



### VEFN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

DATE: 10<sup>th</sup> December, 10am

LOCATION: The Hub @ Docklands (Atrium Room)

	Item	Notes and actions
	Attendees	Committee: Laura Mumaw (Gardens for Wildlife Victoria), Paul Strickland (Friends of Mt Worth), Roger Parker (Friends of Mt Worth), Margaret Hunter (Friends of Braeside Park), Anthony Bigelow First Friends of Dandenong Creek), Graham Ross (Kooyong Koot Alliance)
	Apologies	In Attendance: Carol Challis (VEFN Admin), Merrin Butler (Friends of Mt Worth), Danielle Cini (Friends of Scotchman's Creek), Jessica Gerger (Friends of Kororoit Creek), Jodie Williams (Friends of Kororoit Creek), Maelor Himbrey (Friends of Maribyrnong Valley), John Hargreaves (Warringal Conservation Society), Alison Richards (Rewilding Stonnington), Ben Rossiter (Victoria Walks and guest speaker)
		Judith Baldacchino (Friends of Edwards Point), Andrew Lucas (Friends of the Yarra Valley Parks), Bonnie Gelman (Friends of the Grassy Plains Network), Janet Snowden (Friends of Wanderslore), Hansi Wegner (The Crew at Daangean), Sue Bendal (Friends of the Leadbeater Possum), Kathy Whelan (Friends of Agnes Falls), Helen VanDerBerg (Friends of Steeles Creek), Tim Curmi (Native Fish Australia), Kate Forster (Meander – Menzies Creek and Emerald Tourist Track)
1	Welcome & Apologies	Laura Mumaw welcomed the attendees and reminded everyone of the importance Friend Group membership to the ongoing vitality of the VEFN.  The committee introduced themselves, which Friend Group they were a member of as well as their committee position with the VEFN. Attendees were invited to introduce themselves and their respective Friend Group affiliation. Carol Challis read out the apologies (as noted above).
2	Acknowledgement of Country	Laura acknowledged the traditional owners and lands that all Friend Groups care for as well as the lands of the Wurundjeri peoples on which the AGM was conducted.
3	Minutes of the 2021 AGM	The minutes of the previous AGM were tabled for adoption. MOVED: Paul Strickland SECONDED: Roger Parker <b>CARRIED</b>
4	Business Arising from the Minutes	There was no business arising from the minutes.

5	Annual Activity Report from Committee	<p>Laura Mumaw presented a summary of the committee’s activities, thanking the committee for their work over the preceding year.</p> <p>She reminded the meeting that the DGR status (tax deductible donation) had been submitted and awaiting decision.</p> <p>Membership recruitment has become a priority for the VEFN and Laura described the activities of the Membership subcommittee in maintaining existing members as well as recruiting newer groups that have come into existence since Covid. The development of a member-focused database on the website will be a priority in 2023.</p> <p>One of the key advocacy activities of VEFN in 2021/22 was the engagement with Parks Victoria around their new Volunteer Manual and the arduous administrative requirements placed on volunteers. The VEFN has worked at building relationships and communication with Parks Victoria looking at issues and potential solutions. In July, two workshops (online and face-to-face) were undertaken with representatives from Friend Groups attending each and being able to express their concerns and grievances. A summary of the workshops is on the <a href="#">VEFN website</a>.</p> <p>The Best Friends Award was not conducted in 2022 giving the BFA Subcommittee a chance to revitalise and design new awards including the <b>Habitat Connection Award</b> and the <b>Outstanding Friend Group Award</b>.</p> <p>Laura reported on the DELWP grant for Networking and Capacity Building which required applicants to address opportunities for the younger generation to get involved in environmental volunteering. A face-to-face event called ‘<b>Caring for Nature Expo</b>’ was successfully delivered in Ballarat with EVAN – Central West allowing local groups in a regional area to connect not only with each other but the wider community as well. An RMIT placement student surveyed the impact and provided valuable insights for attracting younger people for future events. Two webinars were also organised including a skill-based session on <b>Grant Writing</b> which was well attended and also a webinar focused on youth engagement called ‘<b>Finding Opportunities to Work for Nature</b>’.</p> <p>The VEFN continues to seek ways that it can be of support and assistance to Friend Groups. Laura commended the consistent communications from Stephen Derrick on environmental issues as well as the production of our newsletter, FriendsNET. Further funding will also be sought to continue the Administration/Sustainability Officer into 2023.</p> <p>Laura acknowledged the committee members (Nadine Gaskell and Paul Strickland) who were leaving the committee noting that they were keen to stay onboard subcommittees that they’d been working on.</p> <p>A detailed Activity Report is <a href="#">attached</a>.</p>
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6	Treasurer's Report	<p>Roger Parker gave an overview of the VEFN finances for the 21/22 year noting</p> <p>Started with \$6019.95 on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021</p> <p>Ended with \$35,639.67 on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022</p> <p>Income included the DELWP Grant (\$16,500) and the Donation for the Administration/Sustainability Officer (\$28,500).</p> <p>Expenses included operating expenses including online costs, insurance and memberships as well as the payment of contractor invoices and the expenditure of part of the DELWP grants.</p> <p>It was MOVED: Anthony Bigelow and SECONDED: Graham Ross that the Treasurer's Report be adopted.</p> <p><b>CARRIED</b></p>
7	VEFN Reflections by Paul Strickland	<p>Laura Mumaw invited Paul Strickland to provide some insight into his time on the VEFN committee.</p> <p>Paul gave some background into how he became a member of the VEFN while seeking advocacy assistance. He attended a discussion on how to keep the VEFN viable as an organisation able to stand up for Friends Groups and, as a result, became a committee member and has remained for eight years.</p> <p>During this time, Paul has worked on developing a new constitution with paid group membership which allows the VEFN to operate relatively independently. He would like to see at least 100 Friend Groups as members but acknowledges that Friend Groups only approach the VEFN if they have a grievance.</p> <p>He also acknowledged that many Friend Groups need assistance reaching out to their own communities. He also commended the work done by Stephen Derrick in keeping environmental issues front of mind for groups but sees a need for Friend Groups to also give back stories to share when they have successful projects or interesting information that would be relevant to other groups.</p> <p>He is pleased that the VEFN is on the verge of getting funding on the website but again stated that we needed an active membership so the VEFN can advocate with politicians and public organisations on the importance of not only connecting with nature but caring for it as well. Covid has provided Friends Groups an opportunity to engage the wider community to its local patch of nature.</p> <p>At this point a question was raised about how to manage membership ie groups, sub-groups and individuals. Alison Richards (Rewilding Stonnington) suggested a tiered approach.</p> <p>Laura acknowledged Paul contribution to the subcommittees he has worked on including the collaboration with Landcare and DELWP.</p>

		Laura also advised the meeting that a new Advisory Group for website would be set up in the new year with a Strategy Workshop to help re-imagine VEFN initiatives.
8	Election of the Committee	<p>Laura Mumaw, Convenor, vacated the chair for the election of the new committee for 2021-22.</p> <p>Carol Challis (VEFN Admin/Sustainability Officer) took the chair, thanked the committee for their contributions and conducted the election process for the office bearer positions. These were filled as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convenor: <b>Anthony Bigelow</b> (First Friends of Dandenong Creek)</li> <li>• Deputy Convenor: <b>Laura Mumaw</b> (Gardens for Wildlife Victoria)</li> <li>• Treasurer: <b>Roger Parker</b> (Friends of Mt Worth State Park)</li> <li>• Secretary: <b>Margaret Hunter</b> (Friends of Braeside Park/Edithvale Seaford Wetlands/Kananook Creek Association)</li> </ul> <p>Carol then noted the nominations received for the ten (10) Ordinary Committee Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Judith Baldacchino</b> (Friends of Edwards Point)</li> <li>• <b>Graham Ross</b> (KooyongKoot Alliance/ReWilding Stonnington)</li> <li>• <b>Andrew Lucas</b> (Friends of the Yarra Valley Parks)</li> </ul> <p>Nominations were called from the floor to fill the remaining places on the committee. There were no nominations. The Ordinary Committee positions were declared elected unopposed.</p> <p>MOVED: Paul Strickland    SECONDED: John Hargeaves  <b>CARRIED</b></p> <p>New Convenor, Anthony Bigelow, acknowledged Laura’s incredible legacy of energy and hard work for the VEFN.</p>
9	Annual Subscription Fee for 2021/22	<p>Laura Mumaw recommended that the annual subscription fee be maintained</p> <p>MOVED: Paul Strickland    SECONDED: Roger Parker  <b>CARRIED</b></p>
10	General Business	Jess Gerger (Friends of Kororoit Creek) sought advice from the attendees for development of a wetland in their area which is covered by Brimbank Council and Melbourne Water. The group generously offered suggestions and ideas that they could work with.
11	Guest Speaker	Dr Ben Rossiter from Victoria Walks provided background into his own organisation’s advocacy work with politicians and techniques for engaging the community through social media. The ability to create a walk in a Friend Group’s area can showcase the Friend Group work with examples and links to connect new community members to join in.
9	Meeting Close	Anthony Bigelow (new Convenor) thanked members for their attendance and light refreshments were provided.