



VNPA 72nd AGM MINUTES

Annual General Meeting 7.00pm – 8.45pm 22th October, 2024

Hybrid event:

- in person at Melbourne City Conference Centre, 190 Little Lonsdale St, Melbourne, 3000 &
- online

7.00 Welcome to evening – MC, Jane Crouch

Welcome to Country – Wurundjeri Man, Thane Garvey

Guest Speaker: Wiradjuri man Richard Swain, Honorary Associate Professor at the Fenner School of Environment and Society, ANU College of Science and an ambassador for the Invasive Species Council.

Richard's presentation emphasised the importance of National Parks for the protection and healing of country, adding that the Australian culture and our history since the arrival of Europeans has not respected and preserved country. As an example, he cited the impact of agriculture. Richard called for the State-based Treaties currently being developed to include a Code of Ethics for care of country. Richard concluded by stating that we need a cultural change in Australia in order to save country from further destruction.

Presentation: Matt Ruchel, Executive Director.

Matt welcomed everyone to the AGM and thanked all for attending.

He then thanked Council and committee members, staff, & volunteers.

A number of staff departures were acknowledged and new staff introduced.

Matt presented the year's activity highlights including:

- a. Official end of VicForest
- b. Aligning the Nature Watch program into nature advocacy
- c. Publication of the *Winds of Change* and *Protecting Our Living Legacies* reports
- d. Progress on Westernport woodland protection
- e. Central Highlands protection advocacy
- f. Advocacy to stop 'loop hole' (fire management & storm recovery) logging on public, and logging on private land
- g. Westernport Bay protection
- h. Grasslands protection

Presentation: Caitlin Griffith, Community Learning & Engagement Manager.

Caitlin presented an update on the six-community learning and activity programs.

NextGen Nature – eg. Westernport woodlands trip

Nature Stewards in partnership with Councils – 186 participants

Reef Watch > 1000 participants

Wild Families – 5 diverse activities

Bushwalking – 170 participants. 19 diverse activities.

Presentation: Dr Sera Blair, NatureWatch Coordinator: 'Life After Fire and Beyond'

Via video, Sera presented a summary of the Life After Fire project which was undertaken in East Gippsland, and aimed to monitor wildlife recovery after bushfire. Following identification of threatened species in the study area, the program is now undertaking wildlife surveys to inform campaigns in other parts of Victoria.

1. President's welcome and introduction to AGM

The President, David Nugent, opened the 72nd AGM by welcoming everyone.

David thanked; Richard for his presentation, Matt and the VNPA team, and all VNPA supporters.

David noted that 26 apologies had been received. No additional apologies were noted.

2. Confirmation of the Minutes of the 71st AGM

Motion 1: That the minutes of the 71st Annual General Meeting of the VNPA be accepted as a true record.

Moved: David Nugent. Seconded: Gerard McPhee. Motion passed on the show of hands.

3. Adoption of the 2023-2024 Annual Impact Report

A copy of the Annual Impact Report was made available on the VNPA website prior to the meeting.

Motion 2: That the 2023-24 Annual Report of the VNPA be adopted

Moved: David Nugent. Seconded: Lara Bickford. Motion passed on the show of hands.

4. Adoption of the audited 2023-2024 Annual Financial Statements

Vice President, Marilyne Crestias apologised that Treasurer Askin Morrison was unable to attend then presented a summary of the financial statements, noting:

- FY24 has been a positive year from a financial perspective.
- VNPA is in a strong position to continue our work defending nature in Victoria, as well as to make some important investments in the coming years.
- VNPA has continued to manage its revenue and expenses quite carefully over the year.
- In regard to the Profit & Loss Statement, the surplus has been largely driven by:
 - Higher bequest revenue (\$1.8M in FY24 vs \$600K in FY23)
 - Appeals & donations (\$1.6M FY24 vs. \$1.4M FY23)
 - Revenue from the Nature Stewards program (\$194k FY24 vs. \$64k FY23)
 - Expenses have increased compared to last year to cover:
 - additional staff
 - running of the Stewards Program.
 - There was a \$167K donation to the National Parks Community Fund from the bequests received, growing the fund to over \$400K.
- The surplus will VNPA to invest to build operational capacity for the long term eg. improvements our website, cyber-security protocols, and donor/communications database
- In regard to the Balance Sheet, VNPA has strong reserves and continues to be liquidity which increases interest earnings.

Asked for questions and none received.

Motion 3: That the Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2024 and the Auditor's Report prepared by Accru be adopted.

Moved: Marilyne Crestias. Seconded: Askin Morrison. –Passed.

5. Appointment of the Financial Auditor:

Marilyn outlined that;

- Accru has been our auditor for the last 3 financial years, that VNPA had a good relationship with them, that they understand our business, and that we had found them to be thorough
- there were no negative findings in this year's audit
- we are proposing to appoint Accru for the upcoming financial year.

In response to a question from the floor relating to prolonged use of the same auditor, Marilyn agreed with the principle of regularly switching to a new auditor, but added that it takes time for a new auditor to become familiar with a new client and that switching at this time was premature.

Motion 4: Accru be appointed auditor of the accounts for the financial year ending 30 June 2025.

Moved Marilyne Crestias, seconded Di Marshall. Passed on the show of hands.

6. Election of Council

Matt Ruchel performed the role of Returning Officer for election to Council positions. He declared that the following nominations had been received.

1. President – one nomination received: David Nugent
2. Vice President – one nomination received: Marilyne Crestias
3. Treasurer - one nomination received: Askin Morrison
4. Secretary – one nomination received: Chris Harvey
5. Councillors (up to 8 positions) – Jan Hendrik Brueggemeier, Doug Robinson, Dianne Marshall, Bruce McGregor, Gerard McPhee, Lara Bickford, Michael Young, and Andrew Norman.

Matt noted that in accordance with the rules of the Association, as nominations had closed, all nominees were declared elected to VNPA Council for 2024/25.

7. Awarding of Honorary Life Memberships

David Nugent outlined that the VNPA Constitution enables Council to award Honorary Life Membership to people who have performed meritorious service. He invited Bruce McGregor to present two Life Membership awards.

Bruce outlined that Life Membership would be awarded to Evelyn Feller, and posthumously to Dr Michael Feller. He summarised that for decades Michael was heavily involved in protecting forests and rivers through research, lobbying and education, had engaged people with the outdoors, and contributed to VNPA committees. Michael was a keen bushwalker and mountain climber, and loved skiing and kayaking. Michael was a member and supporter of VNPA since 1976 (47 years). He was heavily involved in supporting and contributing to many campaigns including drives for new National Parks such as the Alps and the Otway



Ranges, and the endless campaign to stop forestry. He was an academic of the highest integrity. From 2013, he applied these skills at the VNPA Conservation and Campaigns Committee which he was co-convenor for some years, to the VNPA Council, to conservation policy development and campaigns. He also represented the VNPA on the Parks Victoria Falls to Hotham Track Stakeholder Committee. Michael was a generous teacher and mentor to many students and those in the forest conservation movement. He spent time explaining forest ecology to many, with patience and gentleness.

Bruce cited Evelyn's connection of people with nature through bushwalking leadership, research and education activities, and on VNPA committees for over a decade. Evelyn led her first walk in 2013 and has since led a diversity of engaging walks for members and supporters. She recently played a significant role in the refresh of the Bushwalking Program. Evelyn has provided her extensive outdoor education and teaching skills to the VNPA as a volunteer researcher, contributing to committees in discussions on key issues, and in providing feedback on reviews of the NatureWatch and ReefWatch programs. She was pivotal in writing articles on our 2013 *Nature Conservation Review* so that readers of *Park Watch* were provided with clear summaries of that report. In 2011, she brought her skills in outdoor education and teaching to the Marketing and Community Engagement, Education and Events Committee where she was an active contributor until 2022. In 2022, she joined the Bushwalking Program subcommittee where she is an ongoing contributor.

In response, Evelyn thanked VNPA for the awards.

8. Other Business

No other business was raised.

President David Nugent thanked members and supporters for attending and declared the AGM closed.

Jane Crouch, MC, thanked everyone for attending.

Meeting ended 8.45pm.

VNPA Members who attended in person (73)

Andrew Smalley	John Hasler
Andrew Pringle	John Barrett
Andrew Norman	John Poppins
Andrew Beswick	John Grieg
Ann Wigglesworth	Julie Egan
Artur Muchow	Ken Griffiths
Bonnie Gelman	Larissa Bickford
Brian Lennon	Leonard Mendoza
Bruce McGregor	Libby Smith
Catherine McNicol	Lindsay Hesketh
Chris Hibburt	Lisa Lawrence
Colleen Bartolomei	Liz Bodey
Darren McClelland	Maelor Himbury
David McLaren	Marilyne Crestias
David Nugent	Marion Mortimer
Dianne Marshall	Maureen Mendoza
Doug Robinson	Michael Young
Elizabeth Xipell	Nicholas Cole
Elza Meeusen	Nola Wilmot
Euan Moore	Peter Flanagan
Evelyn Feller	Philomena Horsley
Fred Gerardson	Prue Thwaites
Gail & Paul FitzSimons	Ray Radford
George Paras	Richard Brown
Gerard McPhee	Richard Tagg
Glenn Osboldstone	Roslyn Savio
Gregory Noonan	Russell Costello

Heath Rickard

Heather Smith

Isolde Scherrer

Ivanka Jurinec

James Macneil

James Dunstan

Jan Lacey

Janet Graham

Janie Carrington

Janine Sang

Jenny Rolland

Non-members who attended in person (17)

Bryony Callander

Carol Chin

Deb Henry

Erika Feller

Felix Gelman

Harriet Searcy

John Stone

Karen Large

Kate Green

Staff in attendance (17)

Members (6)

Adrian Marshall

Ben Gill

Jane Crouch

Lucy Permezel

Meghan Lindsay

Russell Carrington

Sarah Patterson

Simon Cammell

Stephen Platt

Steve Milton

Xiao Xiao

Linda Parlane

Lucy Farmer

Luke Chamberlain

Philippa Burgess

Richard Swain

Sandra Geitz

Sherrill O'Connor

Teremoana Tonui

Non-members (11)

Blake Nisbet

Brendan Kelly

Caitlin Griffith

Jacob L'Huillier-Lunt

Jessie Borrelle

Michael Loo

Jordan Crook

Kristian Lang

Matt Ruchel

Michelle Klaric

Paul Clifton

Shannon Hurley

Members in attendance online (45)

Adam Edmonds

John Barkla & Alison Street

Arimbi Winoto

Karen & Richard Connolly

Bernadette Cheesman

Lewis Tulk

Charles Street

Malcolm Shore

Chris Harvey

Margaret Letcher

Christine Kilmartin

Marita Lacota

David Redfearn

Michael Robinson

Deirdre Slattery

Nicole Drever

Elsie Carter

Philip Rayment

Emma Gee

Robert Bender

Felicity Brooke

Robin Carter

Gayle Osborne

Robin Crocker

Geoff Durham

Robynne Burchell

Geoffrey & Geraldine Harris

Rodney Novak

Gillian Jervis

Rosemary Race

Hilary McAllister

Sandra Cutts

Jackie Mansourian

Sheina Nicholls

Jan Brueggemeier

Susan 'Sue' Bendel

Jean Christie

Tess Holderness

Jeff Hughes

Wendy Cox

Jill Heydon

Zoe Stevens

Non-members in attendance online (9)

Bronwyn Baade

Bernard & Liz Mace

Marjorie Johnston

Thomas Gengenbach

Diego Granados

John Gurskey

Steve Meacher

Anne Reeves

Apologies received: (22)

Andrew Arnold

Ann Crawford

Barbara Baird

Carrillo Gantner

Christopher Hurrell

David Tatnall

Don Garden

Doug Humann

Doug Palmer

Lance Breguet

Lawrie Hanson

Linden Gillbank

Louise Honman

Melanie von Schorlemer

Peta Colebatch

Phillip Geschke

Raymond Gibson

Rosemary West

Sharon Twining

Stephanie Jones

Sue Hayman

William Howard

Apologies from staff: (4)

Kade Mills, Matt Small, Nicole Mertens, Sera Blair