

Environment Victoria News

MOBILISING PEOPLE TO SAFEGUARD OUR ENVIRONMENT

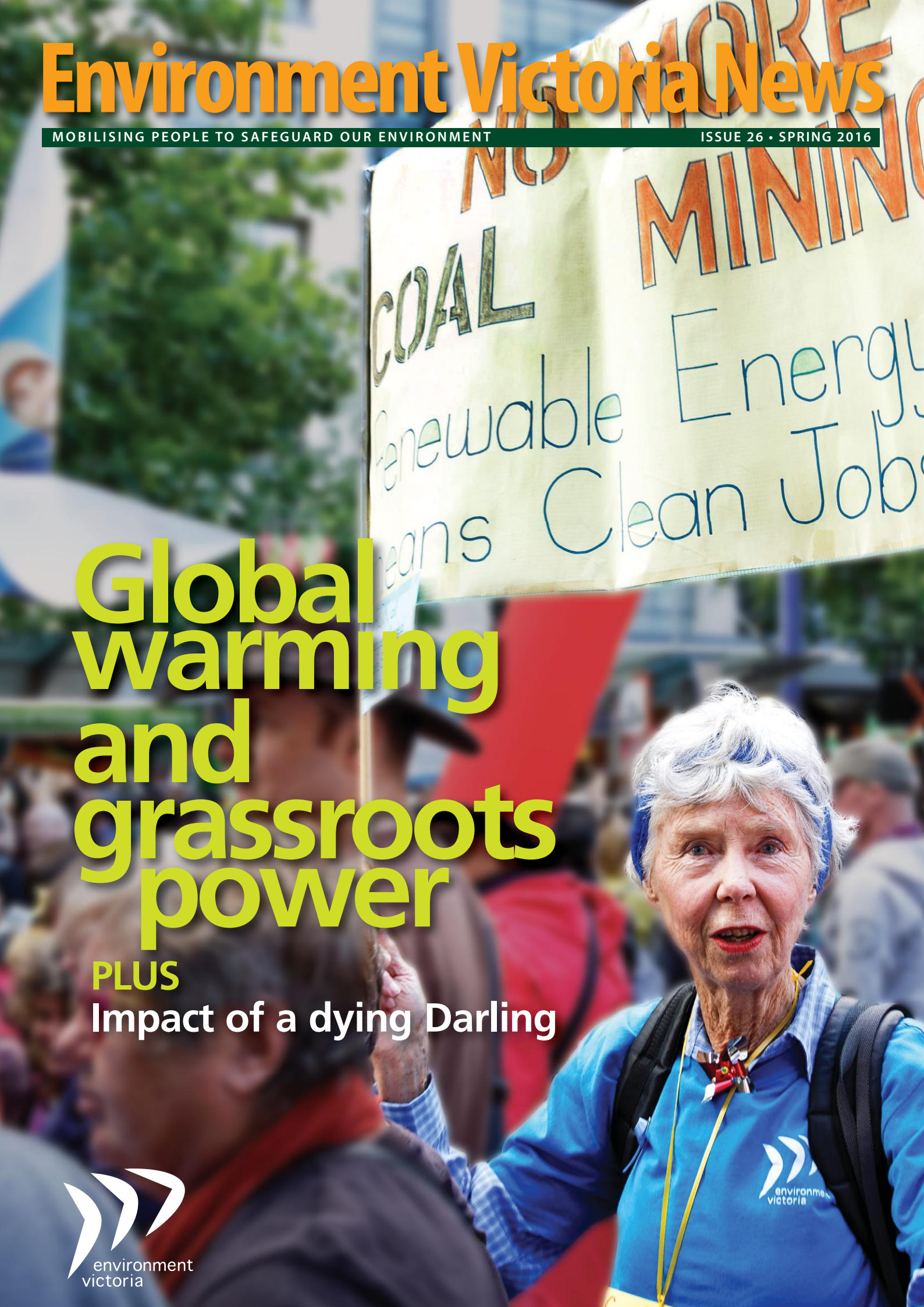
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Global warming and grassroots power

PLUS

Impact of a dying Darling





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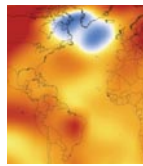
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Editorial

> Mark Wakeham, Chief Executive Officer

Another election cycle is over, and here at Environment Victoria we're taking the long view.

WHO ENJOYED AUSTRALIA'S LONGEST ever federal election campaign? Okay, maybe enjoyed isn't the right word. It was a grinding campaign with an inconclusive result. But one thing was made very clear – Australians reject the ideological attacks of the Abbott era and want a return to more sensible government. Climate change also featured prominently in key electorates around the country, including seats where we ran strong campaigns, like Dunkley, Deakin and Kooyong in Melbourne.

Post-election, Josh Frydenberg replaced Greg Hunt in an expanded role as Environment and Energy Minister. Minister Frydenberg's early comments acknowledging the decline of coal were a welcome change from past rhetoric, but do they represent a turning point towards bipartisanship on climate and environment protection? Or will the

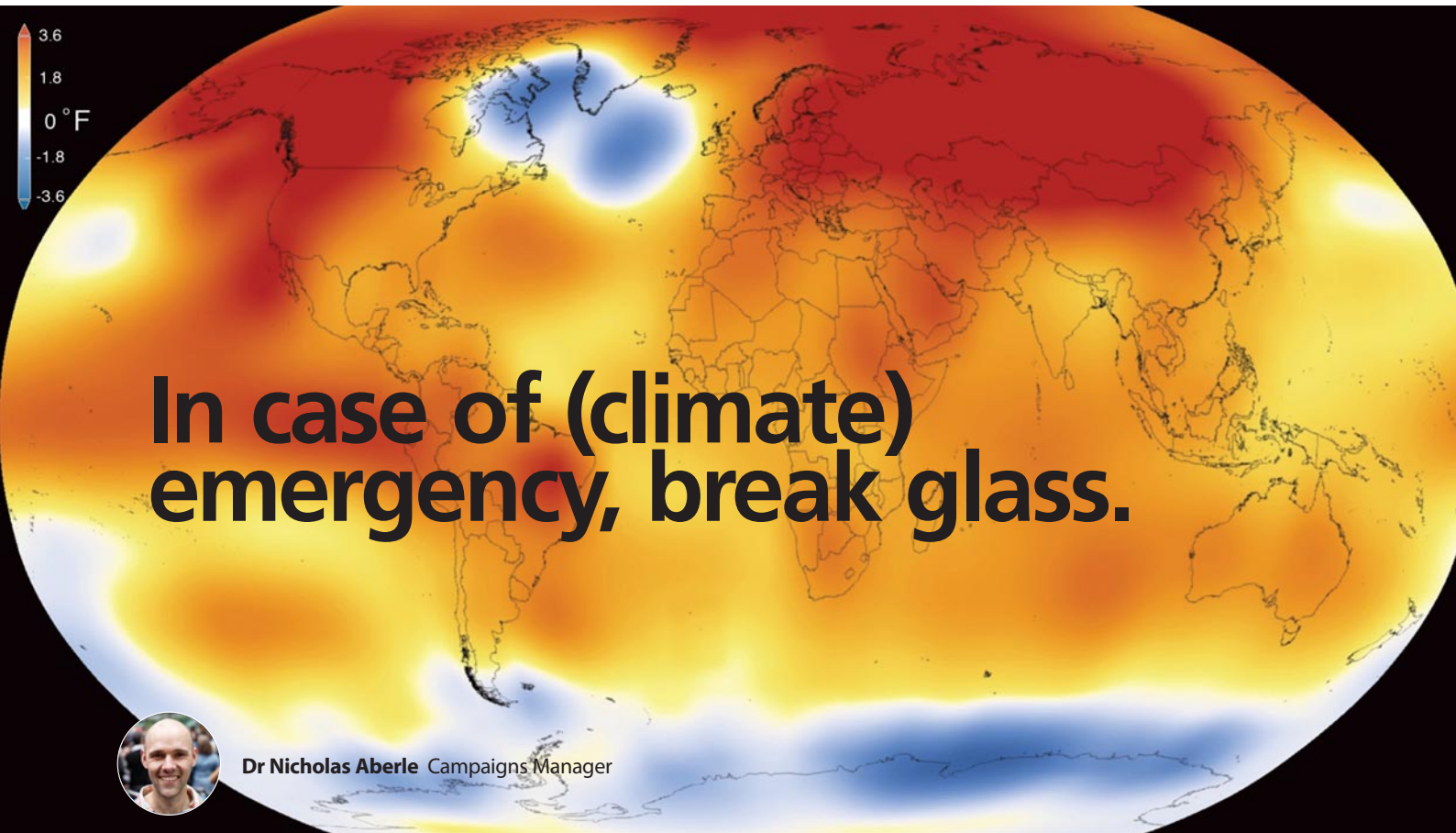
Coalition's policies remain stuck in the deeply unpopular Abbott era? With the news of record global temperatures more disturbing by the day, we need to ensure that the Coalition chooses the responsible path.

At the state level we're seeing some good steps forward. We now have a target to eliminate pollution from the Victorian economy...albeit by 2050. We also look forward to strong renewable energy targets announced by the Andrews government in recent months translating into legislation and the new projects and jobs we so urgently need. But the big question remains: Will the Andrews government step towards a pollution-free economy by phasing out brown coal power stations, while supporting communities through the process? We're doing all we can to make sure the answer is yes.

We're also working to ensure that the Andrews government seizes the opportunities presented by their Water and Biodiversity plans, and the Forests task force, to turn around our extinction crisis and protect the places, plants and animals we love.

Finally, with the federal election over, Environment Victoria staff and board members are busy thinking of solutions as big and bold as the environmental challenges we face. Running strong and effective campaigns is no longer enough. We actually need transformative strategies and leadership. By December we'll have a new strategy to make the biggest difference we can for our environment over the next few years. If you've got a strong opinion about how we can do this, please drop me a line at mark.wakeham@environmentvictoria.org.au

Thanks, and enjoy our newsletter, renamed *Environment Victoria News*.



In case of (climate) emergency, break glass.



Dr Nicholas Aberle Campaigns Manager

NASA Global Warming Map 2015.

PHOTO: NASA

THE VITAL URGENCY OF CUTTING

climate pollution to stop global warming has been a major issue for decades now. Sometimes we seem to be making progress. Other times the enormity of the challenge is overwhelming: after decades of awareness, there is still no clear downward trend in Australia's or Victoria's greenhouse gas emissions.

Indeed, Australia's emissions are rising again.

Global concentrations of carbon dioxide are spiralling out of control and, as a result, global temperatures are too. In May this year, humanity pushed the atmosphere over 400 parts per million (ppm), already way above the 350 ppm thought to be safe. Each of the last 16 months since May 2015 has been the hottest on record for that month. February 2016 was the hottest of all, a staggering 1.6 degrees above the historical baseline.

The problem is, this is more than numbers on a page. Real world evidence of unprecedented warming is all around us: the Great Barrier Reef literally dying before our eyes; unseasonably early bushfires in the Otways; unprecedented bushfires destroying ancient forests in Tasmania; mysterious holes appearing in melting Siberian permafrost; Sydney's

coast being battered by crazy storms and ocean swells. Sadly, the list goes on.

Recent analysis shows we are running out of time. For just a fifty-fifty chance of staying under 1.5 degrees of warming, the world can only create another 250 gigatonnes (Gt) of CO₂. At the moment, we're producing over 35 Gt every year. That means seven years left to get to zero pollution. Seven. Assume that a rich country like Australia should be doing more than others, and, for us, that timeframe shrinks even further.

Make no mistake – this is a crisis. So now what? As Einstein famously said, those with the privilege to know have the duty to act.

When events at Pearl Harbor forced his hand, US President Roosevelt called the captains of industry to the White House and gave them a list of how many tanks, fighter planes and bombers they would need to build in coming months and years. The industrialists said they couldn't do that while still manufacturing their cars. Roosevelt's reply? He said they didn't understand: he was going to ban the sale of private automobiles. Roosevelt knew how serious the situation was and acted accordingly.

This story encapsulates how quickly

CLIMATE EMERGENCY DECLARATION

Grassroots climate action groups are calling on the Australian parliament to declare a climate emergency, mobilising government and community resources to match the scale of the problem. Sign up at climateemergencydeclaration.org

we can change our thinking and our priorities when we need to. And we need to right now.

The last 16 months were the hottest ever recorded, but they could also be viewed as a turning point for global action, with the Paris climate agreement more ambitious than expected. Locally, Victoria is on the cusp of big steps forward (page 13), support for Hazelwood is crumbling (page 7) and we're designing a new strategy learning from successful campaigning globally. (pages 8-9).

In the coming months, we'll be asking you to join us in a blitz of stalls, forums and doorknocks around the state, calling on the Andrews government to get serious about tackling climate change, phasing out coal, and protecting nature in this term of government. Let's do it.

Federal election wrap-up

When we look back at social movements and large-scale changes that have made our communities stronger and our societies better, there is one thing that always stands out as a key to success – people power.



Jane Stabb
Community Organiser Manager

IN THE LEAD-UP TO THE JULY 2

federal election, Environment Victoria ran our biggest ever people-powered campaign. We've been building community support for strong climate policies and nature protection in communities that determine the outcomes of elections — the Frankston and Mornington areas and Melbourne's eastern suburbs.

We recruited and trained hundreds of volunteers to work in these electorates, talking to undecided voters about what the election means for our climate and our environment. They were out every day for months, knocking on doors, making phone calls and talking to voters on the street. And together, we made climate change and our environment key issues this election.

The campaign was making such an impact that the then environment minister, Greg Hunt, and shadow environment minister Mark Butler met with us in Frankston and Ringwood.

When we analysed the climate policies of the major parties, the Coalition came up short. So we called them to account for their lack of credible climate policy with a giant billboard near Ringwood station. After the Deakin branch of the Liberal party had it taken down, we turned it into a viral tweet that was seen



Our billboard was displayed in the marginal electorate of Deakin, in Josh Frydenberg's electorate of Kooyong and seen by over 200,000 people online.



Our mobile billboard was out on the streets every weekend.



A volunteer-led meeting with the then Environment Minister Greg Hunt and Dunkley candidate Chris Crewther to discuss environment policy.



Volunteer door-knocking in south-east Melbourne.

THANK YOU

A big thanks to everyone who contributed to this campaign.

by over 200,000 people – in fact it was the most-shared tweet of the election!

The same billboard displayed on a busy corner in Josh Frydenberg's electorate prompted an article in *The Australian*, in which he complained about environment groups building power in his electorate. The fact he subsequently became our new Environment and Energy Minister presents a real opportunity — we know he's feeling pressure on this issue from environment groups and the community.

Now the election is over and it's more important than ever that all parties listen to the community on our environment. The Coalition has been re-elected with a reduced margin, and no majority in the Senate. This means that to get anything through Parliament, they'll have to negotiate with a mixed bag of Senators – from centrist Nick Xenaphon to far right One Nation. Or, of course, with the Greens.

There's an opening here to bring the Coalition and all parties closer to where they need to be on climate and environment protection. By creating a political space where all parties have to raise ambition, and putting pressure on them when they don't, we can ensure that politics catches up with community expectations.

We know our work to build community power is working. In fact, environment groups across the country are following our lead, creating community organising teams to coordinate and scale up the work we are doing here in Victoria.

Now it's time to take stock and think about how we can grow our impact. Over the next 18 months, we will reach out to more communities across the state to force a power shift – making sure that governments and decision makers act in our interest to stop dangerous global warming and protect the beautiful natural places we all love.

Why I volunteered with Environment Victoria this federal election



Chris

The rest of the developed world has moved towards renewable energy. I believe we have the best conditions to follow suit and, unless we do, we are going to be part of the problem, not the solution.

It was in an effort to try and do something to bring on this change that I gave up my last part-time work and small income to do something I believe in passionately. There was a huge cost involved in this decision for me. I'm 75. I'll probably never work again. But I'm proud to have done what I did.



Stella

I believe we are all custodians of a global village. We can do our bit as individuals, and we can come together as a community with a stronger voice to ensure our politicians truly represent us. Each of us has a responsibility to conserve and preserve our land to enjoy the privilege of knowing our children and future generations can do likewise. Sadly we're at a point in time where this continuum can no longer be assumed.

The First World values of growth and profit have gone into overdrive to the detriment of the Third World and the environment. We have a lot to fix in a short space of time. I can't stand by while all this happens. Grassroots activism is the best way to elicit change from the community up, and never underestimate what a group of committed and passionate volunteers can do! All it takes is an idea ...

Maddie

I began volunteering in 2015. Since then I've gotten to know this community of strong, like-minded people who believe in the same things I do, have amazing stories to tell, encourage me to act and give me a great sense of belonging.

I advocate for protecting the environment and combating climate change because I believe we can't continue to carelessly take and use without deep consequences. We are not the only life on this Earth and it's not all about us! We have so much left to learn about our planet and I want to help safeguard this for the next generation of scientists and explorers, as well as for all life's intrinsic right to live.

THANK YOU to all our extraordinary volunteers. To find out about joining us, go to environmentvictoria.org.au/volunteer



Fixing the laws that protect nature



Juliet Le Feuvre
Healthy Rivers Campaigner

Australia is facing an extinction crisis. We already have the worst extinction rate in the world for mammals, and other groups of animals are not far behind.

HERE IN VICTORIA, WE ARE DOING PLENTY TO SPEED SPECIES on their way towards extinction. We are the most cleared state in Australia and we are still bulldozing native vegetation. Seventy percent of our forests are gone. Our remaining native vegetation is increasingly fragmented, surviving in isolated patches, and our freshwater environments are in decline. Thirty percent of our animal species are listed as threatened and our faunal emblem, the Leadbeater's Possum, is critically endangered. Even common species such as the Magpie and the Willy Wagtail are becoming much less abundant and the chance of seeing a Kookaburra in Victoria has halved since 1999.

Part of the problem is that the laws intended to protect nature are not doing their job. Victoria's *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act* was groundbreaking when it was passed in 1988 but it's now decades old and in need of a serious overhaul. The Act was intended to guarantee the protection and survival of plants and animals in our state. Unfortunately it's turned out to be a toothless tiger and many of its provisions have never been put into action.

The Act has focused on listing threatened species (631 species and 40 ecological communities to date) but not on protecting them. Less than half of the species have published Action Statements — statements outlining how the species will be brought back from decline — and some of those are decades old and still yet to be implemented. The Victorian government has never made use of their ability to declare critical habitat for species protection.

What's needed is a fresh approach that focuses on protecting and reconnecting habitat for all our precious species. A revised Act needs to operate at a much broader scale with revised principles and objectives, and it needs to be embraced across all branches of government. Landscape-scale conservation and ecological restoration should be the core business of the Act and the driving forces for a new Biodiversity strategy with strong 20-year targets to halt biodiversity loss and turn it around. Species protection needs to move out from a back corner of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and become the business of all public agencies with enforcement provisions that are up to the task of halting the extinction crisis.

Fortunately the Andrews government has committed to reviewing the Act so there's a great opportunity to update the laws that protect nature. Over the next few months we will be building support for making them more effective. We'll be telling the stories of Victoria's threatened species, showing what we're at risk of losing, and developing the resources to demonstrate the status of key species and ecological communities. We'll be building an alliance of concerned voices and taking the message to our politicians to make sure biodiversity and the survival of our wonderful plants and animals are key considerations across all of government decision making.

It's time to ACT on extinction.
Sign our petition to Environment Minister Lily d'Ambrosio
envict.org/ACTonExtinction

Or you can donate to the campaign using the form on page 15.



The Swift Parrot is one of Victoria's many endangered species.

PHOTO: SONJA ROSS, BIRDLIFEPHOTOGRAPHY.ORG.AU

Support for Hazelwood is crumbling



Cat Nadel
Safe Climate Campaigner

Time's running out for Australia's most polluting power station as the institutions propping it up pull their support one by one. In the last three months, majority owner ENGIE, major investor ANZ and the French government have all signalled that it's time to phase out Hazelwood. Now it's the Victorian government's turn to step up.

HAZELWOOD HAS BECOME something of a scandal in France where the government is the largest shareholder in ENGIE, Hazelwood's major owner. In May, French television screened a documentary telling the story of Hazelwood's intense climate pollution and the neglect and ambivalence demonstrated by ENGIE during the devastating mine fire of 2014.

"We are studying all possible scenarios, including closure, or a sale if the state of Victoria tells us that it cannot meet power generating needs without this plant." — ENGIE CEO

It showed French Climate and Energy Minister Ségolène Royal being handed a postcard – one of thousands signed by Environment Victoria supporters – calling on the French Government to retire the power station. In response, Minister Royal announced that ENGIE and the French government must "disengage" from Hazelwood.

The documentary caused a huge stir in Paris. The day after it aired, ENGIE's new CEO was called before a government committee to answer questions. She said "We are studying all possible scenarios, including closure, or a sale if the state of Victoria tells us that it cannot meet

power generating needs without this plant."

The good news is, Victoria has more than enough electricity to power the state without Hazelwood. And it seems Victoria's minister for Energy and the Environment, Lily D'Ambrosio, has heard that message loud and clear. When asked the next day in Parliament, she said "I think the whole world knows that

there is an oversupply in the market. I do not have to tell ENGIE...I think that is absolutely clear."

The latest blow for Hazelwood came in July, when ANZ bank failed to renew a loan worth US \$147 million. This followed a sustained campaign – run by Environment Victoria supporters like you – to demand ANZ cut the dirty credit to Australia's most polluting power station. You sent thousands of emails and left hundreds of messages on ANZ's complaint line. Many of you who are ANZ customers threatened to close your bank accounts and move your home loans – worth over \$37 million – if the



The French Energy Minister read our petition postcard on French television.

loan was renewed. In their end of year report, ENGIE disclosed that they've refinanced the loan internally.

It's clear that Hazelwood has lost the confidence of business and governments alike.

What's not yet clear is when and how Hazelwood will close. Now is the moment for the Victorian government to announce a plan for retiring Hazelwood as soon as possible. This plan must support the community in the Latrobe Valley to prepare for economic transition. The allocation of \$40 million in the last state budget is a good first step and many in the community are developing plans to create a sustainable and diverse local economy.

The long campaign to close Australia's dirtiest power station is close to winning. It's time for our government to prepare for the inevitable clean energy transition and provide real support for the Latrobe Valley's future.

THANK YOU!

Together we've been calling for Hazelwood to be phased out for 10 years. Whether you've been with us from the beginning or just got involved, thank you!

The State of the Union: power,



Mark Wakeham
Chief Executive Officer

IN JULY I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO travel to the United States on a study tour exploring cutting-edge campaigning by environment groups and other campaigning organisations. The trip was generously funded by the Reichstein Foundation through their annual 'Jill Reichstein Award for Social Change'.

When I left Australia it was unclear who had won our election, and I arrived

in the US with Donald Trump riding high in the polls and the country in the grip of a series of violent shooting incidents that seem to have rocked confidence.

My plan was to learn as much as I could about a few key questions:

- Who is running the most exciting and powerful campaigns in the US progressive movement? How are their campaigns relevant for Australian campaigning organisations?
- The US has now closed over 200 coal-fired power stations. What lessons can we learn about coal closure and transition planning?

- What's the next wave of digital technologies that can turbo boost campaigning?
 - Which organisations are creating truly transformative strategies? How are they doing it, and how is it relevant to the Australian climate movement and our ability to scale up our efforts?
- These questions took me to Buffalo in New York, to visit inspiring communities in transition from coal and manufacturing, who are seeding and supporting new climate-friendly industries. I joined the NetRoots nation conference in St Louis with the country's



Community-led revitalisation – PUSH Buffalo

Buffalo, New York, has lost more than half its population as its manufacturing industries have folded. But local people are working together to revitalise the area. Here, clean air campaigners, unionists and teachers have joined forces to form a powerful coalition and are campaigning to ensure that the March 2016 closure of the Towananda coal-fired power station leaves their community stronger and healthier.

PUSH Buffalo (People United for Sustainable Housing) is an incredible social venture leading the revitalisation of Buffalo. Lots of community enterprises do one thing really well, but PUSH Buffalo does it all. Wherever PUSH Buffalo see a need in their devastated community, they set up a social enterprise to solve it. So now they are running energy efficiency programs, building new zero emissions homes and apartments, creating parkland, establishing training and recruitment companies to provide jobs for people who had been unemployed for a long time, opening schools and the list goes on.

And they're supported by a powerful community of committed people who overcome any political blocks they face with effective community organising. PUSH Buffalo shows just how powerful and effective transition projects can be when they're led by the community. I was inspired by the possibility of community driven projects injecting new energy and activity into places like the Latrobe Valley, Shepparton and Geelong.



Fast food workers strike outside a McDonald's in Chicago.

Networked power

The NetRoots nation conference in St Louis brings together the country's best digital campaigners and community organisers. This year they were dealing with two very large issues – a feeling of crisis in the wake of a series of police shootings of black Americans, and an incredibly polarised and polarising US federal election campaign.

At the same time, the conference was abuzz with the results of some exciting campaigns that had 'opened themselves up' to grassroots power. These campaigns were designed in a way that could encourage replication across the country, creating an impact far beyond what a single organisation could achieve alone.

A prime example is the union-led FightFor15

activism and social change

best digital campaigners and community organisers. I spent time in Washington DC and New York meeting lobbyists, communications consultants and campaigners.

By the end of my trip the Republican campaign was a shambles and Hillary Clinton was looking a strong favourite to win the election. Perhaps I should travel more often!

I returned to Melbourne excited about the potential for Environment Victoria to work with our colleagues across the movement to increase our impact.

Let's design campaigns that bring

together building clean energy, closing coal, ending fracking and other climate campaigns and make them a unified, uncontrollable and viral call to action. We can also get cracking on community driven enterprises in the Latrobe and Hunter Valley without waiting for government or industry, making it more likely that power stations will retire and less painful when they do.

Post federal election, the time is right to raise our sights and craft seriously ambitious and well-designed strategies to fast track a safe climate and healthy environment.

THANK YOU!

to the Reichstein Foundation for so generously funding this learning experience. Thanks also to my partner Kirsten and sons Henry and Leon for coping (indeed flourishing) without me for a month!



PHOTO: FLIKR CC/STEVE RHODES

Over at NetRoots

campaign that started in New York with fast food workers striking for fair pay. Where most pay campaigns make demands for incremental change, FightFor15 chose a visionary target – doubling of their hourly pay to \$15 an hour. The fast food industry is a behemoth in the States – McDonalds alone employs one million Americans! Twelve months after the first strike in New York, fast food workers struck for the same demand in 200 cities across the country. Many states and cities have now legislated this call for a living wage.

Such deliberate networked campaign design is exactly what we need across the Australian environment movement if we are to make the necessary big steps forward.



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Working together with local communities, the Sierra Club has closed over 200 coal power stations.

The Sierra Club

The 124-year old Sierra Club is the oldest and largest environment group in the US. They have campaigned to close over 200 coal-burning power stations and protected areas of parks and wilderness that total the size of Victoria and NSW put together.

The Sierra Club was generous enough to share their strategies to modernise their own organisation and make it more representative of the US population.

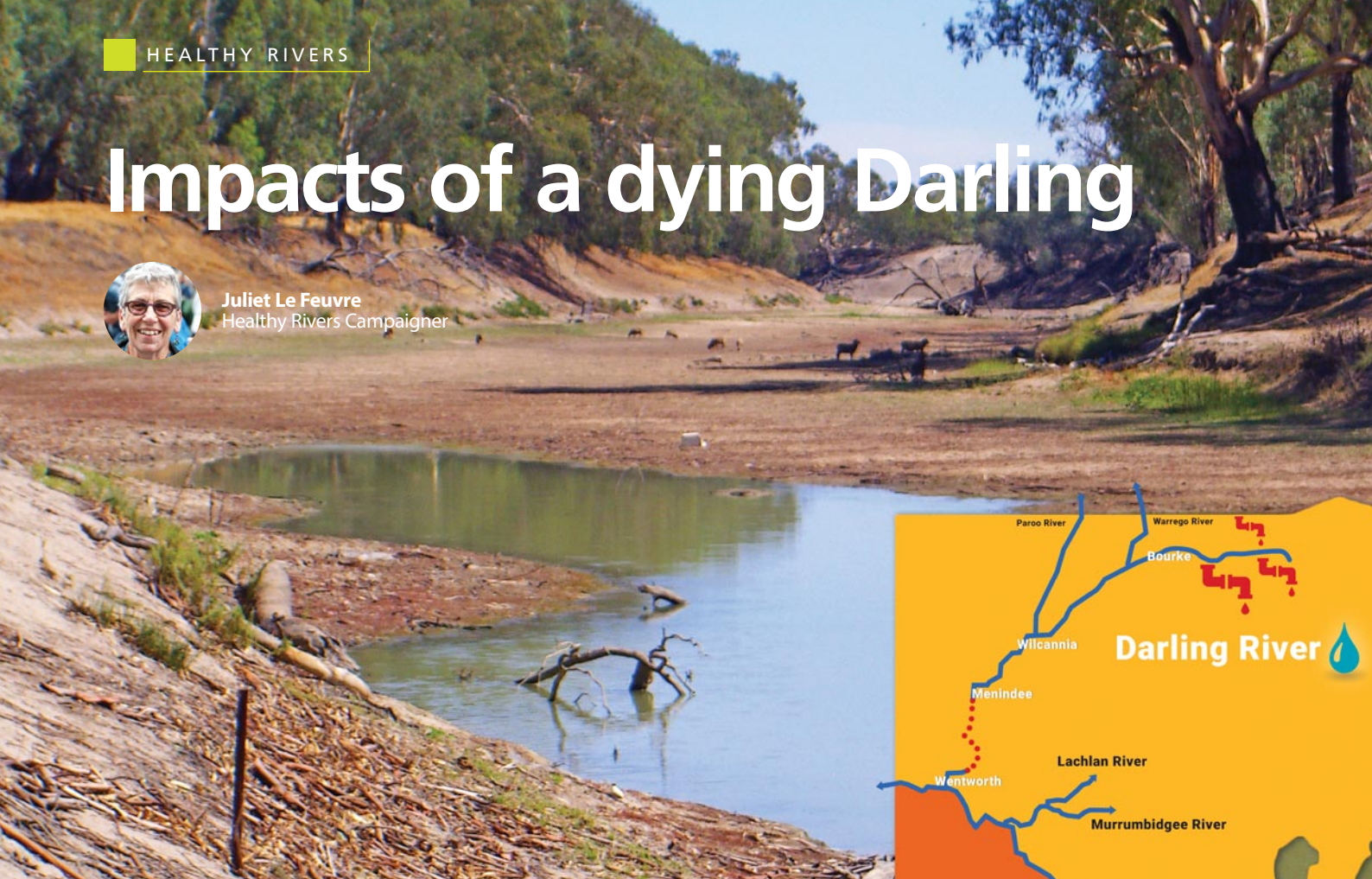
This commitment is critical to their long-term relevance as US demographics change. But it has also helped them win campaigns to stop or close coal and gas projects because they had strong relationships with affected people on the ground, who very often happen to be minority or disadvantaged communities.

It shows that even the largest and most well-resourced organisations need grassroots connections to achieve their goals.

Impacts of a dying Darling



Juliet Le Feuvre
Healthy Rivers Campaigner



For most of this year, the lower Darling downstream of the (empty) Menindee Lakes has been dry, with devastating consequences for the river and its people.

THE DARLING RIVER, TOGETHER

with its tributaries, is Australia's longest river system at 2,470km. It also has the most variable water volumes, with occasional boom years and a lot of bust years in between. It meanders from southern Queensland through outback New South Wales past Bourke and Menindee to join the Murray at Wentworth near Mildura. Some of Australia's most important wetlands such as the Macquarie Marshes, a breeding area for hundreds of thousands of water birds, are in the Darling Basin.

But the Darling is in trouble. For most of this year, the lower Darling downstream of the (empty) Menindee Lakes has been dry, with devastating consequences for the river and its people. It would be easy to point the finger at drought, but this is not the cause of the river's problems. The NSW government has changed the rules for irrigators upstream – cotton growers north of Bourke – allowing them to pump more water out of the river, including environmental water originating from Queensland, and

store it in huge private dams, leaving the lower Darling high and dry.

The Darling is in danger of becoming a divided stream with flows stopping at Bourke. If this happens, the lower Darling will die, along with its fish, trees and cultural significance, and its communities will run out of water. And the Darling Basin will be cut off from the Murray River with enormous consequences for Victoria and even more for South Australia, which depends on the Darling for flows.

Why should we in Victoria care? Apart from its own worth as a natural ecosystem, the Darling is important for practical reasons. If it stops flowing and no water comes down from Menindee Lakes, Victoria has to provide more water down the Murray for use in South Australia – which means less for our own farmers, irrigators and environment.

The NSW government must change its rules so that environmental water can get down the Darling, and make it illegal to pump the river dry upstream of Bourke. The current situation is threatening the whole success of the



Murray-Darling Basin Plan in restoring the Darling and the Murray Rivers to health.

In recent weeks some flows have returned to the lower Darling following good winter rain in northern NSW. While this is great news for the river and its people, we can't rely on nature to do all the work to fix man-made problems.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Sign our petition to state and national Water Ministers, asking them to stop over-extraction and to make sure environmental water can get through to the lower Darling. environmentvictoria.org.au/save-the-darling



In recent weeks some flows have returned to the lower Darling, but we can't rely on nature to fix man-made problems.

The Barkindji people

Will Mooney, Executive Officer, Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN)

FOR THE BARKINDJI PEOPLE OF

Western NSW, the Darling River or Barka/Parka is more than just a source of fresh water. It's a source of spiritual sustenance and a defining element of cultural identity. Barkindji literally means 'people of the river' or 'river folk'. The cultural traditions, stories, spiritual beliefs and everyday economic lives of Barkindji people have been entwined with the river for many thousands of years.

When Barka becomes sick, the community is sick. Allowing the extraction of large volumes of water in the upper Darling and tributaries has a direct impact on the wellbeing and cultural sustainability of Aboriginal communities. In June, community leaders in the town of Wilcannia called a protest to highlight the impacts of over-extraction upstream. Barkindji man Murray Butcher explained to ABC Radio: "The Darling River is like our mother, it is our lifeblood, it is our identity. This river sustained our people for countless generations. We can no longer do that, because of the situation of the river, and the poor health of our water."

In research conducted by the University of Technology Sydney in 2009, the long-term lack of water in the Darling River was identified as a factor in high crime rates for Wilcannia. One Aboriginal Client Service Specialist with the Broken Hill/Wilcannia Local Courts noted that "When the river is

down, the crime rate is high. Most families spend weekends on the river – fishing, swimming and on boats. When there's no water in the river, they're stuck in town, there's nowhere to go."

These issues are often ignored by governments making assessments about the social impacts of water management policy. Production statistics and employment figures are deployed by irrigation interests to argue the need for more extraction. In contrast, Aboriginal communities often lack the resources and lobbying power to document their interests and influence policy. In an effort to address this disparity, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority recently coordinated a research project with the Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations (NBAN). The 'Our water, our life' project demonstrated relationships between the delivery of environmental water and the social, environmental, spiritual, economic and cultural wellbeing of Aboriginal communities in the Northern Murray-Darling Basin.

The next step for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities is to build the case for Cultural Flows: dedicated entitlements that Aboriginal communities own and manage to meet their own objectives. For Barkindji people, owning a share of water in the Darling could empower them to care for the river, maintain an ancient culture and gain new skills.

To find out more about Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN), go to www.mldr.org.au or www.facebook.com/mldr

My life on the Darling

Howard Jones, irrigator, environmentalist and friend of Environment Victoria

For 44 years I've enjoyed camping, fishing and hunting on the Darling and the friendship of the landowners along the river as it meanders its way south. I've watched it rage in a swirling eddied flow in mid flood, then observed the serene floodplain, when the Darling spills out of its bank.

To be there at dawn and dusk, in the edge of an Oxbow, reconnected to the flow, looking at the colours. The huge majestic Red Gums feasting on the once-in-a-decade drink. The multitudes of every kind of bird. The joy in the folk, whose families have lived there, settled in many cases for over a century, loving it, nurturing it through the dry and the wet, is something to behold.

But sadly, not now. It is a divided stream. It finishes at Bourke, in the storage dams for next season's cotton crop. Not allowed to bring the fish for the Wilcannia People or fresh water for the stock. Pushing Broken Hill folk to use bore water, and ultimately a pipeline, that will further disconnect this beautiful, once vibrant river. And finally force my friends from their patch.

So you people down south, come up my way, meet the folk, look at the once proud river, as soon as you can.

Renters deserve better

Freezing in winter. Sweltering in summer. Draughty rooms and rising damp. We think renters deserve better than substandard housing, so we're calling for minimum standards for rental properties.



Anne Martinelli
One Million Homes Campaigner



MANY VICTORIANS ALREADY KNOW that inefficient energy use in our homes is a big contributor to Victoria's climate pollution. And that inefficient homes are uncomfortable and expensive to live in, particularly in the heat of summer and the cold of winter.

But for all the awareness-raising, government rebates and other incentives to encourage efficiency, there's always been one big gap. What to do about rental properties?

Rental homes make up about a quarter of Victoria's housing stock, so any serious effort to reduce emissions needs to include them. But landlords and tenants are in a different situation to home-owners – it's the landlord who has to foot the bill for efficiency improvements, but it's the tenant who gets the benefits of lower bills and greater comfort. So most landlords don't bother to make improvements, and most rental homes are not that great in terms of efficiency, affordability or comfort.

It's an entrenched problem, but right now we've got a rare opportunity to fix it. This year the Victorian government is reviewing the legislation which covers Victoria's rental sector, and our submission calls for mandated minimum standards (for health, safety and efficiency) that rental properties have to meet before they can be leased. We think standards should start at a low and achievable level to capture the worst-performing properties, but be raised progressively over time so that all renters benefit.

We're working with our One Million Homes Alliance partners to put the case that standards – which we used to have but were allowed to lapse in the 1990s – will make a big difference to reducing emissions and improving affordability and quality of life for tenants.

As long as standards are put in place with a reasonable lead-time of several years, and low-cost finance and advice is made available to landlords to help with compliance, we're confident this important reform can deliver a real win for Victoria's tenants, landlords and environment.

We know many Victorian renters and landlords are on board because we asked their views in a survey (see box below). Rental standards exist in other Australian states and overseas, and there's no reason they couldn't work here. After all, what we're asking for is just common sense: rental homes should be liveable homes.



If the average Victorian rental home were listed on Airbnb, how would it rate?

This was the idea behind our Rate Your Rental survey, which collected responses from more than 1000 Environment Victoria supporters. Here's what one renter had to say:

"Freezing in winter and boiling in summer, no insulation or external blinds. In winter we huddle in the lounge-room as the rest of the house is 9 degrees." – Kylie, Coburg

But there was also a strong recognition of the benefits for landlords too:

"If you respect your tenant by providing decent housing then it stands to reason that your tenant will reciprocate and respect your property." – Cathy, Kyneton Sth

Thanks to everyone who filled out the survey– these stories will inform our submission to the government and media campaign over coming months.

Turning ambition into action for our climate in Victoria



Dr Nicholas Aberle Campaigns Manager



Premier Daniel Andrews invited leaders of Victoria's environment movement to the announcement of Victoria's new clean energy target.

In *An Inconvenient Truth*, Al Gore, after showing us the scale of the challenge facing the world, explains how his political career taught him that things can change very suddenly. Is just such a moment emerging in Victorian politics?

THIS TIME TWO YEARS AGO,

Environment Victoria was running a huge ground campaign to encourage people in key electorates to pledge to vote for our environment in the 2014 state election. We did this to send a message to all candidates that if they want our support, they need a compelling plan for protecting the environment and tackling climate change.

Unfortunately, the then-Napthine government had an appalling record on the environment after dismantling decades of environmental protections, some of which had been introduced by former Liberal governments.

We managed to make the environment a key election issue. And in the wake of losing the election, a

number of figures in the Victorian Liberal party publicly asked why the Coalition didn't have better environment policies.

Our campaign also had an impact on the then-Labor opposition. Ahead of the election they released an environment policy and, though it was short on detail, it was long on ambition.

We are now starting to see the fruits of our work, as ambition is turned into action (though the full scale of action remains to be seen).

A key commitment from the Andrews government is to make Victoria a leader on climate change. As we approach the mid-point of this term of government, they've taken some positive steps, such as raising coal royalties and coal mine rehabilitation bonds to more appropriate levels, introducing a state renewable energy target of 40 percent by 2025, and a commitment to reach net zero climate pollution by 2050. Along the way, the state energy and climate portfolios have been united. With energy accounting for 50 percent of Victoria's climate pollution, this just makes sense.

However, the big tests for the Andrews government still lie ahead. By the end of the year, they should have released: a policy on the future of coal; a detailed

Renewable Energy Action Plan; their response to the review of the EPA; emissions targets for 2020 and an Energy Efficiency and Productivity Strategy. At the same time, the government will need to make decisions on the future of Hazelwood. You can't be a leader on climate change and simultaneously allow the world's most polluting power station to continue to operate in your backyard.

We can feel optimistic that the rapid change Al Gore referred to in 2006 might be about to happen in Victoria, but the job is not yet done. Labor could deliver meaningful improvements across climate and environment portfolios – the building blocks are in place. The Coalition could be realising the error of its ways in ignoring the protection of nature and taking us backwards on climate. At the same time, the Greens have their largest ever representation in Victorian Parliament, with their eyes on more inner city seats should Labor fail on key tests.

To paraphrase Martin Luther King, the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards the protection of our environment. Let's bend it further and faster.

THANK YOU to all of you who have been part of the campaign to put the environment above politics. We can be proud of what we're achieving together.

Our new Sustainability Hub



Greg Foyster
Communications and
Partnerships Manager

Check out the amazing illustration to the left – it's your vision of a sustainable future.

IN A SURVEY EARLIER THIS YEAR, nearly 400 Environment Victoria supporters told us what they want our society to look like in 2050. There were stories of birdsong and bike paths, the sharing economy and solar panels, but two things that really stood out were the importance of community, and needing green spaces to connect with nature. We asked an illustrator to represent these insights in a single lovely picture.

Now, thanks to some generous support from the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, we're turning this illustration into the basis of a 'Sustainability Hub' for our new website, launching in late September! Environment Victoria has been running award-winning sustainability programs for decades (in fact, we've just been shortlisted again, for the 2016 Premier's Sustainability Award!) and our online hub will be a home for all the tips and advice we have to offer.

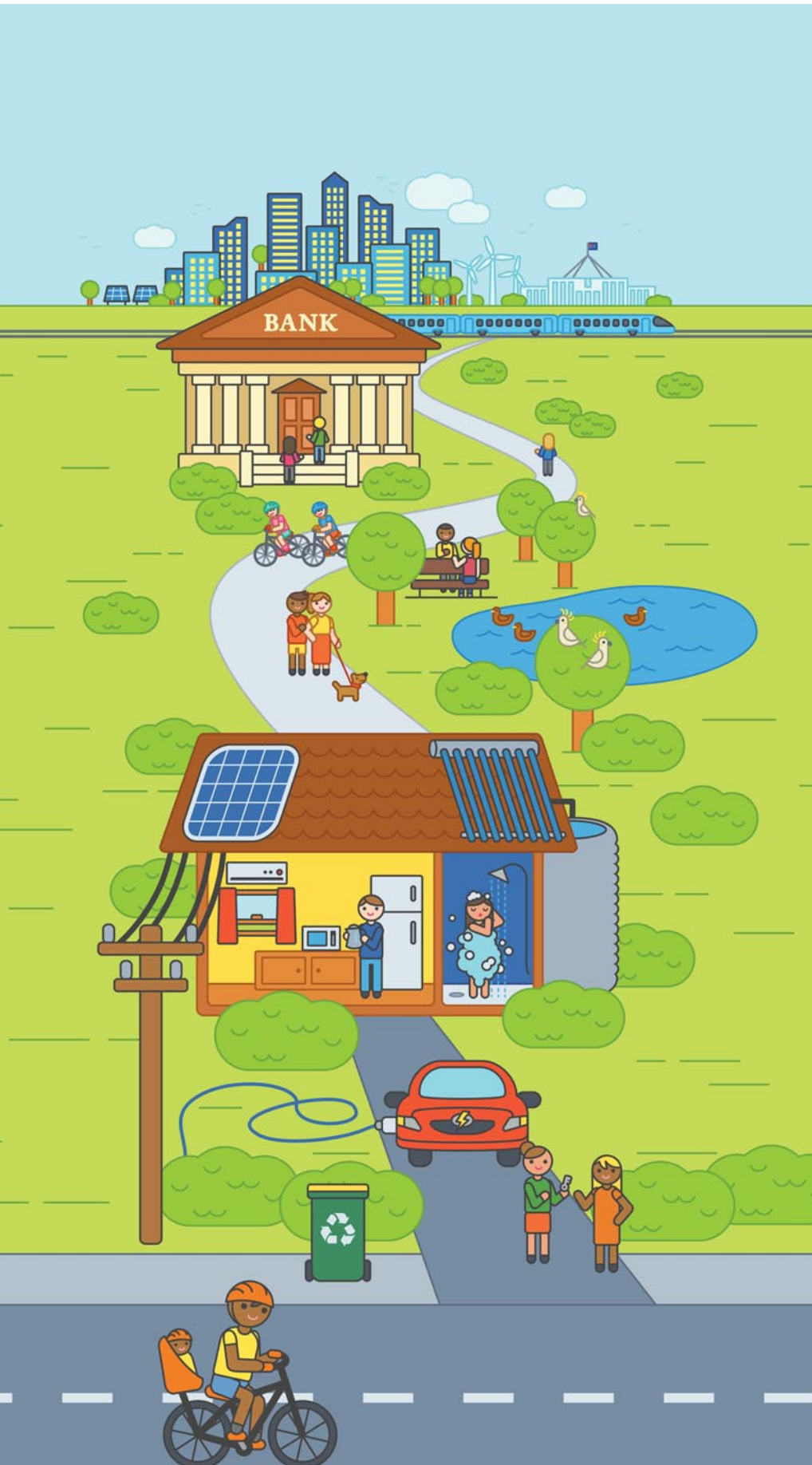
Of course, there's much more to sustainability than swapping light globes, and we can't let dirty industries and irresponsible governments pass the buck onto households. So the new Sustainability Hub will also link making changes at home with campaigning for change in the wider world.

VALE MIKE HILL

The Environment Victoria community was deeply saddened to hear of the passing of a true visionary – Mike Hill.

A former Mayor of Brunswick, Mike was instrumental to so many of our most-loved sustainability projects, from CERES Environment Park to Moreland Energy Foundation to Westwyck eco-cohousing in Brunswick.

Melbourne owes Mike an enormous gratitude for his enduring contribution. Our thoughts are with his family at this sad time.





Time to ACT on Extinction

Their fate is in our hands.

Dear Mark,
Yes! I want to see nature protected in Victoria.
Please accept my donation of:

\$100 \$250 \$500 \$1000 Your choice \$ _____

Please find enclosed: Cheque or Money Order (payable to Environment Victoria Inc.)

Or please debit my credit card: Visa MasterCard Amex

Cardholder's name: _____ Expiry date: ___ / ___ / ___ Signature: _____

Card number:

Please send me info about how I can make a gift to Environment Victoria in my Will.

Please send me info about how I can support Environment Victoria with a monthly gift.

Are your personal details correct on your letter? Or are you moving soon? Please update your personal information here if necessary.

PERSONAL DETAILS

Title: _____ First name: _____ Family name: _____

Address: _____

Suburb: _____ State: _____ Postcode: _____

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Mobile: _____ Home: _____

Please complete this form, cut off this page and return it to **Reply Paid 12575, A'Beckett Street, Melbourne, VIC 8006** or visit www.environmentvictoria.org.au and make your donation online. **Thank you for your generosity!**



2016 ENVIRONMENT Celebration

Featuring...

Melbourne Playback Theatre
& Nobel Laureate Professor Peter Doherty



Join us for a keynote address about climate change with a twist.

First, Nobel Laureate Professor Peter Doherty will present on health in a warming world. Then the creative actors and musicians from Melbourne Playback will turn your responses to the topic into compelling theatre. Finally we'll celebrate the groups and individuals who achieved incredible things for our environment this year. Tickets free, food and drinks provided.

WHEN Wednesday October 26

AGM 5:30 – 6:30pm **CELEBRATION** from 6:30 – 8:30pm

WHERE RMIT University Swanston Academic Building 80,
445 Swanston Street, Melbourne

RSVP essential by Friday 21 October at
envict.org/envirocelebration16 or by calling 9341 8100

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REGULAR VOLUNTEERS

Environment Victoria would like to thank our amazing crew of regular volunteers, who are now too numerous to mention.

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