

Environment Victoria News

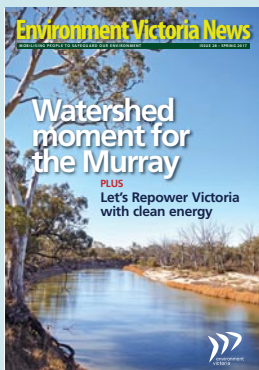
MOBILISING PEOPLE TO SAFEGUARD OUR ENVIRONMENT

ISSUE 28 • SPRING 2017

Watershed moment for the Murray

PLUS

**Let's Repower Victoria
with clean energy**



Environment Victoria News

Issue 28, Spring 2017

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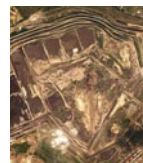
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Editorial

Dr Nicholas Aberle,
Acting Chief Executive Officer

MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN CAN BE A funny thing. One school of thought says the tipping point for a social movement is sustained activism on an issue by 3.5 percent of the population. In the UK, the British version of GetUp! is called 38 Degrees – the angle at which a bank of snow is steep enough to trigger an avalanche.

Each of these suggests a constant build-up of pressure, but the reality is that the quest to protect our environment and stop climate change goes through many ebbs and flows.

As you'll read in the following pages, Australia's rivers have been doing more ebbing than flowing lately, due to

dodgy rules created by the NSW government but also, according to an explosive Four Corners episode, outright theft of water by big upstream irrigators.

Our campaign to restore the Murray-Darling Basin to health has faced a weight of opposition for a long time, but with the pressure we and others have been able to build since those allegations were aired, we're hopeful our rivers will soon flow more freely again.

On climate and energy, some anti-renewables politicians seem determined to grind things to a halt – keeping existing coal power stations

open and even proposing new ones.

But they won't be able to hold back the tide. People power is rising – turn over the page to read about the new #Repower campaign to build an unstoppable nationwide wave of action for the transition to smart and clean energy. Rapid technological disruption is also driving change. The economic argument is now firmly on our side: renewables are the cheapest way forward.

Thanks for your incredible support and for playing your part in the effort to protect our precious environment... I think we're getting closer to the avalanche of change we need.

#Repower Victoria



Taegen Edwards, Organising Program Manager

Our campaign to #Repower Victoria has kicked off with a bang, with 20 groups flying the Repower banner around the state, including many local groups that have been leading the way on renewable energy for years.

CLEANING UP OUR NATIONAL

energy system remains a red-hot topic, with good and bad news in recent months.

In August, Repower Port Augusta in South Australia won a five-year community-led campaign when Premier Jay Weatherill announced the state government would fund a 150-megawatt solar thermal plant in Port Augusta to deliver enough energy to power 90,000 homes and also provide eight hours storage.

Here in Victoria, by the time you read this, we will be very close to having a newly legislated Renewable Energy Target (VRET) kicking off with the biggest renewable energy auction Australia has ever seen (see page 5 for more information about the VRET).

At the same time the federal government has continued to attack clean energy, echoed by Victorian opposition leader Matthew Guy, who has said he would repeal the VRET if his party wins next year's state election.

There has never been a more important time for the community to come together and demand a fast and fair transition to 100% renewable electricity. That's why we developed the national #Repower campaign in collaboration with other environment groups, including the Australian Conservation Foundation, Nature

Conservation Council of NSW, 350.org and Solar Citizens. #Repower works with communities across the country to support local action and advocacy on renewable energy.

Environment Victoria launched the Victorian campaign on 19 April and followed up with a deeper dive into strategy and action planning at our



WELCOME TAEGEN!

Taegen has been driving the Repower Victoria campaign since March. An experienced community organiser, she got hooked helping to set up a grassroots climate action group in 2009 and developed a healthy obsession with solar power while working with Solar Citizens between 2013 and 2015.

Clean energy lovers at Convergence in May, getting ready to #Repower Victoria

Repower Convergence in May, held in Melbourne. For existing groups it was a chance to share thoughts and build plans for local Repower campaigns. For folks speaking up for renewable energy in their communities for the first time, it was a chance to meet others and draw inspiration and ideas for how to get started.

Since then, we've been excited to work with a growing network of people taking action in 20 towns and suburbs around Victoria. Groups have been talking to people about renewable energy at local shopping strips and markets, with over a dozen teams taking part in a statewide Day of Action on July 15 to talk to members of their community and show support to their state MPs for the VRET.

#Repower groups come in different shapes and sizes. Some have been meeting for years, while others are brand new. But they are all doing powerful things, bringing people together to take action for a fast and fair transition to clean energy.

Repower Port Augusta started with a small group of people, a big vision and the will to build community power. With #Repower activity in communities across the country, we can't wait to see more wins to get Australia on the path to 100% renewable electricity.

If you want to be part of #Repower please get in touch with us at repower@environmentvictoria.org.au. You can find useful resources and a map of local groups at environmentvictoria.org.au/repower

#Repowering Victoria

There are 20 amazing #Repower groups in suburbs and towns around Victoria.

Here we talk to Alison, a core member of #Repower North East. The group is based in Bulleen which happens to be opposition leader Matthew Guy's electorate. A few months old, the group has already surveyed local people about clean energy solutions and reached out to Matthew Guy's office to share the results.

#Repowering Melbourne's North East

1. Tell us a little about yourself

I grew up in Canberra and have always loved the bush. My father was a great bushwalker and environmentalist. It just seemed logical and natural to me from an early age to respect and work with the natural environment.

2. What made you join #Repower and decide to set up a group?

I was becoming increasingly unhappy with the political response to climate change and the federal government's refusal to act in the best interests of Australians. Coal lobby groups were the elephant in the room in parliamentary debate. Misinformation was spread by those who should know better, as when the PM made misleading claims about the South Australia energy grid. How could I justify it to myself and to my future grandchildren if I sat back and didn't try to do something? It's a source of strength for me that I work as a team with my partner, and together we've joined with other like-minded people. This gives all of us the impetus and enthusiasm to work locally on the issue.

3. How has it been talking to people about renewable energy?

It has been great! People overwhelmingly support the move to 100% renewables and they want it for all, not just those who can afford solar panels.



#Repower North East members outside Matthew Guy's office (Alison is on the far-left)

4. Any stand-out moments from being involved so far?

As part of the survey, we ask people if they know their local Victorian MP's position on renewable energy. I'm surprised when many people say that they don't. When told that Matthew Guy would revoke the Victoria Renewable Energy Target (VRET) if voted in in the next election, they are genuinely shocked. His view is out of step with the view of his electorate.

5. What's your message to your MP?

Support the VRET and aim for 100% renewable energy. Use government initiatives to ensure energy affordability for all – for renters, for low-income households, for the disadvantaged and for those who will lose their jobs because the coal-fired power stations will inevitably close. Work for all Victorians, because that's your job!



#Repower Ringwood



#Repower Frankston

Smiling faces at the #Repower Day of Action. Over a dozen #Repower groups held their own events.

Clean energy boom!



Cat Nadel, Safe Climate Campaigner



Victorian engineering firm Keppel Prince, based in Portland, is Australia's largest producer and installer of towers for wind farms

In the latest example of Victoria's leadership on climate change, the Victorian Renewable Energy Target (VRET) has been introduced into Parliament along with a plan to build hundreds of megawatts of new clean energy. Safe Climate Campaigner Cat Nadel explains how it happened and what it means.

What does the VRET mean?

The Victorian Renewable Energy Target (VRET) means less pollution, more clean, renewable energy, and more jobs to create it.

Victoria is enshrining into law a plan to power our state with 40 percent

renewable energy by the year 2025. But more than targets and promises, the VRET has kicked off with a call for contracts to build 650 megawatts of new wind and solar. With bids opening in October, this will result in enough clean energy to power Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and the Latrobe Valley combined.

Currently, renewable sources make up about 17 percent of Victoria's electricity generation, with the rest coming from coal and gas. By the end of this year the government will need to determine how much more clean energy is needed to take us to 20 percent by 2020. By 2025, when the full VRET is achieved, it will reduce Victoria's climate pollution by 16 percent and could create over 9000 regional jobs in our growing renewable energy sector.

Most importantly, the VRET signals that Victoria is moving away from polluting and toxic coal-burning power by investing in safe, clean energy for the future.

How did this win for clean energy happen?

The VRET is the result of powerful community campaigns across the state to shift Victoria away from polluting coal power and towards clean renewable energy. Friends of the Earth have done fantastic work in their Yes2Renewables campaign to get a state-based target. The Victorian Greens included a VRET in their 2014 election platform and have consistently pushed renewable energy up the agenda in Parliament.

We're proud of the hundreds of Environment Victoria volunteers and community leaders who have championed the transition from Hazelwood's coal power to clean renewable energy for many years, including our deep community organising effort since 2013. Their hard work on the ground helped ensure the

Andrews government had a strong mandate to act on environmental protection, clean energy and climate change. To the government's credit, they are delivering. The VRET and auction announcement is the latest step in a positive direction for Victoria's future.

Thanks to Minister D'Ambrosio and Premier Andrew for making this happen.

Where to now?

While Victoria's renewable energy future is finally within our grasp, it is still under attack from those who would see us stuck in the polluting past. The Victorian Coalition has announced their opposition to the VRET and have launched a series of ugly campaigns spreading misinformation about power prices and supply.

Ever-growing threats to our climate demand that we make the transition to 100 percent renewable energy as quickly and fairly as we can. This won't be possible unless we come together as a community and demand politicians of all stripes get on board with the clean energy revolution and fight for a just transition that benefits all Victorians.

#REPOWER VRET SURVEY

On 15 July this year, we organised a #Repower day of action to show local MPs that their communities support clean energy. Across the state, from Cowes to Apollo Bay, Geelong to Frankston and Bentleigh to Richmond, volunteers collected 400 surveys, and hundreds more have been collected since. Almost 80 percent of respondents agreed that all political parties should commit to achieving the VRET target of 40 percent renewable energy by 2025 by building 5400 megawatts of wind and solar. With the opposition talking about repealing the VRET if elected, it's important to keep up the momentum with more grassroots support.

A forest of art



Greg Foyster
Communications
Manager



Between the trunks by Anna Curtis. Medium: Reduction linocut

IN THE HISTORY OF THE

environment movement, art and activism have often enjoyed a symbiotic relationship: nature can inspire art, and art can inspire people to protect nature.

One famous example is a photo of the stunning landscape at Rock Island Bend on the Franklin River, published in the Sydney Morning Herald just before the 1983 federal election, which helped transform the damming of the Franklin into a national political issue.

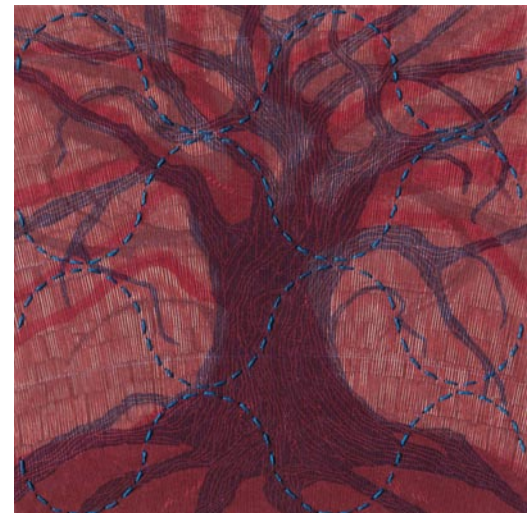
In July this year, Environment Victoria and Printmaker Gallery in Fitzroy collaborated on an exhibition that tapped into this

fertile association between creativity and conservation. Thirty local and interstate artists contributed their own unique representations of trees, transforming the gallery into a forest of artworks and raising funds for Environment Victoria's nature campaigns.

"It was the biggest turnout and most positive response we've had from an exhibition in the last few years," said one of the directors of the gallery, Fi James. "It was just phenomenal." Here are just some of the wonderful images. To view more or purchase prints, visit www.printmakergallery.com.au



Gumtree by Di Colk. Medium: Etching.



The forest sampler by Elizabeth Banfield.
Medium: Linocut on Kozo tissue with thread.



Remnant by Kasia Fabijańska. Medium: Etching with hand colour.

The Birrarung, “a river of mists and shadows”



“It’s nice to tell people about the Yarra, how it was blue running, that it was an eel breeding ground, that it had dolphins and sharks and stingrays. This place was a winter Kakadu.”

As part of this special river issue, Environment Victoria spoke with Stephen (Rocky) Tregonning, a Senior Cultural Guide at the Koorie Heritage Trust. He leads cultural walks along the Yarra River, explaining its history, environmental changes and cultural significance. The story below is adapted from this interview.

I’M FROM THE GUNAI/KURNAI TRIBE of the Gippsland regions, and I grew up around the mission and on the riverbanks. My mother Lillian and my grandparents were from Coranderrk mission in Healesville.

When I grew up at Lake Tyers Mission, we weren’t allowed to hunt and gather; we weren’t allowed to do language or cultural practices. Our mission had barbed-wire fences around it, locked-up gates. We lived in concentration camps on our own land.

I’ve connected with the Birrarung (the Yarra River) because it was a fresh running river and the sea life and the tucker life within the Birrarung reminds me of home. My brother was a senior cultural guide for 20-odd years, so I’ve sort of followed his footsteps, telling people the stories and the truth from our side.

It’s nice to tell people about the Yarra, how it was blue running, that it was an eel breeding ground, that it had dolphins and sharks and stingrays. This place was a winter Kakadu. And then we

use the early settlers’ records to show some of the historical changes to the river.

The most important part of the tour is understanding the impacts of change on the river, and the impact on the Aboriginal community, particularly on the Wurundjeri. This was their main food source. The community would have roo running past, they go down to get flake out from where the Aquarium is now.

When [the first Europeans] came up the Yarra, it was green, very verdant, but then sheep and cattle decimated our traditional bush tucker sources. When the waterfall was removed and the salt water inundated the fresh running river, the eel breeding stopped, the dolphins and sharks stopped coming. My ancestors would have started starving.

But we have to get on with it. Let’s move on to the future – we can’t dwell on what’s happened in the past. The best way for us to move forward is through consultation, discussions, talking with the community.

These Birrarung walks are a fairly new

project. It’s only been happening for 18 months or so, and as it becomes more and more popular we can see that there’s avenues to build onto it, like bush tucker. It’s only a basic introduction, this walk and talk, but we do go on to do other things like cross-cultural awareness training. So it’s great to have a stepping stone.

CUSTODIANSHIP OF THE YARRA

In June this year the Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Bill gave Wurundjeri people a legislatively enshrined voice in the formal custodianship of the Birrarung. This landmark legislation was the first bill to go before Victoria’s state parliament with a dual Indigenous language title. It creates an independent body called the Birrarung Council. Two members of the council must be nominated from the Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council.

You can read more in *the Guardian* at envict.org/Yarra-custodianship

Watershed moment for the Murray

In 2016, the Murray turned green from a putrid algal bloom stretching over 1000 km from Albury to Mildura



Juliet Le Feuvre
Healthy Rivers Campaigner

WE ALWAYS KNEW THE MURRAY-

Darling Basin Plan to revive the basin's rivers and wetlands was going to be a long haul. Five years after it became law, we are stuck about two-thirds of the way to the water recovery target of 3200 billion litres, and the political momentum has been against us.

But in July this year, a TV exposé drew much-needed attention to the issue, reinvigorating our campaign. The ABC's *Four Corners* aired explosive allegations that big industrial cotton irrigators in NSW had engaged in illegal water use, tampering with meters and siphoning off billions of litres of precious water meant to flow downstream to Victoria and South Australia.

Even worse, the NSW government's rules make much of the excessive pumping legal, allowing irrigators to help themselves to water purchased with public money that is supposed to restore the Darling and the once-mighty Murray to health.

Some readers might remember that we exposed these dodgy dealings in the Darling River in this newsletter back in September 2016, but it took the *Four Corners* program to blow the lid off the issue. The reaction has been huge. Five separate inquiries have been announced, but they still may not get to the bottom of what has been going on.



Upstream irrigators have been accused of stealing billions of litres of water that was bought with public money to benefit the environment in Victoria and South Australia

Unfortunately, they are not looking at all the other pressure points that are stopping the plan from realising its potential.

To give one example, our own Victorian government has been chipping away at the water recovery target and environmental outcomes of the plan. It is proposing a whole raft of untried and untested environmental works and rule changes to reduce the volume of water returned to rivers.

Their proposals have been described as taking policy into 'uncharted waters', and the eminent Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists is getting very concerned indeed about the outcomes. No one can say how these projects will work or what the results will be. The Wentworth Group is calling for a rethink of how the \$13 billion attached to the

Basin Plan is spent. They want to see less reliance on engineering solutions and more focus on helping communities adjust to a future with less water, building resilience to climate change.

Suddenly, with the political fallout from the *Four Corners* allegations, calls such as this are getting more attention and support. So let's seize the moment! With your help, we're calling on Minister Lisa Neville and the Victorian government to show leadership and recommit to implementing the Basin Plan on time and in full. That means moving away from untested offset projects and giving our rivers what they actually need – real water flowing past their banks.

THANK YOU!

Within a week of the *Four Corners* episode, 6000 people signed our petition to the Victorian Water Minister, asking her to find out what the impacts are, and to make sure these dodgy water deals never happen again.

You made a big splash! In early August, Victorian Water Minister Lisa Neville came out to support calls for a full independent inquiry into water management rules across the Murray-Darling. Now we're calling on the Turnbull government to support an independent inquiry and to make sure it happens. Sign at envict.org/independent-inquiry

How the Basin Plan can save our species



Golden Perch. PHOTO ARTHUR MOSTEAD

Golden perch – signs of success

GOLDEN PERCH OR YELLOWBELLY is a beautiful fish that used to be common in the lower Goulburn River. It can live up to 25 years, migrates long distances of up to 2000 kilometres, and is very tolerant of changes in temperature and salinity.

Native fish like the golden perch were once so abundant in the rivers of northern Victoria that early settlers didn't even need to go fishing – they could shoot them with a gun. Now their numbers have suffered heavily from overfishing, competition from introduced species like carp, and the building of dams and weirs, which change stream flows and block migration routes. The golden perch is now classified as near-threatened in Victoria.

But there is a glimmer of hope. By a process of trial and error, environmental water managers have learnt when is the best time to create a temporary increase in water flow, known as a 'fresh', to trigger spawning, and they have had some success over the last few years.

The next major objective is to get the right conditions for the baby fish to grow and for juvenile and adult fish to move and



DAVID KLEINERT (DAVIDKPHOTOGRAPHY.COM)

colonise other parts of the river system. This year there are early signs that environmental water has triggered movement of adult golden perch out of the Goulburn and into the main stem of the Murray and some of the other tributaries.

It's early days, but the Basin Plan may be starting to have a really positive benefit for golden perch in northern Victoria.

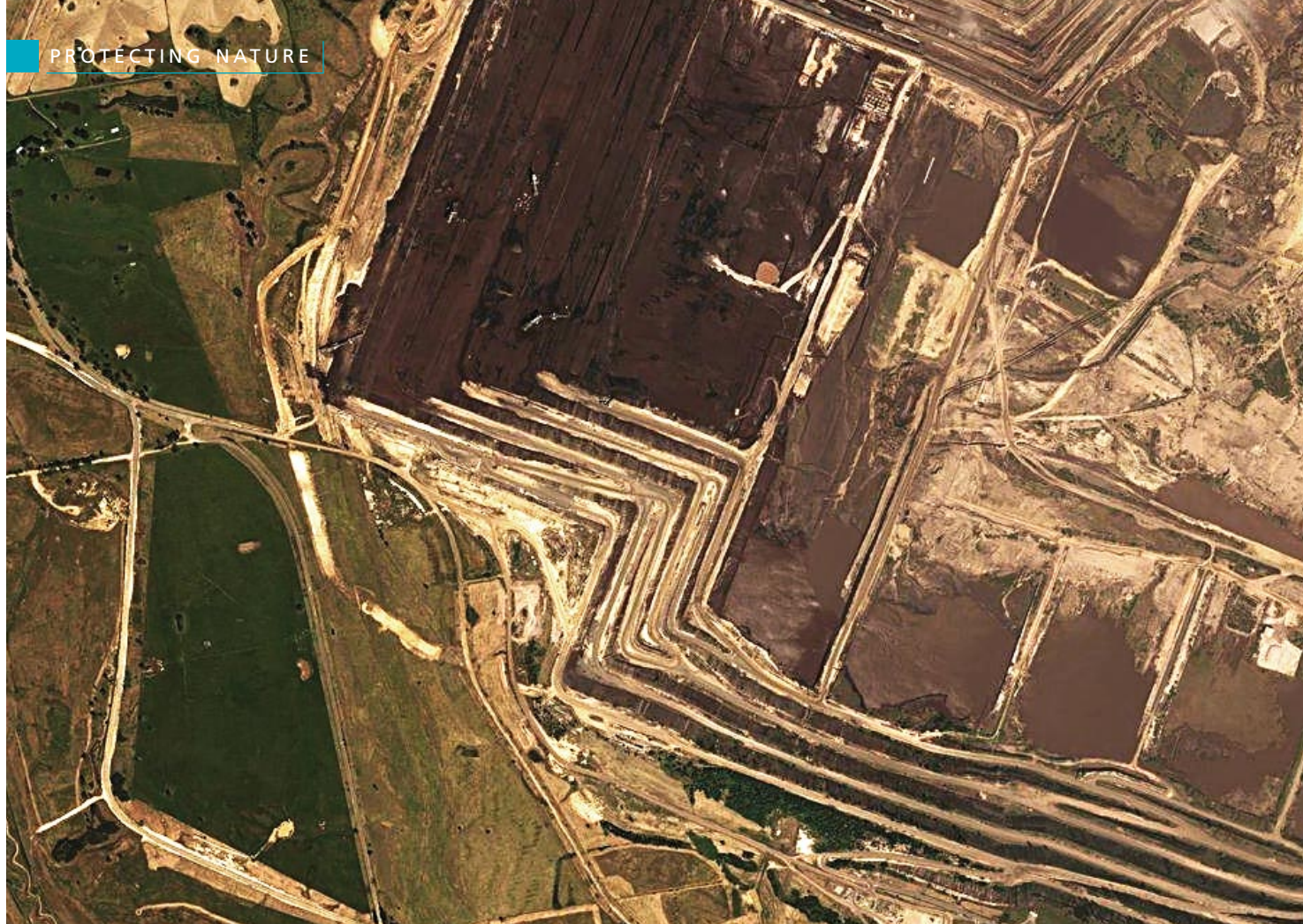
Broad-shelled turtle

THE BROAD-SHELLED TURTLE has the longest neck of any turtle in the world. It is listed as threatened in Victoria because it has a big problem – the population is getting older and young turtles are not surviving to adulthood.

This turtle spends almost all its time in water and lives only in permanent deep pools. It is therefore very susceptible to alterations in water flow regimes. It also has a big problem with foxes, which ransack its nests and eat the large and presumably tasty eggs. No one has yet written an action statement or recovery plan for the broad-shelled turtle, so its needs are little known and prospects for recovery remain dim. The Basin Plan could be our best chance to turn things around for this unique animal by providing crucial deepwater habitat.

VALE BRIAN CUMING

Dr Brian Cuming, a scientist who played a crucial role in protecting Western Port, died in May this year. Dr Cuming was instrumental in having the Western Port wetlands listed under the Ramsar Convention in 1982, and in 2006 he became a founding member of the Devilbend Foundation. He received an Order of Australia Medal in 2015 for his service to conservation and made important contributions to many conservation groups, including Environment Victoria. We acknowledge his extraordinary legacy and wish his family well.



My coal childhood – lessons for Australia from Germany's mine pit lakes

Hazelwood's owners plan to fill the coal pits with water, but the challenges are significant and alternatives have been ignored.



Anica Niepraschk

I GREW UP ONE KILOMETRE FROM the edge of a brown coal mine and surrounded by many others. I remember staring in fear at that massive hole, scared of getting too close after hearing stories of people buried alive because they walked along the unstable mine walls.

My family lives in the Lausitz region of Germany, once home to 30 brown coal mines. Situated between Berlin and Dresden, the region has been shaped by this industry for over 100 years. It was the German Democratic Republic's powerhouse, with coal mining the largest source of jobs.

That changed with Germany's reunification, when the economy was restructured and most of the mines closed. The region's major industry was gone, leaving it punctured with massive holes and the community wondering how to make the region liveable again.

Victoria's Latrobe Valley is facing similar challenges. People are asking the same questions we did in Germany 15 years ago: how do we transition to a more diverse, sustainable economy while providing local jobs? What do we do with the dangerous pits left behind?

The same solutions are put forward too. Engie, the owner of the shuttered

Hazelwood power station and mine, is proposing to fill all or part of the pit to become a lake and recreation area. The inspiration comes from the Lausitz, but the challenges don't seem to have been given enough attention.

In my early teens, as I watched these massive mines around our house fill with water, I got excited about the prospect of living in what was renamed Neuseenland, "the land of new lakes". But while I enjoyed summer days swimming in some of these flooded mines, the process of filling them with water has been very slow. Many are still a long way from being safe after 10 or 20 years,



A satellite image of the Hazelwood mine pit

even though the region has plenty of water. The huge pits could be filled from diverted waterways, groundwater, rainfall and large amounts of reprocessed mining water, transferred from nearby operating mines.

Water is not available to the same extent in the Latrobe Valley. To give a sense of scale, it would take more water than is in Sydney Harbour just to fill one of the brown coal mines. Where will it come from? What would be the downstream impacts? Would a lake be safe for the public to use? The Hazelwood inquiry into mine rehabilitation identified these challenges, and the Victorian government has created a rehabilitation commissioner and advisory committee to start finding answers, but we just don't know yet.

Then there's the environmental contamination. In the Lausitz, mining had already polluted the waterways with high amounts of iron hydroxides, calcium and sulphates. Flooding the mine pits spread this pollution even further, degrading local ecosystems. Increasing salinity in waterways now threatens drinking water supplies to

Berlin and makes water management more expensive. German mining companies are the biggest users of water but don't even have to pay for it.

For local communities, other major consequences include rising groundwater, which floods basements, cracks buildings and shifts the ground. Landslides are also a worry. In the Lausitz in 2009, a 350-metre strip of land – including buildings, a road and a viewing platform – slid into the adjacent pit lake, burying three people. In 2010, in an area where the land was regarded as very stable and settled, 27 hectares of forests sank into the earth. This will come as no surprise to people of the Latrobe Valley, where the Princes Highway was closed for months in 2011 due to landslides related to the adjacent Hazelwood mine.

There have been many such incidents in the Lausitz, and the risk makes whole areas inaccessible, but they're rarely mentioned when the Lausitz is promoted as the poster child of mine rehabilitation through flooding.

Engie's consultations on the future of Hazelwood begin in September. So far, the community has expressed many

ideas other than filling the pit with water, but these have been ignored. Engie is unwilling to release the list of rehabilitation concepts they considered before settling on the pit lake solution. This makes it difficult for the community to weigh the recommendation against alternatives.

Before more planning proceeds on the assumption that a pit lake is the only option, the lessons learnt from the Lausitz should be discussed in the Latrobe Valley. It's important to avoid as many problems as possible from the beginning, and to make sure the mine owners pay for the water they are taking, as everybody else does.

Most of all, the community needs to have more say in what happens to retired mine pits. Like me, the children of Morwell, Moe and Traralgon have grown up surrounded by dangerous holes in the ground. Their families have the most at stake in what happens next, so they should have the loudest voice in shaping the region's future, not the corporate mine owners who shaped its past.

This is an edited version of an article originally published in the *Guardian* and the *Ecologist* in August 2017.

Anica has gone on maternity leave this month. We wish her all the best!

The bats of Melbourne

Melbourne's flying foxes might seem abundant as they dot the city skyline at sunset, but they're actually a threatened species.



Cam Wheatley
Communications Officer



Grey-headed flying fox PHOTO: DOUG GIMESY

MAYBE YOU'VE HEARD THEM

squeaking from a suburban gum tree late at night, or maybe you've glanced up at sunset and seen them dotting the skyline, heading out to feed on nectar, blossoms and fruit.

Every night, Melbourne's grey-headed flying foxes head out from the safety of Yarra Bend Park, where they spend the day suspended upside-down, napping and socialising. If you take a trip to the Bellbird picnic area you'll be treated to a spectacle, a great flapping cacophony of life. Yet appearances can be deceiving.

Their population is a fraction of what it once was, and grey-headed flying foxes are now a threatened species.

Huge numbers have been shot by fruit farmers (despite the existence of affordable and humane alternatives) and their habitat is still being destroyed, especially in New South Wales and Queensland. They also face new threats in their travels through our expanding city, where they become entangled in power lines, barbed wire and netting on backyard fruit trees.

Among all these threats, the bushland

at Yarra Bend provides a crucial safe haven. But our outdated and ineffective laws mean these furry critters aren't getting the protection they need.

Back in 2003, flying foxes were listed as a threatened species under Victoria's Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act (FFG Act) (1988), but fourteen years later, there is still no action plan for their protection. Sadly this is not an uncommon story. Action statements on how a species will be brought back from decline are supposed to be a requirement under the FFG Act, but less than half of the plants and animals listed have plans. Some action statements are decades old but haven't been implemented.

While the loss of any plant or animal is a tragedy, the extinction of grey-headed flying foxes would have far-reaching impacts.

Many plants rely on flying foxes for their survival. In a single night, a flying fox can travel up to 100 kilometres, pollinating trees and spreading seeds as it goes. A single flying fox can disperse up to 60,000 seeds in one night! This is a creature we simply cannot afford to lose.

The Andrews government is reviewing the FFG Act, so now is the time to speak up. We need laws that do what they say on the label, actually guaranteeing the survival of threatened plants and animals.

To take action, go to envict.org/act-on-extinction or use the hashtag #ActOnExtinction on Twitter. Let's hope that the next time you hear the tell-tale squeak and rustling of a grey-headed flying fox doing its rounds, you can smile, knowing it has the protection it needs.

Together we can make sure that these intelligent, charismatic animals continue pollinating trees, spreading seeds and helping our native bush to flourish.



PHOTO: GREG MCLACHLAN

This flying fox has become trapped in unsafe backyard fruit netting. It was later rescued by volunteers, but not all bats are as lucky. If you choose to net fruit trees, please use wildlife-safe netting. Flying foxes are easily tangled in netting with holes larger than 5mm x 5mm and it is the leading cause of death and injury for flying foxes in urban areas.

Liz Wilson is FOREVER GREEN

Liz Wilson, a long-time supporter of many environment groups, recently decided to leave a lasting legacy to Environment Victoria in her Will.



Liz Wilson and her 'Uncle' gifting a witchetty grub in Arnhem Land

"Organisations such as Environment Victoria provide a platform for 'people power' protest and a voice for change."

LIZ WILSON'S FLOURISHING BUSH GARDEN OF INDIGENOUS

plants is sourced from the Knox Environment Society, which collects and propagates local seeds and sells them to the public – a precious gift to the planet.

Liz's passion for Victoria's diverse environments was nurtured by a childhood spent in various parts of country Victoria. Her great love of trees began at this time.

She says no mention of the protection of the environment would be complete without an acknowledgement of the First Australians' contribution over a period of more than 65,000 years (and counting). Liz experienced this firsthand in her thirty-year teaching career, working initially in remote communities in the Northern Territory, and later in country areas of Queensland, New South Wales and finally Victoria.

"This acknowledgment must come from a place of reconciliation, wherein the past injustices of invasion, massacres and stolen generations are recognised, accepted and redressed," she explains. "Constitutional recognition and a formal treaty are necessary starting points."

Liz sees the current federal government's refusal to accept climate change as a regressive move with ramifications on a global scale. "Organisations such as Environment Victoria provide a platform for 'people power' protest and a voice for change." Liz has honoured Environment Victoria's commitment to protecting our unique Victorian environment by leaving us a bequest, for which we are deeply grateful.

BECOME FOREVER GREEN

Leaving a gift to Environment Victoria in your Will is an exceptional legacy for future Victorians who will inherit this beautiful state from us.

It's a simple change when you next review your Will.

The wording below is a guide for your solicitor or trustee:

"I give to Environment Victoria Inc. (ABN: 84 495 053 605) of Level 2, 60 Leicester Street, Carlton, Vic, 3053 for the purpose of safeguarding Victoria's environment [the residue [or...%] of the residue of my estate] or [...% of my estate] or [the sum of \$....] or [specified property....] free of all debts, duties or taxes and declare that the receipt of an authorised officer shall be a sufficient discharge for my executor(s)"

To find out more contact Gifts in Wills Coordinator John Macdonald on 9341 8109 or j.macdonald@environmentvictoria.org.au

VOLUNTEER WANTED

Enjoy creating interesting conversations and listening to people's stories?

We're looking for a person to thank some of our most loyal and committed donors by phone.

They may have recently made a donation, responded to a campaign, experienced a birthday or a significant life event, or would just like to hear a little more about our work from someone who cares as much as they do. If you're interested, please call John Macdonald, for a chat on 9341 8109, email j.macdonald@environmentvictoria.org.au or visit environmentvictoria.org.au/give/bequests/

The tree saver

This year, dedicated conservationist and long-term Environment Victoria volunteer Les Smith received a Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to our environment. And it all started with some gum trees in Mitcham ...



Greg Foyster
Communications Manager



“There’d been little interest in conservation, and suddenly there were whole pages of letters in *The Age* about it from ordinary people, culminating in a massive protest meeting at the St Kilda Palais.”

ONE OF VICTORIA’S MOST COMMITTED environmentalists was recruited to the cause by a real estate agent. Les Smith migrated to Australia from England in 1953 to join his Australian fiancée, Helen. After they married, they looked for a place to settle within reach of her home in Kew. Les remembers, “We would go out and look at land in the Blackburn to Ringwood area, a nice block with trees, and the agent would say to us, ‘We’ll cut down the trees for you free of charge’, or they would already have been removed.”

But Les wanted to protect the bushland, and when he learnt of a private owner who would only sell double blocks so that more trees would be preserved, he immediately bought two. He built on one block, and much of the indigenous vegetation on the other remains today.

Local residents were becoming concerned about the loss of trees in their

suburb, and the Blackburn Tree Preservation Society was launched in 1959. Les joined in 1960 and has been a committee member since 1967. Among its many activities, the society successfully lobbied the local council to protect all trees above a certain size in several zones of the municipality.

Les also became involved in the fight to save the Little Desert, which was threatened by agricultural subdivision in the late 1960s. The Victorian National Parks Association campaigned against the development along with an alliance of about 100 local environment groups, known as the Save our Bush Action Committee.

“There’d been little interest in conservation, and suddenly there were whole pages of letters in *The Age* about it from ordinary people, culminating in a massive protest meeting at the St Kilda Palais,” says Les. The campaign was so

successful that the committee decided to keep the alliance going and created the Conservation Council of Victoria, which in 1992 became Environment Victoria.

After the victory, members of The Blackburn and District Tree Preservation Society formed the Urimbirra Co-operative Society to buy bush blocks next to the soon to be created Little Desert National Park. They now own 1000 hectares, protected by a conservation covenant agreement with the Trust for Nature. Les has remained a stalwart of the movement and was the secretary of Environment Victoria from 1990 until the early 2000s. Now in his 80s, he still volunteers in the office every Tuesday.

All of this was recognised on Queen’s Birthday this year, when Les received a Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to our environment. In September, the Blackburn and District Tree Preservation Society won the Victorian Urban Landcare Award for 2017. Asked to nominate a tree that’s special to him, Les cites one of the yellow box gums in his garden, which is where it all started.



Dear Nick,
I want healthy rivers and wetlands to support Victoria's threatened species.

Please accept my donation of:

(All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.)

☐ \$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: _____ Last name: _____

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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!**

Personal information is collected to process donations, issue tax receipts and keep you updated about our work. Please contact us at the address below if you wish to limit the use of your personal information or stop receiving direct marketing material from Environment Victoria. Our privacy policy is available at environmentvictoria.org.au/privacy and outlines how you can access or correct your personal information, who we disclose your personal information to (including overseas recipients) and how you can lodge a complaint





Thanks to wildlife photographer and Environment Victoria supporter Doug Gimesy for this amazing platypus image. You can see more of his work at gimesy.com

WHO'S WHO AT



Chief Executive Officer
Mark Wakeham
Acting Chief Executive Officer
Nicholas Aberle

CAMPAIGNS & PROGRAMS

Campaigns Manager
Nicholas Aberle
Healthy Rivers Campaigner
Juliet Le Feuvre
Safe Climate Campaigners
Cat Nadel
Anica Niepraschk
Efficiency Campaigner
Anne Martinelli
Community Organising
Campaign Manager
Jane Stabb
Taegan Edwards
Community Organising
Campaigner
Adele Neale
Emma Horsburgh

Communications Managers
Alex Merory
Greg Foyster
Communications Officer
Cam Wheatley

OPERATIONS

Finance Manager
Kate Rogers
Accounts Officer
Jing Lu
Office Manager
Cate Hoyle
Admin Officer
Sharon Hargreaves
Fundraising Director
Jonathan Storey
Fundraising Officer
Heather Bruer
Major Donor and
Gifts in Wills Coordinator
John Macdonald
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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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