

Connecting communities

Bringing people together to speak up for the places they love.



PLUS

Why the Lower Murray's Critically Endangered listing needs to be a turning point for our rivers.

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Environment Victoria News Issue 45, Autumn 2026

Printer **Neo**


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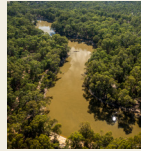
Cover Photo: Group photo from the 'Power Lines' tour (p10). Credit Josie Hess.



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Editorial

Jono La Nauze,
Chief Executive Officer



As the cooler weather sets in, you can almost feel Victoria taking a deep breath. Another dangerous summer has passed, and not without harm. Now what will the cooler months bring? Swelling rivers that support Galaxias and Murray Cod spawning? Snow that shelters Mount Pygmy Possums and replenishes alpine moss beds? Rains that fill farm dams and put moisture in the soil?

For over a century the Latrobe river, or Durt'Yowan, has borne the brunt of coal mining and catchment clearing. Now it faces new threats – being drained to fill old coal pits and cool massive data centres. Farmers, fishers and Traditional

Owners will all lose out if big energy and tech companies get their way, but as you can see on p12 we're successfully pushing back.

The cold weather can also bring bill stress for a growing number of Victorians, particularly as warmongers and fossil fuel companies drive up global energy prices.

Making our buildings more efficient and powering them with homegrown clean energy can make the entire community more resilient. But only if everyone has access to the advice and support they need to take part – whether they rent or own, live in a brand-new apartment or a century-old weatherboard. On p8 you can read about how we're working with Victoria's incredible neighbourhood house network and others to make that happen.

As Angela says on p4, the challenges we face will only be solved by working together across institutions and communities. Which is why I was so

excited to attend the two-day community organising training she ran with leaders like Sudha and Palak in March. And so moved by the connections made between Melbourne's Chinese community and Latrobe Valley locals in last November's Power Lines tour (see p10).

On this rapidly heating planet, we can't take the next season for granted. But by working together we can make sure the needs of people and nature are put first.

Gearing up for the state election

Victor Komarovsky
Senior organiser



This November Victorians will go to the polls and decide who guides our state through to 2030, which will be a critical phase in the state's transition to clean energy.

The recent flash flooding on the Great Ocean Road was a dramatic reminder that the consequences of our damaged climate are no longer a distant threat. As unnatural disasters threaten communities and ravage the landscape, the knock-on effects profoundly impact daily life in different ways – whether it's insurance costs rising, heatwaves affecting health, the increasing cost of groceries or devastating impacts on wildlife.

But the urgency to build clean energy isn't only because we need to cut climate pollution.

Victoria's old coal power stations are also becoming more unreliable and expensive to maintain. According to the recent Reliability Watch report, Loy Yang A is one of the least reliable power stations in the entire energy grid, with 13 unplanned outages between April and September last year alone. Read the full report at [ENVICT.ORG/RELIABILITY-WATCH](https://envict.org/reliability-watch)

Victoria needs leaders who take these issues seriously, accept the scale of what needs to be done, and are willing to act accordingly.

But with the rising cost of living and the uncertain times we are living through, it is easy for politicians and lobby groups to use distractions that promote fear and sow division.

So it's more important than ever to call for clean energy solutions that improve people's lives while making sure that nobody is left behind.

We know from experience that credible and equitable solutions are not enough. We also need people power - connected and well organised communities who can speak up, connect with their local candidates and show that solutions to make clean energy more accessible have the backing of the community.

That's why over the past few years we've been investing in our community organising capacity and increasing the power and reach of our volunteer-led Action Network.

We've had proven results in previous elections, and this time we're taking things to a new level.

Throughout this year we will be working across a range of strategic electorates and engaging with voters, including those who have been unable to access the benefits of clean energy; this includes multicultural communities, renters, apartment

GET INVOLVED

Want to get involved in our election campaign? Our volunteer summit and campaign launch event on Saturday May 23rd is the perfect opportunity.

The day will bring together organisers, allied community groups and volunteers to share plans, strategise together, sharpen organising skills and build momentum. And it'll be packed with food, music and fun to energise us for the campaign ahead.

If you are keen to contribute, then we encourage you to come along.

WHEN Sat 23 May,
9:30am – 5pm

WHERE Phoenix Park
Community Centre,
Malvern East

Learn more and rsvp at
[ENVICT.ORG/ELECTION-LAUNCH](https://envict.org/election-launch)

dwellers and younger households. We'll be talking to them about how climate and clean energy solutions are connected to their immediate concerns and the things they care about.

Our plan is simple. We'll build broad community support for clean energy, make it visible to the candidates who need to see it and convert public pressure into real policy pledges.

So are you in?



During the last federal election we worked with the 'Renew Australia for All' alliance in Melbourne's Eastern suburbs.

Attendees at our two-day Foundations of Community Organising training.



Community building takes off in Melbourne's West

Angela Ashley-Chiew

Senior Community Organiser



By strengthening relationships and building people power, we are laying the foundations for a stronger and more connected movement for environmental and economic justice in Melbourne's west.

Melbourne's west is home to vibrant and diverse communities living and working on Wurundjeri, Bunurong and Wadawurrung Country. It is shaped by people from many cultures who are building their lives here, and who care deeply about the neighbourhoods and natural places that make the west unique.

As the region grows, people are facing rising living costs and the impacts of rapid development and climate change – such as extreme heat, limited green space and tree cover, pressure on endangered grasslands, expanding data centres, and public transport that hasn't kept up with population growth.

Through my work with Environment

Victoria, I have been focused on building stronger local participation around climate and nature, and over the past year we have been growing the Action Network in the west – recruiting new volunteers to help bring people together, start conversations, and create welcoming spaces for others to get involved.

For many people, particularly those from multicultural backgrounds, environmental spaces have not always felt accessible. We aim to change that by creating spaces that reflect the diversity of the west. People bring food from their culture to share, talk about the places in nature that matter to them, and connect over the hopes they hold for their families and neighbourhoods.

Through these gatherings we are not just raising awareness about environmental issues. We are building relationships, trust and leadership. When people have a space to connect with others who care, confidence grows and people begin to see that change is possible when they work together.

But the challenges we face are too big for any one group to solve. That's why we are also connecting institutions and their leaders through the emerging Victorian Community Alliance, beginning in Melbourne's west.

The alliance brings together multicultural organisations, churches and faith groups, unions, social justice organisations, climate and environment groups, women's and women's health organisations, neighbourhood houses, community centres and many other local institutions.

By strengthening relationships across these organisations, we can work together on the climate and economic justice issues affecting the west.

In the coming months we will host a series of community organising trainings, where leaders from these organisations will learn practical tools for building relationships, developing leaders and organising people around shared concerns.

This will help lay the groundwork for deeper collaboration and will build towards a pre-election Listening Assembly, where community members will share stories of lived experience and the pressures people are facing.

At a time when many people feel disconnected from politics and from one another, this work is about rebuilding the connective tissue of society.

Meet some of our local leaders

Luciana Manrique

“Nature has always been part of my life. I grew up in Salta in northern Argentina, surrounded by forests, mountains and rivers, so caring for the environment has always felt natural to me. When I moved to Melbourne’s west, I started getting involved in my community – teaching English to people seeking asylum and helping with local projects.

Volunteering with Environment Victoria felt like a natural next step. I believe when people come together we can protect the places we love and create stronger communities at the same time. Being part of the Action Network has shown me how powerful community action can be.”



Sudha Narayan

“Growing up in Fiji, nature was part of everyday life. I remember picking flowers early in the morning while the dew was still on them and gathering fruits and vegetables from family gardens. Later I saw how forests were stripped bare by logging and rivers began to dry up. That experience stayed with me.

I volunteer with Environment Victoria as a local organiser because I want to do my small part. Their work is very in-depth and values-driven, and I’m glad to be involved in something meaningful.

I feel like I’m really putting my soul into this for future generations. When people I’ve invited become active and start caring for the environment too, that makes me proud.”



Palak Shah

“Seeing the devastating impact of the 2019-20 bushfires really opened my eyes to the reality of climate change. It made me want to do something positive for the future, especially as a parent.

Being part of Environment Victoria’s Action Network has helped me connect with people in my community who also care about protecting our environment. Places like parks, community halls and temples bring people together, and they remind me that everyone can play a role in caring for our planet.

I feel proud that we’ve built a volunteer team in Melbourne’s west from the ground up. When communities come together, people power can create real change.”



THANK YOU to The Greater Melbourne Foundation, Dawn Wade Foundation and the Reichstein Foundation for supporting this work.



Critically Endangered listing must be a turning point for our rivers

Tyler Rotche
Healthy Rivers
Campaigner



In January, the lower Murray River was formally listed as critically endangered. Without significant action we may lose entire ecological communities within the next ten years. But, so far, the federal government's Basin Plan review appears completely disconnected from this reality.

A river dies from the mouth up. As its flow declines – captured and pumped upstream – a river loses its ability to flush sediment and contaminants into the sea. Freshwater loses its force against the ocean. Salinity creeps inland. Once a meeting place of rain, groundwater and snowmelt from distant headwaters, the mouth is overwhelmed by salt.

But death rarely follows a precise sequence. Elsewhere, far upstream, stolen flows leave floodplain woodlands to suffer a slow death. Natural rhythms of the river are replaced by engineered uniformity, and dynamic, living wetlands are converted into engineered reservoirs.

This is where the Basin Plan was meant to intervene.

Failed interventions

In 1995, after a catastrophic blue-green algae bloom spread over 1,000 kilometres on the Darling-Baaka, governments introduced a cap on how much water could be taken from the rivers of the Basin.

Then came the Millennium Drought, which drove the system beyond the brink. Between 2007 and 2012, the federal Water Act and Murray-Darling Basin Plan introduced new limits designed to return water back to rivers and wetlands.

The goal was straightforward. Take less water and ensure it can flow to ecosystems that need it. But nearly twenty years and about \$13 billion later, the results are unsettling. Only four percent of wetlands in the Basin receive the water they need.

This failure is a direct result of the choices made by politicians on behalf of wealthy irrigators and investors.

The Basin Plan's limits on water extraction were heavily influenced by corporate interests. Early modelling suggested that 7,600 gigalitres of water might be needed to ensure river health. But political negotiations ignored the science and landed on a water recovery target of 2,750 gigalitres (or 2,525 depending on how you count it).

It was already a long way short of what our rivers needed. And then came the implementation.

In the southern Basin, programs meant to recover water for rivers favoured 'trickle-down' approaches. The government funded infrastructure handouts and new offset schemes. Billions were spent with negligible or contested water savings.

In the northern Basin, massive floodplain dams had captured flows beyond the legal cap for years. Rather than facing harsh penalties, they were legalised.

Many licences allow irrigators to accumulate a form of debt from the river during dry years that they can take in wet

THANK YOU to everyone who responded to our recent appeals to power our Rivers Campaign; your generosity makes this work possible.

Alarm bells as Murray declared critically endangered

By Andrew Brown and Alex Mitchell
January 15 2026 - 4:27pm

years. Even the havoc of global heating, with increasing drought and flooding, has opened new terrain for profiting from water trading that is concealed behind layers of bureaucracy.

The review

This year the federal government is reviewing both the Basin Plan and the Water Act. A reasonable starting point might be the fact that the original limits on water extraction ignored scientific evidence.

Rivers need more water. They need to flow like rivers instead of channels – with seasonal rhythms and regular small floods. And any viable future for the Basin depends on returning more water and giving more authority over water governance to Traditional Owners.

But conclusions emerging from the Review so far appear to be disconnected from reality. The current proposal does not even plan to update extraction limits to account for global heating.

Rainfall patterns are already being reshaped as our climate becomes more unstable, and river flows are falling. The entire premise of the Basin Plan – releasing intentional environmental flows to prolong, increase or create small floods – becomes harder with less water in the system.

Yet the review treats climate change as a future challenge to be revisited, which means delaying the inclusion of climate science until 2036, nearly thirty years from when it should have been considered.

The choice

The question now facing the Albanese government is stark: will they be the government that allows the Basin to enter an era of managed extinction?

It would be easy to blame the Coalition. On their watch water buybacks were blocked and funding for water recovery flowed disproportionately to large agribusinesses, while actual river flows failed to match the computer models.

But Labor governments have also played a role. They inaugurated the neoliberal reforms that reshaped Australian agriculture, weakening union power and turning water into a tradeable commodity that exposed farmers to volatile global markets.

These changes intensified the pressure to exploit waterways and increased pressure on farmers and farm workers. Effects which have been incorrectly blamed on the Basin Plan.

Faced with these facts, each government has leaned on a tired argument to justify inaction: they must balance ecosystems, agriculture and rural economies.

But who is truly benefitting in any of these areas?

Today, water has become a commodity – bought, sold and accumulated as an asset. It feeds thirsty export crops, while speculative water trading creates a rentier class that profits from owning water rather than farming.

Family farmers are squeezed between supermarkets, water traders and climate change. Meanwhile, the waterways are treated as ‘working rivers’ – to be dammed, constrained and manipulated for the benefit of those profiting.

It is time to recognise the rivers of the Basin as a living system.

That means setting limits on what can be extracted, returning more water and decision-making authority to Traditional Owners, and ensuring river communities – not water barons, Wall Street traders or international pension funds – see the benefits of the agriculture, jobs and public investment that rivers make possible.

It’s possible that Labor and Coalition politicians alike are content with treating water as a tradeable asset rather than the foundation of life, and watching a slow crisis unfold while offering only empty, surface-level gestures.

But communities can compel a response – and this review needs to be a turning point, where this failure of imagination shifts to a vision of the Basin that nourishes its ecosystems and people.

As part of the Murray-Darling Conservation Alliance we’ll be keeping up the pressure, and we will need your support every step of the way.

LEARN MORE OR TAKE ACTION

Find out why the Lower Murray has been listed as endangered and what it means here [ENVICT.ORG/MURRAY-ENDANGERED](https://envict.org/murray-endangered)

Submissions to the Basin Plan review can be made until May 1st – have your say at [ENVICT.ORG/MURRAY-SUBMISSION](https://envict.org/murray-submission)

New partnership helps households go electric

Penny Claringbull

Senior Oganiser



With the generous support of Bank Australia, we're partnering with Neighbourhood Houses Victoria to deliver electrification workshops across Melbourne.

As momentum to get off gas grows across Victoria, community electrification groups have been running events, explaining rebates, simplifying the tech talk, and making the shift to electric homes achievable for more people.

As part of this broad community shift, we're collaborating with Neighbourhood Houses Victoria on the 'Electrifying Communities' project.

Neighbourhood Houses are trusted local spaces that play a vital role in reaching

The Electrifying Communities project is generously supported by Bank Australia.



people who might otherwise miss out on clear, reliable information. Together, we're delivering 30 free, inclusive workshops through Neighbourhood Houses in 12 council areas across Melbourne.

These sessions help households understand how going electric can lower energy bills, improve comfort and health, and reduce climate pollution. Participants hear from qualified home energy assessors, learn about available rebates

and support, enjoy an induction-cooked meal, and get practical guidance on where to start.

By working together, we're helping make electrification easier for people to understand and act on.

We're grateful to the Neighbourhood Houses for opening their doors, and to the electrification groups across Victoria who are helping communities take practical steps toward an all-electric future.



Clean energy for apartments takes a step forward

Kat Lucas-Healey

Senior Climate and Energy Analyst



Anyone who has tried to get their apartment off gas, or get solar on the roof, knows how difficult it can be.

There are technical and spatial barriers, not to mention the effort it takes to get an owners' corporation to agree to an upgrade. Even after all that, many projects still fail. For renters, things are even harder.

We also lag other states when it comes to getting solar on apartments, which is

why the Victorian parliament's inquiry into affordable and renewable energy for apartments is important.

We wanted to make sure the inquiry hears what is happening out in the real world, so we surveyed our community and if you were one of the many people who filled it out, then thank you!

You can read our full submission at [ENVICT.ORG/APARTMENT-SUB](https://envict.org/apartment-sub)

The inquiry will hear that people need apartments that are protected from climate extremes with double glazing, insulation, shading and other passive measures. People also want solar on the roof and efficient electric appliances for heating, cooling, cooking and hot water.

Importantly, our submission highlights the need for law reform and better support for owners' corporations, so that it is easier to get good projects happening and everyone living in the building saves on energy bills. We also want to see more generous and fit-for-purpose incentives available to apartments.

The inquiry will hand down its recommendations by 30th of September, so watch this space!

THANK YOU to everyone who has been following this work and powering our progress and success.



Power Lines: Walking Latrobe

Josie Hess

Digital Content and Mobilisation Lead



Last November volunteers in our Action Network and members of English Corner (a Chinese-based language learning group) followed the power lines out to Gippsland, to see the place that has powered Victoria for generations.

They gathered at Moe Train Station just after 10am to meet a mix of long-time Latrobe Valley locals.

The 'Power Lines Tour' invited people to stand beneath the towering transmission lines that carry coal-fired power from the Latrobe Valley and to understand the history, harm, pride and possibility embedded in this landscape, on Gunaikurnai Country.

We started the day connecting to nature, finding ourselves in the Edward Hunter

Park for a Welcome to Country by long-time local organiser, Electra Green. Surrounded by trees and birdsong, it was a reminder that this is more than an industrial landscape. We spoke about the ongoing leadership of First Peoples in caring for land and water, and the importance of Treaty in reshaping how decisions are made in Victoria.

Electra reflected on that sense of grounding. "The Powerline's experience was indeed special. Having a beautiful Culture of people coming to my country and to be able to share with them our pain when it comes to the damage that the electricity companies have made. Those industries have left a big mess in the environment and our river systems. The tour touched everyone, even though it was raining, and finished off with a beautiful lunch and sharing conversations."

After that, we drove towards Yallourn power station. The scale of the aging coal-giant built in the 1960s and open-cut mine came into view. The mine void is a vast expanse of land in hues of dark brown and black, the scar that is left

behind from over 100 years of brown coal mining.

We stopped at the Yallourn Lookout, gazing across the deep terraced pit. There, we heard from Local Organiser Steph Sabrinskas, about the long arc of energy history in the Valley from the discovery of brown coal and the rise of the State Electricity Commission, and privatisation in the 90s. We spoke about the planned garden town of Yallourn, built in the 1920s, and later demolished to access more coal. We reflected on how entire communities had been shaped, and reshaped, by decisions about energy.

For Minwen, another Local Organiser, who played a key leadership role in bringing people together for the day, the experience was about connection across cultures and communities.

"It was wonderful, everyone had a great time. Being out in regional Victoria helped us to connect with the land and nature and meet people in the Latrobe Valley community while learning more about climate, the environment and the energy transition." Minwen said.



Valley's coal face together

“What Environment Victoria is doing with English Corner is a perfect example of what adult migrant English programs can do, making language learning a community-based, immersive activity where migrants connect with First Nations Australians and become active citizens.”

The participation of migrant community members added a powerful layer to the day. The Latrobe Valley has always been shaped by migration, from early European workers to post-war arrivals from Malta, Italy and beyond.

After getting some group photos with the famous Morwell Dredger, the final sightseeing stop, was the Power Works museum looking out over the Hazelwood mine pit, the site of the infamous 2014 fire that burned for 45 days, blanketing the entire region in acrid smoke. President of Voices of the Valley, Wendy Farmer, spoke to the group about the community response to the fire as a turning point for speaking up against the fossil fuel industry.

To round out the day, we headed to

Kernot Lake Immigration Park in Morwell to join the annual Gippsland end-of-year environment celebration. Over food and conversation, tour participants mingled with local climate and environment champions who have been organising for years around mine remediation, water protection, and a just transition.

Margie, a Local Organiser whose brilliant hosting skills were put to good use during the lunch she organised at Kernot lake, spoke about the power of bringing people together face-to-face. “It was a pleasure to host the folks who wanted to listen and learn about the experience of living in a region that has powered the state and now facing the challenges of transition and rehabilitation.”

“Connections developed through shared conversations, deep listening and good food, bringing people together who care for the environment, the Power Lines tour was another great experience of what environment Victoria does well.”

That connection, between city and regions, between long-time locals and newer Victorians, between environmental

advocates and community members, was the thread running through the tour.

The Latrobe Valley has carried the weight of powering Victoria for over a century. Its workers built the grid. Its towns grew around open cuts and cooling towers. And its people have also lived with the consequences: pollution, mine fires, economic uncertainty and now the complexities of the energy transition.

But what the day made clear was that the Valley is not just a site of extraction. It is a place of knowledge, culture, and community leadership.

As we wrapped up in the afternoon sun, conversations turned to what comes next, mine rehabilitation that genuinely restores land and water, renewable energy projects that benefit local communities, and decision-making that puts power back in the hands of First Peoples and local residents.

Following the power lines created a powerful exchange between communities and planted the seeds for more exciting things to come!

WIN! AGL cops a \$250 million water bill

Loy Yang mine pit.

Hayley Sestokas

Latrobe Valley
Community Organiser



For decades energy companies have taken water from the Latrobe River (Durt'Yowan) for almost nothing; that era is now over.

As the Latrobe Valley's brown coal power stations close, their owners are planning to turn the three enormous mine pits into lakes.

This will require a staggering amount of water and last year AGL was the first cab off the rank, applying to take 36 billion litres of water every year for 30 years to fill their Loy Yang mine pit.

Together, we helped secure a public consultation process and made it impossible for AGL's proposal to be quietly approved without scrutiny. Our community joined briefings, wrote submissions and demanded transparency.

In response, Water Minister Gayle Tierney set a price of \$230 per megalitre, meaning AGL will pay more than \$250 million for the water it needs. But this isn't the end of the story.

The Latrobe River has suffered from decades of coal mining, and this money should be used to fund projects like floodplain protection, wetland restoration, recreating meanders, and installing fish ladders.

As it stands, the money will go into a regional fund and there is no guarantee that this will happen. And while we support investment in the local economy, communities shouldn't have to choose between good jobs and healthy rivers.

So later this year when Hazelwood's mine rehabilitation plans will face scrutiny, we'll stand ready to hold Engie and the Victorian Government accountable.

Together, we've shown the power of people standing up for Durt'Yowan. And together, we'll make sure its future flows strong for generations to come.

THANK YOU to everyone who has contributed to power this campaign. We will keep working with local groups to hold coal mine owners and the Victorian government accountable on coal mine remediation.

National alliance pushes for regulation of data centres

The AI driven explosion of energy and water guzzling data centres is a huge risk that requires transparency, genuine public consultation and good planning.

Without proper regulation, massive tech companies could push the cost of their data centres onto the community by driving up energy prices, delaying the closure of polluting coal power stations, and straining our precious water supplies.

Nowhere are these risks clearer than in the Latrobe Valley, where a gigantic \$10 billion data centre has been proposed despite the region grappling with declining water flows due to global heating and new water demand from coal mine remediation.

Despite the risks, some Victorian MPs have completely bought into the AI hype, with Danny Pearson, Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs, racing to remove regulations and approve data centres as quickly as possible. Recently a massive Port Melbourne data centre was approved in just 75 days.

In response we've joined a national alliance of clean energy, union, industry and community groups to push for clear rules for data centre developments.

We're pushing the federal government to make massive tech companies use 100%

new renewable energy, use the most water efficient technology, avoid the use of drinking water for cooling, and invest in apprenticeships to help build the skilled workforce we need for the energy transition.

In late March the Albanese government released its 'expectations' for data centres, which incorporates many of these principles. But to be effective they must be turned into enforceable federal and state rules that support the renewable energy transition and protect nature.

Read the full 'Public Interest Principles for Data Centres' statement at [ENVICT.ORG/DATA-CENTRES](https://envict.org/data-centres)





Treaty is here!

The Treaty signing event at Birrarung Wilam on 12th November.

Taryn Sadler

Strategic Communications Lead: Rivers, Nature, First Nations Justice



Victoria made history last year – becoming the first state in Australia to enshrine Treaty in law.

In December, Victorians came together to celebrate as the statewide Treaty legislation was formally signed by the Victorian Government and the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria.

It was a landmark moment – not only symbolic, but structural – marking a shift in how this state relates to First Peoples.

It was also decades in the making. Generations of leadership by Elders, alongside six years of consultations and negotiations led by the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria, laid the groundwork for this historic milestone.

The Treaty now transforms the Assembly into a permanent, legislated body, creating an enduring framework for First Peoples to negotiate directly with the State. In doing so, it opens a new chapter in how Victoria reckons with its shared history and builds a future founded on respect, truth and integrity.

But this is just the beginning of the Treaty era.

The next phase will see the negotiation of Traditional Owner Treaties – agreements between the State and individual Traditional Owner groups.

This matters because Country differs across Victoria. From the forests of the east to the mallee in the north-west,

from alpine regions to coastlines and grasslands, each landscape carries its own laws, stories and custodianship practices. Traditional Owners hold knowledge developed over tens of thousands of years – knowledge of fire, water, seasons, plants and animals that has sustained Country for millennia.

Traditional Owner Treaties create space for that authority and expertise to shape local decision-making about land, water and biodiversity. They offer the potential for stronger protections for Country, more culturally informed land and water management, and deeper collaboration in restoring ecosystems in a changing climate. When Traditional Owners lead the care of their Country, all Victorians can benefit.

Victoria's progress on Treaty has also renewed calls for national leadership.

While Victoria has taken significant steps, Australia remains the only

Commonwealth nation without a Treaty with its First Peoples. A national Treaty and truth-telling process would recognise the sovereignty that was never ceded, confront the ongoing impacts of colonisation, and lay the foundations for a more just future across the continent.

But progress is never guaranteed. Treaty in Victoria is already facing political opposition, and the work is far from finished. The Victorian Liberal–National Coalition has threatened to repeal Treaty if elected this year, putting this historic win at real risk. What First Peoples fought for over generations could still be undone – unless people stand up to defend it.

Victoria has shown that Treaty is possible. The task now is to sustain the momentum – here and nationally – so that justice for First Peoples and care for Country remain at the heart of our shared future.

YOU CAN HELP BY JOINING THE TOGETHER FOR TREATY CAMPAIGN

[TOGETHERFORTREATY.ORG.AU](https://togetherfortreaty.org.au)

Together for Treaty is a growing national movement of First Nations peoples and allies working to build unstoppable momentum for Treaties this decade. It's about turning solidarity into action – standing alongside Traditional Owners as they negotiate agreements that recognise sovereignty, protect Country and reshape decision-making for generations to come.

Environment Victoria is proud to support Together for Treaty and back First Peoples' calls for Truth and Treaty – just as First Peoples have long stood strong to defend land, water and climate.

Supporting Treaty is one way we can stand with them – and help secure a future where justice for people and nature go hand in hand.

The courage to protect the places we love

In memory of Christine Fensham (1927-2024)

Christine and her daughter in the ocean at Phillip Island.

Camille Warambourg

Key Relationships Manager



Love for nature is where it all begins. Yet it is the combination of love, courage and justice that moves people like Christine to take action for the environment.

We all have a place we feel deeply connected to. For Christine, one of these places was Phillip Island.

Christine had a lifelong fascination with sea life shaped by years of snorkelling in Victorian rock pools. Her children fondly remember moments spent with her, crouching beside the pools, peering into the beautiful ecosystems hidden among the rocks.

She was also a keen gardener and an early champion of planting natives. Christine passed on her love and curiosity for the natural world to her children and grandchildren – a passion that later led to one of her three boys becoming a botanist!

Christine and her late husband Peter, an avid bushwalker, were committed conservationists. On Phillip Island, they were among the founding members of the Smiths Beachcomber Conservation Association, and they were also involved in Environment Victoria's early days and took part in our campaign opposing a proposed nuclear power station on nearby French Island.

Christine also joined local efforts led by community artists to draw attention to the importance of protecting the precious habitat of the orange-bellied parrot in Westernport.

Christine's passion for Westernport

and her community activism inspired those around her, and her daughter Rachel remains deeply committed to protecting this special place.

"Mum was a wonderfully lively character. Today, I continue to take part in weeding days in Westernport Bay and still marvel at the tides and beauty of this inland water system."

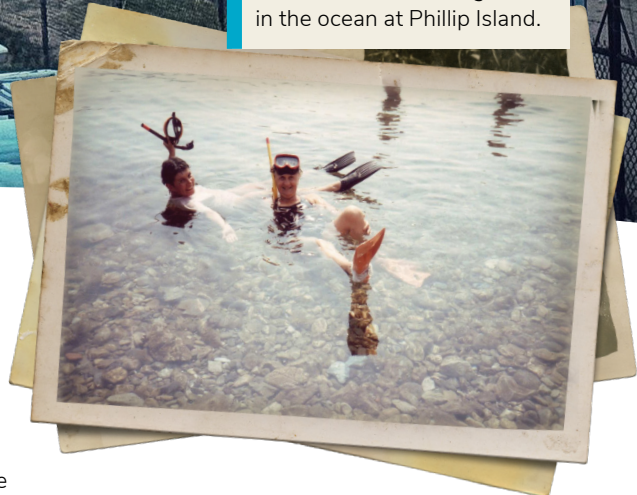
Places like Westernport have faced many threats over the years, and it is thanks to a strong community and people like the Fenshams that we can still enjoy their natural beauty today.

Christine sadly passed away in 2024, her husband three years earlier. In their Wills, they both chose to include a gift to Environment Victoria, continuing their lifelong commitment to protecting our natural world.

Christine's generous bequest has been directed to Environment Victoria's Green Future Fund. This long-term investment plan ensures her legacy continues –

protecting the places she cared about so deeply. With this visionary support, future generations can continue to enjoy Victoria's natural wonders – from the riverbanks of the mighty Murray to the precious coastline of Westernport Bay, the expansive forests of East Gippsland, and hidden gems like Little Desert National Park.

We are grateful that Christine and Peter were part of our Forever Green community. They shared our values of love, justice and courage, and the way they lived those values each day inspired their children, grandchildren and many others in their community to care for the places we all love.



PROTECT WHAT YOU LOVE, FOR GENERATIONS TO COME

Including a gift in your Will is one way you can help Environment Victoria protect the natural places we all love across Victoria

Our **GREEN FUTURE FUND** provides long-term financial stability for this work by ethically investing donations and bequests and generating reliable income to support our campaigns for years to come.

To learn more about leaving a gift to the Green Future Fund, please visit [ENVICT.ORG/ONLINE-WILL](https://envict.org/online-will) or contact Sanchit, our Key Relationships Officer, on (03) 9341 8105 or BEQUESTS@ENVIRONMENTVICTORIA.ORG.AU





Dear Jono, I want safe, clean and affordable climate solutions on the agenda in this year's election.

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

Cardholder's 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.





Photo: Doug Gimesy

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**

Healthy Rivers Campaigner **Tyler Rotche**

Senior Climate and Energy Analyst
Kat Lucas-Healey

Community Organising Co-Managers
Victor Komarovsky, Hayley Sestokas

Senior Organisers **Penny Claringbull,
Angela Ashley-Chiew**

Greater Melbourne Organiser **Peizhi Jiang**

Data Support Officer **Chante Bock**

Communications Manager
Cameron Wheatley

Media and Content Manager **James Norman**

Digital Content and Mobilisation Lead
Josie Hess

Strategic Communications Lead: Rivers,
Nature, First Nations Justice **Taryn Sadler**

OPERATIONS

Finance Manager **Don Batson**

Accounts Officer **Jing Lu**

People and Operations Manager **Beth Koch**

Administration Support Officer **Julie Schilin**

Administration Assistant **Ingrid Wys**

Fundraising Director **Andy Grant**

Key Relationships Manager
Camille Warambourg

Appeals Officer **Wren Trewin**

Key Relationships Officers **Sanchit Jain,
Sylwia Sierkiewicz**

Regular Giving Officer **Grace Kelly**

Database Administrator **Karly Roolker**

BOARD

President **Conor Costello**

Treasurer **Jed Gilbert**

Secretary **Jane Campton**

Bruce Thompson

Tracey Martinovich

Stacey Little

Wai-Ling Au

Georgia Windrum

Adam Walsh

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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