success indicators

Participants report increased knowledge and awareness of local ecosystems		Participants plan to spend more time in nature as a result of their EcoCentre experience	
89% Target	88% Actual	87% Target	86% Actual

Participants have a greater connection to their local environment		Target: At least	Actual:
87% Target	88% Actual	four Stories of Change	4+ stories collected; two shared here

Connect

Outcome

People are more connected with, value and interact with their local ecosystems.

Strategies

Place-based learning. Develop and deliver dynamic, place-based learning for formal and informal education.

Tailored engagement. Engage a variety of participants and groups and tailor programs to their needs.

Highlight interconnections. Highlight and demonstrate the interconnection between catchments, urban ecology, Port Phillip Bay and our daily lives.

Acknowledge First Peoples. Integrate Kulin Nation cultural knowledge into our programs.

Activities in 2019–20 included:

Nature Play, Seedlings, Excursions and Incursions, Help Save Sam Seadragon, Alive Outside, STEAM Clean the Bay, Corporate Volunteering, Community Enviro Fest, Putting STEAM into Sustainability Education.

Story of Change:

Localising nature connections during lockdown

The trademark EcoCentre experience is immersive, guided, outdoors and hands-on. Participants leave with newfound awe and understanding of their local place, whether it's their first visit to the St Kilda little penguins or their thousandth glimpse into the nesting hollows of St Kilda Botanic Gardens. In pre-pandemic programs, more than 95% of people reported a deeper sense of connection to the local environment and 92% planned to spend more time in local nature as a result of their EcoCentre program. 'You brought me to the wrong kinder,' one 4-year-old told his mother the day after a beach excursion. 'I want to go to the nature one!'

As the COVID-19 pandemic intensified and required stricter public health protocols, the EcoCentre team, members and students were remote and eventually restricted to their own homes 23 hours per day, adapting new (and ancient) approaches to nature activities. Home balconies and local parks became beloved reprieves. Every home and back garden could become a classroom, if we improvised our place-based approach across a multitude of locations. The EcoCentre began by staff producing short clips in our own homes, gardens and local blocks to highlight special details about seasons and species.

We helped young kids utilise everyday items like socks and Lego blocks, to grasp scientific concepts in hands-on ways during remote learning. In lieu of snorkelling, we shared storytelling: our marine scientists wore snorkel masks, showed footage and answered questions about underwater dives to youth, families and healthcare clients.

Online seminars, quizzes and workshops prompted curiosity and shared community knowledge. Community stayed linked through volunteer phone trees, virtual lunches, and indigenous seeds posted to grow at home for future community plantings. Through citizen science, anyone could use their senses and their smartphones to snap flora, fauna and fungi and record it to maps without need to roam far -- after all, even a window or balcony is a miniature ecosystem with dozens of species visiting including insects, moths, birds and geckos.

Whether in iconic open spaces or within the limits of lockdown, slowing down to notice the patterns and details of the living world around us remains a rewarding habit for learning and connection.



Connect: Early years, schools and youth

Early years education and Nature Play

Research increasingly demonstrates the health, psychological and brain benefits to young people who regularly spend time playing outdoors. Designing managed risk into a child's play builds coordination, confidence and resilience while developing cognitive abilities.

EcoCentre **Nature Play** activities immerse children in sensory experiences with the living elements of their local environment at kindergartens, early learning centres (ELCs), the EcoCentre gardens, or a local beach or reserve. This year, children participated in activities aligned to the Early Years Learning Framework, with our most popular being:

- **Captain Trash** – our musical anti-pollution pirate sings the 'aaaRRRR's' of waste and litter prevention (Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Recycle and Remove Rubbish)
- **Meet Your Neighbours** – wildlife discovery in your own back garden or ELC
- **Mini-Beast Safari** – investigating types of bugs and the jobs they do
- **Worm School** – learning everything about worms and worm farms



162

**schools and early
learning centres
supported**

574

**teachers and
educators
supported**

- **The Six Seasons** – learning the Indigenous seasons of Melbourne and some of the local names of plants and animals
- **Sensory Gardens** – gardening to delight children's sight, taste, touch and hearing
- **Edible and Indigenous Gardens** – interactive landscaping and learning with local plants

Two online video programs were developed to reach out to early learning centres and families during COVID-19 restrictions: **Worm School**, and **The Miniature World of Insects**, which have both been extremely well received. This year's collaboration with the City of Port Phillip **Seedlings** program and the City of Stonnington enabled 533 children and 66 educators to participate in our early years learning programs.

Our range of **Professional Development for Early Years** educators, staff and parents inspired over 150 early years educators and parents to learn about the local seasons, gardens, mini-beasts, worms, bush kinder and the benefits of nature play for healthy child development. The broadcast recording of our **Nature Play – Developing your child's brain** workshop is a popular free resource to view on our [EcoCentre TV YouTube channel](#).



'Learning about sharks and rays was amazing. I loved it, the kids loved it – you should have seen their excited faces when we told them we were doing another online incursion with the EcoCentre next week!'

– Adam Blau, Teacher at Sholem Aleichem College



Excursions

Our popular **School Excursion** program attracted 2,262 students and 100 teachers who participated in activities unique to St Kilda Pier, West Beach and St Kilda Botanical Gardens. Our excursion activities are aligned with the Victorian Curriculum and **Science Technology Engineering Arts and Maths (STEAM)** learning outcomes, further enhanced through our **Putting the Sustainability into STEAM** work supported by the PMF Foundation. Sessions on marine ecosystems, human impacts and species adaptations remain staple favourites, while renewable energy, Indigenous perspectives and sustainable gardening excursions are growing in popularity. We delivered an exciting series of marine ecology career pathway programs for **Empowering Girls and Women through STEAM Marine Science Experiences**, supported by the Environmental Resource Management (ERM) Foundation and guest presenters. Thanks to our Education Manager, Karen Jones, for ably leading our team from 2016–2019, with a focus on innovative and empowering curriculum.

As excursions were discontinued from mid-March due to COVID-19 restrictions, our educators hand-picked their favourite topics and developed 10 **Online Incursions**. These were offered to Victorian schools free of charge during remote learning.

Victoria's marine emblem, the weedy seadragon, stars in the EcoCentre's interactive, puppet-based primary school and kinder incursion **Help Save Sam Seadragon**. The program seeks to inspire students by teaching them about the extraordinary wildlife living in Port Phillip Bay and the risks to marine life posed by plastic pollution. Students discover solutions they can use to reduce litter in schools, and implement in their own lives with friends and family. Help Save Sam Seadragon was redeveloped for online delivery and is currently reaching thousands of students across Victoria. This program is supported by the Victorian Government through the Port Phillip Bay Fund. Special thanks to Diver Matt for the program concept, Kate Jones for program artwork and Tarius McArthur for the beautiful puppet.

'Extremely knowledgeable, personable and engaging for the kids.'

– Jason Coleman, STEM Teacher and Curriculum Leader, Ivanhoe Grammar School (The Ridgeway)





Expert in Residence

Our unique **Expert in Residence** program tailors environmental education across curriculum priorities at all year levels, drawing on local ecosystems and histories. Students and their teachers have the opportunity to explore knowledge, values and actions of sustainability across a diverse range of subjects and teaching modes. This year, Albert Park Primary School and St Columba's School, Elwood, each hosted EcoCentre educator Sharron Hunter as Expert in Residence for Year 3 and 4 students.

The Albert Park students investigated native pollinators. Students evaluated insect hotel designs, selected strategic locations and constructed terracotta and bamboo pollinator habitat for their campus. They also put together an educational presentation for other classes, which explained the benefits of pollinator habitat and native bees. These activities enabled students to complete the Biodiversity module in the **ResourceSmart Schools** program.

St Columba's classes explored the unique marine ecology of Port Phillip Bay and its connection to inland waterways. Local investigations were undertaken to survey wildlife populations and water quality along Elster Creek and its passage through Elsternwick Park Nature Reserve. Students studied local food chains, birds that visit the reserve and how nest boxes assist by providing artificial hollows that specific species require to breed. The parkland setting also facilitated nature writing and drawing activities, allowing students to reflect on how their time visiting the reserve affected their wellbeing.



'I get upset about the pressures we place on biodiversity ... I feel better when I have the opportunity to help. When Mum told me about Alive Outside and that I could swim with creatures I had seen in books, I was bursting for the day to come. If you are around people who love nature, it rubs off on you. Thank you (the bestest teachers!) for reminding me there are others who want to protect the planet. Can I come next summer and bring my friends?!'

– Annika, 12-year-old Alive Outside
Snorkelling Safari participant



Alive Outside

Local youth join **Alive Outside** to explore and investigate Port Phillip Bay, local parks and beaches in extraordinary ways – as protectors of penguins, investigators of litter on beaches and mini-beasts in parklands, architects of bat nest boxes and as practising palaeontologists. Participants are aged 12–25 and walk, cycle or snorkel their way around the beaches, foreshore, reefs and reserves within the City of Port Phillip, guided by EcoCentre educators.

This year's calendar provided 21 events for 412 youth to connect with and help protect the astonishing array of wildlife in local suburbs. A total of 279 volunteer hours were contributed by young people to environmental service projects, including penguin habitat restoration and beach clean-ups. Participants developed a sense of connection to place; made and strengthened friendships; and participated in team building, knowledge sharing and problem-solving during first-time nature experiences. Our special guided snorkelling route at Point Ormond, with the city skyline above, and vivid reef life below, remains a perpetually booked-out adventure and is delivered jointly with Jacqui Younger and AJ Morton at Dive2U.

Adapting an experiential nature program like this for online delivery required creativity! When COVID-19 restricted our movements, nine sessions were held online via Zoom. Our most successful offering, 'online snorkelling' with our marine scientists, attracted up to 75 participants to hear vivid stories, see marine secrets and ask questions. Our new Education Manager, Dr Cecile van der Burgh, was invited to share lessons learned from this online adaptation at the *Adapting Youth Services Online* webinar hosted in June 2020 by Port Phillip and Stonnington Youth Services and The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria. The webinar included over 130 delegates from youth organisations across Victoria.

Funded through the City of Port Phillip Youth Services, the Alive Outside program addresses many of the commitments within City of Port Phillip's *Happy, Healthy, Heard: Youth Commitment 2014-19*.



Story of Change: How Port Phillip Bay boosted Shreya's bravery

During summer holidays, 12-year-old Shreya heard about Alive Outside and was surprised to learn it was possible to spot underwater wildlife in Port Phillip Bay, especially near the city. She decided to try her first snorkel experience under the guidance of EcoCentre and Dive2U, offered free of charge through City of Port Phillip Youth Services. Arriving curious and leaving inspired, Shreya sent the EcoCentre a handwritten letter about her life-changing experience.

'The waves slithered onto my feet as I took a step closer. The sun was scorching and the water was cooling – just a perfect snorkel day. If you fear stingrays like I did before I met the fabulous EcoCentre peeps, don't fear them! You'll RETURN ALIVE! Due to the wetsuit you could float ... AND ... with the snorkel mask you could breathe under water. We had two official goals: to have a wonderful snorkel while observing the marine life and to look out for pollution.'

'We swam for a long time, spotting some seastars. As we were returning, I spotted a medium-sized stingray. I was so amazed. It was just fabulous. The experience was unforgettable – the bravest thing I have ever done. I loved it a lot. Thank you to Dive2U and EcoCentre who slipped off my fear of the ocean.'

Since her Alive Outside experience, Shreya has visited the Great Barrier Reef with confidence. She suggests that if you want to connect with the water year-round, 'Choose snorkelling!'



Connect: Community



Corporate volunteering

The EcoCentre's five iconic group volunteering experiences provide an enjoyable and meaningful way for businesses to contribute to the community. This year, we welcomed 147 corporate volunteers from Amgen Australia, Asahi Beverages, KPMG, Mimecast, Pexa, NAB and Telstra to **Pamper the Penguins** of the St Kilda breakwater and plant indigenous habitat during an **Urban Wildlife Conservation Day** at Westgate Park.

An impressive 750 volunteer hours were contributed, despite the volunteer season being cut short in early 2020. Efforts included: removing 35 kgs of litter from St Kilda Beach and penguin habitat, moving nearly 12 tonnes of sand and seaweed to stabilise penguin nesting sites, propagating almost 500 noonflowers, and planting an equal quantity to improve nesting and food sources for the little penguin population. Additionally, 500 shrubs and trees were planted at Westgate Park, improving ground cover and canopy for wildlife living in the beautiful revegetated parkland.

These team activities are not only beneficial in improving biodiversity but are also a fantastic and unique way to promote team building. Thank you to all the organisations that participated and to Landcare for helping to connect many of these organisations with us for a volunteering day. All proceeds from Corporate Volunteering help to support our ongoing marine research and citizen science initiatives. A portion is donated to Earthcare St Kilda to facilitate penguin research.

'Helping the penguins was a great way to give back to our wildlife and it is an experience I won't ever forget! It left me with a feeling of accomplishment and it was a definite eye-opener ... I would highly recommend it.'

– Hillary, Telstra



Celebrating our 20th birthday: Community Enviro Fest

The **EcoCentre Community Enviro Fest** brought together nearly 2,000 community members of all stripes to learn, connect, celebrate environmental history and upskill for a thriving future as part of the EcoCentre's 20th birthday celebrations in December 2019.

Perfect weather on the day set the scene for crowds to join in science, art, walks, music and skill-sharing at both the St Kilda Botanic Gardens and the EcoCentre gardens. A feast of activities, stalls and performances was supported by 32 delivery partners and 77 volunteers. Several activities, including a powerful Boon Wurrung Smoke Ceremony by Dave Tournier, cooking and 'green cleaning' workshops, endangered native wildlife shows with Reptile Encounters, art-making with Linden Art Gallery, the young musicians stage, City of Voices Theatre and guided walks for identifying indigenous plants and weeds, proved to be crowd favourites.

Talented volunteer MCs Nadav Zisin and Jane Edmanson (*Gardening Australia*), encouraged attendees to enjoy our 18 stalls, 13 choirs and musicians, and a total of 31 walks, workshops, talks and films. We were thrilled to welcome many friends and Affiliates from different decades of EcoCentre history, and many of our current and past political representatives including the Hon Martin Foley MP, James Newbury MP, Josh Burns MP, Sam Hibbins MP, Cr Dick Gross, Cr Tim Baxter, Sue Pennicuik (former MP) and Professor John Thwaites (a former deputy premier).

'Enviro Fest was filled with hope for a brighter, more sustainable future.'

– Josh Cox, Reptile Encounters

'What a magical celebration! When I did leave the gardens and return to the world, I felt uplifted and hopeful in a way that I haven't for a long time.'

– Gillian, EcoCentre volunteer

A special highlight was a surprise performance for EcoCentre founder Neil Blake, when six community choirs jointly led 200 people in a sing-along of his original tune *Just Add Water*. The crowd, including members of parliament, donned recycled-paper white beards mirroring Neil's iconic style.

Festival goers shared stories of the EcoCentre and local environment memories with our audio recording volunteer Joe Malignaggi from 3CR. Our **Growing Dreams** installation, situated under a Moreton Bay fig tree, allowed people to share words and drawings envisioning the EcoCentre's redevelopment and the community's environmental future.

We sent zero waste to landfill, an achievement made possible through the commitment of vendors and volunteers. The Enviro Fest was proudly supported by City of Port Phillip Local Festivals Fund, Port Phillip Bay Fund, the Australian Communities Environment Program, and South Melbourne Community Chest. We particularly recognise Alive Events Agency for their incredible pro bono expertise, ensuring our success in supporting so many fabulous stallholders and stages running simultaneously. The collaborative, enabling and inclusive spirit of Enviro Fest was truly fitting for an EcoCentre birthday.



Act



Outcome

Individuals and groups take action that protects and restores their environment.

Strategies

Foster volunteering. Create a range of volunteering options that benefit volunteers, the environment and our organisation.

Inspire leaders. Foster skills, knowledge and opportunities for youth, adult and business leadership.

Counteract climate change. Activate and empower citizens to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Build wellbeing. Recognise and support the interdependence of human wellbeing and environmental health.

Activities in 2019–20 included:

Tomorrow's Leaders for Sustainability, ResourceSmart Schools program, School Sustainability Festival, Bayside Schools Climate Summit, Bay Leaders, Port Phillip Baykeeper, NatureSpot, community gardening and community greening, Plastic Pollution Prevention with Waterkeeper Alliance, St Kilda Repair Cafe, Thursday Seminar Series.



3,183
volunteers



21,021
volunteer hours



9,770
indigenous ground cover,
shrubs and trees planted



337
citizen science
surveys completed

Success indicators

Increase volunteer hours by 10% per annum		Target: At least four Stories of Change	Actual: 4+ stories collected; two shared here
Target: 22,393 volunteer hours	Actual: 21,021 volunteer hours	Participants have made and sustained changes in their lives and communities to protect and/or restore the environment.	
Target: 75% of participants made a change	Actual: 76%	Increase in the number and the types of actions completed by EcoCentre participants and partners, as individuals and groups.	
Target: 33% have sustained a change	Actual: Small sample response; all have sustained a change	Target: 5% increase in actions per year total across all types	Actual: 29% decrease in actions per year total across all types (NB: 37% activity time reduction due to COVID or bushfire smoke)



Story of Change: The accidental volunteer

Local resident Sha was uncertain what the EcoCentre actually was, but when she saw the volunteer recruitment promotion running on social media last year, it piqued her interest and she decided to register for the next induction. Sitting at the EcoCentre and feeling nervous, she listened to the other keen volunteers introduce themselves. Unlike the others, 'I hadn't studied environmental science or biology ... but something told me I just wanted to be there.'

Sha quickly joined the community gardening group, becoming a familiar, smiling presence, biking from South Melbourne each week to water the plants between program times. 'I felt like I had won the lottery ... The community and the energy, simply being around nature.' Soon after, Sha also joined the microplastics analysis team, which completed the mammoth task this year of counting, measuring and categorising 13,279 microplastics collected during river trawls. Other volunteers admiringly observed Sha's signature style, creating striking mosaics as she separated organic matter from plastic pieces on the lab bench.

Incrementally, Sha has brought changes in her life from spending time at the EcoCentre. 'I went from eating meat twice a day to just once a week (usually at social gatherings). I used to have to roll out my council bins every week but now it's half as often. I haven't bought a single thing since I started at the EcoCentre because I would rethink every purchase decision and conclude that I either did not need it at all, or that I could improvise with something I already have at home. I traded in my car for a hybrid but mostly swapped to walking, cycling and trams.'

In one year, Sha's chance discovery of the EcoCentre naturally deepened into friendship, wellbeing during COVID isolation, and sustainable living. 'Something as simple as joining a gardening group can make so many positive impacts!'



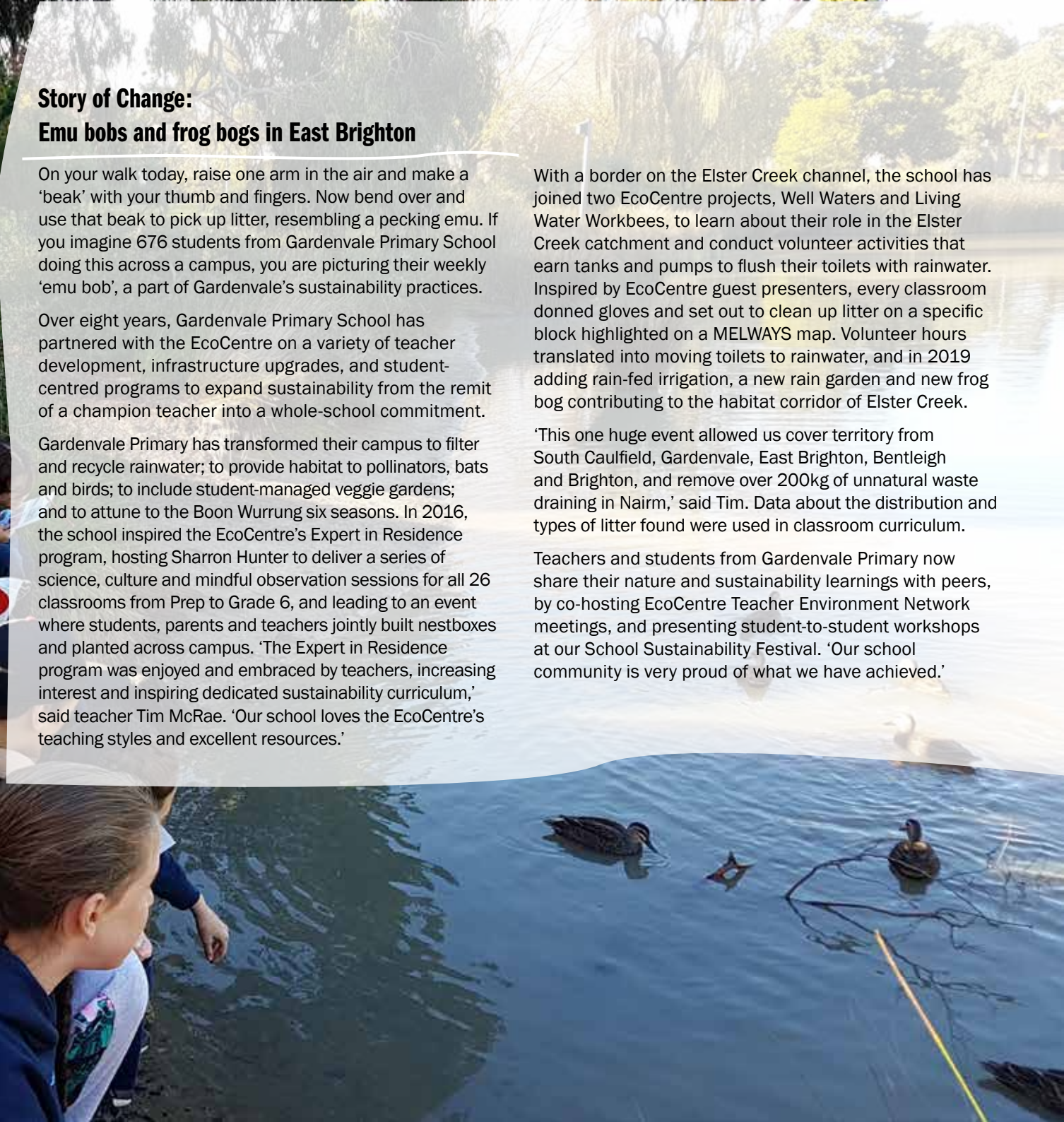
A group of students in school uniforms are gathered outdoors, looking at a book held by one of the boys. They are in a grassy area with trees in the background.

Story of Change: Emu bobs and frog bogs in East Brighton

On your walk today, raise one arm in the air and make a 'beak' with your thumb and fingers. Now bend over and use that beak to pick up litter, resembling a pecking emu. If you imagine 676 students from Gardenvale Primary School doing this across a campus, you are picturing their weekly 'emu bob', a part of Gardenvale's sustainability practices.

Over eight years, Gardenvale Primary School has partnered with the EcoCentre on a variety of teacher development, infrastructure upgrades, and student-centred programs to expand sustainability from the remit of a champion teacher into a whole-school commitment.

Gardenvale Primary has transformed their campus to filter and recycle rainwater; to provide habitat to pollinators, bats and birds; to include student-managed veggie gardens; and to attune to the Boon Wurrung six seasons. In 2016, the school inspired the EcoCentre's Expert in Residence program, hosting Sharron Hunter to deliver a series of science, culture and mindful observation sessions for all 26 classrooms from Prep to Grade 6, and leading to an event where students, parents and teachers jointly built nestboxes and planted across campus. 'The Expert in Residence program was enjoyed and embraced by teachers, increasing interest and inspiring dedicated sustainability curriculum,' said teacher Tim McRae. 'Our school loves the EcoCentre's teaching styles and excellent resources.'

A pond with several ducks and a swan. The water is calm, and the background shows trees and a fence.

With a border on the Elster Creek channel, the school has joined two EcoCentre projects, Well Waters and Living Water Workbees, to learn about their role in the Elster Creek catchment and conduct volunteer activities that earn tanks and pumps to flush their toilets with rainwater. Inspired by EcoCentre guest presenters, every classroom donned gloves and set out to clean up litter on a specific block highlighted on a MELWAYS map. Volunteer hours translated into moving toilets to rainwater, and in 2019 adding rain-fed irrigation, a new rain garden and new frog bog contributing to the habitat corridor of Elster Creek.

'This one huge event allowed us cover territory from South Caulfield, Gardenvale, East Brighton, Bentleigh and Brighton, and remove over 200kg of unnatural waste draining in Nairn,' said Tim. Data about the distribution and types of litter found were used in classroom curriculum.

Teachers and students from Gardenvale Primary now share their nature and sustainability learnings with peers, by co-hosting EcoCentre Teacher Environment Network meetings, and presenting student-to-student workshops at our School Sustainability Festival. 'Our school community is very proud of what we have achieved.'

Act: Schools and youth



Tomorrow's Leaders for Sustainability

Our award-winning **Tomorrow's Leaders for Sustainability** (TLfS) program trained 227 students from eight schools. These students participated in a 10-week program involving hands-on leadership and environmental behavioural change learning, culminating in student-led projects ranging from waste reduction campaigns in their schools to building gardens for wildlife, and from building food gardens to revegetating wetlands, and arts projects both using and promoting sustainability practices. Thank you to the City of Port Phillip, Bayside City Council and the City of Stonnington for providing scholarships to participating schools.

ResourceSmart Schools

The EcoCentre supports 19 local schools embarking on their **ResourceSmart Schools** journey towards five-star sustainability certification in their management of water, energy, waste and biodiversity. Participating schools often achieve up to a 50% reduction in energy usage and waste generation through education and climate action led by teachers, students and the parent community.

We are proud that three of our schools were finalists in the Victorian Government's **ResourceSmart Awards 2020**. Congratulations to St Columba's Primary School (Teacher of the Year, Primary, and School Volunteer of the Year), Melbourne Girls' College (Community Leadership School of the Year, Secondary) and St Louis de Montfort's in Aspendale (Campus Infrastructure and Operations School of the Year). These awards are a testament to many years of hard work towards each school's five-star ResourceSmart certification. ResourceSmart Schools is supported by Sustainability Victoria and our partnership with CERES.

We would like to thank and congratulate all schools participating in the program, their coordinators, students, parents, green teams and leadership teams for making a real difference to the environment.



52

nestboxes
and habitat
features
installed



19

School
Environment
Management
Plans delivered



14

worm farms
and compost
sites established



Teacher and student leadership

Our popular **Teachers' Environment Network** (TEN) continues to provide and share environmental education information and curriculum resources and foster supportive networks among teachers interested in sustainability at all education levels. This year we facilitated meetings on the topics of:

- climate change in the classroom
- biodiversity on school grounds
- marine ecosystems and coastal citizen science survey methods
- adapting teaching for sustainability to an online environment
- understanding climate change and fostering active hope in young people

Network membership increased by 20% on the previous year, further expanding our teacher-to-teacher learning opportunities. TEN participation is free for participants, with support from City of Port Phillip and Bayside City Council.

We continued to celebrate and elevate student and teacher sustainability leadership with our 14th **School Sustainability Festival** (September 2019) held in St Kilda Town Hall and at the EcoCentre. We are proud to annually present Victoria's longest running festival celebrating student leadership and action. This event strengthens and deepens our school sustainability network through students and teachers showcasing their achievements and supporting one another by sharing tools and networking. Over 190 students from 13 schools came together for an impressive and fun day of Kids Teaching Kids hands-on workshops, all focused on improving the health of Port Phillip Bay.

The **School Sustainability Awards** are a highlight of the festival. It was a pleasure to welcome mayors Michael Heffernan (City of Bayside) and Dick Gross (City of Port Phillip) to present these awards. We thank our local businesses for their generous donations of over \$15,000 in eco-friendly and wellbeing prizes for all schools, and sensational volunteer Annie Strutt for coordinating prize

donations (see Partner Organisations page 51). Festival funding support was provided by the City of Port Phillip, Bayside City Council, and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning through the Port Phillip Bay Fund. We also thank our partners and Kids Teaching Kids presenters, the Boon Wurrung Foundation, Roots and Shoots Australia, Reptile Encounters and our excellent volunteers for their logistical support, preparation of a zero-waste organic lunch and preparing the EcoCentre grounds and gardens for this dynamic day.

The EcoCentre played a lead role in the **City of Bayside Schools Climate Action Summit** involving 73 students and teachers from 11 Bayside schools. The summit was originally planned as part of the *Bayside Climate Emergency Action Plan* community engagement, and aimed at capturing the youth voice for inclusion in the development of the action plan. It moved smoothly online to protect the health and safety of the Bayside community during the COVID-19 pandemic. Highlights of the summit included hearing the inspiring speech that Mia and Lili, Year 10 students at Firkbank Grammar, made at the council meeting, during which Bayside declared a climate emergency. Students also participated in a Q&A session with an expert panel, and interactive workshops on climate action and cultivating active hope in the time of climate crisis.

The EcoCentre continues to facilitate online student climate leadership follow-up programs for students in four Bayside schools, supported by Bayside City Council.

The EcoCentre **Bay Leaders** program provided extension workshops before and after the 2019 School Sustainability Festival, engaging 15 schools in 'action learning' to connect students and teachers with Port Phillip Bay and its catchments through STEAM curriculum activities, leadership training and on-ground Bay healthcare actions. The Bay Leaders program is proudly supported by the Victorian Government through the Port Phillip Bay Fund.



'What a glorious day and exciting workshops for the students to participate in. I look forward to this educational event every year! It teaches leadership and students learn from one another. How perfect the School Sustainability Festival is ... and you still improve it every year.'
– Teacher, St Joan of Arc Primary School

Act: Community



Port Phillip Baykeeper – Community collaborations

Your Port Phillip Baykeeper Neil Blake is an independent voice for Port Phillip Bay. The Baykeeper role is part of a global grassroots network of Waterkeepers on six continents who advocate for swimmable, drinkable, fishable water. For over 30 years, Neil has worked with schools, government, First Peoples, researchers, business and community to connect with and protect our Bay. The Port Phillip Baykeeper conducts a range of activities including community projects (below), research and evidence-based advocacy (page 32-36).

The Baykeeper's identical cousin, **Captain Trash**, the musical anti-pollution pirate, toured his edutainment to early learning centres, the **Rye Seaside Scavenge**, and **Geelong Wooden Boats Festival** to spread the word about all things starting with 'aaaRRRR' – Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Recycle and Remove Rubbish. The Captain also visited the **Melbourne Zoo Marine Conservation Festival** at a stall shared with our friends from Yarra Riverkeeper and Werribee Riverkeeper.

Citizen scientists joined the 12th year of **Baykeeper Shoreline Shell Surveys** through Coastcare **Summer by the Sea**. Shellfish are an important part of the marine ecosystem because they filter water but their ability to form shells is being compromised by climate change. Measuring the variety, abundance, distribution and size of shells can serve as indicators of Bay health and can be easily mapped by surveying tidelines over time. Unfortunately, shellfish populations in Port Phillip Bay are under-researched. Using a Waterkeeper Alliance grant, we completed a detailed report collating a decade of shoreline shell data collected from nine beaches around the Bay. The analysis identified species that are commonly reported across all beaches, and also species only found in particular coastal areas. The overarching finding of the study was that each beach has a distinct and special species profile.

Data analysis confirmed that population decline can be detected in several species that were relatively abundant in initial surveys. The analysis also drew attention to particular mollusc species that are likely to have been preyed on by pest Northern Pacific seastars in St Kilda Harbour. This evidence set the scene for collaboration with six Deakin University students in 2020, developing an informative report and presentation on common prey of Northern Pacific seastars. The students also revised the existing shoreline shell survey method to record freshly deposited shells (recently deceased molluscs) and identify possible links to seasonal abundance of the seastars.

Citizen science helps answer big scientific questions by enabling the public to contribute systematic observations over time. The Port Phillip Baykeeper develops and applies such participatory science approaches to study a range of species and pollutants. Sponsors of local citizen science activities include City of Port Phillip and the Australian Government Communities Environment Program in the Macnamara electorate.

Port Phillip's **Community Beach Access Day** featured Baykeeper citizen science as well as Fishcare activities designed to inform and inspire young anglers to care for the Bay. This event has set the scene for lively discussions on future collaboration with Fishcare Victoria. The Baykeeper also enjoyed engaging with the South Melbourne Life Saving Club Nippers Program to conduct three shoreline shell surveys at their local beach. These surveys provided data additional to beach profiling, microplastics monitoring, shoreline shells and live mollusc surveys conducted with local community members and Multicultural Bay Ambassadors at six other inner urban beaches.



'What Neil does best is speak clearly and interestingly on a range of subjects and research.'

– Participant, Baykeeper Citizen Science seminar

'I walk through this park all the time but learned so many new things today'
– Participant, NatureSpot survey event

NatureSpot

Urban biodiversity is becoming increasingly important as a growing body of research shows cities have a vital role to play in biodiversity conservation and management. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity also supports the health and wellbeing of communities and can contribute to effective climate change adaptation actions. However, there is insufficient understanding of what flora and fauna exist as a baseline in most urban areas and there has been no systematic monitoring of biodiversity on private land, which comprises 75% of the City of Port Phillip. To address this, the EcoCentre led the **NatureSpot** citizen science project for City of Port Phillip between November 2019 and June 2020.

Web developer CrowdSpot was commissioned to design an online community mapping tool to record flora and fauna spotted across the municipality. Project objectives were to gather data in parks, residential streets, schools and private property such as backyards and balconies; raise community awareness on the importance of urban ecology; and to provide tools and support for resident and business participation in protecting and enhancing biodiversity.

In addition to encouraging residents to submit sightings or 'spots' of flora and fauna in private properties, the EcoCentre delivered three seasons of public NatureSpot surveys. Each season consisted of six open events at different types of Port Phillip parklands to equip citizen scientists with biodiversity survey skills. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the autumn surveys were livestreamed on Facebook so people could follow from home.

A total of 692 submissions were logged by 172 citizen scientists. From submitted photos, we verified 75 flora species and 114 fauna species, including 17 insects and



172

citizen scientists



21

**new species added
to local records**

four spiders that were recorded in Port Phillip for the first time. This was very exciting and highlights the effectiveness of citizen science in capturing and cataloguing new data. NatureSpot results will inform the council's *Biodiversity Action Plan* and enable strategic habitat enhancements. Verified species data was shared with Visualising Victoria's Biodiversity, a platform that amalgamates and maps species data from a range of sources, from the Atlas of Living Australia database to localised studies.

Local early learning centres and primary schools used NatureSpot as an outdoor learning exercise and will now be able to create curriculums inspired by local fauna maps. As Melbourne entered an increasingly strict lockdown, being able to observe nature on our local block, balcony and in our home garden provided wellbeing benefits alongside the gathering of scientific data.

Many beautiful wildlife photos submitted by citizen scientists contributed to a habitat gardening brochure that was produced as part of the project. *Grow Wild: Guide to native plants for backyard biodiversity* provides advice on garden design considerations and plant selections suitable for small spaces in the local area. The brochure and an in-depth project report are available to download at ecocentre.com/naturespot.

Further surveys, funded by the Australian Communities Environment Program, will collect flora and fauna data in the year ahead to gather data in new seasons.



Understanding what fauna lives in Port Phillip helps us provide necessary habitat for our local species. Along with public parks, gardens on private land can help enhance biodiversity and improve our wellbeing.

Living Water Workbees

Across our city, millions of pieces of litter and other pollutants from stormwater enter street drains and are washed into local creeks, eventually ending up in Port Phillip Bay. For positive change, the community can join **Living Water Workbees** to improve water quality, remove plastic litter, create habitat for wildlife and alleviate the impacts of flood and drought caused by climate change.

A calendar of diverse workbees across Elster Creek and Werribee River catchments helps care for waterways through clean-ups, tree planting and wildlife surveys conducted with environmental groups. Volunteer hours are translated into \$25-per-hour rebate credits, which can be redeemed for an approved rainwater tank or rain garden at schools, homes or businesses. In our urban environment, this infrastructure serves a critical role in harvesting or absorbing rainwater, which reduces pollution run-off, slows stormwater flow and creates a healthier habitat within our local creeks and rivers.

In the third year of the project, our community:

- mobilised 1,980 volunteers, including 650 students, to care for Elster Creek and Werribee River
- contributed 2,754 hours of volunteering to help fund rainwater tanks at four schools
- removed over 3,974 kgs of litter and installed 8,200 plants
- created stormwater diversion capacity of nearly 2.3 million litres per year through installed infrastructure, plumbed to flush 57 toilets with rainwater and filter floodwaters through 294 m² of rain garden surface

The EcoCentre and Werribee River Association worked with 12 community partners and three schools this year. Together, we held 96 workbees in the catchment, along with tailored sessions for schools, and engaged Wauthurong Traditional Owners and the Boon Wurrung Foundation to present local cultural connections to water. We would like to thank our community partners at Love Our Street, Beach Patrol, Friends of Elster Creek, Earthcare St Kilda, and Elwood Plogging Group for



13
tonnes of
litter removed
(2017-2020)



57
rainwater-
flushed toilets
converted



2.3
million litres water per year
diverted, filtered and recycled

enabling volunteer action and raising rebate credits for our community infrastructure. It was fantastic to promote these worthy volunteer groups to new participants, contributing to their local and downstream impact.

This year's rebate funding was allocated to Caulfield Primary School, Gardenvale Primary School, St Columba's Primary School (Elwood) and St Kevin's Primary School (Ormond). The entire school community, including parent volunteers, played a role in organising whole-school clean-ups to earn rebates. With their new water recycling infrastructure, these schools will have an ongoing positive impact on our waterways and biodiversity, harvesting rainwater for use in toilets, gardens, classrooms and frog ponds.

Living Water Workbees was a three-year project funded by the Victorian Government's Port Phillip Bay Fund. During this period our partners and schools collectively engaged over 8,600 volunteers, removed over 13 tonnes of litter and installed 20,556 indigenous plants. Volunteer hours contributed to rebates for seven schools and one home where installations will continue to reduce pollution in our waterways, alleviate climate impacts in our neighbourhood and enhance student learning about our relationship with the Bay during our lives on the land.

'Thanks to the Living Water Workbees program we have been able to replace our old rainwater tank pumps and ensure the supply of rainwater to our school toilets in three buildings. Our local clean-up group was able to raise many volunteer credits while preventing litter from surrounding streets from entering local drains to the Bay. It was fantastic to have local environmental volunteers enable local environmental improvement in our school.'

– Julian Donlen, Co-President, Caulfield Primary School Parents and Friends Club



Community gardening and greening

The **Port Phillip Urban Fresh Food Network** (PPUFFN) program took place on Fridays in the EcoCentre's Community Garden and later remotely through online garden activities, phone calls, posting seeds, and video clips. PPUFFN continued our longstanding initiative, supported by City of Port Phillip, to run inclusive gardening activities, including through partner referrals from social and health services. Weekly sessions centred on garden maintenance, composting, seedling propagation and a shared meal cooked with freshly harvested ingredients.

Over 48 Fridays (including 14 weeks of COVID-adapted sessions from home), the popular program achieved 2,104 voluntary gardening hours through 686 participations by a diverse group of community members. Participants ranged from retired professionals to jobseekers, new migrants, social housing residents and local artists. Participants' languages included Hindi, Polish, Spanish, Italian, German, Croatian and Indonesian – and the shared languages of nature and food!

In addition to regular mini-workshops to build permaculture skills, friends of the EcoCentre met on a seasonal basis for deep-dive discussions and arts activities after gardening. Thanks to our special guests Betty Sargeant (PluginHUMAN), Serene Lau (Port Phillip Dragon), Mariam Issa (RAW Community Garden, Space2b), and Jaeden Williams (Bunjil's Biik).

Of participants surveyed:

- 100% met new people and friends by participating
- 83% learned more about gardening, composting or healthy eating
- 79% learned a new skill
- 76% felt a greater sense of happiness
- 100% now feel more connected with their local environment

Participation during the 14 weeks of restrictions included 168 hours of at-home gardening, plus independent EcoCentre garden visits as some members continued to care for the worms and garden during their exercise

walks. We moved our community lunches online (with tech support) as an anchor for people to connect, share their feelings and what they had been doing. We implemented our phone tree, produced online tutorials and hosted online plant quizzes and Facebook chats. Staff reached out via phone calls and texts to follow up with participants when requested, or to check if they needed additional support if they had not been active in the group.

To welcome more gardeners from our waitlist, we combined new funding from Transurban for **Growing Together** and the Australian Communities Environment Program for **Community Coastal Revegetation** and established the pilot **Saturday Reveg Garden Group**. The group's chief activity is a fortnightly program of propagating and establishing indigenous plants in coastal revegetation and community greening projects, with each session followed by morning tea. The program faced delays throughout summer due to bushfire smoke and then paused during COVID restrictions. The EcoCentre sent out packets of indigenous seeds for participants to grow at home. We also created videos demonstrating how to gently collect seeds from indigenous grasses in parklands and take cuttings of common plants to propagate at home. Further funding has been approved and we hope to relaunch the physical group program in early 2021, to be ready for community plantings from late autumn.

In 2019, two wonderful collaborations used **EcoCentre landscape design services** to create a sensory, indigenous plant garden at Brighton Playroom community-run child care; and develop plans for Malvern Valley Primary School to install nature-play zones, indigenous planting, wildlife habitat and fairy gardens as imagined by the students.

'It makes me feel good to see the people who by their cumulative efforts are contributing to keep the community active, healthy and environmentally conscious. Although COVID-19 has impacted the garden group work, online connection activities have contributed positively to keep all engaged.'

– Garden volunteer

'To volunteer at the EcoCentre beautiful garden changed my life ... much better!'

– Laura Marini



Plastic pollution prevention with Waterkeeper Alliance

As part of a collaborative Waterkeeper Alliance project funded by National Geographic, EcoCentre Executive Officer, April Seymore, consults on citizen science and curriculum. This includes chairing a working group with Waterkeepers from the US, Mexico, Bahamas, Indonesia and Kenya, working to refine an adaptable but rigorous global Waterkeeper standard toolkit for surveying and preventing plastic pollution.

April travelled to Kenya in November to represent Australia at the Waterkeeper Alliance International Region Summit, which was attended by 42 fellow Waterkeepers from the Caribbean, Africa, Europe and the Middle East. In Nairobi, April co-presented a workshop on plastic pollution and data collection methods, and facilitated the closing summit session for collective action planning across the region.

Travelling inland to Lake Victoria, April supported the training and rollout of a fieldwork intensive as part of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) **Global Plastic Pollution Study**. Kenya Lake Victoria Waterkeeper coordinated the research team of 24 young volunteers, with training by the Kenya Marine Fisheries Research Institute. This was an auspicious addition of inland, freshwater data to the world's largest plastic pollution study and the first instance CSIRO research scientists were not personally on site. Nimble support was provided remotely by Dr Denise Hardesty and Dr Qamar Schuyler at CSIRO Oceans and Atmosphere, and by on-ground rock stars Pete Nichols (National Geographic Project Leader) and Katherine Luscher of Waterkeeper Alliance.



St Kilda Repair Cafe

At the **St Kilda Repair Cafe**, we continued to help Melbourne to upskill and reduce landfill. The global repair café movement organises volunteer fixers and menders who offer their time and skills to help make repairs possible, free of charge. The Jewish Ecological Coalition (JECO) and the EcoCentre co-host a monthly St Kilda Repair Cafe led by skilled volunteers on the second Sunday of every month. Anyone can receive a free practical tutorial on how to repair just by bringing their broken household items to the cafe.

In our third year of hands-on repair workshops, 294 attendees worked with volunteers and successfully repaired 204 items, diverting over 385 kgs from landfill. The program included an online interactive workshop where skilled volunteers were paired with community members to work through repairs remotely.

The St Kilda Repair Cafe continues to be powered by donations and incredible volunteers who delivered over 3,000 hours of repair time despite a year truncated by COVID-19. If you would like to volunteer your time and skills in future, please email stkilda.repaircafe@gmail.com.



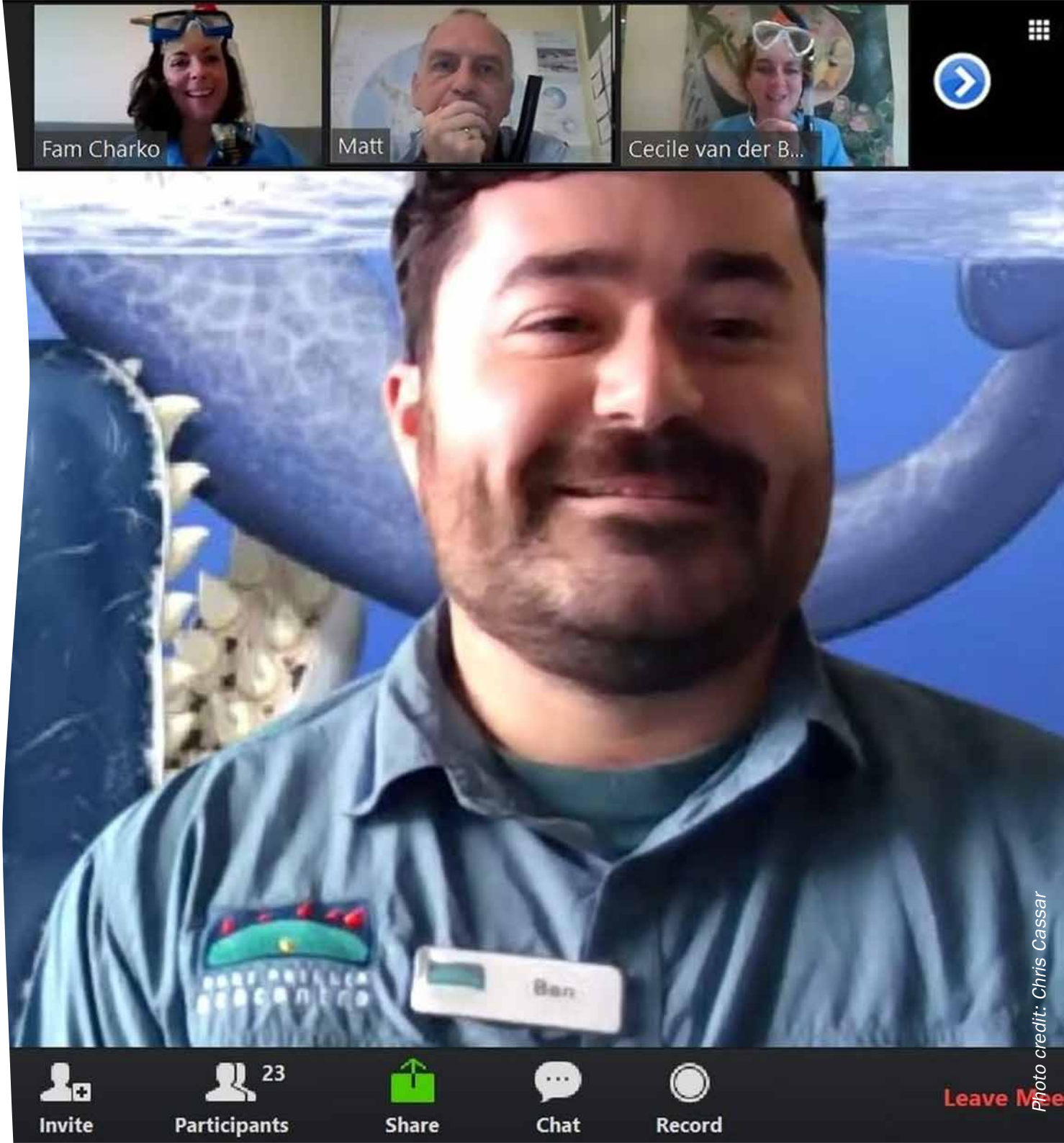


Thursday Seminar Series

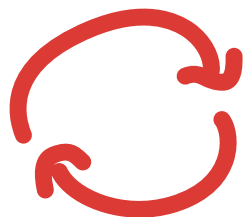
The EcoCentre **Thursday Seminar Series** was launched in April 2020 to keep the EcoCentre community connected and active during the challenges of the COVID-19 lockdown. The programming draws on staff specialist knowledge packaged into free online workshops suitable for broadcast from staff homes. In the inaugural webinar, participants took a deep dive into Antarctic waters with EcoCentre educator Matt McArthur. Matt shared his experiences from past research deployments through a presentation filled with photos and anecdotes from his adventures, followed by an interactive Q&A with the audience.

Each week, we delivered a new seminar topic, covering a wide range of themes including Baykeeper citizen science, how to create wildlife-friendly backyards, cooking with edible weeds and food scraps, the role of active hope in climate action, and tips to plan for Plastic Free July. These sessions were popular with our local members as well as the broader community, even attracting some international viewers. Evaluations showed that the action-orientation of most seminar topics led to a sharp increase in participant commitment to take new action as a result of their EcoCentre experience.

'Engaging, with great humour and information while telling the story.'
– Seminar participant, *Diving with the Kiwis and Penguins*



Transform



Outcome

Our partnerships and networks influence positive, systemic environmental changes.

Strategies

Drive research. Conduct research and citizen science with community and research institutions.

Build networks. Support groups and networks to continually enhance community-led and cross-sector initiatives.

Advocate for change. Forge partnerships, and consult and advocate on local and Victorian policies, legislation and practices.

Amplify voices. Aggregate and share knowledge, evidence and stories to citizens and decision-makers.

Activities in 2019–20 included:

Global Melbourne, Clean Bay Blueprint, Sunscreen and Bay Marine Life, Port Phillip Baykeeper Research, Futureproofing Port Phillip Baykeeper, Elster Creek Catchment Community Reference Group, Advocating for change.

Success indicators

Maintain the number of members, partnerships, research programs and participation in networks.

Target:
Sustain
79
prime
partnerships

Actual:
96
prime
partnerships

Target:
Sustain
5
research
projects

Actual:
6
research
projects

Target:
Sustain
participation
in
10
networks

Actual:
15
networks
and
reference
groups

Target:
Grow
membership
by
10%
per year

Actual:
66%
growth
including
EcoCentre
20th
birthday
campaign

Maintain number of submissions advising on policy, legislation and regulation across all levels of government.

Target:
10
per year
for local
government

Actual:
3
submissions
and
consultations

Target:
6
per year
to state or
Commonwealth

Actual:
11
submissions
to state or
Commonwealth

Target: At
least
2
Stories of
Change

Actual:
2
stories
collected;
one shared
here



Story of Change: Keeping both the 'citizen' and 'science' in citizen science

Citizen science involves the superpower of crowds to collect observations that help answer big scientific questions. Well-designed citizen science both excites community and contributes to bodies of knowledge. Integrating the scientific method, solid volunteer support and vivid storytelling requires a careful balance.

By the time the term 'citizen science' entered the Oxford English Dictionary in 2014, the EcoCentre already had many years of experience engaging schools and community in long-term environmental monitoring, collecting data for professional analysis, and using the results to understand and care for local places. Many groups and individuals contributed to bird maps, shoreline shell surveys, and cigarette litter audits. However, all scientific methods gain credibility through peer review, and since 2015 the EcoCentre and Baykeeper suite of tools to study biodiversity and pollutants have been reviewed, refined and rolled out through the benefit of partnerships.

Working with leaders from CSIRO and RMIT University, with Riverkeepers, councils, community, students and filmmakers, the rigour, repeatability and vocabulary of our methods have been well-tested in nearly 3,000 monitoring events and 30,000+ hours of voluntary analysis and research over five years. In 2018, Worcester Polytechnic Institute helped codify best global practices in the EcoCentre's *Citizen Science Evaluation Rubric*, and this tool has been applied to shape projects like Sunscreen and Bay Marine Life with RMIT University's nanotechnology lab, microplastics studies in Melbourne's rivers, and designing EPA Victoria's outfall drain monitoring to involve Scouts and schools.

As scientists, doctors and policymakers recognise increasingly complex and interrelated issues, the need for large collections of environmental data is rapidly increasing. The EcoCentre has played a vital role in putting citizen science on the map to Australian decision-makers as a valid and valuable method of gathering scientific evidence — achieving change in legislation, plans and government environmental reports with data collected; enriching cross-sector collaborations; and equally important, sparking animated chats about science at dinner tables, classrooms and clubs across Melbourne.



Photo credit: Chris Cassar


Global Melbourne

Our city is diverse and growing. Over 40% of residents were born overseas and in a typical year, Melbourne hosts 2.5 million international visitors, all sharing our landscapes and waterways. The **Global Melbourne** project engages with these diverse communities by removing barriers and increasing opportunities to learn about and take action to protect Port Phillip Bay.

The EcoCentre partnered with three hostels and a tour operator to design active ecotourism for international visitors. We recruited young **Multicultural Bay Ambassadors** to connect communities to the Bay. We also produced a short documentary film that features stories from four people of diverse backgrounds on how they became engaged in environmental action in Melbourne.

Our educators delivered free monthly events for guests at: Melbourne Metro YHA, Melbourne Central YHA and Habitat HQ, to introduce international travellers to Melbourne's vibrant urban ecosystem. Despite a tourism year severely limited by bushfires and COVID-19, 200 travellers from 15 countries volunteered to improve the little penguin habitat on St Kilda foreshore, remove litter from beaches, survey biodiversity in the city, and experience indigenous plant-based dinners. Volunteering at the iconic St Kilda Beach provided a unique and meaningful travel experience for the guests and inspired our hostel partners to increase sustainability initiatives within their operations.

EcoCentre Multicultural Bay Ambassadors Jinhua Hue, Niharika Sharma, Noor Salman and Saniya Dsouza were able to build their professional experience and helped us to improve our cultural knowledge to better engage with Melbourne's multicultural communities. The Ambassadors were trained in a range of Bay care activities, and then devised and led culturally inclusive events to connect people to our Bay and inspire environmental action. Jinhua held a nurdle hunt and beach clean-up at St Kilda Beach to promote a penguin-friendly, pollution-free Melbourne; Niharika promoted discussions around waste and cultural practices through litter removal from West Beach; Noor invited children and young families for a zero-waste picnic



'From our daily routines, within our homes as well as in our community, we will try to keep promoting sustainable practices to our cultural groups and other groups so we can all build a sustainable and thriving future for ourselves.'

*– Noor Salman,
Multicultural Bay Ambassador*

and nature activity along the Werribee River; and Saniya engaged students in a tideline litter audit to take a close look at microplastics and our human impacts on the Bay.

A new short documentary, *Our Catchment: The Whole World Connected by Water*, produced by Lutman Films, featured inspiring stories of action and the experiences of four people on their journey from different parts of the world to Melbourne. The film highlights how multiple perspectives build better opportunities to tackle environmental challenges and unite community effort. *Our Catchment* was a finalist in the 2020 **Sylvia Earle Ocean Conservation Awards** and was screened as part of the international film festival circuit this year, featuring at the Boulder Environmental Nature Outdoor Film Festival (US).

The two-year Global Melbourne project is wrapping up through new digital engagement with local multicultural networks and adding multilingual subtitles to the *Baykeepers* short films. The EcoCentre is committed to continuously improving the organisation's cultural capabilities and broadening our networks to enhance inclusivity in environmental action.

This project was funded by the Port Phillip Bay Fund.

'This program was a very humbling, learning, and truly a listening experience for me. This program and meeting with people from various fields and cultures helped me broaden my understanding of [other people's] cultures. It made me realise that however much I know about 'multicultural' Melbourne, it's never going to be enough because every tradition, community value and belief are going to be different.'

*– Niharika Sharma,
Multicultural Bay Ambassador*

Clean Bay Blueprint

Clean Bay Blueprint is Australia's first litter research project to monitor and map microplastic litter holistically across a city's streets, rivers and coast to inform localised source reduction plans. The third and final project year has been action-packed, including the very end of our data collection being cut short by the global pandemic. Despite this, our wonderful community group partners were able to complete 36 Baykeeper Beach Litter Audits on coastal reference sites around the Bay.

This aspect of Clean Bay Blueprint solidified our litter audit method as a good way to represent whole-of-beach conditions and compare microplastic pollution around the Bay. Preliminary results have shown that the beaches on the east side of the Bay are dealing with much more litter than the west side and that most samples were made up of hard plastic fragments and nurdles. We thank the Beach Patrol chapters from Frankston, Rye, Seaford and St Kilda, Balcombe Estuary Reserve Group (BERG) Mount Martha, Bellarine Catchment Network, Dolphin Research Institute, and Werribee River Association for their ongoing contributions, and our Deakin University placement student Minh Tu for literally putting all this data on the digital map.

The monthly microplastics trawls in the Yarra and Maribyrnong rivers continued as part of our collaboration with the Yarra Riverkeeper Association. After the trawl net contents were dried, our trained citizen scientists contributed 743 hours (triple the previous year) to meticulously sort and count 13,279 plastic pollutants, mostly under 5 mm. Spirits were high in the EcoCentre 'lab', with volunteers from various universities and community groups hailing from our local area and 15 other countries. Special commendations to volunteer analysis team leaders Hilda Poloso and Daniel Cox.

The outcomes of the riverine research were alarming, with an estimated 2.5 billion plastics, of which 85% are microplastics, carried on the surface of Melbourne's two urban rivers and flowing into the Bay each year. Overall, litter in both the Yarra and Maribyrnong rivers is heavily correlated with population growth and is therefore increasing over time.



2.5 billion
plastics annually flow
on the surface of
Melbourne's urban rivers

53,688
microplastics analysed
by EcoCentre volunteers
since 2015

All microplastics captured during the study were donated to the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) Plastics Lab to be analysed for plastic polymer types (i.e. identify what source object they may have come from) and chemical contaminants. The Plastics Lab students analysed over 40,000 individual microplastics collected over the last five years of the project, learning valuable laboratory skills and contributing to emerging research.

A talented team of interns from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) designed and built us a prototype Microplastic Collector with a Pump (MCWAP), a cheap, portable and easy-to-assemble device that can sample for microplastics at different water depths. The number of microplastics actually in the water column is as yet unquantified when measuring microplastics in rivers, and we hope to change this by sampling with the MCWAP. Thank you to Spencer Hoagland, Katie Donovan, Tom Lipkin and Eric Stultz and their advisers, for designing a replicable device with potential to empower water protectors around the world.

We also collaborated with DELWP to establish and contribute data to a brand-new, statewide litter database called LitterWatch, which allows people to access aggregated litter data. We believe that understanding litter volume, type and movement patterns over time will inform better management outcomes for our waterways.

To guide the project's scientific reporting, we are indebted to Dr Chris Johnstone from Monash University and Emma Barnett from the University of Melbourne, who have lent us their incredible expertise by completing the statistical analysis of our data. The final Clean Bay Blueprint report with all findings and key recommendations is available on ecocentre.com/cleanbayblueprint.



'Volunteers were given a clear understanding of how our activity contributed. Training and support in the relevant tools and techniques was enough to allow for skill development, a sense of competence and then some independence of action.'

***– Stephen,
Microplastics analysis volunteer***

Sunscreen and Bay Marine Life

Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University and the EcoCentre have teamed up for the third year under an Australian Citizen Science Grant to research the effects of sunscreen on marine life in Port Phillip Bay.

Sunscreen is important in helping to protect our skin, but what damage might the sunscreen we slip-slop-slap do to the environment when it washes off? Active chemicals found in many sunscreens have a toxic effect on tropical corals and their development. Sunscreens increasingly include ingredients in nanoparticle form. As the nanotechnology industry is a booming new frontier, we need to make sure we understand the effects of nanoparticles in the environment. **Sunscreen and Bay Marine Life** is a world-first research project to understand the effects of sunscreen chemicals on organisms in temperate waters and to use field samples rather than laboratory modelling.

Field sampling is made possible by our fantastic citizen scientists – both new and veteran project volunteers. Our trained volunteers collected water samples at beaches in Elwood, St Kilda and Rye. Volunteers sampled in shifts from 6:00 am until 10:00 pm, and also recorded environmental variables like water temperature, wind speed and direction and number of people in the water. At the RMIT nanotechnology laboratory, water samples underwent sophisticated analysis to record the presence of marine algae as well as sunscreen chemicals, such as oxybenzone, nanoparticles of zinc oxide and titanium dioxide, which are known to be dangerous to marine life in tropical waters. The real-life concentrations of sunscreen in the samples were measured to allow the scientists to test for potential effects on phytoplankton and algae, the base of all healthy marine food chains.

The research results will be published in science journals over the next year. If the results indicate that change is needed, the study will be used to work with industry to ensure production of sunscreens that are healthy for both humans and wildlife. It has been fantastic working with the RMIT research and social scientists on this cutting-edge research and to evaluate the citizen science model.



612
water samples
collected



Port Phillip Baykeeper research

In addition to ongoing Port Phillip Baykeeper monitoring initiatives, the Baykeeper team collaborated with several other projects enabled by the Victorian Government's Port Phillip Bay Fund, to improve Bay health.

The **Street2Bay** project partnership with Scouts Victoria has been an outstanding success. Twenty-five scout groups located on catchments around the Bay conducted 546 street litter audits at 127 sites, representing six different streetscapes: retail, industrial, public buildings, sports grounds, parks and residential. More than 54,000 litter items (including cigarette butts) were collected and categorised, 74% of which were plastics. Many scouts were shocked by the amount of litter and plastic fragments found. Grace, from Brighton Scouts, said, 'I genuinely didn't think there was that much rubbish everywhere!'

Students from RMIT University's **Plastics Lab** are analysing microplastic fragments found in waterways and the Bay to identify polymer types and any attached contaminants. Microplastics have been sourced through the Baykeeper network and manta-net trawls in the Patterson River. The river trawls are conducted with the generous support of David Flew (boat skipper).

The Aquatic Environmental Stress (AQUEST) group at RMIT University launched an innovative **Litter Trackers** project that enabled community members to follow the path of litter in waterways. Bottles fitted with GPS devices were released in various streams that enter Port Phillip Bay and the public were able to track the bottles' movements online. It was a pleasure to assist the AQUEST group in the project rollout. Support from Port Phillip EcoCentre included launching bottles in Elwood Canal with Friends of Elster Creek and retrieving one bottle from Dromana beach two weeks later.

In the climate change context of sea-level rise, storm surges and shifting coastlines, a clear understanding is needed of erosion protection options beyond costly concrete barriers that harm ecosystems. The **Grey to Green** project is a collaboration between City of Greater Geelong and the National Centre for Coasts and



'It feels good to be involved in testing a brand-new way of caring for the Bay.'

*– Steve Hanna,
Grey to Green volunteer*

Climate to address coastal erosion by installing a 'living breakwater' offshore. Such breakwaters absorb wave energy while establishing suitable habitat for mussels and other native species. Grey to Green employed the Baykeeper beach profiling method to monitor changes to the beach at Point Richards, following installation of a semi-submerged breakwater. With help from Gordon TAFE students and EcoCentre volunteers, sand surface levels were recorded along 12 transects across the beach and into the intertidal zone. The first survey was conducted in October 2017, prior to the installation in March 2018. Subsequent seasonal surveys to January 2020 confirmed that the new structure has caused sand to accumulate and a greater diversity of mollusc species was recorded in the altered sediments.

Baykeeper research projects could not have been completed without the partnership of university research teams and the dedication of expert volunteers including David Flew (Karingal Boat Trawls), Damien Nzabanita (plastics analysis), Tracey Steeves (Street2Bay recruitment and training), Peter Dedrick (BERG, monthly beach microplastics audits), Elizabeth Golden (Hampton Joey Scouts, fundraising for MCWAP construction), and Mahnaz Moeini (RMIT plastics analysis).



April Seymore and Neil Blake welcomed Hunter Riverkeeper Dr Patrice Newell and Phillip Adams to discuss the science and culture of waterways.



Futureproofing the Port Phillip Baykeeper

Futureproofing the Port Phillip Baykeeper is a brand-new project to strengthen the Port Phillip Baykeeper program and the Baykeeper project team with support from the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust. Over the next two years, we will deliver a five-year Baykeeper strategic plan, recruit and train a next generation Baykeeper, and hand over the existing networks and partnerships that the current Baykeeper has built and maintained during his tenure. Another part of this project will be to consolidate the Baykeeper's knowledge and citizen science activities and integrate these in the school curriculum and activities led by the EcoCentre Education Team.

During the first phase of the project, a dedicated team of Worcester Polytechnic Institute students helped survey the vast network of Baykeeper stakeholders through interviews and virtual roundtable workshops. The workshops on marine pests and climate change were attended by a great cross-section of stakeholders and included representatives of the community, state government, the education and tourism sectors. The result of these workshops was the creation of two *Bay Issues Papers* that sum up the state of play for each issue, who is involved in managing it, what the current knowledge on this issue is, and which organisations are positioned to collaborate for solutions. These issues papers will be available on the EcoCentre website and are designed to evolve over time. We are looking forward to delivering further issues papers in phase two of the project, based on priority areas identified by water protectors in multiple sectors.



2019-2020

Examples of EcoCentre research, education and practical projects around Port Phillip Bay and Greater Melbourne, designed to drive positive, tangible and systemic environmental changes.

Elster Creek Catchment Community Reference Group

Elster Creek flows into Port Phillip Bay through Elsternwick Park Nature Reserve and the Elwood Canal at Point Ormond, providing the only remaining surface watercourse between Port Melbourne and Mordialloc. In the creek's downstream corridors, the EcoCentre and volunteers have recorded an extraordinary abundance of wildlife and they regularly run education programs. Upstream, the waterway is hidden in underground drains, meandering through a catchment area of 40 km² and crossing four municipalities. The 1905 'reclaiming' of local ephemeral wetlands for construction, the intensity of recent storms and king tides, plus impermeable paving of the suburbs, have combined to trigger pockets of fast-flowing surface floodwaters that cannot soak into the ground.

To reduce impacts for residents in flood-prone suburbs, a working group comprising Melbourne Water, and Port Phillip, Bayside, Glen Eira and Kingston councils, will consider a catchment-scale Integrated Water Management (IWM) program targeting flood reduction and community safety.

The EcoCentre serves on the **Elster Creek Catchment Community Reference Group** to represent community concerns and contribute expertise towards the *Elster Creek Flood Management Plan 2019–2024*. We contribute on behalf of residents, schools and ecosystems to ensure consistent equal consideration of the community benefits and environmental impacts of infrastructure and planning policy and the appropriate emergency responses needed. The commitments of this five-year plan promise exciting shifts into collaborative water management across municipal boundaries.

'Extensive site investigations have been undertaken at the Reserve over the years which have brought to light the substantial existing ecological value of the site and its even greater environmental potential. Reports of particular note include [the EcoCentre's] Elsternwick Park Nature Reserve Fauna Report.'

*- Elsternwick Park Nature Reserve Masterplan,
McGregor Coxall*

Elsternwick Park Nature Reserve

As part of Bayside City Council's efforts to establish the environmentally-focused Elsternwick Park Nature Reserve (EPNR), the EcoCentre sits on the **EPNR Community Reference Panel** to workshop key elements and issues related to design and management of the 13-hectare reserve. A key achievement this year has been the completion of a masterplan that balances biodiversity, flood mitigation, water quality and public amenity. The masterplan was informed by scientific reports including the EcoCentre's *Elsternwick Park Fauna Strategy* (2019), technical advice from Melbourne Water and workshops in which the community refined the balance of environmental priorities.

Exploring the peaceful parkland and observing the variety of species that already share this special sanctuary has provided respite to many locals during lockdown restrictions. Prior to the lockdown, the EcoCentre education team began to pilot a range of excursions that highlight the features of the reserve and engage students in wildlife monitoring.

Photo credit: Josephine Samuel-King

Port Phillip Baykeeper with Melbourne Water

The Baykeeper participated in six workshops of the Drainage and Waterways Customer Council convened by Melbourne Water to support their Waterways and Drainage Investment Plan. The council provided strategic advice on waterways management through the lens of the customer, and input to the Melbourne Water 2021 Price Submission to set water prices. Represented stakeholders included six local governments, State Emergency Services, Victorian Planning Authority, Urban Development Institute of Australia, Werribee River Association, Yarra River Association, Port Phillip EcoCentre, Friends of Steele Creek, an 'engaged community' member, a 'broader community' member and a Special Services Charges customer. The 11 meetings were ably chaired by Werribee Riverkeeper John Forrester. Melbourne Water is commended for their initiative in bringing together such a diverse group of stakeholders, presenting a unique opportunity for knowledge exchange.

Advocating for change

As part of our strategy to Advocate for change, EcoCentre staff generously share original research and topic expertise with decision-makers through a range of policy submissions, surveys, consultation panels and parliamentary hearings each year. This year's 14 submission topics included the circular economy, and community action on climate change. Written submissions can be read at ecocentre.com/submissions.

Josh Burns MP and The Hon Mark Butler, Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Energy, on a visit to the EcoCentre.



Pam O'Neil, April Seymore and Keith Badger, with Clifford Hayes MLC and James Newbury MP.

Enable



Outcome

The EcoCentre is an efficient and effective, forward thinking organisation with an excellent reputation.

Strategies

Outstanding people. Recruit, retain, manage and develop skilled and diverse staff.

Best practice. Ensure best practice through high-quality planning, monitoring and evaluation.

Strong finances. Maintain financial security via a range of sources.

Robust systems. Consolidate systems and policies including HR, IT, membership, communications and marketing.

Excellent governance. Maintain a strong committee of management and best practice governance.

Inspiring Facilities. Develop and implement a strategy for a new fit-for-future community building that enables our innovation and growth.

Activities in 2019–20 included:

Redeveloping the EcoCentre, Community investments and strategic activities, Membership and reach, Awards.



Success indicators

Maintained high levels of satisfaction with funders, government agencies, project partners and Affiliates	
Target: 90% of stakeholders report a high level of satisfaction with the quality and conduct of our work	Actual: Full stakeholder survey in 2021
Redevelopment strategy is progressing against milestones	
Target: 90% of milestones met	Actual: Progressed to Detailed Design

'I was impressed by the prolific and sensitive partnership model, sophisticated original research and distinguished track record for on-ground action with diverse audiences and institutions.'

- Kenneth Harrison AM KSJ

Chairman of the Royal Botanic
Gardens Victoria 2014-2020

Redevelopment: An EcoCentre where we all belong

At a time when Australians are increasingly seeking ways to connect and create tangible change, the EcoCentre's team, with its growing volunteer force and expert network, are equipped to scale up community-led recovery for the climate, health and economic challenges ahead. However, our cottage facilities are no longer fit-for-purpose for demonstrating sustainable practice, meeting capacity demands or accessibility requirements.

This year, the EcoCentre worked closely with City of Port Phillip to complete beautiful Detailed Design for a new community environment hub, which includes community space triple the size of the EcoCentre's current meeting room to house excursions and educator professional development workshops as well as community workshops, meetings and volunteer training sessions; the first community-led citizen science lab in Australia; a fully equipped community kitchen; plus gardens, nature-play nooks and accessible decks. This beautiful design will be net zero carbon in operation and construction and is set to achieve a 6-Star Green Star World Leadership sustainable design rating.

The City of Port Phillip has committed \$2.75 million, covering 50% of the capital redevelopment costs, subject to matched funding. The EcoCentre Committee of Management and Executive Officer continue to

seek matching funds for the new design, which to date has inspired incredible letters of support to the Minister for the Environment and Climate Change, the Hon Lily D'Ambrosio, from over 150 members, partner organisations and Ambassadors, and earned support from parliamentary members across four parties. To ensure our achievements are well-articulated and our work is sustained by a wide network of supporters, we engaged Wendy Brooks and Partners to strengthen our fundraising capabilities.

To ensure we sustain quality programs, partnerships, experiences and impacts during the time of growth-related disruption, the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation has funded training and workshops for our team over two years. A working group has commenced in-depth planning with guidance from David Rosenbaum, PhD, Australia's expert in change management in not-for-profits. As always, the EcoCentre plans to pay forward the lessons learned during this process by freely sharing our own case studies and mentoring peer organisations.

Together with the City of Port Phillip and our partners, we will continue to advocate for visionary facilities by seeking contributions to match the remaining costs of redevelopment and expansion of our programs for increased impact.



Community investments and strategic activities

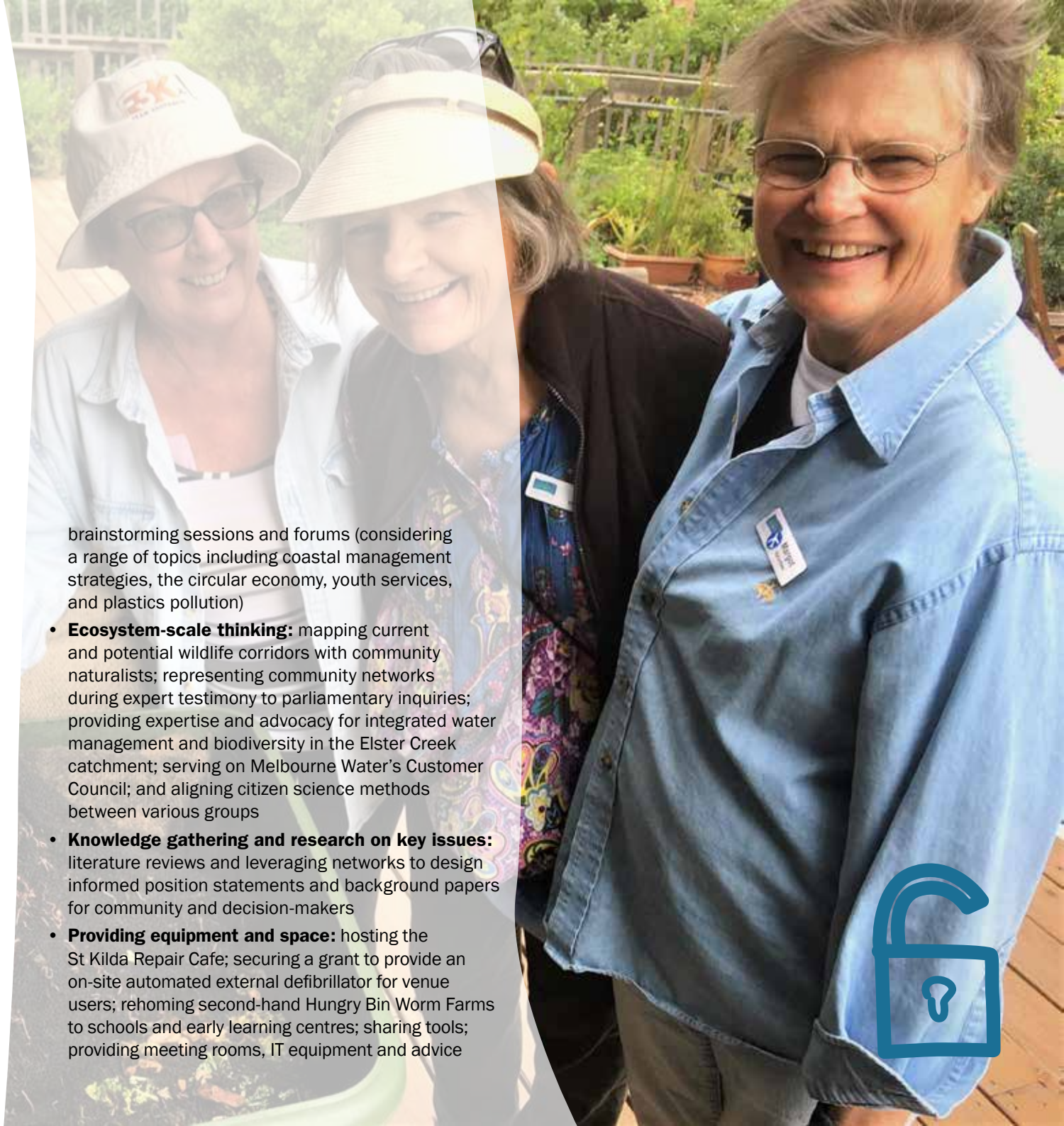
Some activities conducted each year are outside funded projects; however, they provide strategic value on behalf of our members. These activities involve knowledge sharing, network building and practical support that accelerates sustainability in our daily lives, business best practice and government systems. They typically involve a mix of work funded by donations and expertise volunteered by our tireless team.

This year, staff and committee members strategically contributed their time to:

- **Affiliate and partner support:** attending partners' annual general meetings and events; facilitating strategic planning workshops for groups; hosting grant writing bees; supporting project development; and writing letters of recommendation
- **Building the next generation of advocates:** mentoring students and pre-service teachers; participating in research projects; hosting 22 internships; supporting students and youth in the Climate Strike; and providing career advice and professional references
- **Building community connections:** community radio appearances and radio program hosting; attending ceremonies and celebration events; stall hosting at the Zero Waste Festival and Marine Conservation Festival; speaking at film screenings and partners' events; and providing volunteer support and social inclusion activities
- **Community outreach initiatives:** advocating for waterway protection during reforms to environmental laws; partnering with local artists; responding to community enquiries and reports of dead or injured wildlife; and peer reviewing citizen science
- **Cross-sectoral relationship building:** collaborative consulting for government and government agencies by attending events and participation in various co-design workshops; science communication support to research labs; serving consultation panels,

brainstorming sessions and forums (considering a range of topics including coastal management strategies, the circular economy, youth services, and plastics pollution)

- **Ecosystem-scale thinking:** mapping current and potential wildlife corridors with community naturalists; representing community networks during expert testimony to parliamentary inquiries; providing expertise and advocacy for integrated water management and biodiversity in the Elster Creek catchment; serving on Melbourne Water's Customer Council; and aligning citizen science methods between various groups
- **Knowledge gathering and research on key issues:** literature reviews and leveraging networks to design informed position statements and background papers for community and decision-makers
- **Providing equipment and space:** hosting the St Kilda Repair Cafe; securing a grant to provide an on-site automated external defibrillator for venue users; rehoming second-hand Hungry Bin Worm Farms to schools and early learning centres; sharing tools; providing meeting rooms, IT equipment and advice



Membership and reach

Together with direct membership registration, the EcoCentre implemented complimentary lifetime membership offers for donors and regular volunteers in recognition of the diverse, vital contributions made by our community towards our mission. Many lapsed members renewed as part of our 20th birthday celebrations. The EcoCentre currently has 697 lifetime members.

The EcoCentre built on its growing digital presence, publishing over 20 digital videos and 15 blogs. These provided new ways for the community to learn about and connect with our local environment and learn how to take action, particularly during the COVID-19 lockdown period. Our website achieved record site visits and our reach was further boosted by regular guest spots on Triple R's Radio Marinara (102.7 FM) and 3CR Out of the Blue (855 AM). EcoCentre staff and programs were also profiled in articles by *The Age*, ABC News and Judith Lucy's podcast *Overwhelmed and Dying*. EcoCentre staff also published guest articles in the global Waterkeeper Alliance blog and *Eingana*, the journal of Environment Education Victoria.

'Thank you for all the great work you do for the environment and community ... community action and movements are so important and will create real change.'

– Adam Dunsford, donor and lifetime member

Awards

The EcoCentre was proud to have projects recognised as finalists of three awards this year:

- Clean Bay Blueprint – Finalist, **Clean Bay/Waterway Award**, Keep Victoria Beautiful Awards
- Alive Outside – Finalist, **Protection of the Environment Award**, Keep Victoria Beautiful Awards
- Our Catchment – Finalist, **Sylvia Earle Ocean Conservation Award**, MY HERO International Film Festival



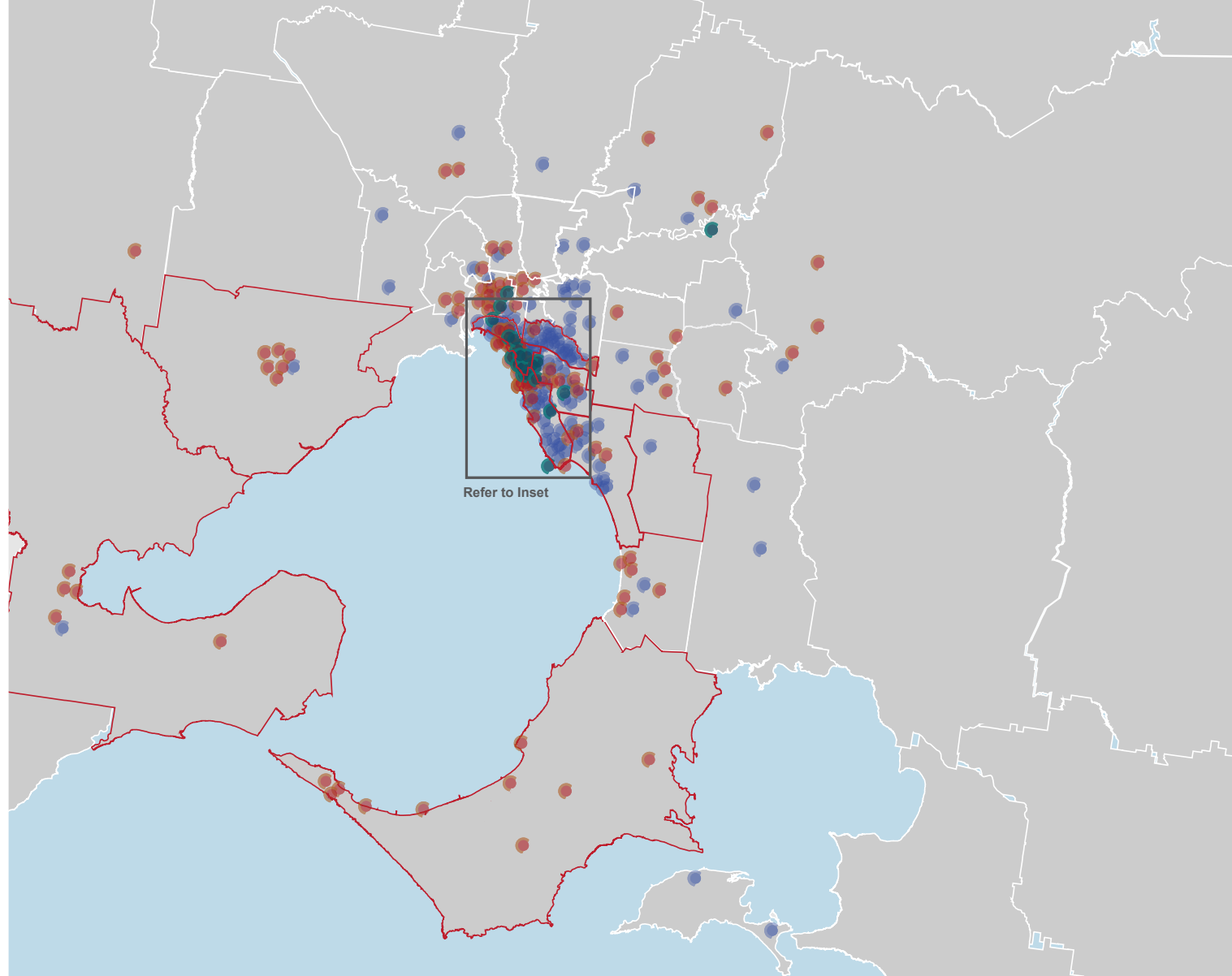
720,000+
people reached via
EcoCentre digital
platforms

119
suburbs reached by
EcoCentre programs,
projects and
partnerships

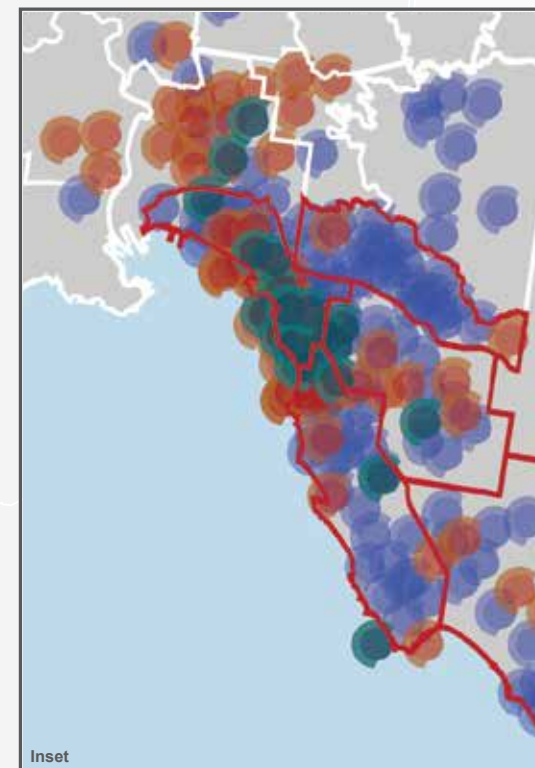
'The EcoCentre is a beacon of integrity, hope and inspiration, practically and educationally.'
– Port Phillip resident, Port Phillip Budget submission

EcoCentre

School Program, Partnered Organisations and Affiliate Reach 2019/20



- School Program: Melbourne Region**
+ 9 School Programs within Regional Victoria, and
2 Interstate School Programs
- Affiliates**
+ 6 Statewide Affiliate Organisations
- Partnered Organisations**
+ 6 Statewide Partnered Organisations and
3 International Partnered Organisations
- Partnered Local Government Area Boundaries**
- Local Government Areas**



Affiliates in Action

EcoCentre Affiliation is open to not-for-profit groups engaged in environmental projects or projects aimed at building and strengthening communities and include an environmental component. We provide a hub for 27 Affiliate groups to conduct meetings and trainings. We cross-promote their events and share resources within this action network. Below are annual highlights from several of our diverse Affiliate organisations.

Beach Patrol

Beach Patrol and Love Our Street form an organised network of volunteer-based beach and street-cleaning community groups across Victoria. Each group is defined by its suburb, consists of local residents and is named after its postcode. Currently, Beach Patrol has 30 groups and Love Our Street has 20 groups, comprising approximately 5,000 volunteers.

We launched our LitterStopper app for iOS and Android to enable groups and individuals to record details of their clean-ups and upload them to our database. Despite group cleans being suspended in March 2020 due to COVID-19, group and individual cleans were still able to remove 2.5 tonnes of litter from the environment this year. LitterStopper recorded over 386,000 pieces of plastic. Numerous corporate group cleans – involving small companies to large national corporations – were undertaken during the last year, giving some of their staff an insight into the serious situation of plastic pollution in our environment.

www.beachpatrol.com.au



Christ Church Community Centre

Our community support includes 24 volunteers helping provide nutritious meals each Wednesday evening and food parcels during weekdays to assist people who are experiencing financial difficulty. We also run a program of activities to address loneliness. Traditionally, these programs are designed to work in groups, as teams and in person. As physical gathering limits continued to change during the pandemic, we have seen gardeners become cooks, quilters and mask makers, and cooks become gardeners as we adjust to the varying needs and fit in with government guidelines. The ability to adapt and do things differently is what 2020 has been about.

We are fortunate to have our kitchen garden, which continues to support the food programs by providing fresh herbs and vegetables. Composting, weeding and plant propagation are some of the regular activities that keep the gardeners busy. With regular workshops, tools, support and training provided, volunteers are welcome to join in, share skills and learn from one another about growing and caring for the garden. While we are unable to meet in person, we have set up a Facebook group and are making the most of the online version of keeping socially connected.

The Garden Nomads program is running when public health protocols allow. **Garden Nomads** are individual volunteers who usually work with elderly, frail or disabled local residents who are unable to care for their garden unaided, but are still living independently and benefit from the opportunity for the social interaction this program offers. New Nomads welcome!

www.ccm.org.au

Climate for Change

Climate for Change supports people to have effective conversations about climate change and to take action that will inspire others. The events of 2020 meant that our flagship program, **Climate Conversations**, had to move online. Though initially feeling a bit nervous about how it would go, our online conversations have allowed us to tap into communities that we would not have otherwise been able to access. This is a very exciting prospect for the growth and impact of our conversations moving forward.

In early 2020 we also released our *Impact Report*, a thorough evaluation of our Climate Conversations, which found they are a unique organising tool within the climate movement. The report demonstrated the ability of our Climate Conversation model to reach new audiences that other environmental organisations have historically found challenging to tap into, including the 'wavering middle'. Read the full report at climateforchange.org.au/our_impact.

There are many ways to get involved with Climate for Change. Our MP Engagement Groups, which help us to better connect with our parliamentary representatives through letters and emails, including one group historically convened at the EcoCentre, are now held via Zoom.

www.climateforchange.org.au



Earthcare St Kilda

Earthcare St Kilda is a non-profit volunteer group that works in partnership with local government, state government bodies and specialists to improve the natural resources of the City of Port Phillip and Elster Creek. COVID-19 has had an impact on most of our work in 2020: breakwater rubbish pick-ups ceased in December; the collection of Northern Pacific seastars was suspended in May; all foreshore and Elwood Canal plantings by Friends of Elster Creek are on hold. Penguin Guiding stopped in March due to restrictions and we launched a monthly newsletter to keep the community connected. Our penguin research was permitted to continue until early July and these efforts were focused on accurately determining the colony's population size and detecting any signs of decline. Meanwhile, a Coastcare Victoria grant has enabled us to build the new St Kilda Penguin visitor app, and we continue to consult on the St Kilda Pier Redevelopment plans, which include better protection for the iconic little penguins.

www.earthcarestkilda.org.au

Elsternwick Park Association

The Elsternwick Park Association (EPA) is a community group with a vision to create a beautifully designed and maintained wetland and parkland in the Elsternwick Park Nature Reserve. This year has been a momentous year, with highlights including:

- development and approval of the Elsternwick Park Nature Reserve Masterplan
- completion of 12-month baseline fauna surveys
- launch of Elsternwick Park Love Our Streets program
- nest box construction workshop with subsequent successful breeding of eastern rosellas in the reserve
- approval of a new management model for the reserve
- commencement of construction of the first stage of the Masterplan implementation, a chain of ponds
- growth in membership leading to over 70 financial members and over 1,000 Facebook members

A huge thank you to a fantastic committee and the many, many volunteers. A huge thank you also needs to go to both Bayside councillors and Bayside Council officers. It has been a delight to work with Bayside on this historic project.

www.elsternwickpark.org



Jewish Ecological Coalition (JECO)/ Jewish Climate Network

The past year has been one of intense activity for JECO as we have grown from being a fully volunteer-run organisation to one with two employees, supported by a highly skilled and engaged board. We have focused our attention and activities on the issue of climate change through the **Jewish Climate Network** initiative, actively fundraising to enable the appointment of Program and Communications Officer, Elinor Hasenfratz and inaugural CEO, Joel Lazar. The aim of the Jewish Climate Network is to catalyse the Jewish community to support and strongly advocate for action on climate change.

The Jewish Climate Network facilitated and presented sessions at many Jewish community events and conferences, bringing the issue of climate change to a wide cross-section of the community. One of the highlights of the year was a major community event featuring Margaret Klein Salamon, a Jewish American author and founder of Climate Mobilization. We were also actively involved in climate emergency declarations in various local government areas, engaging in successful advocacy and community organising campaigns; and we participated in the youth-led climate strikes as part of two global days of action.

In addition to the activities and events under the Jewish Climate Network banner, JECO continued to support the St Kilda Repair Cafe in partnership with the Port Phillip EcoCentre and ran a number of other community events including a Community Garden Tour for the Jewish festival of Shavuot and a Reverse Garage Sale, where people brought old items from their home to be repurposed or recycled.

www.jeco.org.au / www.jewishclimate.org

Kids In Nature Network (KINN)

Founded in 2011, Kids In Nature Network (KINN) acts to empower, connect and grow a movement of individuals and organisations that get kids back outside and connected with nature. KINN provides a unique meeting place for collaboration and capacity-building through facilitating the sharing of experiences, ideas and knowledge. Our network is diverse, with leaders from health, education, environment, urban planning, outdoor recreation, community, government, business, arts and many other sectors.

In September 2019, we launched our first Victorian Threatened Species Children's Art Competition outdoor exhibition of 40 paintings by finalists in the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne. We also took a selection from the exhibition to the EcoCentre's Community Enviro Fest at the St Kilda Botanic Gardens in December.

In April 2020, we held our 7th Nature Play Week with a mere day's notice. As all Victorian face-to-face events were cancelled due to COVID-19, Nature Play Week was relaunched as an online campaign with easy and inspiring nature-play ideas for families unable to leave their home. Our most popular activity, which reached over 25,000 families far and wide, was a backyard camp-out with many families sending us pictures of their camps.

www.kidsinnaturenetwork.org.au

www.natureplayweek.org.au

Marine Care Ricketts Point

Marine Care Ricketts Point had a very busy year until the pandemic struck. We have since learnt to embrace Zoom, and held our first ever online speaker evening of the year in September featuring Mark Rodrigue.

We participated in Coastcare's Summer by the Sea Program and ran a rock pool ramble, conducted intertidal monitoring with Parks Victoria rangers, and participated in the Great Victorian Fish Count and Sea Slug Census. Last October we had a snorkel session in the pool for beginners and a refresher course, and in March we trained new snorkel leaders to help run our weekend snorkel sessions at Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary. We were able to hold our annual winter solstice snorkel as COVID-19 restrictions had eased in June, with quite a few of our snorkelers braving the cold water conditions. We ran our last Beach Patrol 3193 in March but are hoping to get back on the beaches and into the water again once safe to do so.

Our president Beth Jensen along with committee member Alexis Letters-Haydock wrote a submission to the Victorian Parliamentary inquiry into ecosystem decline which was co-signed by 8 other local environmental groups. We have been involved with Bayside Emergency Climate Action Network in working with Bayside City Council on their climate emergency action plan.

<http://marinecare.org.au/>



Port Phillip Bicycle Users' Group (BUG)

In this year of COVID, the Port Phillip BUG has been delighted to see so many people getting out on their bikes, enjoying their neighbourhoods, teaching kids to ride, and seeing teenagers constructing ad-hoc mountain bike tracks in underused spaces. Last year, the City of Port Phillip recognised the climate emergency that we're in. While we've seen significant moves away from fossil fuels for electricity, transport is our second largest emission sector and little has been done to decarbonise it.

We know that people really enjoy cycling when they feel safe. Over the past few years we've been taking our local Councillors out on bike rides to see the conditions and opportunities for themselves. In February, we visited Inkerman St to see where a safe separated bike lane is planned. There is still a long way to go!

This year we've also mourned the passing of our past president Georgie Fyfe-Jamieson. Georgie's enthusiasm and grace continues to inspire us, and we will get together to honour her memory when conditions allow.

www.ppbug.org



South Port Uniting Church

In a year of disruption, the Simply Living Community Garden at Port Melbourne Uniting Church continued to provide a place of community connection. While face-to-face activities were suspended or moved online from March, the garden remained open for harvesting all year. The composting area was closed for several months during winter but when it reopened, it continued to be well used. A pop-up **Community Care Garden** was started just before Stage 4 restrictions to provide a lockdown activity, a way to stay connected and share concerns and a place to visit during daily exercise. Other highlights of the last 12 months included receipt of a rotating compost sifter made by the Port Phillip Men's Shed, and expanding habitat planting for beneficial insects and other wildlife.

www.spuc.org.au

Port Phillip Emergency Climate Action Network (PECAN)

The Port Phillip Emergency Climate Action Network (PECAN) was formed in late 2019 and is composed of twelve community groups in Port Phillip that have environmental and climate action missions. In the short time we have been active, our activities have included a host of physical and digital events. PECAN's forums on topics including Heat, Fire and Flood and The Gas Fallacy have engaged almost 1000 participants, both in-person and online. Upskilling workshops have developed campaigning skills for young people, and collaborative webinars with Sustainable Port Phillip have allowed us to reach broader sections of the Port Phillip community.

One of our key achievements is the distillation of a climate emergency plan for use by councils and community groups to local climate emergency campaigners. We have also documented a comparison of best-practice sustainability initiatives of inner Melbourne councils, and made submissions to various local, state, and federal inquiries. We have been involved with the EcoCentre redevelopment project planning to build a net carbon zero building with energy generation and water harvesting capabilities.

pecan.org.au



Stop Adani Macnamara

After an inspirational day at the springtime Global Climate Strike, like many activist groups, Stop Adani Macnamara (SAM) was forced to leave the streets and marketplaces and reach out to our communities via webinars and Zoom meetings due to COVID-19. Our activities have centred on the three pillars of the mission to stop the construction of the Adani Carmichael coalmine in Queensland:

- **Stop the Money:** we have joined other Stop Adani groups throughout Australia to campaign against companies providing goods and services to Adani by using rallies, leaflet drops and social media to get our message across. At the time of writing, 80 companies worldwide have publicly stated they will not deal with Adani.
- **Change the Politics:** we have met regularly with our federal MP Josh Burns and count ourselves among the environmental groups that have, in his words to the Parliament, 'engaged constructively, positively and passionately' with him on critical environmental questions. Our detailed submissions to the review of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth) exposed the shortcomings of the Act and suggested improvements. Locally, SAM has presented to the City of Port Phillip the case NOT to give tenders to companies that do business with Adani. SAM is now working collectively with other local environmental groups in the Port Phillip Emergency Climate Action Network (PECAN), sponsoring a well-attended climate change forum earlier this year and an upcoming webinar featuring nationwide experts on the dangers of a gas-led economic recovery.
- **Grow the Movement:** through our regular newsletters and continuous broadening of our local networks, we use every opportunity to broadcast the urgency of acting now to stop the development of the Adani coalmine and spare the planet the tens of millions of tonnes of carbon emissions that would be produced over the life of this mine.

We thank the EcoCentre for providing us with resources and fellowship.

www.facebook.com/StopAdaniMacnamara



Tangaroa Blue Foundation

Tangaroa Blue Foundation wrapped up two Port Phillip Bay Fund projects this year. The first was our ongoing **Operation Clean Sweep®** program, which engaged citizen scientists, plastic industry members, and local and state government agencies in the identification of plastic resin pellet (PRP) (aka nurdles) hotspots, as well as the implementation of industry practice and infrastructure to reduce the loss of these nurdles into the environment. Over the life of the two-year project, more than 500 site inspections took place. Additionally, engagement with the Victorian EPA led to the release of *Guidance for handling PRPs*, nine additional plastic and logistics companies took the pledge to Operation Clean Sweep®, and one-third of 80 sites were assessed to have improved with fewer PRPs being found during audits.

The second project was the **Let's Strain the Drains**, an initiative delivered by Tangaroa Blue Foundation, Cleanwater Group and Sustainability Victoria, with support from Wyndham, Hobsons Bay, Moreland, Maribyrnong, Kingston and Greater Dandenong councils, and data analysis support from the University of New South Wales. Through the project, 120 stormwater traps were installed in four different land-use categories across the six partner municipalities. These traps were emptied every six weeks from October 2019 to June 2020, with all litter items sorted and recorded in the Australian Marine Debris Initiative Database. In total, more than 75,931 macro litter items and 677,114 micro litter items were captured. We are now working with Sustainability Victoria and local councils on possible source reduction projects based on preventing these types of items from entering the stormwater system and Port Phillip Bay into the future.

A big thank you to all our volunteers, partners and supporters!

www.tangaroablue.org

WEAll Youth

WEAll Youth inspires young people to take action towards shaping a positive future, and tries to connect these like-minded individuals to co-create a human and ecological wellbeing economy. In 2019, we were thrilled to be selected as one of the 50 Youth Solutions featured in the United Nations Youth Solutions Report, of more than 4,300 solutions submitted from 170 countries. WEAll Youth was invited to present about our approaches at the EcoCentre Community Enviro Fest.

Last September, we were lucky to participate in Australian Unity's panel discussion on 'Ideas for a Grown-up Economy', where we spoke on the importance of adopting a circular economy. A circular economy involves designing reusable products, extending the life of existing products and using waste as a resource. Currently, our economy operates on a linear model, which is reflected in our preference for producing single-use and disposable products made from oil, a non-renewable fossil fuel, which are responsible for generating vast amounts of plastic waste. Clearly, a linear model is not sustainable, though moving to a circular economy involves rethinking business models, adopting renewable energy, and recycling materials.

WEAll Youth is a new but growing global youth network and movement, which aims at inspiring young people to act towards a new economy in which people and planet instead of profits are at the heart of the system. Our local members are Tess Jenkins, Cindy Chen, Anna Duan, Jordyn Swaab, Jem Kleinitz-Lister and Poppy Ashby.

Facebook: [WeAllYouth](#)

www.wellbeingeconomy.org/youth



Westgate Biodiversity: Bili Nursery & Landcare

Westgate Biodiversity: Bili Nursery & Landcare manages and operates Westgate Park and Bili Nursery, bringing together our expertise with growing and promoting indigenous plants and the largest and longest running community-led revegetation project in inner Melbourne. Bili nursery supplies local indigenous plants to the public, councils, commercial clients and landscapers at affordable prices and with an established provenance from the sandbelt suburbs, and inner north and west Melbourne. Our volunteers produce quality plants representing over 300 local species, promoting their use in the community, in council urban renewal projects in Fishermans Bend and with private landscapers – aiming to improve urban habitat and restore our local ecology.

Bili Landcare manages the 48-hectare Westgate Park, a showcase site of revegetated ecological communities that highlights the diversity of plants and animals of inner south-east Melbourne. Westgate Park is renowned as one of Melbourne's premier birdwatching locations and contains over 350 local plant species arranged in zones representing the historical vegetation of our coastal location. We host community volunteering days, corporate events, bird surveys, and run citizen science projects to continue maintaining and planting the forests, heathlands, wetlands and salt lakes.

Westgate Biodiversity formed in June 2018, merging the Friends of Westgate Park and St Kilda Indigenous Nursery Coop (SKINC). *Bili* is Boon Wurrung for small lizard or skink. Westgate Biodiversity aims to actively engage the community with nature, ensuring that indigenous vegetation is valued, understood for its importance to biodiversity, and widely adopted across our urban landscape.

www.westgatebiodiversity.org.au

Our Best Mates

Major partner

City of Port Phillip launched the EcoCentre and provides us with our council-managed building and an annual funding agreement to cover basic operational costs, enabling us to build new partnerships and generate additional income. We value their longstanding collaborative support since 1999.

Major funding

Bayside City Council

Helen Macpherson Smith Trust

Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation

Victorian Government – Port Phillip Bay Fund

Projects funding

Australian Government – Communities Environment Program

Australian Government – Volunteer Grants

Australian Government – Citizen Science Grants

CERES Community Environment Park

City of Port Phillip – Local Festivals Fund

City of Stonnington

Environmental Resources Management (ERM) Foundation

National Centre for Coasts and Climate

National Geographic

PMF Foundation

RMIT University

Scouts Victoria

South Melbourne Community Chest

Sustainability Victoria

Transurban

Waterkeeper Alliance



Government agency collaborators

Coastcare Victoria
Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)
Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning (DELWP)
Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA)
Melbourne Water
Metropolitan Waste and Resource Recovery Group
Parks Victoria
Sustainability Victoria

Advisers and Ambassadors

Genevieve Timmons
John Spierings
Jon Brunner
Kenneth Harrison AM KSJ
Mitty Williams, The Kimberley Foundation
Nick Moraitis

Benefactors

Ann Byrne
Anonymous (Caulfield)
Anonymous (Port Melbourne)
Anonymous (Richmond)
Anonymous (St Kilda)
Isobel Booksmythe
Keith and Debby Badger
Lis Fenwick
Malcolm Dow and Elinor Knappert
Sally Clarke
Ross Illingworth



Affiliates

Animal Liberation Victoria
Australian Landcare International
Australian Youth Climate Coalition Macnamara
Beach Patrol/Love Our Street
Brighton Playgroup Inc.
Christ Church St Kilda
Climate for Change
Earthcare St Kilda
Elsternwick Park Association
Elwood Floods Action Group
Environment Education Victoria
Jane Goodall's Roots & Shoots
Jewish Ecological Coalition (JECO)
Kids In Nature Network (KINN)
Landcare Victoria Inc.
Marine Care Ricketts Point
Mary and Basil Organic Community Garden
Port Phillip Bicycle Users' Group (BUG)
Port Phillip Climate Action Network (PECAN)
RAW Australia
South Port Uniting Church
St Kilda Community Gardens Club
Stop Adani Macnamara
Tangaroa Blue Foundation
Veg Out Community Gardens St Kilda
WEAll Youth
Westgate Biodiversity: Bili Nursery & Landcare

Consultants

Alive Events Agency
Dr David Rosenbaum, Optimum NFP
John Leung, Barrister
Kate Jones, Kate Jones Design
Russell Kennedy Lawyers
Wendy Brooks and Associates

Partner organisations

1st Belmont Scouts
1st Diamond Creek Scouts
1st Ferny Creek Scouts
1st Kallista Scouts
1st Monbulk Scouts
1st North Balwyn Scouts
1st Red Hill Scouts
1st Seaford Scouts
1st Sunbury Scouts
1st Tullapark Scouts
3CR Out of the Blue
3rd Sunbury Scouts
3RRR Radio Marinara
5 Gyres Institute
Alive Events Agency
Anti-Toxic Waste Alliance
Astor Cinema
Australian Conservation Foundation
Back2Bikes
Balaclava Love Our Street
3183 & 3185
Balcombe Estuary Reserve
Group (BERG) Mount Martha
Bayside Community Plant Nursery
Beaumaris Scouts
Bellarine Catchment Network
Bili Nursery
Biome
Blackburn Scouts
Blairgowrie Yacht Squadron
Boon Wurrung Foundation
Breathe a Blue Ocean
Brighton Scouts
Brighton Sea Scouts

Bunnings Port Melbourne
Caulfield/Caulfield South Love
Our Street 3162
City of Greater Geelong
City of Kingston
City of Voices
City of Wyndham
Classic Cinema Elsternwick
Climate Choir Melbourne
CrowdSpot
David Flew
Deakin University
Dive2U
Diversity
Dolphin Research Institute
Dromana Sea Scouts
Earthcare St Kilda
Elsternwick Park Love Our
Street 3186
Eltham Scouts
Elwood Health and Natural
Wellbeing Clinic
Elwood Love Our Street 3184
Elwood Plogging Group
Essendon Scouts
Everest Le Page Rover Crew
First Step
Fishcare Victoria
Footscray Scouts
Frankston Beach Patrol 3199
Friends of Cobbledicks Ford
Friends of Elster Creek
Friends of St Kilda
Botanic Gardens

Friends of Werribee River Park
Glee Plus
Glo Health Elsternwick
Going Green Solutions
Gold and Grit Photography
GoodCompany
Gordon TAFE
Green Clean Magic
Greensong Ecopsychology
Grumpy Swimmer Bookshop
Habitat HQ
Hazel Glen Scouts
Heart of Seeds
Kenya Lake Victoria Waterkeeper
Kenya Marine Fisheries
Research Institute
Kids Teaching Kids
Landcare Australia
Launch Housing
Linden New Art
Lush Cosmetics
Lutman Films
Moonraker Dolphin Swims
Monash University
Mornington Peninsula Shire
National Centre for Coasts
and Climate
Organika Hair Elwood
Penhalluriack's Building Supplies
PluginHUMAN
PJT Green Plumbing
Polperro Dolphin Swims
Polywood Outdoors
Port Phillip Summer Rangers

Port Phillip Youth Services
Reptile Encounters
Roving Refills Frankston
RMIT University
Rye Beach Patrol 3941
Sandringham Scouts
Scouts Victoria
Seaford Beach Patrol 3198
Serene Lau, artist
Sir Dallas Brooks Rovers
South East Water
South Melbourne Lifesaving Club
South Melbourne Market
South Pacific/St Kilda Sea Baths
South Port Singers
St Columba's Primary School
Climate Change Choir
St Kilda Beach Patrol 3182
SunButter Skincare
Tarius McArthur
The Leaf Store, Elwood
The Plastics Lab
The Source Bulk Foods Balaclava
This Week in St Kilda
Tomorrow's Leaders for
Sustainability
Trash Puppets
University of Melbourne
Unpackaged Eco
Veg Out Choir
Vegilicious
Walks 101
Waterkeeper Alliance
Wathaurong Aboriginal
Cooperative

Werribee Beach Patrol 3030
Werribee Love Our Street 3030
Werribee River Association
Werribee Scouts
Wurringga Scouts
Worcester Polytechnic
Institute (WPI)
Yarra Energy Foundation
Yarra Riverkeeper Association
YHA Australia
YHA Melbourne Central
YHA Melbourne Metro
Zero Waste Victoria

Schools

Albert Park College
 Albert Park Primary School
 Alphington Primary School
 Armadale Primary School
 Aspendale Primary School
 Banyan Fields Primary School
 Beaumaris North Primary School
 Beaumaris Primary School
 Beaumaris Secondary College
 Bialik College
 Black Rock Primary School
 Brighton Beach Primary School
 Brighton Grammar School
 Brighton Primary School
 Brighton Secondary College
 Camberwell High School
 Cairnlea Park Primary School
 Carey Baptist Grammar School
 Carnegie Primary School
 Caulfield Grammar School
 Caulfield Primary School
 Caulfield South Primary School
 Cheltenham Primary School
 Cheltenham Secondary College
 Christian Brothers College,
 St Kilda
 Coburg West Primary School
 Damascus College
 Eastwood Primary School
 Elsternwick Primary School
 Elwood College
 Elwood Primary School
 Epping Views Primary School

Firbank Grammar School
 Galilee Regional Catholic
 Primary School
 Gardenvale Primary School
 Geelong Grammar School,
 Toorak Campus
 Glen Huntly Primary School
 Glen Waverley Primary School
 Glenferrie Primary School
 Grovedale West Primary School
 Haileybury College, Brighton
 Hampton Primary School
 Hester Hornbrook Academy,
 South Melbourne
 Holy Trinity Catholic Primary
 School, Eltham North
 Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar School
 Kew High School
 Kilbreda College
 Kingston Heath Primary School
 Korowa Anglican Girls' School
 Korumburra Secondary College
 Lauriston Girls' School
 Lloyd Street Primary School
 Loyola College
 Lumen Christi Catholic College
 Mac.Robertson Girls'
 High School
 MacKillop College, Werribee
 Malvern Central Primary School
 Malvern Valley Primary School
 Mansfield Steiner School
 Mary MacKillop Primary School
 Melbourne Girls' College

Melbourne Girls Grammar School
 Mentone Grammar School
 Mentone Primary School
 Merewether High School
 Middle Park Primary School
 Montague Continuing
 Education Centre
 Monterey Secondary College
 Moorabbin Primary School
 Mount Scopus Memorial College
 Mount Waverley Primary School
 Murrumbeena Primary School
 Newhaven College
 North Melbourne Primary School
 Notre Dame College
 Ormond Primary School
 Our Lady of Good Counsel
 Primary School
 Our Lady Star of the Sea
 Primary School
 Penleigh and Essendon
 Grammar School
 Phoenix P-12 Community College
 Point Lonsdale Primary School
 Port Melbourne Primary School
 Port Phillip Specialist School
 Ringwood Secondary College
 Ripponlea Primary School
 Sacre Coeur
 Sandringham College
 Sandringham East
 Primary School
 Sandringham Primary School

Sirius College, Sunshine West
 South Melbourne Park
 Primary School
 South Melbourne Primary School
 St Agnes Primary School, Highett
 St Anne's Catholic Primary
 School, Kew East
 St Carlo Borromeo
 Primary School
 St Catherine's School,
 Moorabbin
 St Columba's Primary
 School, Elwood
 St Finbar's Primary School
 St James Catholic Primary
 School, Brighton
 St Joan of Arc School, Brighton
 St John Vianney's Primary
 School, Mulgrave
 St Joseph's Primary School,
 Black Rock
 St Joseph's Primary School,
 Elsternwick
 St Joseph's Primary School,
 Malvern
 St Kevin's Primary School,
 Ormond
 St Kilda and Balaclava
 Kindergarten
 St Kilda Park Primary School
 St Kilda Primary School
 St Leonard's College
 St Louis de Montfort's
 School, Aspendale
 St Mary's Primary School, Ararat

St Mary's Primary School,
 Hampton
 St Mary's Primary School,
 Malvern East
 St Mary's Primary School,
 St Kilda East
 St Michael's Grammar School
 St Michael's Primary School,
 Berwick
 St Patrick's College
 Star of the Sea College
 Stella Maris Primary School
 Strathcona Girls Grammar
 Valkstone Primary School
 Wembley Primary School
 Wesley College
 Yeshivah – Beth Rivkah Colleges





Early learning centres

Ada Mary A'Beckett
Albert Park Kinder
Alef Early Learning Centre (formerly Cheder Menachem)
Armada Early Learning Centre
Brookville Kindergarten
Bubup Womindjeka
Clarendon Children's Centre
East Malvern Early Learning Centre
Explorers Early Learning, Brighton East
Genazzano Early Learning Centre
Guardian Childcare and Education, Mentone West
Guardian Childcare and Education, St Kilda North
High Street Early Learning Centre
Hornbrook Children's Centre
Ingles Street Early Learning & Kinder
John Mackenzie Kindergarten
Korowa Anglican Girls' School
Lady Forster Kindergarten
Lancaster House Child Care Centre
Lauriston Girls' School Kindergarten
Little Paddington Early Learning Centre
Little Patch Early Learning Centre
Malvern Day Nursery
Neighbourhood House Albert Park
North St Kilda Children's Centre
Poet's Grove Family Children's Centre
Samantha's Childcare Centre
The Avenue Children's Centre
Wattletree Early Learning Centre



EcoCentre Committee, 2019-20:

L-R: Dr Janie Maxwell, Lis Fenwick PhD
(Vice President), Anne Callaghan, Geoffrey
Love, Pam O'Neil (President), Tony Flude
(Secretary), Deborah Sykes, Keith Badger
(Treasurer), Isabel Robinson, Jan Cossar



EcoCentre people

Committee of Management

Pam O'Neil, President

Lis Fenwick PhD, Vice-President

Keith Badger, Treasurer (*June–March*)

Harpreet Sidhu, Treasurer (*April–June*)

Tony Flude, Secretary

Jan Cossar

Jo Wallace (*June–October*)

Anne Callaghan

Geoff Love

Isabel Robinson

Dr Janie Maxwell

Deborah Sykes

EcoCentre Public Fund Managers

Louise Kyle

Michele Hodes

Nick Capes



Vale Tony Flude

The EcoCentre community expresses our deep sorrow following the death of our Secretary Tony Flude in September 2020. We recognise with gratitude the outstanding contribution Tony made to the governance and management of Port Phillip EcoCentre over the past 15 years, as an exemplary Secretary and participant of numerous working groups and subcommittees. We acknowledge, too, his leadership and hands-on revegetation work over 20 years with the Friends of Westgate Park. The EcoCentre is better for Tony's support, friendship and mentoring of many of us. We will miss his enlivening and indomitable spirit, his generosity and his gentle considerate manner.



Staff

April Seymore, Executive Officer
Karen Jones, Education Manager
Cecile van der Burgh, Education Manager (from March)
Neil Blake, Port Phillip Baykeeper
Belinda Daly, Schools and Community Educator
Bel Evans, Community Engagement Coordinator
Ben Francischelli, Schools and Community Educator
Coco Rivarossa, Schools and Community Educator
David Giles, IT Specialist
Deb Punton, Garden Coordinator, Educator and Project Officer
Ella Ryan, Schools and Community Educator
Fam Charko, Marine Biologist and Project Officer
Josh Solomonsz, Communications and Marketing Coordinator
Kate Bulling, Schools and Community Educator
Malcolm Dow, Schools and Community Educator
Matt McArthur, Schools and Community Educator
Peter Kelly, Schools and Community Educator
Reiko Yamada, Education and Project Officer
Sharron Hunter, Schools and Early Learning Educator
Zaylee Saint-James Turner, Community Engagement Coordinator

Bookkeeper

Akshay Shah, Boutique Accounts

Key volunteers

Allan Pringle, Compost engineer
Anna Duan, Mandarin subtitling
Anne Callaghan, Admin and visitor reception
Annie Strutt, School Sustainability Festival
Daniel Cox, Trawl sample analysis team leader
Dr Christopher Johnstone, Statistical analysis
Emma Barnett, Statistical analysis
Emma McGlashan, Enviro Fest photographer
Francisca Alliende, Garden mentor and *Our Catchment* film
Geoff Love, Admin and visitor reception
Germaine de Castro Basto, Enviro Fest Coordination
Hilda Poloso, Trawl sample analysis, *Our Catchment* film and Enviro Fest
Hilmar Anton, Enviro Fest photographer
Jane Edmanson, Enviro Fest MC
Janine Stabryla, Compost engineer
Jennifer Tenner, Garden mentor
Jo Neil, Garden mentor
John Hillel, Enviro Fest photographer
Katy Li, *Our Catchment* film
Khadija Al Nabhani, Trawl sample analysis
Laura Marini, Enviro Fest Coordination and Garden Team
Louise Kyle, Admin and visitor reception
Margot Brock, Worm farm magician
Meenakshi Bhardwaj, Garden and Festivals volunteer
Nadav Zisin, Enviro Fest MC
Sha Alias, Trawl sample analysis and sunscreen project
Stephen Cramond, Trawl sample analysis and sunscreen project
Tanja Heil, Data visualisation
Victor Holder-Rodriguez, *Our Catchment* film

Multicultural Bay Ambassadors

Jinhua Xue
Niharika Sharma
Noor Salman
Saniya Dsouza

Interns

Ingrid Hamre Konglevoll, Deakin University
Kyle Lacomel, Deakin University
Lily Ferguson, Deakin University
Minh Tu, Deakin University
Megan Olasima, Deakin University
Mitchell Kornberg, Deakin University
Erica Lennox, Deakin University
Lachlan Wiles, Deakin University
Sean Patterson, Deakin University
Evan Zhang, Deakin University
Nicole Shedd, Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Peter Dentch, Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Salvatore Lombardo, Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Shelby Morrison, Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Katie Donovan, Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Spencer Hoagland, Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Thomas Lipkin, Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Eric Stultz, Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Work experience

Dora McGeown, Charlton College
Zara Jenkyn, Charlton College



Treasurer Report

Despite the suspension of most fee-for-service programs due to COVID-19, income for the year remained over \$1 million, due to a significant bequest, and the City of Port Phillip Funding Agreement value adjustment following its first value review since 2005. Consulting and grants income streams grew, including large projects with the Australian Government, Victorian Government, RMIT University, Helen Macpherson Smith Trust, Bayside City Council and others.

Payroll costs were higher as we expanded our volunteer coordination in response to the community's contribution of record-breaking volunteer hours. In addition, fourth quarter payroll reflects paying Jobkeeper 'top-ups' to eligible casual employees. Otherwise, professional services continued to be our largest expense category, reflecting obligations under various grant terms to co-deliver technical and outreach elements of projects. This signature collaborative approach in turn leveraged over \$730,000 in-kind value this year.

In January, the EcoCentre established a long-term investment fund to insulate against uncertainties during capital works, to fund emerging areas of need, and expand the vital and professional work for which the EcoCentre is recognised. The fund is aligned with our strong social and environmental values, and is capably managed by Ethical Investment Services.

Thank you to the outgoing Treasurer Keith Badger, who retired in March 2020 after eight years developing systems, income diversification strategies and an investment roadmap for the EcoCentre.

Harpreet Sidhu

Treasurer





Financial Report

Detailed income and expenditure statement for the year ended 30 June 2020

	2019/2020 \$	2018/2019 \$
INCOME		
City of Port Phillip grants	324,000	260,310
Commercial sponsors	178	2,114
Consulting	259,788	249,112
Donations	146,290	38,345
Interest	16,998	24,419
Membership	1,097	1,739
Other grants	436,766	389,430
Seminars & Education	55,771	114,800
Product sales	3,139	3,935
JobKeeper Payment and Cash Flow Booster	134,000	-
TOTAL INCOME	1,378,027	1,084,204

LESS: EXPENSES		
EMPLOYEE BENEFITS EXPENSE		
Salaries and Wages	739,109	611,258
Superannuation	66,609	54,663
Workcover	7,414	8,769
TOTAL EMPLOYEE BENEFITS EXPENSE	813,132	674,690
DEPRECIATION & AMORTISATION EXPENSE		
Depreciation	6,201	6,590
Total depreciation & amortisation expense	6,201	6,590
OTHER EXPENSE		
Accounting and audit fees	21,234	19,209
Bank charges	849	1,236
Cleaning	5,736	6,061
Computer expenses	5,342	4,723
Consumables	5,417	17,259
Electricity	2,467	3,048
Insurance	3,577	3,456
Equipment and materials	1,336	5,178
Printing, postage and stationery	4,113	4,832
Professional services	148,911	108,170
Repairs and maintenance	150	471
Seminars and training	3,470	8,347
Sundry Expenses	12,394	41,631
Subscriptions	5,123	5,971
Telephone	4,197	2,376
TOTAL OTHER EXPENSE	224,316	231,968
TOTAL EXPENSE	1,043,649	913,248
Profit before income tax	334,378	170,956



Financial Report

Statement of financial position 30 June 2020

	2020 \$	2019 \$
ASSETS		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	1,293,228	1,306,311
Trade and other receivables	13,886	50,784
Other financial assets	410,359	-
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	1,717,473	1,357,095
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Land and buildings	212,753	218,208
Plant and equipment	2,238	2,984
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	214,991	221,192
TOTAL ASSETS	1,932,464	1,578,287
LIABILITIES		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	44,542	52,567
Other financial liabilities	90,632	74,545
Provisions	64,827	67,876
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	200,001	194,988
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Provisions	4,427	-
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	4,427	-
TOTAL LIABILITIES	204,428	194,988
NET ASSETS	1,728,036	1,383,299
MEMBERS' FUNDS		
Retained profits	1,717,677	1,383,299
Financial asset reserve	10,359	-
TOTAL MEMBERS' EQUITY	1,728,036	1,383,299

STATEMENT BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

We, Pamela O'Neil and Harpreet Sidhu, being members of the Committee of the Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc, certify that:

The statements attached to this certificate give a true and fair view of the financial position and performance of the Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc during the end of the financial year of the association ending on 30 June 2020.

Dated: 13/08/2020



Pamela O'Neil (President)



Harpreet Sidhu (Treasurer)



Level 13, Freshwater Place, 2 Southbank Boulevard,
Southbank VIC 3006

Phone: 03 9690 5700
Facsimile: 03 9690 6509
Website: www.morrrows.com.au

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF PORT PHILLIP ECOCENTRE INC

Report on the Audit of the Financial Report

Qualified Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a special purpose financial report of Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc (the Association), which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2020, the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, the statement of changes in equity and the statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies, and other explanatory information.

In our opinion, except for the effects of the matter described in the Basis for Qualified Opinion section of our report, the accompanying financial report of the Association for the year ended 30 June 2020 is prepared, in all material respects, in accordance with the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012.

Basis for Qualified Opinion

As mentioned in Note 3 to the financial statements, accounting records are not available to substantiate buildings and plant and equipment amounting to \$283,017 cost and \$68,026 accumulated depreciation at balance date. The fixed asset register and accounting records for these assets date back 15 years ago and detailed records were not maintained at the time. The committee of management has determined and is of the opinion that these assets exist and that the carrying value approximates the value in use. However in the absence of a valuation and stocktake we are unable to ascertain the details and carrying amounts of these assets.

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report section of our report. We are independent of the Association in accordance with the auditor independence requirements of the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our qualified opinion.

Emphasis of Matter - Basis of Accounting

We draw attention to Note 1 of the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report is prepared to assist the Association to comply with the financial reporting provisions of the Associations Incorporations Reform Act 2012 (VIC) and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose. Our report is intended solely for the Association and should not be distributed to or used by parties other than the Association. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.



INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF PORT PHILLIP ECOCENTRE INC

Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance

The committee of management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012, and for such internal control as the committee of management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, the committee of management is responsible for assessing the the Association's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Association or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Association's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial report is located at the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board website at: https://www.auasb.gov.au/auditors_responsibilities/ar4.pdf. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

COMPILATION REPORT TO PORT PHILLIP ECOCENTRE INC

We have compiled the accompanying special purpose Detailed Income and Expenditure Statement for the year ended 30 June 2020 of Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc. The specific purpose for which the special purpose Detailed Income and Expenditure Statement has been prepared is to provide detailed additional information relating to the performance of the entity that satisfies the information needs of the committee of management.

The Responsibility of the Committee of Management

The committee of management are solely responsible for the information contained in the special purpose Detailed Income and Expenditure Statement, the reliability, accuracy and completeness of the information and for the determination that the basis used is appropriate to meet their needs and for the purpose that the special purpose Detailed Income and Expenditure Statement was prepared.

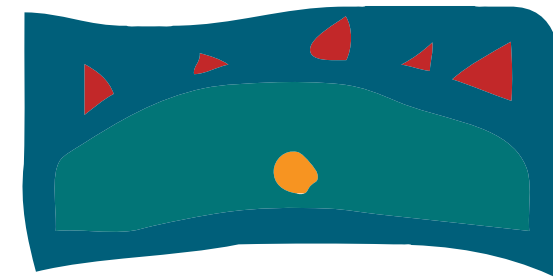
Our Responsibility

On the basis of the information provided by the committee of management we have compiled the accompanying special purpose Detailed Income and Expenditure Statement in accordance with APES 315: Compilation of Financial Information. We have applied our expertise in accounting and financial reporting to compile the special purpose Detailed Income and Expenditure Statement in accordance with the requirements of the committee of management.

Assurance Disclaimer

Since a compilation engagement is not an assurance engagement, we are not required to verify the reliability, accuracy or completeness of the information provided to me by the committee of management to compile the special purpose Detailed Income and Expenditure Statement. Accordingly, we do not express an audit opinion or a review conclusion on the special purpose Detailed Income and Expenditure Statement.

The special purpose Detailed Income and Expenditure Statement was compiled exclusively for the benefit of the committee of management, who are responsible for the reliability, accuracy and completeness of the information used to compile them. We do not accept responsibility for the contents of the special purpose Detailed Income and Expenditure Statement.



P O R T P H I L L I P
eco centre

Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc.

**55A Blessington St.
St Kilda, VIC 3182**

Located in St Kilda Botanical Gardens
(corner Blessington and Herbert Streets)

(03) 9534 0670

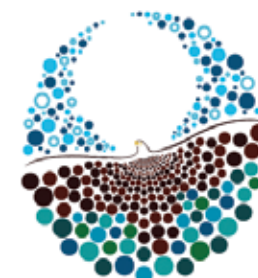
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