

ENVIRONMENT VICTORIA NEWS

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Building the movement for environmental justice

PLUS

**River stories:
connecting across
the Murray-Darling**



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Contributing writers **Jono La Nauze, Greg Foyster, Hayley Sestokas, Cameron Wheatley, Isabel Kimpton, Taegen Edwards, James Norman, Laura Melville, Kat Lucas-Healey, Joy Toose, Peizhi Jiang, Sylwia Sierkiewicz**


Editors **James King, Cameron Wheatley and Isabel Kimpton**


Membership and supporter enquiries
(03) 9341 8100
admin@environmentvictoria.org.au

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For more information, visit
www.environmentvictoria.org.au

Authorised by J. La Nauze,
CEO, Environment Victoria,
60 Leicester Street, Carlton, VIC 3053

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Front cover: Volunteers at our autumn Action Network Summit.

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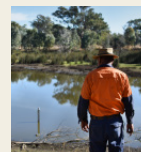
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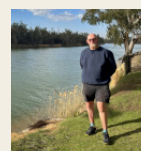
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Editorial

Jono La Nauze

Chief Executive Officer



The recently coined term 'climate whiplash' is getting a workout here in Victoria.

Our winter was short and sharp, with the coldest June and July since the 1980s. The early return to warmer weather was initially welcomed (especially by those stuck in freezing, poorly insulated homes and those without a home at all). But the news that August was Australia's hottest on record, a whopping three degrees above average, gave the sunshine a menacing feeling.

Then Spring announced its arrival with hail and cyclonic winds that closed runways, cut power and, tragically, ended

lives. As I write this, the full extent of the damage is yet to be revealed, but one thing is clear – we are living in a hotter, more dangerous climate and our work to keep fossil fuels in the ground has never been more urgent.

However, Australia's methane gas industry wants us to think otherwise. They've enlisted MasterChef to convince Australians we will never need to give up the little blue flame, and that we can just transition to 'renewable gas'. We've been busy exposing this for what it is – greenwashing designed to prop up gas industry profits at the expense of our climate, our health, and beautiful places like the 12 Apostles, now threatened by gas drilling. The next twelve months are going to be critical as we battle the industry over the future of gas in Victoria's homes. Around half of the gas used in Victoria is in the home, so a fast, fair,

phase out of gas appliances is the biggest step we can take toward a methane gas-free Victoria.

Thankfully, our movement has what it takes to push back against the toxic gas industry and those who profit from damaging our climate and natural world.

This edition of *Environment Victoria News* is packed full of stories from communities working together to restore the bush, keep people safe in times of extreme weather, and demand a clean energy future. From community gardens and billabongs on the Murray floodplain, to mine rehabilitation and the nuclear resistance in the Latrobe Valley, every page is a testament to people power and an inspiration to action. Enjoy!

Survey reveals deep concerns over climate resilience

James Norman

Media and Content Manager



The effects of climate breakdown have quickly shifted from being a looming threat on the horizon, to being very real, immediate and relentless. And it's clear that Victoria is not prepared.

That's why we welcomed the opportunity this year to make a submission to the Victorian Inquiry into Climate Resilience. The inquiry will have an important role in shaping how our state responds to escalating climate impacts like bushfires and floods.

But solutions must be guided by the communities most affected and most at risk. Otherwise we risk replicating all the injustices and inequalities that got us here in the first place.

So we asked our community to complete a survey on climate impacts, and we were overwhelmed by the response. 541 of you filled out the survey and 16 personal video submissions were recorded from across the state.

The insights and deep personal experiences you shared showed the concerns, needs, and aspirations of Victorians from all walks of life. Many of you described being impacted by bushfires, extreme heat and storms and expressed a deep concern for the health and safety of your wider community.

Key issues that kept coming up were stretched emergency services, poor

infrastructure and a lack of access to secure and appropriate housing for everyone.

"[People experiencing homelessness] are the most 'at risk' during any extreme weather event; even normal winter and summer extremes endanger their very lives. Safe housing for all must be a number one priority," said one respondent.

Disability as well as physical and mental health made some folks feel especially vulnerable, including those living with sensory and mobility issues, asthma and heart conditions, autism and those who rely on life support infrastructure.

In addition to the many deep concerns, we also noted a strong motivation to work towards a more resilient future. Many of you cited the ability for communities to band together, collaborate and support each other in times of need.

People contributed ideas on how their neighbours, local council, Country Fire Authority, schools, State Emergency Service, environment and faith groups can all work together. There was also strong support for First Nations-led solutions.

It was clear that our community expects governments to ultimately be accountable for helping communities prepare and rebuild from climate impacts, and that people want to be involved in decision-making.

When we asked how involved you think communities should be, almost 50% of you chose 'active collaboration'.

We need to do more to prepare for the rise of unnatural climate disasters, and this inquiry is a huge opportunity to highlight your concerns and drive momentum for change.

How involved do you think you and your community should be in climate resilience planning?

Informed	10%
Consulted	11%
Involved	22%
Active Collaboration	49%
Decision-Makers	8%

We hope that by creating a powerful submission based on your responses we can make sure the government understands this is an urgent priority, and that they have real people's stories front of mind. The inquiry is due to report back by June 30 next year and is currently holding hearings across the state – the schedule is available at www.parliament.vic.gov.au/get-involved/inquiries/climate-resilience/hearings

READ MORE

Our full submission to the inquiry is available at ENVICT.ORG/RESILIENCE-SUB

THANK YOU to everyone who completed the survey or recorded a video submission. Your deep insights and firsthand experiences were incredibly moving and allowed us to create a powerful submission to the inquiry.



Image: Samantha James

Supporting First Nations water justice at the River Peoples' Forum

Greg Foyster

Rivers and Nature Campaign Manager



In July, we joined a big gathering in Swan Hill on how to achieve water justice for Traditional Owners in the Murray-Darling Basin.

Australia is the driest inhabited continent on Earth and home to the world's oldest living culture. These two facts make Aboriginal peoples the most experienced and successful water managers in human history.

Despite this, they are largely locked out of managing and caring for waterways today. "First Nations people in the Basin have devoted their lives to achieving water justice, and yet we own less than 0.2% of water rights," said Grant Rigney, a Ngarrindjeri citizen and Chair of Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN).

In July, Grant facilitated a big forum on water justice in Swan Hill, hosted by local environment groups Sustainable Living in the Mallee and Friends of Nyah Vinifera Park, with support from Environment Victoria and MLDRIN. About 80 people attended, coming from as far away as Ngarrindjeri Country

in South Australia and Wiradjuri Tubbagah Country in NSW, with another 120 joining the livestream.

Guest speakers included leading voices from MLDRIN, Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (trading as Djaara), Yoorrook Justice Commission, the University of Melbourne and University of Adelaide.

Brendan Kennedy, Deputy Chair of MLDRIN, explained how his people, Tati Tati and Wadi Wadi, currently have no access to, or influence over water on their Country. "We met today to highlight to the broader community how the State and Commonwealth governments deny and prevent us from having any decision-making power over rights to our water. Being part of this decision making is our inherent right."

"We are Traditional Owners of the land and we've got to have those water rights because it's our natural resource," said Ben Muir, a Wotjobaluk man currently working for Djaara. "Our people know how waterways work."

"Friday was an incredibly positive day," said Peta Thornton, a stonefruit farmer and one of the key local organisers of the event. "It really gave the wider community a chance to better understand First Nations rights and aspirations, and what can be achieved when First Nations have the resources to work on these areas."

Wadi Wadi Traditional Owner, Vincent Kirby, has been one of many First Nations people speaking out against Victorian government plans to engineer wetlands along the Murray, which could have a devastating impact on Country. "It was great having so many people together in Swan Hill to talk about what we want for our rivers," he said. "No matter what colour you are, or what race you come from, rivers are important. Water is life and we need to look after it."

THANK YOU to everyone involved in pulling this event together! The River Peoples' Forum was organised by local environment groups Sustainable Living in the Mallee and Friends of Nyah Vinifera Park, with support from Environment Victoria, MLDRIN and Swan Hill Rural City Council Events fund.

LEARN MORE

We have made a beautiful short video from the day, with interviews of speakers and attendees. Watch it at: [ENVICT.ORG/WATER-JUSTICE](https://envict.org/water-justice)

Truth-telling: Land, Sky and Waters hearings

From left: Tati Tati and Wadi Wadi Traditional Owner Brendan Kennedy, Victorian Water Minister Harriet Shing, Matt Dawson and Yoorrook Commissioner Travis Lovett near Robinvale for one of the hearings into Land, Sky and Waters.



Isabel Kimpton

Rivers

Communication Lead



The Yoorrook Justice Commission is Victoria's truth-telling process – and the first of its kind in Australia.

Now in its third year, it aims to record the impact of colonisation and ongoing injustices faced by First Peoples in Victoria. Their invitation to all Victorians is to “walk with us. To listen, to learn and share our history.”

Recent hearings on the topic of Land, Sky and Waters saw First Nations elders and academics providing evidence on how water, land and resources were stolen through colonisation – and how this dispossession continues today. Senior government Ministers, including Victorian Premier Jacinta Allan, also came before the Commission.

Here are some of the key things we heard in the hearings:

1. Colonisation in Victoria started with a violent “squatting rush”

Colonisation in Victoria began in 1834, on Gundijtmara Country in Portland. By the 1840s, squatters had established 700 stations across the state with

millions of sheep. Historian and professor Richard Broome described the spread of settlers as likely the “swiftest expansion within the British empire of any occupation of land.”

Yoorrook heard evidence about the violence and theft of land, water and resources that this brought. There are 49 known massacres in Victoria, but as Professor Marcia Langton explained, “it is unlikely most of the killings were recorded.”

2. Water injustice is ongoing

The hearings explored the idea of Aqua Nulius – that when settlers arrived in Victoria, they didn't just steal land that belonged to First Nations, they also stole water. This dispossession has had ongoing impacts on the ability to care for Country, practice culture and generate income.

The state government has received \$83 billion in water revenue over the past decade, but none of that has been passed on to Traditional Owners. Today, Traditional Owners hold less than 0.18% of water entitlements in Victoria.

3. First Nations deliberately excluded from land royalties

Traditional Owner groups have been deliberately cut out of billions of dollars of land use revenue from industries like native forest logging and grazing. Of the \$1.5 billion raised, none has been distributed to Traditional Owners.

4. Victorian government looking into benefit sharing from renewable energy

Energy Minister Lily D'Ambrosio flagged the government is intending to establish benefit sharing arrangements so Traditional Owners can receive profits from renewable energy on their land. She also agreed that the Victorian government should be funding programs to “enable self-determination by First Peoples and Traditional Owners in the energy and resources sector.”

5. Native Title is not delivering land justice

Rapid colonisation in Victoria not only dispossessed First Nations of land, but deliberately wiped out evidence of their connection to Country. As a result, very few First Nations in Victoria have been granted Native Title.

6. Treaty is one solution, but government can be doing more now

Government Ministers, including the Premier, acknowledged the damage of colonisation and barriers that remain today. Many pointed to Treaty as a solution, but there is plenty that can be done now.

“We have had many expressions of genuine acceptance of the past, but no effective ways of addressing them, despite those good feelings. Treaty is one answer. It is not the only answer.” – Commissioner Anthony North KC.

We all have a role to play in truth-telling. In the words of Professor Eleanor Bourke, Wergaia/Wamba Wamba Elder and Chair of the Yoorrook Justice Commission: “When we understand the past and how this connects to the present, we have the power to create real and lasting change.”

Learn more at YORROOKJUSTICECOMMISSION.ORG.AU

Learn more about Treaty at FIRSTPEOPLESVIC.ORG/TREATY

READ MORE AT
ENVICT.ORG/YORROOK



River stories: connecting across the Murray-Darling

Greg Foyster

Rivers and Nature Campaign Manager



This year we're travelling up and down the tributaries of the Murray River to meet with folks supporting healthy rivers and healthy communities.

Rivers are great connectors. They connect the headwaters of mountain ranges with estuaries thousands of kilometres downstream. They move water – our most precious resource – from one ecosystem to another, bringing new life to wetlands that thrive with fish, birds, turtles and frogs.

Just as importantly, rivers bring people together, connecting humans to the landscape as well as to each other. It's reflected in the 65,000+ years of First Nations history on this continent, where rivers, lakes and floodplains continue to be important places to gather food, practice culture and care for Country.

We know that building these connections between communities and rivers across the Basin is key to restoring the Murray-Darling to health. So this year we've been travelling up and down the tributaries of the Murray River, visiting the many and varied people working towards creating a healthy river system.

From Traditional Owners caring for Country to regenerative graziers and

community farmers, here are a couple of the stories from our first trip to north-east Victoria. We'll be focusing on other regions along the Murray in future editions.

Harka Bista, Bhutanese Community Farm

The Bhutanese Community Farm set alongside the banks of the Murray River in Wodonga helps to build a sense of belonging for the newly arrived migrant and refugee community. With the support of the Wodonga City Council, it was formally established in 2015.

Since then, the farm has expanded to more than 200 individual plots and welcomed many other multicultural communities from the area, including Congolese, Filipino, Indian, Nepali, Iran, Bhutanese and Baha'i. The farm has become a central place for these communities to meet, socialise and share skills, seeds, meals, culture and language.

Harka Bista has lived in Albury with his family since 2010. After leaving Bhutan when he was 18, he spent nearly two decades living in a refugee camp in Nepal before finally settling in country NSW. Volunteering at the Bhutanese Community Farm is Harka's way of giving back.

"I always tell my generation – give something back to the country and community."

The Murray River runs alongside the farm and plays a big role in how people garden and connect with the space. For \$20 a year per plot, families can take water from the river to water their plots through small-scale irrigation infrastructure. All farming is organic to prevent any pesticides running into the river. Giant old river red gums are dotted around the farm, providing shade and habitat for the many birds that keep farmers company with their birdsong. The river is a constant, calming presence.



Harka Bista at the Bhutanese Community Farm



Uncle Allan Murray looking out over Ryan's Lagoon



From left: Tyler Rotche, Uncle Allan Murray, Uncle Phil Murray, Laura Melville and Greg Foyster

Duduroa Dhargal Aboriginal Corporation, Ryans Lagoon

At Ryans Lagoon, Uncle Allan and Uncle Phil Murray are showing how impactful it can be when Traditional Custodians have the power to manage their Traditional land – to restore biodiversity, heal Country and promote cultural practices at the same time.

Ryans Lagoon Nature Conservation Reserve is a 165-hectare network of interconnected wetlands. Previously managed by Parklands Albury Wodonga, Ryans Lagoon is now under the care of the Duduroa Dhargal Aboriginal Corporation, with a three-year project to restore the landscape. They're also promoting cultural practices, and Uncle Allan and Uncle Phil have planted tea

trees and wattles to mark out areas for dancing, rock art, axe-grinding and stone-knapping.

At the time of our visit, the Albury-Wodonga region has gone months without decent rain, and the floodplains and surrounding hills look brown and dry. Ryans Lagoon is waiting for a drink too, and there are plans to deliver environmental water in spring, either by releasing more water down the Murray to help it flood naturally into the wetlands, or by pumping water in directly.

It's a compelling example of how water secured for the environment under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan can be used to restore wetlands under the care of Traditional Custodians. But there is a long

way to go to secure more permanent forms of management, including land and water handbacks.

"Water is life. If we had full control of this place, things would be a lot better."
– Uncle Phil Murray.

THANK YOU to everyone who has contributed to the rivers campaign and Murray Darling Conservation Alliance. Your generous gifts of time, money and expertise are helping grow a movement of people across Australia speaking up for healthy rivers.

WATER PURCHASES RESUME TO RESTORE OUR RIVERS!

The last edition of *Environment Victoria News* featured the inside story of how we helped secure a lifeline for rivers in the Murray-Darling – with revised legislation to finally deliver the 450 billion litres of additional water promised to the environment. You might remember the cover photo with rivers advocates standing outside Parliament House.

Well, now we've got more good news to report. The first round of water purchases towards this target opened for tender in July 2024 – a huge milestone for reviving our rivers back to health, and one that would not have been possible without the coordinated advocacy of Environment Victoria and our counterparts in NSW, QLD, South Australia and the ACT.

The tender is for 70 billion litres of water, which is a solid start to the purchasing program and shows the Albanese government is delivering on commitments made last year. But what we secured is simply the unfinished business of the original Murray-Darling Basin Plan and doesn't go nearly far enough to ensure a healthy, thriving rivers system – particularly in the face of future climate change. So we'll be working hard to build a community vision of what the next national plan for rivers could look like, and how it fits with international targets to protect and restore biodiversity. Watch this space!

Pushing back on gas greenwashing

Joy Toose

Climate Campaign
Manager



The gas industry has recruited MasterChef, one of Australia's most popular TV shows, into its desperate fight to keep Victorians chained to methane gas. But together we're making sure their greenwashing doesn't go unchallenged.

If you've listened to commercial radio, a podcast, watched free-to-air TV or even visited a shopping centre this year, you've probably come across a 'renewable' gas ad. With their enormous profits under threat, the owners of Australia's gas networks are doing everything they can to stall progress on phasing out polluting methane gas.

Central to their strategy is peddling biomethane and hydrogen as alternatives that would allow them to keep profiting from their gas networks. But the reality is these gases simply can't do the job. We can't make enough, production is expensive, and burning these gases still release harmful chemicals in the home.

So when we got word that Australian Gas Networks (AGN) had secured a two-year sponsorship deal with one of Australia's most popular TV shows, MasterChef, we knew we had to act.

For AGN, the MasterChef deal provides a powerful channel for them to greenwash gas. But importantly, it also stopped MasterChef Australia from following its counterparts in the UK, Italy, Singapore, Denmark and Spain, who have all ditched methane and switched to modern electric induction.

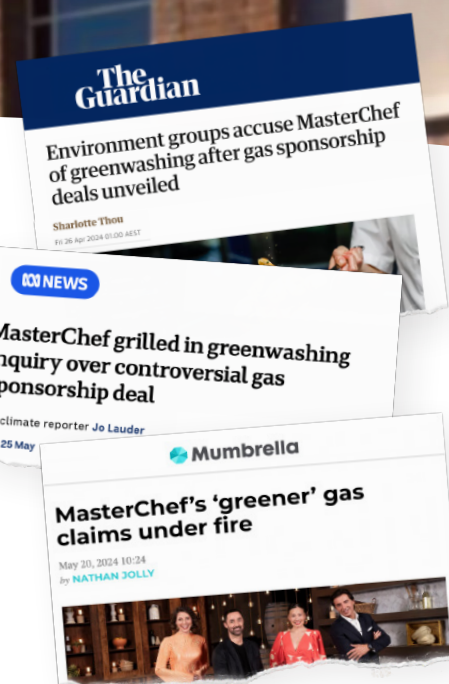
Without the AGN's sponsorship deal, it's likely MasterChef Australia would have made the switch too, giving millions of Australians the chance to see induction cooktops in action.

Ahead of the sponsorship launch, we wrote to MasterChef, alongside a coalition of community, health and social sector organisations, highlighting the serious health and environmental impacts of gas, and asking them to drop AGN as a sponsor.

When news of the partnership was made official, with misleading claims about 'renewable' gas at the centre, we took to the media to expose AGN's dodgy claims and ruin their PR moment. Our message about AGN's blatant greenwashing was covered by a wide range of media outlets, including the Saturday Paper, ABC, The Guardian, and Yahoo news. Interviews with our CEO Jono La Nauze also featured on the radio.

Two and a half thousand of you joined our call for MasterChef to drop AGN. Our video exposing AGN's greenwashing has reached more than 350,000 Victorians (watch it here envict.org/MasterChef), and our targeted myth busting blog had thousands of clicks from people Googling 'renewable gas'.

The sponsorship deal is now under scrutiny by the ACCC and Ad Standards, and Network 10 executives were dragged before the Senate Inquiry into greenwashing to answer questions about the deal.



Our latest report, *A Pipeline of Profits* shows how this greenwashing campaign fits with the industry's broader attempts to block the shift to electrification in Victoria while fighting against any form of transparency and regulation of their industry (read it at envict.org/pop).

The good news is that the gas lobby is desperate. After banning new household gas connections last year, the Victorian government is investigating phasing out old gas appliances when they stop working, and helping Victorians to upgrade to modern, electric alternatives.

This means it will be critical to show that there's strong support for a fast and fair phase out of home gas appliances in the coming months. There will be a chance for all of us to have our say, so stay tuned!

FIND OUT MORE

Watch our *MasterChef* video here [ENVICT.ORG/MASTERCHEF](https://envict.org/masterchef)

Read our latest report, *A Pipeline of Profits* here [ENVICT.ORG/POP](https://envict.org/pop)

Powering on: How electrification can help us pull the plug on gas for good



Kat Lucas-Healey
Senior Climate & Energy Advisor



Replacing old gas appliances with modern electric alternatives is critical to cutting our state's climate pollution.

Victoria's old offshore gas fields are running dry. The few new projects, such as Beach Energy's gas field near the Twelve Apostles, are just small-scale efforts to wring remaining supplies from the Gippsland and Otway basins. Fracking and coal seam gas are outlawed in Victoria and other gas fields on the east coast would prefer to keep profiting from exports than supply to Victoria. This leaves the door open to expensive gas imports as the government looks to increase gas supply.

But supply is only half of the story, and a huge proportion of the gas we consume can be substituted with electricity – that is increasingly being supplied by clean, renewable energy. Even better, electric appliances are cheaper to run, don't harm our health, and – as anyone cooking with induction or heating their home with a heat pump will tell you – they do a much better job.

So faced with climate change, a gas shortage, and good alternatives, what needs to be done?

Several years into our Gas-Free Victoria campaign much of what we have advocated for is coming to fruition. First, the Victorian Government banned new gas connections for a large proportion of new homes, and now they are considering new rental standards which will phase out gas heaters and hot water systems. This year we are also expecting a proposal from the state government for new standards which will progressively phase in efficient electric appliances and end new gas connections for *all* new builds.

Ending gas in homes is a big deal and we're hoping to see an ambitious proposal. So, we're planning to spearhead a community campaign with our volunteers to show the government that Victorians support strong electrification standards. We're also working with a broad range of organisations across the social sector, First Nations, unions, consumer advocates and community groups to put equity and justice front and centre.

Regrettably, a gas import terminal in Geelong is still on the table despite community opposition. Viva Energy's proposal would dump warm chlorinated water into Corio Bay, damaging the

marine ecosystem, especially seagrasses. Imported gas is also more damaging for the climate because so much is wasted in liquefaction, regasification and shipping. It's likely the gas will come all the way from Qatar, leaving us more exposed to international gas price shocks, such as that caused by the invasion of Ukraine.

Everyone in Victoria who goes electric is making our collective effort to phase out polluting fossil fuels that bit easier. It's something that every household should be supported to do. Strong government action to get methane gas out of homes and small businesses – starting with water and space heating – is what is needed to put methane gas firmly in the past where it belongs.

THANK YOU to everyone who has generously donated to power this campaign so far. You are an important part of this journey off gas. And while we have much more to do, we know we can count on your support for a cleaner and healthier renewable energy future.



Building cross-cultural skills at our Autumn Summit

Laura Melville

Community Organising
Co-Manager



40 amazing community leaders joined us on beautiful Woi-Wurrung Wurundjeri Country for a weekend of training and connection.

This year's Autumn Action Network Summit was attended by people from across Victoria – from Traralgon, Ballarat and Shepparton, as well as throughout Greater Melbourne.

The summit aimed to build relationships and had a focus on growing our collective

skills in cross-cultural organising and campaigns. Together we also developed submissions for the Victorian Government's climate resilience inquiry, sharing powerful stories about how climate impacts like heatwaves, bushfires and floods were impacting us in our homes and communities.

We were also joined by incredible guest speakers, including Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung elder Uncle Andrew Gardiner from the First Peoples' Assembly, Marcella Brassett from Market Forces and Jacynta Fa'amau from 350 Pacific Climate Warriors. They generously shared their deep knowledge and experience of social change and environmental justice with the group.

Additionally, Sawsan Alfayadh from Plan International Australia (formerly an Environment Victoria staff member!) shared her expertise on cross cultural organising and highlighted four key lessons around trust building, sharing power, building capacity and making our actions accessible. These are all excellent lessons that we've been using in practice through the Table Talks project (read more about this on pg. 11).

This summit was the first time we offered an on-site child-minding service so parents can participate more easily in our events. It was a great success and something we will strive to offer in the future.

Shout out to the awesome Local Organisers and core volunteers who were an integral part in pulling off the summit: Margie, Bruce, Steph, Josie, Chris, Robyn and Susie. They were pivotal in developing and delivering the workshop content and created a welcoming space for new participants. It really highlighted the growing strength and capacity of the Action Network – and shows how far we have come since our first online workshop in 2021.

The Autumn Summit is set to become a permanent feature of the Action Networks calendar.



Clockwise from top left: Wurundjeri man Mark Thomson kicks off the Summit with a Welcome to Country; Local organisers Robyn and Bruce helped to organise the Summit; Arfa, Adeena and Rebecca painting a banner; Action planning

FIND OUT MORE

Find out more at [ENVICT.ORG/](https://envict.org/)
NETWORK and stay tuned for
how you can get involved.



A 'table talk' event in Noble Park with the Chinese senior community.

Building community for climate solutions

Peizhi Jiang
Greater Melbourne
Organiser



Victorian multicultural communities are showing their deep concerns over climate change. Through listening deeply, we can empower community-led climate solutions.

This year we have been reaching out to more multicultural communities across Melbourne. From Dandenong to Wyndham City, Environment Victoria Action Network volunteers have been on the ground building new relationships with community leaders.

Recently, we have held deep climate conversations with members of the Chinese senior community in Noble Park, and Indian senior community in Tarneit. It's been powerful to hear their stories about climate change impacts as well as ideas for community-led solutions.

We've also had international students get involved with the Action Network and help facilitate 'table talks' for the first time. Shout out to our passionate new volunteers Helen Chen, Gloria Gu, Yu Tao and Zhenxuan Xu for working together and capturing stories from diverse communities.

In August, Sudha Narayan, former project coordinator at Multicultural Women Victoria, also brought together 24 community leaders for a roundtable meeting in Tarneit.

Together, we discussed Environment Victoria's campaigns, what's happening locally and the top environment and climate priorities in the local area. With so much enthusiasm for joining forces on environmental issues, we're fired up to turn these conversations into more action in this part of Melbourne's west!

Multicultural community members, especially those who came to Australia as first-generation migrants, often have unique experiences of climate impacts, such as losing access to drinking water and forced climate migration. Many

support stronger climate action, but often have limited resources and time to push for local solutions. So our hope is that these table talks can create exciting new opportunities for mutual collaboration and allow us to push for climate solutions together.

We have big plans to scale up our engagement with multicultural communities in outer western Melbourne and will be organising more events to promote climate solutions that have the backing of the community.



Clockwise from top: Table talk with Sudha in Tarneit; Welcoming new volunteers; Table talk discussion with Tarneit "Club 60"

Updates from the Latrobe Valley

Locals rally outside the office of Darren Chester, the federal member for Gippsland.

Hayley Sestokas

Latrobe Valley
Community Organiser



Budget cuts lead to closure of Latrobe Valley Authority

In this year's May budget we got the disappointing news that the Latrobe Valley Authority (LVA) will be wound up by December.

For years we've worked to push for tangible action so the Latrobe Valley can embrace new opportunities as coal power stations close. So this news came as a real blow, not least because the Latrobe Valley and Gippsland Transition Plan 2035 is only a year old, and there is so much left to do.

Over the last seven years, the Latrobe Valley Authority has helped guide the Valley towards a more resilient, diversified, and sustainable future, with a focus on worker training and support for community projects.

Whilst this work will now be shared across the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action and Regional Development Victoria, there is a lot of uncertainty around funding, especially considering the scale of change required.

We'll be working to ensure these new departments deliver on the Latrobe Valley and Gippsland Transition Plan, and we're also hoping the Federal government's new Net Zero Economy Authority will have a local presence.

And as we have been for many years now, Environment Victoria will continue our work on the ground, helping local leaders and our wider community to bring about the transformation that is necessary to ensure a clean energy future, where we can all share in the benefits.

Dutton's nuclear fantasy ignores reality in the Latrobe Valley

As local opposition mounts, it's clear the Coalition has not thought through the complexities of building a nuclear reactor in the Latrobe Valley.

Earlier this year, the federal opposition proposed building nuclear reactors on the sites of seven coal power stations across the country.

Loy Yang in the Latrobe Valley was one of these sites, and it was immediately clear that neither Peter Dutton nor his colleagues had consulted the community or AGL, Loy Yang's owner. It was also clear they hadn't even done a basic assessment of whether it was an appropriate site.

Because, putting aside arguments relating to cost, timeframes and legal pathways to building nuclear reactors, there are many good reasons why the Latrobe Valley is not an appropriate location for a nuclear reactor.

Sitting alongside fault lines of the Strzelecki Ranges, the Latrobe Valley is prone to earthquakes. Furthermore, the depletion of groundwater and mining

of billions of tonnes of coal has created ground instability and broad-scale subsidence of up to 2 metres across the region. This makes rehabilitating the sites to safe and stable landforms a huge challenge that still has no clear solutions.

The water requirements for nuclear reactors are also immense. A single reactor can consume billions of litres annually. With climate projections showing a significant and continued decline in water availability in the region, adding a nuclear reactor is impractical and unsustainable.

Given these issues, it's unsurprising that The Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority recently voiced their concerns. They highlighted that coal mine rehabilitation is a top priority for the region, will take decades to complete, and the complexities involved would be a significant barrier to any potential nuclear facility.

The glaring flaws and lack of detail in Dutton's nuclear plan show it for the ruse it is. It is a dangerous distraction from getting on with the job at hand and transitioning to clean renewable energy.

Clean energy is providing the jobs and solutions we need right now. Solar, wind and hydro are already generating 40% of Victoria's electricity, and there are more than 25 renewable energy projects in the pipeline for Gippsland.

The community doesn't need a vague pipedream of power that would be decades away, and there's a mounting chorus of local opposition, putting the proposal on an even shakier footing.



More than 1,000 of you signed our petition calling on Engie to properly clean up the Hazelwood mine, and during a visit to the mine site we delivered it directly to them. From left, Isabella Farrell-Hallegraeff (Environmental Justice Australia), Joy Toose (Environment Victoria) and Ally McAlpine (Environmental Justice Australia).

Joy Toose

Climate Campaign Manager



Holding Engie accountable on mine rehabilitation

In May, we joined our friends from Environmental Justice Australia and Friends of Latrobe Water (FLoW) in a site visit to Hazelwood mine.

Seeing the enormous pit up close was a reminder of why proper rehabilitation is so important – and what’s at risk for our waterways and the community if corners are cut. It’s not good enough for Engie to simply go for the cheapest or easiest option.

It’s incredible to reflect on the huge wins we’ve had on mine rehabilitation over the last 5 years. With leadership driven by the Latrobe Valley community and support from Victorians across the state, we have successfully pushed for Engie’s rehabilitation plans to get the scrutiny they deserve.

It will now be assessed at both the state level, through the Environment Effects Statement (EES) process, and at the federal level, through the ‘water trigger’ in the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (EPBC).

We’ve also pushed to strengthen the requirements Engie must meet as part of the EES. Hundreds of you made personal submissions, and the Victorian government responded by requiring Engie to look at alternatives to a pit lake

and investigate water sources that don’t involve bleeding local rivers dry – including recycled or desalinated water.

Engie is currently preparing its studies and reports, and we expect them to be available for community feedback mid-next year. We’ll keep you updated as this will be a powerful moment for us all to have our say.

THANK YOU to everyone who generously donated to this vital campaign. As Victoria transitions from coal, we will keep working with local groups to hold coal mine owners and the government accountable for proper rehabilitation.

Coal-to-Hydrogen: Another misguided push to ‘repurpose’ brown coal

Another polluting coal project has reared its ugly head in the Latrobe Valley, and there’s a risk that the Victorian government will throw more support behind it.

We’ve been here before, a company proposes an ‘alternative’ use for brown coal, governments throw millions of dollars at it, and then the project fails. Last time it was called the ‘Advanced Lignite Demonstration Program’ (ALDP) ... this time it’s the ‘Hydrogen Energy Supply Chain project’ (HESC).

A group of companies want to build a ‘gasification plant’ in the Latrobe Valley to

convert dirty brown coal into hydrogen and ship it to Japan via the Port of Hastings.

It is the most polluting way to make hydrogen and would generate over 3 million tonnes of carbon pollution every year, the equivalent of 550,000 petrol cars. It would use millions of tonnes of brown coal creating local air and water pollution, and it’s possible they’d even have to dig a new coal mine.

The companies involved say they can use Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) to trap and bury the carbon pollution. But around the world most attempts at using CCS have been a costly and unmitigated failure. Even if it did work, CCS shouldn’t be used as an excuse to create new sources of pollution, especially where there are clean alternatives.

HESC is a bad idea. But the Victorian government still hasn’t ruled out more support for the project. And that’s why we need to speak up.

READ MORE AT

[ENVICT.ORG/C2H](https://envict.org/c2h)

TAKE ACTION

Every Victorian MP needs to know their community opposes this project.

Send your message at [ENVICT.ORG/STOP-HESC](https://envict.org/stop-hesc)

Forever Green: Art, nature and legacy



Sylwia Sierkiewicz

Key Relationships
Officer



Bob Jankowski has a deep connection to our rivers and has made a commitment to give back to the community through his Will by leaving a gift to causes close to his heart, including Environment Victoria.

"My passion for nature is inherent. It was a part of my life growing up. The beach and nature were my playground and learning environments."

Bob is a teacher, a recognised local artist, a facilitator of children's art workshops, and a member of the Mildura Film Society and Greening Mildura. He is also a regular donor to Environment Victoria and, because of his special connection to rivers, our work to restore the Murray-Darling back to health resonates with him deeply.

Bob's family immigrated from Poland and were based in Mildura until they moved to Adelaide where Bob was born. When he was a boy his father regularly went fishing along the Murray River.

"The Murray reminded my father of Wisla [in Poland]. When he had an opportunity, he would persuade a friend to go fishing, and I would go along."

Although Bob had no interest in fishing, he enjoyed the quiet time spent sitting by the river with his father, and it sparked his lifelong love for our rivers. One of his most memorable times spent in nature was his first trip to Kings Billabong in Mildura:

"It was amazing going there for the first time, riding along the dirt track, with the Murray River on the left and billabong on the right. Simply appreciating the quiet and no one in view."

Bob also draws creative inspiration from rivers. He enjoys spending time sketching on riverbanks and, inspired by the majestic trees along the Murray River,

Bob has created paper mâché sculptures representing the tree trunks that he coated with coloured sand collected from different parts of Australia. These sands are used to represent the flood level marking found along the river.

Earlier this year Bob also got involved with Greening Mildura, connecting with others in his community who share his love for nature, helping to plant and water trees.

"At the moment they are small trees emerging from an arid landscape, but one day they'll be big. Not something I'll see in my lifetime, but in 40 years there will be trees!"

By including a gift to Environment Victoria in his Will, Bob hopes future generations can still play in, and feel the magic of, the natural places that he has seen in his life.

If, like Bob, you too wish to protect the natural beauty of Victoria for future generations, a gift in your Will can make the lasting impact you are looking for.

VISIT [ENVICT.ORG/ONLINE-WILL](https://envict.org/online-will) TO CREATE YOUR ONLINE WILL

Our new partnership with Safewill means you can now write a Will online, with ease and at a reduced cost of just \$80 (normally \$160). The Safewill platform takes care of all the detailed and confusing parts of writing a Will.

If you would like to find out more about leaving a gift to Environment Victoria in your Will, please contact Sylwia, our Key Relationships Officer, on **03 9431 8105** or email BEQUESTS@ENVIRONMENTVICTORIA.ORG.AU





Dear Jono, YES, I want to stop big polluters and save nature in Victoria!

Please make this a donation by credit card:

(All donations over \$2 are tax deductible)

\$50 \$100 \$250 \$1000 Your choice \$ _____

Please make this a monthly donation

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

Or please debit my credit card: Visa Mastercard Amex

Cardholders name: _____ Expiry __/__/__ Signature _____

Card number

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

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

Personal Details

Title: _____ First name: _____ Last name: _____

Address: _____

Suburb: _____ State: _____ Postcode: _____

Email: _____

Mobile: _____ Home: _____

Please complete this form, cut off this page and return it with the reply-paid envelope enclosed, or 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.

Please tick if you do NOT want to receive communications from other organisations. Occasionally we allow like-minded organisations to contact you with information that may be of interest to you, including organisations outside Australia. Those organisations allow us to do the same and this way we can reach more people with vital information.

Image: Doug Gimesy



Join us for our AGM and Celebration

It's time for this year's AGM and celebration!

Join us from 5.30pm on Wednesday 23 October to reflect on the year that was, look ahead at what's next and celebrate the groups and individuals who achieved some amazing wins.

There will be food, drinks and entertainment, and plenty of old and new faces!

If you'd prefer to skip the formal AGM at 5.30pm and join us for the awards and celebration from 6.30pm, simply let us know when you RSVP.

WHAT Environment Victoria's AGM + Celebration

WHEN 5:30pm onwards, Wednesday 23 October

WHERE ANMF Victoria Branch,
535 Elizabeth St, Melbourne VIC 3000

RSVP at [ENVICT.ORG/AGM2024](https://envict.org/AGM2024)

Who's who at Environment Victoria

WHO'S WHO

Chief Executive Officer **Jono La Nauze**

CAMPAIGNS & PROGRAMS

Campaigns Director **Alex Merory**

Climate Campaign Manager **Joy Toose**

Rivers and Nature Campaign Manager
Greg Foyster

Healthy Rivers Campaigner **Tyler Rotche**

Senior Climate and Energy Analyst
Kat Lucas-Healey

Community Organising Co-Managers
Laura Melville, Taegen Edwards

Senior Organiser **Victor Komarovsky**

Latrobe Valley Organiser **Hayley Sestokas**

Greater Melbourne Organiser **Peizhi Jiang**

Data Support Officer **Chante Bock**

Communications Manager **Cameron Wheatley**

Media and Content Manager **James Norman**

Rivers Communication Lead **Isabel Kimpton**

Digital Campaigner **James King**

OPERATIONS

Finance Manager **Don Batson**

Accounts Officer **Jing Lu**

Office Manager **Cate Hoyle**

Administration Support Officer **Fiona Ames**

People and Culture Manager **Eleisha Mullane**

Fundraising Director **Andy Grant**

Fundraising Officer **Hannah Minns**

Key Relationships Manager **Wren Trewin**

Key Relationships Officer **Sylwia Sierkiewicz**

Database Administrator **Karly Roolker**

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Beth Koch

Michaela Morris

Bettina Baldeschi

Stacey Little

Tracey Martinovich

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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.

TALK TO US

Phone: (03) 9341 8100

Email: admin@environmentvictoria.org.au

PO Box 12575

A'Beckett Street, Victoria, 8006

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