

Yarra Riverkeeper Association Annual Report for the Year 2017–18



Cover photo: The ash forests of Central Highlands of Victoria are the source of much of the water that flows down the Yarra River and they also supply a large part of Melbourne's drinking water.

Acknowledgement of Country

The Association acknowledges the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation as the traditional custodians of the lands and waterways of the Yarra Catchment.

We are ...

The Yarra Riverkeeper Association Inc speaks for the Yarra (Birrarung), Melbourne's own beautiful, resilient, iconic river. The Association is the credible and authoritative voice for the river. It is an independent community of citizen-advocates that works solely in the interests of the river. The spokesperson of the Association is the Yarra Riverkeeper, and the Riverkeeper boat is permanently moored in the Yarra and patrols the river.

We educate about the river and advocate for the Yarra: for green spaces, for water quality, for biodiversity, for the birds, animals, insects and reptiles along the river, for good planning decisions, for the tributaries, for the parklands, for appropriate recreation; and for an understanding of our river and its role in the life of the city of Melbourne and the Yarra Valley. We promote research and an improved understanding of our river. We work to discover new ways of improving management of the river., We run on-ground weeding and planting programs and litter clean-up programs. We host seminars and run workshops. We advocate to governments and we educate the community. We tell the story of the river.

The Yarra Riverkeeper Association was incorporated in 2005 and is part of the Waterkeeper Alliance of more than 200 waterkeepers worldwide.

Our vision
Our Yarra:
Healthy,
Protected
and
Loved

Our aim

To protect and restore the Yarra River and its tributaries, from source to mouth, for current and future generations.

Our objectives

- to be an effective, independent public advocate for the Yarra River and its tributaries
- to provide a unified voice, representative of the community, in relation to whole-of-river issues
- to identify, create and implement initiatives that will protect and restore the Yarra River and its tributaries
- to build and foster relationships with all stakeholders
- to ensure integrated management founded upon stewardship
- to build and make publicly accessible knowledge relating to the Yarra catchment
- to celebrate the ecological and social value of the Yarra River and its tributaries
- to establish a realistic funding base that can support projected activities.

President's message

As the Association's work, budget and staff numbers increased, the board has evolved and become more focussed. Indeed, the Association's internal activities at a board, and governance level are as pleasing and as important as its external activities on the river and the work of influencing management on the river — though, perhaps, less exciting.

The board has implemented an effective and efficient committee structure developed at a facilitated planning session two years ago. The board now meets every second month. The committees meet on the alternative months. This pattern enables strong attendance and engagement by directors and committee members. Happily, the board and committees meet close to the river, at the Abbotsford Convent — where the Association has its office.

The Committees

The new committee structure and pattern of bimonthly meetings has been in place for all of 2018 and is working well. The four committees and their chairs are:

- **Governance, Ian Thomas** — Ian has extensive experience in business and strategic planning, financial and risk management and corporate plan budget settings in very large private sector corporates, local government and smaller not for profit organisations.
- **Resources, Gillian Jervis** — Gillian's background is primarily in audit, risk management and forensic accounting across a variety of organisations within the corporate and public sectors, including ANZ and BHP Billiton.
- **Advocacy, Janet Bolitho** — Janet has a strong background in local government, for example: she served two terms representing Port Melbourne on the Council of the City of Port Phillip (2004 and 2012), and was Mayor of that Council in 2006 and 2007.

- **Community Engagement, Ian Wong** — Ian is a former Partner in IBM's consulting business. At various times he led IBM's digital strategy, experience and design practice, and retail industry practice in Australia and New Zealand.

The Riverkeeper

With the maturing of the Association and the acquisition of additional staff, the board was pleased to provide greater certainty for both the organization and the Riverkeeper by creating a more formal and structured arrangement for employing the Riverkeeper on an on-going basis. This security will benefit the Association by enabling better longer term planning for the role, and is a recognition of the importance of the role of Riverkeeper in the Association's work. As Andrew writes in his message in this report, the Association has had a terrific year.

On behalf of the Board, our deepest thanks to the Association's members, staff, committee members, volunteers, donors and sponsors. Also, my personal thanks to the board members, each of whom gives substantial time, expertise and effort to the Association. Their contribution is crucial as the Association moves steadily through the post-founder stage to become more robust, more substantial, and more active.

One last thank you. Congratulations and thank you to the Yarra Riverkeeper, Andrew Kelly, for all his efforts on behalf of the river and the Association and, in particular, for his sustained effort to help ensure the Victorian Parliament — with bi-partisan support — enacted the Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017. An outstanding achievement in anyone's book.

*Christopher Balmford,
President, Yarra Riverkeeper Association Inc*



Left: Mr Christopher Balmford, President, Yarra Riverkeeper Association Inc

Below: A view over the lawns and gardens of the Abbotsford Convent towards the Yarra River and across to Yarra Bend National Park, on the other side of the Yarra river. The Association has had its office at the Abbotsford Convent since 2015. We share the office with Waterstewardship Australia and that has been fruitful and enjoyable for the Association staff. We also use the Breakfast Room for our board and committee meetings and other rooms including the Salon for other events, such as our seminar series. The Convent is a fine example of European built heritage on the river and the presence of the offices of Wurundjeri Tribal Land Council in the Providence Building symbolises the continuity of traditional stewardship of the Yarra (Birrarung), and its corridor, in the context of the historical changes along the Yarra since 1835. Our partnership with the Abbotsford Convent is a highly valued one.



Yarra Riverkeeper's Report

The past year has been an exceptional one for the Yarra Riverkeepers and for the Yarra River. A lot has happened on the river. It has been exceptional both in terms of what has happened for the river through legislation and regulation, as well as the extent to which the Association as an organization has progressed internally and also the expansion of our core work of research, talks to schools and community groups, clean-ups, planting and river patrols.

The biggest news was the passing, unopposed through both houses of the Victorian parliament of the Yarra River Protection (Willip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act in September 2017. This was the culmination of four years of work. The work began under Ian Penrose as Yarra Riverkeeper and was taken up by myself when I took on the role of Riverkeeper in November 2014 (shortly before the Victorian State election). Ian and the Association's vision was for a long-term vision for the river and for planning on the river to be managed by one authority, rather than being managed by a mix of agencies, authorities and local governments. The government announced a proposal for a Yarra Protection Act and a Yarra Trust. This became something more. I worked with Environmental Justice Australia, in particular Bruce Lindsay, and we formed the Yarra Protection Act Project. We wrote reports, ran forums, we held community workshops and we worked with government and agencies. A Yarra Ministerial Advisory Committee was appointed, ably led by Chris Chesterfield, to make recommendations on the proposed act and the government announced their response to their recommendations in February 2017. These recommendations were broad but the government accepted all 30 of them, while strengthening two of them. Included in these recommendations was the proposed Yarra River Protection (Willip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act. The Action Plan has

a series of powerful proposals to support the Yarra and Melbourne's green spaces as they suffer under the twin pressures of a drying climate and a population boom.

The act is the first act in Victoria to have a title in traditional owner language, as well as English, and the preamble is in Woiwurrung and English and tells of the Wurundjeri people's commitment to the Birrarung (now known as Yarra) river that runs through the middle of their lands. The act recognizes the importance of 'caring for country' in the city as well as in the countryside. Putting 'caring for country' into an urban context was another Australian first.

The act was supported by the introduction of new planning controls to six councils adjacent to the river. These controls introduced mandatory height limits, mandatory setbacks, and skyline controls over developments on private land. The controls help ensure that development on private land is respectful of the river corridor. These controls however are only temporary, and need to be confirmed once the Yarra Strategic Plan is completed.

The act called for a Yarra Strategic Plan. Melbourne Water was appointed the lead agency for the plan and we have liaised with Melbourne Water about the plan. A draft plan is currently scheduled for release early in 2019.

During this time Melbourne Water's Healthy Water Strategy came up for renewal. This is a key piece of work across all the catchments of Melbourne managed by Melbourne Water. The focus of the strategy is more on in-stream health (while the focus of the act is on the river corridor). I participated in the co-deliver process that Melbourne Water conducted over the past year. The Healthy Waterways Strategy has now been announced.

It is rare for a river to have its own act, so I am honoured that our river does so. One of the Yarra Action Plan Points was to extend

this work to our western waterways and a Ministerial Advisory has been appointed for the 'Waterways of the west' and one has also more recently been appointed for the Barwon.

One of the key developments in the year was the appointment of Dr Nicole Kowalczyk to the staff at the beginning of August 2017 as our Education Manager responsible for our 'Litter and Flows' project, which was later expanded to include our 'Yarra River Blitz' Project. Both have been funded by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning's Port Phillip Bay Fund. This has been an exciting expansion for us to have a dedicated staff member working on education and research, and has led to the expansion of our on-ground activities.

We have continued to run our regular bi-monthly clean-ups at Burnley Harbour, under the 'Burnley Crofters' banner, and our promotion of the area as potentially as a new great urban space. Perhaps the first of the 'Greater Yarra Urban Parklands' mention in the Yarra Act.

The 'Yarra River Blitz' project uses a high volume, low pressure vacuum to suck litter out of the reedbeds. The reedbeds are natural litter traps and the vacuum system collects not only plastic bottles but the fine pieces of polystyrene that infest our river and are impossible to collect by hand. A highly successful pilot was run in April, which culminated in a public clean-up event at the Wesley College boatshed. Some 200 people attended. During the blitz 74 O-bikes were pulled out of the river. That received lots of media coverage. Subsequently the EPA introduced substantial fines for O-bikes that had been thrown in the river but not retrieved by the bike company. I even appeared on an episode of ABC TV's 'War Against Waste', which was a privilege.

In March in partnership with the Victorian Environment Friends Network, we ran a very

successful forum for Friends groups in the Yarra Valley. We are committed to drawing together environmental groups across the catchment to better understand the catchment and to leverage our mutual achievements. Among all the excitement I have continued the day to day work of community talks, keeping the Yarra in front of the media, making submissions, our regular boat patrols and all the other multitude of interesting tasks that come my way as Riverkeeper

I would like to thank all our members and volunteers without whom we would not exist. I would also like to thank our funders and our agency partners.

I would in particular like to thank all the members of the board and committees for their on-going support. As Christopher Balmford mentions in his report the operating structure has consolidated over the past year. I have thought many times of singling out this or that board or committee member for this or that extraordinary piece of work, but by the time I finished the list I realised that everybody had to be included for extraordinary work. So my heartfelt thanks to you all.

Andrew Kelly, Yarra Riverkeeper



Members of our Board of Management

Christopher Balmford, President
Christopher, a former lawyer with Baker & McKenzie and Phillips Fox (now DLA Piper), is the founder and managing director of Words and Beyond an Australian-based plain-language training, rewriting, and cultural-change consultancy launched in 1999. Christopher is also the founder, and former Managing Director, of online legal document provider Cleardocs, which launched in Australia in 2002. Christopher is also a Director of the Robyn Boyd Foundation, is on the steering committee of Birds of King Island 'BOKI' and has served on the Council of Wollangarra Outdoor Education Centre, for periods between 1988 to 2011.

Andrew Kelly, Vice-President and Yarra Riverkeeper
Andrew has been the Yarra Riverkeeper for the past four years from November 2014. Prior to that he had been on the committee of management of the association for three years. Andrew grew up along the Yarra and has a deep understanding of the river as a connected ecosystem that is the imaginative heart of the city of the Melbourne. He has degrees in archaeology, Australian history and geography. Andrew worked in the publishing industry for 35 years, and after a successful career in corporate publishing he established several award-winning independent imprints. He was vice-president of the Australian Publishers Association and a recipient of the George Roberston award. Andrew is a past president of the Society of Editors (now Editors Vic). He is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Ian Thomas, Secretary
Ian Thomas joined the Board of the Yarra Riverkeeper Association as Company Secretary

in March 2017. Ian has extensive experience in business and strategic planning, financial and risk management and corporate plan budget settings in very large private sector corporates, local government and smaller not for profit organisations. Ian has been a Certified Practising Accountant for over 40 years and is an experienced Company Secretary. Ian is the long-standing Company Secretary of the Moreland Energy Foundation Ltd and a co-opted member of the CERES Inc Board Finance Committee.

Gillian Jervis, Treasurer and Membership Secretary
Gillian joined the Yarra Riverkeeper Association Board as Treasurer in May 2014 and is now also the Membership Secretary. Her background is primarily audit, risk management and forensic accounting across a variety of organisations within the corporate and public sectors. Gillian has her own bookkeeping business, her client base largely focused on the not-for-profit sector and local small businesses. Gillian has been Treasurer of the Australian Plants Society South East Melbourne Region for several years and was recently elected Treasurer for the Korowa Anglican Girls' School Parent's Association and is currently collaborating with the school to give students opportunities to learn about the Yarra River and its future sustainability. Gillian has a Masters of Applied Finance from the University of Melbourne and is a member of CPA Australia and Institute of Community Directors Australia.

Warwick Leeson, Committee Member
Warwick Leeson OAM has been a resident of Kangaroo Ground for 20 years, and is a former councillor and mayor of Nillumbik. He is passionate about the natural world, especially that which has been protected by Green Wedges legislation. He has used that understanding to make significant contributions to the formulation of the Association's policies and strategies. Some of Warwick's community activities include:

Secretary: Warrandyte Community Association
Deputy Chair: WCA 'Be (Fire) Ready
Warrandyte' Project Committee member:
Bend of Islands Conservation Association
Member: Christmas Hills Landcare Chairman:
Andrew Ross Museum @ Kangaroo Ground
Member: Kangaroo Ground Rural Fire Brigade
Secretary: St Andrews Community Bushfire Recovery Association
Committee Member: St Andrews Community Centre
Member: St Andrews Landcare Committee
member: Friends of Panton Hill Bushland Reserves
Member: Nillumbik Reconciliation Group
Member: Rotary International (Diamond Creek branch)
Member: Green Wedges Coalition
Committee member: Friends of Nillumbik
Committee member: Green Wedge Protection Group
Community Member: Victorian Local Governance Association
White Ribbon Ambassador: and Committee member: Victorian White Ribbon Ambassadors Network

Janet Bolitho, Committee Member
Since settling in Port Melbourne in 1987, Janet Bolitho has been actively and deeply involved in the life of Port Melbourne. Witnessing and participating in planning debates on Port Melbourne's transition from industrial to residential development led to two terms representing Port Melbourne on the Council of the City of Port Phillip (2004 and 2012), Mayor in 2006 and 2007. Janet represented Port Phillip on the Association of Bayside Municipalities throughout her time on Council. As acting chair of the Victorian Coastal Council in 2011, she oversaw the revision of the Victorian Coastal Strategy (2008) and the studies that underpinned the 2014 Victorian Coastal Strategy which has a strong focus on the health of catchments, and catchment to coast management. She also chaired the Victorian Local Sustainable Accord between 2008 and 2012, which supported collaborative council projects and policies advancing sustainability. Since 2012, Janet has continued her involvement with community groups including the Port Melbourne

Historical and Preservation Society, 3207 Beach Patrol (a group that picks up litter borne by the Yarra to Port Melbourne's beaches) and Friends of Westgate Park. She observes and comments on the changing landscape of the Lower Yarra at Port Places. She is also a community representative on the Ministerial Advisory Committee for Fisherman's Bend.

Ian Wong, Committee Member
Ian, a former Partner within IBM's consulting business, at various times led IBM's digital strategy, experience and design practice, and retail industry practice in Australia and New Zealand. During this time, he worked across multiple industries to assist clients in transforming their organisations and businesses to become more customer focused through the adoption of digital capabilities. He currently serves on the board of the Royal Botanic Gardens Foundation Victoria. Ian also has his own digital consulting business, helping small businesses take advantage of digital technologies to develop customer and stakeholder experiences to grow their business whilst staying true to their core values. He has lived in many places across the world including England, Mauritius, Canada, Singapore, the USA and has finally settled in Melbourne with his lovely wife and two young children who are growing up to become 'eco-heroes'

Projects, staff and volunteers report

The past year has not only been a year of acts, plans and strategies that we have supported at the community level, it has also been a year of internal organizational consolidation and growth. We are building a better stronger and more capable of organization. One of the key steps was when Dr Nicole Kowalczyk joined the staff on 1 August 2017 as our Education Manager. She has a PhD in zoology and her thesis was about the little penguins of Port Phillip Bay. The board identified education as an area into which we wanted to expand our work, as the long-term health of the Yarra depends not only on the current generation but perhaps even more importantly on the coming generation. Nikki was initially responsible for our 'Litter and Flows' project, and her responsibilities were later expanded to include our 'Yarra River Blitz' Project, as well as our community clean-ups.

We are building capacity to deliver more for the river and for the people of Melbourne and the Yarra Valley and for the wildlife and natural places in the Yarra Catchment.

'Litter and Flows' Project

The Association is involved with on-ground and in-water clean-ups along the lower Yarra River. In 2017-18, the Association coordinated 29 community clean-ups, three Bandalong litter trap audits, surveying all 17 litter traps in the Yarra River, and 12 microplastic trawls. Over 2,000 volunteer hours and \$60,000 of in-kind support was generated through these initiatives. Furthermore 6,800 kg of rubbish were removed from our riverbanks and the Yarra itself.

Bandalong Litter Trap Audits

Bandalong Litter Traps Audits take place bi-monthly. The 18 litter traps, operated by Parks Victoria, that occur between the Webb ('Eel

Trap') Bridge upstream to Leonda, Hawthorn are surveyed to assess trap fullness and composition. This information complements data collected by Parks Victoria giving us an estimated volume of the amount of debris making its way into the Yarra and then bay on an annual basis. The data also provides information about the main litter types entering our waterways.

'Burnley Crofters'

The Association is involved with community clean-ups as well as school excursions that conclude in a clean-up of a reserve close to the relevant school. Bi-monthly clean-ups at Burnley Harbour are followed by a networking opportunity for all participants. Regular contact and maintenance of this area has inspired the Burnley Crofter's Project. The Yarra Riverkeeper envisages converting the accidental spaces that form in the undercroft of the freeway at Burnley into green open spaces, connecting the green spaces and parkland on the banks of the Yarra with green spaces in Burnley. For the many walkers and riders on the Main Yarra Trail, this stretch of the river will be converted from a bleak industrial portion of the river to something beautiful and entrancing. Burnley Harbour Clean-ups, now formally called 'The Burnley Crofters Project' attract at least 10 participants at each of the sessions and volunteers have collected over 400 kg of waste from the area in the last financial year.

Microplastic Trawls

The microplastic study, done in conjunction with the Port Phillip Baykeeper, highlights the pervasiveness of plastics in our urban water catchments and reflects their ubiquitous use, mobility, and extreme persistence. The work of the trawls was reported in 'Microplastics in the Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers' (June 2018), published by the Port Phillip Ecocentre. It recorded that a total of 6,335 litter items in the samples of the surface waters of the Yarra and 3,532 litter items from the surface waters of the Maribyrnong River. In total, this

HOW DID WE GO IN 2017-2018?

YARRA RIVERKEEPER LITTER AND EDUCATION PROJECTS

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR WITH THANKS TO ALL OF OUR FUNDERS AND PARTNERS. WE COULD NOT HAVE ACHIEVED WHAT WE HAVE WITHOUT YOUR SUPPORT!

Community Cleanups

'Burnley Crofters' Project

Educational Talks

Litter and Flows Project

Bandalong Litter Trap Audits

Microplastic Trawls

'Yarra River Blitz' Project

Deliverables

➤ **'Burnley Crofters' project developed a strategy to clean-up a key site on the Yarra and highlight its potential as new parkland**

➤ **We ran a pilot 5-day 'Yarra River Blitz' between 16 to 22 April 2018: 200 attendees collected over 5,450 kg of waste including 76 O-Bikes. The success was showcased on ABC TV's 'War on Waste'.**

➤ **Our education program offers excursions for Victorian schools and we delivered 79 educational talks.**

➤ **We had 12 microplastic trawls which concluded in a report titled 'Microplastics in the Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers'.**

Current research estimates over 828 million litter items flow into Port Phillip Bay annually from the Yarra and Maribyrnong's surface waters. Over 612 million (74%) of these items are microplastics

29
Community
Cleanups

\$60,000
of in-kind
support

2,000
volunteer
hours

3
Bandalong
Litter Trap
Audits

Monthly
excursions
and
talks

12
Microplastic
Trawls

We removed 6,800 kilos of rubbish from our river banks and the Yarra itself.



research estimates that over 828 million litter items flow into Port Phillip Bay annually from the rivers' surface waters. Over 612 million (74%) of these items are microplastics. In both rivers, microplastics formed the bulk of litter and accounted for 77% and 67% of the total litter count in the Yarra and Maribyrnong, respectively. In both rivers, most of the litter caught consisted of hard plastic remnants of broken up plastic items. Of the other researched litter items polystyrene, nurdles and plastic bottle caps were most problematic in the Yarra, while in the Maribyrnong, plastic straws and soft plastics were more prevalent.

'Yarra River Blitz' Project

In April 2018, in collaboration with Melbourne Water, Cleanwater Group and Ocean Crusaders, five tonnes of litter and polystyrene contaminated soil were vacuumed and removed from the Yarra reed bed system. A key part of this has been to innovate new ways to clean up our waterways with an innovative vacuum developed with the Association's support by the Cleanwater Group. This has also been a pioneering community/private partnership. The 5-day blitz culminated in a community event which drew over 200 attendees from across Melbourne who collected 450 kg of rubbish from the river. The Blitz attracted a lot of media attention including extensive coverage on the second season of ABC TV's 'War on Waste'. Following the success of the pilot and due to a successful Bay Fund application, the Yarra Riverkeeper Association will run an additional six blitzes within the lower Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers over the next two years.

'Yarra Atlas' Project

In February we applied for our third grant from the Port Phillip Bay Fund, and we were notified that we were successful in April. The project commenced at the beginning of May (although our Yarra Atlas Officer was not employed until August 2018). There was initial in-kind work done by a group of RMIT students as part of their course work to establish the project.

Over 40 community groups and organisations collect data and conduct regular activities within the Yarra Catchment. Few of these groups present their data on open platforms and most of this data is inaccessible to the public. The Yarra Riverkeeper Association is working with groups to collect, collate and present Yarra catchment data on a single site: the Yarra Catchment Atlas. This work is being done in conjunction with the CeRDI group at Federation University. This atlas will build knowledge within community networks and will be a pivotal tool to assist our understanding of the cultural heritage, biodiversity, and health of the Yarra Catchment and their links with Port Phillip Bay.

The Yarra Atlas is a project that has been developed to become an educational tool for everyone, schools, researchers, other environmental organisations, and government departments and agencies. The idea surfaced from realising that there are extensive amounts of information, however, every group of data has been secluded to be in one database or kept by one organisation. The idea with the Yarra Atlas is to create a platform where all of this data is freely and readily available. We want to make it as easy as possible for organisations to get this information and simultaneously create a sense of community since they are contributing to the data pool as well.

We've received many letters of support from government organisations as well as non-government organisations stating that they will contribute data and will allow us to use it on the atlas. Furthermore, we're constantly in touch with smaller organisations that might have very specific data about a certain aspect of the Yarra River, for example, Friends of Leadbeater Possum group who have extremely detailed data about this particular possum.

Additional to the data we gather from other organisations, the Association has gathered substantial amounts of data through our monthly trawls, excursions, and personal data

A BETTER PROTECTED, HEALTHIER, AND LOVED YARRA

DURING 2017-2018 THE YARRA RIVERKEEPER ACTIVELY PROMOTED THE RIVER AND SHARED OUR GROWING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE RIVER.

80+

Presentations about the Yarra River:

- ELCs
- Schools
- Tertiary
- Councils
- Community Groups

30+

Boat trips along the Yarra River including:

- Microplastic trawls
- Stormwater rain mapping
- Faunal surveys

26

Appearances in printed, radio and televised media.

- ABC TV 'War on Waste', Season 2
- The Age
- ABC Radio
- 3AW
- 3RRR
- 3CR



keeping which will also be included into our Atlas.

Volunteers

Our regular volunteer group expanded and the Association would like to acknowledge the volunteer work of Anton Tejada and Eliza Kelly. Anton has now joined the staff as Yarra Atlas Officer though this was following the period of this annual report. Eliza has driven the increased work we have been doing in the social media space to promote the Yarra River and its natural spaces. Jeff Allen volunteered his film-making services for the Yarra River Blitz. And James Baker and Tim Jian from RMIT helped with the early work on the Yarra Atlas Project.

Our event volunteers have been critical to our successful events, both with the Yarra River Blitz and the Burnley Crofters. This is an opportunity to formally thank you all and we look forward to continuing to work with you.

**‘Yes, thank you so much! What a fantastic effort!! May more people be inspired to help next time... I’ll join in too.’
— event feedback**

Committee reports

Governance Committee

The board met six times during 2017/2018 and Board members attended a Strategic Planning Day held in February 2018. The Committees meet in the alternative month between Board meetings. Ian Thomas attended all Board meetings while the other Board members (at 20 June 2018) each attended 5 meetings of the six meetings.

Board members Maudie Palmer, John Lam, David Redfearn, John Merory, Jeminah Reidy, Mim Holmes and Courtney Carthy resigned during the course of 2017/2018. Ian Wong joined the Board in March 2018. David Redfearn, John Merory, Courtney Carthy, Scott Seymore and Tony Isaacson continue to serve the Association as co-opted members of various Board Committees. Late in the financial year Tony Isaacson joined all four of the Committees as a co-opted member, and Scott Seymour joined the Advocacy Committee.

Two years ago, the board established four committees. They are functioning well and prepare decision ready papers for the full Board meeting the month after. The Committees are:

- Governance — chaired by the company secretary, Ian Thomas;
- Resourcing — chaired by our Treasurer, Gillian Jervis;
- Advocacy — chaired by Janet Bolitho; and
- Community Engagement — chaired by Ian Wong.

The committee members include board members, former board members, and a range of other people with relevant skills and experience. Most board members attend each of the committee meetings with the Association’s staff attending as appropriate.

The Governance Committee conducted a risk analysis and developed a sophisticated Risk Management Policy, Process and Risk

Register; The committee is continuing the work of establishing an expanding association on a firm governance footing and ensuring that appropriate processes and procedures and the right structure is in place.

Ian Thomas, chair and secretary

Resourcing Committee

The Resourcing Committee had an active year that consolidated the financial foundations of the Association. Among the achievements of the committee was that all bookkeeping and accounting function were migrated to Reckon Accounts Hosted — as the Association became more active, the paper-based system had become burdensome.

The committee changed the Association’s accounting process for recognising grant income from a cash basis to an accrual basis so that the Association’s accounts more accurately report the financial position when we receive a grant in one financial year for activities to be carried out across more than one year.

The Association’s first incremental budget was prepared, with a sub-budget for each of the grants for which the Association needs to acquit; Most recently, the payroll function was outsourced to ADP Payline to facilitate more effective management of this process with an expanding employee base.

The committee is continuing its work of consolidating the financial organizational base for the Association, so the Association is able to continue to grow and deliver more for the Yarra River.

Gillian Jervis, chair and treasurer

Advocacy Committee

The flagship achievement of the year was the unopposed passing of the Yarra River Protection (Willip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act. In the period leading up to the passing of the act, it was the focus of the committee’s attention. Once it was passed the focus of the committee has been to ensure that the act

and the associated Yarra River Action Plan is implemented effectively and completely. There were a suite of ongoing initiatives happening around the river. Key government and agency work that is happening on the river within the period include:

1. Implementation of the Yarra River Action Plan (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning);
2. Implementation of the Yarra River Action Plan (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning);
3. The Yarra Strategic Plan (Melbourne Water as lead agency), and;
4. Healthy Waterways Strategy renew (Melbourne Water)

Through the committee and the Riverkeeper, the Association has been actively engaged in all these initiatives and our focus has been ensuring that none of the excellent work that has and is being done for our Yarra ends up gathering dust on a shelf instead of being implemented. The committee is committed to developing considered, consistent and thought-through positions on all planned initiatives for the Yarra. One of these positions has been a commitment to assisting in ensuring that all 30 points of the Yarra River Action Plan are delivered in full. One of the issues identified in the Association’s report of 2015 ‘Charting the Yarra’ was that for a period planning on the river was locked into a cycle of reports and plans for the river being written but then shelved. The government has committed to the Yarra River Action Plan and is showing steady progress in working through and delivering on all the points of the plan. It is important to keep this front and centre in people’s minds, so they are aware of what progress is being made and what is left to be done.

A key responsibility for the Advocacy Committee developed the Association’s election strategy. — what the Association sees as the Yarra as needing for the next four years. The strategy is the Association’s proposal to all

political parties about what it believes the state government should do to help ensure the Yarra River is 'healthy, protected and loved'.

The committee has made a series of submissions through-out the year both on specific planning applications and government initiatives on the Yarra.

Several of the issues that came up within the year for the committee are ones that are ongoing and will be on-going for sometime. These include:

- The proposed North-east Link.
- The Yarra Strategic Plan.
- VEAC report for the Yellingbo Conservation Corridor and the associated work around Haining Farm.
- The proposed Yarra Bike Path.
- Increased environmental flows for the Yarra.
- Better stormwater management

Thank you to all members who contributed to our committee.

Janet Bolitho, chair

The Community Engagement Committee

The Community Engagement has begun a major review of what the Association needs to do to grow its membership and its volunteer activities. The review takes a design-thinking approach. It is helping us to better understand how people see, and want to engage with, the Association. In turn, that will enable the Association to better understand its staffing and resourcing needs; to develop internal policies about its brand, values and mission; and to develop its website and other communications.

Website Redesign

As the Association continues to evolve to advocate for the implementation of the Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017, a need has been identified to assess

the existing website to determine whether it is fit for purpose in line with the Association's evolution. In 2018-19, an assessment of the existing website will occur, and a redesign of the website will be implemented based on the findings of the assessment. One of the key focus of the website assessment and redesign will be on driving the deepening and growth of membership and community engagement by making knowledge and events more accessible on the website.

Constituent Relationship Management

In order to better protect and revitalise our Yarra River, the Association must deepen relationships with our members and the community in order to deepen our community's love for the river. In 2017-18, the Association has invested in Wild Apricot, a constituent relationship management software package, and has implemented basic membership management on the package. In 2018/2019, we intend to extend our use of Wild Apricot in order to build deeper relationships with our members, and the community by personalising our interaction with our constituents so our communications on email and other media are targeted and personalised. We also intend to utilise the package to identify potential members and to nurture our relationship with these potential members from signing up, attending knowledge events, attending clean-up events and celebrations.

Social Media Engagement

In order to reach a wider audience within our community and to continue to engage with our existing members, the Association has implemented Social Media Management software to allow us to engage our members and the community on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. We have increased our use of Social Media in early 2018, and have consistently used these channels in addition to our website and traditional print media to launch our 'Five Requests for the River for the Next Four Years'. We will continue to evolve our use of Social Media to complement our website,

newsletters, physical events and emails in order to communicate information about the Yarra River and to garner support for the protection and revitalisation of our Yarra River.

My thanks to all those who contributed to the work of the committee, but in particular to our volunteer, Eliza Kelly.

Ian Wong, chair

'The Association and current Riverkeeper, Andrew Kelly, have played a critical role in supporting the Victorian Government in the development of the recent Yarra River Action Plan, strengthened planning controls along the Yarra River, and the landmark Yarra River Protection (Willip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act, passed into law on 21 September 2017. I thank the Yarra Riverkeeper Association and Andrew Kelly as Riverkeeper for their tireless advocacy for the river.'
The Hon Richard Wynne, Minister for Planning

Funders —we can't do it without you

We would like to extend our thanks to all our funders and key donors, who make our work possible.

CeRDI, Federation University
City of Boroondara
City of Melbourne
City of Stonnington
City of Yarra
Department of Environment Land, Water, and Planning
Isaacson Davis Foundation
Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
Melbourne Water
Parks Victoria
Port Phillip Bay Fund, Department of Environment Land, Water and Planning

Sponsor

Morgan Wealth Management

**26 appearances and interviews
presenting the Yarra River in printed,
screen and radio media channels
including Season 2 of 'War on Waste'
ABC series.**

Financials

The Yarra Riverkeeper Association reported a net operating loss of \$24,051.57 for the year ended 30 June 2018, compared to a \$28,972.39 profit in 2016-17. Contributing factors to this result were:

- Changed accounting treatment for unspent grant income. Previously, grant income was reported when received, however, with the advent of higher grant income combined with the receipt of some grants just prior to year-end the decision was made to match the reporting of grant income with the year in which it is spent. Any unspent grant income was accrued and carried forward to future years as a liability.
- Increased employee expenses as a result of the Board's decision to accrue for employee leave entitlements, implementation of a new payroll system and recruitment of new employees.
- Timing differences and additional project/ grant costs increased operational expenses.

Grants comprise the largest portion of income received during the year, followed by donations and membership fees. These funding sources are a key part of our funding strategy, enabling us to grow the organisation and continue our vital advocacy work for a healthy and sustainable Yarra River. The passing of the Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Bill is a highlight of the past 3 years input by the Association and we look forward to continuing involvement in this new era of environmental management and sustainability. The Yarra Riverkeeper Association would like to sincerely thank all grant providers, sponsors and donors for their generous support throughout the year. Without their support, the work of revitalising our river would not be possible, and enables us to continue the vital advocacy work needed to ensure our

Yarra River is healthy, protected and loved for present and future generations. We would specifically like to thank and acknowledge the generous support of the Port Phillip Bay Fund (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning), Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, City of Boroondara, City of Stonnington, City of Yarra, Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, Isaacson Davis Foundation, Kate and Stephen Shelmerdine Family Foundation, Morgan Wealth and Morgan Stanley.

Support from these sources enabled us to:

- Build our organisational capacity to sustain the Association going forward.
- Help address key issues affecting Port Phillip Bay and surrounding catchment through development of a Yarra River Atlas and a Yarra River Reed Blitz.
- Better understand litter flows between the Yarra River and Port Phillip Bay.
- Inform and educate our community about the importance of a sustainable Yarra River.
- Perform regular clean-up restoration events along the Yarra River including Burnley Harbour

We very much value your continued support of our river.

'I would like to whole heartedly thank you for the education session that you delivered to my Year 10 Geography class today. It was very informative and interactive. The students really enjoyed being involved in all the activities.'
—Devi, Victoria University Secondary College

Financial Statements

The Yarra Riverkeeper Association's Constitution requires that proper financial records be maintained to enable financial statements to be prepared and independently reviewed by a registered company auditor each year. The audited financial statements and accompanying audit report are submitted to the Annual General Meeting of the Association.

Yarra Riverkeeper Association Incorporated ABN: 95 339 378 852 Statement of Profit and Loss for the year ended 30 June 2018

Revenue	2018	2017
	\$	\$
Grants	118,301	86,738
Donations	23,855	16,550
Membership Fees	2,645	6,020
Other Income	7,539	7,556
Total Revenue	152,340	116,864
Expenditure		
Employee Expenses	131,195	63,562
Operational Exp	41,374	20,539
Depreciation	3,350	3,350
Audit Fees	473	440
Total Expenditure	176,392	87,891
Net Surplus/ (Deficit)	(24,052)	28,973

'The environment is greatest challenge of our time, and an educated generation emerges and rolls up its sleeves.' — Adam, at the Yarra River Blitz.

Yarra Riverkeeper Association Incorporated ABN: 95 339 378 852 Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2018

Assets	2018	2017
	\$	\$
Current Assets		
Cash at Bank	214,568	133,801
Receivables	3,700	973
Total Current Assets	218,268	134,774
Non Current Assets		
Plant & Equipment (Boat)	14,670	18,020
Total Non Current Assets	14,670	18,020
Total Assets	232,938	152,794
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities		
Payables	10,594	8,196
Unspent Grant Income	88,250	0
Employee Provisions	11,637	0
Prepaid Membership Fees	1,910	0
Total Liabilities	112,391	8,196
Net Assets	120,547	144,598
Equity		
Retained Surplus	144,598	115,626
Current Earnings 2018	(24,052)	28,972
Total Equity	120,547	144,598

'The Yarra Riverkeeper has had an extremely positive impact on the health and amenity of the Yarra River and been a strong advocate for increasing community awareness of the impact of individual actions on Victoria's waterways.' — Niall

Partnerships

We are proud and pleased to work with many government departments and agencies, with traditional owner groups, and with many other community groups including schools, early learning centres, tertiary institutions, 'friends of', groups, and Landcare groups all who work to improve the Yarra, its tributaries and its catchment.

180 Degrees

3CR

3RRR

Abbotsford Convent

Blue Sky Vision Media

Boomerang Alliance

CeRDI, Federation University

City of Boroondara

City of Melbourne

City of Nilumbik

City of Stonnington

City of Yarra

Cleanup Australia

Cleanwater Group

Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability

Darebin Parklands Association

Dolphin Research Institute

Eruditis

Eruditis consultancy

Ethos Urban

Friends of Damper Creek

Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater

Friends of Merri Creek

Friends of Scotchmans Creek

Friends of the Yarra Valley Parklands

Friends of Westgate Park

Geography Teachers Association of Victoria

Hawthorn Rowing Club

HEWI

Jeff Allen films

Keep Victoria Beautiful

Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation

Medley Hall, Melbourne University

Melbourne Water

Merri Creek Management Committee

Monash University

Morgan Stanley

Morgan Wealth Management

Newtechpoly

Parks Victoria

Plastics Lab

Plastics-Free Victoria Alliance

Port Phillip Baykeeper

Port Phillip Ecocentre

Port Places

Powerhouse Rowing Club

Qiantang Riverkeeper

Riverland Conservation Society

RMIT

Rotary

Sea Life Trust (Melbourne Aquarium)

Shire of Yarra Ranges

Tangaroa Blue Foundation

Tonle Sap Waterkeeper

Trinity College, Melbourne University

Trust for Nature

U3A

University of Melbourne

Victorian Alliance for Platypus-safe Yabby Traps

Victorian Waste Management Association

Victorian Environment Friends Network

Victorian Litter Alliance Group

Water Stewardship

Waterkeeper Alliance

Werribee Riverkeeper

Wild Melbourne

Wurundjeri Tribal Land Council

Yarra Pools

Yarra Ranges Council

Zoos Victoria