



Annual Impact Report 2025–26

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Year in review

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

Central west parks are long-awaited wins

After decades of campaigning, nature in Victoria's central west finally has the protection it deserves. In November 2025, the Victorian Parliament legislated three new national parks plus additions and new conservation parks. Wombat-Lerderderg, Mount Buangor and Pyrenees national parks will protect tens of thousands of hectares of habitat and safeguard hundreds of rare and threatened plants, animals and fungi, including Greater Gliders, Mount Cole Grevilleas, Brush-tailed Phascogales, Mountain Skinks and Powerful Owls. The headwaters of six major Victorian rivers are protected. And the new parks give Traditional Owners greater capacity to care for Country. The Wellsford Forest addition to Bendigo Regional Park and Mirboo North Conservation Park add to these welcome wins for nature. Executive Director Matt Ruchel called the new parks 'a massive win for nature, climate and communities' and noted these are Victoria's first substantial new national

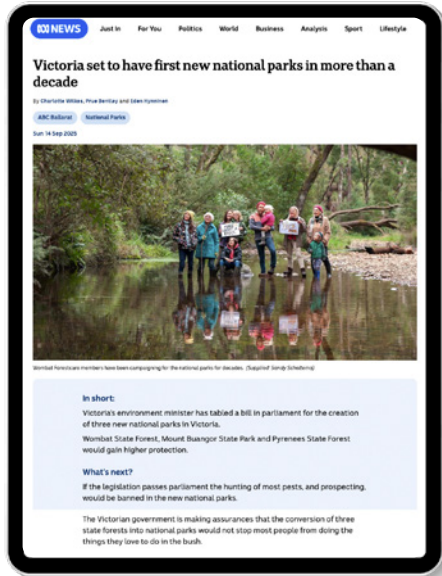


VNPA's new park patches, Dec 2025

parks in 14 years. The wins trace back to a formal assessment process that began in 2017, with recommendations agreed to and promised by government in 2021. We campaigned tirelessly with local community groups for years, weathering delays and broken promises. In the months leading up to the crucial parliamentary debate, VNPA and our supporters took action to make sure the parks got over the line with emails, postcards, media stories, local newspaper ads and social media action. With the parks on track for gazettal on 5 October 2026, our focus shifts to funding and management. We want to make sure these hard-won protections translate into real outcomes for nature and communities. We're also still pushing for the promised smaller reserves in the central west that are yet to be legislated.



Central West Now advertising and postcard campaign, September 2025



ABC News, 14 September 2025

“There is so much wildlife, both rare and threatened, that will now have their habitat permanently protected.”

GAYLE OSBORNE, WOMBAT FORESTCARE, PARKWATCH, DECEMBER 2025



Our grassland bullant

Ants are amazing! They're an essential part of the incredible spectrum of wildlife that make up our grasslands. *Melbourne's Grassland Bullant* by Dr Ian Smith and the Grassy Plains Network is a preliminary investigation into the ecology and behaviour of *Myrmecia nobilis*, a bullant found only in grasslands in Melbourne's north.

The native grasslands *Myrmecia nobilis* calls home are one of our most threatened habitats. Just a tiny 0.5% of the grassy meadow wonderlands that existed before European settlement survive. This report aims to help find new populations of this grassland specialist, look after its habitat and identify threats. Understanding more about this ant will help us protect them and our irreplaceable grasslands. vnpa.org.au/melbournes-grassland-bullant

Bold new campaign: Victorians for Nature

Over the last year, together with Environment Victoria, The Wilderness Society and the Victorian Forest Alliance, we helped to form 'Victorians for Nature', a new and growing alliance calling for stronger protection for nature across the state ahead of the November 2026 election. Our vision: By 2030, Victoria's nature and National Parks are valued, respected, genuinely protected, properly resourced, and managed to restore biodiversity and safeguard nature for future generations. Our mission: Our alliance will organise and mobilise a powerful community base, bringing together supporters, stakeholders and allies to demand strong protection of Victoria's national parks and nature, and secure the resourcing and policies necessary for enduring biodiversity and nature conservation outcomes.



“The aim is simple. Build a movement that's impossible to ignore.”
SHANNON HURLEY, PARKWATCH, JUNE 2026

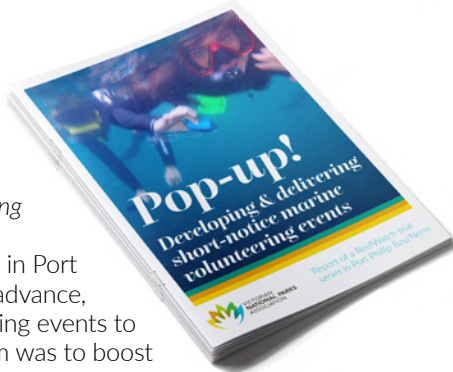
Nature protection in Victoria is being eroded from many directions. A staffing cut here. A shelved reform there. A scientific advisory body abolished. A promise quietly deferred. Together, these decisions add up to a system being steadily weakened. No single organisation can push back against a challenge on this scale alone. By bringing conservation groups, community organisations and Victorians together under one banner, the alliance can speak with a louder, more united voice than any of us could alone. We can reach people who care about nature but may not yet know how much ground is being lost, alongside those who've spent decades pushing for better outcomes.

With the alliance, we developed a new campaign, 'Stop the F*ckery', to expose the loopholes, backflips, funding cuts and broken promises quietly undermining protection for forests, oceans and wildlife. Its goal is to build a movement that reaches beyond the usual audience and brings new voices into the conversation. The provocative name is designed to cut through a crowded, noisy media landscape and get people talking. Throughout the year, we've worked with Victorians for Nature to run film screenings, local events and campaign launches across key regions, and built support on social media for five election commitments: close logging loopholes, create long-promised conservation reserves, increase funding for

national parks, expand forest protections in the Central Highlands and East Gippsland, partner with and resource Traditional Owners to lead the care of Country and remove feral deer protected status while funding proper control. The alliance website tracks the damage being done to nature across Victoria, and gives people an easy way to push back by contacting their elected representatives. Because they're the ones who can fix this. And they'll pay attention if enough of us let them know that. As the election approaches, we'll keep investing in this alliance to build the pressure needed to put nature back on the priority list. victoriansfornature.au

Popping-up on the reef

What do you do when the forecast keeps changing its mind? ReefWatch's answer: stop planning months ahead and start moving with the weather instead. In *Pop-up! Developing and delivering short-notice marine volunteering events*, Kade Mills reported on a trial of short-notice (pop-up) events in Port Phillip Bay. Rather than locking in dates weeks in advance, the project gave volunteers a few days notice, timing events to actual conditions rather than the calendar. The aim was to boost participation, reach a more diverse range of volunteers, and cut the number of activities lost to bad weather.



vnpa.org.au/pop-up



Matt Ruchel,
Executive Director
The last year has once again seen an amazing effort by dedicated VNPA staff and volunteers. The year started with a big push for the government to deliver on their commitment to create the new central west parks.

After decades of tireless advocacy, legislation to create Wombat-Lerderderg, Mount Buangor and Pyrenees national parks and other conservation reserves was finally introduced in September and passed in November 2025. But the announcement came with a sting – the Allan Government declared it '...will not be creating any new national parks' and included some sneaky changes to allow deer shooting in some parks.

Further backwards steps darkened the significant milestone of the new parks, including: rejecting recommendations for new parks in the Central Highlands made by the Eminent Person Panel; again rejecting recommendations from an independent inquiry to make deer a pest; gutting a number of key agencies such as fisheries enforcement and abolishing the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council and the Marine and Coastal Council and refusing to close logging loopholes. The tireless work of our staff on those issues is covered in this report.

The long-awaited audit of the Melbourne Strategic Assessment was finally released. It revealed some wins for threatened wildlife in grasslands but continuing concerns for other threatened wildlife and ongoing destruction by developers. We worked hard to highlight and push back on these grassland issues. These repeated backward steps spurred us to work with other groups to build a new alliance, Victorians for Nature, to make nature a priority ahead of this year's state election. As always VNPA staff work amazingly hard, advocating for nature whilst building a community of nature lovers through our fantastic programs: ReefWatch, NatureWatch, Nature Stewards, NextGen Nature, Wild Families and Bushwalking Program. How we do so much with limited resources, I don't know, but it's always incredible to look back over all we achieved in the last year.

Protecting, defending and restoring nature

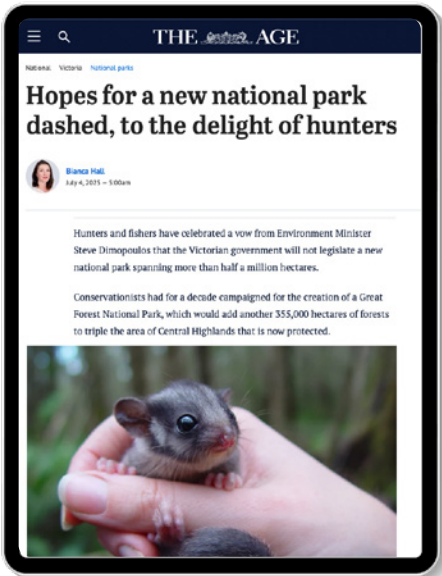
STRIVING FOR A WORLD-CLASS AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PROTECTED AREAS

Parks under pressure: wins, losses and warnings

	22 site investigations
	83 reports & submissions
	11 major media stories
	68 social media posts
	25,068 interactions*

*public shares, likes and comments on VNPA digital channels

It was a year of contradictions for Victoria's parks network. Big wins sat alongside deep cuts and broken promises, and we pushed hard on every front. The biggest win came in November 2025, when Parliament finally passed laws creating three new national parks in the central west. However, seven promised regional parks, 11 nature conservation reserves and 18 bushland reserves in the central west still aren't protected, and a late addition to the new laws opened 130,000 hectares of Errinundra and Snowy River national parks, plus parts of Wombat-Lerderderg and the Pyrenees, to deer hunting. We called out the serious safety risk and the lack of community consultation. We're also keeping the pressure on to make sure the missing central west reserves are protected.



The Age, 4 July 2025

“Every time there’s a new national park, there’s always a debate. In the Grampians there was a fierce debate [when it was proclaimed a national park in 1984]. But I think most people around the Grampians, and communities there, wouldn’t have it any other way now. It’s such a draw card.”
MATT RUCHEL, THE AGE, 2 NOVEMBER 2025



The Age, 2 November 2025

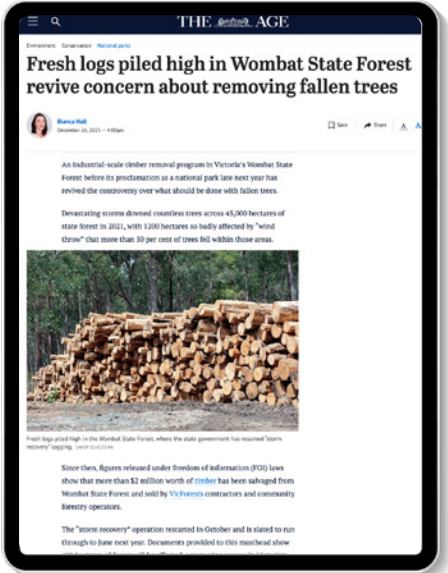
When the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) handed down its Assessment of the Central Highlands in late January 2026, we pushed back on a process that sidelined VEAC's usual independent role. Despite the end of native forest logging in 2024, only 13,500 hectares of the Central Highlands will be added to Yarra Ranges National Park, land already protected inside a closed water catchment. We didn't hold back, calling it 'an epic failure for an epic park.' Parks Victoria's funding (or lack of) has been a constant target of our advocacy. Following 2024's cuts and the CEO's

departure, we pressed government to at least double funding (still under 0.5% of the state budget). We kept the issue in the public eye through 2026 as further staffing cuts came to light. We also called out major staffing cuts in the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Change. On top of all that, VNPA is sticking up for independent oversight. We opposed the abolition of VEAC, and campaigned against the axing of the Victorian Marine and Coastal Council. We warned that losing these independent voices leaves our parks and coasts exposed, just when they need protecting most. 🙌

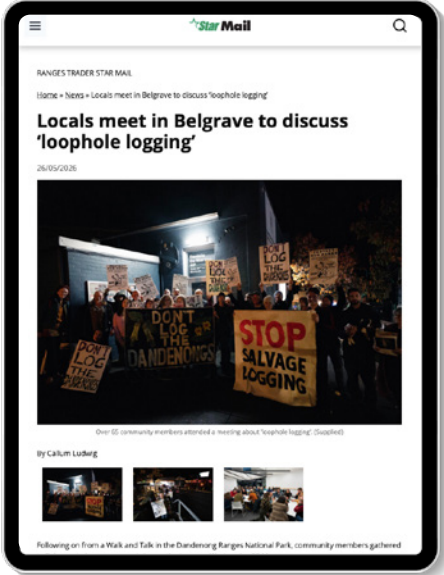
Pushing back against loophole logging

	2 reports & submissions
	5 major media stories
	21 social media posts
	10,921 interactions

This year we ran a sustained campaign against loophole logging, aka the destruction of state forests and national parks disguised as bushfire mitigation or storm clean up. A big focus was the State Forest By-Products Framework, introduced in April 2026. It lets government agencies remove trees from state forests and sell them to timber mills and firewood suppliers. It's commercial logging by another name, with far less scrutiny and far weaker protections for wildlife. Forest Fire Management Victoria oversees its own work, with no independent oversight, no clear rules to protect nature, and no public reporting. National parks aren't included yet, but the government is considering adding them to this destructive strategy. We called out this damaging new framework. Even though national parks aren't officially included in the by-products framework yet, loophole logging has already infiltrated them. We documented and pushed back against new damage in the Dandenong Ranges and the new Wombat-Lerderderg national parks. And we worked with local filmmaker Lewis Haskins to expose the destruction in the Dandenongs in a short documentary featuring Parks and Nature Campaigner Jordan Crook. Campaigners Jordan and Ben also spoke out about the impacts, including trees over 13 metres in diameter and hundreds



The Age, 26 December 2026



Ranges Trader Star Mail, 26 May 2026

of years old being destroyed. A shocking 10,000–12,000 cubic metres of trees were taken from Wombat Forest over four years, nearly three times pre-2024 native forest logging volumes. We joined the Wilderness Society, Environment Victoria and the Victorian Forest Alliance to call on the government to rule out further logging in national parks and conservation reserves, set up independent oversight of Forest Fire Management Victoria's work, and publish ecological assessments for major works on public land. 🙌

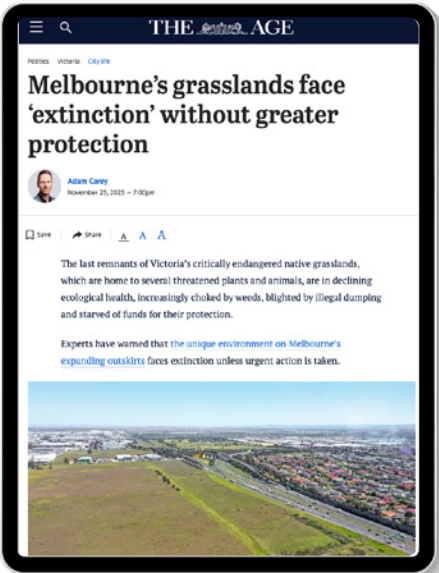
“Two-thirds of every tree processed in these operations is being turned into fine fuel and dumped across the forest floor as the forestry contractors are only interested in the valuable saw logs”
BEN GILL, THE AGE, 26 DECEMBER 2025



Walking through loophole logging in the Dandenong Ranges National Park, Wurundjeri Country, May 2026 | LEWI HASKINS

Guarding our precious grasslands

It was a big year of consolidation for the Grassy Plains Network. We delivered 24 editions of GPN News, 11 Grassy Talks, presented to numerous conservation organisations, held planting days, and toured between Geelong and Melbourne with MPs Ella George and John Lister. A major highlight was our sold out Grasslands Forum in March. Held in conjunction with the Australian Association of Bush Regenerators and Merri Creek Management Committee, over 300 attendees enjoyed 20 speakers bringing the grassy community together for on-ground restoration.



The Age, 25 November 2025

We expanded our Grassy Tours, seeing over 950 sign-ups for 32 trips to over 50 (sometimes more than one per trip!) grasslands across urban Melbourne, Geelong, the Northern Plains and the Victorian Volcanic Plain. Most importantly, we continued scrutiny of the huge and only partially accountable Melbourne Strategic Assessment (MSA), pressing on land acquisition, bringing grassland destroyers into the courts, and chivvyng the MSA to stay true to scientific conservation goals. We continued campaigning for protection for vulnerable roadside grasslands, working with the Office of the Conservation Regulator. The Greens asked three questions in Parliament on the clearing of Moynes Castle Carey Road grassland, prompting responses from government policy makers. Our ongoing grant from Microsoft and the Society for Ecological Restoration funded a Seed Production Area with our Iramoo grant partners, sowing seed using innovative cap and sow restoration on the Merri Creek in Melbourne's north. We campaigned for the Victorian Grassland Earless Dragon; its one known home still remains unprotected. We researched

“ Our priceless grasslands will soon be extinct if developers aren’t forced to restore what they’ve destroyed.”

ADRIAN MARSHALL, THE AGE, 8 DECEMBER 2025

	45 site investigations
	28 reports & submissions
	6 major media stories
	11 Grassy Talks
	34 social media posts
	3,851 interactions

Melbourne's own bullant, with help from Community Bank, Altona and Laverton. We even contributed to a major addition to the contemporary Australian music repertoire, 'Sweeping Plains of Sound' by Kate Tempamy. And always, we stuck up for our threatened grasslands, making over two dozen submissions on everything from warehousing to Precinct Structure Plans to the use of fire in the landscape. vn timer

	5 reports & submissions
	8 major media stories
	28 social media posts
	8,004 interactions

On the other side of the state, a nature conservation victory arrived in early 2026. The Mount Donna Buang Wingless Stonefly, found only within a four square kilometre region, was added to the federal Critically Endangered list in February 2026. We welcomed the listing and increased protection, calling it a really good sign, but urged the Federal Government to step up and help the stoneflies recover.

Better planning for marine habitats

Fisheries officer cuts and holistic planning for Western Port Bay were big marine issues we focused on this year. We strongly opposed and pressured decision makers about state government cuts that removed more than half of frontline fisheries officers across Victoria, leaving marine habitats and wildlife with far fewer guardians. Nature groups, recreational fishers and industry bodies warned that fewer officers means fewer checks, weaker deterrence, and more opportunity for illegal fishing, particularly in marine protected areas. At Barwon Bluff Marine Sanctuary, volunteers from Friends of the Bluff, Barwon Heads have watched risks unfold as a result. Western Port Bay, a Ramsar-listed wetland and UNESCO Biosphere Reserve home to migratory shorebirds, dolphins, penguins and seagrass meadows, faced a different threat. The State Government committed \$124.5 million to progress the

“ We want certainty that the project can be done in a way that doesn’t cause unacceptable harm to the Western Port wetlands and we aren’t confident that has been achieved yet.”

SHANNON HURLEY, MORNINGTON PENINSULA NEWS, 13 AUGUST 2025

proposed Victorian Renewable Energy Terminal at the Port of Hastings, involving the largest dredging works in the Bay since the port was built and a doubling of shipping visits, yet allocated no funding for a long-term protection plan. VNPA continues pushing for a whole-of-bay plan and a dedicated Western Port Fund ahead of the next state election. We've been working with our friends at Environment Victoria to develop a strategy with the local community, to build momentum, mobilise people and put pressure on decision-makers this year. Renewable energy infrastructure must not come at the expense of the habitats it aims to protect. Western Port Bay is one of Victoria's remaining strongholds and breeding areas for threatened and vulnerable marine and coastal wildlife. With many of them now facing additional risk from bird flu, protecting the Bay's habitats and building the resilience of its wildlife has never been more important.

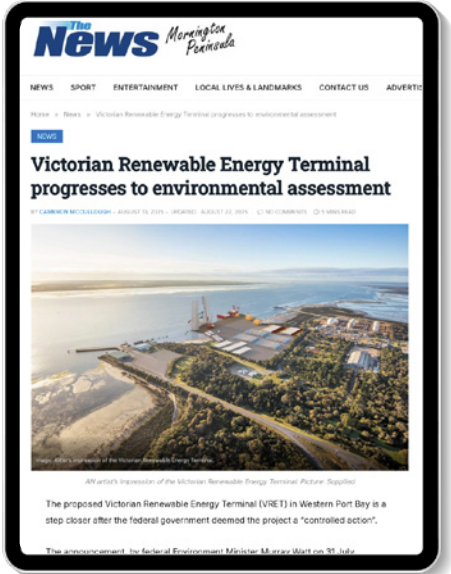


Sunday Age, 29 March 2026

Getting renewables right for nature

The proposed Kentbruck Green Power Hub near Portland became a flashpoint this year for balancing climate action with nature protection. The 7,500-hectare project, featuring up to 105 turbines nearly 300 metres tall, would sit within a pine plantation. However, its footprint borders Cobboboonee National Park, Discovery Bay and internationally significant Ramsar wetlands, placing it in the flight path of Critically Endangered Southern Bent-wing Bats and migratory shorebirds. In the Environment Effects Statement process and in representations to federal Environment Minister Murray Watt, VNPA argued the project was 'a good project in the wrong place.' Our position has been consistent: Victoria urgently needs renewable energy to combat the climate crisis, but poor planning decisions

	3 reports & submissions
	2 major media stories
	25 social media posts
	5,740 interactions



Mornington Peninsula News, 13 August 2025

	3 reports & submissions
	4 major media stories
	2 social media posts
	139 content interactions

risk both irreplaceable habitat and the broader social licence renewables need to succeed. We continue to call for wind energy infrastructure to be planned away from national parks and protected wetlands to make sure the clean energy transition strengthens, rather than undermines, nature conservation outcomes across the state.

Pushing back against inappropriate development



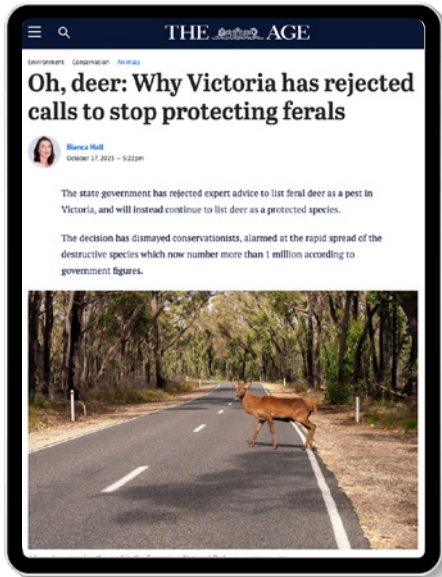
Midland Express, 19 May 2026

“Local council assessed this proposal and refused it because of serious impacts to nature and strong community opposition.”

BEN GILL, THE AGE, APRIL 2026

Highlighting the growing invasive species crisis

Invasive species remained one of Victoria's most pressing nature conservation challenges. We raised alarms about both the scale of the growing feral deer problem and the inadequacy of the government's response. The Independent Review of the Wildlife Act recommended declaring deer a pest species, but this was ruled out by the then minister Steve Dimopoulos.



The Age, 17 October 2025

Victoria's national and state parks faced a troubling year from inappropriate development, and we called it out. At Arthurs Seat State Park, we condemned a theme park-style luge proposal, speaking at a community meeting alongside more than 100 passionate locals to highlight the need to protect this iconic park. Despite strong opposition, the State Government approved the \$25 million project, including a 1,440 metre luge track and a 34 metre observation tower. At Mount Macedon, VNPA and local community groups condemned a decision by Parks Victoria to destroy trees for views, including locally rare Snow Gums. This occurred under a planning pathway approved by Planning Minister Sonya Kirkenny, overriding a prior refusal by

	8 site investigations
	17 reports & submissions
	4 major media stories
	15 social media posts
	7,329 interactions

Macedon Ranges Shire Council. The clearing removed up to 120 trees from almost 0.8 ha of nationally significant Montane Grassy Woodland, of which just 21 ha remain across Victoria. These cases set a dangerous precedent for parks statewide.

With community and Landcare groups across the state, we condemned this decision as politically motivated rather than dealing with the issues caused by feral deer on nature agricultural production and public safety. In a joint statement with the Invasive Species Council, Victorian Farmers Federation, Environment Victoria and others, we called on the government to urgently tackle the growing deer crisis in Victoria by fully funding and implementing the Victorian Deer Control Strategy, and removing the protected status of feral deer under the Wildlife Act, to make sure legislation no longer contradicts expert advice. We called for a clear, well-funded plan to protect Victoria's most important landscapes with professional, evidence-based control programs combining aerial control, accredited and supervised hunters, and long-term investment to protect sensitive habitats.

	14 major media stories
	9 social media posts
	1,041 interactions

In June 2026, we convened the South Gippsland Feral Deer Forum in Meeniyar with the South Gippsland Landcare Network and the Invasive Species Council as well as a forum in Neerim South. The sold-out events allowed the local community to share ideas for coordinated control and learn about the campaign to end Victoria's feral deer crisis. Without genuine political will, coordinated funding, and science-led management, Victoria's invasive species crisis will only deepen, threatening the very habitats that national parks exist to protect.

“It's a really severe problem, and it's a wicked problem because of the politics of it.”

MATT RUCHEL, THE AGE, 17 OCTOBER 2025

Getting into nature

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



NatureWatch volunteer measuring Enfield Grevillea regrowth, Mt Buangor National Park, Djab Wurrung and Eastern Maar Country, April 2026 | SERA BLAIR



Image from 'It's nice to meet you tree' activity sheet | TRACE BALLA



NatureWatch

OUR LAND-BASED CITIZEN SCIENCE PROGRAM

NatureWatch is our land-based citizen science program, training community volunteers to collect important information about Victoria's animals and plants. We work with local groups, scientists and land managers to make sure our projects have community value, are scientifically valid and match local management priorities. NatureWatch continues to support community efforts to monitor wildlife populations and the recovery of endemic grevilleas in the forests of Mount Cole in Djab Wurrung Country. We also supported habitat restoration actions on private land in the region. We undertook pre-burn wildlife surveys in Enfield State Park in Wadawurrung Country, and continued our monitoring focus in smaller central west reserves. We went searching for threatened wildlife in Adam's Creek Nature Conservation Reserve and built on our ability to support habitat protection in the Western Port Woodlands in Bunurong Country. Many thanks to our volunteers, students, local communities and equipment donors for their continued support.

vnpa.org.au/naturewatch

“The student placement was genuinely brilliant and really cemented that this kind of conservation work is what I want to do.”

MIA KLEIN, NATUREWATCH STUDENT PLACEMENT

27,904

camera photos analysed

69

citizen science volunteer days

8,004

nature content interactions

“ Our ‘Walk Talk and Gawk’ in Wombat enabled 25 participants to hear from local advocates and VNPA campaign staff about illegal loophole logging, mobilising several of us to write to our local politicians...”

DENISE FERNANDO, BUSHWALKING LEADER



Encounter with a Senator Wrasse during the Great Victorian Fish Count 2025 in Port Phillip Bay/Nerm, Bunurong & Wadawurrung Country | ELODIE CAMPRASSE



Baldry's Circuit Walk, Mornington Peninsula, Oct 2025 | SHAILA KHAN



ReefWatch

OUR MARINE CITIZEN-SCIENCE PROGRAM

ReefWatch is our marine citizen-science program. It encourages people to collect important information about fish, invertebrates and algae at locations across Victoria. It also create opportunities to connect with and learn more about the wildlife living along our coastline and offers hands-on training to deal with local issues like marine pests. Every year, ReefWatch helps build a richer picture of marine habitats and wildlife in Victoria. This year, over 600 volunteers joined us through the Sea Slug Census, SeadragonSearch and the Great Victorian Fish Count. They contributed thousands of observations that are helping researchers and land managers better understand our changing oceans. ReefWatch also supported community partners to remove invasive species, strengthening volunteer capacity and expanding conservation efforts across the state. Through their involvement with ReefWatch, participants developed new skills, built stronger connections with the ocean and became active stewards for marine wildlife and habitats. Every dive and observation not only added to our understanding of marine life but also strengthened communities committed to protecting it. 🌿

vnpa.org.au/reefwatch

Bushwalking Program

GETTING OUT AND ABOUT IN NATURE AND MAKING NEW FRIENDS

Our enthusiastic volunteer bushwalking leaders offered a range of activities, including day hikes, base camps and accessible walks all around the state. Fifteen bushwalks over the year gave participants a chance to connect with new friends and nature while exploring some of our incredible parks and other special places, including Great Otway, Mornington Peninsula and Wombat-Lerderderg national parks, Cowies Creek, Mount Worth State Park, Brimbank Park, You Yangs Regional Park, Cape Schanck and Cape Conran Coastal Park. 🌿

vnpa.org.au/bushwalking-and-activities-everything

“ It was a great snorkel and I was so happy to be able to attend. It was a great learning experience and time in the water.”

GREAT VICTORIAN FISH COUNT ATTENDEE, KITTY MILLER BAY

“ I feel completely immersed and part of something now where before I felt a bit like an outsider... Now I really have a sense of how I can contribute. I feel I have a whole new network of like-minded people.”

NATURE STEWARDS NW HUB PARTICIPANT, AUTUMN 2026



Field trip to Koolunga Native Reserve, Ferntree Gully, Wurundjeri Country, during the Knox Autumn 2026 Nature Stewards course | R JENNION



NextGen Nature nestbox building activity, Aug 2025 | MICHAEL LOO



Nature Stewards

SHORT COURSES CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH NATURE LOCALLY

Nature Stewards is an inspiring 10-week immersive community nature education program. Designed with and delivered by local experts and land managers, the course promotes literacy and stewardship of nature through discovery, action and ongoing learning. Nature Stewards had another wonderful year from Ballarat to the Mornington Peninsula across seven courses. Our Spring 2025 and Autumn 2026 graduates are now exploring ways to support nature and their local communities through work on private property, joining local nature volunteering efforts and advocating for nature. They're also sharing knowledge, connections and skills with family, friends and colleagues. It was great welcoming back a number of our alumni to do presentations during the year. We're also working with alumni and other interested groups to bring more Nature Stewards courses to new locations across Victoria. 🌿

vnpa.org.au/naturestewards

NextGen Nature

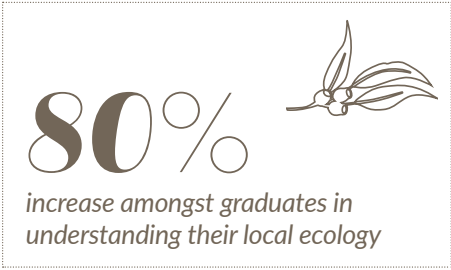
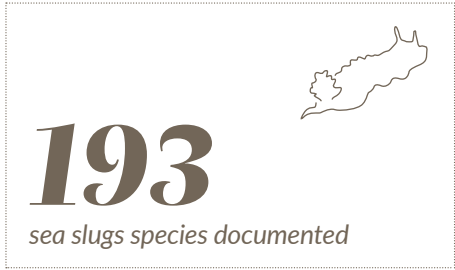
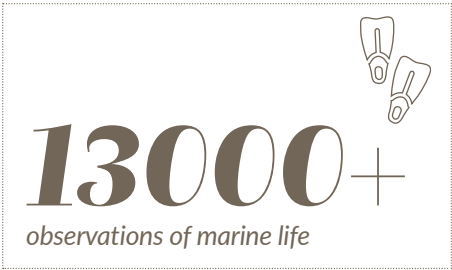
INSPIRING YOUNG ADULTS TO EXPERIENCE NATURE

NextGen Nature connects and empowers young adults by equipping them with the skills and knowledge to take meaningful action for nature in Victoria. Along with their regular meetings and workshops, in 2025 the NextGen crew joined the Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve Association for a tour of the reserve and to build nestboxes for Critically Endangered Swift Parrots. We are currently without a convenor for this program, but the NextGen Nature Collective and VNPA staff have been exploring ways to continue boosting engagement and collaboration with young adults. 🌿

vnpa.org.au/nextgennature

“ Hands on learning combined with hands on making makes a difference.”

NEXTGEN NATURE PARTICIPANT IN THE NESTBOX BUILDING ACTIVITY



Shaping the story

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

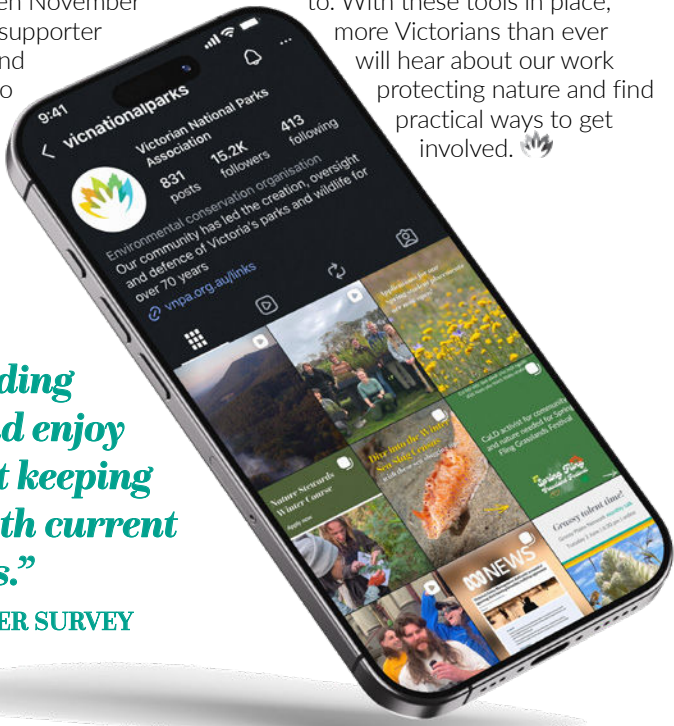
Our communication work connects people with nature and gives them practical ways to stick up for wildlife and habitats. We connect with people through media, our website, social media, webinars and in our print and digital membership magazine, *ParkWatch*. Our staff are a regular go-to for journalists, educators, colleagues and policy makers looking for insight and expertise on the issues nature in Victoria faces.

This year we asked our supporters directly what they wanted to hear from us. More than 1,500 people replied, and the answer was clear: progress on our nature campaigns, and stories about wildlife. So rather than spreading ourselves thin across every available channel, we chose to focus our energy.

The biggest piece of work happened behind the scenes. Between November and April, we brought our supporter database, email program and online actions together into one connected system. The result is a clearer picture of our community and a system that works better for everyone.

“I love reading *ParkWatch*, and enjoy the emails I get keeping me abreast with current issues.”

VNPA SUPPORTER SURVEY



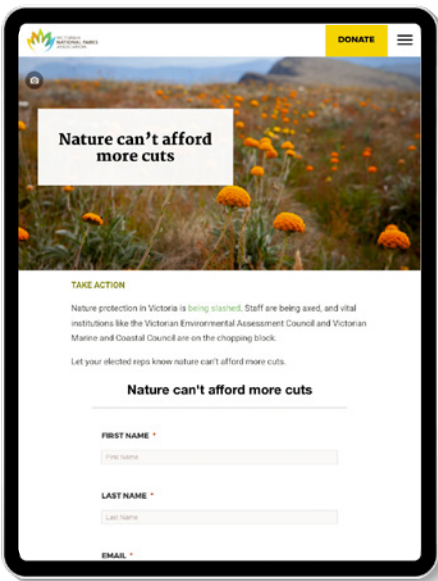
L-R: *Park Watch* #301 (September 2025), #302 (December 2025), #303 (March 2026) and #304 (June 2026). COVER PHOTOS: SANDY SCHELTEMA, MEGHAN LINDSAY, REINER RICHTER



Instagram has become our strongest social media channel this year, engaging twice as many people as Facebook and reaching well beyond our existing followers. Facebook, meanwhile, continues to show fewer posts that link offsite — one more reason a direct line to supporters, through email, matters as much as it does.

We also tested a more focused approach to our content. We've made fewer posts but spent more time crafting each one, focussing on the issues our supporters told us they care about most. It's working. We published less this year than last but reached almost twice as many people.

This has been a year of building stronger foundations. Less noise, sharper focus, and a clearer sense of who we're talking to. With these tools in place, more Victorians than ever will hear about our work protecting nature and find practical ways to get involved.



Action pages on our website allow our supporters to have a say on important nature issues in Victoria

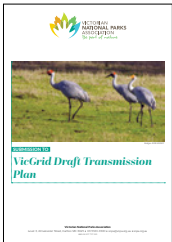


Shaping the agenda

OUR DEDICATED CAMPAIGN TEAM DRIVES EVIDENCE-BASED ADVOCACY THROUGH COMPREHENSIVE POLICY DEVELOPMENT, DETAILED MAPPING, RIGOROUS DATA ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC RESEARCH

JULY 2025

Victorian Renewable Energy Terminal EPBC referral
From conservation vision to depauperate weedscape, briefing for Murray Watt
VicGrid Draft Transmission Plan



AUGUST 2025

Public inquiry into the algal blooms in SA

OCT 2025

Cairnlea Section G Mixed Use Development
Draft National Recovery Plan for the Golden Sun Moth
Application 02850 native forest logging operation at Mount Horsfall

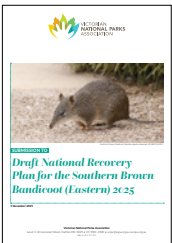
NOV 2025

Pop-up! Developing & delivering short-notice marine volunteering events
Draft National Recovery Plan for South-eastern Long-eared Bat

Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing – Submission to application 2025/10319
Proposed Development at 103 Reid St & 18b Jonesfield Corner, Ardeer
Northwest Alliance (NWA) submission regarding the documentation for the Geelong Strategic Assessment (NWGGA)
Proposed development of 62 Collins Rd & 170 Boundary Rd, Dromana

DEC 2025

Greater Avalon Employment Precinct public consultation
Derrimut Logistics Hub Industrial Development
Draft National Recovery Plan for Southern Brown Bandicoot (Eastern)
Draft National Recovery Plan for Greater Gliders
Draft Master Plan for Werribee Township Regional Park
Western Port Ramsar Site Management Plan



JAN 2026

Draft National Recovery Plan for Grassy Eucalypt Woodland

MARCH 2026

Project Diamond Industrial Development
2024 Great Victorian Fish Count
Draft Terms of Reference for Strategic Assessment of FFMV
Craigieburn Industrial Development, EPBC 2021/9093

APRIL 2026

Melbourne's Grassland Bullant: Initial report into the ecology and habitat of Myrmecia nobilis
Birregurra-Ombersley Poultry Farm

MAY 2026

City of Greater Geelong Draft Plan for Nature
Inquiry into the 2026 summer fires across Victoria
Industrial Facility, 276 Rex Rd, Campbellfield EPBC 2021/8934

Our people

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

Council

Marilyne Crestias (President)^{1,2,3,4}
Doug Robinson (Vice President & acting Secretary)¹
Judy Chen (Treasurer)^{1,2}
Jan Hendrik Brueggemeier
Lara Bickford^{1,6} Chris Hibburt^{1,3}
Dianne Marshall Jeannette McGill^{1,3}
Bruce McGregor^{2,4} Gerard McPhee⁵
Andrew Norman⁵ Charlie Pascoe⁵
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 supporters 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

Community Engagement

Dr Nicole Mertens, Community Learning & Engagement Manager
Caitlin Griffith, Community Learning & Engagement Manager (to Oct 2025)
Dr Sera Blair, NatureWatch Coordinator
Kade Mills, ReefWatch Coordinator
Dr Maddy Willcock, Nature Stewards Coordinator

Andrew Keast, Nature Stewards Program Development
Michael Loo, NextGen Nature Program Coordinator (to Oct 2025)

Fundraising

Belinda Wogan, Fundraising Manager
Jane Crouch, Fundraising Manager (to April 2026)
Kristian Lang, Philanthropy Executive
Matt Small, Fundraising Executive

Communications

Jacob L'Huillier Lunt, Digital Engagement & Communications Manager/Digital Strategist
Jessie Borrelle, Digital Engagement & Communications Manager (to Oct 2025)
Paul Clifton, Publications Coordinator
Meghan Lindsay, Communications Advisor

Operations

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

Thank you!

OUR WORK PROTECTING NATURE IS ONLY POSSIBLE THANKS TO THE GENEROSITY OF OUR WONDERFUL DONORS AND SUPPORTERS

Ann Crawford	Jill Chalker Endowment
The Arnold Foundation	Kate Kantor
The Caroline Durré Fund, sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation	Koshland Innovation Fund, sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation
Christopher Loo	Loftus-Hills Fund, a charitable fund account of the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
D & E Eatts Trust	Louise Stinson Fund
Dan Mathews	Malcolm Shore
Dominic & Anne Gallace Family Fund, sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation	Margaret Henderson
Dr Alison Street AO & Mr John Barkla	Melbourne Water
Dr William N. Holsworth	Melliodora Fund, sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation
EC Curwen-Walker Charitable Trust	Meta Lazarus Fund, sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation
Equity Trustees Limited	Microsoft and the Society for Ecological Restoration
Gras Foundation Trust	Perpetual Philanthropic Services
Harris Environment Fund	
Isaacson Davis Foundation	

We thank the generosity of those who have given a gift in their Will.

Estate of Margaret Badminton
Estate of Lesley Helena Bennett
Estate of Mary Patricia Cooper
Estate of Frances Mary Hortle
Estate of Lillian Gladys Durran
Estate of Patricia de Moulpied
Estate of Patricia Porigneaux
Estate of Elizabeth Sarraillhe

Reichstein Foundation
Rendere Trust
Ros & Elsie Garnet Memorial Fund, sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation
S.T.A.F. – Allan Sisson and Vera McMahon
Society for Ecological Restoration
Vanessa Craigie
Victorian Government
And several generous supporters who chose to remain anonymous.

Stevens, Son Thai, Mick Thomas, Jodi Vermaas, Catherine Watson, John Willems, Ann Williamson

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

Penelope Aitken, Josh Bowell, Laurie Boyle, Erin Brereton, Flic Brooke, Justin Cally, Jane Canaway, Isaac Carne, Roger Chao, Nick Clemann, Judith Deland, John Delp Pratt, Josh Dykgraaf, Friends of Organ Pipes, Friends of Wyperfeld, Yasmine Kelsall, Maggie Logan, Oliver Ledger, Margaret MacDonald, Terri MacDonald, Keith McLean, Carmel McPhee, Lisette Mill, John Miller, Erin Nash, Gayle Osborne, Richard Perry, Geoff Pharo, Wendy Radford, Reiner Richter, Leo Roberts, Mark Rodrigue, Sandy Scheltema, Harriet Searcy, Deirdre Slattery, Cam Suttie, David Tatnall, Marg Thomas, Danny White and many other photographers & writers

ReefWatch

Rosemary John, Rhiannwyn Lloyd-George, Ben Travaglini, Tilly Webb

Student interns

Jasmine Andrews, Kelly Gilbert, Rosemary John, Mia Klein, Taya Lacey, Oliver Ledger, Rhiannwyn Lloyd-George, Jorja Stevens, Ben Travaglini, Tilly Webb

Thank you to our partners

We're honoured to collaborate with many other groups to advocate for nature and deliver our community engagement programs. A huge thanks to all our project partners in 2025-26.

Aboriginal Tours & Education Melbourne ANGAIR Aquability Aquatic Adventures Arthur Rylah Institute Australian Association of Bush Regenerators Australian Diving Instruction Australian Plant Society Keilor Plains Ballarat CFA Ballarat Field Naturalists Club Ballarat Gardens for Wildlife Bellarine Catchment Network Bellarine Landcare & Nursery Bendigo & District Environment Council BERG Mt Martha Biodiversity Council BirdLife Ballarat BirdsOnFarms Black Snake Productions Blackburn Lake Advisory Committee Brunswick Communities for nature Bunurong Land Council Cairnlea Conservation Reserves Committee of Management Cedar Woods City of Ballarat City of Brimbank City of Greater Geelong City of Hobsons Bay City of Hume City of Knox City of Melbourne City of Melton City of Merri-bek City of Monash City of Moonee Valley City of Stonnington City of Whitehorse City of Whittlesea Clarkefield & District Landcare Clarksdale Bird Sanctuary Coalition Against Duck Shooting Coastcare Community Bank Altona, Laverton & Point Cook Community Enterprise Foundation Connecting Country (Mt Alexander) Corangamite CMA	Crib Point Action Group CSIRO Daktari Surf/Dive Deakin University Dingo 2030 Network Dive La Trobe Diveline Environment Victoria Environmental Evolution Environmental Justice Australia EstuaryWatch Federation University Field Naturalists Club Victoria First Friends of Dandenong Creek French Island Community Association Friends of Beware Reef Friends of Box Ironbark Friends of Brisbane Ranges Friends of Canadian Corridor Friends of Chiltern Mount Pilot National Park Friends of Coolart Friends of Cowies Creek Friends of Damper Creek Friends of Glenfern Green Wedge Friends of Glenfern Valley Bushland Friends of Grasslands Friends of Illabarook Flora Reserve Friends of Iramoo Friends of Koolunga Reserve Friends of Merri Creek Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek Friends of Ocean Grove Flora & Fauna Reserve Friends of Old Joes Creek Friends of Royal Park Friends of Serendip Sanctuary Friends of Steele Creek Friends of Terrick Terrick National Park Friends of the Barwon Friends of the Bluff, Barwon Heads Friends of the Gully Friends of Truganina Wetlands Friends of Urban Forest Friends of Wurundjeri Walk Friends with Honey Gardens for Wildlife Knox Geelong Field Naturalists Club	Geelong Intrepid Landcare Georgie Purcell MLC Gippsland Threatened Species Action Group Glenelg-Hopkins CMA Great Forest National Park team Grow West Hobsons Bay Wetland Centre Jawbone Marine Sanctuary Group Kinglake Friends of Forests Knox Environment Society & Nursery Kooyong-Koot Alliance Landcare Regional Programs Latrobe Nursery Leigh Catchment Landcare Little Projector Company Little River Action Group Little River Landcare Living Culture Lloyd Environmental Macedon Landcare Main Creek Landcare Marine Care Ricketts Point Mark Trengrove Ecological Services Melbourne Polytechnic Melbourne Water Merri Creek Management Committee Merricks-Coolart Landcare Metro Trains Microsoft Monash University Moondani Balluk Mornington Intrepid Landcare Mornington Peninsula Landcare Mornington Peninsula Scuba Diving Club Mt Cole-Pyrenees Nature Group NatureWest Nothing Like Nature Ocean Divers OutThere Outdoor Activities Parks Victoria Phillip Island Conservation Society Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group Practical Ecology Preserve our Forest Mirboo North Queenscliff Mental Health & Wellbeing Local Rachel Payne MLC	Rewilding Stonnington Riddells Creek Landcare RMIT University Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria Save Our Seat Save The Dandenongs League Save Western Port Woodlands Save Westernport Scuba Culture Shire of Mornington Peninsula Society for Ecological Restoration South Gippsland Conservation Society Southern Brown Bandicoot Recovery Group Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora & Fauna Association Sunset Sanctuary The Wilderness Society Tree Wishes Consultancy Trust for Nature University of Melbourne Upper Mount Emu Landcare Network Urban Guerrillas Victoria University Victorian Environmental Friends Network Victorian Forest Alliance Victorian Sub Aqua Group Victorian Volcanic Plains Conservation Management Network Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation Warburton Environment Waterwatch Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative Wattle Flat Landcare Wellsford Friends of the Forest Werribee River Association Western Port & Peninsula Protection Council Western Port Biosphere Wildlife Experiences Wildlife of the Central Highlands Wombat Forestcare Woorndoo-Chatsworth Landcare Group Wortook Foundation Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation Zoos Victoria ...and anyone we've missed!
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Financial report

Abridged Audited Financial Report for the year ended 30 June 2026.

Statement by Members of the Council

The Council 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 2026 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 Council.

Marilyn Crestias (President) and Judy Chen (Treasurer) dated 17 September 2026.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2026			STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2026		
	2026	2025		2026	2025
	\$	\$		\$	\$
REVENUE			ASSETS		
Appeals and donations	1,436,402	1,369,142	Current		
Bequests	473,725	88,431	Cash and cash equivalents	1,417,021	1,759,951
Membership fees	70,546	77,049	Trade and other receivables	109,546	133,069
Grants and sponsorship	487,138	181,600	Other financial assets	584,939	503,017
Publication sales, events, outdoor activities	165,600	178,855	Other assets	28,580	9,826
Interest and investment distributions	80,431	101,385	Total current assets	2,140,086	2,405,863
Total income	2,713,842	1,996,462			
			Non-current		
EXPENDITURE			Property, Plant & Equipment	9,265	22,010
Employment expenses	2,112,989	2,295,647	Intangible Assets	399,290	174,036
Campaigns, projects, activities and education	398,506	294,285	Right-of-use-assets	172,752	225,907
Office and administration	187,080	171,372	Total non-current assets	581,307	421,953
Printing/publications/web	117,236	136,649	TOTAL ASSETS	2,721,393	2,827,816
Occupancy and insurance	45,388	44,323			
Depreciation and amortisation expense	102,200	71,689	LIABILITIES		
Other expenses	12,782	15,735	Current liabilities	1,123,911	970,753
Total expenses	2,976,181	3,029,700	Non-current liabilities	210,286	242,265
			TOTAL LIABILITIES	1,334,197	1,213,018
CURRENT YEAR SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FROM OPERATIONS	(262,339)	(1,033,238)			
			NET ASSETS	1,387,196	1,614,798
Net gain/(loss) on revaluation of other financial assets	34,737	(30,985)	Funded by:		
Realised gain on disposal of other financial assets	0	0	Accumulated surplus/(deficit)	62,049	77,388
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	(227,602)	(1,064,223)	Reserves*	1,325,147	1,537,410
			TOTAL EQUITY	1,387,196	1,614,798

*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, 2025-26

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President: Marilyn Crestias
Executive Director: Matt Ruchel



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