



FriendsNET

Newsletter of the Victorian Environment Friends Network

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See our web site at <http://friendsvic.org/>

VEFN 2018 Best Friend Awards



Judy Ingram, Friends of Maribyrnong Valley; Graeme Lorimer, Friends of Bungalook Conservation Reserves; Ben Ellis, Friends of Water Race & Quinn Reserve; Fiona Topolcsanyi, Friends of Ocean Grove Nature Reserve and Melissa Holden, Friends of Wonnangatta Valley.

There was strong support for this year's Best Friend Awards with over 70 people attending the ceremony on 25th August. A number of high quality nominations were received by VEFN, giving the Best Friend Award Panel a difficult task.

Three nominees received Best Friend Awards: Judy Ingram from Friends of Maribyrnong Valley, Graeme Lorimer from Friends of Bungalook Conservation Reserves and Fiona Topolcsanyi from Friends of Ocean Grove Nature Reserve. Another five nominees were highly commended by the Panel and were awarded a Certificate of commendation. Short biographies of the outstanding contribution these recipients have made to the environment and their groups are described in the profiles later in this edition. The commitment and dedication shown by these Friends provides inspirational reading. Continued next page.

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Suggestions for articles for FriendsNET are welcome. Please email to friendsvic@hotmail.com. If you want to include photos, please send as separate files in jpeg format, preferably in landscape.

VEFN AGM: Saturday 27th October 2018.

The 2018 Annual General Meeting of the Victorian Environment Friends Network will be held at The Multicultural Hub, 506 Elizabeth St Melbourne (opposite the Queen Victoria Market) on Saturday 27th October at 10am.

All VEFN Member groups are urged to attend. Under the new constitution groups are eligible to nominate a voting delegate (if no nomination either President or Secretary are automatically accepted). Delegates should be advised by email prior to the meeting. Any member of a member group may nominate for the Committee.

All Friends groups are also strongly encouraged to attend the AGM. Even if your group is not a Member of VEFN, you are encouraged to attend and have your say.

The agenda will include the minutes of the previous AGM (held in February 2018); a committee report, financial report and Committee elections. Positions open for election are: Convenor, Deputy Convenor, Secretary, Treasurer and Committee members (number can be determined by the meeting).

As membership has changed with the new constitution, if you are not sure of your group's membership status please contact the Secretary at friendsvic@hotmail.com. If you wish to attend the meeting, please register your intention to the above email.

The awards were presented at a ceremony held at Cranbourne Gardens on 25th August. Chris Russell, Executive Director of Cranbourne Gardens RBGV, presented the awards and spoke about the dedication, passion and expert knowledge demonstrated by Friends groups. He referred to the invaluable contribution made by Cranbourne Friends to the ongoing development of the botanic gardens and the mutual respect that exists between them and the staff working there.

Paul Strickland, Convener of VEFN, referred to the value of the awards in "highlighting the vital but, too often, unsung role that Friends groups play in developing, protecting and promoting many precious areas of our unique environment." He acknowledged the ongoing support received from the Victorian Government and the support of DELWP for the Best Friend Awards in the form of a \$5000 grant.

After the awards presentation, those attending were able to enjoy the sunshine by taking a short stroll around sections of the gardens accompanied by members of the Cranbourne Friends.



Attendees at the Best Friend Awards take a stroll around the gardens accompanied by Cranbourne Friends.



A Bandicoot spotted on the walk around the gardens.

VEFN 2018 Best Friend Awards - continued

The five Friends who were Highly Commended are:: Margaret and Richard Clarke from Cranbourne Friends RBG; Ben Ellis from Friends of Water Race & Quinn Reserve, Melissa Holden from Friends of Wonnangatta Valley and Claude Odorisio from Friends of Organ Pipes National Park.

VEFN 2018 Best Friend Awards - continued

VEFN thanks Chris Russell for providing the venue for the ceremony and Alex Smart, Barbara Jeffrey and members of the Cranbourne Friends Events Committee for their hospitality in providing morning tea and sharing information about the gardens and the work of the Friends group. It was greatly appreciated by the 73 people who attended.

Biographies of the recipients of the 2018 Best Friend Award and those who were Highly Commended are included on the following pages.

VEFN 2018 Victorian Election Position Statement

The VEFN committee recently approved a Victorian Election Position Statement. This has been circulated to Victorian Labour, liberals and Greens for their consideration in the light of the up-Victorian state election which will be held on Saturday 24th November.

The VEFN committee has taken opportunities as they have arisen to raise the profile of Friends groups with Departments and funding organisations, and this has resulted in a small increase in funding opportunities and recognition for Friends groups.

The Election Position Statement is an attempt to further raise the profile of Friends groups in the hope that commitments of support will be made by potential future governments.

It is acknowledged that the statement will not cover everything that Friends groups might want, let alone elicit any concrete promises, but it was felt that it could make a start. The major parties have been contacted and at this stage no responses have been supplied but hopefully that may still occur.

The committee encourages all Friends groups to contact your local member or candidate (no matter what party, or house) urging them to support Friends groups. If you do make such contact please let us know at friendsvic@hotmail.com.

The **VEFN 2018 Victorian Election Position Statement** requests:

All Parties to consider and respond to the following proposals for implementation in the next period of Government.

Recognition of Friends groups for the work they do in managing and improving parks, reserves and waterways

and engaging communities in environmental volunteering by formalising their role within the DELWP structure, including Parks Victoria, the Victorian Catchment Management Council and other relevant agencies.

Broaden current environment grants to include the work undertaken by Friends groups especially in parks and reserves maintenance, and community engagement (such as past grants in "Local Landscape Enhancement" and "Healthy Parks Healthy People");

Provision of basic administration grants, (including the cost of insurances), to groups and to VEFN to enhance the ability of Friends groups to operate.

Make available wider safety and skills training.

Revision of the Parks Charge, which only some water customers currently pay, but all Victorians benefit from, and the availability of some of those funds to friends groups;

Provision of more funds for weed and pest animal control and development of a process to encourage a landscape wide response.

Election Position Statements by Environment Victoria, Yarra Riverkeeper Association & Victorian National Parks Association are included later in this edition.

VEAC Recommendations on Central West Forests available for comment

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) released its recommendations for Central West Forests on 31st August. This is an important report and covers a wide area of forests in the Central Victorian Uplands between Ararat, Avoca & Beaufort in the west to Lancefield, Bacchus Marsh, Ballan & Daylesford in the east. VEAC has now extended the time for submissions to Monday 10th December. VEAC's report, background documents and how to make a submission can be found [here](#).

VNPA has produced a useful analysis of the VEAC recommendations which can be found [here](#).

Best Friend

Judy Ingram – Friends of Maribyrnong Valley

Since joining the Friends of Maribyrnong Valley (FMV) in 2007, Judy has worked tirelessly to create change within a section of the Maribyrnong Valley parklands.

Judy ascribes to the philosophy that, “you can travel faster on your own, but you can travel further with others.” She has worked to establish strong relationships between FMV and Parks Victoria, local government, state and federal politicians, first nations people, schools and other key stakeholders such as Melbourne Water.

Over the past seven years, Judy has successfully applied for grants totalling \$270,000 using a staged approach to restoration of parkland. The benefit to the parkland is long lasting with seedlings maturing into habitat trees and ground cover stabilising erosion thereby preventing soil from entering waterways.

Involving young people, particularly local schools, in restoring the parkland has been a major focus. FMV’s planting days with schools are now part of the school curriculum.

Judy’s passion and commitment to improving the local environment extend into the broader community. She represents FMV in various forums, raising the level of awareness regarding the pollution and general amenity of the Maribyrnong Valley, seeking funding and a better recognition of the role that the Valley plays from an environmental, conservation and health perspective for local communities. Recently, she has been involved in the Rivers of the West campaign with other Friends groups and stakeholders with the aim of protecting major rivers and tributaries in the west of Melbourne.



Judy Ingram at Friends of Maribyrnong Valley's Annual General Meeting

Best Friend

Graeme Lorimer - Friends of Bungalook Conservation Reserves

Graeme Lorimer has dedicated 30 years of volunteer service to a number of environmental groups that operate within the Maroondah City Council. He is best known for his tireless work as coordinator of the Friends of Bungalook Conservation Reserves (BCR) in Kilsyth South, and guardian of the critically endangered Kilsyth South Spider-orchid, *Caladenia* sp. aff. *venusta* (Kilsyth South).

Graeme was the first to discover and document the botanical significance of land that was to become Bungalook Conservation Reserves. Through Montrose Environmental Group (MEG) he ran a successful public campaign to raise funds to purchase land that is now owned by Trust for Nature and forms part of BCR. For more than 10 years, he campaigned to have two neighbouring blocks purchased by Maroondah City Council and added to BCR. Today, sections of BCR are owned by the council, the Trust and Melbourne Water.



Graeme Lorimer (back row, third from left) at a Friends of Bungalook Conservation Reserves working bee, August 2018

Graeme's efforts are not just restricted to the Montrose Environment Group and Bungalook Conservation Reserves. He is an active contributor to many other environment and conservation groups, including the Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association. He is always willing to help whenever called upon by government agencies or community organisations to volunteer technical support and guidance in relation to conservation related issues.

Best Friend

Fiona Topolcsanyi – Friends of Ocean Grove Nature Reserve

Since joining the Friends of Ocean Grove Nature Reserve (OGNR) in 2005, Fiona has worked tirelessly to improve the amenity of the Reserve. She has used her network of contacts to focus upon educating the local community about the significant natural values of the Reserve. She has led activities and projects that encourage community groups, especially those working with younger people, to become active in the Reserve and help conserve the environment. Fiona is an active member of the committee. She has held the executive positions of President, Secretary and Activities Co-ordinator and has used her organisational skills to manage committee business.

Through successful grant applications, she has been able to access more than \$8000 to help improve the facilities of the OGNR and create new educational display material. She used her creative talents and research skills to revitalise the Information Centre by designing and producing four large information panels to hang on the walls. These eye-catching displays were complemented by a series of cabinets with trays of interesting items of natural history designed to appeal to the tactile senses of young children.

Fiona has worked continuously to introduce local families into the OGNR through her work with preschools, primary and secondary schools. She has encouraged involvement in environmental projects within the Reserve, organised family activity days and attended local events to promote the Friends group. Through the Scouting movement Fiona has visited the Reserve many times and advocated its use at a regional level to a range of other scouting groups. She used a community grant to involve young children in writing a story and designing posters focused on wallabies at OGNR. They created a stylised mascot wallaby to use as a new logo.



David Koch MLC presenting Fiona Topolcsanyi, President of the Friends of the Ocean Grove Nature Reserve, and member Dianne Jones with

Highly Commended

Margaret & Richard Clarke – Cranbourne Friends, Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria



Margaret Clarke (left) with Nicki Zanen
at a book launch



Richard Clarke (front) on Cranbourne
Garden's Garden Explorer

Margaret and Richard joined the Cranbourne Friends (CF) in 2006. Both have served as general committee members, been active members of the Events sub-committee and taken on the role of President, followed by a year as Immediate Past President. Between them they led the committee for a total of 6 years.

Margaret initiated the successful Discovery Day program, organising visits to interesting sites and gardens, including her passion for the therapeutic use of sensory gardens. Both she and Richard have worked tirelessly to organise interesting and educational activities that raise considerable funds for the non-budget needs of Cranbourne Gardens.

Margaret and then Richard oversaw the transformation of a donated Gardens building into the Elliot Centre, which now provides both a home for the Friends and the venue for several special interest groups to function, under the one roof.

The RBGV has benefited enormously from Margaret and Richard's combined effort, their considerable networks, organisational skills and their warm, friendly, constructive personalities.

Highly Commended

Ben Ellis – Friends of Water Race & Quinn Reserve



Ben Ellis (in the hat and blue top) – helping local residents unload their weeds at the Annual Weed Trade Day. 6th May 2018

Ben has been a member of Friends of Water Race & Quinn Reserve (FoWRQR) since 2000 and President of the group for over 15 years. Despite moving house a few years ago, he continues to travel well over an hour each way to run the fortnightly working bees, organise community events, attend group meetings and on-site consultations with agencies and contractors.

Ben has formed productive, long-term relationships with key people in the Shire of Yarra Ranges and with Melbourne Water. He has been responsible for successfully obtaining many years of funding, which has contributed well over \$50,000 worth of environmental maintenance to the reserve. He has sought support from the shire to provide important infrastructure including steps, trail maintenance and a community noticeboard.

Ben's approach to the reserve has been a sustainable one, with the group targeting small areas of the reserve annually. They work intensively, hand weeding and planting small areas, drastically improving their condition in one year.

Under Ben's leadership, FoWRQR run an annual Weed Trade Day where local residents are encouraged to bring weeds from their garden to exchange for indigenous plants (and a free sausage!). It is always a huge success.

Ben's has also been an active participant in many Yarra Ranges environmental committees and projects. His passion for the environment and his commitment to educate, protect and share with others the natural beauty of the area has resulted in a major improvement to this historically and culturally significant reserve.

Highly Commended

Melissa Holden – Friends of Wonnangatta Valley

Melissa has been an active member of the Friends of Wonnangatta Valley since 2002 and Vice President for the past 5 years.

Melissa is a key member of the Friends group and devotes a significant amount of time into planning and organising the group's administration and activities. She has spent hours writing grant applications, including a proposal to rebuild the old Wonnangatta hut and a successful \$5000 grant to run a special historic event acknowledging the centenary of the unsolved Wonnangatta murders and the mystery that surrounds them. Melissa was the event coordinator, which involved working with several other stakeholders, including 4WD clubs, the Mountain Cattleman's Association and the Victoria High Country Huts Association.

Melissa has enthusiasm and passion for the Wonnangatta Valley. She spends many hours each year during her personal camping trips running visitor information stands and providing free tours for visitors to learn about the history and values of the area. Melissa is a strong advocate for the Valley. She has spent ten years producing the Friends newsletter and now has created and administers their Facebook page. She has made a significant contribution to promoting the Wonnangatta Valley by sharing her knowledge and enthusiasm with visitors and significantly enhancing their experience of the park.



Highly Commended

Claude Odorisio – Friends of Organ Pipes National Park



Claude removing Aloes at working bee

Claude is the longest serving active member of Friends of Organ Pipes (FOOP) having joined in 1984. His dedication to the delivery of restoration works on the ground is demonstrated by his continuous attendance at working bees. Claude has volunteered more than 1800 hours of his own time to activities such as weed removal, extensive indigenous plantings, construction of fences and shade house, assisting many Scout and Cub groups visiting the park, manning the information centre and generally doing anything that is required to benefit the park.

Claude's commitment to environmental conservation is demonstrated by the enthusiasm with which he has dedicated hours to labelling, protecting and monitoring the rare *Callitris columellaris* that occur at two sites in the park. His enthusiasm is contagious and his easy going nature makes it a pleasure for other volunteers to work with him.

Claude's genuine passion for conserving Organ Pipes National Park is an inspiration to others and impresses all those who volunteer alongside him.

2018 Victorian Election Position Statements

Environment Victoria 2018 Election Policy Agenda

The following statement is an extract from Environment Victoria's Election Policy Agenda. Environment Victoria is an independent and not for profit charity, which has been campaigning to look after Victoria's environment since 1969. With 40 grassroots member groups and 100,000 individual supporters, Environment Victoria represents a growing community of Victorians standing up for a safe climate, healthy rivers and a sustainable future.

What the November state election means for climate, clean energy and nature protection in Victoria

What happens at the November 2018 Victorian state election really matters — the result could extend support for building clean energy, cutting pollution and protecting nature. Or it could unravel progress we've worked so hard to achieve.

So we're kicking off our biggest people-powered election campaign ever. We want to make sure whichever party wins this election, our environment comes out on top.

Over the last four years, Victoria has made incredible progress but there is so much more to be done.

We need to transition as quickly as possible to clean renewable energy, cutting greenhouse pollution. And we have to get serious about protecting our forests, rivers and the animals that call them home, in a time of climate change.

From our Renewable Energy Target (the VRET) and replacing Hazelwood with clean energy to Labor's latest announcement of solar panels on 650,000 homes across the state, there is a lot to be proud of. But there is a long way to go.

In the next term of government, we want to see the Great Forest National Park established, and we want to strengthen the laws that protect nature and our threatened species. We want to see the VRET supersized to kick start a clean energy revolution.

We know Victorians love clean energy and nature, and they're willing to stand up for it with their voices and their votes. And we've been building this support across the state.

Our election campaign focuses on communities that really matter in Victorian politics – Frankston, Carrum,

Mordialloc and Bentleigh – four of the most marginal seats in the state.

Four out of five Victorians love clean energy, but not many people actually know where the major parties stand. And at this election, there is a lot at stake.

Based on their current announced policies, if elected, Matthew Guy's Liberal party will scrap the VRET, they've argued against the Solar Homes program and they've voted in the Parliament against declaring any new national parks in Victoria.

Our job this election is to make sure voters in these crucial marginal seats know where the major parties stand on protecting our environment when they go in to vote. We're making phone calls to voters in these seats from now until voting day, and it's really easy to get involved.

Join us to make calls to build community support for clean energy and nature protection where it matters! Find out more and sign up at [here](#).

For more details on Environment Victoria's Election Policy Agenda and how you can get involved see [here](#).

Jane Stabb is Environment Victoria's Community Organising Program Manager

Yarra Riverkeeper 2018 Election Position Statement

The Yarra Riverkeeper Association has released its Election Position Statement, which centres around five key issues. Following is an extract from their statement.

Our Yarra River needs more protection as the challenges of an expanding population and a drying climate puts increasing pressure on our waterways. The Yarra Riverkeeper is making five election requests on behalf of our river. Please read and support our election position statement, which is now available [here](#) on our website. Please talk to your local member on behalf of our river and please share with friends and colleagues and on social media. In short, we have 5 requests

- 1. From planning to action – implement the Yarra River Action Plan.*
- 2. Make the Yarra River Planning Controls permanent.*
- 3. Extend stormwater controls and fund gross pollutant traps.*
- 4. Increase Yarra environmental water flows to reflect ecological needs.*

5. *North East Link & Yarra crossing projects — net gain for environment always.*

VNPA's Nature Conservation Policy Ideas for the 2018 Victorian State Election

VNPA has produced a detailed policy document which has been provided to all major political parties. The document, *Natural Victoria: Securing Nature for Victorian Families – Nature Conservation Policy Ideas for the 2018 Victorian State Election*, outlines over 40 individual policy recommendations. This has been condensed to Ten Conservation Priorities as reproduced below.

1. ***New national parks and conservation areas in eastern Victoria (east of the Hume Highway)***, including the Great Forest National Park, East Gippsland Emerald Link, Strathbogrie Fores. Also include Mount Stirling in to the Alpine National Park. *Comprehensively review and replace the outdated and obsolete Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) for Eastern Victoria, and abolish VicForests.*
2. ***New national parks and conservation areas in western Victoria (west of the Hume Highway)***, including completing the VEAC investigation into Central West Victoria to better protect the Wellsford, Wombat, Mount Cole and Pyrenees forests. *There should also be a new assessment carried out in the far southwest in the area between the Little Desert and Grampians national parks. Abolish the antiquated Western Regional Forest Agreement. Establish the long promised Murray River Park and remove cattle grazing from the Murray shores.*
3. ***Private land conservation***: *Dramatically increase capital in the Trust for Nature Revolving Fund by between \$30 – \$40 million. A ramped up Victorian Revolving Fund is a financially effective way of scaling up private land nature protection to around 60,000 – 70,000 additional hectares over four years. An increase would allow for priority land across the state, including coastal, urban fringe or large agricultural holdings, to be acquired, protected (covenanted) and resold.*
4. ***Natural Melbourne***: *Fast track delivery of the western grassland reserves by increasing upfront funding for acquisition of grassland in the 15,000-hectare area on Melbourne's western and northern fringe. Create a Naturally Marvellous Melbourne Plan, which would add smaller high-conservation areas to the metropolitan and regional parks network.*
5. ***Marine and coastal protection***: *Drop the ban on creating new marine national parks and undertake a review of the comprehensiveness, adequacy and representativeness of Victoria's marine protected areas. Protect beaches and shore-nesting birds by banning commercial horse training on all beaches, including on Belfast Coastal Reserve. Establish new coastal parks under the National Parks Act 1975 at key sites such as the Moolap wetland.*
6. ***Core national parks funding***: *While Parks Victoria manages about 18 per cent of the state and some of the state's key urban parks, as well as waterways and local ports, it receives less than 0.5 per cent of the state budget. A core funding increase of \$50 million per year, with subsequent annual increases of at least \$15 million in core government funding (non-tied) in forward estimates, would bring Parks Victoria back up to speed. This would enhance funding for hundreds of skill-based positions such as rangers, as well as resourcing improved long-term land management programs.*
7. ***Stop the invasive invasion***: *Commit to a statewide control and containment strategy in parks and across the landscape to reduce or end the impact of feral game species, especially deer, and other problem pest animals. This needs a specific program that engages integrated control of these pest species, including eradication in key areas, listing deer as a pest species, improving research funding for targeted baits and other control methods.*
8. ***Wandering Victoria one short walk at a time***: *Enhance the approach to the regional visitor economy and protect the integrity of the parks estate by focusing on the hundreds of day, half-day and shorter walks in parks, instead of developing new large-scale multi-day walks and associated infrastructure. This would focus on attracting people to accommodation in and around existing towns and villages.*
9. ***Act on extinction***: *Commit to being a leader in the protection of threatened species, with a new approach developed by an independent commission of inquiry to frame new legislation, and set up programs and institutions needed to reverse the decline.*

10. **Protect wetlands and riversides:** Continue to fund and implement the regional riparian action plan to improve management of public and privately-owned riparian land for at least \$15 million per year (\$65 million over four years), and systematically review and identify freshwater areas (refugia) likely to facilitate survival of organisms under threat from climate change.

VNPA estimates that, if fully implemented, these proposals would cost between \$300 to \$400 million over four years. Further details are available [here](#) and the full document will be available on VNPA's web site in the near future.

Friends groups successful in Community & Volunteer Action grants

Twelve Friends groups were successful in gaining funding through the Community & Volunteer Action (C&VA) grants announced by Minister D'Ambrosio announced on 3rd September. In total, 73 applications received funding of over \$2.4 million. VEFN congratulates Friends of Merri Creek, Friends of Westgate Park, Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater, Friends of Canadian Corridor and Friends of Glenfern Valley Bushlands, among others for receiving substantial grants through this program.

Details of the C&VA grants can be found [here](#) and the Minister's announcement [here](#).

Biodiversity response planning grants leave Friends groups out in the cold

Only three Friends groups participated in \$34.8 million of grants awarded through the Biodiversity response planning (BRP) process. A total of 89 biodiversity and marine environment projects were funded through this program announced by Minister D'Ambrosio on 31st August. Parks Victoria was one of the big winners, receiving 12 grants worth over \$3.3 million in its own right and additional grants in partnership with many other organisations. DELWP received three grants in its own right worth over \$1.2 million and DELWP in conjunction with Parks Victoria and the Sporting Shooters Association received three grants totalling almost \$1.8 million.

The poor showing by Friends groups was not for want of trying. Poor processes by DELWP and failure to provide

timely information meant that Friends and other community groups found it very difficult to get involved in the planning processes. DELWP is currently undertaking a evaluation of the biodiversity response planning process. External consultants have been appointed to assist this process and DELWP plans to publish a report of the evaluation later this year.

Details of the BRP grants can be found [here](#) and the Minister's announcement [here](#).

Grants available for improving digital literacy & technology readiness

A small amount of funding for volunteer groups has been announced by Minister for Families and Children Jenny Mikakos. Grants of \$15,000 to \$50,000 are available for organisations that support volunteers to help *improve their digital literacy*. Only \$120,000 is available for this component and it is envisaged that only two to five projects will be funded.

Projects should broadly aim to enhance the digital literacy, and readiness to appropriately utilise technologies, of small and medium sized volunteer involving organisations.

Projects may include (but are not limited to):

- Provision of training in relevant technology solutions or platforms.
- Engagement in strategic planning activities to identify future technology requirements or opportunities.
- Skill development in specific technologies or platforms (including social media).
- Testing or investigating new technology approaches for volunteer management activities.

A further \$150,000 is available through the *Training and Mentoring Program for Managers and Volunteers 2018-19* funding round, which aims to fund projects to improve access to professional development opportunities for managers of volunteers.

Applications must be submitted by 2pm Thursday 11th October, so you will have to act promptly to have a chance for one of these grants. The rather ambitious timetable will see successful organisations announced by Friday 26th October and programs must be delivered between January and June 2019. Details of how to apply and the program guidelines can be found [here](#). Minister Mikakos's media release about the grants is [here](#).

VEFN Regional workshops

VEFN has funding from the Victorian State Government to run series of workshops in regional areas to engage with Friends groups Victoria wide. Two workshops have been held to date – in Brimbank and in Gippsland. Brief reports on each of these workshops are included below.

Planning for further workshops is underway. The next workshop will be held in Cranbourne on Saturday 17th November at the Royal Botanic Gardens. If you would like to attend and also possibly make a presentation about your group, please email your interest to friendsvic@hotmail.com or paul_strickland@hotmail.com.

A workshop will be held in the Moorabool region in Ballan in February 2019 (date Tbc) and will follow up on issues related to biodiversity as discussed at the workshop in Brimbank. If you would like to register your interest to attend the Moorabool workshop, please email Stephen Derrick ecosystems@bigpond.com or Bonnie Gelman [Bonnie Gelman lucasassets@iinet.net.au](mailto:Bonnie.Gelman@iinet.net.au).

Further workshops are in the early stages of planning, so if you have suggestions for a gathering, or if your group would like to host a workshop in your region, please email us as above.

Brimbank workshop: WHAT'S LOVE BIODIVERSITY GOT TO DO WITH IT?

The workshop was attended by 21 people and there were presentations from three Friends groups; the Werribee Riverkeeper; Brimbank Council and DELWP. The presentations addressed the theme of biodiversity and the focus of the workshop was to explore ideas about what Friends groups can do to improve biodiversity.



Cathy Powers, Friends of Brisbane Ranges

The workshop commenced with Wurundjeri Elder, Aunty Diane Kerr reminding participants of the long history of Aboriginal stewardship of the land and their connectedness across time and landscapes. Aunty Dianne finished her talk with a “Welcome you from the tops of the trees to the roots in the ground.”

Each of the three Friends groups spoke about the history of their group and their experiences of working on their area. These presentations were complemented by talks from the Werribee Riverkeeper; Brimbank City Council; DELWP about its programs and grants that support biodiversity and a special presentation about bats. VEFN is grateful for the involvement of all of the speakers who contributed to a successful day.

The workshop benefitted from the extensive experience of the three Friends groups and their interesting and informative presentations. The Friends of Organ Pipes National Park is the longest serving Friends group in Victoria and was established in 1972. Friends of Brisbane Ranges was established in 1982 and Friends of Maribyrnong Valley in 1986. This combined wealth of experience provided many good examples of things that had worked and things that had not.

Lindy Lumsden's presentation about bats in western Victoria gave the workshop a fascinating perspective on how these creatures contribute to biodiversity, for example, as pollinators and as consumers of large quantities of insects. Lindy brought there live microbats to the workshop, so participants were able to observe them at close quarters.

Presentations by Rod Taylor about DELWP's biodiversity related programs; Martha Ragg and Brimbank City Councils environment strategies and John Forrester about the history and context of the Werribee River all provided important perspectives for the discussions about Friends groups and what they are doing and can do to improve biodiversity.

The final discussion and wrap up sessions focused on ideas that would assist VEFN and Friends groups to do more to improve biodiversity. The following ideas are only a selection of those put forward and discussed, but are practical suggestions that both VEFN and Friends groups can act on:

- Enhance and improve record keeping and verification and work on improving ways of sharing this information.
- Greater effort to be devoted to showcasing what work has been done by Friends groups and what has been achieved. Important that this is undertaken as a collective voice of Friends groups and is used to advocate for more support for their work.
- A focus on pollution could be useful way of highlighting issues, particularly with respect to run-off from roads and industry and its impacts of parks, reserves and waterways.
- Devote greater effort to engagement with young people, particularly school age and how they can be involved in and benefit from Friends group activities.
- Consider whether the Victorian landcare model, with a network of statewide facilitators might be a useful way for VEFN and Friends groups to develop.

VEFN will consider these suggestions, including through further consultation with more Friends groups at forthcoming workshops.

VEFN conducted a survey of attendees, which 13 people completed. Highlights of the survey responses are:

All respondents (100%) said the Workshop met their expectations.

Key outcomes for attendees were:

- Almost 85% valued the opportunities to network and learn about other groups' experiences (n=11).
- Almost 77% valued the opportunity to network (n = 11).
- 9% valued the opportunity to meet friends and colleagues (n = 9).
- All respondents agreed that VEFN should continue to host similar Workshop days (n = 13).

Overall, the Workshop was a success. Key issues noted for improvement were that there were too many sessions for one day and that more time be allowed for discussion and questions. The full report of the Brimbank workshop is [here](#).

Gippsland workshop

More than 20 people met in Traralgon for one of a series of VEFN regional workshops in August.

The session featured Friends groups from Baw Baw, Latrobe and South Gippsland Shires areas and representatives of regional offices of Parks Victoria, DELWP, West Gippsland CMA, the Latrobe Valley Authority and municipalities. Most groups present worked in the Parks Victoria estate.

Speakers from each group introduced their groups' main activities, resource requirements and possible opportunities to share skills and resources. The agencies spoke about their local opportunities for improved relationships and resourcing.



As this was the first opportunity the groups had had to get together in this way, there was enthusiastic engagement, to the extent that the session went overtime. As would be anticipated there was quite a diversity of activities from groups whose focus was mainly in tourism and attracting visitors (including running a visitors centre), to those spending most time on park maintenance (tracks, weeds etc) to those involved in environmental monitoring and public education (such as the group with several publications on species in their park).

Common problems related to limitations on support (in funding, equipment and staffing) from agencies, obtaining grants, recruitment (especially younger active people), handling of invasive pests and illegal human activity. All problems Friends groups everywhere would identify with!

There was some discussion on concerns regarding insurance of equipment. All groups understood that they were covered either by their agency or their own insurance for personal accident, but some were paying large premiums to cover their equipment and in one case had found that using their own vehicle during a working bee was NOT covered, resulting in significant personal cost. Some follow-up with Parks Victoria was suggested, but it is currently the case that they will not cover private equipment. Paul Strickland has made some inquiries and would be willing to initiate discussions with a broker if there was enough interest. See short article later in this edition about insurance for equipment.

There were positive stories as well, of successful improvement from external grants, individual strong relationships with “on ground” staff from agencies (both Parks and Shires), and numbers of activities and visitors.

As most of the groups present worked in the Parks Victoria estate, the session with District Manager Helen Dixon was particularly lively.

The Latrobe Valley Authority’s David Roberts outlined their funding round aimed at increasing physical activity in populations not currently involved, including non-English speakers, indigenous, and older people. He pointed to other grants that may be available aimed at increasing physical activity, mostly in organised sport, but with “tweaking” could be available for “non-competitive” activity such as offered in parks.

Discussion around sharing ideas was active between groups and it is hoped that some joint activities might arise.

A post activity survey of participants resulted in:

To the question “was the Forum worthwhile? 4 (out of 5) with an 80% “worth attending”;

To the question “how likely is it that you would attend another?” 3.6 (out of 5).

Comments indicated that an annual get together would be useful for Friends groups.

The Friends of the Terrick Terrick National Park

invite you to

a free weekend of activities in Terrick Terrick National Park

2pm Friday 5th October to 1pm Sunday 7th October 2018

**Davies homestead site, Mitiamo-Kow Swamp Road TERRICK
TERRICK**



Owlet nightjar in Terrick Terrick forest. Photo: Surong Gunn

WEEKEND ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:

**guided mini-coach tours of the park • climb Mitiamo Rock
evening presentations • guided wildflower walks
birding sessions • free tea and coffee available
static displays • native plant display**

CAMPING SITES AVAILABLE • DAY VISITORS WELCOME

All activities are based at (or leave from) the Davies homestead site, Mitiamo-Kow Swamp Road, in a grassland section of the park.

BYO food and camping equipment. Morning & afternoon tea supplied.

Enquiries: 5480 9254

This free event is part of the Naturally Loddon Spring Festival

13th annual Terricks Activities Weekend: program

FRIDAY 5th October 2018

From 2.00 pm approx: Wildflower display, posters and art work in machinery shed

Videos may be screened in the room at the northern end of Bernie's Shed

3.00 pm Mini-bus tour of the Terricks Forest – Reigel Track and Reigel Rock

6.00 pm Dinner break (dinner not supplied)

7.00 pm Official welcome: Jill Hayes, Deputy Convener, Friends of the Terrick Terrick National Park Inc.

7.10 pm Presentation: "Captive Breeding of Plains-wanderer" ~ Yvette Pauligk

7.50 pm Presentation: "Owls" ~ Andrej Hohmann

SATURDAY 6th October 2018

All day: Plant and poster displays in machinery shed

All day (if wet): wet weather presentations

7.15 am "Early morning birding in Terricks Forest" (mini bus) ~ leaders: to be confirmed

9.45 am Morning tea (supplied)

10.00 am Guided mini-bus tour and nature walks – Allen Track and "Mitiamo Rock" (Mt. Terrick Terrick)

10.00 Grassland (roadside) weed survey/weeding ~ leader: Jenny Spence

12.30 pm Lunch (not supplied)

1.15 pm Grassland walk ~ with naturalist Matt Comer

2.15 pm Mystery bus tour (roads & weather permitting)

2.15 pm Working Bee – Wheel Cactus Control – with Ranger Tim Schwinghammer

4.15 (approx) Afternoon tea (supplied)

5.45 pm Dinner (not supplied)

7.00 pm Annual General Meeting of the Friends of TTNP Inc.

7.25 Parks Victoria Report – Tim Schwinghammer

7.40 pm Presentation by Boort ecologist and historian Paul Haw

8.30 pm Presentation: "About the Plains-wanderer" ~ Dr. David Baker-Gabb, ecologist

9.15 pm Supper and "Night Music" ~ with musician Audrey Dickins

SUNDAY 7th October 2018

Note: summer savings times

All morning: Wildflower, student art and poster displays in machinery shed

7.15 am Breakfast (not supplied)

In case of wet weather only, there will be presentations in the machinery shed during the morning.

9.15 am Mini-bus tour ~ Rogers Track (road conditions permitting)

AND/OR Grasslands Wildflower Walk (depending on seasonal conditions)

12.30 pm Lunch (not supplied)

1.30pm: End of activities. Dismantling of displays, signs, etc

~ times and events are subject to change ~

In addition to "registering", participants are asked to print their name on the separate sheet for each activity they wish to partake in. Those wishing to "do their own thing" away from the Davies homestead are asked to "sign out".

BASE: Bernie's Shed, Davies Homestead site, Mitiamo-Kow Swamp Road (south of Jungaburra Road) Terrick Terrick (VicRoads Map 30 F3) Note: Mitiamo-Kow Swamp Road, which runs roughly parallel to Bendigo Creek, is not labelled in VicRoads Directory 7. GPS: 36° 05' 55"S; 144° 17' 02"E. Look for directional signs.

All coach tours, mini-bus tours, nature walks, bird-watching sessions, wildflower walks, etc. depart from the Davies homestead site, Mitiamo-Kow Swamp Road, in a grassland section of the Park.

All presentations and meetings are to be at the Davies homestead site.

Free camp sites will be available near the homestead from 2pm Friday until 1pm Sunday.

BYO food, drinking water and tent/van. On Saturday, morning and afternoon tea is to be provided.

This is a free event. Small donations or membership renewals are welcome to help us cover costs.