

THE YARRA RIVERKEEPER ASSOCIATION

Annual Report
2021



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Yarra Riverkeeper Association Incorporated
Annual Report 2020-21
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Acknowledgment of Country

The Yarra Riverkeeper Association acknowledges that the lands and waterways of the Yarra Catchment and beyond, are the unceded territories of the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung people. We pay our respect to their Ancestors, who cared for Country since time began, and to all Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung community, to all the Kulin Nation, to all Traditional Owners, who continue to speak and care for their Country. We acknowledge that the river now called the Yarra has always been known as the Birrarung by its custodians.

The Yarra Riverkeeper Association



"It is that range of biodiversity that we must care for - the whole thing - rather than just one or two stars."

Sir David Attenborough



The YRKA

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

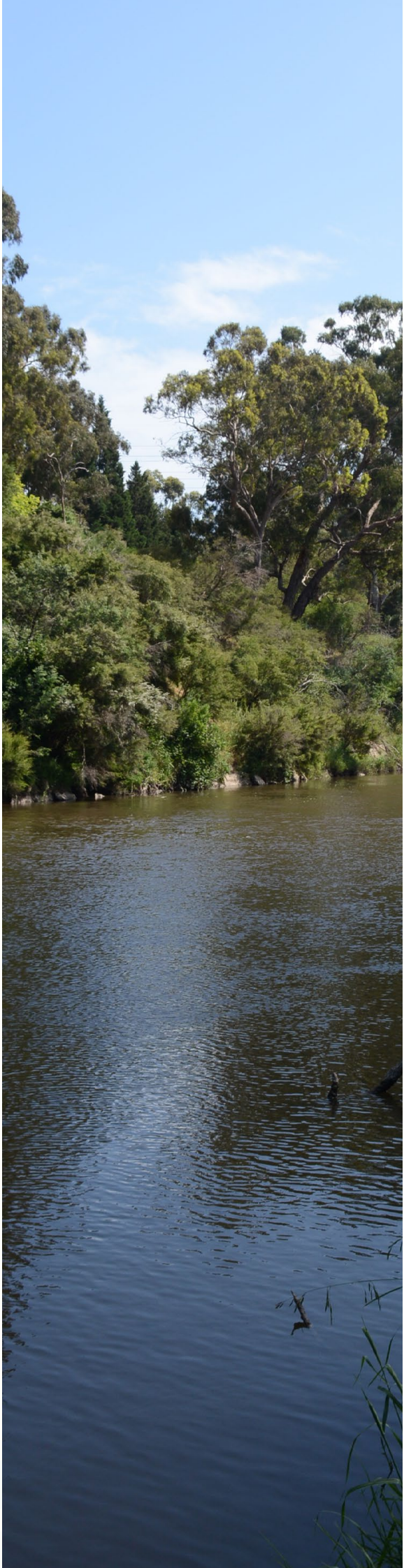
Your Yarra, and
tributaries:
Healthy, Protected
and Loved

Our Mission

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



Warwick Leeson OAM
Chair & President

Another 12 months; another (almost) 12 Zoom meetings.

I'm sure everyone of us has experienced the benefits and the frustrations of electronic meetings; the main benefit being able to hold meetings during lockdowns and the main frustration being the lack of physical interaction. That said, I'm both pleased and proud to report that the Yarra Riverkeeper Association has been able to go about our important business almost seamlessly.

Various other Reports will cover the day-to-day operations of the Association and I commend their reading to you. Your Board and appointed committees have continued to meet, mostly by Zoom but, on a couple of occasions, when we were out of lockdown, we met physically. I want to congratulate and thank my fellow Board members for their enthusiasm, commitment and energy in discharging their various duties. Their dedication to serving our Association is a constant source of inspiration and encouragement; over the past two very testing years, when many

people would have faltered, I can assure you that my fellow Board members have stood tall and overcome each and every challenge.

In our new CEO, Karin Traeger, the Association have unearthed a real treasure.

Operating under these extremely difficult times, Karin has been able to assemble a fabulous team of staff members, who have risen to the challenges facing them and, supported by an incredible band of volunteers, achieved terrific outcomes in their various portfolios.

The Association has reluctantly accepted the resignation of our Riverkeeper, Andrew Kelly, effective from 30th September 2021.

Andrew has held that position, which he has publicly described as 'the best job in the world' for the past 7 years and, under his stewardship, the Association has grown from a Riverkeeper with a supporting committee to a robust and respected organisation, administered by a Board of Directors, with a Riverkeeper, a CEO and staff.

Andrew has put so much of his emotional and physical energy into the role of Riverkeeper over those 7 years that, not surprisingly, he has decided that, while maintaining enduring love for the Yarra River and continued support for our Association, he will be stepping down from his Board position, as well as his Riverkeeper one.

Until such time as the Board has made a new Riverkeeper appointment, one of our Board members, Ian Wong, will fill the role in an interim capacity. It is timely to also note that both Andrew

and I have recently been re-appointed by the Victorian State Government to further 4 year terms on the Birrarung Council; the Council is established under the Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017 and, in brief, its role is to watchdog compliance with the observance and intent of the Act by government bodies, statutory authorities, local governments and relevant stakeholders, with a responsibility to report our findings to Parliament. You will be pleased to know that the Council is undertaking ground-breaking work in Net Gain thinking, the promotion of the Great Birrarung Parkland and in Advocacy communication.

I am delighted to now reflect on what is undoubtedly our most exciting recent acquisition.

Thanks to a generous benefactor, the Association has purchased a new boat; it is an electric vessel (a Duffy 16' Back Bay) and, as such, it will not discharge fuel and/or oil residues into the River system. We are hoping to equip the vessel with solar panels and battery, further reducing our reliance on grid-based electricity supply.

When the COVID lockdowns become a thing of the past, it is hoped that many of you wonderful people will be able to take turns as our passenger guests.

With the recent appointment of a Maribyrnong River Officer, auspiced through the YRKA, it is intended that our new boat, which has been named 'Puggle', after a baby platypus, will be available to that Officer, who used to be one of our staff members, to showcase that section of Melbourne's river system.

Earlier, I reflected on my admiration for the current Board members.

I reiterate that view, but note that we are welcoming of fresh blood, either on the Board or its committees; please don't be shy about asking any of us about the roles and responsibilities.

You will have received advice about some proposed changes to the YRKA Constitution.

One aspect of these proposals is to reduce tautology, where the same 'message' appears more than once. The primary proposals relate to removing the Riverkeeper from Board membership, instead having the Riverkeeper, as with the CEO, identified an employee who reports to the Board.

Further, currently, the Board (of which the Riverkeeper is a member) appoints the Riverkeeper annually; it is considered that it is preferably, to all parties, that the Board would appoint the Riverkeeper for a longer period, giving all parties greater security of tenure.

These proposals have the full support of the Board, including the outgoing Riverkeeper, and I urge you to support the proposals.

Finally, as your President, and I know I speak for all my fellow Board members, it has been an honour to have served the Yarra Riverkeeper Association for this past year and we have all indicated a keen interest to continue with that commitment.

Warwick Leeson OAM.

Riverkeeper's Report



Andrew Kelly

Yarra Riverkeeper &
Vice President

Final report by Andrew Kelly as Yarra Riverkeeper

Earlier this year, I announced my intention to resign to the board, so we had plenty of time to plan. This report then is an opportunity to reflect on the past year and the past seven years.

The existing foundations

I begin by paying tribute to my predecessor Ian Penrose. Ian was there at the start. He built the Association's foundations and set the tone and style of the organisation. Ian described the YRKA's approach as 'advocating from within the tent'.

The core of our work as riverkeepers is advocacy. Advocacy is often seen as criticism, but it is much more than that. It is both praise and criticism and idea generation. Praise at the right time can be as powerful as a pungent critique. And ideas help find solutions.

Our new boat

In my first year as Riverkeeper, I had 90 trips on the boat. This past year I had two. Getting the 'new' second-hand electric boat into

the water was challenging. The boat arrived on the day of the evening of a lockdown extension in 2020. We almost got the boat into the water, but not quite. So the boat had to go into storage for three months!

When she is on the water, she is a beautiful ride. And, like all good things electric, she is an entirely silent ride. So you feel you are really in the river - moving silently through the water. I look forward to getting back out on the river, thank you to Karin for offering me 'lifetime rights' to take the boat out on the river.

Great staff

Mentioning Karin, brings me to our staff. We have a starring suite of staff, from Karin to Kristin to Lachlan to Anthony to Candace to Andrew.

Kristin Charlton has done a fantastic job with social media. She is also the person who has helped with the advocacy work of submissions and newsletters. Christopher Balmford, our former president, rang me up to congratulate me on the spot-on tone of our first advocacy newsletter. I had to tell him it was Kristin who had captured that 'riverkeeper tone' as she had been the one who wrote the newsletter. I had merely done some editing, a comma here and a comma there.

It has been a pleasure to see how the combination of age's experience and youth's energy has come together in the regeneration team of Lachlan Peace and Andrew Wood. I recently said to Karin that Lachlan's role was the one I had wanted when I joined the Riverkeepers: out in the river corridor, learning about plants and putting trees in the ground. Of course, that role did not exist then. Instead, I became a 'keyboard warrior' and a serial meeting attendee fighting for the Yarra/Birrarung Act and the Yarra River Planning Controls.

Anthony Despotellis has driven our polystyrene project forward with Shayan Barmand at the Cleanwater Group. At a

meeting of this project's steering committee, I was struck by just how much we have managed to find out about the causes and sources of polystyrene pollution in the Yarra River. By the way, the sources are building sites and shopping centre loading bays—surely easy places to implement improvements. Look for our next Polystyrene Report.

More congratulations to Anthony on the design of this Annual Report. His design skills have been of great value to the Association.

Candace Colaço is our newest member. She settled into her role very nicely, bringing more energy and enthusiasm to the team.

Our CEO

Karin Traeger deserves a paragraph to herself. She started as Ops Officer and soon became CEO. She is superb at the art of running a team in the middle of repeated lockdowns while keeping delivery to the highest standard. She can pivot like the best running back in response to blocks and the threatened tackles of circumstance. In part, she managed this through mastery of the digital but also through thoughtful, responsive management. It was a learning curve for everybody (though I am still not on Slack).

One other thing. Karin is a keen long-distance - really long-distance - runner. In 2022, she will be running the length of the river from the source to mouth - watch this space.

Maribyrnong Officer

Although our new Maribyrnong Officer, Nikki Kowalczyk (formerly our Litter Officer), started in her new role after the end of the 2021 financial year, I am mentioning her here as I will not be in the role for the 2022 annual report.

It is a great pleasure to welcome Nikki back to the Association. The west of Melbourne is her heartland. She will do a great job





representing the mighty Maribyrnong, and, we always need to remember, many believe the Yarra is a tributary to the Maribyrnong. Peter Somerville, Captain of the Blackbird that sails the Maribyrnong is firmly of that view.

I am hoping the Association can get funding to make the role a full-time Maribyrnong Riverkeeper.

Our expansion enabler

A thank you to the Member for Kooyong, Josh Frydenburg, who initiated the discussions for the grant that allowed us to evolve the Association from something that was too much of a one-person show to a structured organisation with specialist staff and a CEO.

Recent highlights

The two things I reckon I am proudest of in this strange year of ours are:

■ The Regeneration Guide, which I outline below, and

■ Richard Wynne announcing, as Planning Minister, that the temporary Yarra River Planning Controls were now permanent BTW, he announced that on our boat.

Planning controls I would like to acknowledge all those who made the planning controls happen, including those planners, councillors and advisers who came out on the boat and saw the banks and the building developments from the river's point of view. Particular thanks to Minister Wynne, of course, and to Mitra Anderson-Oliver who was his adviser when the Yarra planning control and Yarra act discussions started.

Now we need to work to see those controls rolled out on the Maribyrnong River and the Werribee River and on every tributary on every urban waterway, to an appropriate degree.

Regeneration Guide One of the things I am proudest of this past year is co-writing The Yarra River Regeneration Guide. It began with the then-president Christopher

Balmford's interest in rewilding, in returning nature to degraded places. In discussions at Cams Café at the Convent, we began to appreciate that when Europeans arrived, the catchment hadn't been wild, that it had always been cared for by the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung. Yet, there was plenty to learn from the idea of rewilding.

We cannot restore the catchment to what it was in 1835, but we can set out to create a richer, more biodiverse catchment. That is, a catchment that is not only beautiful, that not only recognises the right of the river to be a river, but also that delivers those ecological services (cooling, stormwater removal, etc.) the city and the valley so desperately need. That is what we are calling regeneration.

Our regeneration work

The Association's regeneration work is the thinking that leads to the vital work of the regeneration team of Andrew and Lachie of getting plants in the ground. Regeneration is not just theory; it is the practice of the Association. We have sites at Burnley and at Andrews Reserve, and there are others, and we are growing the number of sites.

We are now learning the 'how' of regenerating a river corridor, and doing so is winning the respect of our partners.

We have worked with the energetic Graham Ross and the Gardiners Creek catchment environmental volunteer groups to assist them in kickstarting the Kooyongkoot Alliance. Graham has the vision. Kooyongkoot deserves the equivalent of a Merri Creek or Darebin Management Committee.

Essential volunteers

I would like to thank all environmental volunteers, whether for the Yarra Riverkeeper or other Associations and projects. Friends groups and environmental volunteers - sometimes curmudgeonly and sometimes difficult, perhaps - with their hearts in the right place are the ones who go out rain, hail or shine to make our waterways better places.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all the magnificent Friends groups along the Yarra and its tributaries. And to say how much I have enjoyed working with them these past seven years. Friends advocate for what they love, and they labour to improve things - weeding, litter removal, and planting.

To explain my broad appreciation for the friends groups, I want to highlight one example.

Friends of the Yarra Flats Park led the charge against the Treetops development right in the river corridor, right next to the Yarra River, in ancient river red gums. The development requires an amendment to the Banyule Planning Scheme (Amendment C107bany), so a planning panel was convened. I presented to the panel, mainly on the relevance of the Yarra River Protection (Willip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act's principles. The panel's report was released on 6 September. The report acknowledges the Act's principles, the first formal discussion by a planning panel on how to apply those principles. The report strongly recommends extensive consultation by the proponents with the Wurundjeri, acknowledging the failures of consultation in this area. The report also discusses the concept of net environmental gain though we believe the panel misunderstood the Act's requirements by introducing the concept of a 'threshold' before action is taken. We will see how Banyule Council and the proponent's response unfolds.

The Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung

It has been a great pleasure to deepen my understanding of the Traditional Owners of the Yarra catchment (and beyond) and their work of caring for and listening to Country. I think of what I know now compared to what I knew when I started the role and see how much I have learnt, yet how much more there is to learn.

Funding environmental work

Melbourne Water has been working on its Pricing Submission to the Essential Services Commission throughout the year of this

report and I was privileged to be part of the Customer Council for the Waterways and Drainage Charge. Thanks to Scott Seymour for giving me a shove to accept Rob Considine's invitation to join the council. I did feel honoured to be asked to speak at the presentation by the Essential Services Commission.

I believe a purely economic viewpoint does not adequately comprehend the need to spend on the environment. Also, there are uncertainties around the fact that the impact of spending on the environment is not as predictable as the impact of spending on built infrastructure.

On this note, I support Victoria forming a Green Infrastructure Taskforce and Strategy, as recommended by the Yarra River Action Plan written by the Yarra Ministerial Advisory Committee, led by Chris Chesterfield.

Also, very excitingly we will be releasing in the next six months our Green Accounting Report, which is a consideration of how the government and statutory agencies should implement environmental-economic accounting in the management of the Yarra, as recommended by the State of the Yarra and Parklands 2018 and the Healthy Waterways Strategy 2018.

The pending Yarra Strategic Plan That brings me to note we are still waiting on the release of the Yarra Strategic Plan, the crucial part of the Yarra River Protection (Willip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act. The formal release of the plan will surely trigger a flurry of activity to the benefit of the river.

Sustainable Water Strategy

Late in the year, came the State Government's review of the Sustainable Water Strategy for the Central and

Gippsland regions. This is a crucially important strategy to deal with an almost 20% decline in long-term surface water availability. We await the draft strategy with pencils poised to annotate possible improvements.

Thank you to the board

Thank you to the Association's board. You know how much I have depended on you. I am resisting mentioning names as you have all done so much. Space does not permit sufficient thanks to all. So I will save my appreciation for a forthcoming occasion.

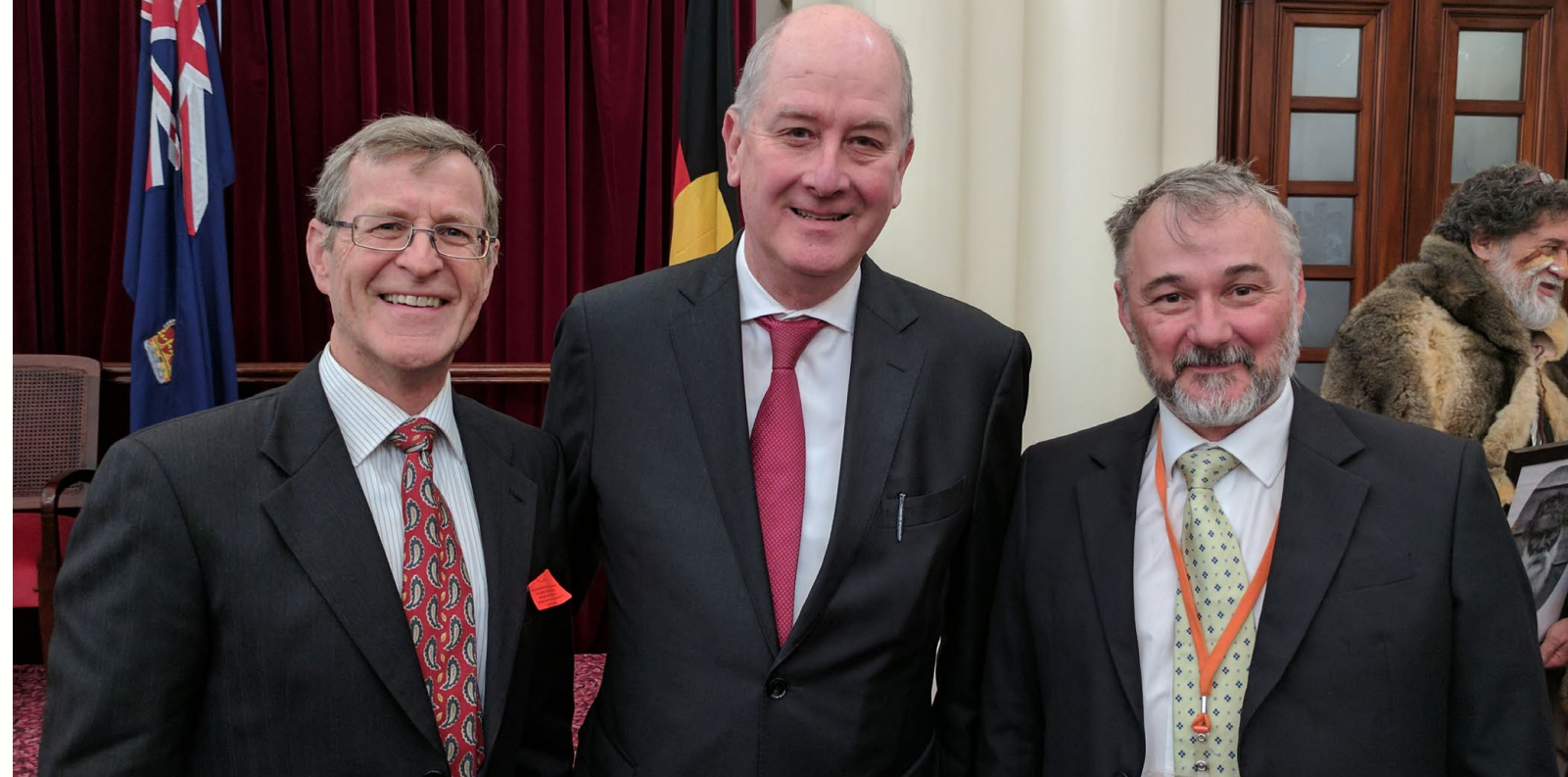
What's to come

I have said - quoting my predecessor Ian Penrose - that being the Yarra Riverkeeper is the best job in the world. Even so, it is a job that has to be done at a sprint, not a jog. It makes one a little breathless.

I am sure the next Riverkeeper will take the role to the next level of robust and informed advocacy. Exactly how they do that, will be exciting to watch. I look forward to supporting them and to cheering them on.

As I draw breath and once my heart rate settles, I will continue to be active. I will continue to serve on the Birrarung Council representing community groups, including the Association. I plan to spend more time in my boots, exploring wild lands and wild waters, deepening my appreciation of our Australian environment. I will continue to speak for land and for water.

I have learnt so much about water, policy, government, legislation, environment and your Yarra in all its beauty. And, of course, I have learnt about myself. For all of that, I thank you, and the Association's members.



Message from the CEO



Karin Traeger
Chief Executive Officer

We hope that everyone has kept safe and well during this last year!

FY20-21 was quite a ride! Happily, for us, it was a good one.

So firstly, thank you so much to everyone who has joined us in this new chapter. While I never thought I would be given the dream job of my life while navigating a pandemic, nothing would have been possible without an incredible team of staff, board members, volunteers, interns, and all our supporters, partners and members. I am so grateful for having this unique opportunity for personal growth while doing something that I am strongly passionate about. It has been a year of learning, innovation, thinking out of the box, and reflecting on the essential role of nature, all while decompressing from the many things around us.

Secondly, thanks to our former team members, Tom Frawley and Jonathan Law, for your commitment to our Yarra and the many little critters depending on it. We wish you all the best in your future endeavours!

This FY20-21, we welcomed Lachlan Peace as our Regeneration Officer, a previous volunteer, and our Volunteer Regeneration Advisor, Andrew Wood. This dynamic duo has been leading the way to keep expanding our regeneration projects, strengthening our relationships with Parks Victoria, Local Councils, Friends Groups, and other many individuals out there working towards a healthy environment. Supporting our communications and fundraising programs, Candace Colaço has brought millennial energy to the team. And last but not least, a big welcome back to Dr Nicole Kowalczyk who has taken on a new role as the Maribyrnong River Officer. Her role will be the first step for the organisation to grow its capacity within the West side of Melbourne. We believe that many policies and experiences from working in the Yarra can apply to the Maribyrnong. Now more than ever, our waterways need the proper protection for future generations, and the Maribyrnong River is a key waterway to many communities.

From our many webinars and toolkits aimed at inspiring families to rediscover their backyards to postcards that allowed the public to grow a piece of nature during the lockdown, we hope last year's work brought some light to 'indoor' life. Some of the celebrations we would like to highlight are: Planning Controls were made permanent and mandatory from Punt Road to Warrandyte.

We were winners of the Premiers' Sustainability Awards: Environmental Protection Category and Premier's Recognition for our work with Cleanwater Group on "Polystyrene Pollution in the Yarra River".

We launched our first Regeneration Guidelines, a free tool available to everyone interested in bringing some green back to our catchment area.

We broke our record on philanthropic donations, thanks to all those individuals and members who support our mission of a healthy, protected, and loved Yarra. And so many other achievements that we will share in this report with you.

We thank everyone who has committed their support to our environment, particularly our Yarra River. While the future of our environment might seem uncertain due to the last IPCC report, this only further highlights the need to keep on advocating for the protection of our local environment and supporting the work of environmental organisations. Your support can come in many ways, from a donation to volunteer work, but also from the many decisions we take daily. Ring your MP to raise environmental issues, clean up a beach, plant a tree, go plastic-free. Every action, big or small, makes an impact!

And last but not least, a big thank you to Andrew Kelly for his incredible work during the past 7 years as Riverkeeper. Thank you for all the learnings, the conversations on our boat, the fun and not so fun moments. I enjoyed every bit of my opportunity to work with you, and we hope you can keep joining us for some boat rides to share your latest books with us. Thanks Andrew! The team and I wish you all the best in your next steps. I will make sure to keep things "running" smoothly :)

Karin Traeger
YRKA CEO



Staff, Volunteers & Projects



Image by Jess Corcoran
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"I envision a safe and just
place where everyone can
thrive in balance with our
Yarra River"

- Ian Wong



Our Staff



Andrew Kelly
Yarra Riverkeeper

Andrew Kelly is the Yarra Riverkeeper and is the spokesperson for one of Melbourne's most iconic natural icons, The Yarra River. Patrolling the river by boat, Andrew gets to consistently admire and observe the wonders of the Yarra, both natural and man-made. He regularly features in news articles, radio and podcasts as Melbourne's foremost expert on the Yarra and frequently contributes his passion and expertise to strategic planning and policy development panels.

Andrew helped build an organisation with a reputation for both on the ground work of environmental stewardship and water quality protection, as well as advocacy and educating the public. In addition, he serves as the organisation's figurehead on a global scale, contributing to the International Network of Rivers and Global Waterkeeper Alliance. A true advocate, he sits on the Birrarung Council, an expert panel of stakeholders dedicated to being the 'voice of the Yarra'.



Nicole Kowalczyk
Maribyrnong River Officer

Environmental education and management have been of interest to Nicole since she can remember. Her childhood was spent in South Africa where she made frequent visits to national parks, enjoying many close encounters with African wildlife. Nicole moved to Australia in 2003 and was fascinated by the native wildlife, particularly the diverse, colourful and loud birds she frequently encountered. Her outdoor adventures shaped her values and naturally led to

studies of environmental science and education. Nicole is a qualified primary school teacher and ecologist. Her honours year was spent in Costa Rica where she studied the nesting behaviour of the leatherback turtle. During her PhD she focused on the foraging and reproductive ecology of the St Kilda little penguin colony. Her research highlighted the importance of the Yarra River in structuring predator prey dynamics in Port Phillip Bay.



Karin Traeger
Chief Executive Officer

Originally from Chile, Karin is our executive force and is responsible for overseeing the management and implementation of our ecological restoration works, as well as the strategic direction as a respected environmental body.

Particularly passionate about aquatic life and fisheries protection, Karin previously worked at Melbourne Seafood Market as the Sustainability Manager and at the Great Barrier Reef as a Divemaster.

During her spare time, she trains as an ultra-marathon athlete and has founded the globally recognised group, The Plastic Runner, facilitates plogging events to create environmental awareness in local communities

Karin is one Victoria's most recognised public eco-heroes and her significant contribution to environmental protection both locally and internationally has been recognised by many distinguished outdoor commercial brands.



Kristin Charlton
Community Engagement Officer

Originally from Western Australia, Kristin's love for rivers and nature was fostered through growing up along Perth's own natural icon, the Swan River. Kristin makes sure the office is a well-oiled machine, coordinates volunteers and tends to all things member-related.

Kristin plans and delivers our online content, keeping the public well informed about environmental disturbances and the

beautiful native plants and animals found on the Yarra River. She also manages our growing volunteer base.

Outside of keeping our amazing members and community well-informed, Kristin enjoys field-hockey, exploring Victoria's beautiful parks and adopting as many plant children as possible.





Lachlan Peace

Regeneration Officer

An experienced environmental scientist and landscaper, The YRKA is very fortunate to have Lachy's expertise and knowledge to drive our ecological regeneration portfolio.

Holding a Bachelor of Science, specialising in Wildlife and Conservation Biology, Lachy has a love for all things of the natural world. His particular passion for sustainable agriculture and food systems is being further fostered through his current

further study as a Master of Environment Student at the University of Melbourne.

Lachy was previously an environmental remediation scientist for Western Environmental, engaging with clients and provided site assessments and contamination solutions.

In his spare time, Lachy is a keen trail runner and also enjoys woodworking and ceramics.



Anthony Despotellis

Litter Officer & Graphic Designer

Anthony is our passionate and dedicated Litter Officer, and is responsible for reducing the amount of litter and improving the water quality in the Yarra catchment. This work is essential in maintaining the integrity of the water quality within the Yarra,

He is Co-Manager of our citizen science platform and environmental database, the Yarra Atlas, reporting on

environmental disturbances such as litter clusters and pollution spills

Holding a Bachelor of Industrial Design, he is a talented graphic designer, contributing to the organisation's promotional and highly commended educational materials through his artistic vision. Anthony also runs a self-founded business 'Remedy Art', painting street art murals all over Melbourne.



Candace Colaco

Communications & Fundraising Support Officer

Candace is no stranger to raising awareness about plastic pollution and waste management. With a Bachelor of Science, majoring in Environments, Candace is able to combine technical knowledge on environmental sustainability with her experience of on the ground experience helping to raise awareness for the threats facing Melbourne's environment.

Candace is the founder of the Little Litter Project, an initiative raising awareness about Plastic Pollution and Waste management. If you live in the west of Melbourne you may have come across her community clean ups, talks and educational campaigns around the impacts of litter. When she's not helping to protect your local environment, Candace enjoys drawing, playing the piano and staying active.



Andrew Wood

Regeneration Advisor

Born 1962 in Eltham, Andrew spent his early years exploring the river by canoe and is the YRKA's much valued specialist advisor. Andrew assists in ecological regeneration and landscape architecture, ensuring planting plans are carried out with both aesthetic and ecosystem functions in mind.

Andrew studied Architecture and then Landscape architecture at University and has a diverse range of professional experience, working as

a landscape contractor, builder, furniture maker, artist, sculptor, permaculture designer and teacher.

He has also worked at Yarra bend park where he managed community planting events, and supervised land restoration revegetation for Work for the Dole programs. Andrew is always finding ways to contribute to the environment and Melbourne community, including being a supporter and contributor to Bush Heritage.

Interns & Volunteers

THANK YOU!



Image by Reece Truscott
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OUR PROJECTS

20-2021

LITTER

Polystyrene Pollution Phase 2

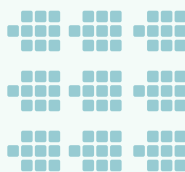
Clean Water Group completed:

3 Rounds of site audits at: **25** sources of EPS across 5 industries.

- Construction
- Manufacturers
- Whitegoods retailers
- Recyclers
- Local shops

90

Collected from Bandalong Litter Traps



We have begun the arduous task of sorting these samples with the help of volunteers!

121.8kg

Collected during the:

Yarra River Blitz

At Melbourne Uni Boat Club in March in 34 bags!

Maribyrnong River

We now have a Maribyrnong Officer! We hope to bring support to the many voices in the west!

BURNLEY CROFTERS

LOYS PADDOCK

100+ Volunteers and counting!

We are trialling a new platform called Volaby, which let's us create activities & post bulletins!



REGENERATION

Restoration Sites

MURANDAKA CORRIDOR

WESTERFOLDS PARK

We worked on 6 restoration sites during this financial year, planting 6,930 plants over 4 sites and preparing two more for planting in the next financial year!



5680

Plants at:

KEW BILLABONG



450

Plants at:

ANDREW'S RESERVE



550

Plants at:

BURNLEY CROFTERS



Works Started at:

LOYS PADDOCK



250

Plants at:

WESTERFOLDS PARK

COMMUNITY



628

submissions to the bioblitz

Citizen Scientists took to the parks in the Yarra River corridor to collect sightings of flora and fauna, submitting them to iNaturalist.

We launched a volunteer run river podcast!

And produced our first 2 podcast episodes.



1198

Event attendees

At online digital events and in person



HEALTHY

'It's not just to save forests and wildlife that we're working but also for our own future – we all need forests, we all need the natural world.'

Jane Goodall



Image by Jess Corcoran
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Regeneration

Our journey for a regenerated Birrarung, which is healthy, protected and loved has taken big steps in the past year. We have seen the completion of two sites from start to finish as well as the development of another eight sites along our river corridor. The sites vary widely from inner urban crafted habitat refuges to remnant pockets of ancient Red Gums. All sites equally deserving of our love and nurture and playing their role in the Birrarung system.

As our portfolio of revegetation sites grew so too did our tool library. With so many sites and volunteer activities coming up we needed to ensure everyone had the appropriate tools. We set about engineering a water cart for planting events as well as an auger for large scale plantings. Planting days also need plenty of hands to ensure our plants find their way to their home along the river corridor. We had gloves made for our volunteers to help this process. With a big thanks to Tony Isaacson for sharing a space for us to store our tools, we now have a centre point for our regeneration operations.

We are proud to report an average survival rate between 90-95% on our sites reflecting the careful planning and implementation from our passionate team and volunteers. Our next steps for our regeneration portfolio include plans for a grassland restoration project at Westerfolds park, restoration around Yarra Bend National Park and regenerating the ephemeral Phillips Fox Billabong, as well as many more exciting projects in the pipeline.



Images by Jess Corcoran
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Burnley Pt 1 - 550 plants

Our first revegetation site has allowed for many learnings, partnerships and opportunities. The site is on the bank of the Burnley Harbour nestled next to the Burnley climbing wall. We were able to complement the revegetation works completed about 15 years ago through the installation of an understory and shrub species as well as some additional upper canopy species. Thanks to the site's central location, we were able to host a hands-on community planting alongside climbing anchors, the climbing community and nearby residents. Blessed with a sunny morning in May we added over 250 plants to the site planted by 45 eager volunteers. This contributed to a little over 550 plants being installed on the site and future habitats being enriched.

Loys Paddock

A known breeding site for many bird species, including resident Swans, Loys Paddock has been actively revegetated with native species thanks to Yarra City Council over the years. We are happily partnering to further these efforts alongside Felix Botanicca. The site has been impacted over the last year by vandalism, resulting in many plants being ripped out. We have begun preparations for a planting later in the year by laying nutrient rich mulch across the site. The mulch will assist a spring planting event, retain moisture, spur plant growth and help keep invasive species at bay while our natives establish themselves.

Murandaka Corridor

Our regeneration officers' favourite place to be on a sunny day, the Murandaka corridor spans a two kilometres stretch of the Birrarung near Bonds road in Lower Plenty. It is home to a plethora of natives and key habitat for species such as the Eastern Ringed Xenica, the Eastern Banjo Frog and the Red-rumped Parrot. We will be directing our plantings to encourage breeding sites for the significant species such as the Ringed Xenica and giving some much needed love to a wetland complex. The local wombats have been dropping by to keep an eye on us and to give their seal of approval.

Westerfolds - 250 plants

Our second site focussed primarily on the installation of ground cover species in several fenced plots. Most of the Westerfolds park was cleared for pasture in the early 19th century however huge efforts from Friends groups, community and Parks Victoria have seen large sections transformed back to native habitat. A haven for Eastern Grey Kangaroos and many bird species, the park is flourishing with life. Unfortunately, this also provides for ideal habitat for rabbits who impact ground cover through herbivory. Our fenced plots will allow for over 250 groundcover species to establish and greatly improve the long-term success of plantings. We hope to see the fenced plots expand into neighbouring areas and fenced plots removed once ready.

Andrews Reserve - 450 plants

We have been working closely with Parks Victoria in the conversion of over 5000m2 of Kikuyu grass back to a more biodiverse community of native species. We have had helping hands from the Friends of Andrews Reserve who have been caring for the area for over a decade! To our delight we discovered patches of a remnant native grass species, microlaena stipoides, which has persisted through years of mowing and change. We are closely monitoring the patches and giving it a helping hand to spread into the surrounding areas. We held a working bee in autumn which saw 450 plants installed on the north and south escarpment which were less impacted by weed species. Follow up spray runs are planned for the remainder of the site before we install the next planting.

Kew Billabong - 5680 plants

Our friends at Acacia Environmental Management have successfully installed the bulk of the whopping 5680 plants! A mighty effort which will assist in bank stabilisation around the flourishing Billabong complex. The community planting has had some hurdles this year, but we will be back as soon as we can for some hands-on citizen science and planting days!

Litter Work

Polystyrene Pollution - Phase 2

Phase 2 of the Polystyrene Pollution project battled hard Covid-19 restrictions for over 6 months and infrequent lockdowns during the next 6. This kept the team in the home, unable to conduct fieldwork or meet in person for half the duration of the project. They were granted a total of 6 months extension until December of 2021 to keep the project on track.

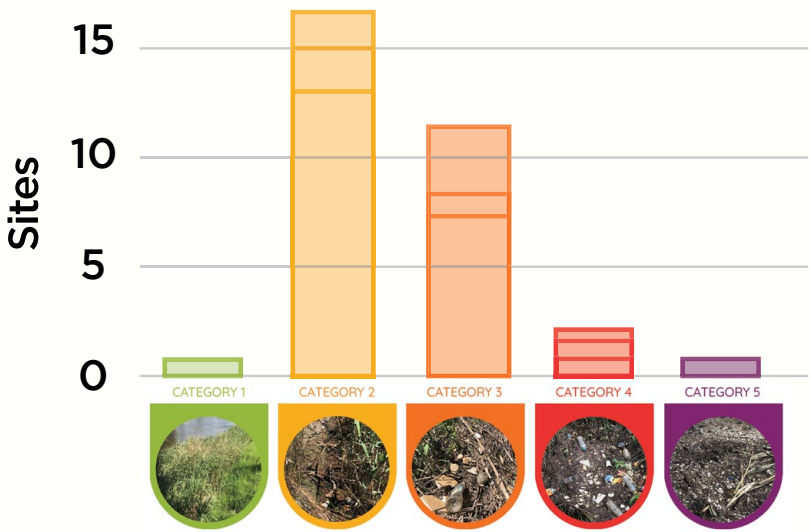
As a pre-assessment for monitoring EPS source sites, Anthony visited over 80 construction sites to find suitable locations. Sites were at varying stages of construction when audited and moved quickly, some of them cutting and finishing with EPS in under 2 weeks. Of 81 construction sites, 56 had polystyrene present - or 70%. 5 of these sites were then selected for the ongoing monitoring.

The project suffered further set-backs when insufficient LGA involvement blocked our plan to monitor sites with drain traps, and Shayan Barmand (Project partner) left Clean Water Group. However, the project team was able to

find a new method for auditing the 25 source sites. This new method worked better than our original and we got well underway by the EoFY.

The first round of site audits produced 0 category 1's, 16 category 2, 7 category 3's and 2 category 4's. Below are a few of the recorded photos. This result was unsurprising, and confirmed our initial hypothesis - that polystyrene pollution comes from ALL 5 source categories. The following rounds will help us understand the relative contribution of those sources, and give an idea of if the pollution is constant, or fluctuation with certain activities.

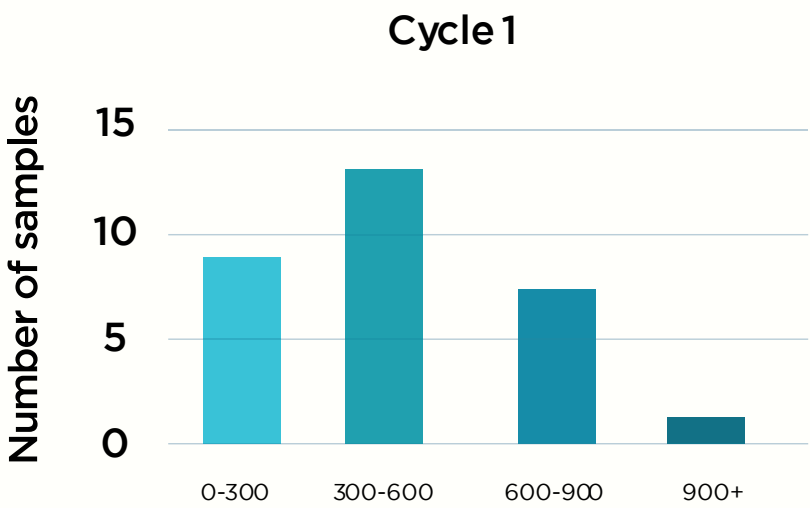
Similarly, a deliverable of the project was auditing the Bandalong litter traps for polystyrene. This proved to be an intense activity but thoroughly interesting and important. Once the samples are collected from the river, Anthony met up with YRKA volunteers to sort them, bead by bead! Once again, lockdowns halted our progress, but we are doing everything we can to catch up.



This graph shows that in the first 3 cycles, the majority of site inspections had category 2 and 3 polystyrene pollution.

Of those sites, the ratings of 4 and above came from construction sites and white goods retailers.

Polystyrene manufacturers made up a large part of category 2, and interestingly, recyclers have consistently had the lowest overall hotspot ratings.



This graph shows the number of polystyrene balls in each sample, for the first round of trap audits. We can clearly see the average amount of eps pieces per sample is in the range of 300-600 pieces.

Once we have more rounds audited, the data can be extrapolated and we will get an idea of how many pieces of eps flow down the Yarra every year. Judging by this beginning, we anticipate it will be a scary figure...

Polystyrene Pollution - Phase 3

We are in discussion with government agencies to secure funding for Phase 3 of the project, where we will move away from documentation, and begin the mountainous task of education and behaviour change.

If funded, Phase 3 will aim to:

- Conduct a study gauging the level of awareness, difficulty and action taken by sources toward pollution reduction.
- Develop a best-practice storage and handling guideline for EPS across all industries.
- Distribute information and material generated from Phase 2 through various types of media
- Conduct an EPS focused 'reduction round table' or similar event.
- Engage industry and work with select sites to implement the best-practice measures/ EPS alternatives to deliver a case study.
- Conduct EPS fingerprint study (based on initial proof of concept from phase 2)



Images by Anthony Despotellis & YRKA



Polystyrene found in drain by construction site



Winner !

Premier's Sustainability Awards

The incredible work done by previous Litter Officer, Dr. Nicole Kowalczyk, on the Litter and Flows, Polystyrene Pollution in the Yarra and the Yarra River Blitz projects are now award winning!

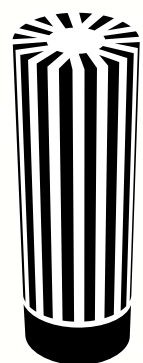
The YRKA in conjunction with Clean Water Group, won two awards:

- Environmental Protection Award

- Premier's Recognition Award

The YRKA are grateful for the recognition of the hard and important work we do. We will continue to deliver valuable projects that keep your Yarra healthy, protected and loved.

We also thank Nicole for her magnificent work on these landmark projects.



Winner
Premier's
Sustainability
Awards 2020



WINNER: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Yarra Riverkeeper Association and Cleanwater Group

WINNER: PREMIER'S RECOGNITION AWARD

Yarra Riverkeeper Association and Cleanwater Group

Yarra Catchment Atlas

EPS tool

As part of the Polystyrene pollution investigation, we added a new feature to the Yarra Atlas. There is now an EPS submission tool which puts submissions of polystyrene sightings into its own layer and helps the submitter categorise the sighting according to our Polystyrene hot spot rating tool. (See below)

A total of 5 photos have been added to the polystyrene layer, and we are planning to run a webinar to launch the new tool by the end of the project.

Observation

2

3

and email

Observation location

Observation

Upk

Make this sighting public

Observation Type*

Polystyrene

What is the polystyrene hotspot rating? ?

Rating 3

What is the approximate size of the polluted area in sqm*

1

sqm

Short description

Polystyrene found creekside. Little balls and chunks.

196 characters

Comment

In 2021, we ran a “best photo” competition with the volunteers to increase submissions and get them out into parks, exploring and documenting our environment.

Here are some highlights! →

Updates and future plans

We are looking to increase the usability of the atlas, possibly creating a mobile app for the atlas and hosting the mapping tool directly on our website.

In addition, we also want to improve how the data is used, and grow our atlas to as many users as possible!



Image by Alicia Privitera

Image by Sofia Enrique

Image by Narelle Huxley



Images by YRKA

PROTECTED

“Humankind's greatest priority is to reintegrate with the natural world.”

Jonathon Porritt



Image by Jess Corcoran
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Advocacy

The Yarra

The core of the work of our Association is to protect the river. That is what we are obliged to do and that is what we do best. We do that in practical ways by collecting litter and planting trees, and we also do that by speaking for the river. The past year has been yet another successful year of advocacy.

Our advocacy committee has been effectively led by Janet Bolitho, who has brought a vision informed by her work in the City of Port Phillip as a councillor and mayor. This year saw the culmination of many year's work with the Yarra River Planning Controls being made permanent. We had lobbied for them when they were first introduced as temporary controls. The Association effectively used expert reports to help drive our advocacy and a key contribution to the debate on the Yarra Planning Control was the report we commissioned from Ethos Urban to write *Making the Yarra River Controls Permanent: Protecting the Yarra from Inappropriate Development*. The report functioned to help keep the report in the centre of the government's thinking about planning on the Yarra River. The Yarra Strategic Plan Panel was held in the middle of the year

and the Association retained Dr Bruce Lindsay to represent the Association as well as his employer Environmental Justice Australia. We were acknowledged as key contributors to the panel and we employed two expert witnesses, Dr Graeme Lorimer from Biosphere and James Reid from Ethos Urban. Shortly after the closing of the panel was when Minister Wynne declared his intent to make the Yarra Planning Controls permanent. The Association was again represented along with other community groups by Dr Lindsay at the North-East Link planning panel hearing. As Riverkeeper Andrew Kelly represented the Association on the Melbourne Water Waterways and Drainage Customer Council. This council formed part of Melbourne Water's submission work to the Essential Services Commission on the Waterways and Drainage Charge. The Yarra Riverkeeper was then requested to speak at a public presentation about the Melbourne Water Pricing Submission. The year came to a close with the appointment of Dr Nicole Kowalczyk as the Maribyrnong Officer to extend our advocacy work to the Maribyrnong and Moonee Ponds Creek, with which we share an estuary.



Image by Karin Traeger
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The Maribyrnong

It is our pleasure to welcome back Dr. Nicole Kowalczyk as the Maribyrnong Officer! Many may recognise Nicole from her previous polystyrene and litter research work, which received both the Premier's Sustainability Award and Premier's Recognition Award last year.

As the city continues to grow, we are faced with the challenge of protecting waterways and surrounding landscapes from the pressures of continued urban sprawl, pollution, habitat loss and population growth. Much like the Yarra, the Maribyrnong River corridor is critical to the physical and emotional health of many communities in the west of Melbourne and beyond.

The goals of the Maribyrnong Officer are to advocate for:

The protection and enhancement of water quality and waterway health

Providing water for the environment and Country

Enacting special purposes legislation for the Maribyrnong River that represents an outcome most directly comparable to what has been achieved for the Yarra River

We look forward to updating you on the progress of this new venture.

Image by Anthony Despotellis 2021. All rights reserved.



Our Reports

Yarra River Regeneration Guide

The aspiration of the Association’s vision is for the ecological integrity and ecological functioning of the river corridor to be regenerated for the whole length of the river. It is a long-term vision of a river that is self-organising and made-up of a functioning series of interconnected ecosystems that reflect soil, position, aspect and climate, and which require a minimum of maintenance and interference.


Regeneration Guide Launch

In May we had the pleasure to host our public launch for the Regeneration Guide. The event was attended by community members, friends of groups, council representatives and several industry contractors. The guide which centers around Melbourne’s unique ecosystems is tailored for outlining and improving revegetation methodologies and providing a framework for environmental works. The guide is available in a digital format for all those interested in seeking advise on regeneration through our website.

Our up-coming reports include:


Water Quality by Teresa Mackintosh and Rishabh Choudhary


Green Accounting Report by Alex Earnshaw and Andrew Kelly



Yarra River Regeneration Guide

Cremorne Railway Bridge to Westerfolds Park





Polystyrene Pollution in the Yarra:
Determining the root of the problem by
Anthony Despotellis and Shayan Barmand

We thank everyone that has worked with us to expand our sources of knowledge, which we will be able to use in our further advocacy campaigns.

LOVED

"I have thoroughly enjoyed my time with the Yarra Riverkeeper Association; I have learnt so much from this incredible group of people, connections I hope to keep for a long time to come. It was fantastic to see all the positive impacts the Association has on the environment, organisations and the broader community."

Matt (Volunteer)



Images by Reece Truscott
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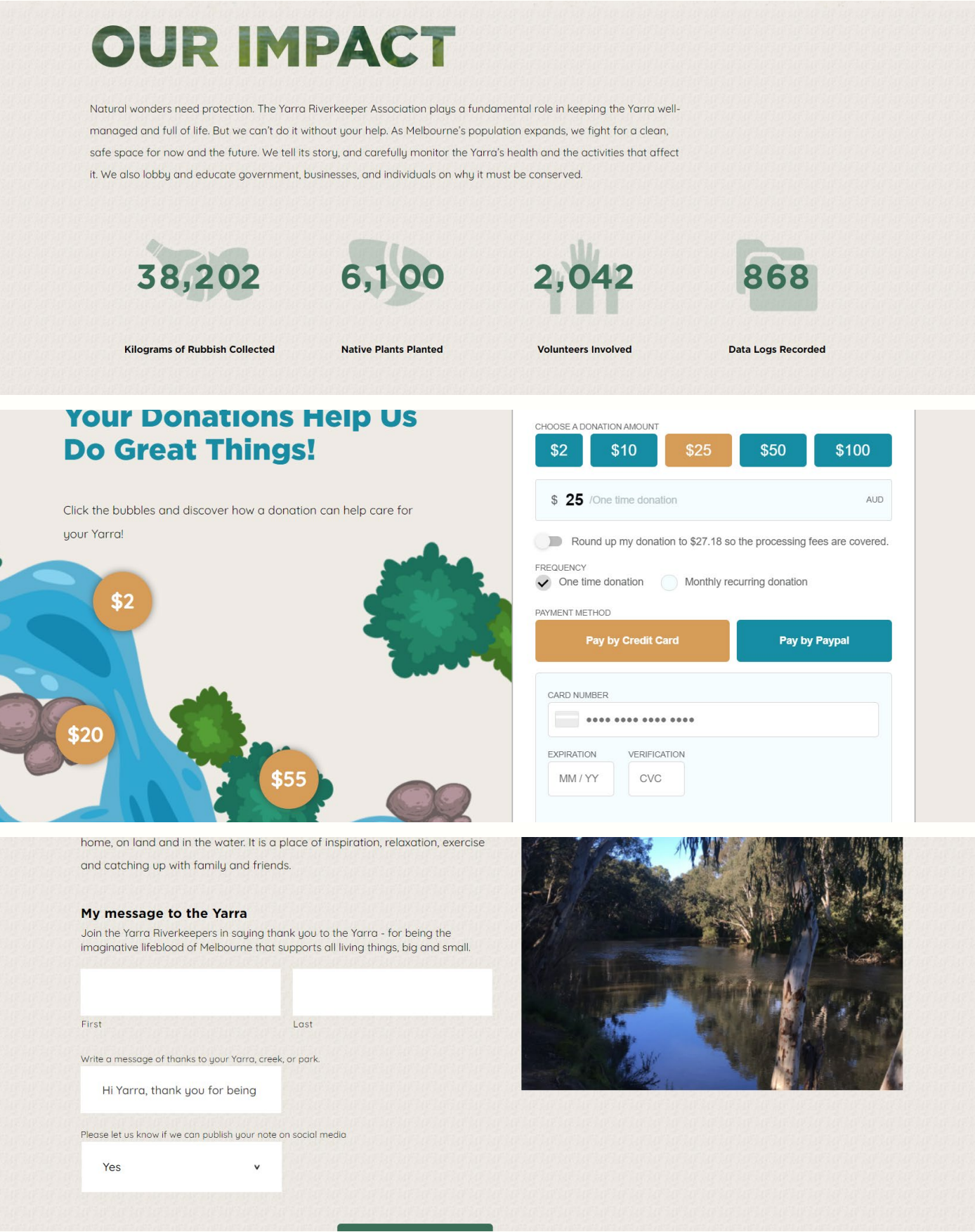
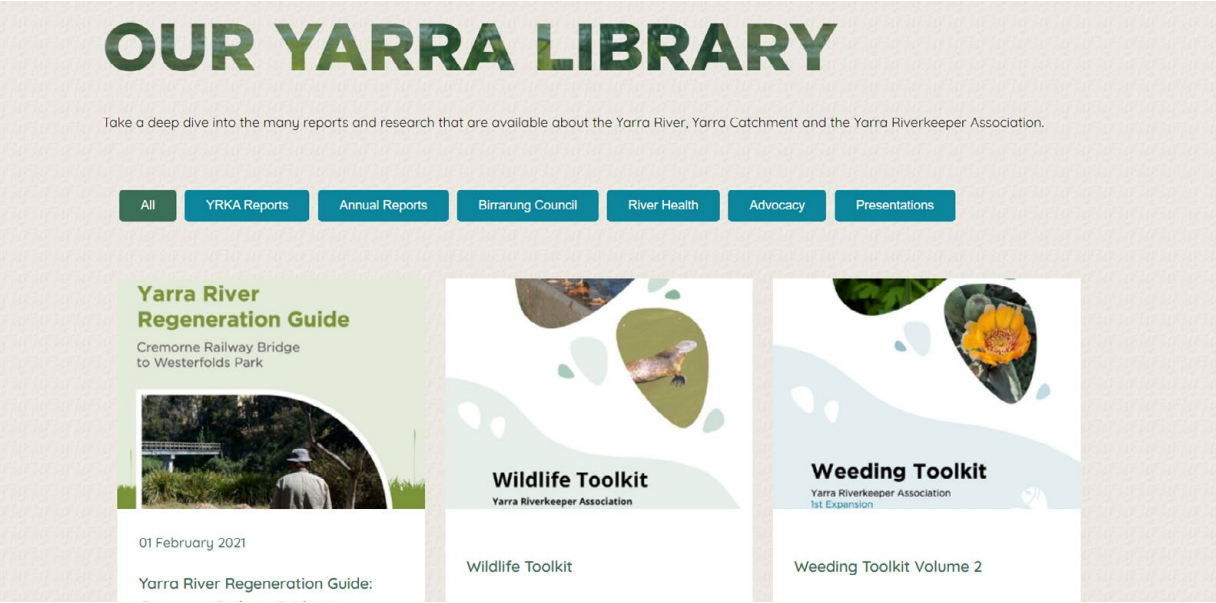
Digital Communications

A refreshed online Look!

We started the new financial year with a refreshed website that elevated our online presence. On the first day it launched we had more than 1000 views! With the help of Digital Next and funding from the Port Phillip Bay Fund, we were able to create an engaging website to inform the public about our events, activities, projects and latest news.

We like to treat the website as a living document that will grow and further our capabilities to connect with the community. We want to make it as easy as possible for people to join us in our vision. In the second half of the financial year we were able to implement a new donation and fundraising page and we are excited to share with you even more additions to our online presence in the next financial year.

To read our reports go to:
yarrariver.org.au



“Volunteers don’t get paid, not because they’re worthless, but because they’re priceless.”

Sherry Anderson

Volunteers

This past year we have been amazed at the expression of interest we received from the community to volunteer with us! Despite roadblocks thrown at us by multiple lockdowns requiring many in-person activities to be put on hold, our volunteer base has grown (and continues to grow).

In the middle of last year we had a team of 17 core volunteers who assisted across a wide range of tasks that covered marketing, advocacy, research and citizen science. Thanks to funding from the Inner North Foundation, we were even able to launch a volunteer-led podcast!

At the start of 2021, we implemented a volunteer platform that would make it easier for the community to register their interest to volunteer with us and search for activities that aligned with their availability and interest. This led to an increase of our volunteer base from 17 to over 100 over the financial year. We’re looking forward to further developing this program to ensure that the interest from volunteers is retained.

Thank you to all our wonderful volunteers who have dedicated their time and energy to support our projects and vision of a healthy, protected and loved Yarra.

Thank you to all our wonderful volunteers who have dedicated their time and energy to support our projects and vision of a healthy, protected and loved Yarra.



Image by Jess Corcoran 2021. All rights reserved.

Events

Digital Events

The ability to connect with the community through online channels has become increasingly important. We've had to think creatively about how to ensure that people are connecting with our vision and our activities.

This saw us host numerous webinars (18 to be exact) and a month long bioblitz for Biodiversity Month. The bioblitz encouraged people to submit observations of flora and fauna while enjoying socially-distant walks under restrictions. Over 25 people submitted 88 observations capturing a snapshot of the area's biodiversity. We've been able to explore a wide range of topics, from women's leadership in waterways, monitoring and evaluation of environmental projects, and how to identify some of the many animals, weeds and insects that call the catchment home. Moving some of our events online has also enabled us to increase accessibility to Yarra Riverkeepers events. Overall, our events have had 1198 attendees. Our bioblitz for biodiversity month led to 628 submissions of flora and fauna found in and around Melbourne.

Seeds for Your Yarra

There is nothing quite like putting a plant in the ground, and to share the experience and learning journey of growing and looking after native plants we sent over 400 postcards embedded with bottlebrush seeds to members, volunteers, interns and the community.



ANZ Yarra River Blitz 2021

With generous funding from the ANZ Community Foundation, Anthony and the team were able to put on another Yarra River Blitz!

On the 27th of March, We returned to the Melbourne Uni Boat House to get in kayaks and pick up litter. In classic Riverkeeper fashion, the event pushed through a light sprinkle of rain, and those who attended enjoyed their time connecting with the Yarra while in the kayaks, making new friends and a buffet of food!

The attendees roamed around and with 34 bags, collected a total of **61.8kg**.

Two shopping trolleys were also removed from the river bank, totalling 121.8 kg.

The majority of litter collected included drink bottles, expanded-polystyrene, food packets, spray paint cans, and a plastic chair. There were also two shopping trolleys on the bank which we didn't include in the weight total.

Looking back, the clean up event was a positive experience for all involved, and Anthony enjoyed the challenge of running an event in covid times. We would like to thank all those who joined us on the day and supported us in our mission to keep our Yarra healthy, protected and loved.



Images by Reece Truscott 2021. All rights reserved.

Let's Get Wild at Burnley

It was great to start 2021 with our first in-person regeneration event at our Burnley Crofters Regeneration site! It was wonderful to have a sunny morning to get our hands dirty and plant more than 250 native plants.

A big thank you to the City of Yarra Environment team and Climbing Anchors for supporting this event.

Working bees with Friends of Andrews Reserve

In atypical Melbourne autumn style the sun shone gleamingly on 15 of our volunteers and Friends of Andrews Reserve (FOAR). We worked closely to install 450 plants in the north and south escarpment with a diverse range of natives. The species selected will assist with slowing surface run-off and trapping seed from surrounding remnant native grasses. We hope to host many more events on this site to connect our volunteers with the FOAR ensuring their knowledge and passion can be passed on.



Image by Reece Truscott
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Images by Reece Truscott
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Image by Jess Corcoran
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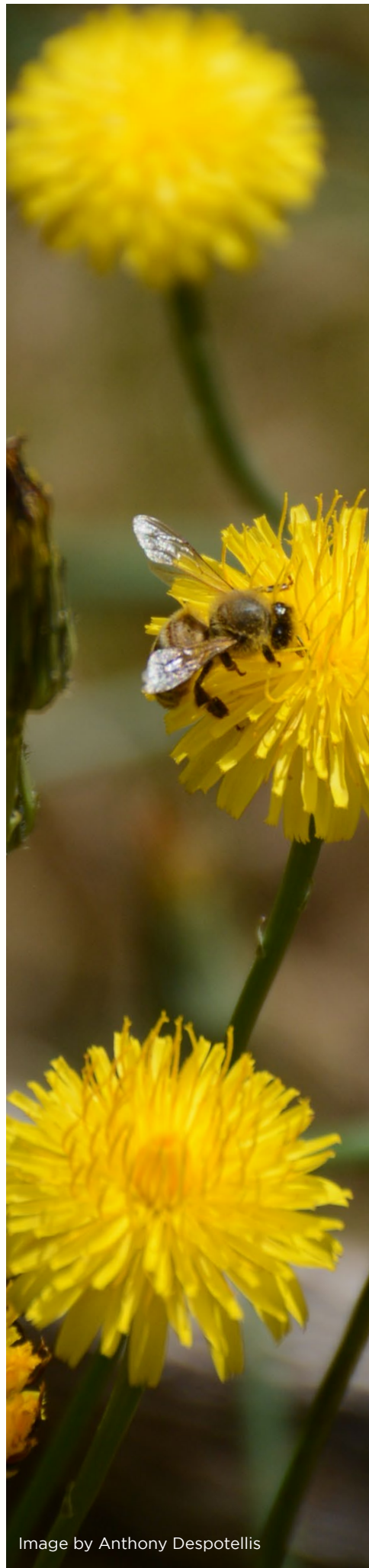


Image by Anthony Despotellis

Toolkits

Following on from our first weeding toolkit in early 2020, Anthony and Tom continued the series with three new toolkits. We gained valuable feedback from those who used the toolkits in the field and improved with every instalation.

We have since created the following:

Our first Weeding toolkit

A Wildlife Toolkit

A Little Critters toolkit

A second weeding toolkit

They have turned into a great beginner resource for anyone interested in learning about the life around the Yarra.

In April we took the toolkits to the Yarra Trail Nature Walk for the 2021 City Nature Challenge. The attendees snapped them up!

We have a new toolkit in the works, a collaboration with the Victorian Fisheries Authority, aiming to create a more complete resource for understanding connectivity around the waterways!

To get a digital copy, head to the [Yarra Riverkeeper website](#), under the resources tab.



New Boat

The YRKA was favourable to receive a kind and special type of donation, a 100% electric Duffy boat!

This boat replaces our much loved little fishing boat, to perform an array of function for us. It is a workboat, a cruise vessel for seeing the Yarra and its banks from the water and a lovely afternoon tea discussing river affairs.

We are extremely proud to reduce our own petrol pollution footprint in the river. We believe that as one of the voices for the Yarra, we should create as minimal impact to the ecosystem we are trying to protect.

The boat has also opened up opportunities for us to bring stakeholders to the water and forge new connections and partnerships, and we have been readily inviting guests onto our lovely new vessel.

Anthony has used the new boat to visit the Bandalong litter traps and take samples for the Polystyrene pollution in the Yarra project, taking volunteers to see the extent of polystyrene pollution.

We are keen to continue to make improvements to our pollution footprint, and are actively applying to grants to cover the costs of putting solar panels on the boats roof, thus further reducing our impact as we require less shore power.

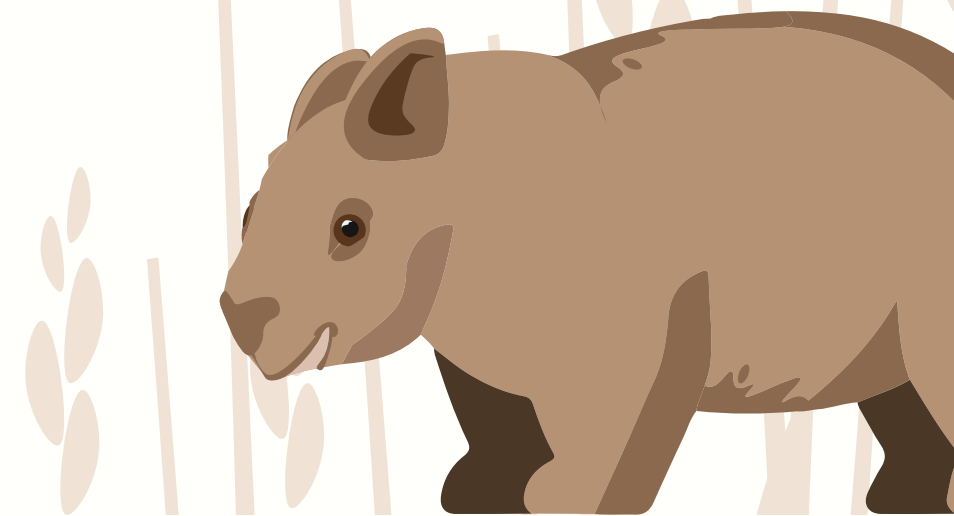


Financial Report

Image by Jess Corcoran
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"If you think the economy
is more important than the
environment, try holding
your breath while counting
your money"

- Professor Guy McPherson



Treasurer's Report

Financial Summary

During the past seven years as Treasurer of the Yarra Riverkeeper Association I have been privileged to be part of a journey that has seen this community organisation grow into one that has respectively earned its place as a key advocate for the protection and sustainability of our beloved Yarra River. This was amplified by the passing of the Yarra River Protection (Willip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act in 2017, a pivotal moment in recognising the Yarra as a natural living entity that must be sustainably managed and protected for future generations. Since then, the Association has been an active voice and educator in the environmental advocacy space, being a key contributor to the Yarra River Strategic Plan, undertaking several projects including polystyrene pollution, litter and flows, the Yarra River Atlas and more recently, ecological regeneration.

The Yarra Riverkeeper Association is pleased to report a net surplus of **\$36,305.34** for the financial year ended 30 June 2021, an increase of 4% from 2020. Despite the continuing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on operations, opportunities were proactively sought to implement operational efficiencies and secure additional funding, enabling the Association to fulfill its strategic objectives. Total income increased **12%** to \$633,873.

Key contributors were:

\$157,032 in donations and membership – the highest amount ever received in one year. The generosity and support were unprecedented, providing significant funding resources for ongoing environmental advocacy, education and environmental stewardship projects, and organisational capacity.

\$363,330 in grant payments, including **\$240,754** from the Federal Government's Environment Restoration Fund (ERF) which is part of a \$500,000 grant payable over two years to embark on several new exciting ecological restoration projects along the Yarra River, \$33,764 from various local councils, and \$50,000 from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) for Phase 2 of the Polystyrene Pollution Project.

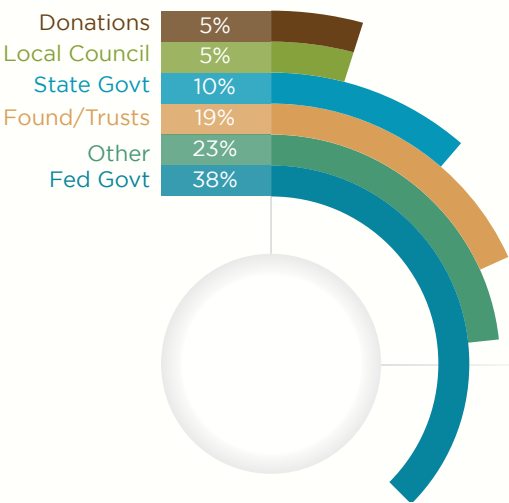
Whilst total expenses rose slightly during the year they were largely funded by grants, with employment and project costs representing approximately **86%** of total expenses.

The underlying net asset base continued to strengthen, increasing 19% to \$229,301. This was reflected, in part, by increased income from government grants, philanthropic donations and memberships. Steady asset growth has provided a solid base for future financial sustainability and continuing investment in organisational capacity. We are proactively striving to further diversify our funding base and ultimately reduce our reliance on grants and other tied funding sources. Currently, untied funding represents **37%** of total funding and has steadily risen during the past three years. This strategy aims to strengthen our financial resilience providing greater capacity to deliver focused and timely outcomes with impact. Current funding sources are represented in the pie chart below.

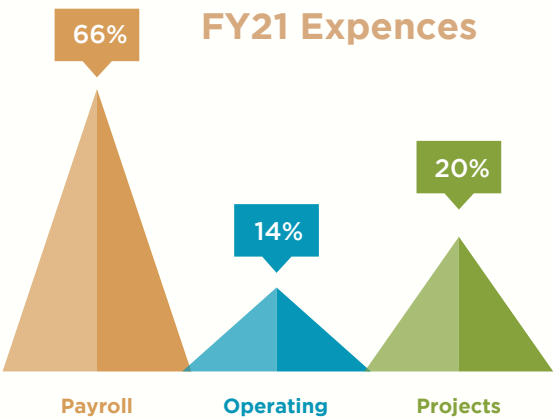
This is my final report as Treasurer. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our dedicated Board, Committee members, staff and volunteers for their support, guidance, and unrelenting enthusiasm. You all have and will continue to bring incredible vitality, energy and commitment to this organisation.

To our members, donors and funders, thank you for all for your ongoing support during the year. Your contributions directly fund our activities and projects which aim to protect and restore the Yarra River and its tributaries, both present and future.

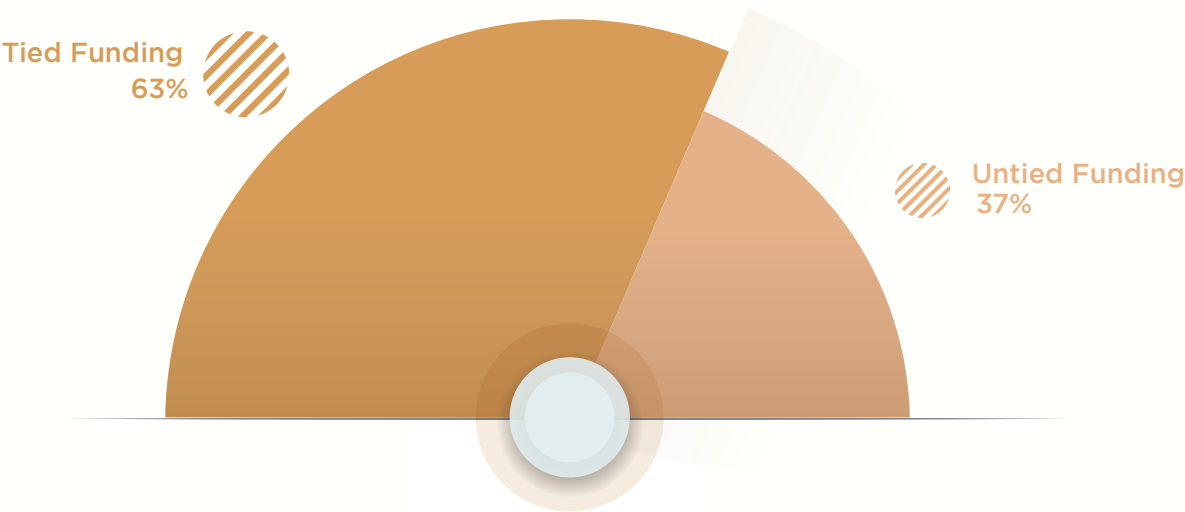
FY21 Funding Sources



FY21 Expenses



FY21 Tied vs Untied Funding



Financial Statements

Statement of Comprehensive Income

For the year ended 30 June 2021

	FY21	FY20
Income	\$	\$
Grants	363,330	460,373
Donations	127,255	41,891
Membership - Corporate	25,000	30,000
Membership Fees	4,777	8,314
Sundry Income	113,168	26,029
Interest	344	300
Total Income	633,874	566,907
Expenditure		
Employee Benefits	396,123	238,947
Expenses		
Depreciation	12,710	3,350
Operational Expenses	72,759	289,829
Project Expenses *	115,977	0
Total Expenditure	597,569	532,126
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	36,305	34,781

* Note - FY20 project expenses were included in operational expenses.

Statement of Financial Position

For the year ended 30 June 2021

	FY21	FY20
Income	\$	\$
Current Assets		
Cash at Bank	303,238	297,327
Receivables	13,397	800
Prepayments	0	20
Total Current Assets	316,635	298,147
Assets		
Boat	23,964	33,502
Office Equipment	5,175	3,862
Website Redevelopment	19,700	1,740
Less Provision for Depreciation	(10,268)	(25,532)
Total Non Current Assets	38,571	13,572
Total Assets	355,206	311,719
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities		
Payables	36,688	40,966
Provision for Committed Expenditure	40,000	50,000
Employee Provisions	49,217	27,757
Total Liabilities	125,905	118,723
Net Assets	229,301	192,996
Equity		
Retained Surplus	192,996	158,215
Current Earnings	36,305	34,781
Total Equity	229,301	192,996

Statement of Cash Flows

For the year ended 30 June 2021

	FY20	FY19
Cashflows from Operating Activities	\$	\$
Receipts from Customers		
Grant Income	348,834	481,604
Donations	127,255	41,891
Other Income	142,945	64,816
Payments to Suppliers & Employees		
Employee Salaries & Costs	(396,123)	(220,964)
Operational Expenses	(207,609)	(328,601)
Interest Received	344	312
Net Cash Provided by Operating Activities	15,646	39,058
Cashflows from Investing Activities		
Payments for Property, Plant & Equipment	(9,735)	(5,602)
Net Cash (outflow) from Investing Activities	(9,735)	(5,602)
Net (Decrease)/Increase in Cash Held	5,911	33,456
Cash at Beginning of Financial Year	297,327	263,871
Cash at End of Financial Year	303,238	297,327



Image by Jess Corcoran
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Governance



“Good governance depends on ability to take responsibility by both administration as well as people.”

Narendra Modi

Committee Reports

Advocacy

The Yarra Riverkeeper speaks for the river as the river cannot speak for itself. Whenever a door has been opened to speak for the River, the Yarra Riverkeeper, Andrew Kelly, has entered the process with clarity of purpose and determination. The Advocacy Committee maintains a register of issues affecting the Yarra River and guides the Riverkeeper in his advocacy.

The greatest advocacy achievement of this reporting period has been securing permanent planning controls for the Yarra River between Richmond and Warrandyte. The controls were announced by the Minister for Planning, Richard Wynne, from the YRKA boat on 18 April 2021. The changes lock in permanent landscape and built form controls, including height restrictions to prevent overshadowing, and setbacks to protect the river from inappropriate development. The controls include mandatory height limits of between 6 and 25 metres along the Yarra River between Richmond and Warrandyte and a minimum mandatory setback of 30 meters means no development can occur on the sensitive riverbanks.

Such achievements are the culmination of long and patient campaigns, in this case going way back in 2012. Advocacy can be a long game. Even when such an outcome is achieved, ongoing monitoring and

watchfulness is needed to ensure the intended outcomes are achieved.

The passing of Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017 was a high point for the advocacy of the Association. This year, the Riverkeeper has become even more focused and determined to see the Act interpreted and implemented in the most Yarra River favourable way. The Riverkeeper has concentrated on two key aspects of the Act: net gain and the realisation of the Greater Yarra Urban Parklands as a flagship for the concept that the River is connected as one living entity from source to mouth. We still await the final adoption of the Yarra Strategic Plan.

The Riverkeeper has made many presentations to Panels, Advisory Committees and Inquiries over the course of the year. While succinct, they make an impression. Each is taken as an opportunity to re-inforce the principles and intent of the Act. Over his time as Riverkeeper, Andrew Kelly's has developed a familiarity with policies and legislation pertaining to the Yarra to hone passionate yet reasoned arguments which reveal a passionate distillation of his years of experience in the role.

The preparation of the Central and Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy (SWS) emerged this year as an advocacy priority. The SWS will determine how water is managed in our



Image by Anthony Despotellis

region for the next 10 years. With rainfall decline attributable to climate change, a growing population and unsustainable water extraction, the Rivers in our region face significant challenges. We thank Scott Seymour for his invaluable experience and insights in this process. YRKA has been working with other community environmental groups to the importance of water for the environment as well as a more transparent public process. The SWS will continue to be a focus in 2021-2022.

YRKA engaged with candidates in the local government election in October 2020 introducing the Association and highlighting the role that River fronting councils can play in contributing to the health of the River.

Some of the Riverkeeper's submissions and appearances

Legislative Council Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline (August 2020)
Yarra River Bulleen Precinct Plan Advisory Committee (February 2021)

Ecoline Tree Tops: Banyule Planning Scheme Amendment C107 (December 2020)

Essential Services Commission public forum on Melbourne Waters Pricing Submission (22 April 2021)

Essential Services Commission submission
Thanks to all those who have contributed to our Advocacy work this year.
Janet Bolitho (convenor)

Governance

It's been a busy, challenging and exciting year for the board. At last year's AGM, Rachel Fensham was elected to the Yarra Riverkeeper Association board, and we welcomed Rachel from December 2020. Rachel brings valuable skills in public engagement, governance, tertiary education and digital platform literacy to the Association and has rapidly become a trusted, driven, supportive colleague and advocate for the river. After a leave of absence, the board welcomed valued member Ian Wong back in 2021. Attendance wise, all board members were present for board meetings throughout the year (unless on a leave of absence), with the exception of one apology in August 2020.

Along with the rest of the world, 2021 has seen the YRKA board and committees embrace digital technology to stay connected and on track. The board met six times during 2020/2021, two of which were face to face meetings, the rest enabled by those now familiar platforms, Google Meets and Zoom. The board were fortunate enough to be able to meet in real life at our home, Abbotsford Convent, for the annual strategy day early in 2021. The session built on 2020's strategy work, helping further shape the Association's direction and inform strategy implementation for our CEO, Karin and the staff body.

The Association's four committees - Governance, Resourcing, Advocacy and Memberships & Community Engagement - all chaired by board members, met at least 5 times during 2020/2021. Over the past year, the board has reflected on the future structure and

function of the current committees, which have historically provided operational support to a small staff body. As the staff of YRKA has grown into a capable, skilled and motivated team, for some committees that operational function is increasingly performed by the staff. This has led to an exploration of how committees and board members can best support the staff and organisation to thrive and grow.

A proposed model is the establishment of focused working groups with specific goals and objectives. We are trialling this model through the recent establishment of a fundraising working group, made up of some board members and staff, with the view to targeting external fundraising expertise. What models are appropriate for each area currently covered by our committees, what other areas might need to be added, and where and how we might attract additional external expertise continues to be explored.

Looking forward, 2021/22 will see the board further streamline and contemporise administration and communications with the adoption of

board management software BoardPro. A focus on improving governance and strategy with our CEO will ensure we can confidently support the hard-working YRKA team, represent the Association's members and, of course, advocate for a healthy, protected and loved Yarra.

Finally, whilst it will be bittersweet to farewell Andrew Kelly, the dedicated Riverkeeper and board Vice President, I give deep personal thanks to Andrew for his tireless and inspirational work for the river and in his excellent governance nouse, and wish him all the very best for the future.

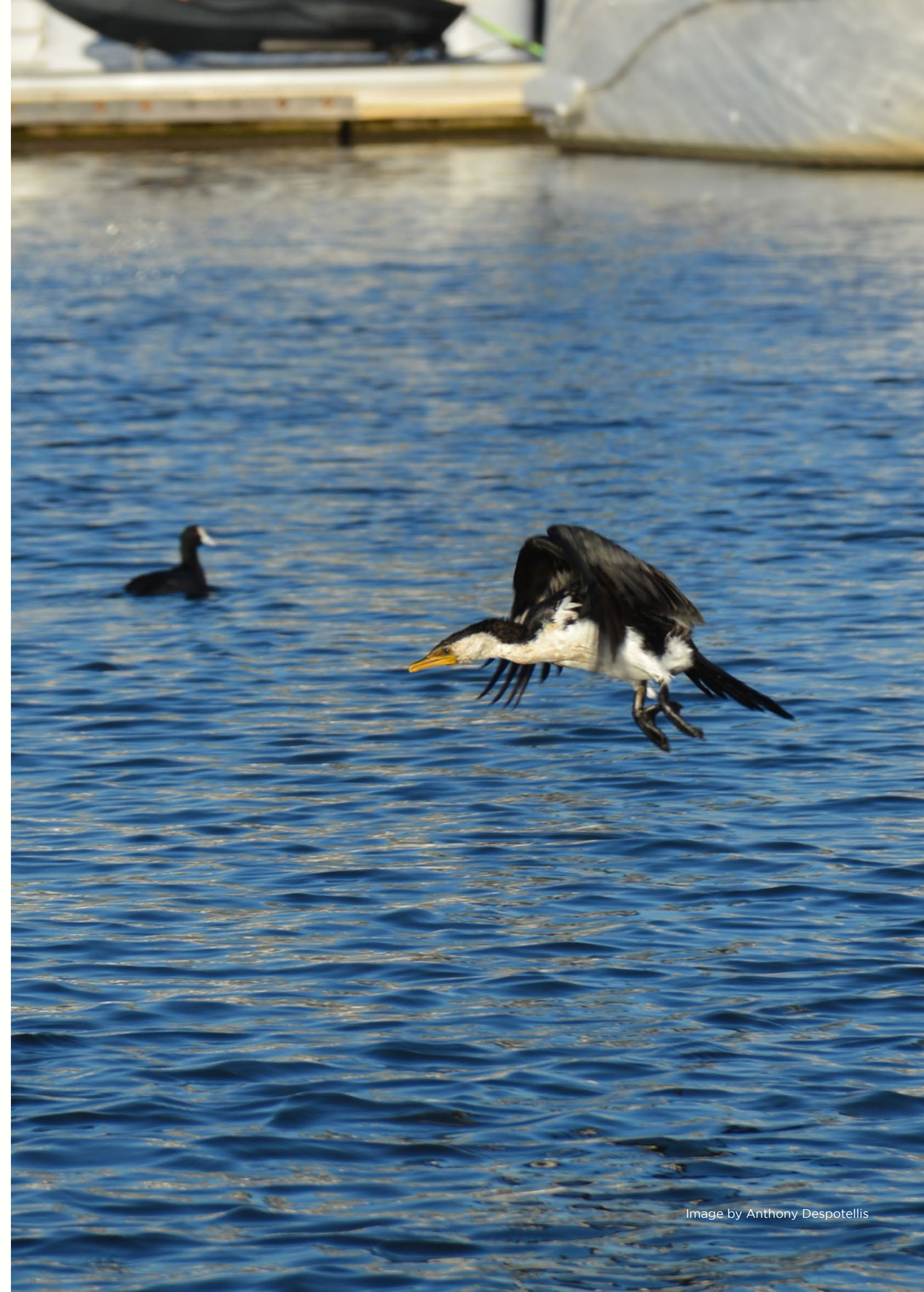


Image by Anthony Despotellis



Community engagement & Memberships

This past financial year we have welcomed 55 new members - thank you for joining us and helping to support our work! In 2020, webinars helped us realise the importance of digital platforms to improve accessibility for the public to engage in our activities and mission. Even in times of eased restrictions, commitments and other barriers such as living too far away can hinder someone's ability to partake in in-person events. At the start of 2021, we hosted our first regeneration event 'Let's Get Wild at Burnley' which was welcomed with great enthusiasm and passion from our members and the community. It has been wonderful to have a mixture of in-person and digital events, and something we hope to continue doing in the future.

Looking forward, our implementation of a volunteer platform has seen us delve further into engaging the community through volunteering. We look forward to sharing with you the progress of this in the next financial year.

Thanks to laying the foundation of a social media strategy, our presence on digital platforms continues to grow. Over the course of the FY our reach on Facebook and Instagram improved by 417.3% and 587% respectively and our following also increased by 2000 on both platforms. Our digital presence is an invaluable tool in promoting the vital vision of a healthy, protected and loved Yarra and we look forward to seeing these figures continue to grow.

Resourcing

The Resourcing Committee is Chaired by the Treasurer, Gillian Jervis. Its primary purpose is to assist the Board to fulfil its overall responsibilities regarding financial sustainability matters including preparation of the annual operational budget.

During the 2020/21 financial year, the Resourcing Committee continued to enhance the financial systems and processes implemented in the previous two years.

The Association has greatly benefited from the implementation of Xero accounting software through streamlined accounting processes and financial reporting. Some key improvements included the adoption of account coding to facilitate extraction of informative executive management reports on project and operational expenditure and a more comprehensive operational budget process. Further website enhancements/improved user experience to effectively capture donations and membership fees. These actions, together with the outsourcing of bookkeeping services have significantly reduced the Treasurer's workload enabling greater focus on the Association's strategic activities. Further details of financial activities are outlined in the Treasurer's Report.

Our committee members have been a great support throughout the year, and I thank them for their valued input and commitment.

Patron & Supporters

Patron

Her Excellency, the Honourable Linda Dessau AC, Governor of Victoria

Associate Partner

Environment Education Victoria

Supporters

Major Funding:

Melbourne Water Corporation
Boroondara City Council
Stonnington City Council
Yarra City Council
City of Melbourne Council
Landcare Australia

Federal Australian Government,
Department of Industry, Science, Energy
and Resources
Community Environmental Programs
Grants
Adam Bandt MP for Melbourne
Kevin Andrews MP for Menzies
Katie Allen MP for Higgins

Federal Australian Government,
Department of Agriculture, Water and
Environment
Environmental Restoration Fund
Hon. Josh Frydenburg MP for Kooyong,
Treasurer of Australia

Victorian Government, Department of
Environment, Land, Water and Planning
(DELWP)
Port Phillip Bay Fund including:

Yarra Atlas
Yarra Lower Reed Blitz
Styrofoam: Sources and Solutions

Community Large Grants:
Litter and Flows

Victorian Government, Department of
Jobs, Precincts & Regions (DJPR)
Business Support Fund

Isaacson-Davis Foundation
Shelmerdine Foundation
Myer Foundation
Global Waterkeeper Alliance

Sponsors:

Morgan Wealth Management
Melbourne Water Corporation
Korowa Girls School

Event Sponsors:

ANZ
Melbourne Water Corporation
Cleanaway
Parks Victoria
Melbourne Uni Boat House

Government Agency Collaborators:

Federal Australian Government,
Department of Industry, Science, Energy
and Resources
Federal Australian Government,
Department of Agriculture, Water and
Environment
Victorian Government, Department of
Environment, Land, Water and Planning
Victorian Government, Department of
Jobs, Precincts & Regions

Victorian Environmental Protection
Authority
Melbourne Water
Park Victoria

Consultants

Practical Ecology (Lincoln Kern,
Daniel Miller)
Acacia Environmental Management (Sophie
Jones-Kelly, Mark Vegara, Paul Murphy,
Cameron Hall, Matt Hall)
Digital Next (Steven Lord, Emily Holmes,
Alex Crouch)
Progressive PR (Jodie Artis, Kate Unsworth)
Alexandra Professional Services: Chartered
Accountants (Nerissa Kennedy,
Christopher Skinner)
Gruen Exchange (Carol Jadraque)
Indigenous Designs (Ross Coupar, Alan Noy)
ABZECO (Liam Hogan, Adrian Lamande)
Geoff Brown - Tangent Consulting

Capstone Project Partners

Victorian Indigenous Nurseries Co-
Operative (VINC) (Mark Hursch)
Nangak Tamboree Wildlife Sanctuary
Nursery (Steph Chan, Regan Beazley)
Friends of Warrandyte State
Park Nursery
CeRDi, Federation University
Cleanwater Group
Port Phillip EcoCentre
Acacia Environmental Management

Friends, Supporters and River Friends

1 % for the Planet
Abbotsford Riverbankers
Acacia Environmental Management
Alluvium Consulting
Aqua Deck Pty Ltd
Aquatika Environmental
Aquayak Kayaks
Arbory Beach Patrol
Atlas of Living Australia
Bend of Islands Conservation Association

Bulleen Arts and Garden
Bunnings Warehouse
Camberwell Senior Citizens Club
City of Melbourne
Clean up Australia
Climbing Anchors
Collingwood & Abbotsford Residents'
Association (CARA)
Cool Australia Trust Credo Group
Digital Next
Dish and Spoon Cafe
Dread Pirate Sound System Eco Aspects
Environment Education Victoria
Finbar Neighbourhood House Inc
First Friends of Dandenong Creek
Five Consulting Pty Ltd
Footscray City Rowing Club
Friends of Damper Creek Reserve Inc.
Friends of Merri Creek
Friends of Scotchmans Creek and Valley
Reserve Inc
Friends of the Yarra Valley Parks (FYVP)
G.L.A.D.E. Gowrie Victoria Docklands
Genovese Coffee
Good Company
Greg Hunt & Associates (Greg Hunt)
Healesville Environment Watch Inc
INCC Yarra Paddlers
Inflatable Regatta
International River Foundation
Jack Vanzet
Johns Hill Landcare Group Inc.
Jumping Creek Catchment
Junior Landcare
Kanteen
Kayak Melbourne
Keep Victoria Beautiful
Kirinari Kayak Klub
Korowa Girls School
Landcare Australia
Landcare Group
Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
Love our Street
Ludlow Bar & Dining Room
Manningham City Council
Melbourne Boat Hire
Melbourne City Marina
Melbourne Girls' College
Melbourne University Boat Club
Melbournwalks.com
Merri Creek Management Committee

Monash University
 Morgan Stanley
 Native Fish Australia (Vic) Inc.
 Newtech Poly
 Ocean Youth
 Olmsted
 Optimising
 Outdoor Education Academy
 Paddle Victoria
 Patagonia
 Port Phillip EcoCentre
 Port Places
 Practical Ecology Pty Ltd
 Progressive PR Communications
 RMIT University
 Red Rock Venues
 Regeneration Projects
 Richmond Rowing Club
 Riverland Bars
 Riverland Conservation Society (RCS)
 Ross Allen Consulting
 Rotary Club of Richmond Storm
 Consulting Pty Ltd
 Sea Kayak Australia
 SeaLife Aquarium Melbourne
 Serco Waste Collection
 Sound Warehouse
 Stephen Curtain Wildlife Filmmaker
 Strathcona Baptist Girls Grammar School
 Strike Bowling
 Tangaroa Blue
 The Australian Environmental Films
 Association
 The Plastic Runner
 The University of Melbourne
 Trinity Grammar School
 Victoria University
 Water Stewardship Australia
 Werribee Riverkeeper Association
 Wurundjeri-Woiwurrung Tribal Land
 Council
 Yarra Climate Action Now

Yarra Dheran Advisory Committee
 Yarra Paddlers
 Yarra Pools
 Yarra River Business Association
 Yarra for Life

Core Volunteers

Alicia Privitera
 Benita Bunting
 Camille Perry
 Christine Slade
 Clare Vernon
 Colin Franklin
 Erica Robinson
 Kylie Patterson
 Manogna Reddy
 Markos Hasiotis
 Mason Wood
 Matt Shephard
 Nicole Mackenzie
 Richard Squires
 Rishabh Choudhary
 Rose Ruby Tucker
 Sebastian Pivet
 Valentina Meza
 Yash Ramesh
 Zeth Cameron

Work-based Learning interns

Alex Earnshaw- University of Melbourne
 Neha Shetty- Monash University
 Akshayaa Pasupathi- Monash University

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