



Annual Report **2014-2015**



## 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



EcoCentre Committee of Management and Neil Blake.  
Left to right: Steve Pennells, Neil Blake, Pam O'Neil, Tony Flude,  
Dr Lis Fenwick, Geoff Love, Dane Coleman, Louise Kyle.  
Not pictured: Anne Callaghan, Keith Badger and Mark Karki



# Letter from the President

For the EcoCentre 2014-15, our 15th year of operation, was a year of significant achievement, change and development.

As well as a number of other notable awards we were thrilled to receive the prestigious Premier's Sustainability Award 2014 for our *Life Support for the Bay* campaign. This is the top award from the Premier of Victoria from all entrants in all categories for sustainability work across Victoria.

It is fantastic to be celebrated and recognised by such awards for our achievements. In particular, it is great to realise that the community-focussed nature of our work and our small organisation is appreciated and recognised as a model that achieves significant outcomes for the environment and for the development of sustainable practices. Communities of people and organisations can make a big difference by working together. Through investigating, learning, teaching, growing, sharing, inspiring, advocating and working in the local environment, small efforts can lead to massive change towards a more sustainable world.

A vital way in which we maximise our impact for the benefit of the environment is to work with others through our affiliates, networks and partnerships.

We work with over 22 affiliate environmentally-focussed organisations, most of whom are local to our region. One example is where we teamed with an affiliate, Friends of Westgate Park (FoWP) who have transformed a former landfill site under the Westgate Bridge into a beautiful 40 hectare indigenous-planted park. With FoWP we jointly conducted programs for schools and corporate volunteers and have administered their human resources matters.

During the past year we worked with 81 Schools and 5 Early Learning Centres including almost 400 teachers and 2000 students on delivering and developing programs and inspiring students, teachers and parents. To celebrate the schools' achievements we conducted the annual *Sustainable Schools Festival* where school students run workshops for other students and where schools are awarded for their efforts towards the development of a more sustainable world.

There are many networks in which we participate or which we manage. The Teachers' Environment Network which operates on both a face to face and a digital model is managed by the EcoCentre and has over

29 participating schools and 148 teachers. This is an invaluable way for teachers to gain professional development and to share ideas and support about their environmental programs.

There are many community organisations with whom we partner in the delivery of programs and projects. We are privileged to have a special close relationship with the Boon Wurrung Foundation that represents the traditional people and custodians of the lands where we are situated. Arweet Carolyn Briggs and others have helped us to understand the ways the Boon wurrung people used and protected the land, plants, animals and Port Phillip Bay (Nairn) before Europeans came, and to integrate these learnings into our work and teaching.

We are most grateful to our major partner the City of Port Phillip (CoPP). The City owns the EcoCentre building and has begun the process of its much-needed redevelopment by investigating design concepts and then providing project funds for the development of a business case and detailed drawings. As well CoPP has supported us through an annual administration grant and project funds for a range of activities. We are most grateful for the support and friendship of our Councillors, in particular Serge Thomann and Jane Touzeau, and of supportive Council officers. It is great to work with a Council and staff who are truly committed to improving sustainability and who appreciate our work.

We are truly indebted to a number of other important partners who support us financially and encourage us in many other ways. These include Bayside City Council, the Environmental Resources Management Foundation, the Victorian Department of Education and Training, and the Metro Waste and Resource Recovery Group. We welcome too the support from new partners; the Lord Mayors' Charitable Foundation, the City of Monash, Landcare Australia, the Victorian Department of Environment, Land and Planning and the City of Hobsons Bay.

There are many other people, including our members and organisations that support and help us by providing donations and other funding. We are most grateful to you all.

The past year has been one of change for the EcoCentre as our founder and Director of 15 years Neil Blake in June 2015 moved to a position of Baykeeper Program Manager and we appointed a new Executive Officer April Seymore, who had been the excellent Education Manager.



On behalf of the Committee and staff I would like to sincerely thank Neil for his outstanding work as Director over the past 15 years. His achievements are numerous and too many to note here. However I would like to highlight his role and skills as an inspirational environmental leader and as promoter of community involvement and local solutions.

Neil has developed, gained funding for and often conducted numerous innovative programs and projects over the past 15 years. Most of them involve working in partnership with other organisations and always with local community members. A good example of this is Neil's role as Baykeeper and the projects that have been conducted in that capacity. In the past year these have included: Litter Hotspots: Turn off the Tap (including monthly litter trawls on Maribyrnong and Yarra Rivers), the Baycare project via the Victorian Environmental Protection Authority Inspiring Community Solutions project, Friends of Williamstown Wetlands litter research, Hobsons Bay City Council cigarette butt report, Coastcare Summer By the Sea program, the Baykeeper Catchment Education project, and screenings and citizen science around the award winning film *Baykeepers*.

Neil's work continues to involve and support others including staff and volunteers of the EcoCentre and other organisations with whom we partner. But mostly Neil has contributed immeasurably to protecting the local environment and to the development of a more sustainable future through his own work but especially through teaching and inspiring thousands of others.

I would also like to thank the other members of our fantastic team of very skilled, committed and hard-working staff. So much has been achieved because of their dedication, expertise and commitment to community. We also have been supported by a group of dedicated generous volunteers who regularly give their time, skills and knowledge to work in a range of capacities. Special thanks go to the garden volunteers who have maintained and developed the gardens at the EcoCentre and the St Kilda Sea Baths.

Although I am writing this on behalf of the Committee of Management I wish to thank and commend the individual members of the Committee and of the



trustees of the Public Fund for their exemplary work. I especially would like to thank Kay McKenzie who retired this year after 15 years of volunteering with us as the first President, and later as an honorary Manager of the Port Phillip EcoCentre Public Fund which she was instrumental in establishing. Kay has made a huge contribution to the EcoCentre becoming a viable and valued community-managed organisation.

The committee members and Public Fund Trustees are another reason that the EcoCentre is so well regarded and successful in what it achieves. Thanks to their work, the organisation is very well governed, financially stable and strategic. The new Strategic Plan 2015 – 2018 which sets our directions for the next 3 years is evidence of this.

So to all, congratulations on our great work in 2014-15 and in setting the framework for the future by participating in the development of the new Strategic Plan.

Pam O'Neil  
*President*



# 1. Engaging and empowering the community

## Carbon Cut

The City of Port Phillip is committed to help residents and businesses reduce their carbon footprint by 50% from 2006 levels and water use by 50% from 2001 levels by 2020. To assist with this, they contracted the EcoCentre to deliver the last leg of their Carbon Cut 1000 program, whereby low-income earning residents could sign up for a free energy and water retrofit of their homes. Trained EcoCentre retrofitters visited the last 67 households to fulfil the target of 1000 retrofitted homes. Householders were able to choose which energy and water savers were installed, like compact fluorescent light globes (CFLs), water saving showerheads, window insulation strips, anti-draft strips for under the door, reflective window foil that reflects 97% of radiant summer heat and other products.

Over  
**137**  
tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>/year  
saved

**200<sup>m</sup>**  
of draft strips  
installed

Over  
**1000**  
KL/year of water  
saved

**224**  
CFLs  
installed

The EcoCentre's  
Carbon Cut project

***"I am a retired pensioner.  
On 23rd August Ms Charko and  
David attended my property in  
relation to the installation of energy  
saving products . Amongst other  
enhancements , the replacement of  
the shower head has already made a  
considerable positive difference."***

- Carbon Cut participant

***"Carbon Cut people, Bronnie  
and Dave, came today  
and we are delighted with  
replacements, advice, etc.  
Many thanks to all involved."***

- Carbon Cut participant

## Film nights

The EcoCentre hosted 6 film nights this year, including one in partnership with the City of Port Phillip. 'A Modern Build' is a documentary about the building of a sustainable house in Tasmania, followed by a Q&A with director Alex Palmer. Guests were very engaged and asked many questions, especially the people who had an interest in building their own sustainable house.

As usual, our film nights were facilitated by our team of film volunteers, without whom screenings would not be possible. The film team chooses the films, runs the cinema, provides coffee and tea and make the guests feel welcome.



## Well Waters

With the support of the Victorian government, we have piloted **Well Waters**. Well Waters has allowed homeowners, schools and community groups to earn up to 100% rebates on new water-harvesting systems, or even to “activate” existing tanks by connecting them to flush their toilets. Rebates can be earned by volunteering with community action groups who keep the Elster catchment healthy.

Well Waters takes a whole-of-watercycle management approach by reducing the flow of stormwater (using tanks), cleaning the water that does flow into the creek (using raingardens), removing rubbish from the waterways and monitoring key indicators (through community volunteer events).

A calendar of **Well Waters Workbees** help the Creek and allow community members to earn \$25 credit per volunteer hour. These credits are then “donated” to a local participating household, school or business for a Well Waters rebate on eligible rain tank installations. Public Well Waters Workbees were hosted by **Beach Patrol 3184**, **Friends of Elster Creek**, EcoCentre, and the **Port Phillip Bicycle User Group**. Groups such as **National Australia Bank** and **Gardenvale Primary School** worked with the EcoCentre to earn credits through custom-tailored workbees for corporate volunteers and the 604 students, respectively.

Gardenvale Primary School was able to earn \$16,250 in rebate credits by conducting a “Drains to the Bay” Emu Bob and maths activity with the whole school. It was a great project that took hundreds of kilos of rubbish out of the waterways, installed new tanks, connected community, and achieved curriculum outcomes. Sustainability Coordinator Tim McCrae reported, “Students have covered (twice) the area between Nepean Hwy, North Road and Hawthorn Rd plus a further 20 whole streets north of North Rd and East of Hawthorn Rd.”

Schools or individuals who earn surplus credits are able to “pay it forward” to other schools, homeowners or groups who still need credits. This project is ongoing through November 2015 – check out [www.wellwatersworkbees.com](http://www.wellwatersworkbees.com).

***“This project has been amazing, while earning credits I have learned so much about the Elster Creek catchment and biodiversity, working with community groups I never knew before.”***

– Well Waters Workbee participant



Jan-June 2015

***“The Caulfield Primary School Committee is still wondering how this managed to happen at no cost to the school, and I keep saying ‘through the magic of the EcoCentre’.”***

– CPS Green team

## Elwood Poetry Prize

The sixth annual Elwood Poetry Prize 2014 attracted the talents of local poets of all ages, including over 200 students. The EcoCentre organises this popular competition in collaboration with Cr Jane Touzeau. The theme for 2014 was *Earth*, evoking many emotive poetic contributions from local writers.

Student prizes were presented at the Sustainable School Festival on Thursday 11th September at the City of Port Phillip Town Hall.

Community prizes were announced at an afternoon poetry reading and light afternoon tea at the EcoCentre on Sunday 14th September.

### WINNERS

Best Primary haiku.	Robin Findlay-Marks
Best Primary illustrated.	Yuki Phromphan
Best Primary group.	Tess Jenkins and Annabelle Butman
Best Primary poem.	Jack Rankin
Best Primary env't issue.	Oscar Ross-Lawson
Best Secondary haiku.	Willow Allen EC
Best Secondary poem.	Vanessa Charles. EC
Best Secondary env't issue.	Maggie Kontev. Yr 8.
Best haiku	Danny Libson
Best limerick.	Brenda Richards
Best illustrated.	Mary Grace Levakis
Best poem.	Allan Lake



## Litter Hotspots

After funding the EcoCentre's **Litter Hotspots** pilot project in 2014, the Victorian Government awarded the EcoCentre a project grant for the new project **Turn off the Tap**. This 2.5 year project concentrates on building new partnerships and combines litter research in our waterways with education in schools and the community. Turn off the Tap:

- Supports **Beach Patrol Australia**, the **Friends of Westgate Park** and **Upper Yarra Landcare** in collecting baseline litter data in known hotspots near the Bay and in the Yarra catchment.
- Conducts monthly micro-plastics trawls of the Yarra and Maribyrnong with the **Yarra Riverkeeper**.
- Travels to schools in the catchment to show *Baykeepers* and teaches students about the connectivity of our waterways. It stimulates the students to think about how to use less plastic in their lives ('If you don't use it, you can't lose it').
- Supports the **Tangaroa Blue Foundation** with nurdle survey data, so they can work with the Victorian plastics industry to prevent the loss of nurdles in the environment.

The project has already been featured in 2 magazines, on the radio and in a new environmental documentary *A Drop in the Ocean*. The EcoCentre's involvement in the Litter Hotspots program has also led to an invitation to provide a community voice in the reference group of the **Victorian Litter Action Alliance**.

*"I had the best time giving back to the bay and learning about the ecosystem and how the issues of man-made pollution have, and are, affecting the coastline and wildlife. It was really great to meet new people in the company that I recognised from walking around the office but have never dealt with. Being a surfer and avid ocean lover, I found the day to be a great overall experience and majorly fulfilling, not just a bit of time to get out of the office! The two ladies running the day were really friendly and full of information. They could answer any question I had regarding the coastline."*

Luke, Field Sales Representative

1,248  
Volunteer hours

47  
nurdle surveys

43 litter  
audits  
performed in  
6 months

1,451  
Volunteer hours

221  
Volunteers

## Corporate Volunteering

If last year saw the birth of the corporate volunteer program, this year was spent growing it into a full pillar of support for the EcoCentre. Many corporate organisations, large and small, are taking steps to become more active in their local community by engaging in corporate social responsibility and employee volunteering. This means that they pay their employees for 1 to 2 days a year to volunteer their services in the community.

Our largest client this year was **National Australia Bank**, who helped us with penguin habitat improvements on the St Kilda Breakwater, Baykeeper monitoring of biodiversity in the Bay and earning water tank credits for local schools by volunteering for Well Waters. One of our very first clients, **Treasury Wine Estates**, also booked with us again for their company-wide, national volunteer week in May. 71 of their employees helped us with marine research, litter audits and planting as part of a collaborative project with the Friends of Westgate Park. We particularly enjoyed having our partners **City of Port Phillip ASSIST** and the **Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation** spending volunteer days with us, to show them what we do and how we work for the environment in practical ways.

Exciting times are ahead, as we have partnered with charity support organisation GoodCompany and will be expanding the program even further with their help in the coming year.



## 2. Demonstrating best practice – facilities and resources

### Community Gardens

When 'Smiley' **Will Pullin** returned to his hometown of Newcastle in December 2014 we were fortunate to have **Deb Punton** take up the role of Garden Volunteers Coordinator. Although Will is no longer with us the garden is smiling! Under Deb's dedicated and empathic leadership the garden team are a cheerful, well-organised and motivated crew who offer mutual support and good company every Friday. Friendly yarns and laughter are the order of the day as they nurture the plants, turn the community compost, and cook delicious team lunches from the garden.

Even through winter, notorious for low volunteer numbers, they've consistently kept the EcoCentre grounds looking fantastic. This includes the **Wominjeka Garden**, which is now thriving with local bush tucker plants under the expert eye of Gill Upton. Several times per month, the team also maintains the indigenous gardens and the **St Kilda Sea Baths**, doing a fabulous job of taking the positive gardening message to the people.

The EcoCentre now supports our community's food security by offering in-season heirloom seedlings for a donation and **Slow Gardening** on the last Sunday of the month. Slow Gardening is an opportunity for community members to meet the garden team, try their hand at gardening, ask questions and learn skills in a relaxed Sunday setting.

The seedlings cannot seem to grow fast enough, as people frequent the 24/7 seedling stall every day to purchase some for their own gardens, pots and balconies. Our new propagation expert **Eva Marks**, who also volunteers at Poet's Garden, can be found tending the hot house almost daily, growing all sorts of herbs and veggies.







## Port Phillip Urban Fresh Food Network (PPUFFN)

The City of Port Phillip's **PPUFFN** program empowers community action to create a city and region with the smallest possible ecological footprint. EcoCentre has been commissioned by CoPP to deliver PPUFFN since its inception in 2009 with the primary goal of providing opportunities to improved access and affordability of fresh food.

In 2014-15 we enjoyed a fruitful partnership with **Port Phillip Housing Association (PPHA)** staff and tenants. After initial site assessments and discussion with tenants at 5 properties:

- We conducted a series of workshops with tenants to establish a shared approach to maintaining communal vegetable gardens at PPHA properties
- PPHA tenants visited the EcoCentre's shared gardens and met our garden team
- Working with tenants, we installed 'wicking' garden beds at 4 properties and provided ongoing garden advice.

The 2014-15 PPUFFN program enabled low income residents to engage in shared gardening where they live, promoting social connections, healthy eating and general wellbeing. The new gardens in different properties will enable tenants to grow their knowledge and demonstrate interest in extending the area of their garden.

We look forward to ongoing engagement with the PPHA gardeners in 2015-16 to share the enjoyment of chemical-free fresh food grown with friends, that doesn't come wrapped in plastic!

## Capacity Building Project

The **Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation** has provided resources for a two year Capacity Building Project at the EcoCentre. The project which commenced in August 2014 is intended to improve the resilience and capacity of the EcoCentre and to ensure its sustainable future through succession planning and staff development.

In particular it aims to assist the organisation to:

- achieve a smooth transition and full continuation of the organisation after the retirement of the founding Director
- provide skills and career development of team members in managerial roles
- enhance the financial management skills of team leaders
- improve its knowledge management and operational systems
- continue our service to the community and the environment, supporting long-term social change
- have a greater capacity for delivering our mission and strategic plan.

It is a timely project, as the Director of the past 15 years has chosen to move to an operational role and through this project the new Executive Officer and other staff are able to receive training and support to undertake their roles. Through the project the financial, human resources and knowledge management systems are being reviewed, redeveloped and documented.

**Anne Garrow** is working with staff as a consultant to the project and at this stage, half way through the time period of the project, many of the performance measures have been met. We are most appreciative of the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation for this opportune and innovative support.



### 3. Educating for sustainability

Our energetic Schools and Early Learning team enjoyed another year building strong collaborations with teachers, mentoring student leaders and action-planning with parents at local schools, as well as expanding our Early Learning programs.

The education team has now facilitated more than sixty **Tomorrow's Leaders for Sustainability (TLfS)** programs with students in Port Phillip and Bayside schools. TLfS involves weekly workshops with a class or leadership team, who learn principles of sustainability and leadership skills, explore local ecology, and develop student-led practical projects. This year students projects included a frog bog, Nude Food, ethical shopping campaigns, Clean Up Australia Day, Ride2School Day, soil testing, litter and biodiversity surveys, and becoming Zero Waste Fete ambassadors.

Schools receive a full Bayside or City of Port Phillip scholarship for their initial participation in Tomorrow's Leaders for Sustainability. Based on the incredible outcomes, schools are increasingly choosing to budget for repeating TLfS as an integrated curriculum unit or leadership program. More than half of our schools on scholarship in 2014-15 paid for a second class to participate in order to accommodate growing youth populations. Projections for City of Port Phillip see the cohort of youth age 12-17 increasing by 48% in the next two decades and our programs, teaching methods and facilities must adjust to support this trend. We are lucky to collaborate closely with TLfS founders Pat Armstrong and Jane Stewart as this thriving program develops and changes.

Andrea and April continued successful facilitation of the **ResourceSmart Schools** framework in 12 schools. We work in close collaboration with our friends at **CERES**, who coordinate the Southern Metro region for this Victorian accreditation framework that guides schools to become 5-Star Sustainable.

We concluded our nine-year partnership with the Victorian Department of Education and Training as co-funders to run our **Teachers' Environment Network (TEN)**, but as we transitioned to a locally-funded professional development network we saw growth in both attendance of all eight meetings and digital subscriptions, growing to incorporate 148 teachers. One new member wrote, "The guest speakers were really great. I appreciated the opportunity to pick the brains of other teachers at other schools as it was the first TEN meeting I had been involved in." Beyond our own network, April was invited to present at Kingston and Frankston TEN meetings, where she was inspired by the diversity of school initiatives.

**Sessions With Elders** supports educational programs for students and teachers in City of Port Phillip to engage with Boon Wurrung elders and cultural educators to increase Indigenous cultural awareness. This

year, five Boon Wurrung Foundation educators worked with us to lead a smoking ceremony, storytelling, bush tucker and weaving workshops, and cultural walks. The programs engaged 335 students as well as 27 teachers and parents.

With the support of Environmental Resource Management (ERM) Foundation, we ran our **Environmental Audit Training: Green My School** workshops to train student leaders to measure a school's water, waste, energy footprints and habitat quality. ERM provided a guest speaker for each workshop, and helped us adapt an additional program for a keen primary school. Green My School successfully de-mystified rigorous data gathering methods for school leadership groups, and motivated several students toward related career pathways. Following our highly successful integration of specialist student participants in 2013 (and reflecting participant feedback) April, Andrea and Bronnie continued to expand the visual and interactive nature of the workshops. One student wrote, "I loved being outside, learning by interacting and getting involved. I loved learning about professions in ecology."

Enthusiastic students, teachers and parents representing 14 schools celebrated leadership and action for sustainable communities – and the sunshine held strong – for our 9<sup>th</sup> annual **Sustainable Schools Festival**. Students led workshops on eight topics, following the Kids Teaching Kids model of interactive peer learning. We thank **Bayside, Port Phillip, Kids Teaching Kids, Elwood Community Bank Branch** and our many community businesses for supporting this heartwarming event. The lively Festival was opened by City of Port Phillip **Mayor Amanda Stevens** and attended by **Cr Bernadene Voss**, as well as **Cr Jane Touzeau** who presented the Elwood Poetry Prize for poems themed "Earth." **Bayside Mayor Laurence Evans** opened the Awards ceremony and attended several Kids Teaching Kids workshops, engaging students in passionate conversation about biodiversity.

Expanding our **Early Childhood** offerings, we hosted our first pre-school excursion for 2-year-olds and a St Kilda Botanic Gardens exploration with forty (!) 4-year-olds from Treehouse Early Learning. April presented at the ResourceSmart Early Years professional development session hosted by

***"The Sustainable Schools Fest  
Helps inspire us, gives us new  
ideas and builds networks.  
Really positive."***

*– feedback through 2014 Fest evaluation*



VAEE (now Environmental Educators Victoria). **City of Monash** initiated a **Sustainability in Early Learning Centres** project, during which Andrea worked with 70 educators and 165 children aged 0-4. Practical activities included developing productive gardens, planting indigenous plants, improving organic waste collection, bird surveys, auditing biodiversity, energy reduction actions. Many educational activities and songs were developed through professional development with staff, and Andrea helped Centres work through their practices and policies to embed sustainability in everything the Centres do. Aboriginal perspectives were incorporated into professional learning sessions with staff via acknowledgements and linking to stories of the Woi Wurrung and Boon Wurrung language groups. The diversity of projects undertaken by the centres indicate that early learning centres are able to take sustainable action in numerous simple and direct ways. As early learning centres are busy places, the support offered by the EcoCentre in this project allowed managers and staff to communicate, collate and action ideas.

Our naturalists **Gio Fitzpatrick** and **Peter Kelly** introduced dynamic walking tours exploring the flora and fauna of the Elwood Canal biodiversity corridor and the St Kilda Botanic Gardens. Twilight walks were particularly well-received. Recently, Gio even found locals setting up chairs at dawn for the week prior to ducklings hatching from his nesting box in Elwood!

Thank you to our incredible volunteer team, in particular **Sarah Child**, **Sharron Hunter**, and **Annie Strutt** who were well-loved by our students who had the privilege of working with their mentoring. We were delighted to host Laras (Melbourne Uni) and Nadav (Victoria Uni) as well as five Year 10 work experience students and three Grade 5 "Scientists for a Day." We often learn as much from these students as they do from us.

***"Over the last few months we have been working really hard to make a happy environment for the wonderful frogs. We have learnt many great things that will help us for the rest of our lives such as teamwork, organisation skills, having responsibilities and being environmentally friendly. Each leadership team had a fun yet challenging role to help construct and understand this major project."***

*- Esther and Airlie, St Kilda Park Primary School*







### Multicultural Food & Gardens with Arweet Carolyn

Arweet Carolyn Briggs of the Boon Wurrung Foundation is not only a valued Elder of the Yalukit Willam, but a professional chef with a specialty in bush tucker to boot. During her workshop, participants and volunteers learned about native bush tucker plants growing in the EcoCentre garden, how to grow them at home and how to prepare a delicious wild meal. Arweet Carolyn cooked local snapper in lemon verbena sauce, kangaroo garnished with coast saltbush, dampers and pesto made from macadamia nuts and warrigal greens. Served with a variety of bush teas, this meal was a spectacular taste of the First People's food. Thank you to City of Port Phillip Community Grants for supporting this program and its abundant teachings.

# 81

number of  
schools we  
worked with  
in 2014-15

# 85%

percentage of schools  
who re-engaged through  
multiple EcoCentre Schools  
programs or services

# \$102,000

value of successful  
sustainability grants  
we helped schools apply  
for this year





## 4. Advocating and acting to protect and enhance the environment

### Port Phillip Baykeeper 2014-15

The EcoCentre's **Port Phillip Baykeeper** program was established in 2008 in affiliation with the US-based Waterkeepers Alliance, an international network dedicated to maintaining "fishable, drinkable and swimmable" waterways. There was no funding attached to accepting the mantle of Port Phillip Baykeeper, but the Waterkeepers ethos was in total accord with the EcoCentre motto of [Local Action Global Future](#).

Early Baykeeper activities were conceived to engage communities, businesses and schools to "say g'day to the bay" and to learn how to look after it. Shoreline shell surveys were first conducted on beaches around the Bay in 2009 for Coastcare Victoria's **Summer By the Sea** program and have continued ever since.

The Baykeeper program provided a setting for numerous positive relationships to be forged with community groups, government agencies, schools, and business. The essence of the program is that people learn about the natural world where they live and where they can make a difference.

In looking for shells it was a natural progression to notice plastic pollution washed up on Bay foreshores. Litter provided the link to the impact of human choices on the natural world. It's not rocket science and practically everyone can do something about it! The Baykeeper program designed and delivered litter collection audits and cigarette butt surveys, discovered nurdles in many places, produced *Baykeepers* an award-winning film with film-maker **Michael Lutman**, and continued to generate positive partnerships.

We're proud to have conducted significant successful projects with government organisations: **City of Bayside, City of Port Phillip, Environment Protection Authority Victoria, Frankston Council, Mornington Shire, Coastcare Victoria, Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, City of Hobsons Bay, City of Yarra Ranges, Metropolitan Waste Management & Resource Recovery Group, Sustainability Victoria and Victorian Litter Action Alliance.**

In 2015, our Bay-related community partners include Boon Wurrung Foundation, Australian Coastal Society (Victorian Chapter), Beach Patrol Australia, Earthcare St Kilda, Friends of Greenwich Bay, Friends of Westgate Park, Friends of Williamstown Wetlands, Jawbone Sanctuary Marine Care Group, Ricketts Point Marine Care, Scab Duty, Tangaroa Blue, Werribee Riverkeeper and Yarra Riverkeeper.

Our great mates include Polperro Dolphin Swims, Sheree Marris and Josie Jones - Share the World Creative Design Studio. We deeply appreciate the current funding support from Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation enabling the **Baykeeper Catchment Education** project. This is a 2 year project which aims to establish 4 regional Baykeeper chapters around the Bay to conduct citizen-science activities and promote stewardship of the Bay.

The Waterkeeper Alliance provided a generous travel scholarship for April to represent the Port Phillip Baykeeper for the first time at this year's International Waterkeeper Alliance Conference. Along with Werribee Riverkeeper, she sang Neil's anthem *Just Add Water* to Robert F. Kennedy Jr, the Board of Directors and several hundred waterkeepers on the closing night of this inspirational conference.

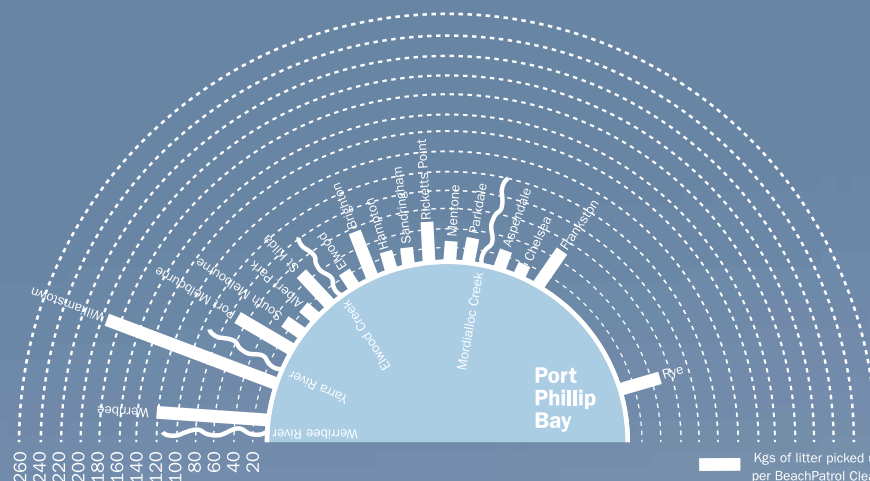
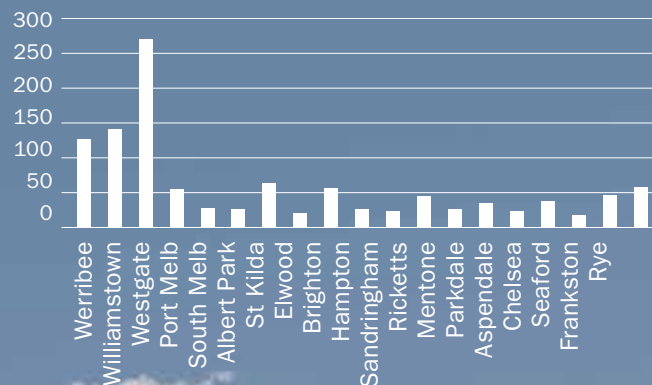
In 2014 we won 5 major awards and Neil was honoured to receive the Victorian Coastal Council's Lifetime Achievement Award. What "seemed like a good idea at the time" in 2009 had grown to almost a fulltime role.

Need we say more? "Gotta love the Bay!"





## BeachPatrol Avg kgs Litter per Clean



## Beach Patrol

Beach Patrol is a chain of volunteer community groups each defined by suburb, post code and t-shirt colour. By mid 2015, there were 18 groups running, covering over 50 km of beach across the top of Melbourne's Port Phillip Bay with approx. 1500 volunteers signed up to help keep our beaches clean. This year, Beach Patrol cleaned up 7365 kilograms of litter.

Not only do they pick up rubbish, but some of their other activities include raising awareness of the plastic pollution problem and helping to educate others to reduce their plastic footprint.

In June we were involved in a presentation with the EcoCentre at Melbourne Girls College, during Inspiring Women in Environmental Sciences Conference week. Two of our eighteen groups are involved in the EcoCentre's Turn off the Tap project each month, by providing detailed scientific data of the rubbish collected. Our website development has allowed for more data regarding rubbish and recycle items collected from our beaches and foreshore from all groups to be recorded as well, giving a better picture of the issues faced in our marine environment.

## Christ Church Community Centre, St Kilda

Christ Church Community Centre values the relationship we have with the Port Phillip EcoCentre and we are proud to be affiliated with this environmental asset in the local community.

Our link with the EcoCentre strengthens our sustainable practices and helps us to reduce our environmental footprint.

- By improving our knowledge about recycling our disposal of waste packaging is better managed and we are mindful about how we recycle surplus goods, ensuring unwanted items are donated to local opportunity shops and redistributed to people in need. Some packaging items have been donated to schools for project materials.
- Christ Church Community Centre volunteers have been offered opportunities to participate in EcoCentre activities such as Beach Litter surveys and cigarette butt audits. These additional projects have provided learning opportunities and help to strengthen our partnership with local action groups.
- The EcoCentre has helped to promote environmental projects and activities that take place at Christ Church Community Centre.
- We feel we can always seek advice from the EcoCentre and our kitchen garden has benefited from design advice we received when planning took place. The garden, which is modelled on the EcoCentre design, is now thriving.

We look forward to being informed about the latest trends and opportunities provided by the EcoCentre.



## Elwood Flood Action Group (eFLAG)

At a recent eFLAG meeting, one of those present gave a summary of reports on climate change adaptation by Federal, State and Local governments and relevant authorities. It was a long list and he observed (or lamented) that if some of the money spent on these reports had been spent on practical measures for flood mitigation we would be better prepared for a flood than we were before the 2011 flood. We aren't.

Nevertheless eFLAG has:

1. had a stall at the Volunteers Expo at St. Kilda Town Hall  
- good for exposure & to connect with other community groups;
2. pursued the plan to install an Early Warning Flood system with Melbourne Water. This would use existing water level monitors in Elwood Canal to signal a trial group of 10 on their mobile phones when a flood is threatening. eFLAG would like to see this expanded to include all residents when testing is complete;
3. made our annual submission to CoPP budget for increased spending on flood mitigation with our usual lack of success. CoPP has proposed a Toward Zero Consultative Forum which eFLAG has endorsed and hopes will lead to introduction of flood mitigation measures;
4. made submissions to the Victorian Government Draft Strategies for Floodplain Management & Flood management for Port Phillip & Westernport. These documents are an indicator of a State response to flood mitigation.
5. eFLAG also participated in the Elwood Water Project, a Federally funded program run by the Dept. of Industry & Science, Cooperative Research Centres, Water Sensitive Cities. It includes a series of interviews and workshops with residents & interested organizations including the Ecocentre and CoPP looking at our future relationship with water. This is a national program, and again eFLAG hopes this may lead to practical flood mitigation programs. Eflag proposed that the review of Elsternwick Park by Bayside Council may be a good start to putting some of these ideas into practise & that the Port Phillip EcoCentre with its experience in environmental education programs would be a valuable resource;
6. eFLAG encouraged the uptake of domestic flood mitigation infrastructure such as rain tanks and rain gardens, through the EcoCentre's Well Waters project, in which residents of the Elster Creek Catchment can earn water infrastructure rebates from the Victorian government simply by volunteering with community groups who help the stormwater and creek in various ways.



eflag

elwood floods action group





## Friends of Westgate Park

We have just concluded a year that has seen many changes both within the park and nearby; some of these changes have been a direct result of our work each week to improve the park while others have been the result of advocacy. We are pleased to advise that the fence came down in early August and we now have additional land along the Yarra to work on. This outcome was the result of our negotiations with the Port of Melbourne for a "land swap" as compensation for just under 1 hectare of land removed from the park's south-east corner for port road development.

We continue to revegetate areas of the park, removing non-indigenous trees and replacing them with trees, bushes and understorey plants consistent with our revegetation plan for the park. During the year, we planted around 20,700 plants.

Our group's activities expand beyond the on-ground revegetation project. We have a dedicated nursery group that provides plants for our project. Our bird survey team has carried out a survey every month of the year since 2007 (with our bird list now 156 different species). WaterWatch monitors the water quality each month and records the results. We now conduct fungi forays in the park acknowledging the importance of fungi to biodiversity. To make sure everyone knows what we are doing, we maintain an excellent website and engage with the community via social media. All of these activities are so important and contribute so much to the overall success of our group.

Our group is playing a part in the movement of groups and individuals tackling plastics pollution in the bay and along waterways. We are regularly controlling litter especially on the Yarra River in partnership with the EcoCentre and the Litter Hot Spots initiative. Following representation to the Port of Melbourne Corporation, rubbish bins have been installed at this location to assist.

Last November, the City of Melbourne and the Museum Victoria hosted an event for "Bio-blitz Melbourne" in Westgate Park. Although it was aimed "at discovering some of the unique plants and animals that call Melbourne home", the emphasis, at least in our park, was on animals (rather than plants) but this was welcomed by us as an area we don't spend enough time on. We had some of Melbourne's leading ecologists and biodiversity experts leading groups of citizen scientists around the park.

When you review this range of activities that we have been engaged in over the year, it becomes obvious that we have an incredibly talented and hardworking crew. This is the strength of our organisation. The number of hours individuals put in to improving the park together with their special skills does indicate we have sound future. Why don't you join us?

Twitter: @fofWestgatePark



(L to R) Jenny Hunter, Margaret Byron, Jan Harper, Mike Perkal, Steve Nelson and David Robinson

## LIVE - Locals Into Victoria's Environment

LIVE's website [live.org.au](http://live.org.au) promotes local climate change events as well as articles and videos of interest to our mailing list. Individual members were active in the following actions in 2015,

- Angelo has a team teaching sustainability in 60 schools in Colombia - [sonarmasverde.com](http://sonarmasverde.com)
- Deborah published a book about Australian climate change activists - [guardingeden.org.au](http://guardingeden.org.au)
- Deborah has formed a theatrical group of climate change activists - [climacts.org.au](http://climacts.org.au)
- David is a team member organising the Port Phillip Solar Bulk Buy - [enviroehub.com.au/solar](http://enviroehub.com.au/solar)

LIVE also helps with the organising of events held by our partner group in Bayside - the Bayside Climate Change Action Group - [bccag.org.au](http://bccag.org.au). This year there was a well attended talk by Tim Flannery [bccag.org.au/events/tim-flannery-2/](http://bccag.org.au/events/tim-flannery-2/) and another by Philip Wollen [bccag.org.au/philip-wollen](http://bccag.org.au/philip-wollen). LIVE also partnered in the RAP (Residents Against Plastic) Campaign [facebook.com/BaysideRAP/timeline](https://facebook.com/BaysideRAP/timeline)



## Major partner

City of Port Phillip has provided an annual grant to cover operational costs (providing a basis for us to generate additional external partners and income).

## Major funding

Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation

- *Organisational Capacity Building Project*

- *Baykeeper Catchment Education Project*

Victorian Government Cleaner Bays and Waterways program

- *Turn Off The Tap (Litter Hotspots) Project*

Department of Environment Land Water and Planning

- *Well Waters Project*

## Small projects funding

Bayside City Council

City of Hobsons Bay

City of Port Phillip

Environmental Resource Management (ERM)

Friends of Williamstown Wetlands

Landcare Australia

Melbourne water

City of Monash

## Consultants

Anne Garrow's experience in managing small-medium sized community service organisations has been invaluable.

Jan Cossar provided expert workshop facilitation and guidance in developing the new Strategic Plan.

Marcus Willis of Eight Clients whose invaluable guidance advised our corporate engagement.

## Benefactors

The EcoCentre acknowledges with gratitude all supporters. Our work is made possible by your generous gifts. In particular we would like to recognise our major gifts from:

The Brunner Foundation

Alicia Hooper

Belinda Evans

Mr. Eytan Lenko

Keith and Debbie Badger

Nicko Lunardi

## Government agency collaborators

Frankston City Council

Mornington Shire,

City of Yarra Ranges

## Community contributors

Arwee Carolyn Briggs for sharing cultural knowledge, good yarns and tucker.

Dane Morrisy for his Monster Composters supporting our neighbourhood compost program.

Deb Punton and the gardening group who have maintained and developed the gardens at the EcoCentre and the St Kilda Sea Baths.

Gill Upton has contributed special skills and time to nurturing our 'Wominjeka Indigenous Cultural garden'.

Judy Muir (Polperro Dolphin Swims) and Natalie Davy (Pelican Expeditions). For their encouragement and support for our programs to promote community and business stewardship of the Bay.

## Affiliates

Animal Liberation Victoria

Australian Landcare International

Beach Patrol Australia

Christ Church Community Centre

Earthcare St Kilda

Earthsong

Elwood Floods Action Group

Friends of Westgate Park

Friends of Port Melbourne Foreshore

Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association

Jewish Ecological Coalition

Locals Into Victoria's Environment

Marine Care Rickett's Point

Mary and Basil Community Garden

OASES College and Graduate School

Port Phillip Bicycle Users Group (BUG)

Port Phillip Citizens for Reconciliation

Port Phillip Community Group

St Kilda Community Garden Club

St Kilda Indigenous Nursery Coop

Transition Port Phillip

Veg Out Community Garden



## Committee of Management

Pam O'Neil, President  
Liz Fenwick, PhD, Vice President  
Tony Flude, Secretary  
Keith Badger, Treasurer  
Steve Pennells  
Mark Karki  
Ann Callaghan  
Louise Kyle  
Dan Coleman

## EcoCentre Public Fund Managers

Kay McKenzie  
Louise Kyle  
Michele Hodes  
Nick Capes

## Staff

Neil Blake,  
Director  
*(now Baykeeper Program Manager)*  
April Seymore,  
Education Programs Manager  
*(now Executive Officer)*  
Fam Charko,  
Community Engagement  
and Volunteer Coordinator  
*(now Operations & Research Manager)*  
Andrea Eales,  
Schools and Early Learning Educator  
Bronnie Walsh,  
Schools and Community Educator  
Peter Kelly,  
Sessional Schools Educator

Gio Fitzpatrick,  
Youth Wildlife Ambassador

David Giles,  
IT Specialist

Fiona Second,  
Bookkeeper

Paula Havelberg,  
Visitor Engagement Officer

Will Pullin,  
Garden Coordinator

Jill Robinson,  
Marketing & Corporate Relations Officer

Amanda Knights,  
Sessional Schools Educator

## Key Volunteers

Tara Crowley, admin ninja  
Deb Punton, Community Garden coordinator  
Sarah Child, schools team and admin ninja  
Sharron Hunter, schools team  
Emma McGlashan, nurdle research team  
Cam Villani, nurdle research team  
Ying Quek, nurdle research team  
Paul Muller, Backyard Garden Arts Play  
Annie Strutt, Sustainable Schools Fest

## Work Placement

Laras Larasati  
Nadav Zisin  
Sierra Mchlachlan  
Dessi Lin  
Mitch Watson  
Luke Gerrard  
Neve Omeara-Caspar



## Detailed income and expenditure statement for the year ended 30 June 2015

	2015	2014	LESS: EXPENSES		
INCOME			EMPLOYEE BENEFITS EXPENSE		
Administer projects	\$33,632	\$33,273	Salaries and Wages	\$340,432	\$440,465
City of Port Phillip grants	\$181,600	\$206,252	Superannuation	\$30,928	\$35,908
Commercial sponsors	\$3,100	\$14,940	Workcover	\$5,351	\$5,196
Court order grants	-	\$84,450	TOTAL EMPLOYEE BENEFITS EXPENSE	\$376,711	\$481,569
Consulting	\$60,178	\$98,241	DEPRECIATION & AMORTISATION EXPENSE		
Donations	\$118,049	\$16,328	DEPRECIATION	\$9,369	\$10,587
Interest	\$1,781	\$6,550	TOTAL DEPRECIATION & AMORTISATION EXPENSE	\$9,369	\$10,587
Membership	\$2,796	\$2,409	OTHER EXPENSE		
Other grants	\$164,160	\$38,192	Accounting and audit fees	\$12,490	\$11,584
Seminars & Education	\$32,459	\$30,268	Auspicing	\$30,009	\$23,599
Product sales	\$9,597	\$25,315	Bank charges	\$1,029	\$1,017
Sundry income	\$701	\$972	Cleaning	\$5,968	\$8,093
TOTAL INCOME	\$608,053	\$557,190	Computer expenses	\$2,087	\$3,314
			Consumables	\$7,841	\$17,478
			Electricity	\$1,533	\$2,940
			Insurance	\$3,226	\$2,940
			Equipment and materials	\$15,229	\$11,415
			Printing, postage and stationary	\$4,009	\$5,073
			Professional services	\$55,105	\$57,640
			Repairs and maintenance	\$1,541	\$366
			Seminars and training	\$3,633	\$3,084
			Sundry Expenses	\$10,320	\$12,220
			Subscriptions	\$4,671	\$1,083
			Telephone	\$3,071	\$2,929
			TOTAL OTHER EXPENSE	\$161,762	\$164,025
			TOTAL EXPENSE	\$547,842	\$656,181
			NET PROFIT/(LOSS)	\$60,211	(\$98,991)



## Statement of financial position 30 June 2015

	Note	2015	2014
<b>ASSETS</b>			
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Cash and cash equivalents	2	\$311,959	\$155,477
Trade and other receivables		\$134,765	\$29,348
Prepayments		-	\$133
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>\$446,724</b>	<b>\$184,958</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Land and buildings	3	\$241,465	\$247,656
Plant and equipment	3	\$9,533	\$12,711
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>250,998</b>	<b>260,367</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<b>\$697,722</b>	<b>\$445,325</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Trade and other payables	4	\$19,193	\$16,559
Grants received in advance		\$194,350	-
Employee provisions		\$25,359	\$30,157
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<b>\$238,902</b>	<b>\$46,716</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>		<b>\$238,902</b>	<b>\$46,716</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>\$458,820</b>	<b>\$398,609</b>
<b>MEMBERS' FUNDS</b>			
Retained profits		\$458,820	\$398,609
<b>TOTAL MEMBERS' EQUITY</b>		<b>\$458,820</b>	<b>\$398,609</b>

PORT PHILLIP ECOCENTRE INC  
ABN 66 852 809 680

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

We, Pamela 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 2015.

Dated

.....*Pamela O'Neil*.....  
Pamela O'Neil (President)

.....*Keith Badger*.....  
Keith Badger (Treasurer)



**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 2015, 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 officers 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 the Association Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Vic) and is appropriate to meet the needs of the members. The committee of management's 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.

**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 \$32,119 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**

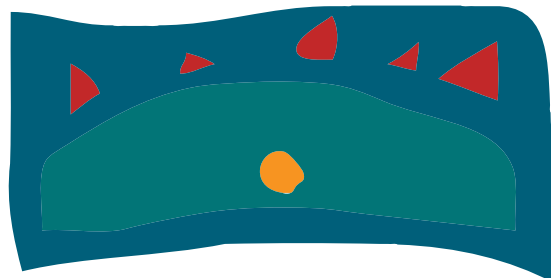
In our opinion, except for the possible effects of the matter described in the Basis for Qualified Opinion paragraph, the financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc as at 30 June 2015, and its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and the 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





P O R T P H I L L I P  
**eco centre**

**Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc.**

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St Kilda, VIC 3182**

Located in St Kilda Botanical Gardens  
(corner Blessington and Herbert Streets)

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

**ABN: 66 852 809 680**

Incorporated Association No. A0038897K



**EcoCentre**



**@ecocentrestkilda**



**@ecocentrestk**

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

Port Phillip EcoCentre Inc is a Waste-Wise Organisation

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