VNPA 73rd AGM MINUTES
Annual General Meeting 7.00pm – 8.45pm 21st October 2025

Hybrid event:

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

7.00 Welcome to evening – MC, Shannon Hurley

Shannon welcomed everyone to the 73rd VNPA AGM and introduced Daniel Ross.

Welcome to Country – Wurundjeri elder, Daniel Ross

Guest Speaker: Felicity Brooke – Victorian Protected Areas Council.
"Protecting the legacy and future of National Parks: A Parks Manager perspectives".

Felicity's presentation outlined the formation of VPAC then highlighted some key milestones across the 50-year history of National Parks in Victoria including the formation of the Land Conservation Council and the National Parks Act of 1975. She then emphasised current threats to parks including the trend towards recreation uses rather than conservation, and insufficient funding and resources. Felicity ended by appealing to attendees to support VNPA in its efforts to counter these threats.

Presentation: Matt Ruchel, Executive Director.

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

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

A number of staff departures were acknowledged including Caitlin Griffith after 17 years of service.

Matt presented the year's activity highlights including:

a. The establishment of Central West National Parks
b. Progress on Westernport & Westernport woodlands protection
c. Grasslands protection
d. Responding to threats including cuts to Parks funding, a review of Parks Vic, changes in State Gov't support
e. Closing logging loopholes

Presentation: Kade Mills (ReefWatch Coordinator) representing the Community Learning & Engagement program.

Kade described the team's mission being to give participants experiences in nature, then summarised each program;

- Bushwalking program including enhancing the accessibility of the program
- Next Gen Nature program
- Wild Families

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- Nature Watch
- Nature Stewards
- Reef Watch

1. President's welcome and introduction to AGM

The President, David Nugent, opened the 73rd AGM by welcoming everyone.
David thanked Matt and the VNPA team.
David noted that 30 apologies had been received. Two additional apologies were noted.

2. Confirmation of the Minutes of the 72nd AGM
David noted that a copy of the minutes from last year's AGM have been made available to members.

Motion 1: That the minutes of the 72nd Annual General Meeting of VNPA be accepted as a true record.
Moved by David Nugent. Seconded by Lara Bickford. Passed.

3. Adoption of the 2023-2024 Annual Impact Report
David noted that a copy of the Annual Impact Report was made available on the VNPA website prior to the meeting. There were no questions pertaining to this report.

Motion 2: That the 2024-25 VNPA Annual Impact Report be adopted.
Moved by David Nugent. Seconded by Gerard McPhee. Passed.

4. Adoption of the audited 2023-2024 Annual Financial Statements
David apologised for VNPA Treasurer Askin Morrison as he was unable to join the meeting, noting that a copy of the annual financial statements had been circulated by email, was available on the website, and printed copies were available at the meeting. He then introduced a pre-recorded presentation from Askin.

In the video presentation Askin acknowledged the work of the VNPA finance team, Brendan and Michelle, the Finance committee members, and all donors and supports. He then summarised the FY25 financial accounts, noting:

- That during FY25 in addition to funding operational needs, financial investments were made towards important strategic projects to secure VNPA's future. The first of these investments was the adoption of a new system to broaden our engagement with supporters and improve the impact of fundraising efforts. The second investment was work to respond to the increasing risk of cyber-security threats.
- Considering these projects, the FY25 financial plan was a deficit of $600k.
- The YE expenses result was 8% lower than budget. This result was achieved without impact on key programs.
- Revenue for the year of around $2M fell below target. There were three key factors impacting this result; i) appeals and donations were 20% below budget with most of the shortfall occurring in the final months of the year, ii) bequest income, which varies year-to-year, also fell below budget, and iii) grants and sponsorships were also below budget being primarily a timing issue.

- The overall result was a deficit of about $1M.
- Despite this result, VNPA's balance sheet continues to be in a strong position.
- In summary some important investments have been made with the funding shortfall against plan requiring continued focus to ensure a sustainable future, with targeted spend reductions having already taken place, and increased frequency of financial reporting with lead indicators introduced.

Askin indicated his support for the two upcoming motions relating to acceptance of the audited annual financial accounts, and the reappointment of the financial auditor.

David asked the meeting if there were any questions relating to the finance report. None were received.

Motion 3: That the Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2025 and the Auditor's Report prepared by Accru be adopted.
Moved by David Nugent. Seconded by Bruce McGregor. Passed.

5. Appointment of the Financial Auditor:

Motion 4: Accru be appointed auditor of the accounts for the financial year ending 30 June 2026.
Moved by David Nugent. Seconded by Marilyne Crestias. Passed.

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.

- President – One nomination received: Marilyne Crestias
- Vice President – One nomination received: Doug Robinson
- Treasurer – One nomination received: Askin Morrison
- Secretary – One nomination received: Jeff Nottle
- Councilors (up to 8 positions) – Lara Bickford, Dianne Marshall, Bruce McGregor, Gerard McPhee, Jan Hendrik Brueggemeier, Andrew Norman, Chris Hibbert & Charlie Pascoe.

Matt noted that in accordance with the rules of the Association, as nominations had closed, all nominees were declared elected to VNPA Council for 2025/26. Matt then thanked outgoing President David Nugent and the other Councillors who have stepped down.

7. Introduction from the new President

Marilyn introduced herself to the meeting, then thanked Matt and the VNPA team.
She then thanked David Nugent and Chris Harvey for their contribution while on Council.

8. Awarding of Honorary Life Memberships

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Marilyn outlined that the VNPA Constitution enables Council to award Honorary Life Membership to people who have performed outstanding service to VNPA. She invited Ben Gill to read the citations.

Ben outlined the contribution and achievements of Gayle Osbourne – the heart and driving force behind Wombat Forestcare – for her vision, endurance and and extraordinary contribution to conservation. Her tireless efforts have led to the impending creation of the new Wombat–Lerderderg National Park, and under Gayle's direction Wombat Forestcare's citizen science work uncovered new populations of the endangered Mountain Skink, helping strengthen the case for protection. Ben then congratulated Gayle on her Life Membership award. Gayle responded by thanking VNPA for the honour and all supporters of the Wombat campaign.

Ben then summarised the achievements of Wendy Radford and Stuart Fraser, of the Bendigo and District Environment Council. Together, they have dedicated decades to the protection of central Victoria's Box-Ironbark forests, especially the Wellsford Forest near Bendigo. Their work has shaped both local conservation and state-wide park outcomes. Ben then announced that they have been awarded VNPA Life Membership. Wendy apologised for Stuart's inability to attend the AGM then thanked VNPA for the recognition.

9. Other Business

No other business was raised.

Marilyn thanked all for attending and support, and declared the AGM closed.

Meeting ended 8.45pm.

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Attendance

Members in person (88):

Andrew Beswick
Andrew Norman
Andrew Smalley
Ann McGregor OAM
Ann Wigglesworth
Anna Foley
Artur Muchow
Bonnie Gelman
Bruce McGregor
Catherine McNicol
Cecilia Jagan
Charlie Pascoe
Chris Hibburt
Christina Drummond
Clancy Lester
Darren McClelland
David Cole
David Nugent
David Rhoderick
Dorothy Howes
Doug Robinson
Elaine Yap
Elisabeth Bodey
Elza Meeusen
Emma Davis
Esther Rule
Evelyn Feller
Flora Bee
Fred Gerardson
Gail Fitzsimons
Gayle Osborne
Gerard McPhee
Isolde (Izzy) Scherrer
Jacqueline Ridler
James Dunstan
James Macneil
Jan Lacey
Janet Graham
Janette Carr
Janine Sang
Jean Christie
Jeff Nottle
Jennie Jaram
John Bardsley
John Harcourt Hasler
Jean Christie
John Greig
Julia Croatto
Kay Cole
Ken Griffiths
Kyle Matheson
Lara Bickford
Libby Smith
Linden Gillbank
Lisa Lawrence
Louise Honman
Maelor Himbury
Malcolm Shore
Marilyne Crestias
Marion Mortimer
Mary Louise Baxter
Maureen Anne Walker
Megan Davis
Mem Alexander
Michael Forster
Michael Johnson
Moira Jeffreys
Nicholas Cole
Nick Legge
Nola Wilmot
Paul Fitzsimons
Peter Kriesner
Phillip Geschke
Philomena Horsley
Prudence Thwaites
Rhys Freeman
Robin Crocker
Rodney Novak
Rosemary Mann
Rosemary Race
Russell Costello
Sandra Geitz
Simon Cammell
Stephanie Jones
Stephen Platt
Trevor Viénet
Wendy Radford
William Jeffreys

Non-members in person (21):

Annabel Richards
Carol Lee Chin
Carolyn Lunt
Deb Henry
Elizabeth Matheson
Gordon Lescinsky
Harriet Searcy
John Orr
Kit Ming May Fu
Leilani Yu
Linda Parlane
Lorraine Siska
Lucy Osborne
Margaret Henderson
Merrill Jusuf
Noel Renouf
Patricia Kennedy
Roger Richards
Sandra Wilson
Sue Fraser
Wendy Katz

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VNPA staff members in person (6):

Adrian Marshall	Jane Crouch	Lucy Permezel
Ben Gill	Nicole Mertens	Matt Small

VNPA staff non-members in person (11):

Brendan Kelly	Kristian Lang	Paul Clifton
Jacob L'Huillier Lunt	Maddy Wilcock	Sera Blair
Jordan Crook	Matt Ruchel	Shannon Hurley
Kade Mills	Michelle Klaric	

Members online (32):

Alison Shelton Agar	Geoff Lacey	Margo Heeley
Alison Street	Geoffrey Harris	Marita Lacota
Andrew Arnold	Heath Rickard	Nicole Drever
Bette Mitchell	John Barkla	Philip Rayment
Bryony Callander	John Garnet	Ray Radford
Catherine Carlyle (Friends of Grampians Gariwerd)	John Langford	Raymond Gibson
David Cramond	John Renowden	Richard Connolly
Don Garden	Julie Kidd	Robin Carter
Elizabeth Maertin (Friends of Chiltern – Mt Pilot National Park)	Karen Connolly	Susan Bendel
Emily Clough	Kevin Heeley	Wendy Cox
Eva Klusacek	Lewis Claude Tulk	

Non-members online (5):

Alison Watson	Elizabeth Jarman	Susan Bannerman
Anne Reeves	Margaret Johnson	

Apologies (42):

Andrew Keast (staff)	Graham Brown	Maureen Mendoza
Caitlin Griffith (staff)	Jane Canaway	Michael Bond
Andrew Rouse	Janie Carrington	Michael Howes
Angela Munro	Jennifer Rolland	Michael Twining
Ann Crawford	Joanne Bechaz	Patricia Crowley
Bernadette Cheeseman	John Barrett	Robert Argent
Betty Vergara-Pink	John & Ruth Stirling	Rosemary Murnane
Cath Rouse	Karen Alexander	Russell Carrington
Chris Harvey	Kate Kantor	Sharon Twining
Dianne Marshall	Kathleen Burrows	Stuart Fraser

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VICTORIAN NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION
Be part of nature

Elaine Mathison
Elisabeth Bodey
Elizabeth Xipell
Euan Moore
Glenn Hilling
Ken Mawdsley
Leonard Mendoza
Lucy Farmer
Margaret Arnott
Martine Holberton
Victoria Strutt
Askin Morrison

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