



Annual Impact Report 2024–25

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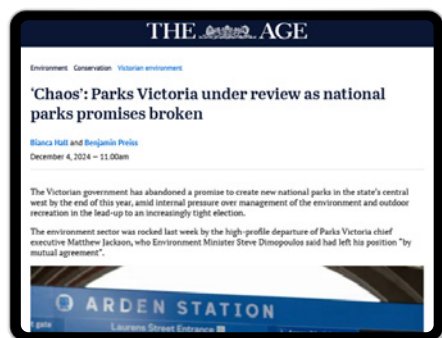
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Matt Ruchel,
Executive Director

Our national parks and conservation reserves keep wildlife and habitats safe. They create and purify water, clean our air, store climate disrupting pollution and ease the risk of floods. Protected areas support local nature-based jobs and tourism, forming part of our communities' fabric and family adventures. These sacred places provide respite for millions.

As always it's been big year for nature, with both victories and setbacks. In July 2024, the much-maligned VicForests was formally disbanded. VNPA had hoped this would open up opportunities for improved protection for nature in Victoria. Instead, it been a year of back flips and broken promises. With a new premier and environment minister, we saw further delays to creating long-promised parks in the central west, and dropping a commitment to create large new national parks in the east. Cuts to parks and management agencies have been endless, and the gutting of fisheries officers has left our coastline exposed to poaching. VNPA has worked hard to reverse these backward steps. We've shone a light on various aspects of nature destruction, including opening up national parks for more hunting, illegal grassland clearing, and logging loopholes on private and public land. Throughout the year we've worked hard at improving deer management, protecting Dingoes, highlighting the dangers of cuts to key nature institutions and emphasising the popularity of national parks. We continue to get people of all ages and backgrounds out in the bush and inform and inspire them with interesting and informative publications. All to help Victorians be part of nature and stand up for the places they love. We can only do this with your continued support.



The Age, 4 Dec 2024

Year in review

WITH YOUR SUPPORT WE'VE COVERED A LOT OF GROUND AND MADE PROGRESS ON THE PROTECTION OF NATURE IN VICTORIA

Parks under attack from without and within

State Government changes

VNPA maintained active advocacy throughout significant Parks Victoria leadership changes. Environment Minister Steve Dimopoulos announced a Parks Victoria review on 28 November 2024, coinciding with the CEO's departure.

Our advocacy focused on protecting Critically Endangered plants and animals, adequate funding, integrated feral species management, and utilising legal tools.

The Allan Labor Government implemented disappointing cuts to Victorian nature protection in 2024-25, including funding and staff cuts to Parks Victoria, Victorian Fisheries Authority and the Conservation Regulator. The government delayed promised central west parks legislation and withheld key policy reviews.

Concerning decisions included illegal track reopening at Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park, killing of Dingoes/Wilkerr in the Big Desert, and opening Snowy River and Errinundra national parks to deer hunting without consultation.

Attacks on parks

VNPA confronted unprecedented and coordinated attacks on national parks in 2024-25. The most prominent was the Great Northern beer controversy in January 2025. When the company announced a \$200,000 conservation partnership, anti-parks groups organised a boycott, falsely claiming the initiative would exclude 4WD enthusiasts.

We countered with polling showing 84 per cent of Victorians consider national parks important and 80 per cent support creating new parks, highlighting the boycott only represented a very small, entitled group. Nonetheless, the company capitulated within 48 hours.

We recognise these as sophisticated disinformation campaigns that weaponise marginal voices to undermine conservation progress.

Fighting back

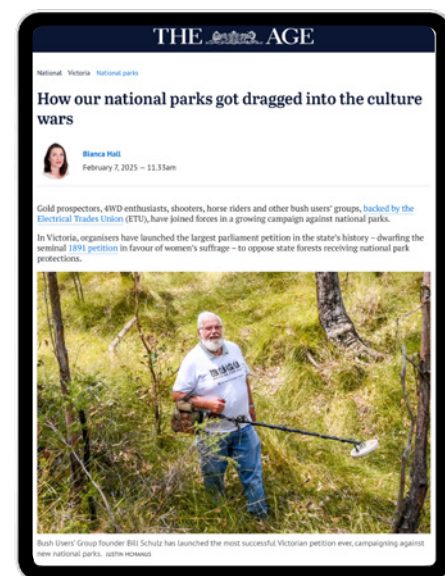
In April 2025, VNPA convened a Future Parks Summit bringing together over 30 conservation groups across Victoria and Australia. Alarmed by ongoing attacks on parks and management agencies, all agreed to collectively organise against systemic attacks on nature protection.

The Summit agreed on the urgent need for a major campaign to counter attacks and seize opportunities state-wide and nationally. There was consensus to re-engage hearts and minds in community and government, reaffirming national parks' critical role in our lives and planetary health.

Together, we'll make sure decision-makers understand the critical importance and legacy of landscape-scale protection, so that our irreplaceable natural wonders are protected and cared for, forever.

“National parks are hardly a woke idea, right? They've been around for over 100 years!”

MATT RUCHEL,
THE AUSTRALIAN, 8 FEB 2025

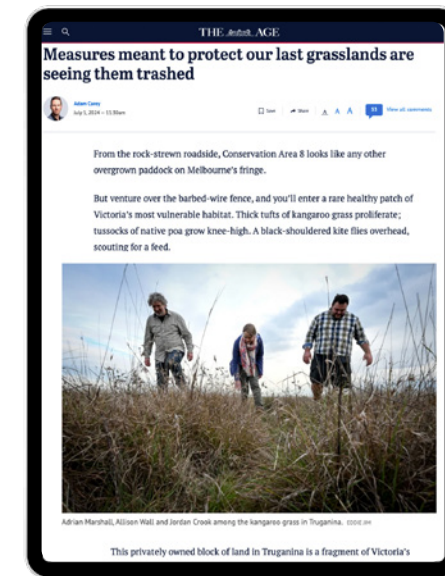


The Age, 7 Feb 2025

Revealing failures to protect promised lands

Blatant clearing, noxious weeds and systematic mismanagement is rife in Victoria's most threatened habitats, according to A People's Audit of the 36 MSA Conservation Areas.

Published in July 2024, the audit reviewed 36 critical conservation reserves in Melbourne's growth corridors set aside



The Age, 1 July 2024 (front page)

as compensation for the Melbourne Strategic Assessment (MSA). Eleven years after the deal was struck, most of the areas are yet to be acquired.

In 2022, Conservation Area 9 was found destroyed, all life smothered under asbestos-contaminated fill. 'We thought Conservation Area 9 was an anomaly. But then we started looking. Turned out it was a smoking gun. We've found more than 15 apparent breaches of the law so far,' said Dr Adrian Marshall, Grassy Plains Network Convenor.

Home to once-abundant, now-struggling wildflower meadows, woodlands and creek corridors, the areas are supposed to protect endangered plants and animals, and critically threatened grasslands and woodlands.

Key findings in the Audit were:

- Only 7 of the 36 Conservation Areas are protected.
- More than half have had their size cut.
- Just three areas are known to be in good ecological condition.
- Almost half have compliance issues, eight of them severe.



“It's a dangerously slow and damaging process... a gift to developers.”

- Only one Conservation Area is likely to be improving in condition. Many continue to decline.
- Most importantly, no actions have taken place regarding compensation for the significant loss in the quality or extent of the Conservation Areas.

vnpa.org.au/a-peoples-audit

Tackling a seaweed invasion

Underwater weeding in Port Phillip Bay reveals the spectacular success of a two-year aquatic mission against a notorious seaweed troublemaker, *Undaria pinnatifida*.

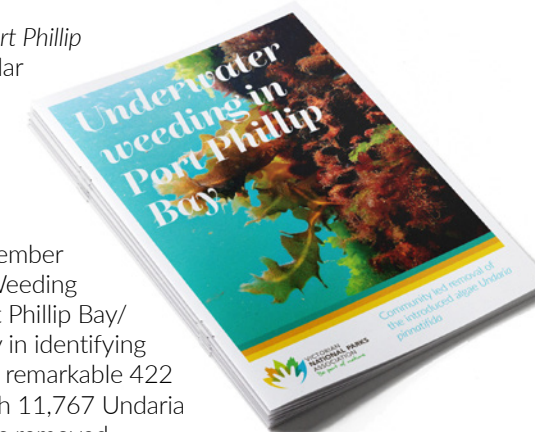
From April 2022 to September 2024, the Underwater Weeding Project engaged the Port Phillip Bay/ Nerm marine community in identifying and removing *Undaria*. A remarkable 422 volunteers took part, with 11,767 *Undaria* plants across 12 hotspots removed.

'This project shows the power of community in stemming the tide of invasive marine pests. By joining forces, we've not only evicted thousands of unwelcome pests but also revitalised marine habitats,' said Kade Mills, ReefWatch Coordinator.

This project seeded a conservation revolution. Divers aren't just removing plants – they're becoming trained experts, learning to identify and safely extract *Undaria*. Along the way they've enlightened hundreds of onlookers about the threat lurking beneath the surface. Dive groups have embedded *Undaria* removal into their annual calendars, and the Atlas of Living Australia will track their progress.

The next phase includes recruiting more volunteers, accelerating kelp restoration, investigating how removing seaweed invaders helps native seaweeds, animals and habitats bounce back, and exploring partnerships to turn this pest into something useful.

vnpa.org.au/underwater-weeding



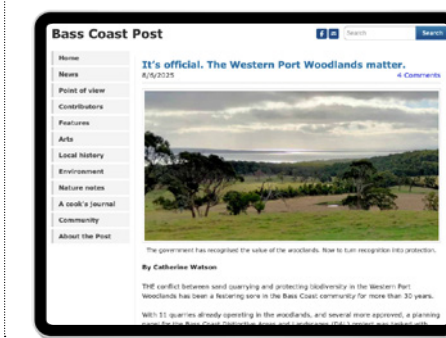
Recognition for Western Port Woodlands

Following years of advocacy by VNPA and a coalition of community groups, Western Port Woodlands was finally recognised for its 'outstanding environmental significance' as part of the Bass Coast Distinctive Area and Landscape (DAL).

They are home to threatened animals like Southern Brown Bandicoots and Powerful Owls, and the Critically Endangered Tea-tree Finger fungus, yet remain threatened by industrial sand mining and development.

Whilst robust planning controls weren't put in place to prevent habitat destruction, the DAL allows strategic assessments and evaluates existing nature protections. We continue to push for urgent surveys and plans for keeping this critical habitat corridor safe from harm.

vnpa.org.au/connectandprotect



Bass Coast Post, 8 June 2025

Protecting, defending and restoring nature

STRIVING FOR A WORLD-CLASS AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PROTECTED AREAS

Extending our parks estate

	13 site investigations
	6 reports & submission
	8 major media stories
	10 targeted email actions
	47 social media posts
	5156 content interactions*

*public shares, likes and comments on VNPA digital channels

Central west national parks

For four years the Victorian Government have repeatedly promised to create these new national parks and conservation areas. For four years they've missed every deadline. This is the longest it has taken any state government to turn a promise into a park in 25 years.

We launched our 'Don't make us wait' campaign, calling for all promised protected areas to be legislated.

We maintained pressure, mobilised community, worked with media and targeted decision-maker actions. By early 2025, the government reaffirmed its commitment to introduce legislation 'this year', indicating it would be introduced in September.

As always, we don't take anything for granted. We're keeping a close eye on the parliamentary agenda and updating relevant ministers on emerging issues.

vnpa.org.au/centralwestnow



Midland Express, 3 Dec 2024

Defending wildlife and habitat

	2 reports & submissions
	3 major media stories
	16 targeted email actions
	26 social media posts
	3531 content interactions

Following Victoria's ban on public forest logging in 2024, VNPA has exposed and campaigned against the shift of native forest logging to private land.

In September 2024, we led an investigation exposing logging of endangered wildlife habitat on private land, with over a dozen projects identified across the Central Highlands, East Gippsland and central Victoria. Our campaigners documented at least 187 hectares of native forest (equivalent to around 40 MCGs) had been cleared or logged on private land.

We spearheaded advocacy efforts and called for Environment Minister Steve Dimopoulos to close the logging loopholes. Our work highlighted critical threats to endangered animals, particularly Leadbeater's Possums detected within 80 metres of private land logging operations, where protective buffers don't apply.



PS News, 18 Sept 2024

VNPA coordinated with partners including Friends of Leadbeater's Possum, and wrote to 57 Councils responsible for issuing logging permits. As most regional shires lack resources to properly regulate complex logging impacts on habitat, we advocated for government intervention to remove the responsibility from local councils and amend planning policies so threatened wildlife habitat is effectively protected.

“Our campaigners documented at least 187 hectares of native forest (equivalent to around 40 MCGs) had been cleared or logged on private land.”

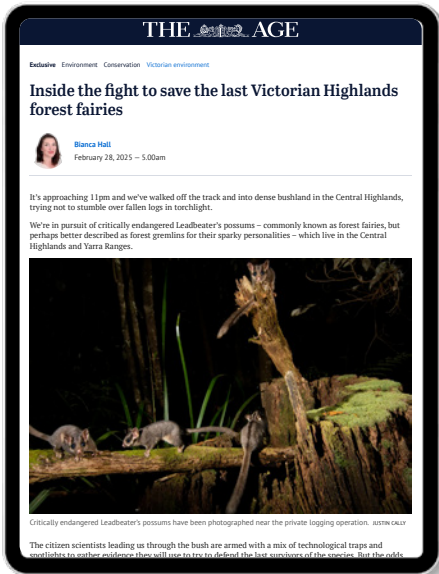
“Our community has worked so hard to have the Wombat recognised for its incredible wildlife... The delay to implement the national and other parks is extremely frustrating.”

GAYLE OSBORNE, WOMBAT FORESTCARE, MIDLAND EXPRESS

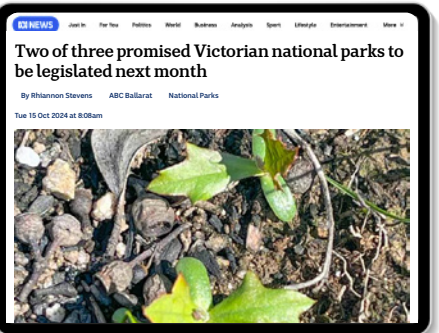
Great Forest National Park

We continued advocating for the Great Forest National Park in Victoria's Central Highlands; a 355,000-hectare proposal designed to protect endangered wildlife like Leadbeater's Possums and Greater Gliders.

We submitted to the Victorian Government's 'Achieving 30 by 30 on land' consultation in September 2024, advocating for expanded protected areas. However, the campaign faced a significant setback when Environment Minister Steve Dimopoulos indicated in July 2025 that the Great Forest National Park proposal was not on the Government's agenda.



The Age, 28 Feb 2025



ABC News, 15 Oct 2024



Forever Forests, VNPA campaign booklet, March 2025.
TATTOO DESIGN BY FRED BAIN

Guarding our precious grasslands

The latest data indicates only 0.58% of the Victorian Volcanic Plain grasslands have survived. The Victorian Government needs to do more.

Big infrastructure continued to (try to) whack our grasslands. Together with Little River Action Group we fought off Pacific National's proposed freight hub, earning a Community Campaign Award from Environment Victoria. We made submissions about multiple wind farms and freight hubs, Barwon Solar Farm, the Western Renewables Link, Watergardens Carpark for Commuters, and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action's disappointing Renewables Handbook.

“We had a bittersweet win watching the developer responsible for the destruction of Conservation Area 9 plead guilty but get off without criminal conviction.”

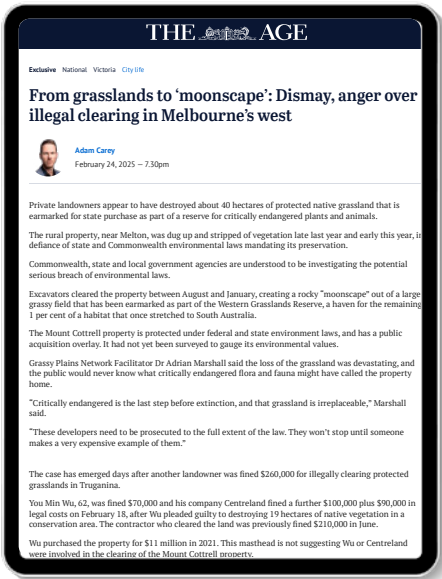
We made submissions to three of the big Precinct Structure Plans fast-tracked for housing: Melton East, Casey Fields and Devon Meadows. Fast-tracked usually means bad news for the environment. We watched in horror as developers cleared grassland at Faulkners Road, Mount Cottrell, knowing the local, Victorian and Australian governments were doing nothing despite being aware clearing was in progress. We had a bittersweet win watching the developer responsible for the destruction of Conservation Area 9 plead guilty but get off without criminal conviction.

The Victorian Grassland Earless Dragon, Australia's most endangered reptile, is responding well to breeding in captivity. But its one known location in the wild has still not been protected by the Victorian Government. The Melbourne Strategic Assessment (MSA), the deal to compensate for the development of Melbourne's growth corridors, continues to

	11 site investigations
	33 reports & submissions
	2 targeted email actions
	7 major media stories
	11 Grassy Talks
	115 social media posts
	4259 content interactions

be underwhelming. It is still far from transparent in its actions, has completely failed to acquire any of the 1200 ha of the promised Grassy Eucalypt Woodland, and continues to clear potential Dragon habitat. The Environment Minister refuses to table an audit of the MSA. Our tours and festival are a joy, with over 600 registrations. We introduced many to the hidden wonderlands that live in our grasslands. We are getting the word out. More of you than ever know the value of our grasslands, come to events, listen to talks, and provide support. Thank you!

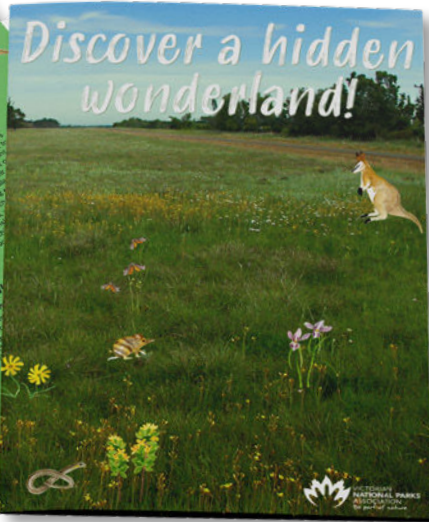
grassypains.net.au



The Age, 24 Feb 2025



The Age, 25 Feb 2025



Discover a hidden wonderland!, VNPA campaign, Dec 2024

Looking after our marine landscapes

In April 2025, the State Government announced a renewed push for its Victorian Renewable Energy Terminal (VRET) proposal in Western Port Bay. VNPA and our partners have been working hard to determine if the project can proceed without causing unacceptable damage to these much-loved wetlands.

The proposal has moved into the next stage of environmental assessment. We have been influencing the process through our role on the community reference group, detailed submissions, and collaboration with scientists, decision-makers and the community.

Our goal is to see the Western Port Strategic Framework adopted. The holistic bay-wide plan aligns decisions with the community's vision for Western Port's future. To support this, we delivered a budget briefer to the Allan Government outlining the modest cost of getting it underway.

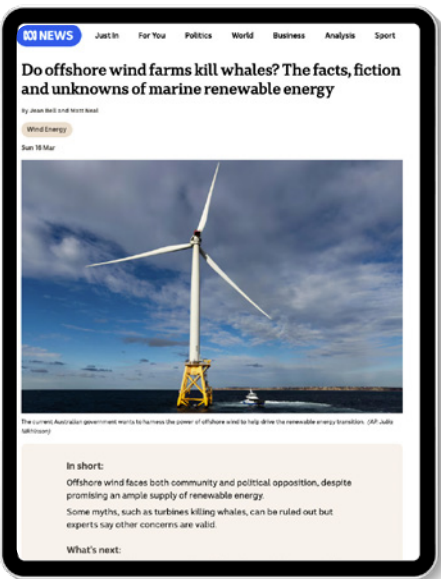
We've also hosted a series of community engagement events to connect people, share knowledge, and inspire action for stronger stewardship of Western Port – with a record number of attendance! We strongly opposed the Victorian Government's damaging decision to cut

	7 reports & submissions
	2 major media stories
	2 targeted email actions
	54 social media posts
	2983 content interactions

fisheries officers, the vital eyes and ears on the water. These officers protect marine life, safeguard marine parks from illegal fishing, and uphold public safety. Our action included media and letters in partnership with peak bodies representing both commercial and recreational fishing sectors and pressured decision-makers with supporter actions.

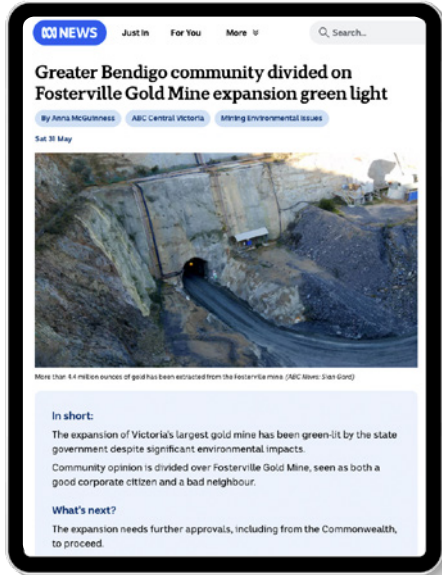
vnpa.org.au/marine-protection

“We have been influencing the process through our role on the community reference group, detailed submissions, and collaboration with scientists, decision-makers and the community.”



ABC News, 16 March 2025

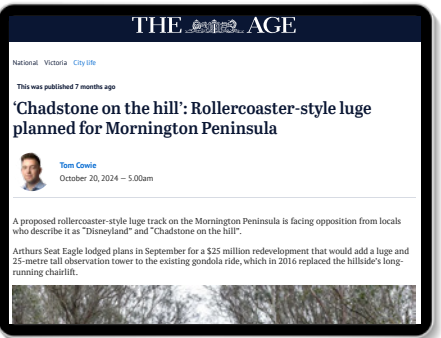
Opposing inappropriate development



ABC News, 31 May 2025

State parks are not playgrounds for the privileged. That's why we campaigned against inappropriate developments in protected areas, including the proposed Arthurs Seat luge project. We joined opposition to the \$25 million theme park-style project, which would devalue Victoria's parks system. We participated in community meetings and spoke at the Save Our Seat campaign. We highlighted concerns about the streamlined approvals, where developments over \$20 million enjoy shortened consultations that limit community input. VNPA opposed the proposal for an expansion of the Fosterville Gold Mine. Our key concerns included the damage that underground mining extensions and new tailings storage facilities could do to local wildlife and their habitats. We consistently promote the principle that our parks exist for all Victorians and for nature, not private commercial exploitation, supporting grassroots campaigns to mobilise public opposition.

	3 reports & submissions
	3 major media stories
	2 targeted email actions
	12 social media posts
	5739 content interactions



The Age, 20 Oct 2024

Better care of our landscapes and wildlife

VNPA intensified efforts to strengthen laws protecting Dingoes, our iconic but misunderstood apex predator. Despite significant advocacy efforts, we faced a major setback when the Victorian Government extended Dingo culling permits until January 2028, expanding the unprotection zone by over quarter of a million hectares.

We raised serious ethical and scientific concerns with the State Government on the proposed use of GPS shock collars and leg-hold traps, rather than non-invasive methods of control.

We highlighted critical evidence showing Dingoes are not hybridising with domestic dogs and emphasised their cultural significance to First Nations communities. We documented alarming population decline data, revealing that 468 Dingoes were killed in eastern Victoria in 2023 alone.

VNPA and our partner organisations achieved victories for Dingoes including the termination of the discredited bounty program and modest investment in non-lethal deterrent trials. We collaborated with Traditional Owners and scientists to promote alternative approaches for private land conflicts. Despite receiving official protection status, Victoria's Critically Endangered Dingo/Wilkerr population face mounting threats, with fewer than 40 individuals surviving in the Big Desert-Wyperfeld area.

VNPA expressed particular concern for genetically vulnerable populations of Dingo/Wilkerr, advocating for their removal from culling programs. We continue pushing for comprehensive protection of these iconic native predators on public lands.


VNPA advocacy on invasive species in the last year focussed on feral deer




11 major media stories



7 targeted email actions



32 social media posts



3706 content interactions

management. In September 2024, we spearheaded a letter to Ministers Dimopoulos and Spence demanding removal of feral deer's protected status under the *Wildlife Act 1975*, highlighting economic costs of up to \$2.2 billion over 30 years. As feral deer now occupy nearly 40 per cent of Victoria, threatening 469 native animals and plants with extinction risk, this is a key policy reform.

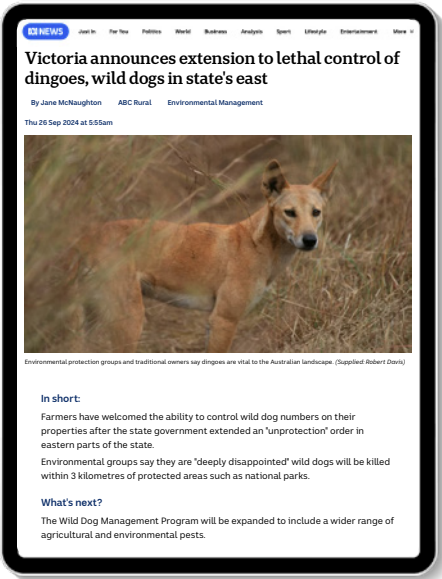
“ Together, we can protect these incredible animals and end the state-sponsored killing programs on public lands.”

We criticised the government's decision to open Errinundra and Snowy River national parks to seasonal deer hunting. This approach is inadequate for controlling Victoria's million-strong deer population. We advocated for comprehensive pest animal classification and professional control programs alongside regulated hunting activities. After the destructive bushfires in the state's west, we pushed for decisive action to help eradicate feral deer from national parks following such disasters.

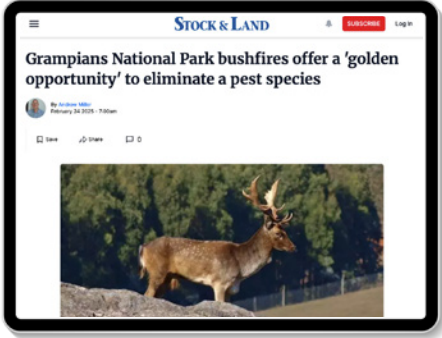
Working with First Peoples

In the past year, our campaign and program staff worked with Traditional Owner corporations on a wide range of issues of joint concern and interest. With profound respect for the sovereignty, culture, and rights of First Peoples, we were pleased to support the path towards Treaty in Victoria. VNPA's Nature Stewards program was delighted to work together again in our classes and time on Country with Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, Living Culture,

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, as well as other First Nations organisations. VNPA was proud to sponsor a First Nations woman, Electra Greene, to participate in the WELA National Leadership Program this year. VNPA acknowledges the many First Peoples of the area now known as Victoria, honours their continuing connection to and caring for Country,



ABC News, 26 Sept 2024



Stock & Land, 24 Feb 2025



and supports Traditional Owner joint-management of parks and public land for conservation of natural and cultural heritage. Read our Pledge for Treaty at: vnpa.org.au/treaty

Shaping the agenda

Our dedicated campaign team drives evidence-based advocacy through comprehensive policy development, rigorous data analysis and strategic research. By combining expert policy formulation with detailed mapping and analytical work, we deliver authoritative, science-backed responses to critical government consultations and planning processes.

In 2024-25, our team produced multiple publications, submissions, letters and detection reports that shaped public discourse and influenced decision-makers.

- JULY 2024
- A People's Audit of the 36 MSA Conservation Areas
- Achieving 30 by 30 on land
- AUGUST 2024
- Southern Ocean Region Offshore Renewable Energy Zone infrastructure proposal
- Proposed expansion of the Fosterville Mine
- SEPT 2024
- Offshore wind industry consultation process
- OCT 2024
- Inshore trawl fisheries bycatch management
- Murray River Adventure Trail Stage One
- NOV 2024
- Draft Strategic Extractive Resource Areas planning change
- Better management of ecological impacts of fire management works
- Submission to consultation draft Code of Practice for Bushfire Management on Public Land 2024
- Draft Southeast Marine Park Network Management Plan
- DEC 2024
- Case against salvage logging in the future Wombat-Lerderderg National Park
- Victorian Renewable Energy Terminal (Port of Hastings) EES draft scoping requirements
- Commit to the Western Port Framework
- Joint Ministerial letter

- JAN 2024
- Proposed reserve design for the Central Highlands
- Victorian Government Great Outdoors Taskforce
- Dyurrite Cultural Landscape Management Plan Amendment
- FEB 2025
- A better approach to managing biodiversity impacts of renewables
- Stanley Road widening and native vegetation clearing
- Proposed development of Collins Rd and Boundary Rd, Dromana
- MARCH 2025
- Alpine Ash forests of mainland Australia: Support for listing assessment
- Kentbruck Green Power Hub EES
- Strengthening Biosecurity legislation
- Draft Orchid Action Statement
- Planning amendments for Point Nepean Defence and Quarantine Precinct and Research and Education Field Station
- Underwater weeding in Port Phillip Bay
- APRIL 2025
- Future investment in the You Yangs and Serendip Sanctuary
- Gippsland Offshore Wind Transmission: EES Draft Scoping Requirements
- Strengthening and connecting Victoria's protected area reserve system: eastern Victoria
- JUNE 2025
- Wildlife roadstrike



34

reports & submissions

Shaping the story

OUR COMMUNICATIONS WORK HELPS PEOPLE SEE WHY NATURE MATTERS AND SHOWS THEM PRACTICAL WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Our communications help people see why nature matters and gives them practical ways to use their skills and voice to improve outcomes for nature in Victoria. When people grasp nature challenges and learn how to contribute, they take meaningful action. Our social media, publications, reports, and educational materials convey essential information about nature and wildlife. We transform complex science and policy into narratives people can comprehend and act upon. We spotlight pressing issues and celebrate conservation victories. We provide our community with clear pathways to get involved in protecting the places and wildlife they value. Through targeted video content that showcases our campaigns and passionate expert staff, we have deepened connections with existing supporters and attracted a whole new audiences of followers across our channels. Our social media strategy involves regular testing and analysing to optimise each new video, with our campaigners and staff trying new strategies and styles to engage an ever-growing community. These offer new and interesting ways for people to

connect and participate in our work. We guided our supporters through striking the balance for nature, culture and recreation in the Dyurrite Cultural Landscape Plan and Parks Victoria's plan Future investment in the You Yangs and Serendip Sanctuary. We crafted compelling stories about these issues and chased those with practical tools to impactfully contributing to policy and improved nature protection. Our community delivered thousands of messages to their elected representatives and land managers. Decision-makers received direct communication from informed and passionate people who want to see an end to habitat clearing across the state. They received input from thousands of people in our community,

“ We believe knowledge is power, and sharing the right information can help us all to stick up for nature.”

through their emails, on their phones, via social media and in their post boxes. From people who want to see the dodgy loopholes closed that allow native habitats to be logged, to higher protections for the wildlife of Central Highlands, to the creation of the long-promised new national parks and reserves for the landscapes of the central west. **Extending our media presence** Over the past year, we provided statements for dozens of media stories, with numerous appearances on television and radio on issues from cuts to fishery guardians, how our national parks got dragged into the culture wars, whether offshore wind farms kill whales to concerns feral deer will become 'Australia's next rabbit plague'.



From top: Park Watch #297 (September 2024), #298 (December 2024), #299 (March 2025) and #300 (June 2025). COVERS: MEGHAN LINDSAY, DR DANIEL HUNTER, KADE MILLS, MARK LORDING

We hosted webinars and briefings on many issues: How to become a Nature Stewards host; why we must Stick up for national parks; How to become a volunteer activity leader; Fire in the Western Port Woodlands; The marine life of Western Port Bay; Protecting and restoring our grassy plains; Great Victorian Fish Count; What's the deal with Dingoes; Fed up with feral deer; Offshore wind; and a whopping eleven Grassy Talks. VNPA's research, reports and investigations become updates on our website, social media and in our print and digital membership magazine, *ParkWatch*. Journalists, educators, colleagues and policy makers reach out to our staff for insights and expertise. Our June 2025 *ParkWatch* featured our first illustrated cover: the magnificent tattoo designed by Frankston artist, Mark Lording, to celebrate our other big milestone, the 50th anniversary of the current *National Parks Act 1975*. While policy milestones don't often make front page news, we alchemised this artistic collaboration into a limited edition of sold-out t-shirts. This unique design sparks not only pride in our parks' legacy but conversations out in the public about the unsung heroes of landscape management – legislation! **Dismantling misinformation** We're confronting many challenges in our conservation work – not just out in nature, but online as well. Industry-backed lobby groups continue to view nature primarily as a resource for exploitation. Increasingly, our national parks have also become entangled in broader culture wars, where conservation issues are politicised and nature protection becomes a partisan battleground rather than a shared value. This weaponisation of nature protection is diverting attention from evidence-based conservation. It creates unnecessary divisions in communities that should be united in caring for our natural heritage.



A guide to leaving a gift in your Will

Give nature a future voice is our new booklet that provides practical advice on how to leave a gift in your Will to protect nature and support VNPA. Contact us to receive your free copy. vnpa.org.au/bequest-guide

“ I have submitted through your fabulous email action to the Fed Govt on the energy terminal development in Western Port. Thanks so much for making it easy! Keep up the good work!” MARK

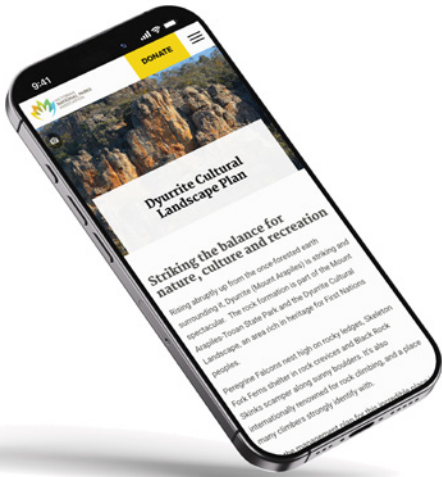
This is why equipping our community with accurate, accessible information is more critical than ever. When misinformation campaigns attempt to undermine nature protections, informed citizens armed with credible facts become our most powerful advocates.

Building collective strength That's why we've spent considerable time this year creating

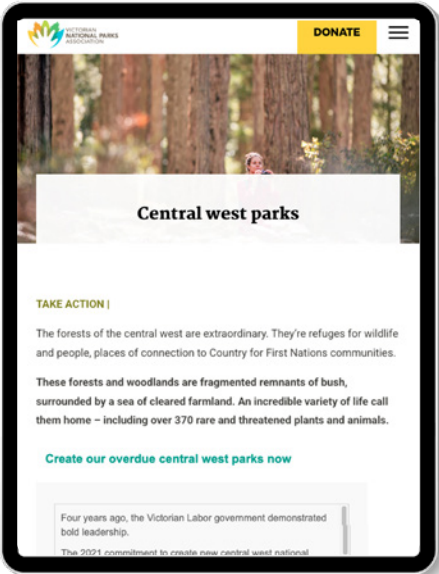
comprehensive FAQs and practical guides to help people navigate this challenging era. These resources address common misconceptions, provide clear explanations of complex issues, and offer talking points for those who want to advocate effectively for nature protection. We believe knowledge is power, and sharing the right information can help us all to stick up for nature. We've also been tracking, and experiencing firsthand, the rise of misinformation. It spreads easily, but it can be challenged. That's why we began work on a new booklet, *The Purpose and Power of National Parks*. This publication is being created to give the community the tools to speak up with confidence, whether you're chatting with friends or bantering online. We need as many people as possible to use their voice, time and passion for our lands, skies, waters and wildlife. When we collaborate to achieve our goals of protecting, defending and restoring nature, we are stronger and more impactful.



New VNPA information brochure and membership form



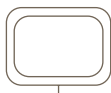
Dyurrite Cultural Landscape Plan supporter action



Central west action page on VNPA website



566,688
people reached on social channels



2,250
webinar registrations



8,564
actions taken online



19,468
email subscribers



610,641
email sent to supporters



45.4%
email open rate industry standard 40%

Getting into nature

HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE HAVE COME TOGETHER TO PROTECT, RESPECT AND ENJOY NATURE



NatureWatch volunteers in Wombat Forest. CAM SUTTIE

NatureWatch

OUR LAND-BASED CITIZEN SCIENCE PROGRAM

NatureWatch continued to evolve into new areas, techniques and partnerships this year.

Our wildlife monitoring in Wombat Forest expanded to include fuel load assessments when a planned burn threatened to damage Brush-tailed Phascogale habitat. We expanded our wildlife surveys into new areas at Cobaw and Bungal. We did post-fire surveys at Mt Cole, to look at the recovery of plants and animals, like Mt Cole Grevilleas.

We held community workshops and landowner training to extend wildlife research on private land. In areas of the proposed Great Forest National Park we hosted our first conservation campouts to discuss issues and spotlight for nocturnal animals like Greater Gliders. In Western Port Woodlands, we continued our post-fire wildlife surveys and ran training for local groups so they can monitor recovery over time.

Our volunteer citizen scientists and local community groups leapt into our surveys and training boots first. Their boundless enthusiasm, knowledge and all-weather resilience are inspiring and we couldn't do it without them.

vnpa.org.au/naturewatch



Completing the Great Victorian Fish Count. ELODIE CAMPRASSE

ReefWatch

OUR MARINE CITIZEN-SCIENCE PROGRAM

Over the past year, ReefWatch has bought together thousands of volunteers across the state to protect and celebrate marine life.

The Great Victorian Fish Count mobilised 500 participants across 65 surveys led by 30 dive groups. The Sea Slug Census drew over 250 people to events plus 120 dedicated observers spent countless hours documenting sea slugs in their own time. SeadragonSearch immersed 150 people in tracking and photographing these iconic animals.

Twenty-five 'Underwater Weeding' dives saw 200 volunteers remove invasive Undaria algae, restoring precious reef habitat. We published a report of the program to date, *Underwater Weeding in Port Phillip Bay*.

ReefWatch highlights the strength of collective action, turning community effort into tangible protection for our unique marine life. We're lucky to work with such a legendary bunch of ocean lovers, the citizens scientists who make our work possible.

vnpa.org.au/reefwatch



Inner East Hub Nature Stewards program. NICOLE MERTENS

Nature Stewards

SHORT COURSES CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH THEIR LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

This year, Nature Stewards celebrated 129 graduates across eight courses. This included running a course as part of a social prescribing program being delivered by healthcare partners. Thanks to our local council partnerships, our Nature Stewards connected with their natural places, other like-minded people, and were inspired to look after nature.

We developed six new marine and coastal sessions for our course curriculum. Made possible through the Port Phillip Bay Fund, these new sessions will enrich understanding of marine habitats. We also launched comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of our alumni through Equity Trustees, to help us measure long-term impacts.

Roughly 70 nature, community, education and industry partners showcased their important work at our courses. These create learning and networking opportunities for our Nature Stewards, and demonstrate the breadth of conservation efforts across Victoria. Our collaborative approach inspires and strengthens connections to community and nature among graduates.

vnpa.org.au/naturestewards

“Great variety of topics covered by very proficient presenters. Left you feeling inspired with the tools and confidence to pursue further interests.”
RICK, NATURE STEWARDS GRADUATE



Snorkelling at Ricketts Point. MICHAEL LOO

NextGen Nature

INSPIRING YOUNG ADULTS TO EXPERIENCE NATURE

NextGen Nature continued connecting and empowering young adults during the last year. We ran events to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to take meaningful action for nature.

Together, we snorkelled at Crystals Steps, Rye Pier and Ricketts Point in search of native fish and visiting kelp restoration sites. We learnt about campaigning for nature protection in the Central Highlands and went spotlighting for nocturnal animals. And we built nestboxes for Critically Endangered Swift Parrots.

Seven new members joined the NextGen Nature Collective in March 2025. The collective meet regularly to plan events and discuss other nature protection opportunities. The Collective also helped set up wildlife cameras and learnt about future national parks in central west Victoria from VNPA campaigner Ben Gill.

vnpa.org.au/nextgennature

“I appreciated getting to learn how to set and plan camera trappings, and I especially appreciated getting to learn from Sera and Ben about their work and the political landscape of environment in Victoria.”
ANASTASIA, NEXTGEN NATURE

“I loved the enthusiasm and knowledge that was shared!”
SARAH, REEFWATCH PARTICIPANT



Wild Families nest box decoration activity. JESSIE BORRELLE

Wild Families

HELPING FAMILIES TO ENJOY, DISCOVER, LEARN ABOUT AND LOOK AFTER NATURE TOGETHER

Wild Families delivered an exciting year of nature-based activities for families with young children.

Families came together to build insect hotels to take home, creating habitat for native pollinators. They enjoyed nature activities at the vibrant Spring Fling Grassland Festival at Iramoo in October and got curious at sea slug searches at San Remo with ReefWatch.

We continued to create and update nature activity sheets for curious kids, adding 'Nice to Meet you Tree,' 'Waterways,' 'Pretty Pollinators,' and 'Nifty National Parks' to the growing collection.

vnpa.org.au/wild-families



Beeripmo Walk, Mt Cole. EVA LIU

Bushwalking Program

GETTING OUT AND ABOUT IN NATURE AND MAKING NEW FRIENDS

Over 2023-24, our volunteer bushwalking leaders led over 70 outdoor enthusiasts for walks through wildflowers, along beeches, in heathland and past gorges.

Highlights included the dramatic landscapes of Werribee Gorge, Mt Buffalo, Bunyip State Park and Lorne. The overnight expedition to Wilsons Promontory National Park was a unique opportunity to search for elusive Ground Parrots. Bushwalkers enjoyed the sand beneath their feet at Somers, Fingal and Anglesea and explored the future Wombat-Lerderderg National Park. Mountain enthusiasts trekked across the iconic Beeripmo walk at Mt Cole/Bereep Bereep.

To grow the Bushwalking Program, we hosted a popular webinar calling for new bushwalking leaders. We were excited to have a batch of new leaders undergoing mentorship training.

vnpa.org.au/bushwalking-program



Thank you!

OUR WORK PROTECTING VICTORIA’S NATURAL PLACES IS ONLY POSSIBLE THANKS TO THE GENEROSITY OF OUR WONDERFUL DONORS AND PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORTERS

We would especially like to acknowledge the following generous supporters.

The Arnold Foundation	Koshland Innovation	Patagonia – via CAF
The Caroline Durré Fund,	Extension Fund, sub-	America
sub-fund of the Australian	fund of the Australian	Perpetual
Communities Foundation	Communities Foundation	
Community Bank	Life Saving Victoria	Rendero Trust
Altona, Laverton & Point	Loftus-Hills Fund, a	Ros & Elsie Garnet
Cook and Community	charitable fund account	Memorial Fund, sub-
Enterprise Foundation	of the Lord Mayor's	fund of the Australian
D & E Eatts Trust	Charitable Foundation	Communities Foundation
Dr William N. Holsworth	Malcolm Shore	S.T.A.F. – Allan Sisson and
EC Curwen-Walker	Melbourne Water	Vera McMahon
Charitable Trust	Melliodora Fund, sub-	Silver Gold Fund, sub-
Equity Trustees Ltd	fund of the Australian	fund of the Australian
Geoffrey and Geraldine	Communities Foundation	Communities Foundation
Harris	Meta Lazarus Fund, sub-	Vanessa Craigie
Gras Foundation Trust	fund of the Australian	Victorian Government
Isaacson Davis Foundation	Communities Foundation	Wartook Foundation
Kate Kantor	Microsoft and the Society	And several generous
	for Ecological Restoration	supporters who chose to
		remain anonymous.

Bequests

VNPA acknowledges the generosity of those who have given via a gift in their Will.

Estate of Graham Wills-Johnson
Estate of Eleanor M Lancaster
Estate of Joyce Sherlock



Colquhuon Grevillea. STAN WAWRZYCZEK

We're honoured to collaborate with many other groups to advocate for nature and deliver our community engagement programs. Our key project partners in 2024-25 were:

Aboriginal Tours & Education Melbourne	Clarksdale Bird Sanctuary Coastcare	Friends of Organ Pipes	Microsoft	Southern Brown Bandicoot Recovery Group
ANGAIR	Community Bank Altona, Laverton & Point Cook	Friends of Steele Creek	Monash University	Recovery Group
Aquability	Community Enterprise Foundation	Friends of the Bluff, Barwon Heads	Moondani Balluk	Southern Ocean Environmental Link
Aquatic Adventures	Community Enterprise Foundation	Friends of the Gully	Mornington Gardens for Wildlife	Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora & Fauna Association
Arthur Rylah Institute	CSIRO	Friends of Truganina Wetlands	Mornington Intrepid Landcare	Sunset Sanctuary
Atlas of Living Australia	Daktari Surf/Dive	Friends with Honey	Mornington Peninsula Landcare	Tait Furniture
Australian Dingo Foundation	Deakin University	Geelong Field Naturalists Club	Mornington Peninsula Scuba Diving Club	Tree Wishes Consultancy
Australian Plant Society	Dive La Trobe	Geelong Intrepid Landcare	Glenelg-Hopkins CMA	Trust for Nature
Ballarat CFA	Diveline	Hidden Orchid Permaculture Guild	Mt Cole Pyrenees Nature Group	University of Melbourne
Ballarat Field Naturalists Club	Eco Connect	Hobsons Bay Wetland Centre	Naturelovers Education	Upper Mount Emu Landcare Network
Ballarat Gardens for Wildlife	Environment East Gippsland	Jawbone Marine Sanctuary Group	NatureWest	Victorian Sub Aqua Group
Bayplay	Environment Victoria	Kinglake Friends of Forests	Nothing Like Nature	Victorian Volcanic Plains Conservation Management Network
Bellarine Catchment Network	Environmental Evolution	Knox Environment Society & Nursery	Ocean Divers	Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation
Bellarine Landcare + Nursery	Environmental Justice Australia	Leigh Catchment Landcare	OutThere Outdoor Activities	Waterwatch
Bendigo & District Environment Council	EstuaryWatch	Little Projector Company	Parks Victoria	Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative
Big Desert Dingo Research	Federation University	Little River Action Group	Queenscliff Mental Health & Wellbeing Local	Wattle Flat Landcare
Biodiversity Council	Field Naturalists Club Victoria	Living Culture	Rewilding Stonnington	Wellsford Friends of the Forest
BirdLife Ballarat	Friends of Beware Reef	Lloyd Environmental	RMIT Underwater Club	Werribee River Association
Birds on Farms	Friends of Box Ironbark	Macedon Landcare	RMIT University	Western Port Biosphere
Blackrock Dive Group	Friends of Canadian Corridor	Main Creek Landcare	Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne	Wildlife Experiences
Breathe Architects	Friends of Cowies Creek	Marine Care Ricketts Point	Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne	Wombat Forestcare
Bunurong Land Council	Friends of Erinundra	Mark Trengrove Ecological Services	Save Western Port Woodlands	Woorndoo-Chatsworth Landcare Group
City of Ballarat	Friends of Gariwerd/ Grampians National Park	Melbourne Polytechnic	Save Westernport	Wortook Foundation
City of Boroondara	Friends of Glenfern Green Wedge	Melbourne Water	Scuba Culture	Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation
City of Brimbank	Friends of Glenfern Valley	Merri Creek Management Committee	Scuba Scouts	Yalukit Willam Nature Association
City of Greater Geelong	Friends of Grasslands	Metro Trains	Sea All Dolphin Swims	Zoos Victoria
City of Hobsons Bay	Friends of Hearn Creek		Shire of Mornington Peninsula	
City of Hume	Friends of Iramoo		Shire of Pyrenees	
City of Knox	Friends of Koolunga Reserve		Society for Ecological Restoration	
City of Merri-bek	Friends of Leadbeater's Possum		South Gippsland Conservation Society	
City of Monash				
City of Stonnington				
City of Whittlesea				
Clarkefield & District Landcare				

Thank you to our volunteers

A huge thank you to the hundreds of incredible, dedicated and passionate volunteers who work with us to achieve so much for nature in Victoria.

Bushwalking Program

Terese Dalman, Evelyn Feller, Denise Fernando, Anthony Fernando, Deb Henry, Eva Klusacek, Darren McClelland, Euan Moore, Doug Palmer, Paivi Salo, Isolde Scherrer, Richard Tagg, Cheryl Walker

Campaigns

Bill Blackburn, Teresa Castley, Stuart Fraser, Karl Just, Prof. David Lindenmayer, Tanya Loos, Neil Marriott, Wendy Marriott, Lisette Mill, Gayle Osborne, Jane Rusden, Trevor Speirs, Les Sprague, Dr Chris Taylor and many others in the scientific and conservation community

Committees

Andrew Beswick, Holly Browne, Bryony Calendar, Russel Carrington, David Cheal, Vanessa Craigie, Nicole Drever, Chris Hibburt, Lucy Farmer, Maelor Himbury, John Kotisaris, Marita Lacota, Gordon Ley, Jackie Mansourian, Bridgette McDonald, Euan Moore, Greg Noonan, Stephen Platt, John Renowden, Zoe Stevens, Chris Schuringa, Chris Smythe, Rachel Unicomb, Jeff White, Nola Wilmot

Grassy Plains Network

Daryl Akers, Kirsten Bauer, Gary Beazley, Sophia Bosfelds, Andrew Booth, Brooke Caddell, Jane Canaway, Carol Challis, Griffen Clements, Ben Courtice, Vanessa Craigie, John Delpratt, Rowan Ewing, Bonnie Gelman, Gerry Ho, Andrek Hohmann, Helena Jankowski, Simon Jolly, Lorraine Jolly, Lincoln Kern, Daniel Kurek, Gordon Lescinsky, Paula McGlashan, Peter McGrath, Genevieve Newey, Doug Osborn, Megan O'Shea, Deb Reynolds, Dabbie Reynolds, Nola Sanders, Dee Smith, Dee Smith, David Tsardakis

Nature Stewards

Max Campbell, Andrew Knight, Ann McGregor, Bruce McGregor, Trevor Prowd, Isolde Scherrer, Heath Stewart

NatureWatch

Rosalyn Ashby, Nic Barnard, Sue Bendel, Olivia Bernardi, Leo Blair, Ness Carr, Tony Carr, Sophie Clarke, Grace Cole, Tara Ellis, Elodie Etienne, Evelyn Feller, Jessica Fernando, Jamie Fukunaga, Sandra Geitz, Karena Goldfinch, Jack Higgins, Clare Hollebone, Amy Hunter, Harry Jarvie, Sarah Kush, Pat Lacy, Felicity Law, Kate Lawrence, Chui Lee, Michael Loo, Niamh McCool, Sue McKinnon, Tim Moran, Grace Moroney, Gabby Moutsos, Aimee Patching, Geoff Pharo, Ella Roberts, Lulu Robertson, Esther Rosenberg, Christine Schmidt, Jacinta Stewart, Rosie Storey, Linda

Tarrant, Robyn Tarrant, David Taylor, Son Thai, James Tharle, Mick Thomas, Tara Thomsen, Johanne Walker, Aawa White, Kat Wilkie, Sally Wilson, Elaine Yap

NextGen Nature

Sophie Clarke, Lorien Francis, Selina Gauder, Ryan Kilgower, Clancy Lester, Michael Loo, Melissa Makarewitsch, Anastasia Maslyukova, Annie Preston, Consuelo Quevado, Claire Waddell-Wood

Publications and Photography

Fred Bain, Katherine Best, Laney Callahan, Kate Carrillo, Nick Carter, Robin Carter, Ella Darling, Judith Deland, Gerard Drew, Denise and Anthony Fernando, Eva Galasso, Don Garden, Glenn Hilling, Louise Honman, Hilary Howes, Daniel Hunter, Michael Johnston, Martin Lenard, Matt Lording, Neil Marriot, Lisette Mill, Euan Moore, Gayle Osborne, Jess Racklyeft, Reiner Richter, Karin Ruff, Harriet Searcy, Bob Semmens, Trevor Speirs, Les Sprague, Ahalya Suresh, Robyn Tarrant, Prue Thwaites, Mary-Jane Walker, Jim Whelan, Peter Whelan and many other photographers and writers

ReefWatch

Erin Brereton, Sonali Koura, Jayde Thomas

Student Interns

Erin Brereton, Ella Deering, Niamh Dolfi McCool, Jessica Fernando, Sonali Koura, Robert Pergl, Huyen-Anh Pham, Jayde Thomas, Eleanor Vearing, Jessica Vize

Our people

We are governed by a voluntary Council and several guiding committees. Together with our staff, volunteers and partners, they work to protect and defend nature in Victoria.

Council

David Nugent (President)^{1,2,3,4,5}
Marilyne Crestias (Vice President)¹
Askin Morrison (Treasurer)²
Chris Harvey (Secretary)^{1,3}
Jan Hendrik Brueggemeier
Lara Bickford^{1,6} Dianne Marshall⁵
Bruce McGregor^{1,2,4,5} Gerard McPhee⁵
Andrew Norman⁵ Jeff Nottle^{4,5}
Doug Robinson^{1,5} Michael Young⁵
vnpa.org.au/about/council

Committees

- Executive
- Finance
- Governance, Policy and Legal
- Strategic Communications and Fundraising
- Conservation and Campaigns
- Citizen Science and Nature Education

Staff

Our dedicated staff coordinate our campaigns, run activities, engage citizen scientists, inform our members and support our organisation.

Matt Ruchel, Executive Director

Campaigns

Jordan Crook, Parks & Nature Campaigner
Ben Gill, Nature Conservation Campaigner
Shannon Hurley, Nature Conservation Campaigner
Dr Adrian Marshall, Facilitator Grassy Plains Network
Blake Nisbet, Nature Conservation Campaigner (to June 2025)

Community Engagement

Caitlin Griffith, Community Learning and Engagement Manager
Dr Sera Blair, NatureWatch Coordinator
Andrew Keast, Nature Stewards Program Development
Kade Mills, ReefWatch Coordinator

Michael Loo, NextGen Nature Program Coordinator
Dr Nicole Mertens, Nature Stewards Coordinator
Dr Maddy Willcock, Nature Stewards Coordinator

Fundraising

Jane Crouch, Fundraising Manager
Kristian Lang, Philanthropy Executive
Matt Small, Fundraising Executive

Communications

Jessie Borrelle, Digital Engagement and Communications Manager
Paul Clifton, Publications Coordinator
Jacob L'Huillier Lunt, Digital Strategist
Meghan Lindsay, Communications Advisor

Operations

Brendan Kelly, Finance and Operations Manager
Michelle Klaric, Accountant
Lucy Permezel, Office Coordinator
vnpa.org.au/about/staff

Financial report

Abridged Audited Financial Report for the year ended 30 June 2025.

Statement by Members of the Council

The Committee of the Association declare that:

The financial statements and notes are in accordance with the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* and:

- Comply with Australian Accounting Standards Simplified Disclosure Standard; and
- Give a true and fair view of the financial position as at 30 June 2025 and of the performance for the year ended on that date of the Association.

In the Council's opinion, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Association will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

This declaration is made in accordance with a resolution of the Committee.

David Nugent (President) and Askin Morrison (Treasurer) dated 18 September 2025.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2025		
	2025	2024
	\$	\$
REVENUE		
Appeals and donations	1,369,142	1,558,679
Bequests	88,431	1,858,948
Membership fees	77,049	78,034
Grants and sponsorship	181,600	275,970
Publication sales, events, outdoor activities	178,855	201,155
Interest and investment distributions	101,385	38,227
Total income	1,996,462	4,011,013
EXPENDITURE		
Employment expenses	2,295,647	2,120,787
Campaigns, projects, activities and education	294,285	430,360
Office and administration	171,372	169,962
Printing/publications/web	136,649	136,443
Occupancy and insurance	44,323	43,130
Depreciation and amortisation expense	71,689	79,012
Other expenses	15,735	37,462
Total expenses	3,029,700	3,017,156
CURRENT YEAR SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FROM OPERATIONS	(1,033,238)	993,857
Net gain/(loss) on revaluation of other financial assets	(30,985)	24,003
Realised gain on disposal of other financial assets	0	0
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	(1,064,223)	1,017,860

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2025		
	2025	2024
	\$	\$
ASSETS		
Current		
Cash and cash equivalents	1,759,951	2,657,785
Trade and other receivables	133,069	117,183
Other financial assets	503,017	485,728
Other assets	9,826	18,345
Total current assets	2,405,863	3,279,041
Non-current		
Other financial assets	0	0
Property, plant & equipment	196,046	34,684
Right-of-use-assets	225,907	279,062
Total non-current assets	421,953	313,746
TOTAL ASSETS	2,827,816	3,592,787
LIABILITIES		
Current liabilities	970,753	618,595
Non-current liabilities	242,265	295,171
TOTAL LIABILITIES	1,213,018	913,766
NET ASSETS	1,614,798	2,679,021
Funded by:		
Accumulated surplus	77,388	1,258,626
Reserves*	1,537,410	1,420,395
TOTAL EQUITY	1,614,798	2,679,021

*The Reserve Policy is designed to assist with future variability in income and act as a means to strengthen the long-term future of VNPA. Please contact the office to get more information.

The full Independent Auditor's Report will be tabled at the Annual General Meeting as part of the Audited Financial Statements and the full text of the Report will be available at vnpa.org.au.

VNPA Annual Impact Report, 2024-25

Editor: Jessie Borrelle
Publication design: Paul Clifton
Editorial assistance: Meghan Lindsay

Published by Victorian National Parks Association
Wurundjeri Country, Level 3, 60 Leicester St,
Carlton VIC 3053 ABN 34 217 717 593
President: David Nugent
Executive Director: Matt Ruchel



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