



THE YARRA RIVERKEEPER ASSOCIATION

Annual Report
2022



Thank you for supporting the Yarra Riverkeeper Association.

The Yarra Riverkeeper Association is a values-driven community-based organisation that advocates for the health and protection of the Yarra, Birrarung River and her tributaries.

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Photo: The Upper Yarra, Birrarung Catchment, John Gollings
Design: Anthony Despotellis

Acknowledgement of Country

The Yarra Riverkeeper Association acknowledges that the lands and waterways of the Yarra, Birrarung catchment, are the unceded territories of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong peoples. We pay our respect to their Ancestors, who cared for Country since time began, and 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.

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‘The Birrarung is alive, has a heart, a spirit and is part of our Dreaming. We have lived with and known the Birrarung since the beginning. We will always know the Birrarung.’

- Preamble of the Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017

About Us

We believe that the Yarra, Birrarung – our beautiful, spiritually significant, and resilient river – brings life, joy, and balance along its 242 kilometres journey from source to sea. The river we know, and love, is not just water, but lands, terrain, ecosystems, people, community, and culture – together as one living and integrated natural entity from source to sea.

Founded in 2005, the Yarra Riverkeeper Association is a values-driven community-based organisation that works with communities, Traditional Owners, governments (local, state, and federal), statutory authorities, and businesses to advocate for the health of the whole river. We are a not-for-profit organisation with a paid staff and volunteer Board. We are independent of the government and transparent in our decision-making.

Our vision is a healthy, protected and loved Yarra, Birrarung River. We seek to understand and partner with Traditional Owners to re-energise the river ecologically and culturally, bringing back biodiversity and health. Every day we work to make this possible, through vibrant advocacy, education, community engagement, on-the-ground litter and regeneration programs, and fundraising.

As Melbourne’s population grows and the climate crisis worsens, the Yarra, Birrarung is coming under increasing environmental pressure, pollution, and habitat fragmentation affecting biodiversity and health. Riverkeepers are vital to keeping the Yarra, Birrarung healthy.

Healthy



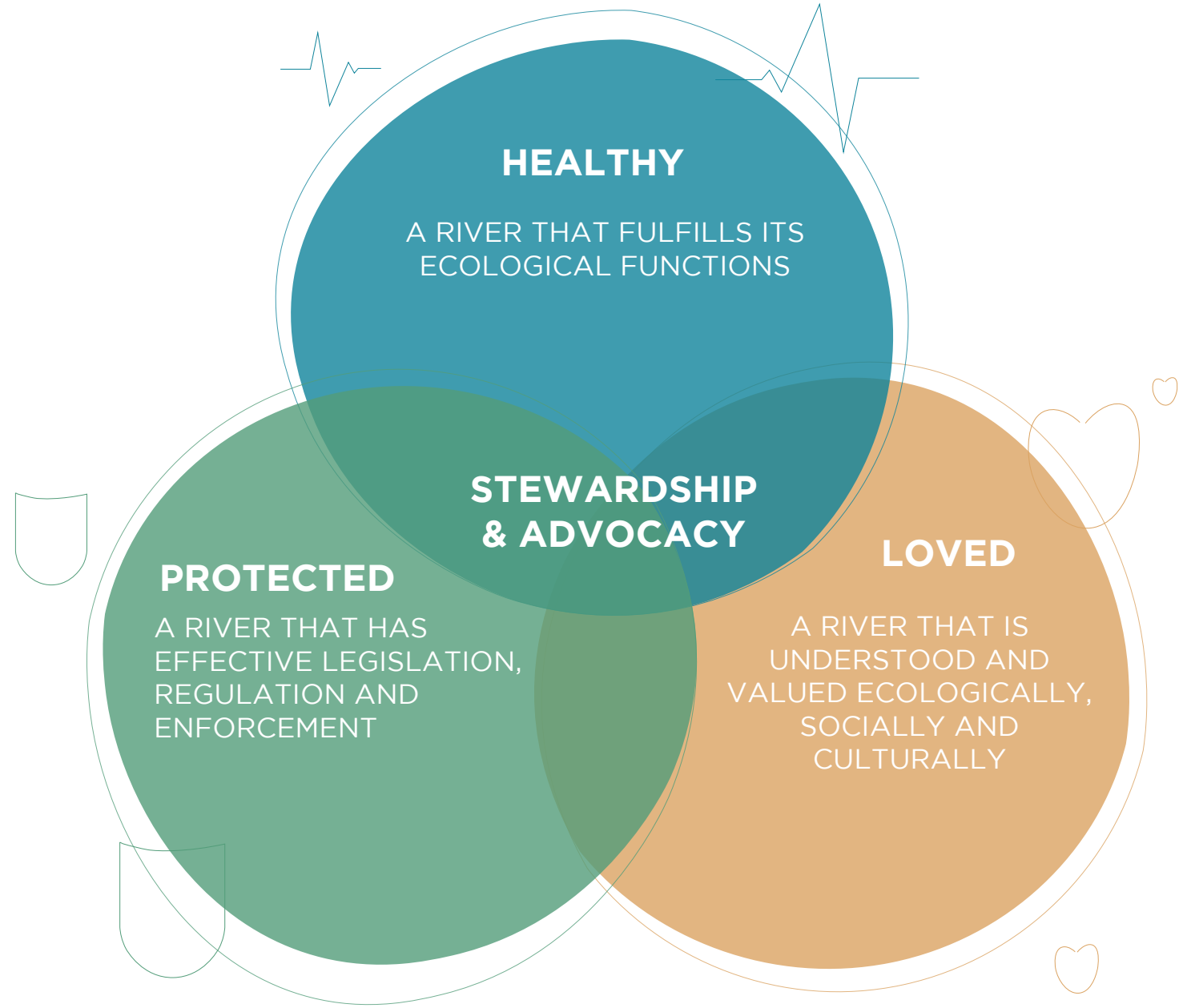
protected



Loved



“Our vision is a healthy protected and loved Yarra, Birrarung River”



Our Team



Charlotte Sterrett
Yarra Riverkeeper

Charlotte is the Yarra Riverkeeper responsible for delivering YRKA's vision of a healthy, protected and loved Yarra, Birrarung. She does this through advocacy, research, citizen science and communications with governments, communities, grassroots organisations, media and business.

For 20 years, Charlotte has been a passionate advocate for climate and environmental justice here in Australia and overseas. She is recognised globally for

her work supporting local communities in the Asia-Pacific region build their resilience to climate change.

Charlotte lives by the Yarra, Birrarung in Warrandyte and takes every opportunity to spend time by the river through walking, swimming, and canoeing.

Part of her motivation of working as the Yarra Riverkeeper is to encourage people to be more connected to the river and to respect it as a living entity with rights of its own.



Karin Traeger
CEO

Karin is our Chief Executive Officer and is responsible for overseeing the management of the organisation's operations.

Originally from Chile, she is 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, Karin trains as an ultra-

marathon athlete and has founded the globally recognised group, The Plastic Runner, facilitating plogging events to create environmental awareness in local communities.

Karin is a recognised public eco-champion and her significant contribution to environmental protection both locally and globally has been recognised by many well-known outdoor commercial brands.

This year we said goodbye to Andrew Kelly (previous Riverkeeper), Candace Colaço (Communications & Fundraising Assistant), Lachy Peace (Regen Officer), Kristin Charlton (Community Engagement Officer) and Jonathan Law (Partnerships Manager and Knowledge Officer) **and we welcomed** Jessica Rosien (Advocacy Consultant) and Katrina Lee (Project Consultant). Thank you to everyone who is part of the YRKA Team.



Nicole Kowalczyk
Maribyrnong Officer

Nicole is our Maribyrnong Officer responsible for advocacy along the Maribyrnong river with the aim to set up a similar group to YRKA in the catchment.

Environmental education and management have been of interest to Nicole since she can remember. 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.

She has studied both the nesting behaviour of the leatherback turtle in Costa Rica and the foraging and reproductive ecology of the St Kilda little penguin as part of her Masters and PhD respectively.



Anthony Despotellis
Litter Officer & Graphics

Anthony is our passionate and dedicated Litter Officer, and is responsible for increasing knowledge about litter in the river and advocacy to reduce pollution to improve the water quality in the Yarra, Birrarung catchment.

He holds a Bachelor of Industrial Design and 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.



Andrew Wood
Regeneration Advisor

Andrew is responsible for leading YRKA's regeneration work across many sites in the Yarra, Birrarung catchment, ensuring our work supports ecological health, climate resilience, and cultural healing.

Born in Eltham, Andrew spent his early years exploring the river by canoe. He is a qualified landscape architect and has a diverse range of

professional experience, as a landscaper contractor, builder, furniture maker, artist, sculptor, permaculture designer and teacher. He is an avid sailor.

Andrew is most at home amongst the plants and while he tried not to have a favourite part of the river banks, his home regen site is Andrew's reserve close to YRKA's offices.

Riverkeeper's Report



Charlotte Sterrett

Yarra Riverkeeper

This year has been a year of firsts for the Yarra Riverkeeper Association. We developed our first comprehensive strategic plan, we embarked on a massive program of regeneration along the river, and we appointed our first ever female Yarra Riverkeeper!

Back in 2005, when YRKA came into being with Ian Penrose at the helm, I never dreamed I would take up this vital role. I am fortunate to live by the river. On a warm day, there's a swimming hole I like to visit with my family. It's a great spot – there is a small beach, there is shade from the many trees, and the current is gentle. Spending time by the river calms my soul and revives my spirit. It is serendipitous that the role of Yarra Riverkeeper came along.

In the last annual report, Andrew Kelly described being the Yarra Riverkeeper as the best job in the world, but a job that must be done at a sprint, not a jog. This has certainly been my experience so far. It's an 'infinity job' – a role where one never feels like the work is done! It's a varied role, where the only weekly rhythm is time spent with the Birrarung. This is paramount to be able to stay grounded and purposeful.

YRKA has achieved so much this year and we have much to look forward to.

Campaigning and influencing

With a federal election, the development and finalisation of key Victorian strategies, and the launch of the Yarra Strategic Plan (Burndap Birrarung burndap umarkoo), YRKA has been busy. In addition to influencing key decision-makers, YRKA has supported several effective campaigns to prevent harm to the river from urban development, including numerous objections to urban development along the river. We have also used research and evidence to talk with authenticity and authority in our advocacy efforts, publishing three excellent reports.

Community engagement

Despite reduced capacity, we have been highly active and effective in engaging with the media, communities and businesses to tell the many stories of the river. We have been broadcast across all media

channels and have increased our social media presence considerably. We have held fun and engaging events for members, volunteers and supporters, reconnecting and taking on-the-ground action for the river. We launched our Business Partnerships program and have welcomed many like-minded businesses into the advocacy and stewardship space.

River regeneration and health

This year was a massive year for regeneration. Emerging from COVID-19 restrictions, we wasted no time and embarked on planting over 26,000 grasses, bushes and trees across nine sites. Our litter work also stepped up a notch with the second phase of the Polystyrene Project completed just in time for the end of the financial year, and new funding confirmed for the following two years to reduce this pervasive pollutant in our rivers.

Building resilience

This year we have lost and gained expertise in the organisation – we are not immune to the effects brought about in the labour market subsequent to COVID-19. It has been challenging to fulfil all the requests made of us by those interested in the stories of the river, especially in a 24-hour news cycle world. However, we have risen to the challenge and become a smaller but stronger team with great skills and a can-do work ethic. With additional core funding we will be able to capitalise on the work already done.



The future

Every organisation needs a longer-term plan and this year we developed ours. It was a fabulous experience and opportunity to develop our first comprehensive strategic plan which puts in one place our vision, values and goals. The strategy speaks to the heart, head and hands of YRKA. Our heart tells us that the river is in desperate need and that we must serve her and the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong people to heal Country. Our head tells us that we can achieve positive change through advocacy and stewardship. Our hands tell us that we must act by regenerating the lands and waterways and by telling the many stories of the river so that others can become riverkeepers.

As the Yarra Riverkeeper, I have many hopes for the Yarra, Birrarung, and

her tributaries and the plants, people and animals that call her home. This includes:

Mindset change to foster positive water- and landscape change (with government, businesses, communities and the general public)

Stronger communities (as active citizens lead to effective States)

Better connections to each other and nature – together we can become ‘one living, integrated entity’

Realising Traditional Owner values as the norm not the exception in water policy and practice

More water for the river

A swimmable Yarra, Birrarung!

Thank you

I would like to thank everyone at YRKA – the board, staff, volunteers – for welcoming me into the unique and special organisation. Past Riverkeepers Andrew Kelly and Ian Penrose have also been a great support – always at the end of the telephone or email with answers to my many questions. Special thanks to Janet Bolitho and Scott Seymour for mentoring me in this role.

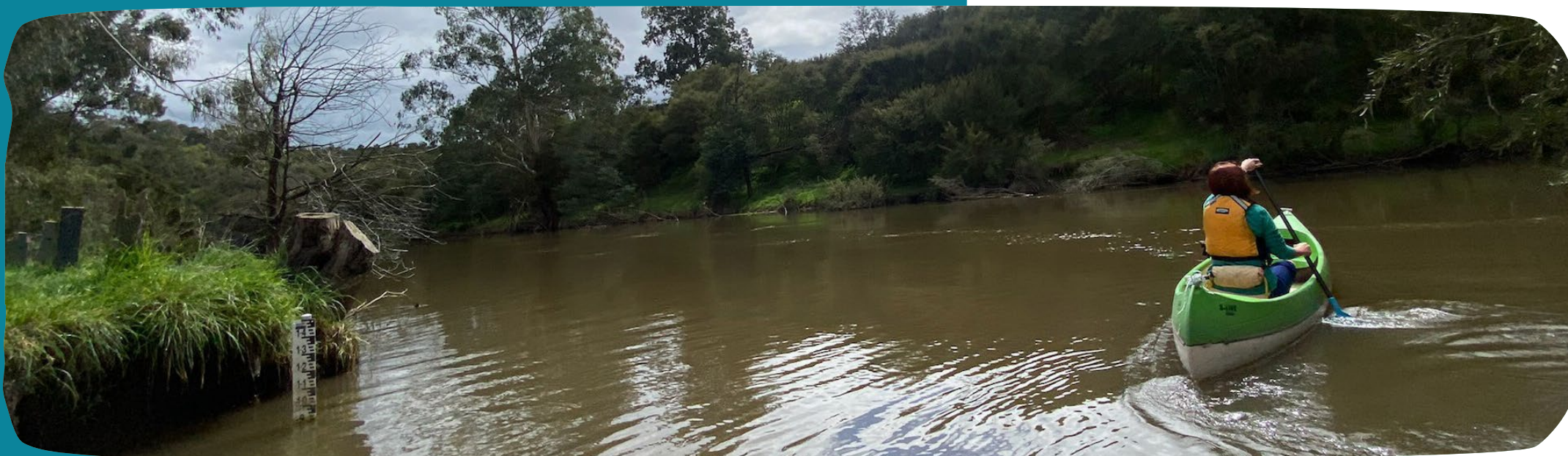
There is so much to learn about this beautiful, spiritually significant, and resilient river and many people have been instrumental in getting me up to speed on the range of issues affecting our beloved river. Thanks to all the local community groups who have taken me out to visit their ‘homes’ along the river – the places they have dedicated their lives to without asking for

anything except for a return of the river’s health. Thanks to Melbourne Water and the teams who support waterways and land health. Thanks to the folk at the Concerned Waterways Alliance who have shown me how a group with little resources but a big heart can have real impact on water policy in Victoria. And thanks to the many individuals in government, the media, and business who also share our vision and are trying their best to make positive and transformative changes.

It has been a rollercoaster ride these past six months but with the support I have received, it has been joyful. I feel honoured and privileged to lead the organisation’s efforts for a healthy, loved and protected Yarra, Birrarung and her tributaries. I look forward to the year ahead, with a clear strategy for how to achieve our vision.

Burndap Birrarung burndap umarkoo (What’s good for the Yarra, is good for all).

Charlotte L. Sterrett
Yarra Riverkeeper



A message from the Chair



**Warwick
Leeson OAM**
Board Chair

Despite the constraints of COVID-19 restrictions over the past year I'm both pleased and proud to report that the Yarra Riverkeeper Association (YRKA) has been able to go about our business almost seamlessly.

Following Andrew Kelly's retirement from the role in September 2021, the Association appointed a new Riverkeeper, Charlotte Sterrett, in January 2022. Charlotte's extensive experience in the international not-for-profit sector, combined with her ability to hit the ground running in her new role, and her passion for rivers and their rights, has provided our organisation with a new sense of vigour.

Karin Traeger, our CEO, continues to work diligently to achieve the vision and mission of YRKA despite challenges this year in recruiting and retaining some key roles. She is supported by a small but dedicated and talented team who have risen to the challenges facing them and taken advantage of the opportunities presented.

The Maribyrnong River Officer, Nikki Kowalczyk, is in her second year. The role and its function auspiced under YRKA have been highly successful with a new organisation currently under development to advocate and steward the Maribyrnong River.

I would like to congratulate and thank my fellow board and Committee 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 the Board and Committee members have stood tall and overcome each and every challenge. Thank you to them for their ongoing efforts to ensure the Association is sustainable and resilient.

Regeneration of the Board of Directors is an on-going issue for many community-based organisations, and, over the past couple of years, with lock-downs, this has been challenging.

Sally McPhee and Ian Wong have reluctantly decided to step away from the board. They will be sorely missed, but leave with our love and support. A rigorous recruiting process has resulted in some outstanding new candidates seeking election to the board at our AGM in November 2022.

Finally, as your Chair and on behalf of my fellow board members, I would like to say that it has been an honour and a privilege to have served the Yarra Riverkeeper Association. We remain committed as ever to a healthy, protected and loved Yarra, Birrarung river and her tributaries, especially as we begin implementing our new three-year strategic plan – a plan that builds on what we have achieved during the past 18 years of operation and takes us forward in new and exciting ways.

Warwick Leeson, OAM

Chairperson, Yarra Riverkeeper Association



A message from the CEO



**Karin
Traeger**
CEO

This past year has been busy for the team, our board, and supporters. From strategic planning to welcoming a new Riverkeeper, and the recruitment of new board members, we have been busily working to achieve our vision of a healthy, protected and loved Yarra, Birrarung and tributaries. We have high hopes for the future and hope you will join us to be part of the journey.

With the recent flooding across the State, advocacy for rivers is more important than ever. We hope that the impacted communities can receive the support they need, and we will keep working towards strengthening community capacity for protecting waterways and people from the climate crisis.

This past year, we have planted over 26,000 native grasses, bushes and trees in the ground along the river. This work will support climate resilience, increase biodiversity and heal Country. Thanks to everyone involved in the various projects including our dedicated Bush Crew ably led by Andrew Wood (Regeneration Lead) for their passion and dedication to our beloved riverbanks.

We continued to kick goals with our litter research this year. We completed our Polystyrene Phase 2 Project, culminating in the release of our 'Deep Dive' Report which identified the key sources of this pervasive pollutant. A big thank you to all the volunteers who audited and counted bead by bead from their homes. Without their support, we wouldn't have been able to successfully complete this project.

This year, some of our valued team members moved onto other challenges in the environmental space. Thanks to Kirstin Charlton, Candace Colaço, Jonathan Law and Lachlan Peace for helping us this past year. We wish you all the best in your future endeavours as eco-champions.

In the past year, we have listened to supporter feedback on our membership platform and have researched better ways to make the process better and faster, so our members can have a better experience. We will send communications on the changes as we move to a new platform. We appreciate your patience with the transition.

Now for some not-so-great news. Due to staff changes and a large increase in interest from people in the community to volunteer with us, we have reluctantly paused our Volunteer Engagement Program until further notice. I know...sounds like a good problem to have! We are endeavouring to secure ongoing funding to reappoint a Community Engagement Officer this financial year, but in the meantime volunteer opportunities will be limited to events only. If you would like to chat about funding opportunities, let us know!

Thanks again to every partner, donor, volunteer, and community member who has supported us this year. We cannot achieve our vision of a healthy, protected and loved river without you. We look forward to the coming year where we will once again work hard to provide the much-needed advocacy and stewardship our local waterways need.

Thank you from the team.

Karin Traeger
CEO, Yarra Riverkeeper Association

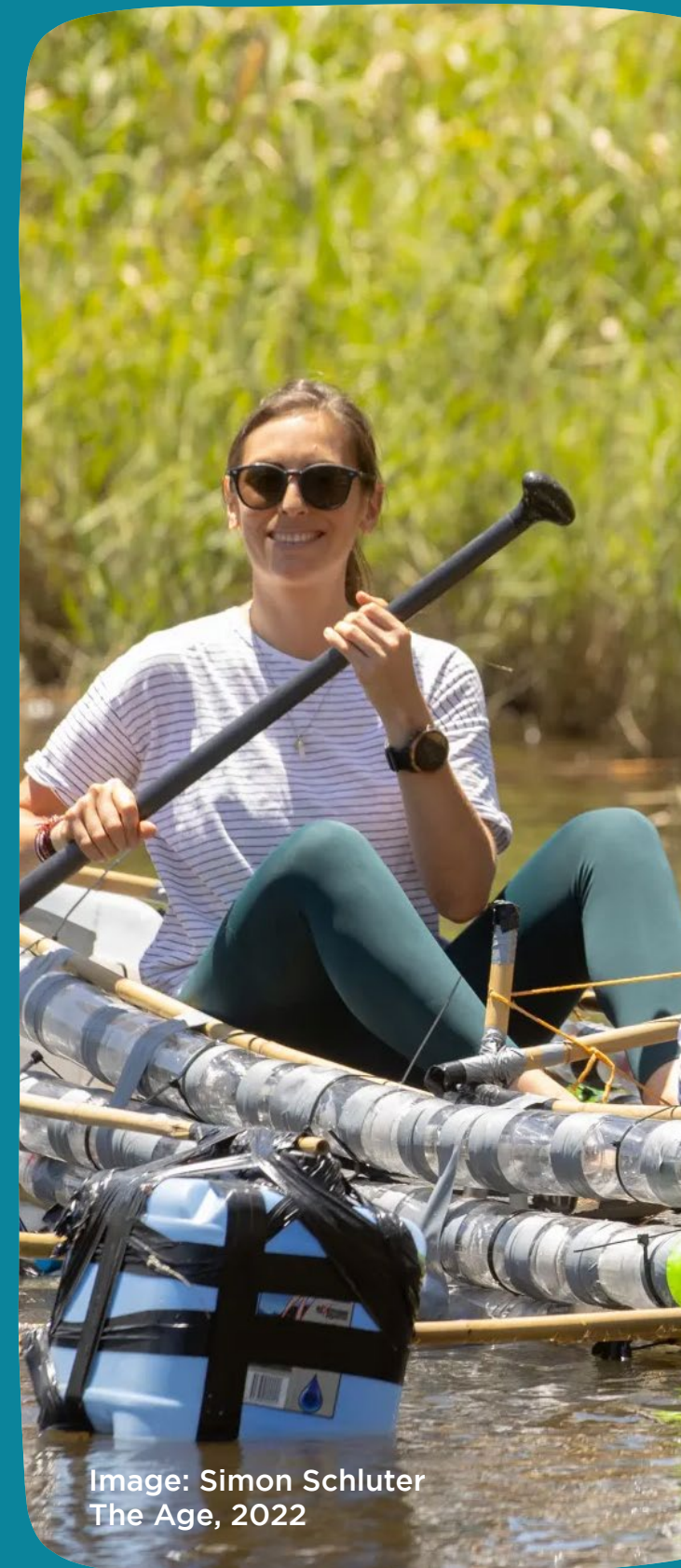


Image: Simon Schluter
The Age, 2022

IMPACT SNAPSHOT

INFLUENCE

MARIBYRNONG



Advocated for
planning controls

4 Community events
participated in

8 Boat trips with
politicians & councillors

YARRA, BIRRARUNG

3 Research
publications

3 Government
submissions

15 Boat trips with
politicians and
government

1 Election
campaign

800+
Attendees at 21
Riverkeeper talks



Advocacy to stop a
mountain biking trail in the
Yarra Ranges NP;



Increase environmental water;



And stop damaging urban
developments.



Strengthened advocacy
capacity in local groups

RIVER HEALTH

Litter

Polystyrene Phase 2



50+
Volunteers



152
Samples sorted



330+
Hours



Restoration Sites

We worked on
9 restoration
sites during this
financial year!



25,732

Plants along the
YARRA CORRIDOR

COMMUNITY



3 Community-led
advocacy
campaigns



6 Business
partners

2,574



1,355



2,500



2,583
volunteer hours
and counting



3

Media items per
month (average)

28 Community
events

Digital events
and in person



Influencing

KNOWLEDGE

This year we produced three reports and made one submission to government, which contributed to the body of knowledge on healthy rivers, and influenced decision-makers at local, State and National levels to inform and improve water policy and practice.

The first report *Polystyrene Pollution in the Yarra River: Deep Dive* built on earlier research conducted by YRKA and partners into the extent and sources of polystyrene pollution in the Yarra, Birrarung River. Authored by YRKA and the Clean Water Group and supported by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), it quantified the relative contribution of potential sources of polystyrene pollution in the river and conducted a deep dive into construction sites as majority sources of pollution.

We put forward 12 recommendations for government and industry to prevent polystyrene from entering our iconic waterway and Port Phillip Bay, along with four recommendations to increase awareness and education of this pervasive pollutant. Subsequent to this research, YRKA has received funding for a further phase to bring together different stakeholders to co-create and pilot interventions to reduce polystyrene pollution.

The second report *Tackling our Water Crisis: How Sustainable is the Government's Strategy for Southern Victoria?* is a critique of the

Victorian government's draft Central and Gippsland Sustainable Water Strategy. Authored by the Concerned Waterways Alliance, of which YRKA is a founding member, it details the key issues affecting southern Victoria's waterways – over extraction of water, climate change and alienation of floodplains from rivers – and examines the draft strategy in terms of how well it responds to these issues.

It provides six recommendations for a way forward to strengthen the strategy including asking the government to take a precautionary approach overall, to consider our rivers and waterways as living entities, to bring all the options and more cash to the table, to protect our most precious sites and to bring Traditional Owners into the picture. The report was generally well received by decision-makers in government and played an important part (along with many meetings with DELWP) in influencing the final strategy (though fundamental issues with the strategy still remain).

“Active citizens lead to effective states. This means that we need to build a movement of local river and waterkeepers who will advocate for and steward our beloved rivers.”

Charlotte Sterrett, Yarra Riverkeeper.

The third report *The Birrarung Confluence: Great Birrarung Parklands Strategic Planning Report*, was commissioned by YRKA and

INFLUENCE

Good river health decisions and actions are achieved through the co-creation of knowledge, advocacy, government engagement, and partnerships with diverse stakeholders.

undertaken by the University of Melbourne. This innovative document provides a conceptual and practical exploration of the Great Birrarung Parkland, which is enshrined in the *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017* – a parkland that celebrates water, land, community, and culture. The report provides readers with practical actions, strategies, and recommendations for the the initial development of the Great Birrarung Parkland at key confluences. It demonstrates a near term strategy to begin to re-conceptualise the river as one living and integrated natural entity from source to sea. So far it has been discussed with Councils, local State and Federal members and the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung. Our hope is that with funding, this research will become a practical reality and that similar reports will be undertaken for other key confluences along the river.

YRKA made a submission and presented at the Environmental Effects Statement hearings for the Warburton



Mountain Bike Destination Project to object to the project on the grounds that bike trails in the Yarra Ranges National Park would likely result in damage to our waterways through erosion, sediment deposition, as well as impact on local biodiversity such as the Leadbeater Possum. A final decision on the project was given by the Planning Minister in October 2022 (outside of the annual report period), which while giving the project the go-ahead, did stop the majority of tracks in the National Park stating that trails in this area presented an, “...unacceptable risk of significant effects particularly on Cool Temperate Rainforest and Cool Temperate Mixed Forest and the Mount Donna Buang Wingless Stonefly, which are of high conservation value”. This is a considerable win for groups campaigning against the development, and we thank the Victorian National Parks Association in particular for their broader campaign efforts.

We have also commented on and made submissions to several government strategies to ensure they foster healthy rivers. These include the *Water for Life - Greater Melbourne's Urban Water and System Strategy*, and *Water is Life* - the Victorian Government's roadmap to return water to Traditional Owners.

Photo: Federal Election Campaigning

Influencing

GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT

Of tremendous significance this year has been the launch of the *Yarra Strategic Plan (Burndap Birrarung burndap umarkoo) (YSP)* which is the first bi-cultural plan for the Yarra, Birrarung River. This plan is of utmost importance to the river and is central to YRKA's strategy for a healthy, protected and loved river. We worked hard to influence its development and these efforts have been rewarded with polystyrene pollution being included as one of five priority projects in the 10-year plan, and three of our regeneration projects being included in this year's implementation plan along with our involvement in the implementation of a landscape approach to billabong management alongside local Councils, Parks Victoria and the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC).

We have spoken regularly with the YSP implementation team at Melbourne Water and with members of the Yarra Collaboration Committee to stress that implementation of the plan should match the ambition of the Community Vision, and that the voice of communities and the river they know and love must form part of the ongoing decision-making process and actions on the ground. We have also engaged with the Birrarung Council as the statutory body created by the *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017* and we look forward to continued engagement to support their advice and advocacy to the Victorian Government.

Our engagement with politicians has been significant this year with YRKA focusing on four key electorates across the catchment during the Federal Election Campaign to increase awareness of river issues and ask for actions to address our concerns. Our asks included action to reform national water policy, resources to implement the Yarra Strategic plan, support for local community organisations that advocate for and steward the river, and actions to address polystyrene pollution. As a result of our advocacy, and in line with our non-partisan policy, we met with candidates from all electorates and from all parties (including independents).

Several candidates supported our requests and we believe that issues affecting the Yarra, Birrarung are more widely understood by politicians along the river.

YRKA's electric boat 'Puggle' has been one of our biggest advocacy assets this past year. In between March to June (when we were able once again to take people out post COVID-19 restrictions) we have travelled along the Yarra, Birrarung 15 times with Federal Ministers, Federal and State Members of Parliament, local government, as well as government authorities, community groups and the media so that people could experience the river first-hand and listen to her many stories.

LOCAL HEROES

The Yarra, Birrarung catchment has hundreds of groups that love, care for and protect it. YRKA is fortunate to associate with many of these groups who work from Warburton, Yellingbo, the Bend of Islands, to Templestowe, Ivanhoe, Abbotsford, Hawthorn, and Burnley. The majority have been in existence for many, many decades. YRKA at 18 years' old is a relative newcomer.

Whether it's supporting local groups to apply for regeneration grants, getting our hands (and knees) dirty doing regen, working together to develop and execute local campaigns to protect the

parklands, spending time on or around the river listening to stories and gaining knowledge about the plants and animals that call this special area home, or helping connect groups to each other, decision-makers and the media, we continue to learn from one another.

YRKA's ability to advocate for and steward the Yarra, Birrarung River the river is because we are connected to the grassroots. Using these connections, collaborations and the collective knowledge of the river and the many issues she faces, helps YRKA speak with knowledge and authenticity to duty-bearers across the catchment. We can achieve so much more together!



Photo: Many hands make light work at Murandaka.

Influencing

PARTNERSHIPS

This past year, we have doubled our efforts to engage with Traditional Owners, government authorities, and local governments to strengthen relationships and build new ones. We have continued partnerships with key government stakeholders including Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, EPA and DELWP, working together to improve river health.

Melbourne Water has provided several opportunities for the new Riverkeeper to better understand the role and various functions of Melbourne Water through a range of site visits in the Upper, Middle and Lower Yarra, Birrarung. This dialogue has included ecological monitoring, visits to cultural sites and learning about cultural practices, walks in conservation areas, visits to on-stream and off-stream dams to learn more about diversions, visits to key billabongs to discuss environmental watering, as well as multiple discussions with team members across the organisation.

Parks Victoria have supported our regeneration work in several sites in the lower Yarra, Birrarung and provided advice on increasing protections at Bolin Bolin Billabong (Bulleen). DELWP has supported our polystyrene pollution work and considered various recommendations for the *Central and Gippsland Sustainable Water Strategy* as part of our joint campaign with the Concerned Waterways Alliance to return more water to our waterways.

We have met with the Environmental Protection Agency on several occasions

to discuss our polystyrene pollution work, they are part of one of our project steering groups, and we sit on their Community Reference Group. We have extended our relationships with local councils as part of the Yarra Strategic Plan, trying where possible to have good engagement with key councils along the whole length of the river. Given Council's participation in the Yarra Strategic Plan, their ongoing role in the care of the Yarra, Birrarung catchment, and their engagement with communities and businesses on issues affecting the river and its users, these relationships and the collaborations that arise as a result, are more important than ever.

This year, we also renewed Riverkeeper relationships with Traditional Owners through informal meetings and networks. This has provided the new Riverkeeper with the opportunity to actively listen and learn from the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong people, which is reflected in YRKA's new three-year strategic plan - a plan that includes First Nations Reconciliation as a central value, as well as strategies and actions to partner with Traditional Owners to support cultural learning and healing of Country. We hope these relationships will deepen and be nurtured in the coming years.

STEWARDSHIP

The successes we achieve at YRKA are due to the dedication and commitment of so many people across the Yarra, Birrarung catchment, and others across other catchments with similar passions. Their stewardship of the land

and waterways is a major contributor to the health and protection of our rivers and waterways - their love is ever flowing. This year we have partnered with numerous groups along the river through regeneration, advocacy, capacity strengthening and mentoring.

In terms of advocacy, we supported the Alphington Paper Mill Action Group (APMAG) to develop and execute an advocacy campaign with developers at the old paper mill site, and the local council. While this campaign to have the riverside site returned to ecological health is ongoing, meetings with the developer, a community forum, and meetings with local council are building momentum in the right direction. We also supported local community members interested in increasing environmental protections for the Bolin Bolin Billabong. While this initiative is ongoing, important first steps have been made in engaging with the local council, Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water.

Riverkeeper talks to community groups have been popular this past year, with 21 talks and over 800 attendees since in the January to June period alone. We have also been fortunate to present at many forums and events including two presentations for International

Women's Day events highlighting women's leadership on climate change, as well as presentations to the Victorian Office for Women, Waterwatch, Melbourne University Law Society, and others throughout the year. We also attended several events to raise awareness of issues affecting the river and to garner support for our work including the Women in Conservation Breakfast, participation in the two-day River Symposium held as part of the Sydney Biennale, as well as attendance at the WaterAid Gala Dinner.

We have also been an active member of several alliances and working groups. These include the Concerned Waterways Alliance, a network of community and environment groups from Gippsland to the Otways with a deep concern about the degraded state of southern Victoria's rivers, wetlands and aquifers; Yarra4Life, a collaborative environmental program that aims to improve the quality of land, water and natural habit in the Yarra Valley; Swimmable Birrarung 2030, an alliance of organisations who would like to see a swimmable river from source to sea; and the KooyongKoot Alliance and related Kooyongkoot Regional Collaboration Project, which brings together diverse stakeholders to advocate for and restore the health of the Kooyongkoot Creek and environs.



Photo: Some members of the Concerned Waterways Alliance.

Community Engagement

COMMUNICATIONS

At YRKA we help tell the many stories of the river to community groups, supporters, governments, businesses, media and the general public. We engage with people through our events, via social media, our newsletters and website, as well as traditional media channels such as radio, television, print and online. We are a trusted and credible source of information about the Yarra, Birrarung and Maribyrnong Rivers.

This year, our stories of the river and key messages about her health have been broadcast by national, State and local media across television, radio, print and online sources. Our work has been profiled by the ABC, The Age, the Herald Sun, Channel Nine, 3AW, Dockland News, community radio, and local newspapers.

We have been active across social media including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Stories were varied, for example, celebrating World Days (World Water Day, World Environment Day, World Bathing Day), highlighting the issues facing rivers in the Federal Election campaign, and how rivers can help physical and human health. Our presence has grown considerably this year and we have more than 7,145 followers across different platforms (Instagram 2,500, Facebook 2,574,

Twitter 1,355, and LinkedIn 716). During COVID-19 restrictions, digital communications were critical to engage with our supporters and followers. While we are now able to meet face-to-face, our digital engagement will continue to grow and be an important part of how we communicate with diverse audiences.

COMMUNITY AND SUPPORTER ENGAGEMENT

After two years of lockdowns and social distancing, in the second half of this year we could finally provide in-person events! We have missed interacting with our members, volunteers and supporters and were happy to reconnect, sharing some great activities to support a healthy, loved and protected Yarra, Birrarung River.

“Whether it’s cleaning up litter from riverbanks, planting grasses and bushes in a local park, or joining one of our campaigns for healthy rivers, there’s room for everyone to care for our rivers.”

Katrina Lee,
Project Consultant

While 2020-2021 were the years of prepping sites, mulch spreading, and plant selection, we jumped into 2022 with

Community

Diverse individuals, communities, supporters and businesses are able to increase their understanding of, and be involved in, river stewardship and advocacy through social and traditional media, participation in events, training and knowledge-sharing opportunities.



Photo: Campaigning for a swimmable Birrarung on World Bathing Day

a lot of energy for our biggest planting season to date. With over 30 planting and working bees, we joined forces with our local communities and volunteer groups to spread the seeds. Together, we achieved an incredible number of more than 26,000 native plantings.

As well as planting, we were busy raising awareness of litter in our river. As part of our End of Year Appeal, we got crafty and brought in some friends to help. Thanks to the inspiration brought by Julian O’Shea and crew, we designed a plastic kayak that cruised along the Yarra, Birrarung in December 2021 to raise awareness of plastic pollution. To make it happen, we shared the mission of collecting as many

plastic bottles as possible. Over 660 plastic bottles collected by volunteers and cafes brought our plastic kayak to life! The kayak was used subsequently at other events as an engagement tool to raise awareness of the issues of plastic pollution in our waterways.

Part of our strategic commitment is to create a bridge between volunteers and areas of impact, fostering a sense of stewardship with the Yarra, Birrarung but this year we have had to pause our Volunteer Program due to lack of funding for a Community Engagement Officer. It is an important reminder that while we have had an astonishing growth in expressions of interest for volunteering, that all

Community Engagement

our activities require core resources. While we are currently working on some backend solutions, such as online training and improvements in onboarding processes, as well as securing more long-term funding, this program remains on hold. We thank all who have come to one of our many events and expressed interest in joining forces. Keep an eye on our website for event updates and other resources, and in the meantime, don't forget to support your local community groups!

BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

This year, YRKA decided to proactively engage with local businesses to better understand the potential for partnerships with those aligned to our vision and values. In collaboration with Regeneration Projects, we delivered a series of roundtables to discuss, share and learn how YRKA could create meaningful relationships with businesses while growing untied funding for our core operations.

In early 2022, we officially launched our Business Partnerships Program and over the following months welcomed some key partners, such as the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, FedSquare, Ecosa, Up the Creek Melbourne, Melbourne

Water, Yarra Falls, Little Lon Distillery, Yarra Trams, Kayak Melbourne, and other like-minded businesses. As part of this work, we hosted two business partnership planting bees, getting our hands dirty and sharing what we love doing on the ground with partners. We planted over 900 native plants in some of our project sites by the river. We can't wait for the many new opportunities of the coming year!

Moving forward, we aim to target “for-purpose” organisations and businesses to keep growing YRKA’s capacity to achieve our vision.

For this reason, we recently joined 1% for the Planet as an Environmental Not for Profit Partner and we will continue to look for opportunities to get businesses involved in the critical work and messaging about the river. And we have some exciting announcements about this program to make in 2023.



Floating the problem of plastic pollution

When we think of plastic pollution, we usually think of rubbish on our beaches. But what about the Yarra, Birrarung River?

Plastics have indeed been one of the main polluters in the Yarra, Birrarung River, and to raise awareness of this problem, we wanted to go big, so the YRKA team jumped into creativity mode and designed an engaging campaign to float the issue of plastic litter.

Thanks to the support of local clean-up groups like Beach Patrol and Love Our Street, we collected enough plastic bottles to build a Plastic Kayak.

However, this was not all. Businesses were also vital in spreading the word. With the help of Ecosa, FedSquare

and Regeneration Projects, our Plastic Kayak came to life! It made its way along the river from Hawthorn until it landed at Flinders Station.

The journey from start to finish was one of not only bringing awareness about plastic pollution through storytelling, it was also one of connecting with each other and the river.

“Along the way we collected 60 kilograms of plastic pollution and other litter – from plastic bottles and bags, polystyrene and tennis balls, and even some bike helmets and a fluffy toy.” –

Karin Traeger, YRKA CEO

River Health

River Health

Improved ecological health, biodiversity, water quality, cultural healing, and climate resilience is realised through good practice regeneration approaches. Litter and polystyrene pollution are reduced through research and multi-stakeholder engagement.

REGENERATION

This year, we continued the mammoth task of spreading the seed of planting projects along the Yarra, Birrarung River. With new sites and other projects coming to completion, to this day, we achieved a goal of 26,482 plants in the ground across nine sites! These little plants will increase the biodiversity of the river corridor, building climate resilience for our local ecosystems. A big thank you to our Regen Team and the many community groups, volunteers and contractors for completing this enormous task. Thanks to Andrew Wood, Lachlan Peace, John Temme, and our Bush Crew volunteers Jode, David and Bell. We are now in the exciting phase of building up these sites, increasing engagement via working bees, and exploring opportunities upstream.

This is the first year YRKA has embarked on such a large amount of regeneration work. We look forward to growing the community's collective impact in this space.

We are proud to report an average survival rate between 90-95% on our sites. Our passionate team and volunteers' careful planning and implementation have been key to this result. Our next steps for the regeneration portfolio include plans for expansion and maintenance at Fox Billabong, Windmill, and Murundaka corridors, as well as plans to expand into the Upper Yarra, Birrarung catchment.



Working together for healthy rivers

The Friends of Andrews Reserve (FOAR) is a group of volunteers who work tirelessly to improve the Andrews Reserve, which sits by the river on the opposite banks of the Abbotsford Convent in Kew. As part of the Yarra River Regeneration project, YRKA supported them to expand the planting area within the site.

With the support of local rangers, the community and volunteers, we saw native species return as we controlled the many weeds. Numerous events allowed families and students to meet the local Friends group, and learn about each other while helping the health of the ecosystem along the river. The collaboration was a success and will be replicated in the future.

“Our connection has paid off in spades for both of us we think, where the sharing of knowledge, materials and, of course our essential participants, has really created a free flowing partnership. Thanks Riverkeeper.”

- Rohan Syer, FOAR

Burnley - 4,879 plants

Continuing from our very first regeneration project, we further increased native vegetation at this site to support biodiversity. We look forward to hosting volunteer events under the Volunteer Innovation Fund this summer! We aim to keep fostering a sense of stewardship for the site, particularly with the climbing community using the public bouldering wall adjacent.

Loys Paddock - 3,175

Loys Paddock, a known breeding site for many bird species, including resident swans, has been actively revegetated with native species thanks to the work of Yarra City Council over the years. We happily partnered with them to further these efforts alongside Felix Botanica

Andrews Reserve - 4,700 plants

This was another successful community partnership! In collaboration with Friends of Andrews Reserve, YRKA increased the size of the local corridor, boosting the number of species within the Reserve. This project also served to build relationships with the Friends group as we explore further opportunities to expand the project area.

Chandler Highway - 800 plants

We assisted Parks Victoria in conserving the biodiversity of remnant vegetation at Yarra Bend Park by undertaking critical plantings. These were close to the Chandler Highway and were selected because of growing pressure from illegal bike track building. This project site has helped to reduce landslides from erosion on the banks of the Yarra, Birrarung River.

Murandaka Corridor 3,500 plants

We completed this project with the support and collaboration of Friends of Yarra Valley Parklands and our mighty Bush Crew volunteers. The project builds up from previous community plantings, strengthening the biodiversity and density of the surrounding area of the local wetland. Growling Grass Frogs have been spotted in the area, highlighting the importance of increasing plant density for biodiversity.

Westerfolds - 998 plants

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. Like the previous site, we increased plant cover and biodiversity within this special area, Westerfolds Park that is known for its rare native grassland.

Phillip Fox Billabong - 1,950 plants

Community planting days were organised to increase species diversity on the site by planting 24 species not found there. Friends of Yarra Flats helped with this project, which built local interest and ownership in the place.

Swale - 800 plants

Thanks to the sponsorship of Bulleen Arts and Garden, YRKA increased the density of native plants in a corridor along the Swale site to provide a habitat for native wildlife. We engaged the local community in the project by collaborating with groups such as the Warringal Conservation Society, Friends of Yarra Flats, and others.

Kew Billabong - 5,680 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!

River Health

LITTER

This year marked some great achievements within our litter work. Phase 2 of the Polystyrene Project came to an end, delivering with it evidence of the industries that most contribute to polystyrene pollution. We also confirmed continued funding for this project and received new funding to begin a microplastic trap pilot in the Yarra, Birrarung and Maribyrnong Rivers.

Phase 2 of the Polystyrene Pollution Project has added further to the body of evidence documenting the wide-spread scale and sources of polystyrene pollution in the Yarra, Birrarung River. We found the construction industry, retailers, markets, manufacturers of polystyrene, and the recycling industry to be the top five sources of polystyrene waste. Research conducted as part of the project found polystyrene pollution in 70% of construction sites and auditing of the Yarra, Birrarung River's 16 bandalong litter traps estimated that over 93 million pieces of polystyrene were caught by trap each year.

When added to the Clean Bay Blueprints estimation of polystyrene entering Port Phillip Bay, the research estimated that 382 million pieces enter the Yarra, Birrarung River every year. This figure is an underestimate due to limitations with sorting the 152 litter trap samples and the amount of polystyrene trapped in reedbeds - unreachable and unquantifiable.

Our 'Deep Dive' Report garnered attention from media (The Age, the ABC, Dockland News and Herald Sun) and government agencies (Environmental Protection Agency, Melbourne Water and DELWP) and we were able to secure Victorian government funding from DELWP for Phase 3. Now that we know the extent of polystyrene pollution in our waterways, the objective of this phase is to work with stakeholders from different sectors to co-design interventions and pilot projects to test potential outcomes. The project runs until June 2024.



50+
Volunteers



152
Samples Sorted



330+
Hours

Total pieces counted...

93,275

>5mm

7,518

<5mm

85,757



Organisational Resilience

Organisation

Strengthened efficacy, efficiency, and resilience of the organisation is fostered through good governance and practice, transparency, and accountability.

WATERKEEPER MOVEMENT BUILDING

It takes the efforts of many to achieve the global goal of healthy rivers and waterways. This year, YRKA has been playing our part to help mentor new groups dedicated to water keeping in Australia. This has included providing guidance to the newly established Richmond Riverkeeper Association in northern New South Wales, which formed to give the rivers in this region a community voice.

Closer to home we have been proud to support advocacy for Melbourne's sister river, the Maribyrnong River, through the appointment of a Maribyrnong Officer, funded by the Ross Trust for three years. In this role, Nicole Kowalczyk, has been engaging with the Maribyrnong River community to build a united voice for the river, to raise the profile of the Maribyrnong River, and to develop a governance framework and strategic plan to ensure ongoing community support for the Maribyrnong River.

Liaising with community groups, councils and agencies along the river through online surveys and community forums, the key role and strategy of the Maribyrnong Officer has been refined to improve the health of the river through speaking publicly about the

river, to develop knowledge and shift the narrative; engaging with politicians and managers about policy that will deliver a better deal for the river; developing evidence-based proposals for action by governments; and coordinating targeted campaigns along the Maribyrnong.

This year, in collaboration with Jessica Rosien, Nicole focused her advocacy efforts on improving planning controls along the length of the Maribyrnong by engaging with politicians and council planners to implement the Waterways of the West (WOW) Action Plan. Nicole and Jessica have also been lobbying councils, local MPs, government agencies and the planning minister, to protect the river corridor from inappropriate use and development and to enhance waterway corridor values.

"The Yarra Riverkeeper Association not only supports healthy rivers, but also healthy communities. And we achieve this on a shoe-string budget!"

Karin Traeger, YRKA CEO

YRKA's Maribyrnong Officer, along with consultant Jessica Rosien, have been working hard to improve planning controls along the Maribyrnong River. In consultation with the Chain of Ponds coordinator, YRKA followed

Waterkeeping in Cambodia

The Waterkeeper Alliance is a global movement of people and organisation advocating for healthy waterways. There are over 300 waterkeepers in 49 countries worldwide. In Cambodia, Tonle Sap lake has its own waterkeeper, Senglong Souk. The lake which was declared a UNESCO Biosphere in 1997 is mostly fed by the Mekong River and is home to 19 species of fish (11 of which are globally endangered). It is also home to more than a million people living in hundreds of communes who depend on the lake for their fishing livelihoods.

All is not well with the largest lake in South East Asia. It is under increasing pressure from pollution and deforestation, climate change and development, while dams upstream on the Mekong River are affecting its unique inflow-outflow systems.

On a visit to this area, the Riverkeeper, saw first-hand the importance of water-keeping to the people who depend on the lake for their livelihoods, and to the ecosystem which needs to be healthy to thrive. She spent two days with Senglong and his organisation Fisheries

Photo: Koh Chiviang's fish processing centre

Action Coalition Team (FACT) visiting different projects including a conservation site, an eco-brick factory (bricks made from plastic rubbish), and lots of community fisheries. Staying overnight at Koh Chiviang in the floating village was a highlight.

Everything is connected. This is very true when it comes to the world's water which makes up our beautiful Blue Planet.



up with Ministers Wynne and Neville reiterating a request for consultation on the significant landscape overlay design and calling for a collaborative evaluation of the effectiveness of the planning controls on the Yarra River through the Yarra River Act and Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO), guided by jointly developed Terms of Reference with DELWP and the YRKA in order to incorporate lessons into the WoW SLO process. Tighter planning controls will go into effect following the November election.

YRKA efforts to build a movement of water keepers has meant greater involvement in the global Waterkeeper Alliance, which has over 300 groups in almost 50 countries. This year, the Yarra Riverkeeper Association was elected to be one of 27 Waterkeeper Council members responsible for growing the movement's reach and impact. We look forward to growing the movement in our region and globally.

The Riverkeeper was also fortunate to visit the Tonle Sap Waterkeeper in Cambodia at the end of this year learning about how this ecologically significant water body provides livelihoods for millions of people.

PEOPLE & CULTURE

At YRKA, we are committed to being values-driven, with knowledge, skills and experience to support our vision and mission. This year, we increased the cultural understanding of staff, board and key representatives through the participation in Indigenous Cultural

Awareness Training (ICAT). We thank the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation for sharing their knowledge and living history with us.

Additionally, we supported some of our team members to undertake professional development courses to improve their knowledge and skills. This included:

(1) supporting Maribyrnong Officer, Nicole Kowalczyk to complete an intensive facilitation course. The training has covered aspects of facilitating strategic design, conflict resolution and collaborative decision-making.

(2) supporting CEO, Karin Traeger to complete Water Leadership Training from the International Water Centre. During 2022, Karin has also expanded her leadership capabilities by undertaking the Leadership Training by Women Environmental Leadership Australia (WELA), which is ongoing into the next year.



ORGANISATIONAL RESILIENCE

With age and growth come many changes. In the past year, YRKA has gone through some critical transformations. From giving a farewell to our previous Riverkeeper to developing the first Board recruitment process, and the development of our first strategic plan, the YRKA team and Board have been busy working towards the future.

We said farewell to Andrew Kelly, our second Yarra Riverkeeper, and welcomed Charlotte Sterrett our third and first female Yarra Riverkeeper after a competitive recruitment process. It's not every day we have a new Riverkeeper! Charlotte comes to us with many skills, not least a fabulous track record in advocating for the environment. Andrew hasn't gone too far away and is still in the waterways space. He has been very

helpful in onboarding Charlotte and remains a key supporter.

As an organisation, we also looked at how to improve diversity within the YRKA and made the decision to expand board membership. While this process is not yet complete, we feel confident that new members will add to the existing knowledge and skill base and bring renewed energy to complement the new three-year strategic plan.

YRKA's new strategic plan was developed this past year and became operational in July 2022. It seeks to build on our successes and strengthen our efforts by holding duty bearers to account and by collaborating with Traditional Owners and others to ensure a healthy, protected and loved Yarra, Birrarung. Its four workstreams – influencing, community engagement, river health and organisational resilience



2021-2022

Finances

The Yarra Riverkeeper Association employs robust financial and donor management systems overseen by the Finance Committee of the YRKA Board. The committee is chaired by Ian Wong, with Board and senior staff as members. We maintain strong financial and compliance controls, as well as careful budgetary and cash management review processes.

The financial information in this annual report has been extracted from the Annual Financial Report which has been audited by Kevin Jessup, Chartered Accountant.

During this reporting period, the Yarra Riverkeeper Association has implemented processes and controls that match the evolution of the organisation from a single person organisation to a more professionally managed organisation with dedicated staff. We have developed and implemented a Procurement and Delegation Policy that formally and clearly outlines the delegation of responsibility between the Board and the Executive team in carrying out the management of the Yarra Riverkeeper Association. To support this policy, ApprovalMax has been implemented to provide traceability in all financial transactions. Furthermore, the role of the Treasurer has been redefined to remove the Treasurer from day-to-day transactions and to leave this responsibility to paid staff within the organisation. This level of financial

management process transformation has successfully occurred during a period of staff turnover within the administration functions of the Yarra Riverkeeper Association. I would like to thank the CEO, Karin Traeger, for persevering with this transformation despite the disruption caused.

In terms of the Financials for 2021 - 2022, YRKA suffered a significant reduction in income from the previous financial year of \$633,873 to income of the current financial year of \$561,113, and an increase in costs due to investments in our staff. The reduction in core income is tied to two key factors: a reduction in untied donations, \$69,445, from our donors compared to the previous financial year \$127,254, and the absence of income from the governments of COVID-19 measures, \$113,167 during the previous financial year. As a result, YRKA experienced a net operating loss of \$126,255. The Board and staff are addressing this with targeted advice on fund-raising and a new strategy to secure core funding over and above targeted grants.

On a positive note, we continue to see growth in the grants from Government and Foundations, \$421,341, compared to the previous financial year, \$363,329, in recognition of the strong program delivery from YRKA as well as growth in revenue from the corporate sector through memberships, and sponsorships.

Key contributors of income were:

- \$69,445 in donations, and \$59,113 in memberships (corporate and individual). Of some concern is the reduction in the amount of donations that we received this year, \$69,445 compared to \$127,254, from the previous financial year. Notably, the pandemic years encouraged philanthropy, and there was an EOFY drop in share prices in 2022.

- \$421,341 in grant payments, including \$149,500 from the Federal Government's Environment Restoration Fund (ERF) which is part of a \$500,000 grant that was payable over two years to embark on exciting ecological restoration projects along the Yarra, Birrarung River, \$44,904 from various local councils, and \$136,428 from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) for Phase 2 of the Polystyrene Pollution Project.

Total expenses rose from \$595,429 to \$687,339 due to two main factors: the increasing portfolio of project work resulting in more employment costs, \$401,389; and project costs, \$202,782, due to the various grants received by YRKA. The year has also delivered an increase of investment in the advocacy

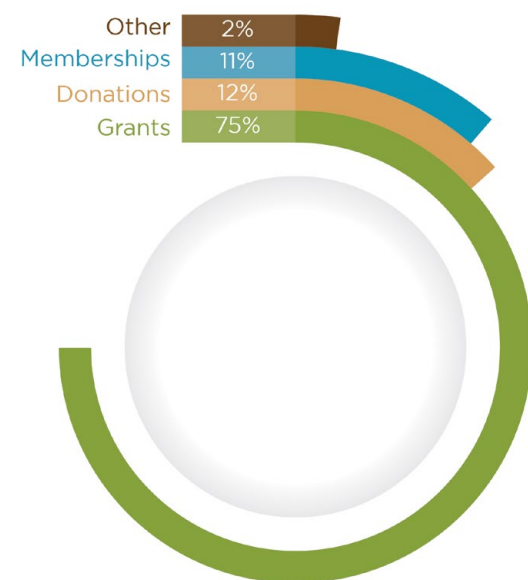
work that YRKA pursues.

This Financial, we did not separate project employment costs from operational employment, and advocacy employment costs. The reporting will change in the next financial year to provide a more defined breakdown between project employment costs, and operations and advocacy employment costs.

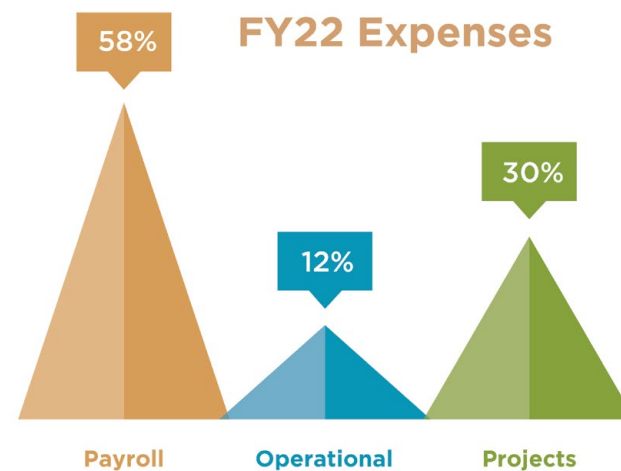
The combination of these factors, in a rapidly changing environment sector with new Federal government priorities, has reduced our underlying net asset base with a decrease of 50% from \$230,658 to \$104,432. The key factor in this decline is the significant reduction in untied funding from our donors in the financial year, and we are concerned that the reduction in the net asset base poses a risk to the future financial sustainability of YRKA. We are proactively striving to further diversify our funding base through the development of our fundraising strategy to ultimately reduce our reliance on grants and other tied funding sources. We have taken a step backwards in terms of untied funding from 37% to 23% of total funding during this financial year as well as a decline in untied funding percentage for the first time in four years. The fund-raising strategy aims to strengthen our financial resilience in this complex environment providing greater capacity to deliver on the successes and recognition of YRKA in its capacity to provide focused and timely outcomes with impact.

2021-2022 Finances

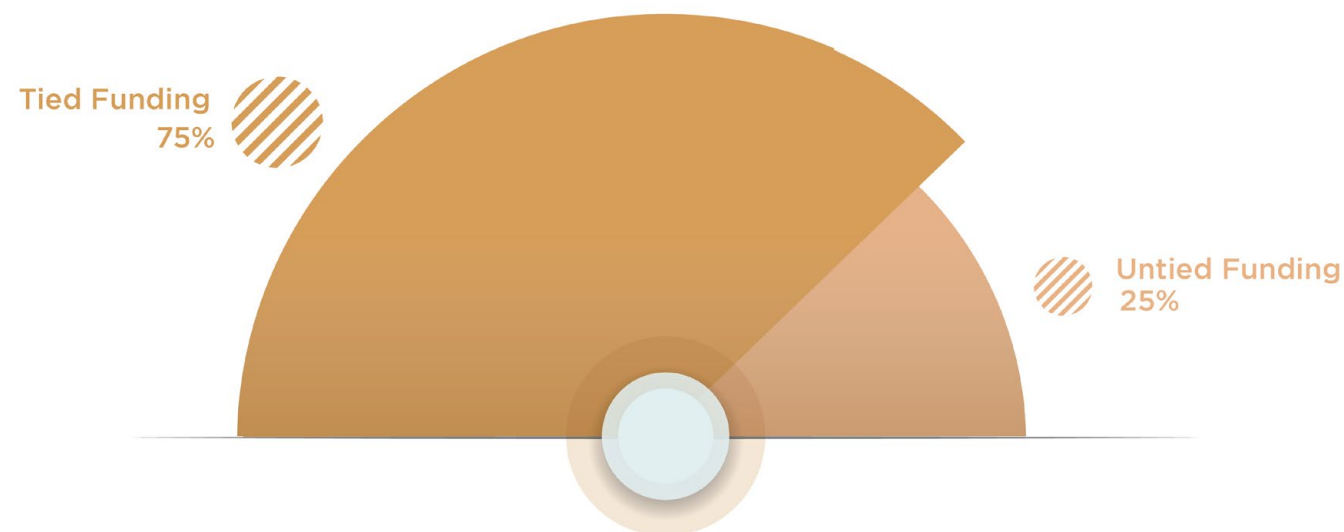
FY22 Funding Sources



FY22 Expenses



FY22 Tied vs Untied Funding



Yarra Riverkeeper Association

Profit and Loss

For the Year Ended 30 June 2022

2021		2022	2022
Income			
25,000.00	Membership - Corporate		55,500.00
4,777.25	Membership - Renewals		3,613.37
127,254.66	Donations (Note A)		150,354.39
363,329.87	Grants (Note A)		340,432.71
113,167.57	Sundry Income (Note A)		10,946.57
344.25	Interest		266.56
633,873.60	Total Income		561,113.60
Expenses			
1,000.00	Audit Fees		1,250.00
240.60	Bank Charges		290.01
9,087.47	Boat Maintenance & Fuel		4,050.95
7,140.00	Book Keeping Fees		7,016.50
(1,000.00)	Consultants		5,228.50
12,709.49	Depreciation		11,885.03
-	Donations		2,600.00
Employment Costs			
334,911.47	Wages	356,242.02	
31,234.02	Superannuation	28,632.07	
2,525.90	Workcover	4,401.24	
3,259.09	HR Advisory Services	2,540.00	
7,776.29	Annual Leave Provision	(9,494.81)	
4,035.47	Long Service Leave Provision	(3,121.00)	
9,647.59	Personal Leave Provision	(2,710.95)	
-	Fringe Benefits Tax	9,307.00	
2,433.50	Employee Training	15,593.68	
5,025.69	Insurance (Note B)		401,389.25
1,956.13	Marketing & Promotion		3,958.04
2,543.56	Office Equipment & Support		1,600.46
522.18	Postage		993.16
1,190.43	Photocopier, Printing & Stationery		93.32
115,977.44	Project Expenses (Note C)		1,035.82
9,262.73	Rent		202,782.25
5,036.36	Strategic Planning		10,953.28
8,126.10	Subscriptions		-
9,227.91	Sundry Expenses (Note D)		8,141.19
68.52	Travel - National		22,895.66
11,492.00	Website & Social Media Management		1,176.06
			-
595,429.94	Total Expenses		687,339.48
38,443.66	Net Operating Income/(Loss)		(126,225.88)

Yarra Riverkeeper Association
Notes to Accounts
For the Year Ended 30 June 2022

Note A:	Income Received	
2021		2022
	Donations	
27,754.66	Donations for Gift Fund	39,745.30
-	Ross Trust Advocacy Maribyrnong	80,909.09
99,500.00	Philanthropic Foundations & Trusts	29,700.00
127,254.66		150,354.39
	Grants	
1,000.00	Melbourne Water	4,600.00
50,805.45	Dept Land Water Environment & Planning	136,428.71
6,846.44	Waterkeeper Alliance	
-	Australian Government - Solar Panels	5,000.00
1,160.00	Landcare	
1,500.00	Inner Northern Community Foundation	
240,754.21	Environment Restoration Fund	149,500.00
17,500.00	ANZ Community	
10,000.00	Business Victoria	
15,000.00	City of Boroondarra	15,225.00
5,774.55	City of Yarra	7,679.00
-	City of Moonee Valley	10,000.00
12,989.22	City of Stonnington	12,000.00
363,329.87		340,432.71
	Sundry Income	
-	Corporate Volunteering	6,870.18
42,756.00	Cash Flow Boosts	-
64,200.00	JobKeeper Payments	-
5,835.90	Consulting Income - Riverkeeper	2,800.00
-	Consulting Income - Other	1,276.39
375.67	Sundry	-
113,167.57		10,946.57
Note B:	Insurance	
2,569.40	Boat Insurance	1,517.49
2,456.29	Director's' & Officers' Liability	2,440.55
	Public Liability	
5,025.69		3,958.04

Yarra Riverkeeper Association
Notes to Accounts
For the Year Ended 30 June 2022

Note C:	Project Expenses	
6,232.47	ANZ Community	-
-	Auspice Grant Agreement	4,181.82
-	Bulleen Arts & Gardens	2,777.82
-	City of Stonnington	1,605.18
824.60	City of Yarra	(306.41))
	Community Environment Program	
7,575.53	Burnley	-
1,788.55	Stonnington	-
10,508.22	Westerfolds	-
16,663.21	Dept of Environment, Land Water & Planning	40,502.58
72,384.86	Environment Restoration Fund	98,906.90
-	University of Melbourne - Birrarung Parklands	19,578.00
-	Vic. Environment Friends Network	28,500.00
-	Wartook Foundation - Maribyrnong Planning	7,036.36
115,977.44		202,782.25

Note D:	Sundry Expenses	
744.91	Board Meeting Catering	2,171.40
	Boat Registration Fee	
-	Business Partnership Launch Expenses	11,016.45
805.44	Consumables & Office Supplies	1,291.07
1,880.04	Equipment Hire & Storage	1,588.17
324.54	Equipment Purchases & Repairs	127.18
0.88	General Expenses	1,208.69
2,000.00	Immigration Services	2,538.53
	Legal Expenses	854.55
73.93	Loss on Sale of Asset	
582.72	Mobile Telephone	1,094.53
2,815.45	Venue Hire	1,005.09
9,227.91		22,895.66

Note E: Project Funding Received in Advance

Various government and municipal funding is received from time to time resulting from approval of project proposals. The timing of receipts of the funds generally occurs at or before commencement of a project. It is therefore deemed prudent to bring the funding to account as income in the year in which the expenditure on that project occurs. Details of funds received that are not yet expended are shown below:-

Melbourne Water	17,592.00
(Expenditure to occur in FY2023)	
Dept of Environment, Land Water & Planning	157,922.00
(Expenditure to occur in 18 month period from July 2022).	
Dept of Environment, Land Water & Planning	99,136.00
(Expenditure to occur during FY2023 and FY2024)	
IDF (Expenditure to occur in FY2023)	33,000.00
	307,650.00

Yarra Riverkeeper Association

Balance Sheet

For the Year Ended 30 June 2022

2021		2022	2022
Assets			
Current Assets			
Cash at Bank			
8,324.79	Bank Australia - Community Access	332,143.69	
60,575.96	Bank Australia - Commercial Saver	58.61	
2,134.29	Bank Australia - Operating Expenses	5,146.66	
232,079.94	Bank Australia - Public Gift Fund	155,433.66	
(0.01)	Westpac - Gift Fund	(0.01)	
123.39	PayPal	25.49	
-	Bank Debit Card	80.23	
303,238.36			492,888.33
8,260.79	Aust Tax Office Receivable	-	
5,000.00	Accounts Receivable		5,451.50
316,499.15	Total Current Assets		498,339.83
Fixed Assets			
23,963.82	Plant & Equipment - at cost	30,262.00	
5,175.46	Office Equipment	5,629.10	
19,700.00	Website Development	25,500.00	
(10,268.09)	Less Provision for Depreciation	(22,153.12)	
38,571.19	Total Fixed Assets		39,237.98
355,070.34	NET ASSETS		537,577.81
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
11,907.34	Accounts Payable	37,996.00	
22,666.99	PAYG Payable	12,853.99	
0.20	Sundry Creditor	9.47	
-	Net GST Payable	20,438.22	
-	Fringe Benefits Tax Payable	16,025.61	
40,000.00	Project Payments Received in Advance	307,650.00	(Note E)
620.02	Superannuation Payable	4,281.37	
23,435.42	Provision for Annual Leave	13,940.61	
7,547.68	Provision for Long Service Leave	4,426.68	
18,233.95	Provision for Personal Leave	15,523.00	
124,411.60	Total Liabilities		433,144.95
230,658.74	NET ASSETS		104,432.86
Represented by:			
Equity			
192,215.08	Retained Earnings - brought forward		230,658.74
38,443.66	Current Surplus - 2022		(126,225.88))
230,658.74	TOTAL EQUITY		104,432.86

Yarra Riverkeeper Association Statement of Changes in Equity For the Year Ended 30 June 2022

2021		2022
192,215.08	Opening Balance Equity	230,658.74
38,443.66	Current Surplus - 2022	(126,225.88))
230,658.74	Balance at 30 June 2022	104,432.86

Yarra Riverkeeper Association Inc. Statements of cash flows For the year ended 30 June 2022

	2022	2021
Cash flows from operating activities		
Receipts from customers		
Grant Income	668,891	348,834
Donations	150,354	127,255
Other Income	70,060	142,945
Payments to suppliers and employees		
Employee Salaries & Costs	(401,389)	(396,123)
Operational Costs	(290,336)	(207,609)
Interest received	267	344
Net cash inflow from operating activities	197,847	15,646
Cash flows from investing activities		
Payments for property, plant and equipment	(8,197)	(9,735)
Net cash (outflow) from investing activities	(8,197)	(9,735)
Net (decrease)/increase in cash held	189,650	5,911
Cash at the beginning of the financial year	303,238	297,327
Cash at the end of the financial year	492,888	303,238

Governance

Governance Committee Report

In addition to the Annual General Meeting (AGM), the board met seven times in the past year. This included special board-only meetings regarding the recruitment and appointment of the new Riverkeeper. All board members were present for meetings throughout the financial year (unless on a leave of absence) with the exception of one apology in December 2021. After the departure of Andrew Kelly there were two board meetings without a Riverkeeper present (Andrew Kelly finished in September 2021 and Charlotte Sterrett commenced in January 2022).

Following the changes to the constitution confirmed at last year's AGM, the Riverkeeper is no longer required to sit on the board, marking a transitional year for the organisation. Governance activities and tasks were carried out by small working groups over the course of the past year, including recruitment of the Riverkeeper, completion of the Association's first strategic plan, the development and approval of two new policies (sexual harassment policy and a policy for escalation process), and new board member recruitment.

The board, with assistance from valued YRKA member Tony Isaacson, undertook a thorough Riverkeeper recruitment process and were delighted to appoint Charlotte Sterrett into the

Riverkeeper role in November. The annual planning and strategy day early in 2022 offered a chance to recalibrate and reconnect in person. Staff, board and YRKA's new Riverkeeper met to review and refresh the draft strategy together. The strategy development, led by Charlotte Sterrett and Karin Traeger (CEO) involved both the board and staff, and included input from external experts. We are proud to launch it at this year's AGM.

Recognising the need to grow the board's expertise and focus, Vice President Rachel Fensham presented a discussion paper this year, recommending the board confirm a new model for committees and working groups and to seek new board members. Work commenced on a model Terms of Reference for committees and working groups, and an Expression of Interest process to attract new board members commenced at the end of the financial year. Rachel Fensham along with board members Warwick Leeson and Ian Wong managed the process with several candidates putting their names forward at the AGM in November 2022. Despite the return to face-to-face meetings, technology continues to play an important role in both meetings and management. Board management software, BoardPro has now been rolled out and proved a valuable governance tool as a centralised platform for documenting board operations and communications.



Photo: International Women's Day breakfast

Thank you to the tireless YRKA team, and a special thank you to my fellow board members. They're a committed and skilled group of river lovers whose work always prioritises the interests of the river. It's been a pleasure to serve with you.

Memberships

This past year we have welcomed 47 new financial members bringing our total memberships for the financial year to 460. Thank you to everyone who joined us to help us achieve our goals, and to all who continue to support YRKA's work.

Sally McPhee

Advocacy Committee Report

The Advocacy sub-committee guides the advocacy agenda of YRKA in close collaboration with the Yarra Riverkeeper.

Although the Association transitioned from Andrew Kelly to Charlotte Sterrett midway through this reporting period, the advocacy activities of the Association did not miss a beat. In the transition, Andrew was generous in sharing his insights and knowledge gained over his years in the role. Charlotte dived into the Riverkeeper role in the New Year with passion, energy and determination backed up by strong experience.

The main advocacy activities for the year were working in collaboration with other organisations in responding

Governance

to the *Gippsland and Central Region Sustainable Water Strategy* and the Federal election campaign, along with some smaller local advocacy initiatives with local groups to minimise impacts on the river environment from urban development.

The Riverkeeper ran a focused and targeted campaign for the federal election. The YRKA boat, Puggle, was the vehicle for introducing candidates to the issues confronting the Yarra, Birrarung. A trip on the boat allows the river to speak persuasively to decision makers and influencers. The Riverkeeper invited community groups working for the river to join her in meetings with candidates which strengthened the campaign and increased opportunities to collaborate. This year, work was initiated on building the Association's knowledge and presence in the Upper Yarra to ensure YRKA is able to advocate for issues from source to sea.

Maribyrnong River Keeper, Nicole Kowalczyk, has done impressive work in garnering support for the Maribyrnong River, including facilitating a process to set up a new organisation to advocate for Melbourne's most industrialised river.

The Association's mission – working for a River that is Healthy, Protected and Loved has proved to be an enduring, succinct, yet powerful way of communicating YRKA's agenda. Thank you to Warwick Leeson and Tony Isaacson for their valuable contribution to the committee and to our Riverkeepers, Andrew Kelly and Charlotte Sterrett for being such effective advocates for the river. Thanks also to Scott Seymour for his invaluable advice to the Committee.

Janet Bolitho

Fundraising Committee Report

The Fundraising Committee supports the Yarra Riverkeeper Association in the planning, coordination and implementation of all fundraising activities, consistent with the Association's strategic priorities. An effective and sustainable fundraising strategy is critical to provide a platform to amplify our impact and seek sustainable funding income into the foreseeable future. Attracting fundraising in an ever increasingly competitive market is an ongoing challenge.

To this end, in the last quarter of the reporting period, we engaged an external consultant (Wendy & Brooks) to assist us in providing strategic fundraising services to enable us to develop an effective and targeted strategy, and to enhance our fundraising capacity to achieve our strategic goals. We anticipate this process to be complete by the end of December 2022.

In April 2022 we launched the Business Partnership Program which generated considerable interest from the business community and provided opportunities for them to connect and engage with our Yarra, Birrarung River. Other initiatives included corporate volunteering opportunities and further refinements to the donation page on our website that enable donors to direct their donation to specific projects or activities, to "choose your impact".

As the Fundraising Committee Chair, I would like to say a big thank you to all our wonderful donors, supporters and volunteers for their contributions this past year which has greatly assisted us to continue the vital advocacy and stewardship work needed to keep our beloved Yarra, Birrarung River healthy, protected and loved for generations to come. Without their help and concern for our environment this work would not be possible.

Gillian Jervis



Photo: Planting grasses at Andrew's Reserve

SUPPORTERS

The work of the Yarra Riverkeeper Association would not be possible without the support of the many organisations, communities and people who love and care for the Yarra, Birrarung River. We are deeply grateful for your ongoing dedication, commitment and support.

Without your support, we would not exist. Together we have achieved so much for the health and protection of our beloved river, but more can be done. As an independent community-based organisation, we thank you.

Patron

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

Grants and Philanthropy

Melbourne Water Corporation
Ross Trust
Boroondara City Council
Stonnington City Council
Yarra City Council
Federal Australian Government:
Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment
Victorian Government: Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)
Isaacson-Davis Foundation
Parks Victoria
Shelmerdine Foundation
Myer Foundation

Business Partners

Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre
FedSquare
Yarra Falls
Bulleen Arts and Garden
Kayak Melbourne
ERM
Regen Melbourne
Regeneration Projects
Permanent Vacation
The Altar Electric
The Plant Runner
Optimising

Little Lon Distillery
Up the Creek Melbourne
Patagonia

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 (DELWP)
Victorian Environmental Protection Authority (EPA)
Melbourne Water
Parks Victoria

Consultants

Practical Ecology
Acacia Environmental Management
Digital Next
Progressive PR
Alexandra Professional Services:
Chartered Accountants
Wendy & Brooks
Gruen Exchange
Indigenous Designs
ABZECO
Tangent Consulting

Research and Internship Project Partners consultants

RMIT
Monash University
The University of Melbourne

Community Supporters

Abbotsford Riverbankers
Acacia Place Riverbankers
Alphington Paper Mill Action Group (APMAG)
Bend of Islands Conservation Association
Birrarung Bathers
Concerned Waterways Alliance
Camberwell Senior Citizens Multicultural Club
Collingwood & Abbotsford Residents' Association (CARA)
Environment Education Victoria
Finbar Neighbourhood House Inc
First Friends of Dandenong Creek
Friends of Andrews Reserve
Friends of Burke Road Billabong
Friends of Damper Creek Reserve Inc.
Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater
Friends of Merri Creek
Friends of Scotchmans Creek and Valley Reserve Inc.
Friends of the Yarra Valley Parks (FYVP)
Friends of Yarra Flats
Healesville Environment Watch Inc.
Johns Hill Landcare Group Inc.
Jumping Creek Catchment
Kirinari Kayak Klub
Korowa Girls School
Landcare Group
Love our Street
Kooyongkoot Alliance
Manningham City Council
Melbourne Girls' College
Melbourne University Boat Club
Native Fish Australia (Vic) Inc.
Ocean Youth
Port Places
Riverland Conservation Society (RCS)
Ross Allen Consulting
Rotary Club (various)
Probus Club (various)
Trinity Grammar School

Urban Guerrillas
Waterkeeper Alliance
Water Stewardship Australia
Warringal Conservation Society
Yarra Climate Action Now
Yarra Yabbies
Yarra Paddlers

Business Supporters

Alluvium Consulting
Atlas of Living Australia
Aqua Deck Pty Ltd
Aquatica Environmental
ANZ
Beach Patrol
Breathe Studio
Cool Australia Trust
Credo Financial Group
Digital Next
Dread Pirate Sound System Eco Aspects Pty Ltd
Good Company
G.L.A.D.E. Gowrie Victoria Docklands
Greg Hunt & Associates (Greg Hunt)
Hydroterra
Ludlow Bar & Dining Room
Melbournwalks.com
Morgan Stanley
Olmsted
Open House Melbourne
Practical Ecology Pty Ltd
Progressive PR Communications
Ross Allen Consulting
SeaLife Aquarium Melbourne
The Australian Environmental Films Association
Visit Victoria
Yarra River Business Association

Event Contributors

Acacia Environmental Management
Abbotsford Riverbankers
Aquayak Kayaks
Arbory
Beach Patrol
City of Melbourne

SUPPORTERS

Cleanaway
Clean up Australia
Footscray City Rowing Club
Friends of Merri Creek
Inflatable Regatta
Kanteen
Kayak Melbourne
Melbourne City Marina
Melbourne University Boat Club
Merri Creek Management Committee
Paddle Victoria
The Plastic Runner
Port Places
Port Phillip EcoCentre
Richmond Rowing Club
RMIT
Sea Kayak Australia
Tangaroa Blue
Werribee Riverkeeper Association
Wurundjeri-Woiwurrung Tribal Land Council
Yarra Pools

Core Volunteers

Andrew Wood
Jode Lee Morthy
David Sanelli
Bell Lindsay
John Temme
Katrina Lee
Kate Unsworth

Work-based interns

Jenny Shen
Hui Tay
Sandeena Fonseka
Rishabh Dhawan
Minh Anh Nguyen
Daniel Wiggins

Special thanks to:

Tony Isaacson
Will Shelmerdine
Joanna Baevski
Susan Bannerman
Patrick Myer
Angela Armstrong
Stephen Rado
Sarah Laidlow
Andrew Wood



Photo: Puggle, the Yarra Riverkeeper Association's electric boat



Photo: A messy river is a healthy river.

Thank you for supporting the Yarra Riverkeeper Association.

The Yarra Riverkeeper Association is a not-for-profit organisation. We rely on donations from the public. We appreciate your contributions. All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

[Donate here](#)



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<https://yarrariver.org.au/>



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