

# Pushing Back and Powering Forward

Grassroots action from Gippsland to Glen Waverley



**PLUS**

How we can return the heartbeat to our rivers




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Cover image: The Coalition's toxic nuclear proposal has brought the Gippsland community together in their determination to oppose it.

# Inside this issue



**The Renew Australia for All Alliance Takes Off**

**3**



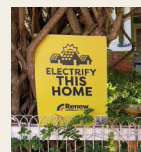
**Gippsland Says No to Nuclear**

**4**



**Our Land, Our Water, Our Future – Taking a Stand Against Nuclear**

**5**



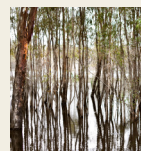
**Victoria's Next Big Move on Gas**

**6–7**



**Treaty for Victoria**

**8**



**How We Can Return the Heartbeat to Our Rivers**

**9**



**A Legacy to Preserve Precious Habitat in Victoria**

**10**

## Editorial

**Jono La Nauze**

Chief Executive Officer



As a child the first protest I ever attended was for peace and nuclear disarmament. Marching down the main street of our country town was electrifying, and when the preacher who had inspired the crowd with a megaphone came back to ours for lunch after, I felt I was in the presence of celebrity.

The anti-nuclear movement was a force to be reckoned with, having recently seen off a proposed nuclear reactor in Westernport Bay and won a statewide ban on nuclear industries in 1983.

Forty years later, I cannot believe we are back there again, calling out nuclear power for the dirty and dangerous folly that it is.

But I have faith that we will prevail, thanks to heroes like Kurnai Gunai woman Electra Greene who writes on page 5 about taking to the streets (again!) with other Latrobe Valley locals to say “we do not want to destroy our own waterways and wetlands, we don’t want toxic waste in our community.”

In Melbourne, Environment Victoria volunteers have banded together with faith groups, unions and multicultural community organisations to mobilise support for clean energy in the home.

We’re showing candidates in the federal election that voters want help shifting to solar, batteries and efficient electric appliances, not more dirty and expensive gas, and not nuclear. Read all about it on page 3.

Speaking of gas, after years of laying out the case for shifting away from this polluting and outdated technology, we’re now on the cusp of a world leading phase-out plan for gas in the home. It’s a sign of how significant this change will be that the gas industry are pouring millions into misleading campaigns to stop us (see page 6).

Looking ahead, we are helping to ensure this is the year Victoria takes another historic step, with the nation’s first Treaty. You can read our Treaty pledge on page 8. And we’re launching a new phase of our work to restore the Murray-Darling, by reconnecting rivers with floodplain billabongs and wetlands. Many of these critical nurseries for native fish and waterbirds have been cut off from rivers, preventing the recovery of threatened wildlife (see page 9).



# The Renew Australia for All Alliance Takes Off

## Peizhi Jiang

Greater Melbourne  
Community Organiser



**Launching in late 2024, 'Renew Australia for All' is an alliance of social services, unions, faith groups, community groups, industry and environment organisations like ours, working together to deliver a fairer, better and more secure future for all Australians.**

Together we're advocating for federal support to make solar, batteries, home insulation, and efficient electric appliances accessible to all, including renters, migrants, and low-income households. This could save over \$23 billion on our energy bills each year, cut pollution, and create thousands of jobs.

In the lead up to the federal election we have been working closely with Victorian Trades Hall Council and local groups like Lighter Footprints and Chisholm Climate Action Network to grow the 'Renew Australia for All' campaign in three eastern Melbourne seats – Chisholm, Deakin, and Menzies.

In February we officially kicked things off with a BBQ in Ashwood. Over 60 people from the local community came together to show their support for the campaign, signing up to volunteer rosters for street stalls and local events.

As a Deakin local it has been inspiring to meet the local leaders working tirelessly to organise in our community. Shout out to David Hudspeth for pulling together Chisholm Climate Action Network, and Sally Moseby for making the 'Simply Sustainability Handbook' to inform multicultural communities in Menzies.

It has also been great to see multicultural community members leading discussions on solar and efficient electric upgrades. On March 1, we joined Asian Australians for Climate Solutions and Doctors for the Environment Australia in Glen Waverley, where Chinese and Indian community

members discussed climate and health impacts and wrote postcards to MPs supporting home electrification.

Together we are building unstoppable political momentum for policies that will help everyone access savings from efficient electric and solar-powered homes.

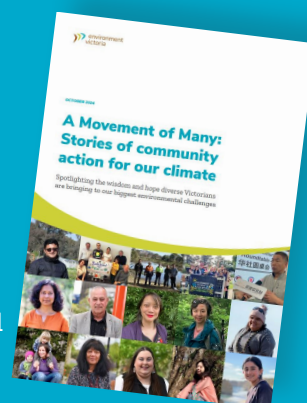
Learn more about the campaign at [RENEWAUSTRALIAFORALL.ORG](https://RENEWAUSTRALIAFORALL.ORG) and get involved at [ENVICT.ORG/RENEW](https://ENVICT.ORG/RENEW)

## A MOVEMENT OF MANY: STORIES OF COMMUNITY ACTION FOR OUR CLIMATE

Launched in late 2024, 'A Movement of Many: Stories of community action for our climate' contains an inspiring collection of stories from 13 community leaders and activists who are caring for our natural world and contributing to our movement in different ways.

Together they give us an insight into the range of experiences that inspire us to get active and the shared passion for nature and justice we all draw on.

See for yourself the love and hope they all bring to our movement at [ENVICT.ORG/MANY](https://ENVICT.ORG/MANY)







# Gippsland Says No to Nuclear

## Hayley Sestokas

Latrobe Valley  
Community Organiser



**When Peter Dutton first announced his plan to build nuclear reactors across Australia, one of the proposed locations was the site of Loy Yang coal power station in the Latrobe Valley.**

The announcement was made without any community consultation and nuclear isn't right for Gippsland for a range of reasons.

Top of the list is that fact that the Loy Yang site is on an earthquake fault line and right next to a huge and unstable open cut coal mine. And that's before we even get to issues around toxic waste and water consumption!

We've created a full breakdown of reasons why nuclear is a bad idea at [ENVICT.ORG/NUCLEAR-FACTS](https://envict.org/nuclear-facts)

This toxic nuclear proposal is so bad that it has brought the community together in their determination to oppose it. And Environment Victoria has joined with local environmental and community groups, in forming 'Nuclear Free Gippsland', which has since gained traction and attracted support from across the region.

We've seen remarkable turnouts to rallies, including one in Traralgon in December 2024 that featured speeches from Gunaikurnai leaders, a former oil and gas electrician, and a doctor, united in their opposition.

The community also turned to the streets in March this year to mark the anniversary of the Fukushima disaster with a demonstration that highlighted the safety risks to the Traralgon township, which is only 7km from the site of the proposed nuclear reactor.

Dutton's nuclear plan would also be a blow to the pipeline of renewable energy projects that are creating jobs and investment in the region right now.

Victoria has already reached 40% renewable energy generation, and the planned investment in renewable

energy projects across Gippsland is over \$40 billion, which will continue the region's proud tradition of powering Victoria.

But Dutton's Nuclear proposal would put all of that at risk, for a technology that wouldn't deliver a single electron for two decades.

In a sign of desperation, the nuclear industry has tried everything it can to create the false perception of community support – including inviting former Miss America Grace Stanke to a public disinformation campaign in Morwell earlier this year.

As this campaign gains momentum, it's becoming clear that nuclear power will be a defining issue in the next election – one that could shape the future of Gippsland and the entire country.

Now is the time to take action. Show your solidarity with the people of Gippsland by joining the movement. Visit [nuclearfree.com.au](https://nuclearfree.com.au) to sign the petition, stay informed, and find ways to get involved.

**Together, we can keep Gippsland nuclear-free and protect our future.**







# Our Land, Our Water, Our Future – Taking a Stand Against Nuclear

## Electra Greene

Kurnai Gunai Woman,  
Local Community  
Organiser



**We do not want nuclear in the Latrobe Valley. When I first heard from the Environment Victoria team about the proposal, I was in disbelief.**

Seeing the plan to put a nuclear reactor on the Loy Yang Power Station site on TV made me realise this is going to be a problem we need to solve as a community. There has been no consultation with Indigenous communities or traditional owners.

When I attended the Federal Parliament's inquiry into nuclear power generation in Traralgon, I realised that there weren't any Elders in the room. None of us have been spoken to or asked about what we want and how we see the future of our land.

Having worked in Environment Victoria's Action Network and had the opportunity to speak with a diverse range of community members, I hear the same response over and over: people are against nuclear. They don't want toxic

waste in our community. Beyond that, I also find that many people are largely unengaged and unaware of the plan, which speaks to the lack of community consultation. People don't think this will impact them, so they don't pay attention.

I've heard about other Indigenous groups in the desert who are protesting the impact of uranium on their land. We are protesting here because we don't want to produce more waste for them to deal with, and we do not want to destroy our own waterways and wetlands. I worry for our waterways—water scarcity is already an issue. Adding a nuclear power station could mean things get even worse.

It feels like we have a long way to go, and sometimes I think things may get worse before they get better. But I know, as part of the Action Network, that we are working on the solution. The community's passion is what helps me to keep taking action.

We recently had a protest in Traralgon, on March 11th to demonstrate the community's outrage against the Nuclear proposal. I sat in front, holding my sign, and getting toots of agreement from the cars and trucks passing by. It's the community coming together and doing what's right, that gives me hope.



Electra Greene is a Local Organizer with Environment Victoria's Action Network. Electra is a poet, activist, and has worked as an Aboriginal cultural advisor.





Our week of action in December last year saw volunteers meeting with their MPs across the state.

# Victoria's Next Big Move on Gas

**Joy Toose**

Climate Campaign Manager



**The path to a cleaner, fairer Victoria is at a critical point, with the government considering a new plan to phase out polluting gas appliances as they break down.**

Burning gas at home is a disaster for our climate, health and cost of living. Gas is responsible for about 17% of Victoria's climate pollution, half of which is from gas burned in homes.

Environment Victoria supporters have played an important role in the transition away from gas, pushing the government to release their roadmap away from methane gas and winning a ban on

gas connections to the majority of new houses. And right now, the government is considering regulations that will bring us one step closer to clean, efficient all-electric homes for all Victorians.

Last December during our week of action, community members met with their local MPs and displayed bright yellow yard signs, calling for action to phase out old gas appliances.

Just a week later the Victorian government shared their proposal for electrifying Victorian homes and businesses, asking for public feedback.

The government's preferred approach would mean that when old gas heaters and hot water systems in our homes break down, the replacements tradies have to offer will be efficient, cost-effective, electric appliances. Nobody would be required to go out tomorrow and buy a new heater or hot water service. But this

plan, if implemented, would break the cycle of reinstalling polluting 1980s-era appliances in Victorian homes.

Switching from gas to electric appliances isn't just crucial for our climate – it also saves households money. Our How We Electrify report (Oct 2024) shows that replacing gas heating with reverse cycle split systems can cut annual energy bills by at least two-thirds, with the upfront cost paying for itself within a year. Strong regulations will ensure tradespeople come ready to install better alternatives when gas systems break down and help build reliable supply chains, making efficient electric options more accessible for Victorians.

**READ THE REPORT**  
[ENVICT.ORG/ELECTRIFY](https://envict.org/electrify)



Many Victorians are already making the switch and reaping the benefits, and we're seeing that gas demand in Victoria is already falling! But regulations will make sure as many people as possible upgrade to cheaper efficient electric appliances as old gas appliances break down.

But gas companies, and particularly the owners of Victoria's gas networks, are fighting desperately to preserve their super profits. They're doing everything they can to spread fear and convince Victorians that nothing needs to change. But the fact is that we're at a fork in the road, Victoria's local gas supplies – once abundant – are running out. Building terminals to import expensive gas, and drilling in new areas for smaller and smaller pockets of methane gas is not a long-term solution.

The gas used in Victorian homes, half of Victoria's total gas, is wasted on inefficient appliances when there are electric appliances that can do the job better and more efficiently.

Ensuring that inefficient, polluting gas appliances are phased out as they break down is the best thing our leaders can do to slash household energy bills, protect our climate and head off more destructive and short-term supply measures, like Viva's proposed gas import terminal.



Coverage of our report in the The Age

**THANK YOU** to everyone who made a submission on the government's plan for electrification, together we're standing up to the gas industry and showing the real groundswell of support!

## COMMUNITY SENDS CLEAR MESSAGE ON VIVA

**Victor Komarovsky**  
Senior Organiser



As we await the Victorian Planning Minister's decision on whether to approve or reject Viva's gas import terminal in Corio Bay, the

community has been ramping up the pressure against this polluting project!

On Sunday 23rd February, around 300 locals gathered by the bay to send a strong message that they reject Viva's gas terminal, forming the words "NO GAS TERMINAL" while chanting "Yes to renewables".

The vibe on the day was electric, with excellent live music, great conversations and clear actions that everyone could do to help win this campaign. Shout out to Geelong Renewables Not Gas and Geelong Sustainability, as well as all the local volunteers that continue to build an impressive campaign.



Image: Geelong Renewable Not Gas coalition



# TREATY FOR VICTORIA

**Alex Merory**  
Campaigns Director



First Nations have been campaigning for Treaty for generations. Now, in Victoria, official negotiations are underway.

We are proud to walk alongside First Peoples on this journey and we'll be actively supporting their campaign. Read more in our Treaty pledge below.

## Our pledge

**We, Environment Victoria, acknowledge that we live and work on stolen Aboriginal land. We pay respect to Traditional Owners who have cared for Country for thousands of generations and acknowledge that their sovereignty has never been ceded.**

As an organisation committed to a healthy environment and a fair, sustainable society, we must play our part in righting the wrongs of the past and creating a better future together. That means accepting the truth about how First Peoples have been treated and supporting their right to determine their own future.

When it comes to what works for

First Peoples' communities, cultures and lands, the experts are, of course, First Peoples. With profound respect for the sovereignty, culture, and rights of First Peoples, we're proud to walk with the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria on the journey to Treaty.

The past can't be changed, but we can choose to take steps today that will heal injustices and commit to a fairer society for tomorrow. One that tells the truth about Victoria's history; affords dignity, respect and economic equality to the First Peoples of this land; and affirms their right to control over their lives, land and waters.

Environment Victoria pledges our unwavering support to the First Peoples' Treaty process in Victoria. To help build support for the shared journey to Treaty, we will:

- Maintain long-term and accountable relationships with First Nations
- Educate ourselves and our community
- Back calls for Treaty, justice and land and water rights through our campaigns
- Take action towards Treaty, demonstrating public support and holding decision makers to account
- Honour the principles of Treaty once agreed

By making this pledge, we affirm our commitment to the self-determination of First Peoples in Victoria as they assert their rights, tell their truths and chart a healing path towards Treaty-making.

Together, we will create a future where First Peoples' voices are heard, rights are respected, and justice is realised for generations to come.

**FIND OUT MORE AT**  
**[FIRSTPEOPLESVIC.ORG/TREATY](https://firstpeoplesvic.org/treaty)**

## JOIN THE WALK FOR TRUTH IN VICTORIA

Yoorrook, Victoria's truth-telling process, was set up by the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria and the Victorian government to provide an official record of the impact of colonisation and ongoing injustices experienced by First Peoples in Victoria.

Now, as the Yoorrook Justice Commission prepares to release their final report, we're all being invited to join a Walk for Treaty from Portland to Parliament, passing through Warrnambool, Colac, Geelong and Footscray. The walk leaves Portland on 25 May and arrives at Victorian Parliament on 18 June.

To get involved visit

**[YOORROOKJUSTICECOMMISSION.ORG.AU/EVENTS/WALKFORTRUTH](https://yoorrookjusticecommission.org.au/events/walkfortruth)**





Gemmill swamp enjoying the benefits of environmental flows.

# How We Can Return the Heartbeat to Our Rivers

**Tyler Rotche**

Healthy Rivers  
Campaigner



**The task of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan is to set aside enough water to sustain wetlands, and then let it flow downstream: restoring the river's heartbeat.**

Here's how it should happen: Water set aside for the environment is released from dams in pulses, mimicking the seasonal rhythms that once sustained the river landscape. River operators open the taps, the river rises and nourishes billabongs and forests on the floodplain.

But in practice, much of that water never reaches the floodplain. Only 2% of the Basin's wetlands can get it. It is held back by 'constraints' – regulatory rules and outdated infrastructure that limit how much water can flow downstream.

Letting the river flow across low-lying floodplains requires moving pumps, temporarily relocating livestock, upgrading roads. But the changes we're talking about aren't monumental. The river would rise to below minor flood level, lower than where homes and sheds are allowed to be built.

Even relaxing constraints slightly along the Goulburn River could save 6000 hectares of river red gum forest from drying out. Across the southern Basin, taking this approach could allow water to reach more than 370,000 hectares of wetland. That's about 7.5 times the size of Wilson's Prom

The main barrier is concern from some private landholders who don't

want water passing over their paddocks, even for a short duration with advance notice and compensation.

One path forward is negotiating 'flow easements' with these landholders. It's often said that if this were a highway, it would've been built a decade ago. But the political dynamics are different. Rivers aren't so predictable. And unlike roads that serve private interests, the benefits of a living river, flowing with all its complexity, are harder to measure.

The task of relaxing these constraints is linked to the Basin Plan's complex offsets program and crosses the borders of multiple jurisdictions. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) has mapped out

a plan, but cautiously, at reduced flow rates and blown out timelines.

To move forward, we need to see in practical terms what different flows can achieve. Then governments need to act. The benefits of constraints relaxation ripple outward, beyond ecosystems. Letting the water flow reduces 'spills' from dams. It also means upgraded infrastructure and improved forecasting systems: all critical as climate change drives more intense rainfall and heavy flooding.

At its core, this program is about giving rivers back their heartbeat and ensuring that all of us who live alongside them can appreciate that rhythm as well.



## LOCALS CHALLENGE DODGY WETLAND SCHEME

Local group Friends of Nyah Vinifera Park are taking the government to court. They're challenging dodgy wetland engineering schemes along the Murray that would turn natural wetlands into irrigation bays.

These projects are risky, untested and expensive. The government never considered alternatives like relaxing constraints, explained in the article above. Despite this, the project at Nyah forest has approval to go ahead, steamrolling the concerns of locals.

Please join us in giving your support to this important court case:  
[CHUFFED.ORG/PROJECT/MURRAY-FLOODPLAINS-CASE](https://chuffed.org/project/murray-floodplains-case)





# A Legacy to Preserve Precious Habitat in Victoria

*It's 6 in the morning. Jim hops into his car to make the two-hour journey from his home in Brighton towards Yea, collecting unwanted food from several bakeries and fruit and vegetable stores along the way. When he arrives, he is greeted by a park ranger who shares a report of what needs doing.*

*Jim was ready to help where needed most at The Haven, a rehabilitation sanctuary where injured and orphaned animals are cared for until they are ready to be released back into the wild. At the sanctuary, Jim helped with all sorts of tasks; tree planting, caring for animals, building floating platforms for birds to drink from the ponds onsite. No task was too small or too big for Jim. At the end of the day, Jim made the long journey back home.*

We are honoured to remember the life of James Roberts, who was known by friends as Jim. And celebrate the incredible work he did to protect wildlife and their habitat here in Victoria.

Jim sadly passed away in October 2023 at the age of 85. A true gentleman, who was humble, kind and generous. After retiring, Jim dedicated a lot of his time to care and advocate for native animals in Victoria.

He also volunteered with environmental groups closer to home like Friends of Bats and Bushcare Inc. He was devoted

to protecting Melbourne's threatened grey-headed flying-fox population and preserving their 'new' home along the Yarra River through tree planting.

In the early 2000s, Jim ventured out in the evenings with other passionate friends to assist in the relocation of the flying-foxes who at the time resided in the Botanic Gardens. Initially, they'd heard about a group wanting to undertake this venture using air guns. Jim and his friends worried that this approach was not kind and would arrive earlier to alert the flying-foxes using less distressing methods instead to deter them from residing in the gardens.

At Environment Victoria we are grateful for his long-term support and thoughtful decision to remember us in his Will. Jim was part of our community since 1987, and during those 36 years he made generous contributions and regularly signed our petitions to power our campaigns.

Today, his incredible act of kindness and generosity through including Environment Victoria in his Will is helping us to tackle climate change and to preserve precious habitat that our wonderful wildlife – whom Jim deeply cared for throughout his lifetime – rely upon.

To honour Jim's love of animals Friends of Bats and Bushcare Inc. fixed a plaque to one of the flying-fox enclosures in Yarra Bend Park, along the Yarra River.

Environment Victoria is dedicated to safeguarding our precious Victorian environment. Including a gift in your Will is one way you can help us to continue to take on the biggest challenges to protect nature, preserving natural places we all love in Victoria.

With our partner Safewill, one of Australia's leading online Will writing platforms, we have arranged for you to have access to writing a Will free of charge until 30 April.

Visit [ENVICT.ORG/ONLINE-WILL](https://envict.org/online-will) for more information and to create your online Will.

Or contact Sylwia, our Key Relationships Officer on (03) 9341 8105 or [BEQUESTS@ENVIRONMENTVICTORIA.ORG.AU](mailto:BEQUESTS@ENVIRONMENTVICTORIA.ORG.AU)







I WANT A FUTURE  
POWERED BY  
CLEAN ENERGY



## Dear Jono, I want to help stop climate pollution and protect Victoria's environment.

### 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:

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☐ 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.





# Who's who at Environment Victoria

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Rivers and Nature Campaign Manager  
**Greg Foyster**  
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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

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