



Port Phillip EcoCentre

Annual Report 2013-2014



Local ACTION global **FUTURE**

Key elements of Port Phillip EcoCentre Strategic Plan 2012 - 2015

Vision

An empowered and engaged community actively shaping a more sustainable world.

Mission

The Port Phillip EcoCentre is a vibrant, accessible network engaging and enabling communities in long-term social and environmental wellbeing. We do this through reconnecting people to the natural world and building relationships to inspire, educate and demonstrate.

Key values

We value integrity, inclusiveness, openness, creativity, innovation and practical action.

Key Strategic Directions

Engaging and empowering the community

- Build strong relationships and social connections
- Expand sphere of influence
- Take the message to the people
- Facilitate and support affiliates and community groups
- Communicate with the community

Demonstrating best practice - facilities and resources

- Develop leading edge facilities
- Practically demonstrate sustainable living
- Attract and retain outstanding staff and volunteers
- Ensure adequate funding base

Educating for Sustainability

- Schools
- Businesses
- Community
- Research

Advocating and acting to protect and enhance the environment

- Provide a credible community voice
- Liaise with all levels of government

Cover photos (clockwise): Aunty Carolyn, Jess, April and Jane (pic courtesy of Keep Australia Beautiful Victoria)
Marlena Eales
Life Support for the Bay crew: Neil, Dean, Gio, Fam and Jill (pic courtesy of Edunity)

President's Report

The EcoCentre has received accolades and awards from various bodies over the last year that are satisfying and worthy of celebration. We won the Keep Australia Beautiful, Clean Beaches and Waterways Award and the Young Leaders Award and were short listed in 8 other categories. Neil, our Director won the Outstanding Individual Achievement award from the Victorian Coastal Council; and we are one of three finalists for the 2014 Premier's Sustainability Cleaner Bay and Yarra Award.

The success and importance of our work and achievements are best judged by those who we work with. Our collaborators and the people, schools, community organisations and businesses who come to our programs and events, overwhelmingly tell us that what we are doing is great – it is important, interesting and usually fun.

The staff, committee and volunteers of the EcoCentre together with our affiliates and participants are working to protect and enhance the environment and to help people live more ecologically balanced lives and to shape a more sustainable world. We do this by reconnecting people to the natural world and by building relationships to model, educate and inspire.

Over the past year we have engaged with 54 schools and 6 Early Learning Centres. We conducted activities and classes linked to the national curriculum in schools, on beaches and close to nature. Our 22 affiliates and over 30 other organisations used the centre and shared programs and events with us.

We were members of many groups and networks including the Sustainability Community Action Network (SCAN), Teachers for the Environment Network (TEN) and the Port Phillip Bicycle Users Group, often facilitating their meetings and activities. We conducted research with citizens, other community organisations and universities and published our results including *Micro-plastics in the Maribyrnong and Yarra Rivers and Port Phillip Bay*.

We shared our stories and our work on-line and in magazines and newspapers. We partnered with Earthcare to monitor and protect the little penguins while the new marina was being built at St Kilda. We taught kids, their parents and grandparents to build and install nest boxes for native animals and birds. Seventeen schools participated in our Sustainable Schools Festival where we celebrated their leadership and achievements.



Pam O'Neil, President

We conducted walks on the beaches, along the creeks and around the streets where we studied and monitored nature and litter. We learnt of and from the life and the uses of the land and sea of the Boon Wurrung from before white man was here. We made an award-winning film, *Baykeepers*, which celebrates Port Phillip Bay while educating us about the major worldwide issue of marine plastic pollution. We conducted community art classes with recycled materials. We had a monthly film and discussion night and other community workshops. We grew edible plants, developed community gardens, cooked healthy meals and learnt and taught about food security. We developed a rain garden out the front of the EcoCentre. We monitored water quality, the plants and animals of the bay; and we did a lot more.

We are extremely fortunate at the EcoCentre to have a Director and staff who are outstanding in their dedication, knowledge, skills and innovation. As well they are enthusiastic, encouraging and supportive. The Committee members too are exceptional and, like the volunteers, generously give their time and skills for our vital environmental work. Thank you to you all. It is little wonder that our programs are so successful and we are celebrated by awards and the community.

All of us who are part of the EcoCentre community can be justifiably proud of our actions and achievements, because together we are making a difference to our community, our environment and the wider world. Together we are learning, teaching, acting and inspiring for a better more sustainable world.

Independent Auditor's Report

INDEPENDENT AUDIT REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF PORT PHILLIP ECOCENTRE INC

Report on the Financial Report

We have audited the accompanying financial report being a special purpose financial report, of Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc, which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2014, the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, notes comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information, and the officers' assertion statement.

Committee of Management's Responsibility for the Financial Report

The committee members of Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc are responsible for the preparation of the financial report and have determined that the basis of preparation described in Note 1, is appropriate to meet the requirements of the Association Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Vic) and is appropriate to meet the needs of the members. The committee of managements' responsibility also includes such internal control as the committee of management determine is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial report 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 entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

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

CERTIFICATE BY MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE ANNUAL STATEMENTS GIVE TRUE AND FAIR VIEW OF THE FINANCIAL POSITION OF INCORPORATED ASSOCIATION

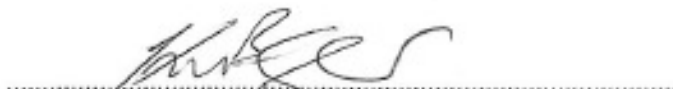
We, Pam O'Neil and Keith Badger, being members of the Committee of the Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc, certify that -

The statements attached to this certificate give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc during the end of the financial year of the association ending on 30 June 2014.

Dated 28/07/2014



Pam O'Neil (President)



Keith Badger (Treasurer)

Independent Auditor's Report continued

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2014

	2014	2013
	\$	\$
Revenue	557,190	601,094
Employee benefits expense	(491,569)	(397,938)
Depreciation and amortisation expense	(10,587)	(12,163)
Other expenses	(164,025)	(147,799)
Profit before income tax	(98,991)	43,194
Income tax expense	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	(98,991)	43,194

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION 30 JUNE 2014

	Note	2014	2013
		\$	\$
ASSETS			
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	2	155,477	343,328
Trade and other receivables		29,348	55,270
Prepayments		133	401
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		184,958	398,999
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Land and buildings	3	247,656	254,006
Plant and equipment	3	12,711	16,848
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		260,367	270,854
TOTAL ASSETS		445,325	669,853
LIABILITIES			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and other payables	4	16,559	38,726
Grants received in advance		-	112,400
Employee provisions		30,157	21,227
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		46,716	172,353
TOTAL LIABILITIES		46,716	172,353
NET ASSETS		398,609	497,500
MEMBERS' FUNDS			
Retained profits		398,609	497,500
TOTAL MEMBERS' EQUITY		398,609	497,500

Independent Auditor's Report continued

DETAILED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

	2014 \$	2013 \$
Income		
Administer projects	33,273	18,636
Aust. sustainable schools init	-	3,750
City of Port Phillip administration grant	206,252	134,530
City of Port Phillip other grants	-	161,126
Commercial sponsors	14,940	5,227
Court order grants	84,450	124,203
Consulting	98,241	55,906
Donations	16,328	2,058
Government grants (DEECD)	-	9,590
Interest	6,550	9,713
Membership	2,409	3,232
Other grants	68,460	34,692
Product sales	25,315	21,438
Sundry income	972	16,993
Total income	557,190	601,094
Less: Expenses		
Employee benefits expense		
Salaries and Wages	440,465	365,634
Superannuation	35,908	29,638
Workcover	5,196	2,666
Total employee benefits expense	481,569	397,938
Depreciation & amortisation expense		
Depreciation	10,587	12,163
Total depreciation & amortisation expense	10,587	12,163
Other expense		
Audit fees	2,750	2,500
Accountancy fees	8,834	30
Auspricing	23,599	25,848
Bank charges	1,017	656
Cleaning	8,093	6,937
Computer expenses	3,314	2,804
Consumables	17,478	18,554
Electricity	2,190	1,637
Equipment replacement	-	17,917
Insurance	2,940	4,480
Equipment and materials	11,415	8,376

Independent Auditor's Report continued

DETAILED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

	2014	2013
	\$	\$
Office supplies	-	2,803
Other operating expenses	-	12,452
Printing, postage and stationary	5,073	7,486
Professional services	57,640	20,002
Repairs and maintenance	366	597
Seminars and training	3,084	3,902
Storage	-	1,249
Sundry Expenses	12,220	4,786
Subscriptions	1,083	795
Telephone	2,929	3,988
Total other expense	164,025	147,799
Total expense	656,181	557,900
Net profit / (loss)	(98,991)	43,194

INDEPENDENT AUDIT REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF PORT PHILLIP ECOCENTRE INC

Basis for Qualified Opinion

As is common for organisations of this type, it is not practicable for Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc. to maintain an effective system of internal control over receipts until their initial entry in the accounting records. Accordingly, our audit in relation to receipts was limited to the amounts recorded.

As mentioned in note 1(k) to the financial statements, accounting records are not available to substantiate buildings and plant and equipment amounting to \$283,117 cost and \$22,750 accumulated depreciation at balance date. Management has determined and is of the opinion that these assets exist and that the carrying value approximates the value in use. However in the absence of a valuation and stocktake we are unable to ascertain the details and carrying amounts of these assets.


Qualified Opinion

In our opinion, except for the possible effects of the matter described in the Basis for Qualified Opinion paragraph, the financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc as at 30 June 2014, and its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and Association Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Vic).

Basis of Accounting

Without modifying our opinion, we draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report is prepared to assist Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc to comply with the financial reporting provisions of the Association Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Vic). As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose.


MSI RAGG WEIR
 Chartered Accountants


L.S. WONG
 Partner

Melbourne 28 July 2014

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Affiliates in action

Christ Church Community Centre values our membership with the Port Phillip EcoCentre. We are very pleased to report that our kitchen garden has been very productive and this is partly due to advice we received during the planning stages. We continue to reduce our carbon footprint by recycling materials where possible and growing our own food as much as we can. We also greatly appreciate the **donation** of a garden shed. We've enjoyed the opportunity to participate in several of the EcoCentre's beach litter audits.



Good friends and veggie plots

Some regular community centre participants took part in this activity and learned more about responding to local environmental issues.

On World Environment Day, June 5, we showed the Baykeeper documentary in the community centre hall. We had a successful event and those who attended expressed how much they learned about Port Phillip Bay and as a result some volunteers have since been involved with Beach Patrol 3182. We plan to show the documentary again in our garden during the summer months.

Our affiliation with Port Phillip EcoCentre has helped to enhance our centre in other ways too. We thank the EcoCentre for lending us their data projector and speakers which has helped us to trial our new *Movie Night* program over the past year.

Contact: Elaine Wilkinson

<http://www.ccm.org.au/>

facebook: Christ Church Community Centre - the Little St Kilda Mission

Elwood Floods Action Group (Eflag) have had a mixed year in 2013-14.



June 2014 - coinciding with high tide & 100km wind

Our highlights of the year include:

- Our new banner gives us a glowing presence at public events;
- Our stall at the Volunteers Expo at Port Melbourne Town Hall;
- Linking in with City of Port Phillip's Sustainable Community Action Network (SCAN) to organise a public/ community information meeting at the Phoenix Theatre on August 27 .



Extreme weather events are on the rise!

Lowlights were our failed application to City of Port Phillip for funding for a flood warning system; and the mystery of the disappearing team from South East Water who offered to supply a device that would send mobile phone messages to when floodwaters reach a certain level.

The first coastal flooding event, driven by high tides and strong winds was a grim reminder of things to come.

Geoffrey Love, Secretary

<https://sites.google.com/site/elwoodfloods/>

Affiliates in action

Friends of Westgate Park continue their exciting revegetation project in Westgate Park - under the Westgate Bridge in Port Melbourne, next to the Yarra and near Port Phillip Bay. A visit is well worthwhile! We plant around 20,000 plants each year to improve local biodiversity. Our plantings feature nine different vegetation classes ranging from redgum woodland to coast banksia woodland and three heathlands areas and grasslands. The park's two lakes and several ephemeral wetlands make it an attractive to birds. Our bird list now stands at over 150 species!



Enhancing wetland habitats

The Port of Melbourne Corporation is currently expanding Webb Dock (next to Westgate Park). When this work is complete, there will be a direct route from Sandridge beach via Todd Road to the park and the Yarra River on the south side of the Bridge. We've just constructed a new pedestrian and cycle link into the park which is yet to be connected to Todd Road.



We always welcome new members to our vibrant well-resourced group that offers plenty of opportunities to get your hands dirty. Contact Tony on 0400 770 254. <http://www.westgatepark.org/>

Victorian Landcare Council (VLC) was established in 2008 to represent volunteer landcare in Victoria, in pursuing a healthy and sustainable environment. The VLC is recognised as a peak "landcare organisation" by both federal and state agencies. Two VLC delegates represent Victoria on the National Landcare Network. The Council is made up of six landcare delegates selected by each of the 10 Catchment Management Authority regions in Victoria, 5 from the volunteer community and one to represent professional landcare staff. The 50 strong Council meets at least three times a year. Day to day activities are overseen by an elected Committee of Management of 12, which meets bimonthly.



Cathy McGowan accepts role of 'Landcare Champion'

The last financial year has been very busy for this volunteer organisation. We held regional forums/workshops in the Wimmera and North-east Victoria, and partnered with Australian Landcare International to set up an Overseas Landcare Fund for small projects.

We held six executive meetings, many at the convenient EcoCentre, and made submissions to federal and state governments on topics including Native Vegetation Clearance, Carbon Farming and future design and resourcing of natural resource management projects. We've recently obtained funding to support and mentor landcare groups and networks across the state.

Affiliates in action

Marine Care Ricketts Point: had another positive year in 2013-2014. Numbers attending the Saturday morning summer snorkel increased, and we extended the program to the end of March, to take advantage of good weather and keen interest. We also developed extensive website information about snorkelling in the Sanctuary.



Black Swan - living on the edge

Plastics coming from drains increasingly damage our marine and bird life! Based on member feedback, we established a monthly litter clean of the beach, in cooperation with Beach Patrol Australia. Community support has been tremendous, with good local media coverage. We received \$4,500 from Bayside Council to continue this work.



3193 Beach Patrol

Our Marine Education Centre continues to be well supported, including through targeted school programs funded by the EcoCentre's 'Yarra Plume' grants and delivered by Gould League.

Our web mistress, Yolanta, has done a fabulous job in updating our website, providing more information about the Sanctuary and our activities. This enables us to further increase community awareness about the Sanctuary and our guardianship role. In recognition of our success in community engagement, particularly through our annual Summer by the Sea program, Parks Victoria awarded us a Kookaburra Award.

Jewish Ecological Coalition (JECO) primarily focussed on low-key community events that connected environmentalism with Jewish festivals or provided an opportunity for involvement of the local Jewish community. We continued a series of film screenings / discussions at a synagogue, a Jewish community house and a Jewish library. We also made another donation of 'Jewish-environmentalism' books to the library.

JECO continued our liaison with the PPEC holding an event in Elsternwick Park on micro bats & their nestboxes, cigarette butt surveys and a beach litter audit / nurdle survey.



Mitzvah Day - here's looking at you!

We ran another bike skills course in conjunction with the City of Port Phillip and were involved in an Eat Less Meat fundraising dinner in conjunction with a number of multi-faith environment groups. In the coming year we are very interested in exploring opportunities for combined activities with other PPEC Affiliates.

Tom Osborn. President.

Affiliates in action



LIVE members look to the future - the sky's the limit!

Locals Into Victoria's Environment (LIVE) has continued its project to enable community members to own a share of a solar farm on the roof of the South Melbourne Market. We are currently resolving issues associated with complying with laws managed

by the Essential Services Commission (ESC) that govern the generation, distribution and retailing of electricity. We now have legal assistance to gain an exemption from the ESC. The project will be finalised by June 2015.



Some LIVE members are involved in a theatrical group called ClimActs. They perform "Climate Acts" at public events to spread the message about the consequences of climate change. In March 2014 they

officially opened the Lorne Sculpture Biennale 2014 with a performance called "Coal Requiem". Photos, and videos of their acts are at climacts.org.au



Two of LIVE's members spend half of the year in Colombia. They work with schools in Cartagena to grow trees from seedlings, plant them in schools, streets, and parks, and then look after them.

The program is proving very successful with 25 schools involved, local businesses, and the Education Department of the State of Bolivar. More information is at www.sonarmasverde.com

EcoCentre's Baykeeper program

The **BayCare Action and Awareness project** (funded through the Environment Protection Authority's Inspiring Environmental Solutions program) has created a forum to connect community groups, government agencies and researchers actively addressing pollution threats to waterways. This connection was encapsulated in the 'Baykeepers' film (by acclaimed US film-maker Michael Lutman) which has been well received in numerous school screenings and various other local settings, and won 'Best Short Documentary' at the Oceanside Film Festival in California!

The project also funded a part-time 'BayCare Volunteer Coordinator' role which effectively scaled up community action to care for our rivers and bay. Schools and community groups such as Beach Patrol Australia are now conducting audits of litter collected, rather than simply cleaning up and disposing of other peoples' litter. The Baycare Volunteer Coordinator role was highly successful in deploying volunteers to various projects including Earthcare Penguin Guiding and EcoCentre 'Nurdle' surveys on beaches and inland streams.



Yarra Riverkeeper Ian Penrose and manta-net

As a component of the '**Clean Bay Coalition**' project (in partnership with City of Port Phillip and Beach Patrol) funded through the State Government's 'Cleaner Yarra and Port Phillip Bay Litter Hotspots' program, we collaborated with Yarra Riverkeeper to conduct manta-net trawls to measure micro-plastics in the Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers. Using a manta-net (as used in international studies), 8 trawls were conducted in each river between December 2013 and May 2014.

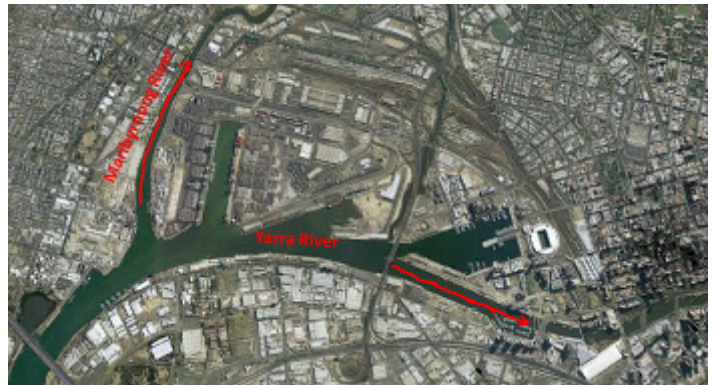
The purpose of the study was to:

- measure levels of micro-plastics entering Port Phillip Bay from either river;
- document common streams of micro-plastic pollution including 'nurdles', polystyrene beads and fragments of assorted user plastics; and to
- compare the pollution loads from both catchments to inform local strategies to address local sources of micro-plastics pollution.

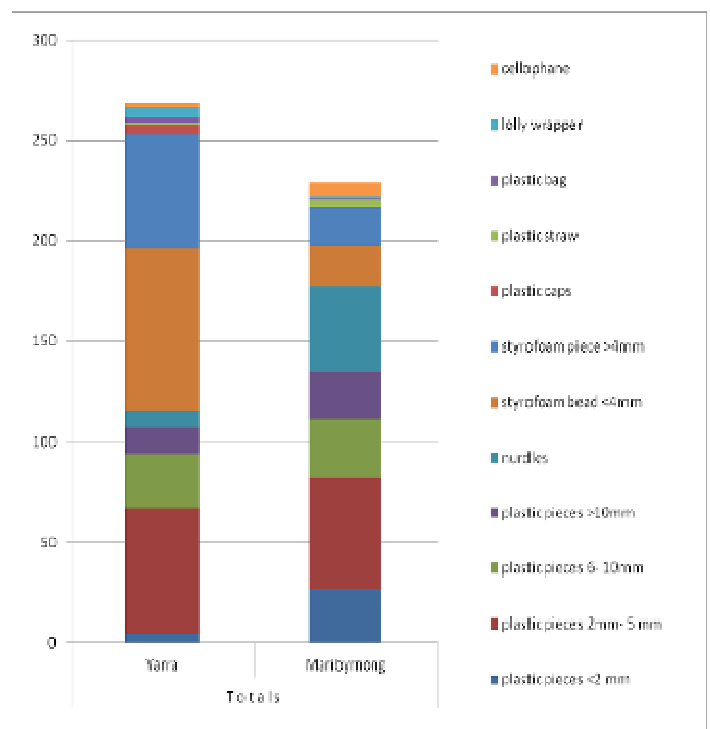
Eight X '30 minute' micro-plastics trawls were conducted in the Yarra and Maribyrnong between December 2013 and May 2014. Due to timing of the trawls not coinciding with rainfall or storm surge events the trawl samples represents background levels of micro-plastics in both rivers.

The total number of trawl sampled plastics recorded in the Yarra (268) and the Maribyrnong (229) approximates to 586,920 per year and 501,510 respectively.

The river trawls recorded pre-production pellets of plastic (nurdles) in both rivers; and weekly searches on north-eastern Port Phillip beaches regularly found significant numbers of nurdles, indicating there is an ongoing influx of nurdles into the Bay.



Locations of the river trawl transects



Detailed analysis of micro-plastics in the Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers

EcoCentre's Baykeeper program



Plastic pre-production pellets collected by BayCare volunteers

Hobsons Bay Cigarette Butt Litter Study

Hobsons Bay City Council commissioned EcoCentre to conduct cigarette butt collection/audits at 6 sites during the autumn /winter of 2014. The project was funded through the State Government's 'Cleaner Yarra and Port Phillip Bay Litter Hotspots' program. The 6 sites vary considerably in character and usage, including shopping strips and an associated car parks, residential dwellings, parks (formal and informal), beach and an industrial property frontage.



A bucket of butts collected in a single (1,000m) survey

Cigarette butts are the most common litter item in Australia. The purpose of the study was to identify and document 'hotspot' areas (where high numbers of butts are found consistently) to inform local strategies to reduce butt litter. The method was to collect and compile butt litter data across 6 sites and record correlation (if any) between hotspots and site usage and infrastructure. The sites were selected by Hobsons Bay City Council on the basis of being either important recreational or commercial sites, proximity to water, and/or due to being known as areas of concern in relation to butt litter.

The EcoCentre had pioneered street butt litter auditing in 2011, recording the number of butts collected in front of each property, including those found in or within a few metres of the street gutter. The methodology required to effectively audit butt litter in informal open space, formal parks, and urban industrial areas had not been done previously.



Pier Street & Altona foreshore

The survey methods and mapping designed for the Hobsons Bay project have proven to successfully identify hotspots and provide a basis for more detailed analysis of the correlation between butt numbers and street infrastructure. As well as identifying areas with high numbers of butts in streets the survey also shows other areas of similar usage that are relatively butt free. Investigation of local factors at play in these areas could prove instructive. The data provides a basis for liaison with traders / business premises where hotspots have been recorded, with a view to implementing proactive measures to reduce butt litter.



Commonwealth Reserve, Williamstown

Community engagement

New connections

For visitors and volunteers alike, the EcoCentre was a place where social wellbeing was visibly nurtured this year. We met a striking number of first-time visitors who were new to the area and keen to immerse themselves in neighbourhood life and create positive community connections. During opening times the EcoCentre proved to be a lively, natural beacon to curious newcomers, many of whom were young couples and travellers.

Some positive feedback from newcomers:

- “I’m excited to find this place. There’s nothing like this where I’ve come from”
- “Really? I can buy my own greens straight from the garden?” and
- “Looks like my little one will make lots of new friends here”.

Through our hospitality and recognisable public face as a community ‘hub’, we’ve been able to offer a unique social space in our vibrant neighbourhood. We organised and hosted over 90 public activities and several hundred people dropped in for practical advice on composting and worm farming; and to inspect our diverse organic waste facilities for inspiration and troubleshooting tips. There was also a notable amount of interest from visitors from the wider Melbourne’s thriving community garden scene. We made loads of referrals and provided information about other affiliate groups, with penguins, cooking and veganism enduring topics of interest.



Tony and Timna rock on!

Some favourite moments engaging the public were:

- Spontaneous music performances on many a Sunday by local duo Tony (on guitar) and Timna (on flute), as passers-by grabbed a cuppa under the native willow, extolling the joys of St Kilda;
- Adjudicating the ‘penguin mating call challenge’ and ‘nurdle counting challenge’ at our trivia fundraiser in February, held as part of the Sustainable Living Festival;

- Enabling parents to hold ‘eco-friendly’ birthday parties for their children at our centre and seeing them come up with their own innovative ideas of achieving a zero waste outcome.
- Implementing zero waste practices with festival-goers and stall holders at several large scale events. We also designed and successfully implemented a zero-waste policy for the annual Port Phillip Volunteer Expo. Our visitor officers and volunteer waste ambassadors were at the forefront of these public exchanges.



Backyard Garden Arts Play

Our visitor officers dubbed 2013-2014 EcoCentre’s ‘Year of the Child’, a moniker that came from the fresh and exuberant presence of young ‘sprouts’ in and around the EcoCentre every day, many for hours at a time. In an era where children need to be coaxed outdoors for more green time rather than screen time, to see so many children utterly at home and naturally engaged in the EcoCentre’s big backyard has been priceless.

Backyard Garden Arts Play sessions on offer every fortnight from spring to autumn gave a focus to kids’ creativity and outdoor exploring instincts. Children who participated in this volunteer-run and designed workshop were quick to uncover loads of natural treasures and use these as springboards for storytelling, puppet craft and even making animal motifs.

Some favourite moments engaging the kids were:

- Regular visitor, one-year-old Charles picked up a fruit peel, headed to our worm farms and announced: ‘Where worms?’
- Watching Joan the ‘lizard lady’ enchant a group of under-7s with lizard whispering and stories of how to tread gently and observantly in country where our fellow creatures roam.

Volunteer Power!

The EcoCentre would not be what it is today without our volunteers. With their dedication and hands-on contributions we make ideas become reality and get the work done: nearly 2300 volunteer hours were recorded, of which the two largest projects were organic gardening (45%) and plastic pollution research on nurdles (34%). This does not include the thousands of hours contributed by the management committee each year!

Apart from receiving volunteer help, the volunteer program is also our service to the community. It provides a space for people to connect in a social environment. We are proud to foster a culture of inclusiveness and therefore we have the pleasure of working with a varied bunch of people of all ages, nationalities, backgrounds and skills.

This year saw the creation of a Volunteer Coordinator position through the BayCare program, funded through the **Environment Protection Authority's Inspiring Environmental Solutions** program. This made it possible to streamline volunteer recruitment and management systems, start doing nurdle monitoring research, develop a corporate volunteer program and assist fellow environmental groups with operations, volunteer recruitment and promotion.

The results of the volunteer conducted nurdle research were published in the report *'Pilot Study of Micro-plastics in the Maribyrnong and Yarra Rivers and Port Phillip Bay'* in July 2014 and have added to the growing international voice calling for measures to reduce micro-plastics in waterways. Our project put nurdles more widely on the map of plastic pollution and generated interest from the media, which led to several publications, including the front page of the New York Epoch Times and the Leader newspaper chain.

Earthcare Penguin Guides

EcoCentre assisted affiliate group Earthcare St Kilda with the coordination of their penguin guides. Every year during the breeding season (the daylight saving period from October until April), teams of volunteer penguin guides man the boardwalk on the breakwater at the end of St Kilda pier. They answer questions from visitors about little penguins and educate the public about penguin life and habits, while protecting them from dogs, people, and flash photography (little penguins are sensitive to bright white light). With a total of 150 guides rostered, this service was provided every night of the week, including public holidays. Nearly 125,000 people visited the penguin colony last year. The EcoCentre was the central point for penguin guide training, communications, sign up, rostering and coordination.

Corporate Volunteering

This year saw the establishment of a corporate volunteer program in response to the emerging trend in business to give back to the community by means of allowing their staff to volunteer for a day. This has proved an excellent vehicle for community engagement and education, with the opportunity to reach people who spend most of their day in an office behind a desk. Several groups of corporate volunteers contributed to research on marine biodiversity and litter for the Port Phillip Baykeeper by doing shell safaris, nurdle surveys, live mollusc research and beach clean-ups. One group helped us build new nesting places for little penguins on the newly constructed part of the St Kilda breakwater. Participants left the beach with a deeper understanding of the ecology and natural history of Port Phillip Bay and a renewed interest in their local environment.



**Karen Maillard on student placement
conducting micro-plastics audit**

Nurdles and micro-plastics research

Our dedicated team of plastic pollution surveyors, schools and corporate volunteers collected nearly 40,000 nurdles from bay beaches, trialling different collection methods. Coordination of volunteers involved in nurdle surveys (conducted on a weekly basis since August 2013) was funded by the BayCare Action & Awareness project. The preliminary results led to EcoCentre publication 'Nurdle Soup' in October 2013.

Cultural Connections

Wominjeka ('Welcome') Garden

Over the course of a year, the EcoCentre's Garden Team set out on a mission to rejuvenate our local native front garden. This community-based project started by reaching out to community volunteers and Aboriginal organisations, as we chose to only use local indigenous plants that have a significant function in Aboriginal culture as bush food or other everyday uses. The first phase consisted of research, overall design layout of the garden and plant selection.



Garden coordinator Will organised an all day tour where the volunteers visited two established indigenous gardens for education and inspiration. The Monash University Indigenous Garden tour was guided by Sharee Harper and was followed by a visit to the Cranbourne Botanical Gardens. Volunteers were also invited to EcoCentre supporter Gill Upton's local backyard to see how beautiful a 'local native' garden can look.

Once we knew where we were going we could not wait to get our hands dirty. Indispensable volunteers Paul Muller and Stephen Hanna gave it all they had. The shovels came out and off we went weeding, mulching, landscaping and planting. Plants and plenty of good advice on placement and selection were provided by David Sparks from our affiliate organisation St Kilda Indigenous Nursery Cooperative (SKINC), Sharee 'World of Knowledge' Harper and our own director Neil Blake.

The result is a beautiful educational space representing the local landscape from Point Ormond to St Kilda hill, with 50 plant species, including bush tucker, medicinal plants and plants for tools, art and ceremony. A story-telling space with a fire pit and the addition of a raingarden make the whole place feel as welcoming as its name. The garden was festively opened with a community planting event, a bush tucker cooking session with Boon Wurrung Elder Carolyn Briggs and live music by Gunditjmarra songman-storyteller Dave Arden.

We were fortunate to receive funding from **Melbourne Water** to install a **raingarden** in our Wominjeka garden. After being filtered through local wetland plants the water flows to our underground tank. The installation includes artistic elements created by contemporary Indigenous Artist Steaphan Paton. These include a carved coolamon (which channels rainfall from the roof) and a stone tarnuk to receive water as it enters the garden.



Auntie Carolyn Briggs sharing bush tucker recipes



Red sandstone tarnuk carved by Steaphan Paton



Steaphan carving coolamon

Education for Sustainability - Schools & Community

The Education team's year was brimming with green time, partnership-building and lifting our voice as leaders in the Education for Sustainability sector. Our engagement now encompasses:

- Early Childhood to Secondary curriculum
- teacher professional development
- youth services and volunteer opportunities
- business consulting, and
- a diversity of community capacity building workshops.

We don't just build capacity, we activate leadership and forge symbiotic, rich networks across our local communities as neighbours, life-long learners and part of a shared ecosystem. The longstanding Port Phillip-Bayside Teachers' Environment Network (TEN) grew 20% in membership, signifying the value of good connections for schools at any point of their ResourceSmart Schools journey. Notable guest speakers to the TEN meetings on a variety of topics included Bayside Fauna, Bayside Environment Friends Network, St Kilda Indigenous Nursery Cooperative, Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation and South East Water.

Growing programs

Thousands of students and teachers from 54 schools visited the EcoCentre, local reserves and beaches to (re)experience the space through excursions or action for sustainability. Students conducted scientific research and planted indigenous seedlings with the help of Bayside Friends of Native Wildlife, Friends of Brighton Dunes, CityWide, Baykeeper, Friends of Westgate Park and Friends of Port Melbourne's Foreshore.



The garden Olympics - going for green!

"I loved... the connectedness to the curriculum, links to the local Aboriginal community, the resources and networking."



"The whole day was loved by the group and the kids had a super time. My particular class really enjoyed the hunting for native plants and the facts about the local native wildlife. The discussion from the day has continued at school for some time, with many kids getting inspiration for their writing from the excursion and things they did and saw."

Popular programmes such as **Tomorrow's Leaders for Sustainability** now require wait lists for schools keen to participate in our suite of leadership and local action programs supported by City of Port Phillip, Bayside City Council, Dept of Early Education & Childhood Development, Victorian Association of Environmental Education and Environmental Resource Management Foundation (ERM). The successful **ERM Audit & Action Leadership** workshops have helped secondary schools conduct rigorous and fun resource and habitat audits on campuses across southern metropolitan Melbourne.

Collaborating with Boon Wurrung Foundation, we facilitated highly-rated professional learning as well as excursions focusing on First Peoples' language, story, ceremony, bush tucker and Connection to Country.

Education for sustainability - schools and community

We hosted the 8th annual Sustainable Schools Festival as part of the 2013 Target Kids Teaching Kids Week. This buzzing, full-day event is supported by Port Phillip and Bayside Council but also attracted neighbouring schools from Stonnington, Monash and Melbourne! All 120 attendees marvelled (as is tradition) at the impressive student-led workshops, the inspiring Elwood Poetry Prize *AND* at the perfect timing of the departing rainclouds.

“The idea of having students do the teaching is very appealing. It really makes them focus much more on what is being taught and when they have to prepare for their teaching session, again they put in much more attention to the concepts covered.”

Stella Maris Primary were finalists in the UN World Environment Day Awards for piloting a student leadership program with Andrea that involved the EcoCentre, Bayside Friends of Native Wildlife, the Boon Wurrung Foundation and CityWide. The leaders visited Long Hollow Heathland, Balcombe Park and Rickett's Point Marine Sanctuary; and conducted a litter audit at the Balcombe Road shops. This program was co-funded by the school and Bayside Council.



Boon Wurrung Foundation cultural education

Other highlights included: facilitating St Kilda Primary School's inaugural Zero-Waste Fete, speaking to 900+ students at Mac.Robertson Girls' High School assembly for EnviroWeek, and bringing schools to Greening Australia workshops at Westgate Park.

Dynamic team

In early 2014, April was appointed Education Programs Team Manager and welcomed Jill, our dynamic troubleshooter, into the *Marketing & Corporate Relations* role. Jill's magical powers have given our website and public profile a much-needed makeover!

Check out the Education team's zany adventures on Instagram @ecocentrestkilda.



Bronnie (Ms Charisma) celebrated her first anniversary on the team by coordinating a group of school students to cycle through the Bayside and Port Phillip areas, engaging a local ornithologist to teach them about the history of birds in the region. The positive response and significant learning outcomes influenced Bronnie to pursue her Bike Ed qualification. She

has also made huge voluntary contribution towards establishing the Port Phillip Bicycle Users Group; and secured funding for a fleet of bikes for future bike tours from the EcoCentre. Other community engagement activities involved tree planting, trivia night, variety of workshops, building a raingarden and school holiday programs.

Peter Kelly, a former secondary science teacher and botanist, has come on board as a popular community and schools educator. Andrea and April each had articles published in the VAEE journal *Eingana* 'Celebration' issue and April taught the most recent cohort of ResourceSmart Schools facilitators for Victoria.

We also recognise the excellent and impactful work of casual superstar Amanda Knight, the Film Night curator team (100% volunteers), new team member on student placement Nadav Zisin, and volunteer queen "Unstoppable Annie" Strutt.

Expanding our community

With a growing commitment from Early Childhood Educators working to teach and model sustainability for ages 0-8, the Schools team built our kinder and Early Learning network and program options. Teachers from St Kilda and Balaclava Kindergarten attended the Aboriginal History and Culture whole day PD, and April presented at the October 2013 ResourceSmart Schools Early Childhood Pilot workshop. Other highlights included St Columba's students presenting *Worm School the Musical* at their prior kinders, PD on writing science-based songs at Bubup Nairn, and offering excursions.

Andrea recently facilitated our first excursion for 2 year olds! Children, parents & educators discovered invertebrates and sang about these invaluable creatures, all found in the EcoCentre garden. She has met with 17 out of 30 principals in Bayside schools to learn about

Education for sustainability - schools and community

their school and tell them about sustainability opportunities offered by Bayside Council and the EcoCentre. This has led to better engagement by Bayside Schools in TEN meetings, EcoCentre events and increased expressions of interest to participate in the Tomorrow's Leaders for Sustainability program funded by Bayside Council.



**Talking local native plants at
St Kilda Indigenous Nursery Cooperative**

Our research on education, behaviour change and 'time in nature' for teachers and young people found evidence that young people benefit greatly from spending time in natural landscapes. To facilitate out-of-school opportunities we're collaborating with Awards Vic for Duke of Edinburgh candidates; as well as youth, health and wellbeing organizations in the south metropolitan region such as St Kilda Police Citizens Youth Club, Southport Uniting Care and adventure playgrounds.

We were privileged to partner with a number of specialist schools who have made sustainability commitments this year, including Victorian College for the Deaf (VCD), Berendale, Port Phillip Specialist School, Ashwood School and Montague Continuing Education Centre (MCEC). We're very proud of the students and love the experiential approach the schools take.

Both VCD and Ashwood led interactive and super-engaging mainstage presentations at the 2013 Sustainable Schools Festival. Port Phillip Specialist School contributed to Baykeeper nurdle research. MCEC's *Tomorrow's Leaders for Sustainability* class was a finalist in the Keep Australia Beautiful Victoria 2014 Awards.

Community Education

EcoCentre Members are now treated to impressive discounts on our exciting workshop programs, from organic container gardening and St Kilda Botanic garden walks, to shell surveys and nestbox building. 2013 marked our third - and most successful year yet - participating in the City of Port Phillip Seniors Week Festival. Film Nights also continue to inspire!

Supporting sustainable business

In partnership with Moreland Energy Foundation Ltd (MEFL) and assisted by Port Phillip Counsellor Bernadine Voss, our team conducted energy audits of 135 businesses on Bay Street Port Melbourne, assessing potential cost and energy savings with upgrades to LEDs. 65 business owners were keen to invest in upgrades for this double return on investment. A fantastic result!



Elwood Community Bank Branch generously supported biodiversity programs such as Wildlife Sketching with Myke Mollard, nestbox building with our Youth Wildlife Ambassador Gio Fitzpatrick, and family walks along Elwood Canal and green corridors. Our two inaugural *Kids In Nature Week* programs attracted large crowds of first-time EcoCentre program participants. And Paula's *Garden Harvest* workshops proved favourite, particularly for Kingston Council who booked seven visits!

Looking ahead

Subscribe to our TEN newsletter and renew your EcoCentre membership so you don't miss our exciting year of programs ahead; we've polished our pens and are working on a number of partnerships to connect the community with our planet. Hope to see you along for the ride (or walk, or snorkel)!

Education for sustainability - schools and community

Our energetic Educators getting some 'green time'

Port Phillip Urban Fresh Food Network (PPUFFN) funding from City of Port Phillip enabled us to create a **'Pop-in' garden installation kit** as we designed and installed a 'small spaces' garden at Port Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre. The aim was to develop an attractive, low cost, modular garden that could adapt to any space. Soil used was a blend of commercially available soil enriched by EcoCentre compost.

We contributed to the **Food Alliance Urban Agriculture Working Group** (convened by Deakin University). Jill and Neil attended 6 half-day workshops conducted by Food Alliance to develop the Draft Urban and Regional Food Charter. The Draft Charter was made available for wider community input in June 2014. We conducted a workshop for local people to learn about the Food Charter and document local progress towards the vision and principles espoused in the Charter.

We coordinated a **Port Phillip community gardens tour** in which 28 people visited 5 local community gardens to hear presentations at each garden. PPUFFN funding also assisted the launch of 'Wominjeka' Garden and the bush tucker cooking workshop (described on page 14).



Will at work on 'pop-in' small spaces garden

Youth engagement: Ker-Up-Non program

Kerr-Up-Non was developed and delivered by Jill Robinson and Mornington Peninsula Youth Services (MPYS) and engaged EcoCentre facilitators Neil Blake, Bronnie Walsh and Dean Bird. The program enabled students to connect with their local community and youth networks, and explore volunteer and future career opportunities.

External expertise included Boon Wurrung Foundation, Coastcare and Balcombe Creek Estuaries Group. The students decided to host a community event which took the shape of a stall at the Mornington Main Street Market, where they engaged the community in marine education.



Mornington youth explore the coast

Based on evaluations, students absorbed and understood a cross-section of content, expressed increased interest in connecting with their community and learnt to work with their non-peers. The EcoCentre now has a template for future programs and successfully trialled new delivery methods for some key activities.

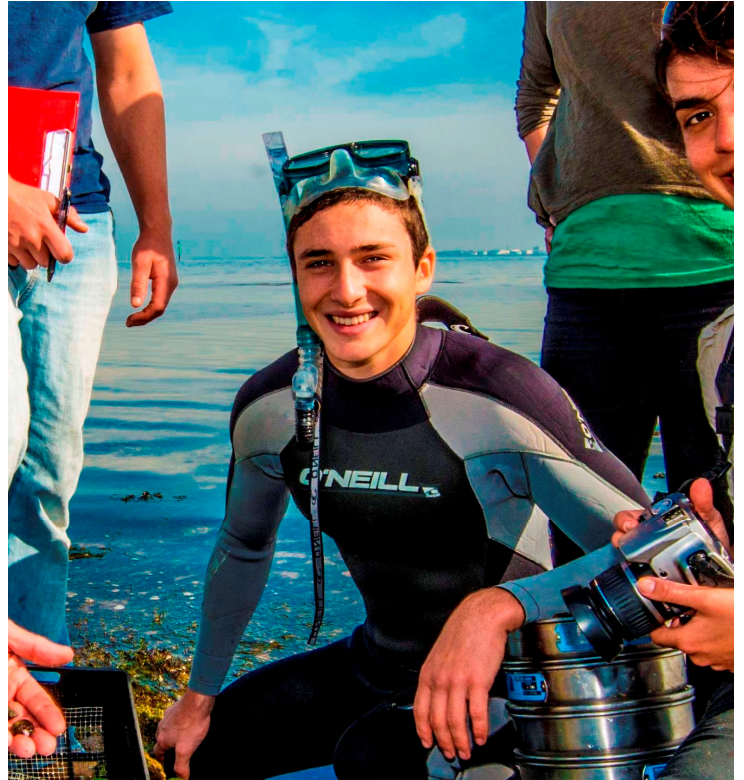
Witnessing the participants' transition proved incredibly rewarding and provides evidence of the potential impact of programs of this nature, as well as continuing to build the reputation of the EcoCentre on the Mornington Peninsula.

Our remarkable Youth Wildlife Ambassador

Gio Fitzpatrick (our Youth Wildlife Ambassador currently in year 12 at Wesley College) has enjoyed and studied nature since he began to walk and talk. His knowledge of flora and fauna is equal to that of many people working in wildlife conservation field. At age 11 Gio realised loss of breeding habitat was key to the local survival of wildlife species. He learnt all he could about nest-boxes and was soon designing, building, installing and monitoring homes for individual species.

Gio has a natural ability to explain simply how animals live, the threats they face, and what ordinary people can do about it. Over the past 4 years in his EcoCentre role he's delivered numerous talks and workshops to school classes and family groups and drawn praise from all ages. So it's only natural we want Gio to pursue his passion and continue to inspire other young people to celebrate and care about nature.

Gio's legendary powers of observation were confirmed when he spotted and photographed a marine spider in the inter-tidal zone at Point Ormond. This must be the find of the century as this *Desis sp.* had been recorded once before in Victoria, and never in Port Phillip Bay.



Gio in his natural habitat—what will he find next?



The *Desis* spider photographed by Gio Elwood - the only previous Victorian record being at San Remo in 1902.

Our best friends

We take great pride in our ongoing collaborations with **Boon Wurrung Foundation** and pleased that **Aunty Carolyn Briggs** regularly drops in for a cuppa and chat to plan mutually beneficial activities.

We thank our members, affiliated groups and volunteers who understand that their contribution is a tangible statement of support towards a shared future. We're based in one of the most popular visitor destinations in Australia, which presents the broad range of environmental challenges



We're delighted when staff or Councillors from **City of Port Phillip** (our landlord and major sponsor) call in and collaborate.

As EcoCentre approaches its 15th birthday it is fitting to acknowledge the longterm support from the **City of Port Phillip** (CoPP) for their continued annual funding which maintains our basic operations. CoPP took the innovative step of establishing a community-based hub to showcase and support local sustainability initiatives in 1999. The strategy of initiating and supporting a strong community-based partner with a regional (as opposed to strictly local) scope of operations has successfully attracted additional partners and funding from other sources. In addition to the obvious wins for our living environment, this extra 'external' funding has achieved significant benefits for Port Phillip residents and traders and our affiliated organisations.

Apart from annually providing a grant to meet the EcoCentre's administration and infrastructure maintenance costs CoPP has also contributed to projects such as the 'EcoHouse' redevelopment to showcase sustainable building design and technologies, and a host of other smaller projects that enable us to engage residents in various aspects of sustainability. In the past year CoPP has also provided a new storage shed to accommodate our growing needs.

Along with CoPP, we are grateful to the following sponsors for substantial funding that enables us to deliver quality activities to schools and community in 2013-14:

- **Bayside City Council**
- **Bendigo Bank (Elwood Branch)**
- **Environmental Resource Management**
- **Melbourne Water.**

In 2013-14 our Employment sub-committee comprised of executive committee members: Pam, Tony and Keith with our Director, undertook the complex process of planning and implementing an organisational restructure. This required careful examination of human resource and governance issues and took practically a whole year to complete. Ultimately, we succeeded in establishing a more effective, self-sustaining operational team. As the process developed we appreciated the opportunity to draw upon business mentorship support through the **Toyota Community Spirit program** for feedback on our progress.

Over the past year we placed a greater focus on providing opportunities for more corporate groups to contribute to our ongoing efforts to enhance and protect our living, natural environment.

In the coming year we hope to engage more of those corporate groups that are interested in combining educational and entertaining team-building opportunities with practical environmental research and protection.

Possible future projects designed and delivered by the EcoCentre include:

- constructing nesting platforms for penguins;
- developing and maintaining outdoor classrooms;
- litter collection and audits; and
- snorkelling to conduct seastar and mollusc population surveys.



EcoCentre people

Management Committee

Pam O'Neil - President
Lis Fenwick - Vice-President
Tony Flude - Secretary
Keith Badger - Treasurer
Steve Pennells
Mark Karki
Ann Callaghan
Louise Kyle

EcoCentre Public Fund Managers

Kay McKenzie
Louise Kyle
Michele Hodes

Staff

Amanda Knight - Sessional Educator
Andrea Eales - Schools' Educator
April Seymore - Schools' Educator
- Education Program Manager
Bronnie Walsh - Schools & Community Educator
David Giles - IT Communications

Staff (cont.)

Fiona Second - Accounts
Fam Charko - Community Engagement Manager
- Volunteer Coordinator
Gio Fitzpatrick - Youth Wildlife Ambassador
Jill Robinson - Marketing & Corporate Relations
Neil Blake - Director
Paula Havelberg - Visitor Engagement
Peter Kelly - Schools & Community Educator
Will Pullin - Garden Coordinator

Key volunteers

Annie Strutt - Schools' team
Elisabetta Franchi - Nurdle research
Emma McGlashan - Nurdle research
Dane Morrisy - 'Monster Composter' development
Katherine Evans - Film Night coordinator
Natalie Vassilaka - Multi-talented Legend
Paul Muller - Backyard Garden Arts Play
Quentin Doherty - Garden team
Steve Hanna - Human bobcat
Therese Forsgren - Backyard Garden Arts Play

Affiliate Groups 2013 - 2014

Animal Liberation Victoria (ALV)
Australian Landcare International
Christ Church St Kilda
Earthcare St Kilda Inc
Earthsong
Elwood Flood Action Group
Friends of St Kilda Botanical Gardens
Friends of Port Melbourne's Foreshore
Friends of Westgate Park
Jewish Ecological Cooperative Inc.
Locals Into Victoria's Environment (LIVE)

Marine Care Ricketts Point Inc
Mary and Basil Organic Community Garden
Oases Community Learning Ltd
Port Phillip Citizens for Reconciliation
Port Phillip Community Group Ltd
South Port Uniting Care
St Kilda Community Gardens Club
St Kilda Indigenous Nursery Cooperative
Transition Port Phillip
Veg Out Community Gardens Inc.
Victorian Landcare Council



Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc.

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