



# ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023



**Connect**



**Act**



**Transform**



**Enable**





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## ► Our Theory of Change and Outcomes

We **connect** people to nature and each other, empowering groups and individuals to **act** with increasing momentum to **transform** systems.

- » Connect
- » Act
- » Transform
- » Enable

## ► Our Vision

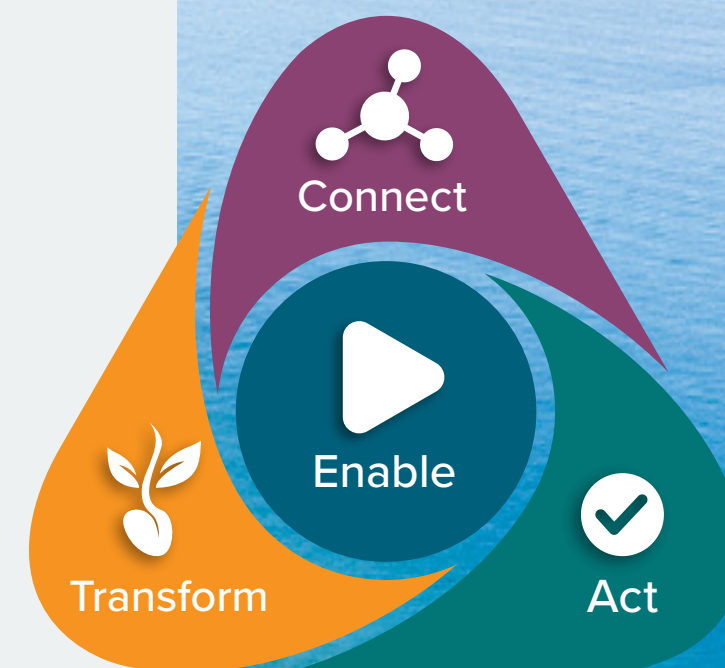
A healthy, thriving and resilient planet where humans live in balance with the natural world.

## ► Our Purpose

We connect and inspire people to care for land, water, wildlife and wellbeing.

## ► What We Believe

- » Our climate and ecology are in crisis.
- » We must act together now.
- » Connected communities drive change.



## ► Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the First Peoples, in particular the Bunurong/Boonwurrung, Wathaurong and Wurundjeri (Woi wurrung) language groups, as the traditional and continuing custodians of the unceded lands and waters upon which EcoCentre activities occur. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and to cultural knowledge holders, and we commit to caring for Country.



## ► President's Report

I'm very proud to present to you this 2022/23 Port Phillip EcoCentre Annual Report that sets out in detail our work and outcomes: who we are, what we do, how and with whom we do it, and the impacts that the programs have.

The Port Phillip EcoCentre has been a leader in community environmental engagement since 1999, through education, research, citizen science, policy development and advocacy, and practical action programs locally and at ecosystem-wide scale.

The EcoCentre has grown from the community and is part of that community. We have a vision of *a healthy thriving and resilient planet where humans live in balance with the natural world* and a mission *to connect and inspire people to care for land, water, wildlife and wellbeing*.

Every year we grow in the number and type of programs we offer and have more staff and volunteers. Further we collaborate with more and more people and organisations. In the past year, we supported nearly 14,000 participants, and 89,506 total service users. There were 18,670 environmental volunteer hours contributed by 3,441 volunteers.

This is not just because the need and demand for the work grows but because the impacts and outcomes from our programs are clear, recognised and celebrated. These outcomes are set out in the *EcoCentre Strategic Plan 2021-2024*, measured through the *Monitoring and Evaluation Framework* and reported here in the Annual Report.

We know at the EcoCentre that connected communities drive change. The EcoCentre has never done things just by ourselves and works with many Affiliate Organisations and other partners. This past year we partnered with over 250 organisations including 147 schools. Together we learn, act, teach, innovate and change – for the benefit of both the community and the environment.

Our programs are centred in nature and the environment, and increasingly on the impacts and demands of climate change and global warming. In this time of global existential crisis our work is ever more crucial. We work with partners, participants and members to reduce the impacts of climate change on humans and other species, restore balance to

ecosystems and the environment and radically reduce emissions. In our work, we embrace the knowledge of First Nations peoples, and we honour the rights of future generations to a flourishing planet.

We are passionate about supporting people to take action together – to learn and do things in their local area that collectively build lasting, far reaching and multiplying effects on people and the environment. As a result of our programs, 90% of participating individuals and groups commit to new environmental and climate actions.

We are most grateful to our major partner, the City of Port Phillip, and to the State of Victoria who have both recognised the success and ongoing importance of our work by funding a new EcoCentre building in the St Kilda Botanical Gardens. Construction is progressing and we look forward to launching the new net zero, solar-powered EcoCentre hub in spring 2024. We are currently fundraising for its fitout and exciting new programs that we will run from the expanded space.

Also, we sincerely thank the City of Port Phillip for the core operational funding that it provides to the EcoCentre. This grant is central to our impacts as it provides the resources and people power to enable us to secure the rest of our revenue from a diverse range of sources including philanthropic organisations, the State and Federal Governments, other local councils, fee for service programs and donations from supporters.

I would like to thank all those organisations and people who believe in our work and our organization and supported us through funding and gifts. You can see who many of them are on pages 57-60. The EcoCentre cannot exist without you.

The EcoCentre is proud of its record of inclusiveness in programs, policies and expertise. The staff includes teachers, scientists, researchers, community workers, and environmental and other managers. They speak many languages, have lived and worked in many countries, providing enriching, diverse cultural perspectives and knowledge. It is a great group of committed, smart, innovative, resourceful and generous people, led by April Seymore, our dedicated and multitalented Executive Officer. A thousand thanks to you all.

EcoCentre volunteers also come from many backgrounds and contribute many things for no pay, including gardening, administration, citizen science

work, environmental restoration and advocacy. Each volunteer brings a lifetime of experience and skills with them, and each is incredibly generous to share this with the participants, staff and other volunteers of the EcoCentre. Volunteers are a vital part of the EcoCentre team and because of their support we are able to offer an increased range and number of programs. Thank you very much for all you do for the EcoCentre.

The EcoCentre is a well-governed and managed organisation that has excellent plans, reporting frameworks, policies and systems. This is in no small part due to the dedicated and professional volunteer Committee of Management members, who give their time, skills, experience and knowledge generously and graciously. Thank you all for your fantastic work and support. It has been a privilege and pleasure to be a part of this team.

Our climate and ecosystems are in crisis. The next decade is critical in determining how Australia, Victoria and the Port Phillip Bay region respond to key environmental challenges and the impacts of climate change. Together we the Committee of Management, staff, volunteers, members, partners and participants will continue to take action together, respond to the challenges, innovate for success and support each other on this vital and challenging journey of our lifetimes.

*Pam O'Neil*

Pam O'Neil  
President



89,506  
service users



18,670  
volunteer hours



90%  
of participants committed  
to new climate or  
environmental actions



82%  
of participants feel  
a better sense of  
belonging and wellbeing



People are connected  
to nature and each other.



Connect



MAJOR  
FUNDERS



95%

of participants feel  
more connected  
to nature



96%

of participants  
increased knowledge  
of local ecosystems



88%

of participants feel  
more involved in  
their community

## ► What we achieved

We believe connected communities drive change. This year, EcoCentre programs inspired 95% of participants to feel more connected to the local environment, and helped 77% of participants to develop new social connections with individuals and community groups.

More than 4,500 school and kindergarten students, homeschoolers and young people engaged in EcoCentre education and youth programs. This includes iconic **Nature Play** and **Excursions**, and activities ranging from online talks about **The Rise and Fall of Megafauna**, to **Outdoor Connections** and **Nature Space** events conducted to complete citizen science, remove litter and increase native habitat across beaches and Parks Victoria lands.

EcoCentre teachers developed custom **Citizen Science Fieldwork** for Year 9 students, wrote new Port Phillip Bay geography curriculum to be taught on land and aboard boats and ferries, and co-designed biodiversity lessons and nature gardens in multi-session packages for early learning centres (ELCs).

A 'learning-by-doing' approach introduced habitat creation and environmental monitoring through our **Corporate Volunteering** programs, **Community Garden Group**, and coastal monitoring with the

**Warreen Beek Cultural Rangers** land management course. In Elwood and Port Melbourne, EcoCentre naturalists helped community volunteers build species-spotting skills as part of Greater Melbourne's entry in the global **City Nature Challenge**.

Our community is diverse and we need more diverse values and voices reflected in climate action and decision-making. The **G'Day Bay Action Days**, **Sense of Place** and **Nature & Neighbours** programs continued to support recently arrived migrants, English language educators and volunteer coordinators, to improve inclusiveness in nature-based volunteering using cultural, educational and physical safety resources and mutual-learning models.

Our community joined **Walks on Country** with Boonwurrung cultural educators, gained perspective through **Deep Time Walks**, and unpacked emotions about climate change at a pilot **Climate Cafe**. Through the **Speakers Program** we shared science, stories, skills and tools for action with a diversity of audiences at community gardens, town halls and festivals, as well as online sessions joined by participants from across Victoria and the world.

Thank you to our donors and partner organisations who help us to connect people to nature and with one another.

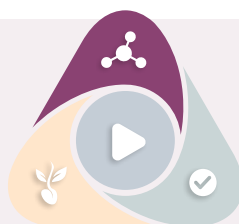




*‘Interesting and engaging excursion  
with a hands-on component, humour and  
playfulness throughout the experience ...  
Allowing the teachers and parents present to  
join in added a dimension to help  
keep the children engaged.’*

— Greg Woolford,  
Teacher, Mother of God Primary School, Ardeer

Strategic Outcome  
**People are connected to  
nature and each other.**



### ► Key Performance Indicators

Participants increased knowledge and awareness of ecosystems



89%



96%

Participants feel a greater connection to nature

87%

95%

Participants strengthen connections to people or community groups

70%

77%

Participants spent more time in nature because of the EcoCentre (long-term)

87%

67%

Participants feel more part of a community because of the EcoCentre

4+  
stories of change

4  
stories of change



**1** Shelford Girls Grammar environmental leaders in a fig tree. **2** Excursion students identify waterbugs. **3** Volunteers Mick and Margot say EcoCentre-grown harvest makes delicious meals. **4** EcoCentre Educator Heather dressed as a monarch butterfly to assist schools with a safe walking commute. **5** Early years student having a magic moment. **6** Patting dingoes with Reptile Encounters at an EcoCentre event. **7** EcoCentre Educator Pascale teaches all about locally indigenous trees before schools start planting on National Tree Day. **8** Point Ormond at sunset. **9** Wendy and Libby harvest nasturtium for lunch.





## How Caroline attuned to the earth

*'I still have a lot to learn, but I know that the EcoCentre team have the energy, will and determination to make a big difference. I am blessed to be a part of that.'*

**Caroline, a local resident and Sister of the Good Shepherd, first volunteered with the EcoCentre in early winter 2022, during an Albert Park litter clean-up with the Port Phillip Multifaith Network. She quickly put her hand up to join the team.**

'I wanted to do something practical. I knew I did not have the physical ability to be out on the beach or in the bush for long, so I help out in the office.'

As one of the EcoCentre's valued Venue Engagement Officers (VEOs), Caroline spends two afternoons per week supporting enquiries, looking after our community venue and tackling diverse tasks from watering seedlings, to assembling a giant Rig Recycle bin to collect fishing line and lures.

'I have learned along the way a lot more about the impact our lifestyles are having on the environment and our planet. This has led me to be much more aware of what I do, what I buy, what I use and how I use it.'

'This gradual change is in conjunction with a deeper understanding of our universe, and the spirit of the cosmos, which surrounds me. I am much more attuned to the sounds of the birds, listening to them, rejoicing in their beautiful song. I'm much more attuned to the earth beneath my feet and my impact on it.'

**Below:** Caroline participating in a Reconciliation Week smoking ceremony.



## ► Community Gathering Space

From its founding days in 1999, the EcoCentre has provided flexible spaces to build and sustain social networks, enabling them to learn and share and plan together.

During EcoCentre redevelopment, our temporary home at the Cora Graves Centre, which includes meeting spaces, large kitchen and a garden-enclosed deck, continues to be a popular venue.

This year, the centre welcomed Affiliates and community groups for meetings, training sessions and films, the bustling monthly Repair Café, free bike repair classes, plastic-free painting lessons, clothes swaps, workshops helping constituents to write to elected officials, regular sessions for the Mindful Mamas Birrarungga group, **Environmental Leaders Action Network (ELAN)** meet-ups, and the big olive oil canning for Port Phillip Pickers.

## ► Nature Play and Early Years Education

Connections to nature and community begin in early childhood and are cultivated through joyful encounters that inspire wonder and curiosity. The EcoCentre's Early Learning program builds on this philosophy and our activities are designed to cultivate a deeper understanding of sustainability.

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

The EcoCentre **Early Years and Nature Play** programs immerse young children in sensory experiences with the living elements of their local environment at kindergartens, Early Learning Centres,



147  
schools and  
ELCs engaged

*'Brilliant. The kids were mind-blown from their new learning! Mouths wide open for most of the session.'*

the EcoCentre gardens or a local beach or reserve.

Children are engaged in curious nature play, with a focus on the wonders of the natural world. Through our programs children develop a sense of responsibility and respect for nature, moving through a development sequence from wonder to action.

Children and educators participated in activities aligned to the Australian Early Years Learning Framework, with the most popular sessions being garden-focused, as well as exploring the miniature world of insects. A new **Early Learning Biodiversity Package**, supported by the City of Stonnington, combined site visits, professional development for teachers, and biodiversity-focused incursions with follow-up resources.

## ► Education to Empower Students

By experiencing education in the world beyond the classroom, young people are shown to achieve improved attention, knowledge, motor skills and mental health; positively change their environmental behaviours and values; and grow their resilience to respond to changing conditions in their environment. These equip students to navigate the complexities of a world facing climate change.

Our popular School Excursions are offered both on beaches and in urban parks, with unique activities aligned with the Victorian Curriculum Foundation–10. Human Impacts and Urban Biodiversity programs remain school favourites, and deliver key learning outcomes in geography, as well as science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics (STEAM).

Students and teachers learn about nature, climate and sustainability through a local lens, then undertake

practical projects in their school or local community through the Stonnington Sustainable Schools Program, Bayside Sustainable Schools Program and Port Phillip Environmental Education and Leadership Program. New skills and projects help to increase biodiversity, reduce emissions and/or eliminate waste streams to landfill.

We also delivered bespoke fieldwork sessions for Albert Park College's entire Year 9 cohort (12 classes, totalling 218 students) as part of their Student Inquiry Citizen Science Program. Students conducted shoreline shell surveys and beach litter audits at Sandridge Beach, and at the St Kilda Botanical Gardens they learned about macroinvertebrates as water-quality indicators, and actions to support hollow-dependent wildlife.

## ► Youth Volunteering, Leadership and Wellbeing

Locally and globally, young people have demonstrated a keen concern about climate change and want to take action. The EcoCentre equips young people with skills, knowledge, networks and agency to create their preferred futures. Young people explore and investigate Port Phillip Bay, local parks and beaches in extraordinary ways – as protectors of penguins, investigators of minibeasts, architects of habitat boxes and as climate scientists.

*'The nature-based volunteering sessions have been really well received by our young clients in our early psychosis program, and we would love to be able to offer similar sessions to other clients.'*

– Loren Lewis, headspace Bentleigh







In collaboration with the team at headspace Bentleigh, we ran our second **Nature Space** for a cohort of young people experiencing early psychosis. This pioneering program, which has both wellbeing and biodiversity conservation outcomes, has been shortlisted for a Keep Australia Beautiful Victoria 2023 Awards in the wellbeing category.

At St Kilda West Beach, we ran tailored fieldwork days for two cohorts of Year 10 students from around the state, participating in the **Zoos Victoria's Youth Leadership program**. Students learned about the impacts of plastic pollution on wildlife, and practised methods to gather data and evidence through citizen science to inform positive action and policy.

In collaboration with Lord Somers Camp and Powerhouse, and Parks Victoria, we coordinated five **Nature Calling** sessions focused on urban wildlife at Albert Park Lake, for Youth2Industry College students. Participants learned about the history and management of Albert Park Lake, and designed and built habitat.

We also delivered a second season of **Outdoor Connections** activities for 12–18-year-olds, including to Port Melbourne Scouts. Scouts enjoyed a night-time shell survey at St Kilda Beach, and a walk to the penguin colony while learning about our unique local wildlife.

Youth programs are provided with the support of Parks Victoria and City of Port Phillip.

## ► Multicultural Nature-based Volunteering

Melbourne is a culturally diverse city with over 240 languages spoken – and we, its residents, are all equally dependent on a healthy climate, clean air and water and a flourishing natural environment. Despite this shared dependency, our diverse population is not yet included equitably in environmental volunteering, so the EcoCentre is invested in shifting our approach, networks and practices to improve culturally safe and inclusive ways to connect with and protect nature. Everyone benefits from inclusive volunteering, when many perspectives and lived experiences can enrich knowledge, action and decision-making as well as a sense of community.

Through partnerships, reflective practices and inclusive dialogues, we work towards equitable

representation of Melbourne's diverse communities in environmental volunteering, careers and decision-making – and its associated wellbeing benefits for nature and society.

This is supported by two-way learning with healthcare services, youth and community service groups, multifaith networks, and providers of the Adult Migrant English Program.

Building on the findings of the *Victorians Volunteering for Nature* report published by the Victorian Government, Melbourne Nature & Neighbours and Sense of Place sessions facilitate accessible nature-based volunteering tailored to our city's diverse migrant communities, in partnership with Melbourne Polytechnic and Glen Eira Adult Learning Centre. Events connecting educators and volunteer groups were held to exchange cultural stories and understandings of 'nature', while learning specifically about our local role as part of urban ecosystems. Newly arrived migrants, and young people particularly, were invited to volunteer at iconic Melbourne foreshores, wetlands and parklands, to cultivate a connection to place and community while caring for nature.

In **G'Day Bay Action Days**, we introduce Port Phillip Bay to multicultural urban communities that may not be reached through conventional volunteer models. Events help migrants to connect with and value the Bay, Australian biodiversity, and local volunteering communities. We provide summer internship programs for emerging professionals (read more about **Multicultural Bay Ambassadors** on page 21), excursions for young and adult English learners, new curriculum resources for English as an Additional Language (EAL), and development workshops for volunteer-based organisations.

Across all program streams, delivery of pre-excursion online workshops introduced key vocabulary and themes, creating rapport and trust between the students and EcoCentre staff, ahead of outdoor volunteering. This included learning about Indigenous connections, the importance of urban habitat and foreshore ecology, and human impacts. Excursion activities explored native plants and animals through citizen science, wildlife observation and identification, litter analysis and revegetation working bees. Pathways to ongoing volunteering were highlighted at various sites by ambassadors from Werribee Riverkeeper Association, Yalukit Willam Nature Association, and Friends of Gardiners Creek.

*'Some of these students come from hard contexts in their home countries, so giving them the opportunity to relax and connect with this new place and with the other students, it's just so meaningful for their adaptation process.'*

– Maria, Teacher, Young Adult Migrant Education Course, Melbourne Polytechnic (Epping campus)

Across 35 events, 550 community members contributed nearly 1,500 hours to nature care. Inclusion is not just a program design change. EcoCentre staff participate in a range of regular professional learning reflections and activities to expand empathy and skills, to reduce ingrained systemic and interpersonal barriers to justice, equity and inclusiveness. In 2022, we appointed our first project manager with a specific focus on program design, new partnerships and adaptive facilitation approaches, to support culturally and linguistically diverse community involvement at the EcoCentre and other environmental groups.

This year's initiatives were made possible with funding from the Victorian Government's Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) through the Port Phillip Bay Fund and New Growth Fund, and Melbourne Water. We were also pleased to collaborate with Coastcare Victoria, Parks Victoria and STEM Catalyst, as well as many fantastic diversity, equity and inclusion training providers.



523  
youth volunteers  
aged 12-25

*"Genuinely one of the coolest and most fulfilling experiences I've had."*

– Calvin, EcoCentre university intern



**1** Reconciliation Week Smoke Ceremony with Willie Pepper from the Boonwurrung Land and Sea Council.

**2** Corporate volunteers tend to West Beach revegetation site. **3** Mother and daughter planting for National Tree Day.



## CASE STUDY

### Nature as health care

**The EcoCentre teamed up with headspace Bentleigh to deliver a second season of Nature Space, a nature-based volunteering, wellbeing and career pathway program for teenagers experiencing early psychosis. The program was carefully designed around local parks, reserves and beaches in response to local youth interest and informed by wider research.**

While the global trend towards increasingly urbanised living offers considerable advantages in terms of access to educational, commercial and healthcare services, it also carries the potential for some negative consequences for human health. Higher levels of stress, social isolation and poorer air quality are commonly associated with urban living and are linked to a number of negative mental health outcomes. The recent COVID-19 pandemic also saw the challenges associated with living in metropolitan environments intensify, as infected people around the world needed to isolate themselves from friends and family to keep their communities safe. Young people in particular felt the impact of these challenges, as demonstrated by an increase in mental health presentations over the last three years (World Health Organization, 2022).

Numerous studies and reviews into the topic of nature-based interventions have pointed towards the overall positive effect of nature on mental wellbeing, specifically among children and teenagers. Much research points towards nature's restorative and stress-reducing effects. Of particular interest is the impact this may have on individuals diagnosed with mental health conditions.

Volunteering in nature offers a number of benefits to young people who undertake it. Whether it be reducing stress, restoring levels of attention, increasing levels of physical activity or providing opportunities to re-define oneself, working voluntarily in green spaces provides the opportunity to enhance mental and physical health outcomes. It also appears that individuals from marginalised backgrounds and those experiencing difficulties with their

mental health, can derive an even bigger benefit from such experiences. And, of course, our urban ecosystems, which are under increasing pressure and in need of a helping hand, are also benefiting from this program.

As part of the Nature Space program, EcoCentre teachers and youth workers met regularly with young people to lead them in nature-based volunteer activities, to have informal dialogue about concerns and aspirations, and to educate them about climate issues as well as future environmental volunteering opportunities.

In addition to group-specific programs like Nature Space, the EcoCentre continues to advocate for the inclusion of nature-based therapies in the Victorian Mental Health Menu, a State Government initiative to enable schools to support student mental health and wellbeing.

Nature Space is a Finalist in the Wellbeing category for the 2023 Keep Australia Beautiful Victoria Awards.

*‘Can’t decide what my favourite part was – I enjoyed meditating and listening to the park’s sounds because it was grounding. I liked searching for water bugs in the creek because it was exciting and informative, and I liked planting plants because I felt like I was contributing to something big and rewarding.’ – Nature Space participant*

## STORY OF CHANGE

### How feeling welcomed can unlock skilled environmental action

**Skilled migration has increasingly been a central feature of Australia’s economic development, yet research demonstrates there are many barriers for culturally diverse immigrants to secure employment commensurate to skills and experience. The EcoCentre’s internship, volunteer and ambassador programs aim to connect migrant students and professionals with place-based knowledge and community networks. As a result, as well as forging friendships, many EcoCentre volunteers move into environmental professions or voluntary leadership roles – lending more hands, voices and perspectives to tackling the climate challenge.**

Environmental Scientist Ying Quek first joined the EcoCentre to explore Australia's environmental issues, engage with local community, and learn about Australian culture and working practices.

‘The EcoCentre was empowering, inspiring and motivating to do better for the environment, without judgement of race, gender, cultural background, or expertise. I was really shy and new to Australia... the EcoCentre gave me the courage to jump in, and be open and honest about struggles and challenges outside of volunteering. It was life-changing to be able to volunteer with EcoCentre. My learnings remain with me as I now progress in my environmental career.’

Akalya Sarathy is a student in the Masters of Environment at Monash University and weekly Port Phillip EcoCentre volunteer. Akalya says, ‘After only arriving in Australia from my home town Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India in February 2023, I already feel that I have a deep connection to the community and country. Studying for the first time in a new place was challenging at first. However, after joining the EcoCentre as a volunteer in the Impact Team, I feel I am now an important part of an incredible community with a shared passion for conserving a healthy planet.’

*‘This experience has also been a reminder of the urgency of addressing environmental issues and protecting our fragile ecosystems.’*



Parth Zaveri is passionate about keeping our streets and natural spaces clean and healthy. As an EcoCentre Multicultural Bay Ambassador, Parth received mentoring, fieldwork training and a budget to design an inclusive volunteer event focused on litter clean up, followed by meditation.

Parth says, ‘I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the EcoCentre team for their unwavering support and trust in my leadership.’

There is a generosity of knowledge and experience that loops back between generations of EcoCentre members and volunteers. Chenxin Tu arrived in Australia as a primary student, and began volunteering with the EcoCentre Baykeeper program seven years ago in Year 9, eventually leading to her current university studies in Environmental Science. Recently, EcoCentre references helped Chenxin land exciting roles at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and the Australian Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

‘Thank you so much to the EcoCentre team for the support and mentorship over all these years,’ says Chenxin. ‘I look forward to sharing back what I learn!’

Contact [cata@ecocentre.com](mailto:cata@ecocentre.com) to learn more about our work creating a sense of place for newly arrived migrants.





# Individuals and groups *take action* to mitigate climate change and *protect* the environment.

Act



MAJOR  
FUNDERS



## ► What we achieved

Learning, volunteering and adapting together sustains our network to protect our land, waterways, wildlife and wellbeing in this climate-critical decade.

This year we collaborated with community volunteers and naturalists, schools, councils and State Government, researchers, tourism operators, Scout groups and organisations such as Riverkeepers and Melbourne Polytechnic, for innovative activities, contributing more than 18,670 environmental volunteer hours combined. Over 91% of participants gained skills and confidence, and 90% committed to new actions as a result of their EcoCentre experience.

We facilitated meaningful time together in nature: digging in at **Community Planting Days** co-hosted with Earthcare and Citywide, building pollinator and penguin habitat through **Corporate Volunteering** programs, and through events with volunteer **Port Phillip Beachkeepers** and **Baywide Data Pioneers**, which saw volunteers clean up microplastics, weed, plant indigenous seedlings and conduct citizen science on local beaches and dunes.

The new **Wetlands and Wildlife** catchment care calendar combined social connection and waterways conservation by bringing together Friends groups, schools and community to explore, survey and protect the aquatic ecosystems of Glen Eris, Elwood and Port Melbourne.

To scale up climate action, we equipped and mentored new leaders, including four emerging professionals appointed as Multicultural Bay Ambassadors, 15 university interns developing new citizen science and volunteer training materials, and local residents through the **Glen Eira Sustainability Champions** and **Stonnington Enviro Champions**. We supported the development of the **Environmental Leaders Action Network** for alumni of leadership programs to continue connecting, skills building and developing projects at regular meetings at the EcoCentre.

The EcoCentre **Teachers' Environment Network (TEN)** and **Early Years Workshops** built skills through on-ground and online professional development engaging 406 teachers from across the region.

In a mighty return to face-to-face format, 250 students from 16 schools exchanged leadership and sustainability skills at the 17th annual **School Sustainability Festival** with the theme Action Makes a Difference.

More than 280 young graduates of our flagship program **Tomorrow's Leaders for Sustainability (TLfS)** completed a term-long training course to develop leadership skills and inspire environmental behavioural change, culminating in student-led projects. Projects ranged from taking action to care for Port Phillip Bay to improving wildlife habitat in school grounds, and developing a school Climate Action Plan for reducing emissions.

Educators from our growing multidisciplinary teaching team delivered workshops, panel presentations, and excursions featuring hands-on activities for the participants of **Port Phillip Enviro Champions**, **Bayside Youth Climate Leadership** and **Zoos Victoria's Youth Leadership** programs.

To complement the food gardening activities and seedling propagation at the EcoCentre, our **Community Gardening and Greening** volunteers provided outreach support, sending extra green thumbs to Salvation Army Youth Services and Friends of Red Gum Triangle.

The **St Kilda Repair Café** surpassed 1,500 items serviced, with more than two tonnes of items diverted from landfill to date. The volunteers of the roving **St Kilda Bike Kitchen** continued to offer bike repair and tune-up tutorials at the monthly Repair Café sessions.

Training up **PestWatch!** teams for deployment when mass pest aggregations occur and to collect data on Northern Pacific seastars (NPS) and Asian shore crabs, demonstrated what is possible when community volunteers, state and local governments, scientists and the diving industry combine their unique resources to tackle biosecurity. User-friendly species identification resources were designed and launched with partners, including Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

Thank you to our donors and the many partner organisations who help us empower individuals and groups to take action to mitigate climate change and protect the environment.





6,480  
indigenous seedlings  
planted across Port Phillip



1,113  
marine pest  
fauna removed

*'The students loved having a regular visitor come and provide them with really engaging, hands-on activities that encouraged them to consider how their actions impact the earth.'*

— Siobhan, Teacher, St Joseph's Primary School

Strategic Outcome

**Individuals and groups take action to mitigate climate change and protect the environment.**



### ► Key Performance Indicators

Increased volunteer numbers and hours through EcoCentre programs



5%  
increase p.a.



21%  
increase

Participants gained skills or confidence as a result of their EcoCentre experience

70%

91%

Types of climate and environmental actions taken by individuals and groups as a result of EcoCentre programs

95%  
Take action

90%  
Take action

Participants have sustained changes in their lives/communities to improve our climate or environment

4+  
Stories of Change

5  
Stories of Change



What type of follow-up action does EcoCentre participation inspire?





## ► Student and Teacher Leadership

Leadership is the cumulative impact of everyday decisions, and the skills and qualities of leadership can be learned and cultivated. Problem-solving, flexibility, teamwork and fostering collective intelligence (drawing on the values and needs of diverse stakeholders) can serve us today and are critical in transitioning to a healthy climate, a circular economy and flourishing, inclusive communities. The EcoCentre provides a range of leadership development programs for students and teachers.

Our award-winning **Tomorrow's Leaders for Sustainability (TLfS)** program trained 280 students from 12 primary and secondary schools, supporting their climate emergency and sustainability efforts. Graduates completed a term-long program involving hands-on leadership and environmental behavioural change, including excursions to explore local ecosystems. All programs involved hands-on activities, leadership reflections and teamwork. Each program culminates in student-led projects, such as:

- » reducing waste to landfill by introducing compost
- » improving habitat for wildlife in school grounds
- » making local sporting clubs more sustainable
- » developing a School Climate Action Plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Thanks to the City of Port Phillip, Bayside City Council and City of Stonnington for providing scholarships to participating TLfS schools. Thanks also to St Michael's Grammar School for embedding the program into



406  
teachers upskilled

their annual Year 4 curriculum, to help support local wildlife habitat, both on campus and in local reserves. With TLfS providing a successful pilot program for linking students with their local community and public spaces, the school was inspired to develop other community program partnerships for their entire upper primary teaching levels. Read the school's case study on page 23.

To celebrate and share examples of leadership in action, the 17th annual **School Sustainability Festival** was our largest face-to-face festival yet, with 250 students from 16 schools attending with support from local councils. After two years of being run online, the festival was held at the St Kilda Town Hall and at St Kilda Botanic Gardens. Primary and secondary students came together for an interactive and inspiring day, which featured student-led workshops focused on the theme Action Makes a Difference, as well as our afternoon program delivered by environmental educators from the EcoCentre and guest organisations, including Serene Kitchen's Plastic-free paint workshops, and visits from Reptile Encounters providing the opportunity to meet endangered species.

Teachers were able to build practical sustainability knowledge and leadership skills through the **Teachers' Environment Network**. Regular

*'Informative, really good facts, modelled collaborative teaching and learning practice, further united a network of like-minded educators.'*

— Teacher, Professional Development participant

professional development workshops and a newsletter featured resources, case studies, curriculum activities and deep dives into zero-waste schools, hands-on biodiversity, sustainable gardening, embedding sustainability as a whole-school approach, and energy generation, renewables and efficiency.

Teacher training programs tailored for secondary-level geography teachers were provided as part of our project **Activating secondary teachers and students as Bay Care Leaders**. At the intersection of geography curriculum and environmental health, there are ample real-life, local opportunities for schools to have a tangible impact. It is also quite fun, with outdoor learning experiences facilitated in partnership with Polperro Dolphin Swims, Canopy of Care and Port Phillip Ferries. Special thanks to the Victorian Government and the Geography Teachers Association of Victoria.

## ► Community Leadership Courses

After many years supporting sessions of the City of Port Phillip and City of Bayside community leadership courses, this year the EcoCentre developed and facilitated three local community leadership programs: **City of Stonnington Enviro Leaders** and **City of Glen Eira Sustainability Champions**. These programs provide essential skills building in effective behaviour change, leadership and project development, as well as the support networks needed, to transform participant sustainability ideas into tangible local projects that contribute to a more environmentally conscious and resilient community.

Participants are mentored to develop projects through a season-long series of workshops, project coaching, a field trip, meeting with council representatives, and hearing from community guest speakers.

Graduates are welcomed into the **Environmental Leaders Action Network (ELAN)**, a community network convened by alumni, at the Port Phillip EcoCentre. ELAN originated from the City of Port Phillip leadership program and offers bi-monthly meetings for sharing projects, networking, collaboration, and further training and auspice opportunities by the EcoCentre.

## ► Multicultural Bay Ambassadors

**All Victorians depend on a healthy environment; however, environmental decision-making does not yet reflect the diversity of all Victorians, and under-represented communities often face an unequal burden of pollution and climate risks. The EcoCentre is committed to removing barriers for emerging professionals of under-represented identities to succeed in environmental careers and leadership.**

Each summer, Multicultural Bay Ambassadors join our team for four months to build their professional skills, extend their networks and deepen specialist knowledge of *Nairn* (Port Phillip Bay). This development program provides each Ambassador with a budget to produce an event tailored to a community that may typically face barriers to participation.

This year more than 132 volunteers, including international students and an Arabic women's group, joined citizen science events to monitor coastal erosion, test near-shore wetland health and clean up cigarette butts and plastic litter; and attended workshops to understand and propagate indigenous plants. Together, we considered new ways to protect Port Phillip Bay.

## ► Community Gardening & Greening

Cities, suburbs and coasts play an important role in biodiversity, and planting and gardening can both play an important role in creating closer-knit neighbourhoods and cooling urban heat islands. The EcoCentre brings these benefits together through plantings in collaboration with community groups, volunteers and land managers, to support

*'The TLfS program was fantastic for Prahran High School. The students had the opportunity to study a practical problem in our school – waste and recycling – but also had the opportunity to reflect and think about sustainability in the school and community more broadly and on the actions they can take as leaders to make change.'*

— James Fidler, Assistant Principal, Prahran High School





landscapes that restore indigenous habitat, filter stormwater, stabilise coastlines, cool temperatures and beautify and balance our urban ecosystems.

Every Friday, the **Port Phillip Urban Fresh Food Network (PPUFFN)** and Community Gardening Group tend the EcoCentre small-space gardens, map local plant communities, prepare and serve community meals using fresh harvest, and lend a hand at sites, including the Ngargee Tree (a Boonwurring cultural marker), and the Salvation Army Youth Services.

Each year, hundreds of Melburnians help with habitat care and creation through our Corporate Volunteering initiative of full- and half-day programs. In winter, popular Community Planting Days are held with Earthcare St Kilda and Citywide, to revegetate Elster Creek and St Kilda.

## ► Wetlands and Wildlife

The EcoCentre's **Wetlands and Wildlife** community events were part of the vibrant **Nairn Catchment Care Calendar** funded by Melbourne Water in 2023. The wider project included six community events, and seven programs customised for different schools and for recently arrived migrants studying English.

Every event offered firsthand the wonders of wetlands and their vital role in our landscape, practical ideas for personal stewardship of waterways and catchments, as well as opportunities to join groups with ongoing waterway care events, including community groups that look after wetlands.

Volunteers were able to connect with nature and contributed more than 455 hours of caring for iconic (but often unknown) urban waterways and wetlands across southern metro Melbourne, including the Glen Iris Wetlands, Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve, Westgate Park and St Kilda West Beach.

Wetlands provide a great opportunity to learn about birdwatching and to be a citizen scientist by conducting regular bird surveys that contribute to Birdlife Australia's records. 'Birds are great environmental indicators thanks to the diversity of niches that they collectively fill and their supreme mobility – especially water birds,' says Gio Fitzpatrick, a local naturalist from Yalukit Willam Nature Association.

EcoCentre educators also explained the vital role of macroinvertebrates and shared practical methods for

monitoring and interpreting their presence, behaviour and diversity, and how to 'decode' the state of health of freshwater ecosystems, using the data collected.

Unfortunately, pollution poses a significant threat to urban waterways. During each event, we came across many examples of how rubbish, litter and plastic pollutants can be so destructive to the environment. Volunteers removed litter from along the creeks, streets, footpaths and gutters adjacent to high-traffic areas, and sports fields alongside and upstream of waterways and storm drains. These materials were then sorted using Baykeeper Litter Audit Datasheets to identify the types, volumes and movement patterns of key categories (notably food packaging and synthetic turf), generating data to inform source reduction plans to rethink, avoid or effectively contain damaging materials before they enter the environment. Despite the alarming amount of litter we came across, the teams left with a feel-good vibe of having tackled the problem practically, systematically and together. Everyone had a terrific experience among the reserves, surrounded by the autumn and winter vegetation, feathered friends, frogs and other wildlife our urban waterways host.

## ► Beachkeepers

Supporting the efforts of our **Port Phillip Baykeeper** to protect Bay health, the **Port Phillip Beachkeepers** project engaged more than 155 keen volunteers of all ages to learn about the role of healthy coasts in a healthy climate, and to join practical events along Port Phillip's foreshore. Events welcomed both experienced volunteers, and first-timers connecting to nature.

This year featured two seasons: **Beachkeepers of the Dunes** (from Port Melbourne to Middle Park) and **Beachkeepers of the Tea Tree** (in Elwood). Volunteers undertook litter and weed removal, indigenous planting, citizen science data and habitat monitoring, for a thriving Bay and foreshore.

Activities highlighted and addressed a range of key issues that contribute to the health of the Bay – in the less-researched areas of intertidal zones of sandy coasts as well as dune ecosystems. In the coming two years, we will expand in the Beachkeepers of the Bay featuring working bees on beaches from Frankston to Altona.



## Embedding authentic environmental leadership for Grade 4 students

**Following many years of annual excursions the Education Team reached out to St Michael's Grammar School to discuss ways in which our nature-based programs could support student learning. The school was keen for authentic engagement with local community, undertaking real action connected to curriculum outcomes.**

Since 2021, the EcoCentre has delivered an annual program of Tomorrow's Leaders for Sustainability (TLfS) for 40 Grade 4 students at St Michaels. Weekly immersive learning and leadership experiences are held at the St Kilda Botanical Gardens and Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve over ten weeks. Each session introduces students to local wildlife, habitat, community organisations and student agency to make a real-life positive difference.

Teachers Emmet Nichols and Allyson Prezons recently shared feedback on why this tailored program has been impactful.

'A change that has resulted from participation in the program has been the opportunity to become increasingly connected with our local community. Students have been working and learning in the local environment as visible community members alongside the public. Being part of this ecosystem of people, flora and fauna has reinforced a sense of connectedness.'

'The EcoCentre program is providing a sense of accomplishment and accountability which has led them to designing some actions for the good of their environment – empowering them to take action. This has inspired a great deal of enthusiasm.'

'The facilitators were awe-inspiring for the students. One of the students has contacted the facilitator to donate his pocket money because he was so inspired.'

Partnering with the EcoCentre has grown into an important component of St Michael's Grade 4 curriculum, followed by practical projects such as building nest boxes to install on campus. In future, the students plan to building pollinator hotels to sell to families for their home gardens, while raising funds to add a frog bog at school.

The successful partnership has also inspired St Michael's to develop other community program partnerships for their entire upper primary teaching levels.

*'Being immersed in the environment that you are learning about is so powerful. This is experiential learning at its most authentic.'*





**1** Over 250 students celebrate and skillshare about leadership for sustainability at School Sustainability Festival (SSF) 2022. **2** Port Phillip Mayor Louise Crawford, Bayside Cr Fiona Stitfold, Stonnington Deputy Mayor Melina Sehr, and Education Manager Dr Cecile van der Burgh. **3** Students abuzz with ideas at SSF 2022. **4** EcoCentre Comms Coordinator Ryan and Sam the Seadragon. **5** Youth2Industry College constructing pollinator hotels for habitat creation in Albert Park. **6** Educator Ben and keen volunteers weeding West Beach St Kilda. **7** Intern Jordan enjoying the Bay's red sandstone coasts. **8** Nadav demos his MC skills with students in the Botanic Gardens. **9** Weeding helps corporate volunteers feel good!



## Connecting community leaders for emissions reduction

Around Australia, many local councils have declared a Climate Emergency. Community leadership courses are now arising to develop shared climate and environmental actions that are inclusive, impactful, self-sustaining and long lasting. In 2022-23, the EcoCentre designed and facilitated three such courses for residents of the City of Glen Eira and City of Stonnington.

Over three-month programs, participants deepened skills and knowledge, established local networks, and developed practical community-led projects across waste, biodiversity and energy matters.

'My biggest highlight was meeting like-minded people and working on a project we are all passionate about.' – Graduate, Stonnington Enviro Leaders Course

Program graduates reported their skills grew most in developing project ideas, creating change, and confidence to lead or inspire others. Up to 90% of graduates reported 'good to excellent' confidence to lead or inspire others to take action on environmental issues – this was double the pre-program self-assessment ratings.

Malcolm Guy, Seathrun Hayes and Madi Haalansari are graduates of the Glen Eira Sustainability Champions program facilitated by the EcoCentre. Their resulting project is Energy Smart, a workshop to support people to lower their carbon footprint.

Malcolm has been gradually electrifying his home over more than a decade. He says, 'I installed my first solar panels in 2011. Since then, I have added hot water heat pumps, batteries, an electric car and increased my solar array to 28kW to reduce my carbon footprint. Not long after I enrolled in Sustainability Champions.'

Madi works in the transport industry in data analytics and sustainability finance. Her passion began while exploring the circular economy and how to get her house to net zero emissions. 'This led me to join the leadership program to start my journey. I have conducted energy analysis based on consumption in bills, and made small lifestyle changes that made a difference.'



Seathrun, a Green Star accredited architecture professional, says, 'I feel strongly that more action is needed to lessen the effects of climate change and I want to help drive this in my local community.'

'I believe education is key to helping people understand climate change and to feel empowered to act.'

After the first few Sustainability Champion sessions, the three participants were drawn to each other. Although they were looking at sustainability and carbon footprint reduction from slightly different angles, there were natural advantages in working together. After a few more sessions and with guidance from the program leaders, their project emerged into providing community workshops to existing groups.

They didn't want to create another social media group or website when all the information is already available to those who are interested. Instead, they believe that connecting with like-minded people face to face has more impact in nudging neighbours towards taking action to reduce their carbon footprint, while saving money.

Free workshops have launched at the EcoCentre, and include brief presentations and extensive question and answer time. The team really wants people to learn from their triumphs and mistakes, and show what can be achieved by community members. To host an energy smart workshop, contact the team at [EnergySmart@outlook.com.au](mailto:EnergySmart@outlook.com.au).



## ► PestWatch!

The establishment and spread of invasive species are widely recognised as one of the greatest threats to global biodiversity. In 2021, the EcoCentre established a cross-sectoral network to facilitate rapid community response to marine pest outbreaks, and to activate and support volunteers to protect Port Phillip Bay. Five Community Rapid Response Teams now cover all the Bay's beaches, with team leaders appointed, fisheries permits secured, and volunteers trained to correctly identify and either report or remove key marine pests.

From 2022–2024, the EcoCentre's **PestWatch!** project is expanding hands-on community engagement to report, prevent and remove multiple marine pest species around the Bay, collect data and develop a species distribution overview.

This year saw more community volunteers, snorkellers and Scouts trained, using webinars and fieldwork, and a suite of multimedia resources created to address multiple pest species, with a special focus on Northern Pacific seastars (*Asterias amurens*) and Asian shore crabs (*Hemigrapsus sanguineus*).

- » Northern Pacific seastars (NPS), a nationally significant marine pest, are voracious predators, fast breeders and a major threat to the marine ecosystems of Port Phillip Bay. Since 2019, mass aggregations of NPS have abruptly appeared in different locations. While these incidents have

attracted widespread community concern, before this project, the removal was often done by only a handful of volunteers and without a regional strategy.

- » Asian shore crabs outcompete and prey upon native species. Although the Asian shore crab was only recently spotted in Victoria, many other parts of the world have seen this fast-reproducing crab destroy native crab populations. Scientifically, little is confirmed yet about breeding cycles, local hotspots or effectiveness of different removal methods. This demands close attention to avoid perverse outcomes. EcoCentre volunteers are primarily focused on reporting crabs to biosecurity authorities, and geospatially mapping the locations where they are detected.

The PestWatch! steering committee included representatives from Agriculture Victoria, local governments, Parks Victoria, the Victorian National Parks Association and community organisations. The project's Facebook group has 143 members who are all trained to join the Response Team in their local area when an aggregation call-out or removal working bee is posted. A further 120 members of the public, Friends groups and Scouts have also joined training sessions, crab reconnaissance trips, and NPS removals. Special thanks to Worcester Polytechnic Institute for the design and production of interactive, synchronous and asynchronous digital educational materials.

*'I wanted to volunteer with the EcoCentre... to keep in touch with the outside world around my professional interests rather than just inside Monash University. It also gives me an opportunity to get to know the local environment and to meet people who do what I want to do in the future. And that is exactly what the EcoCentre experience has provided me. It gave me a different perspective.'*

— Akalya Sarathy, Master of Environment and Sustainability student, Monash University



## How volunteering gave back to Harry

**Harry Baxter started his EcoCentre volunteering journey as a first-year student in a Master of Landscape Architecture. 'The EcoCentre held many connections, ran different activities ... and was extremely welcoming,' says Harry. He joined the Beachkeepers and the gardening team.**

With a focus on supporting volunteers and EcoCentre Affiliate groups in their goals, the EcoCentre Community Engagement Coordinator, Nadav Zisin, discussed Harry's aspirations with him and quickly introduced him to the Yalukit Willam Nature Association's (YWNA) work with Bayside Council to reimagine a former golf course. Harry soon became an active member of the YWNA Plant Lab and coordinates large monthly planting bees. He was also motivated to get involved volunteering at his local park and on the Surf Coast.

'I don't think I would have had the confidence to have done this without my EcoCentre experience, and the positive relationships and exchanges shared with those there. I have learnt that in the volunteering community, your time is valued and others will invest that back into you. Whether that is in the form of friendships or career and educational opportunities, which it opened for me, one can only benefit '

'These experiences have resulted in me changing the way I spend my time and what I value, for example, I spend more time in my nana's garden and helping her for all the times she's spent looking after me.



*'Ultimately, what an individual gets out of volunteering is up to them, but you will end up with great things you didn't go searching for: new knowledge, connections, friendships or passions you didn't realise you had.'*

*'The EcoCentre was such a great place to start and has such a broad scope of activities to explore, which I would recommend to anyone who is looking for clarity on what they are passionate about.'*





## ► St Kilda Repair Café

At the **St Kilda Repair Café** (SKRC), we continued to help Melbourne to upskill and reduce landfill. The global Repair Café movement organises volunteer fixers and menders, who offer their time and skills to help make repairs possible, free of charge, in a social atmosphere.

The Jewish Ecological Coalition (JECO) and the EcoCentre co-host a monthly SKRC led by skilled volunteers, on the second Sunday of every month, and annually at the Victorian Zero Waste Festival. Anyone can receive a free practical tutorial on how to repair just by bringing their broken household items to the Repair Café.

In our sixth year of hands-on repair workshops, we returned to the in-person model and repairers surpassed 1,500 objects serviced to date – with two-thirds being repairable – meaning over two tonnes of

waste was diverted from landfill, and many customers left with a smile on their face with their beloved items having been given new a lease of life. Electrical appliances are still the majority of items repaired at the café, all of which are safety-tested and tagged after repairs. There is also a steady stream of repairs requiring sewing and mechanical skills.

A successful collaboration has been established to offer bike maintenance tutorials at SKRC, thanks to the volunteers of St Kilda Bike Kitchen. The new locally led **Share&Swap Shop** group is excited, looking forward to also popping up during these community zero-waste Sundays, once there is expanded space available at the new EcoCentre.

The SKRC continues to be powered by donations and incredible volunteers who delivered hundreds of hours of repair coaching as well as data collection and communications support. If you would like to volunteer your time and skills in future, please email [stkilda.repaircafe@gmail.com](mailto:stkilda.repaircafe@gmail.com).



**1** Community members step through repairing a fan at the St Kilda Repair Cafe. **2** Peter from Port Phillip Men's Shed prepping penguin plant protectors. **3** Fam presenting at the Zero Waste Festival at Fed Square. **4** Glen Eira Mayor Jim Magee with the inaugural cohort of Sustainability Champions learning from local naturalists and First Nations Educators.



# Transform



MAJOR  
FUNDERS



Ryan Cooper  
Family Foundation

contents





'I joined the EcoCentre's monthly calls to have a support network of people doing similar things, to get ideas, to influence, to make a difference together. The EcoCentre is organised, always respectful of everyone's time and opinions, and just overall excels at preparation and facilitation.'

- Community leader, Australian Waterkeepers Network

Strategic Outcome

Our partnerships and networks drive positive systemic environmental changes.



► Key Performance Indicators



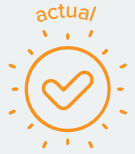
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collaborative research projects

Number undertaken and utilisation of research programs

4

citations of EcoCentre studies in publications



5

collaborative research projects

2

citations of EcoCentre studies in publications

collaboration with

79

core partner organisations

High level of engagement and action with partnerships and impact networks

Action through

10

networks

collaboration with

85

core partner organisations

Action through

10

networks

Number and results of legislation and policy submissions across all levels of government

10

per year for local, state and Australian government

10

submissions made to government, EPA Victoria and United Nations

Partnerships achieve progress towards positive environmental changes

2+

stories of change

2

stories of change

► What we achieved

The EcoCentre is more than an organisation; it is a constellation of action and expertise. This past year saw us expand our research, advocacy, networks and knowledge sharing, to build cross-sectoral capacity for meeting the decade's water, biodiversity, waste and emissions-reduction imperatives.

With the support of The Ian Potter Foundation, we started our second year with a multidisciplinary Impact Team (including the Port Phillip Baykeeper program) to leverage science, law and our deep community connections to create more effective plans and policies for environmental care. The team's focus includes **Shaping Best Practice Under New Victorian Environmental Laws** and distilling principles and legal theory to apply **Citizen Science Fit for Legal Use**.

The EcoCentre participated in strategic panel discussions for ecosystem-scale solutions, such as flood management of the Elster Creek Catchment, regional coastal management of the Bellarine Peninsula, and discussed consistent data collection and analysis for emerging contaminants of concern (CECs).

Our staff applied their scientific, legal and communications backgrounds to prepare evidence-based advocacy on behalf of the community, presented to all levels of government as well as private industry and the United Nations. Submissions covered a range of topics, including greenwashing and inaccurate labelling (including so-called 'compostable' and 'ocean plastics' products); major flood response; seismic blasting proposals; various Climate Emergency Management Plans; the Victorian Government's inaugural Wellbeing Plan; and repeatedly flagging our significant ongoing concerns about the dangers of unregulated plastics, including the impediments they create to a circular economy. In

June, we were invited to appear before the committee hearings of the **Parliamentary Inquiry into plastic pollution in Australia's oceans and waterways**.

For the fourth year, we convened the **Australian Waterkeepers Network**, a monthly online peer-learning network for Waterkeeper organisations and fellow water protectors from community, academic and water management sectors. We continued efforts to compare water laws from Australian jurisdictions with the US Clean Water Act 1972, seeking potential pathways for more effective and consistent protections and enforcement of environmental law breaches.

We hosted free professional development for community groups, including **Koorie Heritage Trust Cultural Training**, **Knowledge Sharing Walks**, and our original workshop **Managing Big Changes without a Big Budget**, with key lessons and tools from our own change management journey.

Together, we advanced research in the marine environment, improved science communications and mentored emerging professionals through partnerships with universities, including RMIT University, Monash University, Deakin University, the University of Melbourne, and Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

Joining forces with universities ensured that academic researchers and on-ground stakeholders – like angling clubs and foreshore management committees – connected around the same table. This process resulted in the production of a range of resources, including video clips about coastal habitat and marine pests, world-first citizen science methods to **Lift the Game on Synthetic Turf Pollution**, and an updated *Citizen Science Evaluation Rubric*.

Thank you to our donors and partner organisations who support the EcoCentre to develop partnerships and networks that drive positive systemic environmental changes.





## ► Tools for Impact: Citizen Science and New Environmental Laws

The EcoCentre's Impact Team transforms science into solutions through partnerships, knowledge-building and advocacy. Citizen science is at the heart of our work.

### » Why Citizen Science?

Citizen science engages the public to collect data in collaboration with scientists, providing unprecedented and providing vast, unprecedented field data sets. Such projects allow people from all walks of life to collaborate and help gather data in engaging ways, building answers to big scientific questions.

Citizen science projects have helped shed light onto incremental, diffuse and cumulative threats to climate and nature, including microplastics. This all-pervasive pollutant is a problem recognised globally by scientists because microplastics disrupt ecosystem functions, emit greenhouse gases, injure marine life and leach chemicals into the food chain. Despite such threats, there remain significant barriers to holding polluters to account. Microplastics are less likely to be captured during traditional clean-ups/audits, are often hard to trace back to their source, and currently, no jurisdictions have set any legal limit to microplastic concentrations in the environment. Using citizen science to help tackle microplastics is also a powerful case study, helping identify core principles to ensure Australia's volunteer-collected data will be sufficiently robust, recognised and accessible to improve policies and help apply laws for nature protection.

### » Building Knowledge, Regulatory Tools and Legal Strategies

At the heart of Victoria's recently amended Environment Protection Act 2017 is a general environmental duty (GED), which requires that businesses understand the potential risks they pose to the environment and human health and to take reasonable action to eliminate or minimise these potential risks as much as is reasonably practicable. Simply, this means that if risk mitigation practices are known and reasonable (referred to as a 'state of knowledge'), they are obligatory and enforceable

before any breach occurs. But this remains largely theoretical until tested through precedents.

As part of our work, we are focusing on three specific case studies of microplastic pollution with traceable sources evidenced by citizen science data: synthetic turf, polystyrene, and plastic feedstock (including nurdles). Each category has a different current state of knowledge levels about practices to prevent microplastic pollution. Where industries 'know better' we want the preventative actions enforced. Where preventative actions are emerging, we want to amplify them and use citizen science data to understand their effectiveness in reducing pollution.

Through collaboration with Environmental Justice Australia, Tangaroa Blue Foundation, Yarra Riverkeeper Association, BeachPatrol Seaford, Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Victoria, the Australian Citizen Science Association and many partner organisations, we are collecting evidence of the harm pollutants do to environmental and human health. We also use this data to assess best practices for pollution prevention (e.g. comparing the designs or practices that correspond with hotspots versus healthier reference sites).

With Environmental Justice Australia, we continue developing case theory for using citizen science data to set precedents under the laws. Our current assessment shows that there is sufficient knowledge about plastic feedstock management, for the industry to be held accountable via precedent-setting litigation. Preferable to litigation, however, we support regulatory tools that are fit for purpose to prevent microplastic pollution. It has become increasingly apparent that the regulatory framework is not designed to deal with cumulative harm. We aim to assess existing regulatory tools that could be applied in new ways, and will lobby to 'plug gaps' in EPA reference standards and guidelines.

An especially exciting area of work this year is around synthetic turf, a plastic material that has been found in EcoCentre's street, river and beach audits over a number of years. While environmentally controversial, synthetic turf is increasingly installed in order to meet the demand for sport participation and to maximise playable hours on shared sports fields, by avoiding the maintenance and water requirements and the damage associated with natural turf. Both the plastic yarn and the rubber crumb infill generate microplastic pollution,

but the state of knowledge is low regarding both the scale of harm and the most effective solutions.

In collaboration with Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), we created a 'scorecard' for citizen scientists to survey design features and audit plastic pollution levels at synthetic sports fields. The scorecard was tested at 17 sports fields across Greater Melbourne, mapping their respective proximity to waterways or stormwater drains. We also held conversations with technical experts, including environmental lawyers, EPA Victoria, RMIT University researchers, industry bodies, environmentalists and field managers.

As a result of these conversations, we are collaborating with Martin Sheppard from Smart Connection Consultancy, an organisation that focuses on best practice in Australian and international sport, and produces a best practice guide for synthetic turf fields. Together we aim to analyse and propose solutions required to address issues with pollution from synthetic turf, from a design and management perspective.

### » Connecting the Dots with Philanthropic Support

The EcoCentre's Impact Team includes our Port Phillip Baykeeper, a lawyer and scientists who participate in the reviews of key environmental policies, reports and plans and coordinate related scientific, legal and practical collaborations. The twin goals are building knowledge, sharing it widely, and applying it strategically – in the right place, at the right time and on the right platform – to create and sustain positive change.

This is exciting as Victorians currently have little representation with a cross-portfolio perspective, network and expertise, and as a result, many management plans miss targets, and individual grassroots successes often fail to achieve meaningful lasting change. The team's critical work 'connecting the dots' is made possible through the generous support of The Ian Potter Foundation, Pool of Dreams Fund, Ryan Cooper Family Foundation and a number of members of the Australian Environmental Grantmakers Network. We are currently pursuing ethical fundraising to maintain the team beyond 2025.



## Baywide data pioneers

**As Port Phillip Bay's coastline habitats change and deteriorate due to 'coastal squeeze' (the deterioration and loss of habitat due to encroaching infrastructure and rising sea levels), citizen scientists can provide critical, ecosystem-scale insights. Volunteer groups were linked and upskilled to map the less-researched dune and intertidal habitat zones at seven reference sites around the Bay, to record both terrestrial and marine flora and fauna at risk of being displaced by rising sea levels and erosion due to severe storms.**

Citizen science methods, including dune and beach profiling and surveys of coastal plants, live molluscs and shoreline shell surveys, have been conducted with volunteers from Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre, Frankston Beach Association, Balcombe Estuary Reserve Group, Friends of Ramblers Road Foreshore, Trust for Nature and Holmesglen TAFE's Indigenous Rangers group, and students from RMIT University.

Resulting data will underpin development of a range of beneficial new coastal plant guides, inform erosion management, and fill data gaps, contributing to future 'state of' reports by the Victorian Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability. In 2022, this project was recognised with the Minister's Choice Award.







**1** Port Phillip Baykeeper, Werribee Riverkeeper, Yarra Riverkeeper and Moonee Creek Litter Officer visiting 'Geoff' the Parks Victoria litter wheel. **2** Mapping the profile of Port Melbourne dune systems. **3** N'Arwee Dr Carolyn Briggs AM PhD at the naming of the Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve. **4** Hosting the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Toxics and Human Rights in response to our submission on microplastics and 'forever chemicals' causing cumulative harm. **5** Plastic feedstock (nurdles) found on the beach. **6** Briefing PestWatch! volunteers. **7** Federal MP Josh Burns, Member for Macnamara, with EcoCentre Vice President Jan Cossar, Committee member Ian Gray AM, and Ed Manager Dr Cecile van der Burgh. **8** The Hon Tanya Plibersek, Federal Minister for the Environment and Water meeting with the EcoCentre, PECAN and Yalukit Willam Nature Association. **9** Collecting data on pest seastars.

## ► Port Phillip Baykeeper

With 76% of Victorians living and working around Port Phillip Bay, and depending on and impacting its health, our award-winning **Port Phillip Baykeeper** program connects everyday bay users, community groups and organisations, to learn about and protect the bay and its catchments for today and future generations.

As a member of the global Waterkeeper Alliance, the Port Phillip Baykeeper is an independent advocate, for Port Phillip Bay recognised by the local community, government and media.

As outlined in the *EcoCentre's Baykeeper Program Framework (2021–2026)*, the Port Phillip Baykeeper connects everyday bay users, community groups and organisations to learn about and protect the Bay and its catchments for today and for future generations.

The Baykeeper team combines citizen science and practical action to inform decision-makers, educate our communities and to improve coasts, the Bay and its catchments in measurable ways. Your Baykeeper, Neil Blake OAM, identifies issues affecting marine ecology and biodiversity, responds to citizen concerns, builds alliances to deliver evidence-based solutions, and helps set strong policies and uphold environmental laws.

Once, there was no pressing need to fully understand those features of the Bay that seemed so vast and permanent. Now, rising sea levels are displacing our beaches and intertidal habitats, while ongoing urbanisation, in response to population growth, is fundamentally diminishing the quality of water flowing from catchments to the Bay.

As climate change, pollution and population growth put pressure on the Bay, the Baykeeper links community networks with local knowledge and passion to institutions with technical skill, resources and management responsibilities.

This year's work on myriad interconnected issues across a large catchment, was made possible by many collaborators and networks, expert advisers, passionate volunteers, and valued support by Parks Victoria Innovation Grants, the Victorian Government's Port Phillip Bay Fund, the Ryan Cooper Family Foundation, South Melbourne Community Chest and community donors. We are also grateful to Marine Biologist Fam Charko, who wrapped up in April 2023 after a decade of project design,

### Baykeeper Objectives

- » **Knowledge-building:** Collect robust evidence on Bay health and threats, using citizen science.
- » **Stewardship:** Foster personal connection and facilitate active care for the Bay and its catchments.
- » **Networks:** Build capacity of local champions and agencies for ongoing collaborations and advocacy.
- » **Influence:** Use evidence to influence decision-makers to improve Bay policy and management practices for a healthy Bay.

science communications, leadership and volunteer coordination for citizen science.

Citizen science allows simple observations, repeated over time, to provide unique data that scientists cannot collect alone. The Baykeeper team surveys a range of reference sites from catchment to coast, monitoring biodiversity and threats to the Bay and its freshwater tributaries. The team also designs and tests new methods for scientific rigour and feasibility in the field.

This year, Baykeeper Citizen Science included delivery of the Baywide Data Pioneers project, an ambitious attempt to forge new collaborations with community organisations around the Bay. Seasonal monitoring included dune and beach profiling, surveys of coastal plants, live molluscs and shoreline shells, in partnership with coastal community groups, the Warreen Beek Cultural Rangers and RMIT University students.

Volunteers who are passionate, curious and concerned help sustain regular monitoring between funded projects. In particular, this year, Jaqui O'Leary, Phyllis Di Palma (who also deftly articulated key issues of Bay health on *Millionaire Hot Seat*), and Glen Adams, and Stephen Cramond were instrumental contributors and conversation leaders.

Our design of citizen science methods that increase community capacity for evidence based-advocacy to address threats to the Bay, was immeasurably advanced through our practical collaboration with Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) in the United States. In three separate projects, groups of four students conducted literature reviews and expert





*We believe healthy ecosystems rely on principles of science and First Nations' knowledge, cross-silo and long-term perspectives, genuine and representative engagement, and evidence-based impact assessments. Therefore, the Impact Team supports improved ways of working together, as a lever for improved ecological outcomes.*

interviews on their chosen topic, followed by seven weeks' full-time placement at the EcoCentre, adding significantly to our capacity.

- » **Citizen Science Rubric** – The students conducted interviews and surveys with the Australian Citizen Science Association, scientists, policymakers and community organisations, to review and update our *2017 Citizen Science Evaluation Rubric*. The students designed a workshop for peer organisations and other stakeholders to share the rubric, and apply it to strengthen project outcomes for scientific knowledge, community building, policy development and legal use.
- » **Synthetic Turf Scorecard** – Working with EcoCentre staff and industry best practice advocates, the students designed and trialled methods for community monitoring of plastic filaments and rubber crumb infill leaking from synthetic turf sports fields. The scorecard allows surveyors to collect data on the design features of a field, alongside pollution volumes and locations. To our knowledge, this is the first instance of such an assessment to understand the impact of design features and management practices on turf leakage being undertaken anywhere in the world.



352  
citizen science surveys

» **Pest crabs community education resources** –

The students liaised with community members and government agencies to design and create a range of resources to enable community members to accurately identify and report Asian shore crabs (an aggressive pest species that has recently arrived in Port Phillip Bay).

Thank you to WPI and our many partner organisations that contribute expertise to each joint project. The resulting reports and resources from every project are used for many years after.

The Baykeeper's 'all in this together' commitment to strengthening fellow travellers, and learning together, was demonstrated through activities, such as supporting the Yarra Riverkeeper Association in six community meetings to establish a Maribyrnong River officer and co-facilitate a catchment-wide strategic planning forum; facilitation of the Werribee River Association Strategic Plan; meeting with Bellarine councils, catchment management authorities and the Victorian Government to consider the formation of a Bellarine Regional Strategic Partnership (RASP) for coastal management; and attending the Marine Spatial Planning Framework discussion with the Victorian Marine and Coastal Council.

Along with maintaining international and national affiliations through regular Zoom meetings with the Waterkeeper Alliance and representatives of the Australian Waterkeeper organisations, your Baykeeper has been involved as an honorary committee member of the Australian Coastal Society Victorian Chapter, and Friends of Darebin Creek.

The Baykeeper was delighted to join celebrations of community water protection, from the 20th anniversary Marine Care Ricketts Point to the federal

environment minister's visit to Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve. His identical second cousin, Captain Trash, the musical anti-pollution pirate, was also spotted at kindergartens, marine reserves and City of Stonnington's World Environment Day Celebration. Captain Trash sang the praises of the 'big aRRRghs' for a planet free of plastic pollution: Rethink, Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repair and Remove.

Baykeeper Neil also shared Bay health updates and insights to the wider community through presentations to angling clubs, Coastcare's Summer by the Sea holiday program, and on ABC Radio, ABC television news and 3RRR's Radio Marinara. Topics included microplastics, Darebin Creek pollution, double-clutching penguins, the new Maribyrnong River water advocate, synthetic turf pollution, and new books that celebrate and explore marine sanctuaries in Port Phillip Bay.

Over time, cross-sectoral conversations and the observations collected by citizen scientists form valuable datasets about environmental health and threats to the places we love. The Baykeeper writes evidence-based submissions to local, state and federal government, and presents both on field walks and in formal presentations. Examples this year, included joining Frankston City Council's Coastal Management Plan working group to identify sensitive sites; presenting submissions about microplastics pollution to Federal Parliament; and a presentation of Baykeeper beach profile data to the Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) and Parks Victoria, documenting ongoing coastal erosion at Observatory Point. The EcoCentre was also

represented in a number of advisory groups, including work on flood management in the Elster Creek Catchment and litter in Waterways of the West.

Bay-care work is diverse, hands-on and collaborative. Please get in touch to join the science, storytelling, advocacy and practical action! #BeABaykeeper

## ► Working Together

The EcoCentre is passionate about supporting people and groups to work together. We connect our Affiliates and partners, develop new collaborations and partnership models, and leverage collective expertise. Not only do we encourage robust, consistent monitoring and reporting methods for the conditions of aquatic, marine and terrestrial ecosystems, but we also aim to ensure that emerging knowledge is shared with those best placed to apply it to maximise conservation, innovation or social value. Thus, one measure of success is a high level of reciprocal learning, collaboration and action undertaken through impact networks.

The EcoCentre is part of a range of networks and holds memberships including:

- » Australian Association of Environmental Education
- » Australian Citizen Science Association (founding member, Victorian Chapter)
- » Australian Waterkeepers Network (Convenor)
- » Environment Education Victoria
- » Teachers' Environment Network (Convenor)
- » Victorian Citizen Science Collective
- » Waterkeeper Alliance (global)



1 Port Phillip Baykeeper and Coastcare Victoria coastal citizen science training. 2 Teaming up with Marine Care Ricketts Point, Scouts students and community to remove marine pests. 3 'Say No to Oil and Gas' Forum at the EcoCentre with local, state and national campaign leaders.





*The EcoCentre is an  
effective, efficient,  
inclusive and innovative  
organisation.*

**Enable**



MAJOR  
FUNDERS



## ► What we achieved

In a rapidly changing world, the EcoCentre continues to look to the future with strategic, operational and financial planning, and service and partnership expansion plans. We looked inwards through cross-cultural competency training, and outwards through learning-exchange walks and workshops with naturalists, historians, economists and First Nations educators. We spoke with stakeholders, to consider the role(s) the EcoCentre can best serve now and into the future.

COVID-19 continued to impact our people and culture and we navigated waves of sick leave, said farewell to several beloved and long-serving staff, and in turn, welcomed new colleagues. These new team members bring a range of expertise that will serve the EcoCentre well in responding to evolving environmental and social needs.

Our *Strategic Plan* and *Monitoring and Evaluation Framework 2021–2024* are core documents that guide the EcoCentre's work to ensure we have outstanding people, best practices, strong finances, excellent governance and skilled change management. The EcoCentre Committee of Management collaborated online and in person to refresh governance practices and policies, including our commitment to ethical fundraising.

To support our building redevelopment, we operated from the spacious hall of the Cora Graves Centre for talks and used its meeting room for our Affiliates to convene, as well as the beautiful back garden deck and well-equipped community kitchen.

The EcoCentre redevelopment tender was completed by City of Port Phillip, appointing a builder that meets the rigorous environmental standards for a carbon-neutral deconstruction and build. We are excitedly watching the site redevelopment from directly across the road at 38 Blessington Street.

Thank you to our donors and partner organisations who support the EcoCentre to be effective, efficient, inclusive and innovative.

## ► Our New Net Zero EcoCentre

Construction of our new community environmental hub is underway! St Kilda neighbours, visitors and EcoCentre volunteers watched the historic building being carefully deconstructed to sort its materials for reuse, tree protections being conducted, and the new building's foundations taking shape.

At a time when Victorians are increasingly seeking ways to reconnect and create tangible environmental change, the EcoCentre's team, with its growing volunteer force and expert network, is equipped to scale up community-led recovery for the climate, health and economic challenges ahead. However, our cottage facilities were no longer fit for purpose.

We are excited to have worked closely with the Victorian Government and City of Port Phillip to commence their development of a community hub with world-leadership-rated sustainable design, which will triple and modernise our community and education spaces. The new centre will increase the capacity to conduct original research, develop curriculum and leadership activities, and to work with and be responsive to our community, local groups and partners. Australia's first Citizen Science Lab will expand access to and inclusion of volunteering, learning and action for our network of volunteers, advocates and decision-makers.

To learn how to support the facility fit-out and innovative new programs, email [april@ecocentre.com](mailto:april@ecocentre.com).



contents



'A friendly, participatory environment where everyone feels appreciated and welcomed. Thank you all for a wonderful, meaningful experience and all the hard work put in to making EcoCentre events so enjoyable and rewarding!'

- Jade, volunteer and Port Melbourne resident

Strategic Outcome  
**The EcoCentre is an effective, efficient, inclusive and innovative organisation.**



► Key Performance Indicators

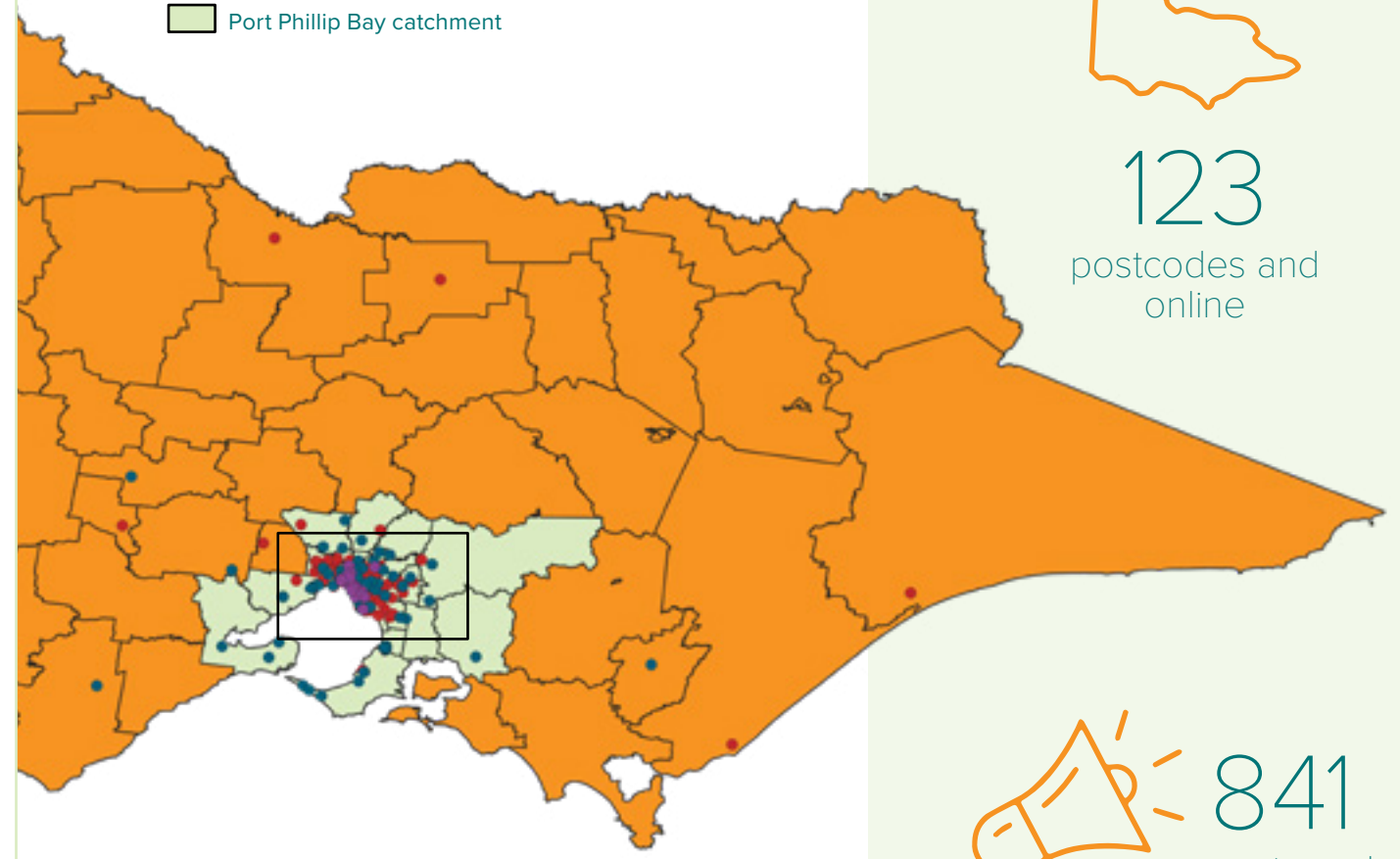


High levels of satisfaction with funders, government agencies, project partners and Affiliates sustained	95% of stakeholders report high level of satisfaction with the quality, conduct and innovation of our work	98% stakeholder satisfaction *next full evaluation in 2024
Financial targets achieved	Annual Budget achieved	On track
	5-Year Financial Plan implemented	Being actioned
Staff and Committee members skilled, effective and satisfied	90% employee satisfaction score	Being actioned
	Satisfactory score on Committee evaluation	Being actioned
	Diversity Equity and Inclusion Plan developed and implemented	In progress
Transition to the future EcoCentre planned and implemented effectively	Change Management Plan implemented, meeting 80% of milestones as scheduled	On track

► EcoCentre Reach Map 2022-23



- 147 Schools & Early Learning Programs  
Plus 1 homeschool network and 1 online school
- 24 Affiliate Organisations  
Including 3 statewide, 2 national and 1 international
- 139 Partnered Organisations  
Including 12 statewide, 13 national and 3 international
- Port Phillip Bay catchment



323  
collaborating groups

programs across  
123  
postcodes and online

841  
events and activities



# ► Community Investments And Strategic Activities

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

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

- » **Advice, venue space and cross-promotion** for Affiliate community organisations, including celebration of their milestones and sharing their resources.
- » **Building the next generation of advocates**, including mentoring pre-service teachers, coaching emerging professionals and hosting 15 student internships.

- » **Building community connections** for learning, employment and practical collaborations.
- » **Community outreach initiatives**, from wildlife rescue to explaining key science simply for radio, newspaper and television audiences.
- » **Cross-sectoral relationship building**, particularly around complex issues and emerging contaminants of concern that require joint solutions.
- » **Ecosystem-scale thinking** to holistically protect biodiversity, coastlines, reduce urban heat islands, eliminate plastic pollution and mitigate floods upstream.
- » **Knowledge gathering and research on key issues**, as part of consultative panels and in collaborations with universities, pioneering new approaches with environmental legal experts and biosecurity practitioners, and publishing position papers to advise discussions.
- » **Providing equipment and space**, including repair tools, Zero Waste Birthday Kits, hybrid meeting technology, and Zoom support for online issues-based forums.



**1** EcoCentre Committee, staff and members attending a Port Phillip Council meeting.  
**2** Corporate volunteers clean the beach.

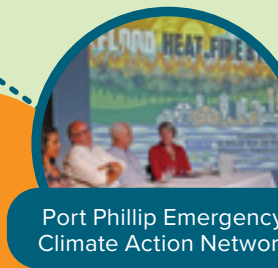
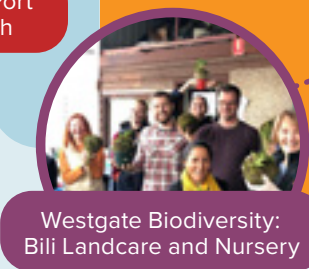


**1** EcoCentre Committee members meeting. **2** Rob Mills and Josh Reid Jones enjoying EcoCentre-grown salad wraps. **3** The Friday Garden Group hosting guests from Tokyo, keen to learn about community garden models. **4** Turning of the soil ceremony to launch the redevelopment. With Neil Blake OAM, April Seymore EO, The Hon Ingrid Stitt, Victorian Minister for the Environment, Ms Nina Taylor Member for Albert Park, Port Phillip Mayor Heather Cunsolo, and President Pam O'Neil. **5** Educator Consu exploring wetlands and wildlife with TAFE students. **6** Interns explore citizen science.



## ► Affiliates in Action

Australia wide



St Kilda

South East Melbourne

State wide  
Victoria

Beaumaris

Carlton

Balaclava

Middle Park

Westgate

Port Melbourne

Port Phillip

EcoCentre Affiliation is open to not-for-profit groups engaged in environmental projects, or projects aimed at building and strengthening communities, which include an environmental component. We provide a physical hub (and Zoom support) for 24 Affiliate groups to conduct meetings, trainings and webinars. We cross-promote Affiliate events, provide mentorship and share resources within this action network.

Following are annual highlights from a selection of our diverse Affiliate organisations.



## ► Affiliate Highlights



BeachPatrol / Love Our Street

BeachPatrol is a group of volunteers who raise awareness and empower communities to reduce plastic pollution and other litter in our environment through local monthly clean-ups. They empower citizens to collect pollution data, and collaborate with community groups and change-makers to improve and influence policy. BeachPatrol (coastal) and Love Our Street (neighbourhood-based) groups are organised by local postcode and currently have 52 groups in suburbs across Melbourne.

- » BeachPatrol's Litter Stopper App started feeding directly into the Victorian Government LitterWatch program, allowing them to add to the bigger picture by providing data to the state government for their analysis and policymaking.
- » The Litter Stopper App shows that over 5,500 people have put in over 6,000 hours of collecting and removing almost 16,000 kilograms of litter from our streets and beaches. There's more information about what each group collects on the BeachPatrol website.
- » BeachPatrol also regularly provides opportunities for corporate and school cleans.

BeachPatrol and Love Our Street are always looking for new volunteers, either monthly or whenever you can. Head to their website to find a clean-up, or register your interest in forming a group.

[Beachpatrol.com.au](http://Beachpatrol.com.au)

[Facebook.com/BeachPatrolAustralia](https://Facebook.com/BeachPatrolAustralia)



Earthcare St Kilda

Earthcare St Kilda works to protect the local Little Penguin colony and the natural resources of the City of Port Phillip and surrounding areas. Earthcare St Kilda's volunteers work on environmentally based projects, and learn from each other and scientific specialists about the amazing range of wildlife which inhabit this inner city location.

Highlights of 2022 - 2023 included:

- » Earthcare hosted five tree-planting events. All our tree planting events were hosted in cooperation with the City of Port Phillip, Citywide and EcoCentre. We facilitated almost 300 volunteer hours and planted approximately 6,000 native plants in the local area.
- » Our Northern Pacific Seastar team is quickly approaching 1 tonne of pest seastar removal from the bay this year!
- » We have been providing ongoing expert advice in the construction phase of St Kilda Pier, to ensure that there has been minimal disturbance to the Little Penguin Colony.

We look forward to an exciting year ahead, helping to care for nature and provide opportunities for the community to take positive action and become involved in Earthcare.

[earthcarestkilda.org.au](http://earthcarestkilda.org.au)



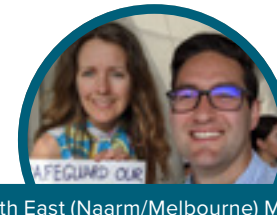
Friends of Alma Park

Friends of Alma Park is a fledgling community group of local people advocating for the care and improvement of Alma Park.

- » This year we have concentrated on growing our membership via establishing social media accounts that can serve as a link to community and a tool for updates and education.
- » We held two successful planting days in conjunction with Citywide, and enjoyed meeting friends and neighbours during these events. We also hosted two follow up maintenance days to facilitate the success of these newly established beds.
- » Other projects in process include a proposal for nesting boxes in Alma Park; a visual species identification sheet to hand out to school groups and children using the park; and a more evolved mission statement on our aims and aspirations for future projects and participation at Alma Park.

Our group is keen to connect with like-minded organisations and have a strong interest in the proposed railway Greenline project, and the City of Port Phillip Urban Forest Strategy. We are highly appreciative of the resources provided by the EcoCentre. To join the Friends and learn more about upcoming projects and activities, join our Facebook group.

[Friends of Alma Park](#)  
(Facebook group)



South East (Naarm/Melbourne) Member of Parliament Engagement Group

Seeded from Climate for Change, the South East (Naarm/Melbourne) MP Engagement Group holds friendly, free monthly workshops at the EcoCentre to guide participants through easy ways to contact your elected representatives and make a difference.

Highlights of the past year include:

- » holding nine MP engagement workshops, guiding participants to feel confident engaging with their MPs on climate change
- » assisting individual constituents to undertake more than 100 advocacy actions with their MPs, in the form of emails and petitions
- » regularly advocating for climate change via emails, social media and in face-to-face meetings with local MPs

People of all experience levels are welcome to attend workshops regularly or drop in.

[seastmpepg@gmail.com](mailto:seastmpepg@gmail.com)



St Kilda Bike Kitchen

The St Kilda Bike Kitchen is a non-profit, volunteer-run organisation that teaches people how to maintain and repair their own bicycles. Their mission is to grow and support a vibrant and welcoming community, where any person can learn to build, maintain and repair bicycles. It also nurtures ecological sustainability and personal wellbeing by promoting the bicycle as a fun, safe and accessible form of transportation.

The last year has been a very productive one for the St Kilda Bike Kitchen. The team:

- » received a grant from the Palais Theatre Community Fund, which, together with last year's Stronger Communities Grant, has allowed them to fully kit out their mobile workshop
- » operated two open workshops a month – one at the Veg Out Farmers' Market and the other at the EcoCentre's Repair Café
- » hosted monthly Fix-A-Flat workshops at the St Kilda Library, monthly basic maintenance courses at the EcoCentre, and two open workshops at the South Caulfield Community House

Reach out by email or Facebook to get involved as a volunteer or to attend a course or workshop.

[stkbikekitchen@gmail.com](mailto:stkbikekitchen@gmail.com)

[www.facebook.com/stkbikekitchen](https://www.facebook.com/stkbikekitchen)



South Port Uniting Church – Simply Living Project

In 2023, the St Kilda, Port Melbourne, and South Melbourne Uniting Church congregations came together to form St Kilda South Port Uniting Church with ministers John Tansey and Alex Sangster. In doing so, they brought together our collective concern for the earth and everything that lives on it.

- » The church continues its Simply Living Project, with food gardening, composting and wildlife planting at the Simply Living Community Garden, as well as Make & Mend (which has included sewing, weaving, jam making, repurposing items for new uses, and more).
- » This year, gardening was incorporated into the playgroup.

For more information about the Simply Living Community Garden, please visit their website or get in contact with Janet, the Simply Living Project Worker, at [janet.hoare@southportuniting.org.au](mailto:janet.hoare@southportuniting.org.au). [Stkildasouthportunitingchurch.org.au](http://Stkildasouthportunitingchurch.org.au)





Westgate Biodiversity

The members of Westgate Biodiversity Bili Nursery & Landcare grow and sell indigenous plants and have transformed Westgate Park into a biodiverse, bush-like habitat. Their vision is for indigenous vegetation to be valued and understood, and for people to be actively engaged with nature – both in Westgate Park and beyond.

Achievements this year include:

- » Bili Nursery has completed a major seed collection and cleaning exercise with the very welcome assistance of volunteers. In a changing climate, future seed production may be compromised, so a well-stocked seed room is essential.
- » Their Hollows for Habitat project, funded by Melbourne Water, is now well underway, with 50 nest boxes having been erected for microbats and hollows-nesting birds. These boxes should encourage successful breeding in the park in the absence of natural hollows, which can take 100 years to form. Groups of citizen scientists held events and produced manuals, and will continue to monitor the boxes and publish ongoing data.

To get involved with Westgate Biodiversity, the Bili Nursery and all their projects, including planting days, weeding and pruning, litter pick-ups and nest box building, visit their website.

[westgatebiodiversity.org.au](http://westgatebiodiversity.org.au)



Global Landcare

Global Landcare is a non-profit organisation supporting overseas communities to sustain their land, water and biodiversity. They have supported Landcare and projects around the globe, including Germany, Iceland, New Zealand, Tonga, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Fiji, USA, Canada, Jamaica, Japan and 12 African countries.

In 2022–23, Global Landcare continued to consolidate its governance, administration, small-project funding and cooperative initiatives. Global Landcare also achieved the following:

- » Secured funding from the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) to bring three Landcarers from Fiji and Timor Leste to the 2022 National Landcare Conference in Sydney.
- » Partnered with ACIAR in publishing and launching the *Building global sustainability through local self-reliance: Lessons from Landcare* at the 2022 National Landcare Conference in Sydney. The publication records the proceedings of the first international Landcare conference held outside Australia, in Nagoya, Japan in 2017. As Australian Landcare International, Global Landcare played a major role in organising the Nagoya event.
- » Led a two-week agroforestry and Landcare information exchange between Japan and Australia in March 2023, financed through the Australia-Japan Foundation, Private Forests Tasmania, and nursing education company, Ausmed.

New members are welcome and eligible to nominate for the Global Landcare Board.

[Globallandcare.org](http://Globallandcare.org)



Kids in Nature Network (KINN)

Kids In Nature Network (KINN) empowers, connects and grows a movement of individuals and organisations in Victoria to connect kids with nature. We exist to link up key initiatives in Victoria that promote nature play in order to enhance children's well-being and development, promote creative play and facilitate connection to the natural world.

KINN provides a unique meeting place for collaboration and capacity-building through facilitating the sharing of experiences, ideas and knowledge. Our network is diverse, with leaders from the health, education, environment, urban planning, outdoor recreation, community, government, business, arts and many other sectors.

- » Nature Play Week, our flagship event held annually in April, celebrated its 10th birthday this year with a launch event at the Geelong Botanic Gardens attended by nearly 2,000 people. The week featured 180 events by 85 organisers and had 11,000 participants over the week.
- » Kids In Nature Network and partner organisations are currently conducting our second state-wide report of nature play, bush kinder and outdoor learning providers and initiatives in Victoria.
- » We organised regular networking events at the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria.

Being in nature is good for us. It makes us happier, healthier, more resilient and more caring. Join our events and collaborate with us to empower, connect and grow a cross-sectoral movement that gets kids back outside. Visit our website for details on how to get involved.

[kidsinnaturenetwork.org.au](http://kidsinnaturenetwork.org.au)  
[natureplayweek.org.au](http://natureplayweek.org.au)



Veg Out Community Garden

Veg Out is an organic, chemical-free community garden run by volunteers and located in St Kilda. We have over 140 garden plots, where members, friends, families and community groups enjoy getting their hands into the soil. Many have little or no gardening experience – but they soon learn as advice, seedlings and friendships are readily shared.

The year saw Veg Out's volunteer base re-ignited to return to our previous levels of engagement with the community, and with each other, with our first full year since pandemic restrictions eased. Along with our usual garden working bees back in full volunteer force, we wholeheartedly embraced the return of Veg Out's community functions.

- » We held our second ever Big Sculpture St Kilda exhibition and competition. With 22 sculptures on show, Big Sculpture Biennale was the largest outdoor sculpture event in metropolitan Melbourne. It provided locals and visitors to St Kilda with the opportunity to interact with the sculptures while meandering through our garden setting. The Grand Prize 2022 was judged by Professor Callum Morton, Practice Professor in Fine Art at Monash University's Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture, and the People's Choice Prize was judged by one and all.
- » In November, our first post-pandemic open day, saw a large-scale return of the community to Veg Out for a day of food, music and fun, all amid the amazing Big Sculptures.
- » December 2022 saw the local community flocking to Veg Out for our Carrots by Candlelight get-together for the first time since 2019. An evening Christmas singalong on the lawn featured Christmas pop songs with our longstanding band and some more traditional Christmas carols with our community choir.

For most general enquiries, contact Angharad at [hello@vegout.org.au](mailto:hello@vegout.org.au) or visit the Veg Out website.

[Vegout.org.au](http://Vegout.org.au)



Tangaroa Blue Foundation

Tangaroa Blue Foundation is an Australia-wide not-for-profit organisation dedicated to the removal and prevention of marine debris, which is one of the major environmental issues affecting our planet. They coordinate the Australian Marine Debris Initiative (AMDII), an on-ground network of volunteers, communities, organisations and agencies around the country, monitoring the impacts of marine debris and litter along their respective coastlines and waterways.

- » In March 2023, they launched their new and improved AMDI Data Collection App, which allows users to easily log their clean-ups and provide vital information to help develop strategies to stop marine debris at its source.
- » Under Sustainability Victoria's Circular Economy Communities Fund, they extended their Rig Recycle program, which focuses on diverting unwanted or broken recreational fishing gear from landfill. Victorians can now drop off selected fishing gear at convenient collection points across the state. Check out the Recycle Mate App for locations (including the EcoCentre).
- » Tangaroa Blue has received many enquiries regarding the credibility of products claiming to be made from ocean plastic. To address this topic, they teamed up with the Environmental Defenders Office and a panel of industry experts to host a webinar to discuss the myths, truths and possibilities for recycling plastics recovered from our oceans. This resulted in the ACCC investigating misleading claims about products made of ocean plastic and ocean bound plastic.

Explore the Tangaroa Blue Foundation website to get involved with a project near you.

[tangaroablue.org](http://tangaroablue.org)



Treasurer’s Report

The continued effects of the global pandemic have led to a reimagined ‘business as usual’ for our partners, funders, community and clients as well as the EcoCentre itself. As the post-pandemic ‘new normal’ gradually stabilised, our final result was an operating loss of \$35,166 (compared to an operating loss of \$155,323 in 2022).

As with the prior financial year, the current year revenue streams were affected by the ongoing pandemic and associated restrictions for our clients and our staff; however, our consultancy work and donations (including from philanthropic foundations) both approximately doubled compared to the prior year, and school programs returned to pre-pandemic booking levels.

Payroll costs increased slightly, reflecting the first full year of two new roles for community engagement support and for advocacy, the latter funded philanthropically. The continuing investment in our highly qualified, skilled and dedicated staff is essential for the success of our ongoing impact and community support.

Although the capital value from our ethical investment fund increased compared to the prior year, its dividends were modest, corresponding with most investment funds worldwide as at 30 June 2023. This resulted in a fair value gain of \$70,021 on our investment.

Accordingly, our final total comprehensive result for the year was a surplus of \$34,855. Our balance sheet remains very strong, with net assets of \$1,439,681.

The EcoCentre also generated considerable environmental and social value. While this is not fully quantified annually, we note the volunteer hours contributed, providing an equivalent value of over \$870,000 as per Australian Bureau of Statistics.

*Nick Capes*  
Nick Capes, Treasurer

Statement of profit or loss

and other comprehensive income/ (Loss) for the year ended 30 June 2023

	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
Continuing Operations			
Income			
Revenue	2	1,133,719	861,488
Total Income		1,133,719	861,488
Less Expenses			
Employee Benefits Expense		1,009,022	852,511
Depreciation and Amortisation Expense		1,258	29,366
Other Expenses		158,605	134,934
Total Expenses		1,168,885	1,016,811
Operating Profit / (Loss) from Continuing Operations		(35,166)	(155,323)
Other Comprehensive Income / (Loss)			
Items that will be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss		70,021	(174,385)
Items that will not be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss		-	-
Total Comprehensive Income / (Loss)		34,855	(329,708)

Please refer to the full Financial Statements for detailed notes: <https://bit.ly/PPECFinancialsFY23>

Statement by Members of the Committee

We, Pamela O’Neil and Nick Capes, being members of the Committee of the Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc, certify that:

The statements attached to this certificate give a true and fair view of the financial position and performance of the Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc during the end of the financial year of the association ending on 30 June 2023.

Dated:  
*Pam O’Neil*  
Pamela O’Neil (President)  
*Nick Capes*  
Nick Capes (Treasurer)



# ► Detailed income and expenditure statement

for the year ended 30 June 2023

	2023	2022		2023	2022
	\$	\$		\$	\$
<b>Income</b>			<b>Other Expense</b>		
City of Port Phillip	349,661	347,788	Accounting and Audit Fees	29,000	32,790
Other Grants	254,432	205,026	Bank Charges	644	596
Consultancy Income	248,502	121,607	Cleaning	10,600	4,061
Donations	198,017	92,424	Computer Expenses	14,189	26,270
Investment Income	24,381	41,760	Consumables	1,870	850
Membership	1,594	1,663	Electricity	3,463	1,316
Seminars & Education	49,985	28,446	Insurance	11,166	7,632
Product Sales	1,492	2,774	Equipment and Materials	16,990	5,605
Other Income	5,655	20,000	Other Operating Expenses	-	-
			Printing, Postage and Stationary	3,864	4,860
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>1,133,719</b>	<b>861,488</b>	Professional Services	22,468	20,651
			Repairs and Maintenance	701	363
<b>Less: Expenses</b>			Seminars and Training	3,822	2,825
<b>Employee Benefits Expense</b>			Sundry Expenses	32,633	19,506
Salaries and Wages	906,580	771,911	Subscriptions	706	2,697
Superannuation	91,528	73,390	Telephone	6,289	4,912
Workcover	10,914	7,210	<b>Total Other Expense</b>	<b>158,605</b>	<b>134,935</b>
<b>Total Employee Benefits Expense</b>	<b>1,009,022</b>	<b>852,511</b>			
<b>Depreciation &amp; Amortisation Expense</b>			<b>(Deficit)/Surplus for the Year</b>	<b>(35,166)</b>	<b>(155,323)</b>
Depreciation	1,258	29,366			



Shepard Webster & O'Neill Audit Pty Ltd  
Certified Practising Accountant, Authorised Audit Company  
ABN: 69 154 680 190

## Independent Auditor's Report To the Members of Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc. ABN: 66 852 809 680

### Report on the Audit of the Financial Report

#### Opinion

We have audited the financial report of Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc, which comprises the Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2023, the Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income / (Loss), the Statement of Changes in Equity and the Statement of Cash Flows for the year then ended, notes comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information, and the Committee Members' Declaration.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial report gives a true and fair view of the financial position of Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc. as at 30 June 2023 and of its financial performance for the year then ended in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements and the requirements of the Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013*.

#### Basis for Opinion

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

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

#### Emphasis of Matter – Basis of Accounting

We draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared to assist the Association to meet the requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

#### Other Matter

The financial report of Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc for the year ended 30 June 2022 was audited by another auditor who expressed an adverse opinion on that financial report on 2 September 2022.

#### Information Other than the Financial Report and Auditor's Report Thereon

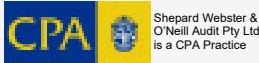
The Committee of the Association is responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Association's annual report for the year ended 30 June 2023, but does not include the financial report and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial report does not cover the other information and accordingly we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. In connection with our audit of the financial report, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial report or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

#### Responsibilities of the Committee for the Financial Report

The Committee of the Association is responsible for the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view in accordance with the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* and for such internal control as the Committee determines is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view and is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

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

The Committee of the Association is responsible for overseeing the Association's financial reporting process.



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Shepard Webster & O'Neill Audit Pty Ltd  
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**Independent Auditor's Report (Continued)**  
**To the Members of Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc.**  
**ABN: 66 852 809 680**

**Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report**

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

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Association's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Committee.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the Committee's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Association's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Association to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with the Committee regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Dated at Frankston on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August 2023

Shepard Webster & O'Neill Audit Pty Ltd  
Certified Practising Accountant  
Authorised Audit Company No 415478  
31 Beach Street Frankston 3199, PO Box 309 Frankston Victoria 3199  
Telephone (03) 9781 2633 – Fax (03) 9781 3073  
Email – [szeplafusy@shepard.com.au](mailto:szeplafusy@shepard.com.au)

David Szeplafusy  
Director



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ABN: 89 154 680 190

**Auditor's Disclaimer**

To the Members  
Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc.  
ABN: 66 852 809 680

The additional financial data presented in the following pages is in accordance with the books and records of the Company which have been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in our audit of the Company for the year ended 30 June 2023. It will be appreciated that our audit did not cover all details of the additional financial data. Accordingly, we do not express an opinion on such financial data and no warranty of accuracy or reliability is given. Neither the Company nor any member or employee of the firm undertakes responsibility in any way whatsoever to any person in respect of such data, including any errors or omissions therein however caused.

Shepard Webster & O'Neill Audit Pty Ltd

David A Szeplafusy  
Director

Signed on this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of August 2023



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is a CPA Practice

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# Our Collaboration Network

### Major partner

We value the City of Port Phillip’s longstanding, substantial and collaborative support since 1999. Council launched the EcoCentre and provides us with our council-managed building and an annual funding agreement to cover basic operational costs, enabling us to build new partnerships for diverse programming and impacts. We are excited to work together to build the future EcoCentre community hub in Port Phillip.

### Major funding

- » Bayside City Council
- » The Ian Potter Foundation
- » Victorian Government – Port Phillip Bay Fund

### Project funding

- » City of Glen Eira
- » City of Port Phillip – Youth Access Grants
- » City of Stonnington
- » Coastcare Victoria
- » Lord Mayor’s Charitable Foundation through the Eldon & Anne Foote Trust
- » Melbourne Water
- » Palais Theatre Community Fund
- » Parks Victoria
- » Community Impact Foundation – Pool of Dreams Fund
- » Ryan Cooper Family Foundation
- » South Melbourne Community Chest
- » Victorian Government – New Growth Project

### Government agency collaborators

- » Agriculture Victoria

- » Association of Bayside Municipalities
- » Coastcare Victoria
- » Department of Energy, Victorian Environment and Climate Action
- » Environment Protection Authority Victoria
- » Melbourne Water
- » Parks Victoria
- » Sustainability Victoria
- » Victorian Fisheries Authority

### Advisers and Ambassadors

- » John Spierings
- » Kenneth Harrison AM KSJ
- » Mitty Williams, The Kimberley Foundation
- » Nick Moraitis
- » Trevor White

### Benefactors

- » Anonymous (East St Kilda)
- » Ann Byrne
- » Mrs Ann E Miller
- » David Robinson
- » Deborah Sykes
- » Iain Stewart
- » Ian Gray
- » In memory of Tony Flude
- » Keith and Debby Badger
- » Lowther Hall Anglican Grammar School students
- » Marguerite Hall
- » Sue Mathews

### Consultants

- » Advantage Books
- » Audienceware
- » Bourke and Bouteloup Architects
- » Ethical Investment Services

- » Full Proofreading Services
- » Hootville Communications
- » Koorie Heritage Trust
- » Gio Fitzpatrick, naturalist
- » katejonesdesign

### Affiliates

- » Animal Liberation Victoria
- » BeachPatrol Australia/ Love Our Street
- » CANSign
- » Christ Church Community Centre
- » Earthcare St Kilda
- » Elwood Floods Action Group
- » Friends of Alma Park
- » Global Landcare
- » Jewish Ecological Coalition
- » Kids in Nature Network (KINN)
- » Marine Care Ricketts Point
- » Port Phillip Bicycle Users’ Group (BUG)
- » Port Phillip Emergency Climate Action Network (PECAN)
- » St Kilda Bike Kitchen
- » Stop Adani Macnamara
- » Southeast MP Writing Group
- » St Kilda South Port Uniting Church
- » St Kilda Community Gardens Club
- » Tangaroa Blue Foundation
- » Veg Out St Kilda
- » Westgate Biodiversity: Bili Landcare and Nursery
- » Yalukit Willam Nature Association

### Project and action partners

- » 1st/14th Brighton Sea Scouts
- » 3CR Out of the Blue
- » 3RRR Radio Marina



» Abbotsford Riverbankers	» Earthcare St Kilda	» Living Space Ecology	» Salvation Army Youth Services	<b><u>Schools</u></b>	» Elwood College
» Albert Park Primary School	» Eastern Alliance for Sustainable Learning (EASL)	» Lord Somers Camp & Powerhouse	» Scouts Victoria	» Albert Park College	» Elwood Primary School
» Albert Park Yachting and Angling Club	» Eco Connect	» Manningham City Council	» Serene Kitchen Art	» Albert Park Primary School	» Emmanuel College, Point Cook
» Anti-Toxic Waste Alliance	» Ecolinc	» Maribyrnong River and Waterways Association	» Smart Connection Consultancy	» Armadale Early Learning Centre	» Ewing Kindergarten
» Australian Citizen Science Association	» Elwood Angling Club	» Marine Care Ricketts Point	» South West Local Learning & Employment Network Inc.	» Armadale Primary School	» Fintona Girls' School
» Australian Coastal Society (Victoria)	» Elwood Scouts	» Marine Education Science and Community (MESAC)	» Spider Crabs Melbourne	» Athol Road Primary School	» Firbank Grammar School
» Balcombe Estuary Reserve Group	» Environmental Justice Australia	» Maroondah City Council	» St Kilda Park Primary School	» Bacchus Marsh Grammar School Mornington	» Flinders Christian Community College
» Banyule City Council	» Environmental Leaders Action Network	» Melbourne Down Under	» STEM Catalyst	» Balcombe Grammar School	» Footscray High School
» BeachPatrol/Love Our Street	» FieldTech Solutions	» Melbourne Polytechnic Broadmeadows	» Stonnington Youth Services	» Bayswater South Primary School	» Frankston High School
» Beaumaris Primary School	» First Friends of Dandenong Creek	» Melbourne Polytechnic Epping	» Sweltering Cities	» Beaumaris North Primary School	» Gardenvale Primary School
» Bellarine Catchment Network	» Flavours of Syria	» Melbourne Polytechnic Point Cooke	» Tangaroa Blue Foundation	» Beaumaris Primary School	» Gardiner Preschool
» Biik Bundjil	» Flowing Loops	» Melbourne Polytechnic Prahran	» This Week in St Kilda	» Beaumaris Secondary College	» Gilson College, Mernda
» Boonwurrung Land and Sea Council	» Frankston Beach Association	» Melbourne Polytechnic Preston	» Tomorrow's Leaders for Sustainability Inc. (TLfS Inc)	» Bialik College	» Glen Eira College
» Bunurong Land Council	» Frankston City Council	» Melbourne Psychotherapy Services	» Trust for Nature	» Black Rock Pre-School	» Glen Huntly Primary School
» Canopy of Care	» Friends of Darebin Creek	» Mentone Lifesaving Club	» University of Adelaide	» Black Rock Primary School	» Glenferrie Primary School
» Caulfield South Community House & Garden	» Friends of Gardiners Creek	» Monash University	» University of the Third Age Port Phillip (U3A)	» Boroondara Primary School	» Good Shepherd College
» CERES Community Environment Park	» Friends of Jawbone Marine Sanctuary	» Mornington Peninsula Shire	» Veolia	» Box Hill Institute City Campus	» Goodstart Early Learning Beaumaris
» Chain of Ponds Collaboration (Moonee Ponds Creek)	» Friends of Red Gum Triangle	» Native Fish Australia	» Victorian National Parks Association	» Brighton Beach Primary School	» Haileybury College, Brighton
» Cheltenham Community Centre	» Friends of the Barwon River	» Newtecpoly Pty Ltd	» Warreen Beek Cultural Rangers	» Brighton Grammar School	» Haileybury Pangea (online school)
» City of Glen Eira	» Gardenvale Primary School	» Nillumbik Shire Council	» Waru Sustainable Schools Alliance	» Brighton Primary School	» Hampton Primary School
» City of Greater Geelong	» Gasworks Arts Park	» Polperro Dolphin Swims	» Waterkeeper Alliance	» Brighton Secondary College	» Hillcrest Christian College
» City of Kingston	» Geography Teachers' Association of Victoria	» Port Melbourne Scouts	» Wauthaurong Aboriginal Cooperative	» Brookville Kindergarten	» Homeschooling Education Network
» City of Stonnington	» Geography Victoria	» Port Phillip Ferries	» Werribee Riverkeeper	» Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children's Centre	» Kamaruka Education Centre
» City of Voices Community Theatre	» Glen Eira Adult Learning Centre	» Port Phillip Men's Shed	» Whitecliffs Foreshore Management	» Burwood East Primary School	» Kensington Community Children's Centre
» Citywide	» Glen Eira Emergency Climate Action Network (GECAN)	» Port Phillip Multifaith Network	» Whitehorse City Council	» Camberwell Girls Secondary School	» Kilbreda College Mentone
» Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)	» Greensong Ecopsychology	» Port Phillip Youth Services	» Worcester Polytechnic Institute	» Camberwell Grammar School	» Killara Primary School
» Conservation Volunteers Australia	» headspace Bentleigh	» Preston Reservoir Adult Community Education (PRACE)	» Work for the Dole	» Camberwell Primary School	» Kindergartens and Early Learning Centres
» Cool.org	» Hobsons Bay City Council	» Regeneration Projects	» Wyndham Community and Education Centre	» Caulfield Grammar School	» Korowa Anglican Girls School Early Learning Centre
» Deakin University	» Hobsons Bay Wetland Centre	» Reptile Encounters	» Yarra Energy Foundation	» Caulfield Primary School	» Lauriston Girls' School Kindergarten
» Dive2U	» Holmesglen Institute Chadstone Campus	» Revma Consulting	» Yarra Ranges Shire Council	» Caulfield South Primary School	» Lowther Hall Anglican Grammar School
» Diveline Scuba Centre	» Jane Goodall Foundation (Roots & Shoots Australia)	» River Connect	» Yarra Riverkeeper Association	» Cheltenham Primary School	» Mac.Robertson Girls' High School
» Dromana Bay Life Saving Club	» Knox City Council	» RMIT University	» Youth2Industry College	» Coburg West Primary School	» Malvern Central Primary School
	» Landcare Australia	» Roxburgh Community Hub	» Zoos Victoria	» Cornish College	» Malvern Early Learning and Childcare Centre
	» Laverton Community and Education Centre	» Royal Botanic Gardens		» Damascus College, Mt Clear	
		» Rye Community Group		» East Bentleigh Primary School	
				» Echuca College	
				» Elsternwick Primary School	



- » Malvern Memorial

» Malvern Primary School

» Margaret Thomas House

» McClelland College

» Melbourne Archdiocese of Catholic Schools

» Melbourne Girls Grammar School

» Melbourne Girls' College

» Melbourne Graduate School of Education

» Melton Secondary College

» Middle Park Primary School

» Monash Science School

» Mother of God Primary School

» Mount Lilydale Mercy College

» Mount Scopus Memorial College

» Mount St Joseph Girls' College

» Mount Waverley Secondary College

» Newmark Primary School

» Notre Dame College Shepparton

» Oakleigh South Primary School

» Olive Phillips Kindergarten

» Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception

» Our Lady's Catholic Primary School

» Overport Primary School

» Oxley Christian College, Yarra Ranges

» Port Melbourne Primary School

» Prahran High School

» Preshil - The Margaret Lyttle Memorial School

» Princes Close Childcare Centre

» Renown Kindergarten

» Resurrection Primary School, Keysborough

» Ripponlea Primary School

» Rossbourne School

» Ruyton Girls' School (Kew)
- » Sacré Cœur Glen Iris

» Sandringham College (Junior School)

» Sandringham East Primary School

» Sandringham Primary School

» Scoresby Secondary College

» Simonds Catholic College

» Sirius College, Keysborough

» Solway Primary School

» South Melbourne Childcare Co-operative

» South Melbourne Park Primary School

» South Melbourne Primary School

» St Albans Secondary College

» St Bede's College, Mentone

» St Bernadette's Primary School

» St Bernard's College, Essendon

» St Cecilia's Primary School

» St Columba's Primary School, Elwood

» St Finbar's Primary School, Brighton East

» St James Catholic Primary School, Brighton

» St Joan of Arc School, Brighton

» St John's Kindergarten, Sandringham

» St John's Primary School in Clifton Hill

» St John Vianney's Primary School, Mulgrave

» St Joseph's Primary School, Malvern

» St Joseph's Primary School, Black Rock

» St Kilda Park Primary School

» St Kilda Primary School, Brighton East

» St Leo the Great Primary School

» St Leonard's College
- » St Louis de Montfort's School, Aspendale

» St Mary's Primary School, Hampton

» St Mary's Primary School, Malvern East

» St Mary's Primary School, St Kilda East

» St Michael's Grammar School

» St Monica's College Epping

» St Peter's Catholic Primary School, Sunshine

» St Peter's Primary School, Keilor East

» St Scholastica's Primary School

» St Theresa's Primary School, Albion

» Star of the Sea College

» Strathmore Primary School

» Templestowe College

» Thornbury High School

» Toorak Primary School

» University Park Primary School

» Valkstone Primary School

» Vermont Primary School

» Vermont Secondary College

» Victoria University

» Warrnambool East PS

» Wesbourne Grammar School

» Wesley College

» Westall Secondary College

» Western English Language School

» Williamstown Primary School

» Windsor Community Children's Centre

» Windsor Primary School

» Winter Street Early Years Service

» Yarram Secondary College

» Youth2Industry College

► EcoCentre People



**Committee of Management**  
*(above: top left to bottom right)*

- » Pam O'Neil, President
- » Jan Cossar, Vice President
- » Deborah Sykes, Secretary
- » Nicholas Capes, Treasurer
- » Josh Reid Jones
- » Ian Gray AM
- » Elliot Costello
- » Josh Solomonsz
- » Prof Kathryn Bowen
- » Emma Giakoumatos PhD
- » Will Burnham (subcommittee secondment)

**EcoCentre Public Fund Managers**

- » Louise Kyle
- » Michele New
- » Nicholas Capes

**Staff**

- » April Seymore, Executive Officer
- » Cécile van der Burgh PhD, Education Manager
- » Lisa Horler, Operations and Community Action Manager

- » Michelle Fisher, Impact Team Leader (July - December)
- » Vanessa Shambrook, Impact Team Leader (March - present)
- » Neil Blake OAM, Port Phillip Baykeeper
- » Nadav Zisin, Community Engagement Coordinator
- » Fam Charko, Marine Biologist
- » Catalina Mardones, Project Manager
- » Ryan Abramowitz, Comms and Marketing Coordinator
- » Alex Hoffman, Education Coordinator
- » Deb Punton, Community and Early Years Educator
- » Peter Kelly, Educator and Garden Coordinator
- » Allison Shanahan, Educator
- » Anna Malone, Educator
- » Ben Francischelli, Educator
- » Betsabe Ortiz, Educator
- » Consuelo Quevedo, Educator
- » Heather Maginn, Educator
- » Jailene Santana, Educator
- » Malcolm Dow, Educator

- » Pascale Jacq, Educator
- » Sharron Hunter, Educator
- » David Giles, IT Specialist

**Multicultural Bay Ambassadors**

- » Arjumand Khan
- » Claudia Zárate Castañeda
- » Kacey Tada
- » Parth Zaveri

**Above and beyond volunteers**

- » Abbey Jacob
- » Adele O'Brien
- » Allan Pringle
- » Andrew Christie
- » Team Anne & Jean
- » Bobbi O'Riley
- » Bronte Kyle
- » Camille Heisler
- » Cara Hull
- » Carol-Ann Allen
- » Caroline Price
- » Dan Wei
- » Jacqui Younger
- » Jade Pearson-Smith



- » Janine Stabryla
- » Jaqui O’Leary
- » John Hillel
- » Josie Jones
- » Judy Muir
- » Julianne Stuart
- » Julie Everett
- » Karri Giles
- » Kate Skinner
- » Marc Alexander
- » Margot Brock
- » Max Patton
- » Mick Meehan
- » Morgan Kurrajong
- » Myra Kelly
- » Nikita Donovan
- » Peter Lindner
- » Phyllis Di Palma
- » Stephen Cramond
- » Steve McIntosh
- » Tammy Taylor
- » Wendy Joseph
- » Zac Grimes
- » Olivia Peterson
- » Jake Letourneau
- » James Ralph
- » Jordan Wecler
- » Matt Haley
- » Nathaniel Polus
- » Niralya Sundararajan
- » Samson Hodges
- » Warren Callen
- » Xiao Xuan Hoo

#### Interns

- » Aidan Kaufman
- » Akalya Sarathy
- » Calvin Page
- » Chenxin Tu
- » Eliza Dion

#### Work Experience students

- » Jade Lee Willis
- » Safia Osman



#### VALE GEOFF LOVE

Nearly as familiar to locals as the St Kilda penguins, Geoff Love served on the EcoCentre Committee of Management for six years, and later became a visitor engagement volunteer - greeting and charming visitors to the EcoCentre and St Kilda Botanic Gardens with both informative conversation and outrageous fashion. He was always happy to lend a hand, whether digging a raingarden, or advocating to government on behalf of flood-affected suburbs.



**1** Staff rainbow party. **2** Corporate volunteers removed weeds totalling twice the volume of Marine Biologist Fam. **3** EcoCentre staff Anna, Allison, Ben and Nadav prepping habitat workshop materials.

## ► EcoCentre Contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals

The EcoCentre’s work is underpinned by the scientific imperative of the United Nations Climate Agreements and informed by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are 17 global ambitions contributing to a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet,

now and into the future. The goals recognise that a thriving society must develop in parallel with a healthy planet.

As part of our *Monitoring and Evaluation Framework*, the EcoCentre assesses our projects, programs and practices for positive, negative or neutral contributions to the SDGs.







Artist's render by Bourke and Bouteloup architects

## New EcoCentre launching in 2024

Bunurong/Boon Wurrung Country  
c/o 38 Blessington St, St Kilda  
VIC 3182, Australia

Incorporated Association No. A0038897K

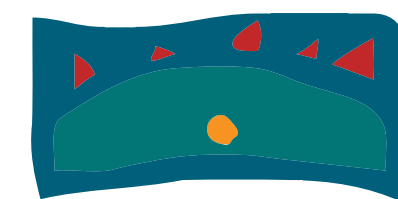
Registered on Environment Australia's Register of  
Environmental Organisations and entitled to  
receive tax-deductible donations.

[www.ecocentre.com](http://www.ecocentre.com)

Email [info@ecocentre.com](mailto:info@ecocentre.com) to find out more  
about our team and our initiatives.

P: 03 9534 0670

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[@ecocentrestkilda](https://www.instagram.com/ecocentrestkilda)



PORT PHILLIP  
**ecocentre**

ANNUAL  
**REPORT**

2022  
**2023**