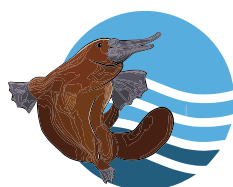


Werribee River Association

40 YEARS OF WATERWAYS PROTECTION

1981 - 2021



WERRIBEE
RIVER ASSOCIATION

Celebrating **40** *Years* 1981-2021

LET'S WALK TOGETHER

We gratefully acknowledge all the people who have contributed to the betterment of the much-loved Werribee River, or Wirribi Yaluk as the Wadawurrung people named it, and those who have shared in the journey from the creation of the Werribee River Association to what it has become today.

We acknowledge that many of the people and organisations in this story are a part of a larger story, part of a larger movement and cause, which is to protect all land and waterways, and ensure that future generations can enjoy the natural resources available to all of us.

This story is described within the broader environmental and social movements, technology changes, government interventions, population growth and climate change. This story will be familiar to other environmental groups and organisations, and we acknowledge that we are not alone in advocating for a safe climate, reconciliation, and truth-telling.

The Werribee River Association respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of what is now known as the Werribee catchment; their rich culture and deep spiritual connection to the land, animals, plants, rivers, and sea.

We acknowledge that many places within the Werribee River catchment were where the Aboriginal people lived and prospered, but are also the sites where Aboriginal society was decimated by disease, dispossession, and killings.

We strive to work and learn together, to restore what has been lost and to heal the pain of this traumatic legacy.

In the spirit of reconciliation, we invite you to reflect, respect and reimagine.

Let's walk together for connecting and protecting our waterways and country.

Lisa Field | Community & Business Development Manager
Werribee River Association
2021

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A voice for the river

2021 is the 40th year that the Werribee River Association has been an active voice for the health of the Werribee River and its catchment waterways.

It all began in 1981 with a group of vocal community members speaking up and taking action. Their legacy remains today.

In 2021, the organisation has become a professional environmental agency, with a small team of part-time staff, working with hundreds of community volunteers, across multiple programs, and in partnership with dozens of stakeholders. The organisation has reached an exciting growth stage.

Working with a board of eight members, the organisation is guided by strategic priorities, a business plan and has its sights on even bigger things, such as a new environmental hub for Melbourne's West.

So, who are we? And how did we get here?

We'll return to that later, but first, a little bit about our landscape.

The Werribee Catchment



The Werribee River catchment is part of the Port Phillip Bay catchment, and covers an area of 1424 square kilometres.

The catchment is located approximately 40km west of Melbourne. It begins in the Wombat State Forest which is important for the river's eco-system, the native fauna, flora and the river itself.

Due to colonial farming, the Wombat State Forest has been cleared in many locations. However, some restoration work has begun in parts, and there is hope for the future with the announcement of the forest becoming part of a National Park.

The Werribee River begins as a small stream in the central highlands of the Wombat State Forest, flowing southwards to Ballan. In 1918, a tunnel was built by the Water Commission, connecting the Werribee River to Pyke's Creek for diverting water at times of high flow into a storage (Pyke's Creek Reservoir), guaranteeing supply for Bacchus Marsh and Werribee Districts.

Pyke's Creek joins the Werribee River before it passes through the stunning Werribee Gorge, located upstream of Bacchus Marsh. The Lerderderg River, coming from the Blackwood Range, and having much of its water diverted to Merrimu Reservoir, joins the Werribee at Bacchus Marsh, where water is diverted to irrigation farming.

The river has many tributaries but the significant streams entering the Werribee are the Parwan Creek at Bacchus Marsh, Toolern Creek below Exford, and Davis Creek in Tarneit.

Along its journey of 110 kms in a south easterly direction, the river passes through the towns and cities of Ballan, Bacchus Marsh and Melton's southern suburbs, where the waters are held back by Exford Weir, forming the Melton Reservoir. The Werribee River then cuts its way through volcanic gorges and basalt plains until it reaches Wyndham, where it flows through the Werribee delta area, finally emptying into the north-western shores of Port Phillip Bay.

The Werribee Shire Banner dated 25 June 1975 broadcast, *"The National Trust has classified the Werribee River between Exford Bridge and Cobbledick's Ford as a landscape area essential to the heritage of Australia."* *The National Trust was concerned "that the important landscape values may be threatened by pollution from sewerage treatment plants, removal and sale of topsoil, damming of the river, river improvements and tree clearing and subdivision."*



The lower catchment landscape below the highlands does not typically have a high tree coverage, but a thicker tree canopy and understory are common features along the river.

Basalt plains dominate the geology of the lower catchment, and the climate is regarded as temperate. The plains form part of the Victoria's western volcanic plains grasslands eco-system that is now highly fragmented. This area is considered one of the driest areas in Victoria south of the Great Dividing Range.

In Wyndham, the harnessing of the river for irrigation is completed by the Werribee Diversion Weir, built in 1909-10 and later enlarged, in order to divert water to Werribee South farmland.

The lower Werribee River, now much reduced in natural flows, passes between the Werribee Open Range Zoo and Werribee River Park, shaping the iconic K Road Cliffs, before meandering to Port Phillip Bay at Werribee South, alongside the market gardens opposite the Western Treatment Plant in Cocoroc.

The catchment had significant wetlands prior to European settlement but now many have been reduced in size and quality. Good examples can still be found at Balliang, Spit Wildlife Reserve, Cheetham Wetlands, RAAF Lake and others near Point Cook Coastal Park, and Truganina Swamp.

The Heathdale Glen Orden Wetlands in Werribee were once a natural low-lying area but are now much smaller and subject to edge effects from urbanisation and stormwater, nonetheless having great benefit to migratory birds such as Latham's Snipe.

From the highlands to the estuary, the Werribee River has a rich and diverse history. The Wadawurrung name for the Werribee River is Wirribi Yaluk. *Wirribi* means spine, *Yaluk* means stream, while Port Phillip Bay is *Nerm*.

Over time the Werribee River has provided a significant contribution to our enrichment, both physically and culturally.



Map courtesy of Melbourne Water 'Know your river': <https://www.melbournewater.com.au/water-data-and-education/water-facts-and-history/known-your-rivers-and-creeks/werribee-river>

CHAPTER 1

1980's Early Beginnings

Throughout the 1960s and 70s, the local newspaper, the **Werribee Shire Banner**, featured many alarming articles about the poor condition of the Werribee River. At that time, it was being used as a dumping ground in many locations. Urban drainage was directly discharged into the river, along with all sorts of chemicals and sediment. Cars in particular were dumped in many central locations around Werribee.

Indiscriminate tree cutting and an overgrowth of reeds and weeds meant the former native habitat was being overtaken, leaving fewer options for native wildlife.

There were no monitoring or control systems, and, given the town was largely built along the river, it was not a problem that could be ignored.

In September 1972, the **Banner** published a report by members of the **Werribee Jaycees**. This comprehensive report was produced over a two-year period, outlining the health of the river and its wildlife, and advocating for protection. Contributors **Leo Doolan**, **Joe Sammartino** and **Brian Smith** were alarmed at worsening water quality, the risks to wildlife, and the volume of rubbish being dumped.

Following the report, the **Werribee River Preservation Society** was formed, with the first meeting in late 1972.

That meeting was attended by over 60 people, with **Sir Vernon Christie**, speaker of the Legislative Council, as a guest speaker. He told the meeting of his connection with the **Yarra Valley Preservation Society** and made suggestions as to the proper action for the Werribee River Preservation Society to be for the whole of the river catchment, not merely the water and banks.

The **Werribee River Preservation Society** would eventually fold, but the approach advocated by the Werribee Jaycees and Sir Vernon Christie would form the initial objectives of Werribee River Association.

Another community group called the **Werribee River Conservation League** also started in the mid 1970s but this group did not last more than a couple of years, finding it difficult to mobilise sufficient interest and support for conservation work.



Growing concern for the river

The Werribee Association, the Werribee River Preservation Society, the Werribee River Conservation League and the Jaycees report were all part of a growing voice for the environment, and for the Werribee River.

Environmental concerns reported by locals during the 1970-80s included using the river as a dumping ground, infestation of weeds, poor urban planning, erosion of riverbanks, and direct drainage and sediment into the river. The Werribee River was described as often stagnant and revolting, and certainly a threat to wildlife.

It was not until 31 March 1981, when a public meeting was organised to initiate a unified voice for the care of the river and its surrounds, that the Werribee River Association – or **WRIVA** was established.



The acronym WRA was adopted in 2020, replacing the name WRiVA or WRIVA which was first used. During this book, abbreviations for the Werribee River Association will be interchanged - WRA, WRIVA, the Association, and the committee, referring to the organisational structure at that time.

Australia in drought

Australia is drought prone, with water scarcity and the impacts of reduced rainfall having significant impacts on the landscape and rivers, animals and agricultural eco-systems, populations and industries dependent on water. The impact of a drought may be felt for many years, and as a consequence, rates of anxiety and depression become elevated.

Major droughts recorded in South Eastern Australia over the past 150+ years include:

1895-1903 Federation drought
1913-15
1939-45 World War II drought
1964-68
1982-83
1997-2009 Millennium Drought
2017-19

Early water and land management system

The legacy of early water and land management systems were important factors for the initial focus of the Werribee River Association and in many cases would become ongoing themes across the decades.

Concerns were for water quality, indiscriminate tree and soil removal, over-growth of weeds, lack of habitat for wildlife, poor drainage systems, contaminants entering the river, lack of public access to river frontage and private land-owners being the default land and water managers of the river.

These concerns reflect the early land and management systems that were fragmented, and focused on water supply, irrigation and sewerage, with little regard for conservation or environmental protections.

The **Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works** was set up in 1891 to manage water supply and sewerage in Melbourne. A sewerage farm was established in Werribee using land-based treatment. Melbourne's first homes were connected to the Werribee sewerage farm in 1897.

The **Water Act 1905** was introduced to consolidate laws relating to water supply and conservation. Under this Act, the relevant authority for the Werribee River catchment was the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission. This Water Commission was to supervise the activities of local water authorities.

The **State Rivers and Water Supply Commission** was to extract water from the Werribee & Lerderderg Rivers for the irrigation farms, at Bachhus Marsh and Werribee South. Diversion weirs were used to channel water towards the farms.

Local water authorities were managed by Waterworks trusts and Local Governing Bodies. In 1978, there were 207 local water authorities in Victoria, supplying water to 3017 towns.

Local municipal councils took varying degrees of responsibility for river presentation and amenity within townships, but not beyond.

In 1940, an Act of Parliament set up the Soil Conservation Board that eventually became the Soil Conservation Authority.

In 1963 the **Australian Water Resources Council** (AWRC) was established by the Commonwealth and State Governments as a non-statutory body. The council existed into the 1980s.

In 1969 the Melbourne community formed the **Conservation Council of Victoria**, which later changed its name to **Environment Victoria**.

In 1970, the **Environment Protection Act** came into effect.

In 1971 the **Ramsar Convention** was held in Iran with an aim to end the worldwide loss of wetlands and to establish a framework by which to do this. As a signatory, Australia was obliged to maintain the ecological character of its Ramsar sites through the conservation and wise use of wetlands. Victoria has eleven sites currently listed as Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

Drought affected Werribee River upstream of Cottrell St Ford, 1940





Former Presidents reunite for the 40th year celebrations in 2021

The committee members were very keen letter writers. They campaigned, lobbied and sent investigative letters to Werribee Shire Council, the State Rivers & Water Supply Commission of Victoria, the E.P.A. , the Lands Department, Fisheries and Wildlife, the Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works, the Minister of Planning, the Minister for Conservation, Minister for Transport, National Trust of Australia, AV Jennings Industries, Melton Sewerage Authority, and the Greening Committee.

The committee were robust and ambitious and focussed on multiple campaigns to get things done. They were a small but active group who shaped the organisation for the decades to come.

The Association is formed

The Werribee River Association was formed in 1981. Its first official meeting was held on the 14 April, 1981, electing **Darryl Wells** as President, **Graeme Mein** as Vice-President, **Joan Hodge** as Secretary and **Kim Speirs** as Treasurer. The first role and objectives stated WRIVA was to act as a catalyst and co-coordinating body for the protection of the Werribee River.

The goals were:

...to act as a catalyst and co-coordinating body ...:

- 1. To maintain, improve and develop the Werribee River catchment, for the purpose of passive recreation and sport while conserving the native flora and fauna.*
- 2. To promote the wider appreciation and use of the river in accordance with the first objective by the residents of, and visitors to the region.*
- 3. To achieve a balance between the quality and quantity of water within the Werribee River catchment necessary to fulfill the above objectives and the use of the river water for irrigation purposes.*

The Association's early focus was on the river within the town boundary of Werribee as well as the wider Werribee River catchment. Their work centred on investigation, planning, education, publicity, responding to and advocating for issues of concern, of which there were many. There was a mix of skills and interests beyond the environment, including sporting and service club affiliations.

Early advocacy work

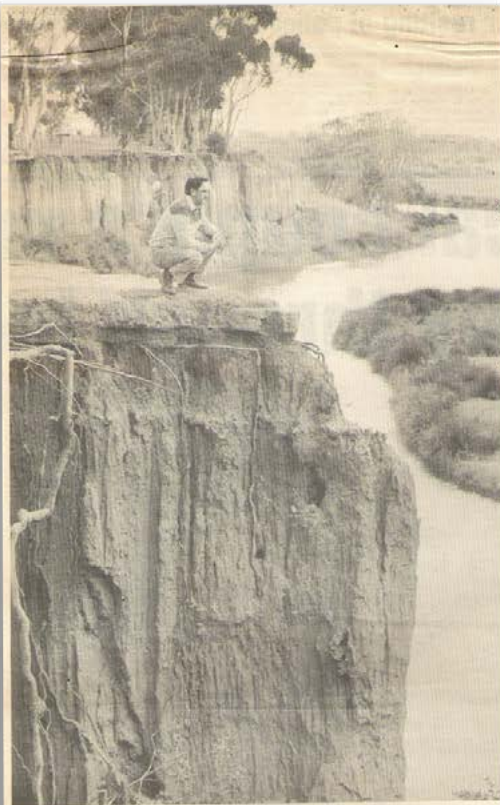
The Secretary Joan Hodge wrote to the **EPA** regarding their programs to monitor water quality and the licenses to discharge water into the Werribee River.

Letters were sent to **Melton Sewerage Works** at the first mention of concerns about sewage in the river, and for further information about their water monitoring programs.

Information was sought from the **State Rivers and Water Supply Commission** about the Werribee River basin proposal for Water Resources Management which was in development.

With soil removal, weed infestations and vandalism at **Cobbledicks Ford**, letters were sent to authorities including Werribee Shire Council and the National Trust seeking protection. Letters were followed up with on-site meetings.





Protect K Road cliffs

Darryl Wells wants a preservation order placed on the red clay cliffs at Werribee South.

He is applying, on behalf of the Werribee River Association, WRIVA — to the National Trust for a "manicure worthy of preservation" classification of the cliffs.

Mr. Wells, who is president of WRIVA, says the idea of the classification is to preserve the cliffs for future generations.

He also hopes to protect wildlife in the area around the K Road cliffs.

Docks, waters, skiffs, boats, masts and waterloos can be found readily in the section of the Werribee River adjoining the cliffs. This part of the river is also an important breeding area for trout.

The "Harmach's Hole" which lies between the Werribee Park Golf Club and the gateway to the best fishing spots for the fish around Melbourne. In recent months, however, poaching has caused problems and threatened the trout population.

The K Road cliffs are an historical link with Werribee's past also. "The Widgeon family is associated with the area," says Mr. Wells with a glint in his eyes.

Meritau Werribee's history and the diary in the possession of historical facts in Darryl Wells' mind open wide.

He has been associated with the Werribee District Historical Society for several years and is an authority when it comes to remembering dates and places.

The cliffs themselves, for instance, were used for target practice by the Chamberlain's ball, instituted a reservation for an unnamed future village at the site of secondary Werribee.

Mr. Wells, an ambulance officer and captain of the Werribee Fire Brigade, rattles off historical facts with ease.

He is not quite so at ease when it comes to the river though. He is concerned for the river's fish.

This concern is shared by WRIVA members.

The group hopes to make the public aware of the Werribee's value by promoting an interest in the river and by emphasising the community's responsibility to it.

initially, the Werribee was named the Armorel by the Hunt and Hunt expedition of 1824 and the river was used to divide the Western Port district from the Portland District.

In 1839 the Surveyor General, Dalk, drew the first map which included Werribee.

In those days they crossed the river where Shaw's field is now. The new track between Melbourne and Geelong over the river was built by James Kennel and the militia.

These tracks since 1840 when supporters using the criteria of "manicure worthy" in 1889 made

The Werribee River valley downstream of Exford had National Trust listing from the mid 1970s and yet the valley was being mined. A previous soil removal operation upstream had been shut down due to the discovery of an Aboriginal burial ground. However, these issues continued on into the 1990s, resulting in a trip to VCAT, but with limited success.

The committee also wrote to the National Trust requesting **K Road cliffs** to come under National Trust Protection.

The committee made various submissions including this one to the **State Environment Protection Policy** for the waters of the Werribee and Little River in 1981.

No provision for any of the water from the catchment area for environmental purposes; also noting that the Werribee River between Melton Reservoir and the diversion weir is essentially for irrigation purposes that would presumably have effects on the breeding and lifecycles of the local flora and fauna; the river below the diversion weir is virtually a drain (for stormwater and other approved and non-approved discharges).

EPA to collect, collate and publish data on current water quality in the township of Werribee, the estuary and river mouth areas; that criteria for minimum acceptable water quality be established for parts of the river; that specialist advice be obtained on acceptable water quality. Other possibilities including a cover on the open irrigation channels and use of reclaimed water.

Letter to the Minister for Conservation, 1981

In 1983, the **Port Phillip Authority** started to prepare management plans for the coast of Port Phillip Bay, with comments being invited.

The Association were contacted to make a submission and very quickly the committee was engaged in a number of issues.

The committee supported a wide range of issues, writing to:

- The **Lands Department** regarding weed infestations, particularly blackberries,
- To **Members of Parliament** voicing disapproval of toxic waste at Tullamarine,
- To the **Tasmanian Wilderness Society** giving support to their stand for the preservation for the Franklin River, and
- To the **Natural Resources & Environment Committee** in support of a container deposit legislation in 1983, part of the Friends of the Earth Melbourne campaign, and
- A submission to the **Western Suburbs Planning and Environment Action Plan**.

The committee sought to create portfolio committees for themselves, with the focus being on Cobbledicks Ford, Bungey's Hole, K Road Cliffs, with these areas continuing to be focal points.

The Committee worked closely with **Shire of Werribee** (now Wyndham City Council) from the outset. Letters were sent seeking information on planning schemes for land use, water quality, and flood management. There was evidence that the Association and the Shire could work well together, and that there were shared concerns.

A public meeting was organised in the Civic Centre in August 1981 with Werribee Shire Engineer, **John A Nicol**, as guest speaker.

Harvesting of water for town water supplies and agriculture would become so intensive... it is unlikely the river could ever achieve high enough water quality to be declared safe for swimming, but a higher level than experienced at present during dry period is desirable. The problem is yet to be resolved. Urban development of the river in Werribee is about 80% complete, so volume and quantity of urban run-off will not alter greatly.

Letter to the Association from Shire Engineer John A Nicol, 1981.

The committee invited a Councillor Representative to attend committee meetings. The first Councillor nominated to the committee was Cr Frank Purcell. Frank was a very suitable fit given he had been involved in a forerunner of the Association in the 1970s, the **Werribee River Conservation League**.

The Association was invited to have representatives on the Shire's **Greening Werribee Committee** and the **Bicentennial Committee**, and Vice-President **Ron Rixon** attended these. The Greening committee would start work on planning for **Presidents Park**, and the Bicentennial Committee were focused on the development of **Wyndham Park**. WRA's representation at both of these would allow their input, particularly around vandalism, loss of habitat and the lack of conservation work.



There is mention in the early minutes of the Association of other local committees, ie. a **Werribee River Management Board** and a **Werribee Mansion Management Committee**, of which the Association saw as important to further their work.

But an offer to join the **Port Phillip Conservation Council** was declined due to time limitations, and the need to remain locally focused.

The committee was informed of the plans for an extended river trail along the river right down to Port Philip Bay. This proposed **Bay Trail** still awaits development.



Advocacy snap shot from the 1980s

The early members lobbied the Werribee Shire Council on multiple issues. Concerns raised included:

The poor condition of the walking track behind Watton Street Shops

The path was unmade, weeds and rubbish were evident. The drought of 1982-83 had resulted in very poor water flows through the town. The committee got involved in rubbish removals, plantings along Comben Drive, and continued to advocate for proper pathing. Their advocacy and involvement continued for many years, particularly for an extension of this path, which is now known as the **Werribee River Trail**.

The need for a central public park

The committee advocated to Werribee Shire to acquire the disused railway land leased by E.G. Phelps that was being over-run by mini bikes. The Shire did eventually acquire this land, and obtained funding through Bicentennial grants for its initial development. In 2020, a revitalised **Wyndham Park** was re-opened providing a central attraction to Werribee.

The need for proper parking and improvements to Chirnside Park

The committee was very pleased when a car park and picnic and BBQ facilities were installed at Chirnside Park. This site has been redeveloped since and further masterplans have been created.

For controls on the storm water drains directly entering the river

The rubbish and state of these central drains, particularly at the end of Bridge Street, was a matter of urgency for the committee.

Protection of native grasses & restoration works along the Werribee River in central Werribee

The committee was successful in restricting access to the **island at Bungey's Hole** thus providing protection of the Kangaroo Grass stand.

The committee was aware of the high conservation values of this site and to the entire riverine area downstream to the Maltby Bypass, becoming actively involved in restoration works here for a number of years. The committee objected to the Shire's suggestion of removing the historic swimming pool as this would have had an affect on the water levels and ecology. The remnants of the historic swimming pool are still in place.

For the protection of Cobbledicks Ford

The committee was first to inform the Shire of the nearby soil mining and erosion of the cliffs. Also reported were acts of vandalism including damage to a significant canoe tree. The committee was actively involved in a number of submissions, hearings and appeals around soil removal that continued into the 1990's, but it was a battle lost, and soil removal continued. The organisation continues to this day to support this wonderful site of ecological significance through the **Friends of Cobbledick's Ford**.

To ban the use of mini bikes in Werribee

Due to the safety concerns and environmental damage being caused by these, the committee asked the Shire to take actions to enforce laws or ban this behaviour.

For more parks in the township

The committee joined the public outcry when **Troup Park** was redeveloped into car-parking. Troup Park had been a spacious area with garden beds and a fountain, a pleasant recreation spot and attractive entrance to the top end of town. It was an area around the original weighbridge and was named after Councillor Bill Troup. The land had suddenly and mysteriously been rezoned from 'reserve' to 'road', and was asphalted over to become a supermarket carpark for the now Woolworths supermarket.



Talks were arranged for the **Werribee Garden Club**, **Werribee Junior Council**, and the **Werribee District Historical Society**. School talks were certainly discussed as a key objective, but it is unclear how many were delivered. This would feature more in the following decades.

From 1982, the committee became involved in **Weerama**, a popular community festival in Werribee from 1978. The Association would participate in the parade, and often host activities such as Night Walks or Spotlight Walks.

In 1985 there were discussions around creating a Friends of Werribee River group, but delayed until more events were activated. Whilst the group was getting involved in monthly working bees and they had done some joint plantings and clean-ups with the **Brownies**, **Hoppers Crossing Apex Club**, **Werribee Shire**, **Lions** and **Rotary groups**, the committee membership numbers were still too low to fully activate a new Friends of group.

In 1987, the group organised a raft race from Watton Street to Bungeys Hole. The Association also organised a display in the library and later at the civic centre.

The committee did organise walks for members, within Werribee, Bacchus Marsh, and to Werribee Gorge. To gain new members these walks were advertised in the local newspapers, the Werribee Banner and Western Times.



One project that did come to fruition in the 1980s was the unveiling of the plaque in 1987 to commemorate the location of the **first bridge** across the Werribee River at Cottrell Street, above the ford. Members had spent much time researching and organising the rocks and plaque for this. This plaque was removed by vandalism in the early 2000s.

On the sideline

1982 ***International Year of the Tree***

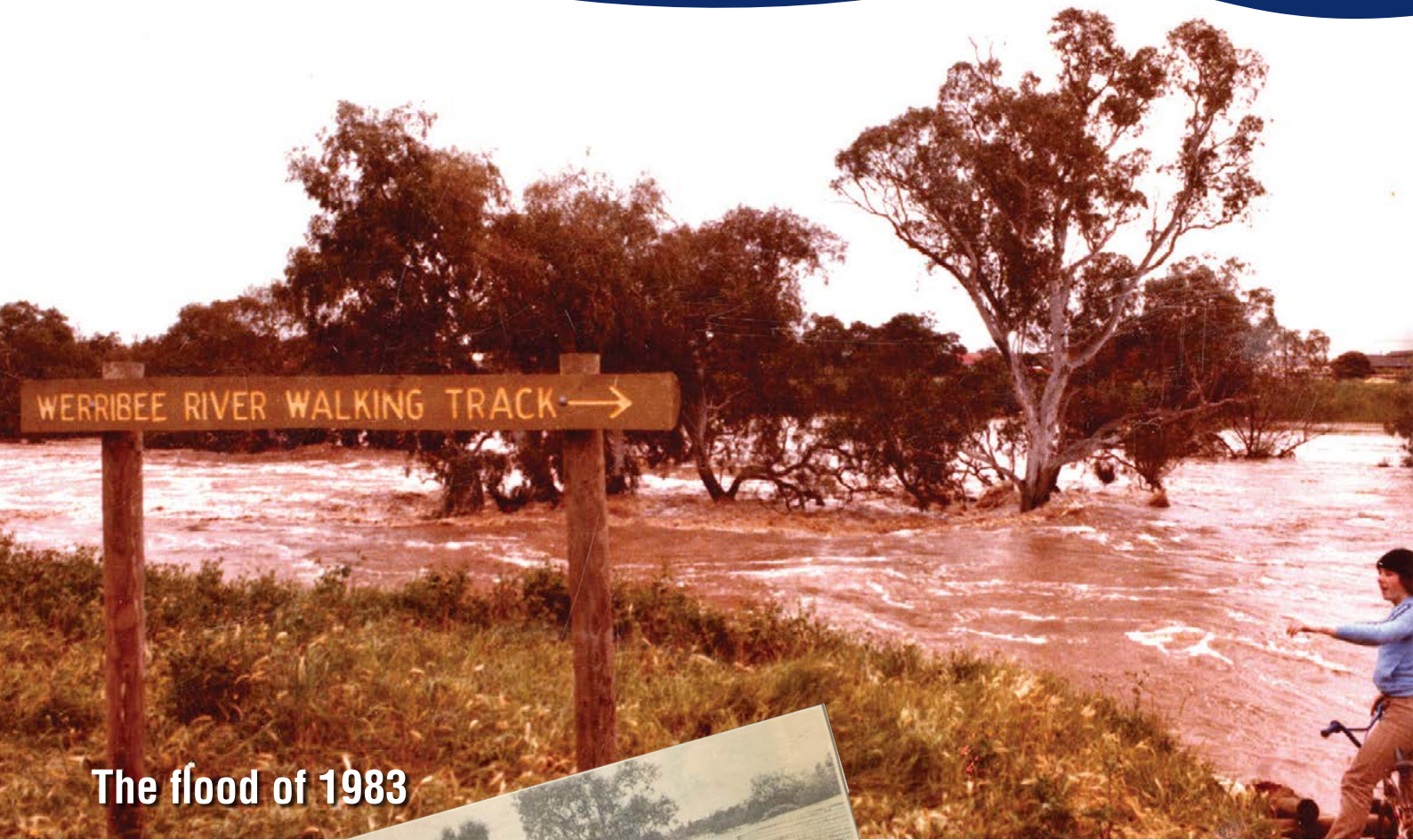
During the International Year of the Tree 1982, the United Nations Association of Australia together with the Nursery Industry Association of Australia founded an environmental organisation, namely Greening Australia, to protect, restore and conserve Australia's native vegetation.

1986 ***Landcare begins***

Landcare began in Victoria in 1986, when Joan Kirner, then Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, and Heather Mitchell, then president of the Victorian Farmers Federation joined forces to create what was then called Land Care, a community-based movement.

1987 ***Planning and Environment Act***

The Planning and Environment Act 1987 was passed by the Parliament of Victoria in 1987 and provided a framework for urban planning and the use and development of land in the State of Victoria.



The flood of 1983

In October 1983 the Werribee River flooded, causing thousands of dollars of damage to houses and roads. Many roads were covered by the floodwaters, homes were inundated, and people stranded. The emergencies services and the community rallied to clean-up and protect what they could. In a catchment known for its dryness, this certainly was an uncommon occurrence.



Of the challenges

I cannot help to feel shame of the present state of our river. I and 30,000 people in Werribee have neglected this river for too long. I feel that putting pressure on influential people in the community is not the right way to go about restoring some form of regrowth to our river system. I feel we must make a combined community effort, to make the best use of what we have.

A clean up operation will give our river a new sparkle without increasing the need to push for a better flow of water. It seems to me that all community members want more water to flow, but we already know that every gallon of water is committed. It just seems we are putting pressure on people to perform a miracle, that just won't happen."

Ron Rixon, Vice-President, Meeting Minutes, early 1980s

Of the successes

The clean up of the walking track behind Watton Street, the display in the library, the involvement of the Association by the Council in the planning and development of the river bank adjacent to the redevelopment of the new station complex stand out as our major achievements. Our submission to the E.P.A. re the draft policy for use of the river may also bear fruit in the future.

Darryl Wells, President's Report, 1982

The Committee Executive Roles 1981-1989

Year AGM	President	Vice-President	Secretary	Treasurer
1981	Darryl Wells	Graeme Mein	Joan Hodge	Kim Speirs
1982	Darryl Wells	Ron Rixon	Joan Hodge	Fiona Leach
1982	Don Hume	Ron Rixon	Joan Hodge	Fiona Leach
1984	Don Hume	Ron Rixon	Joan Hodge	
1985	Don Hume	Ron Rixon	Joan Hodge	Ron Rixon
1986	Ron Rixon		Joan Hodge	Ron Rixon
1987	Ron Rixon	Graeme Mein	Joan Hodge	Ron Rixon
1988	Ron Rixon	Peter Noble	Joan Hodge	Ron Rixon
1989	Rohan Bugg	Darryl Wells	Joan Hodge	Ron Rixon

CHAPTER 2

1990's Growth of Landcare & Environmentalism

The 1990s saw changes to the original committee and ongoing advocacy with authorities. There was a significant increase in strategic and community partnerships and many more grants and projects underway. The organisation's profile and the cause to help regenerate the Werribee River were growing.

This was a decade of integrated catchment management strategies and an emergent conservation industry. But there were still many threats to the waterway, namely over-regulation of the river, loss of habitat, no waterway manager, and a lack of funding, despite the many calls for improvements over the years.

There was evidence that the members of the committee felt that their work, both practical and strategic, was being recognised, with growing support for the protection of remnant bushland, grasslands and wetlands.

The growth of the conservation and **Landcare** movement resulted in the establishment of a growing number of Friends of Groups, some of whom became Incorporated and remain today. The Association would join, align and form Friends of groups to further the conservation work along the river, taking a shared responsibility for managing natural resources. This was very much the spirit of the waterway protection and Landcare movement.

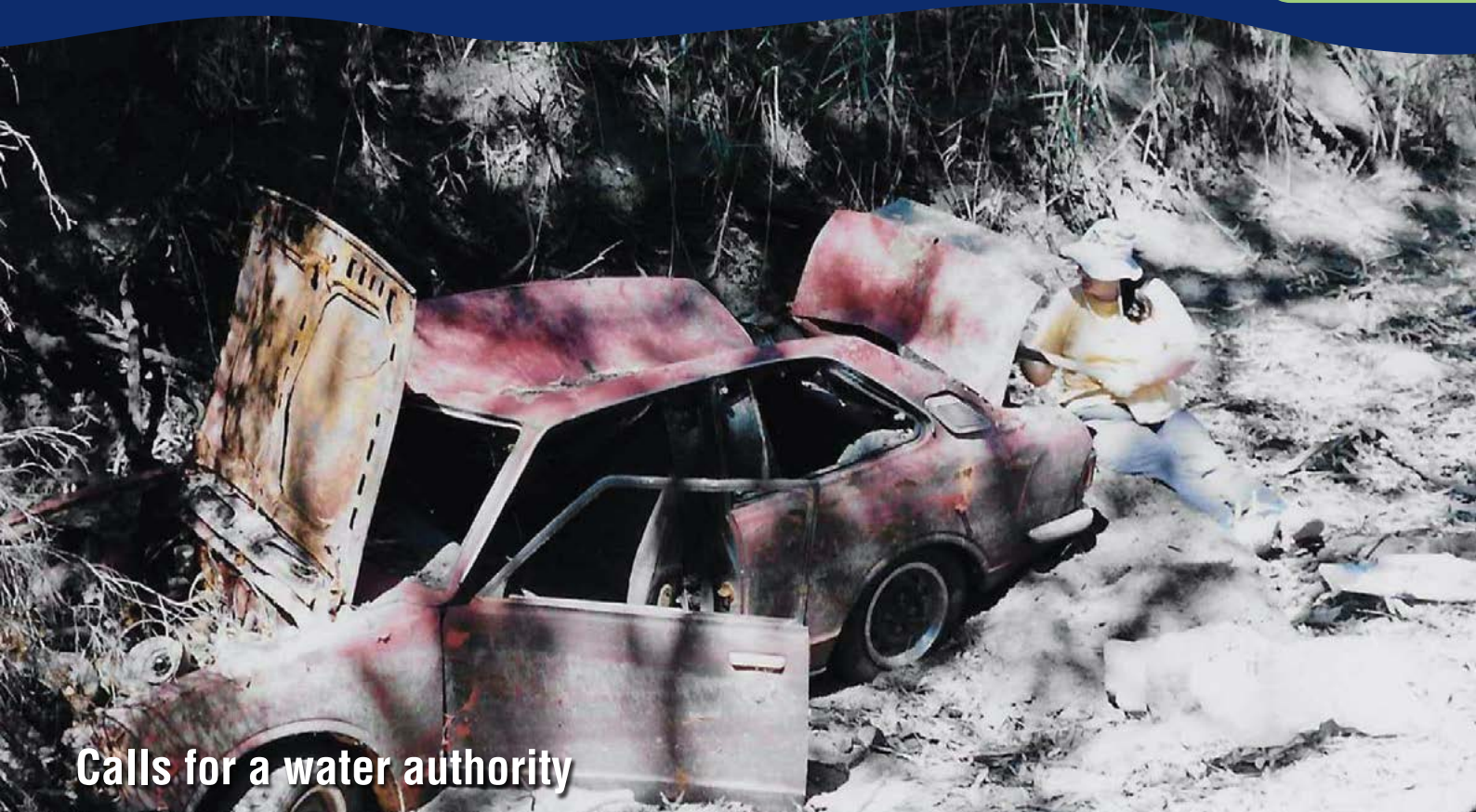
The introduction of the **world wide web** during this decade would have a significant impact on the exchange of information, with many groups and environmental agencies beginning to produce their own **newsletter**. WRA would follow suit later in the decade.

The committee continued to seek water quality reports from the **EPA** to follow up concerns for a range of issues including discharges of effluent into the river and the rise of algal blooms. In some locations, water was still being pumped directly from the river onto gardens without a licence. Soil removal, erosion, sediment run-off and planning proposals right on the river's edge were also of concern.

Following the flooding in Werribee in 1983, the committee advocated for flood management systems, and these plans were beginning to take shape. Weeds, dumped cars and discarded supermarket trolleys in central Werribee were other matters for which the committee sought appropriate responses.

After high flows in the Werribee River following above average rainfall from 1993-96, the water in the **Diversion weir** was drained in June 1997 to allow maintenance work to proceed on the channel gates and valves in the weir wall. The low water level exposed 2 dumped cars, which required removal by the police salvage unit. The modified valve now allowed 10 megalitres of water per day to flow into the river downstream of the Diversion Weir as part of the newly **legislated environmental flow**. A win for the health of the Werribee River as it flowed downstream through the town centre and beyond.





Calls for a water authority

The committee would spend two years following and engaged in preparing the **Werribee Basin Water Quality Strategy**. They were excited by the suggestions for a single management authority.

In 1992, the **Minister for Water Resources** allocated \$12 million for an environment study on the Port Phillip Bay. This was for a four-year works program to be funded by the newly privatised **Melbourne Water Corporation**, which was formed in the same year, following the merger of **Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works** with a number of smaller urban water authorities.

The **Port Phillip Bay Environmental Study** has been described as the largest and most integrated piece of coastal marine research ever carried out in Australia, providing world class research on the functioning of the Bay.

The Committee made a submission to the **Port Phillip Catchment and Land Protection Board's** (CALP Board) draft strategy advocating strongly for a water manager and adequate funding.

Committee Member **John Forrester**, who would go on to be WRA President in 1995, became a member of the **CALP Board**. His involvement brought a broader perspective on water and management systems to the Association. The **CALP Board** was the forerunner of the **Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority**.

John Forrester also started attending a newly formed community body called the **Werribee Waterways Catchment Management Committee**. He moved on to be Chairman of the CALP Board's **Werribee Catchment Implementation Committee**, working hard on advocating for a water manager.

Other committee members also started attending workshops and joining committees with a broader focus, including **Graeme Mein** attending the **Western Waterway Management Study Steering Group**, and **Paul Harris'** involvement in the **Draft Western Plains Regional Open Space Plan**, both organised by Melbourne Water.



Aerial view K Rd, Werribee Regional River Park, Werribee South area, October 1998



Community engagement

Networking and partnerships with community groups continued during the 1990s, working alongside schools, Scouts, Brownies, CFA, U3A and church groups for clean-ups, conservation work and educational talks.

In the early 1990s, the committee under the leadership of **Paul Harris** developed its first logo featuring the platypus, and created its first pamphlet for distribution at community events and to attract new members. Later in the decade, signage was obtained for greater visibility to the community at events and working bees. Thanks to generous local sponsorship, WRivA obtained windcheaters and polo shirts sporting the logo, allowing greater awareness of WRivA members during larger community gatherings and guided walks.

From as early as 1991, committee member **Lea Harris** started work on listing the flora along the Werribee River. This work developed into a pamphlet, and later into a River Flora Book with input by committee member **Heather Noble** in 1998.

Guest speakers continued to attend the monthly meetings, including representatives from the **Victorian Archaeological Survey Dept, Werribee Zoo, Melbourne Water and Werribee Golf Course.**

Committee members organised walks, social dinners, a canoe trip at K Road cliffs, and several tours to Werribee Gorge. The Association continued to participate in the local **Weerama** festival mounting displays and trying to educate the local community about the issues and the beauty of the river.

Committee member **Heather Noble**, who acted as *Publicity Officer* from 1995, was instrumental in placing advertisements in community newsletters and papers, church, school and scout newsletters, and furthering community partnerships.



*WRA Social event
L-R Annette Monk, Kim Monk,
Kim Deneys, Dorothy &
Richard Davies, Werribee South
February 1999*

Local and emerging issues

The Association joined the local community in the protest against the **Prescribed Waste Disposal Facility** proposal for Wyndham by **CSR**. A formal submission against the proposed toxic dump was prepared by **John Forrester**, and presented to VCAT in Dec 1997.

The submission, hearings, appeals, demonstrations and support for this issue took a good deal of time and energy. The outcome was favourable - no dump was permitted in Werribee. The lead agency **Werribee Residents Against the Toxic Dump** (WRATD) wound up in the late 1990s. From WRATD came the formation of the **Western Region Environment Centre**, led by **Harry van Moorst**, who would champion environmental causes in the west for the following two decades.

A similar proposal to dump toxic soil removed from the **Westgate Tunnel Project** in Wyndham Vale in 2019-2020 would again see WRA involved in the community outcry against such measures.

The Committee supported other mutual associations and their submissions, such as the **Truganina Progress Association** who were objecting to a planning permit for a BHP methanol plant in Laverton North.

A sub-division on Farm Rd was of concern. This land was rezoned from rural to residential and the committee wrote to Council re their concerns which centred on:

- Removal of significant vegetation and habitat*
- Over development at points too close to the river*
- Effects of habitat removal*
- Inappropriate development*
- Effects on significant views and vistas*
- Future consideration of tourist needs*
- Existing regulations*

As a result of these objections, it was determined that blocks would be set back a little from the escarpment, and that no spotlights should face the river.

The committee made a submission on the **West Tarneit** Development plans for Hogans Road and the land west of Tarneit Road and east of the Werribee River. It was pleasing that parkland along the river was secured. This is adjacent to the site that is now the proposed **Werribee Regional Township Park**, to be managed by Parks Victoria.

In one example of community partnership over a period of time in the mid 1990s, WRA worked with the **Werribee 4 Wheel Drive Club** and **Wyndham Council**. The project helped to remove 18 cars from the billabongs and river itself adjoining **Presidents Park**.

In an example of confusion over who was responsible for waterway management, calls had to be made from WRA to **Melbourne Water**, **Southern Rural Water**, **Vic Police** and **Wyndham City Council**, in order to remove a dumped car.



Committee members Heather Noble, Paul & Lea Harris inspect a dumped car at Presidents Park, 1994



Grahams Wetland Reserve, 1997

Working closely with Wyndham City Council

Wyndham councillors continued to attend committee meetings with **Cr Shane Bourke, Cr Karen Roberts, Cr Heather Marcus** and **Council Officer Peter Gibbs** participating.

Wyndham Council developed its first **Werribee River Strategy** in the 1990s, covering land use, river hydrology, natural and cultural heritage sites, future housing development, mineral and extractive industries, management and maintenance. Vice-President **Ron Rixon** was the WRA representative and involved in these discussions.

The Committee members were keen advocates for public access and recreational usage around the river, with a vision for a continuous parkland to be created alongside the Werribee River, supporting both humans and wildlife. The committee were supportive of a proposed amendment of the Planning Scheme to enable public access; however, there were 50 objections to a walking track and public access along the river. The community, or nearby landowners were still not convinced of the need for a river parkland.

Committee member **Heather Noble** was the WRIVA representative on the **Presidents Park Committee** for many years, and would be instrumental in supporting Landcare work at this site. Not all plantings were successful, and WRIVA recorded that some were even ruined by the Council Depot team, not aware of native species.

Survival of plantings in **Presidents Park** were also impacted by the **Millennium Drought** that began in 1997 and continued for 12 years.

The Association provided support for a Landcare Officer Application, that was coordinated by **Stephen Comben** at Wyndham Council, and in 1996 Council employed its first **Conservation Officer**.

Additionally, **Heather Noble** was involved in the first **Wyndham Heritage Study**, and **Paul Harris** was involved on the **Northern Bridge Link Consultative Committee** that identified Shaws Road as the important river crossing point that exists today.

The committee were integral to the first Wyndham City **Quality Community Plan**, developed in 1996-97. The Werribee River was identified for its first project. **Jan Goates** chaired the formative **Quality Community Plan Taskforce** which held a public meeting to determine the priorities.

This led to the formation of the **Werribee River Recovery Inc** from a meeting of stakeholders in 1998. The Association effectively doubled up by being involved in the Werribee River Recovery Inc. that was the significant driver for Landcare and clean ups for many years.



Bicentennial footbridge mosaic entrance, Comben Dr, Werribee, 1997



Werribee River Association has representatives on many community committees – Western Treatment Plant, Presidents Park Consultative Committee, River Recovery Project, Wyndham Council Litter task group, Catchment Implementation Committee. We have also had input to the consultant, David Abbott who reported to Wyndham Council on Werribee River landscaping options in the Manorvale Parade area.

Glenyce Deneys, President Report 1999

Growth of Landcare

This decade saw some tremendous Landcare work being activated through the **Werribee River Recovery** group, a **Greening Werribee Project** led by **Wyndham Council** and work carried out by **Greening Australia Victoria**.

The committee were very supportive of affiliated programs and initiatives, such as the **Landcare & Environment Action Program (LEAP) schemes** that also made significant progress to beautify central Werribee.

The **Dept of Conservation and Natural Resources** cleared boxthorn from Doolan Street area in 1993 and Council Works Depot crew volunteered to clean up the river banks between Cottrell Street Ford and the Rail bridge in 1994. The committee were very encouraged with this work-there seemed to be a growing impetus to benefit the riverine environment.

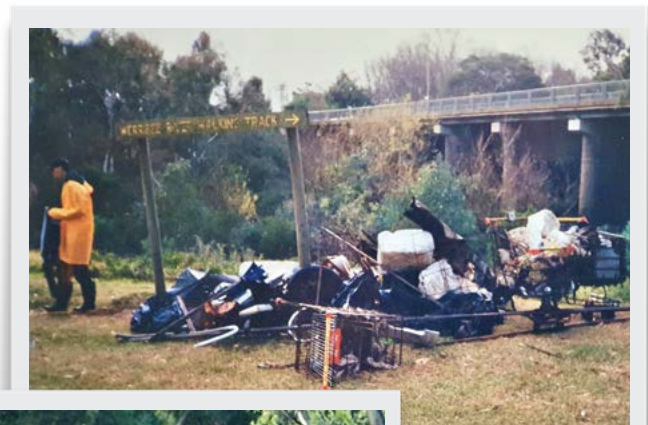
In 1998-99 following the large scape works by the Werribee River Recovery group in removing willows and introduced species in central Werribee, there was a degree of soil disturbance and turbidity in the river.

At all stages of **Werribee River Recovery's** work, WRA committee members **Glenyce** and **Kim Deneys** and **Kim Monk**, in particular, participated alongside around 12 other service clubs and local groups with support from the local council. Along with the work of **Greening Australia Victoria** the riverine environment of central Werribee downstream of the rail bridge was transformed. WRA partnered in the working bees, and brought in other community partners, like service clubs, Brownies and Scouts.

Werribee River Recovery folded in 2003 after five years of dedicated work, donating their wind-up funds to WRA. The legacy can be seen in the wonderful plantings along the Werribee River Trail in central Werribee, and the ongoing pride in the worth of the Werribee River to the Wyndham community.



Weed removal Ash & Willows, Werribee City Centre, 1995



Lower Werribee River working bee



Growth of grants & projects

A grant was obtained by the Committee in 1993 (Wyndham Council – Open Space 2000 grant) to construct a **canoe launching facility at Riverbend Historical Park**. The purpose of this first launching facility was to limit the degradation of the bank at this popular spot, and to enable on-water access to the river. A working bee conducted by WRIVA members cleared boxthorn and blackberry from the surrounds of the facility, however a flood a few months later caused damage to the area.

In 1997-98, in partnership with the **City of Wyndham** and other agencies, the Association was the active community signatory for the first **Waterwatch Coordinator, Paul Puhar**, for the Werribee River. This newly created position was based in Bacchus Marsh, and provided research and educational support for schools. The Association was provided with updates on the progress of the role and water quality findings. WRA member **Adrian Cloonan** began to conduct water sampling in Werribee as part of the **Waterwatch** program.

In partnership with the City of Wyndham, the Committee was the community signatory to the first application for a **Coast Care** grant for **Graham's Land**, a fifty-acre area located on the north bank of the river nearing the mouth of the Werribee River. This first grant of \$10,000 allowed preliminary planning and some restoration works which began in 1998.

Waterwatch members Dorothy Davies, Kim Monk, Paul Puhar & Heather Noble, 1999



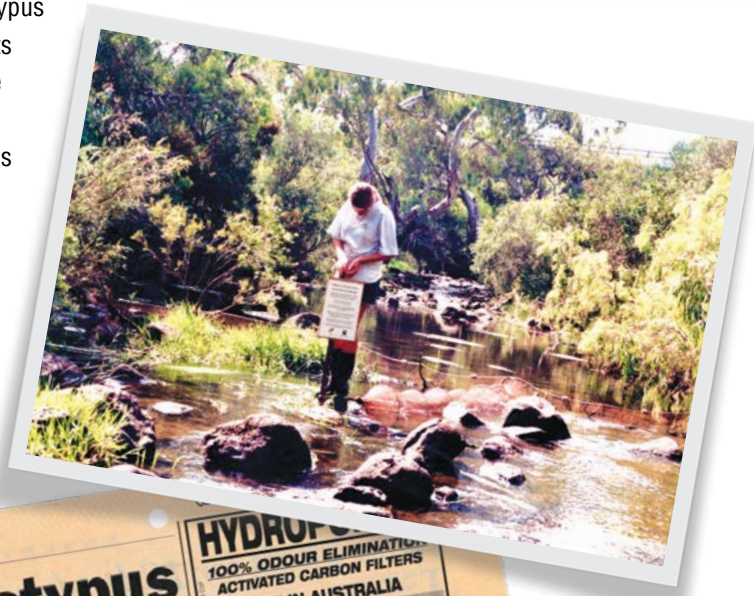
Protecting the Platypus

As early as 1987 there was mention by Committee Member **Graeme Mein** to conduct **platypus surveys**. This initiative was to come to pass in 1997-98, following a successful **grant application** to Wyndham City, by committee member, **John Forrester**.

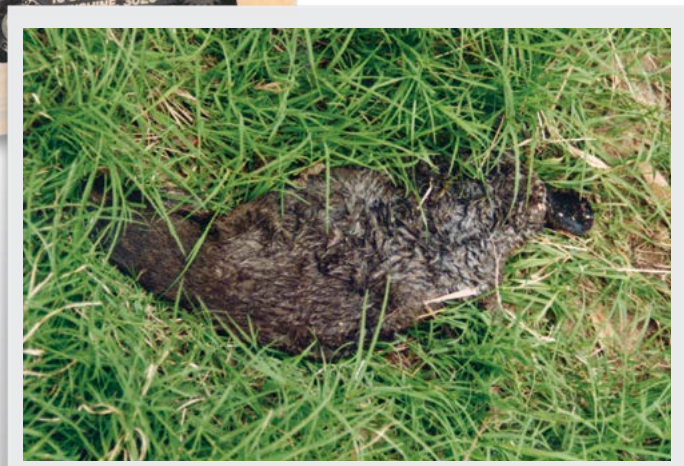
The **Australian Platypus Conservancy** was engaged to conduct a series of surveys over a four-month period, netting the Werribee River in several locations from below the Diversion Weir to the Maltby Bypass. A healthy population of 16 platypus as well as an eastern long-necked turtle, rakali and native fish were discovered, with the majority of platypus found were between Anembo Court and the Maltby Bypass.

Further funding was obtained to run a similar platypus survey in 1999-2000, however this time the results were not as pleasing. Poor water flows at the time in the Werribee River did not make the conditions ideal for conducting the survey, hence less animals were seen by the researchers from **Australian Platypus Conservancy**.

WRA was presented an inaugural **Platypus Award** from Wyndham City's **Quality Community Taskforce** for this inaugural research into the platypus population living in the Werribee River.



Werribee Banner 21 January 1998





Manorvale Primary School engaged in local planting 1994

In the 1990s, the **Friends of Werribee South** group formed, with the President **Nino Tedesco** attending the meetings of the Association to give them updates. The groups worked together on both practical and planning matters.

The Committee obtained a grant in the late 1990s to clear weeds and plant trees and shrubs near **Manorvale Parade**. They also engaged residents in a public meeting to discuss the walking path for which they were advocating.



The Association became involved in many Friends of Groups, including the formation of **Friends of Lollipop Creek**. In the 1990s Lollipop Creek was little more than an open concrete drain running through the older areas of Wyndham Vale, however newer developments upstream of Greens Rd treated the creek environs sympathetically with walking trails along the banks. The Committee assisted with restoration projects and working bees to protect areas of indigenous grassland habitat along the creek.

Wyndham Council would later expand on this work, including returning the concreted creek back to a revegetated waterway and a grasslands meadow from Greens Road downstream to Black Forest Road, offering a marvelous transformation.



The river in flood



Flood waters rear of Hungry Jack's in Watton St Werribee 1993



Flood of Cottrell St, Werribee 1995



Floods upstream of Cobbledick's Ford 1995

The Committee Executive Roles 1990-1999

Year AGM	President	Vice-President	Secretary	Treasurer
1990	Rohan Bugg	Darryl Wells	Greg Mather	Ron Rixon
1991	Rohan Bugg		Greg Mather	Ron Rixon
1992	Paul Harris	Duane Harris	Peter Noble	Ron Rixon
1993	Paul Harris	Duane Harris	Peter Noble	Peter Noble
1994	Paul Harris	Suelin Shue	John Forrester	Peter Noble
1995	John Forrester	Glenyce Deneys	Paul Harris	Peter Noble
1996	John Forrester	Glenyce Deneys		Peter Noble
1997	John Forrester	Glenyce Deneys	Peter Noble	Peter Noble
1998	Glenyce Deneys		Kate Muirhead Dorothy Davies	Kim Monk
1999	Glenyce Deneys	Heather Noble	Kate Muirhead Dorothy Davies	Kim Monk

CHAPTER 3

2000's A New ERA

Growing interest in a waterways manager

In 2002, after much consultation, Wyndham Council prepared its **Wyndham Waterways Draft Strategy**, which focussed on water quality and nutrient management. This was guided by the CALP Board's **Werribee Catchment Committee**, which folded in 2003.

In 2003-2004, WRA worked with a dozen stakeholders to create its own **Werribee River Coordination Strategy**, which aimed to put in place a coordinator for the Werribee River. This strategy, developed with significant input from **Maarten Hulzebosch** of **Werribee Zoo** and **John Forrester** from WRA, was launched in March 2004 by **Mary Gillett MP**.

Other representatives who worked toward this joint strategy were **Wyndham City Council**, **Melbourne Water**, **Parks Victoria**, **Werribee Golf Course**, the **Port Phillip and Western Port Catchment Management Authority**, **Landcare** representatives, the **Department of Sustainability** (now DELWP – Dept of Environment, Land, Water and Planning), **Werribee River Recovery Inc.**, and members of **Friends of Werribee South**.

In 2006, after the Wyndham Waterways planning scheme amendment had been passed, Wyndham Council commenced a **Wyndham Water Plan 2005-2008**. This allowed greater public access to river frontage.

Following this, another change in Werribee River groups came about. **Riverrun**, a community group which worked on Landcare issues, was renamed **Werribee Waterways Management Committee**, and continued to promote river works and priority areas. This committee met at the Wyndham Civic Centre on Tuesday 23rd November 2004, to rename itself as **Western Melbourne Catchment Network**, and then renaming **NatureWest** in 2015.

The WRA committee was encouraged by, and involved in all of these developments, all seeking a united approach to the management of Werribee River and catchment waterways.

The Committee was also following the revegetation work being progressed by **GrowWest**, targeting areas from **Werribee Gorge** to the **Brisbane Ranges**.

The committee continued to follow up on issues of concern, such as algal blooms, non-Indigenous plantings along the river, river reeds, shopping trolleys, protection of grasslands, etc. The focus was unchanged, but the workload and engagements had increased.



Delving into research

By Megan Sheehan

A GROUP of green thumbs last week dedicated a day to discovering Wyndham's leafy treasures by conducting a plant survey along the Werribee River.

The idea for the survey germinated from comments by an RMIT lecturer on ABC radio that Wyndham had more threatened species than Kakadu.

President of the Werribee River Association Alex Smart said the group then decided it was time the local species were documented and appreciated.

"The primary purpose is to survey and record significant plants, both desirable and undesirable, and then complete a report which will build on existing knowledge and provide a record for use [for a number of interested parties]."

"A secondary purpose would be to identify those plants which should have vouchered specimens submitted to the Herbarium to record their presence in Wyndham."

The survey started upstream from Cobblecreek Ford and worked downstream towards the Malby Bypass.

Representatives of Melbourne Water, Werribee Open Range Zoo, GrowWest, Wyndham Council, the Werribee River Association, the Royal Botanic Gardens and the National Herbarium of Victoria took part in the survey, which is being compiled.

Submissions and plans

In 2003, WRA provided its second submission to the **Regional Catchment Strategy** to the **Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority** (PPWCMA). The Catchment Management Authority was developing a **Native Vegetation Plan**, a subject dear to the hearts of the WRA Committee.

WRA developed submissions to the **Green and White Papers on Our Water, Our Future**, where the State government sought input regarding the future of water as a resource. WRA's submission would emphasize the need for a waterway management authority across the Werribee River catchment, with appropriate funding provided for this authority.

The early but ambitious State Government plans of the **Werribee Plains Vision** were met with interest by WRA, and resulted in a submission to the Vision by WRA in 2002.

In 2005, **Melbourne Water** was finally given responsibility for the Werribee River, and more broadly for the waterways and drainage systems in the Port Phillip and Western Port Region. Their role was to improve the health, quality, amenity and community understanding of the region's waterways, with an early focus on flood management and engineering works to maintain the stability of bed and banks. **Darren Coughlan** was appointed Maintenance Manager for the Werribee River.

WRA also submitted to the **Central Region Sustainable Water Strategy** in 2005-06, which built on the previous work on **Our Water, Our Future**, with a focus on environmental flows, bore water and aquifers, planning laws, urban expansion, erosion, degradation, and biodiversity.

In 2006, Parks Victoria was given responsibility for an 8 km stretch of river frontage on the western side of the Werribee River from the Maltby Bypass to the mouth of the river to create a regional park, now known as the **Werribee River Regional Park**, from land that was formerly part of the **Western Treatment Plant**. **Deputy Premier John Thwaites** committed \$4.4 million to complete Stage One of this new park. WRA was asked to be involved in making contributions to the masterplan.

In 2009, Melbourne Water started to develop a new **River Health Strategy**, seeking input via an on-line survey. Other external submissions made by WRA during this time were to **Melbourne 2030**.

Despite the considerable developments during this decade, and some well-developed partnerships, it was interesting to note that there were continued frustrations expressed by the committee, evidenced by this meeting note from 2007.

WRIVA has participated in about 10 plans along the river and nothing has been done.

Meeting Minutes 2007

Committee roles and focus

President **Glenyce Deneys** continued until 2003 when **Phillip Richards** stepped into the role, followed by **Alex Smart** in 2006. Councillor **Heather Marcus** attended meetings, and the committee developed specific roles for **Terry Scott** to manage membership subscriptions, **John Forrester** to do education and for **Heather Noble** to continue her role in publicity and education.

Committee members became active on a number of Wyndham City Council Masterplans for **Chirside Park, Riverbend Historical Park, Grahams Reserve, and Cobble Dick's Ford Reserve**, as well as being involved in the **Wyndham Gateway Steering Group**, considering ideas for the entrance to the City of Wyndham from the Melbourne side of the freeway.

John Forrester and **Alex Smart** attended the **Werribee River Environmental Flows Study Advisory Group** with **Melbourne Water**, whilst John continued as Chair of the **Catchment Implementation Committee** for the Catchment Management Authority. After 6 years, John stepped down in 2004.

The WRA committee would get regular updates from the **Western Treatment Plant Community Liaison Committee**, and **Werribee River Recovery Inc.** and Heather Noble continued to attend the **Presidents Park Advisory Committee** meetings.

As a sign of the times, WRA launched its **web site** in March 2000. This was updated in 2006. An ABN was acquired in 2003, and new brochures are printed thanks to a grant. Correspondence via email became the norm.



Changes to the landscape

The **walking trail** behind Watton Street shops to Bungey's Hole was extended to the Maltby Bypass, thus forming the **Werribee River Trail**. The **Federation Bridge** across the river from Comben Drive to Wyndham Park, built as part of the **Bicentennial project** in 1987-88, had upgrade works completed. Development of the **Federation Trail** from the Maltby Bypass-Werribee River crossing through to Skeleton Creek, following the line of the old outfall sewer, progressed with the official opening of the Trail occurring in 2006.

A **Rotary Club of Werribee** project as part of the **River Recovery** initiative, the **Millennium Path** beside Comben Drive, was completed. A number of Association members supported this by purchasing named pavers.

A much-needed **gross pollutant trap** was installed on the west bank of the Werribee River at **Bungey's Hole** in 2003. This captured rubbish in the drains emanating from the developments on the south and west side of the Werribee township.

The **Lower Werribee Restoration project** was a significant project for the Association, running from 2002 until 2005, and vastly improving the river environs along the stretch from Synnot Street to Tesron Court, with some work going beyond to the Maltby Bypass. The project removed hundreds of tonnes of Silver Ash, Willows and weed species, and replanted bare areas. This project was funded by the **Natural Heritage Trust** and had input from Wyndham Council.

It was during this time that the Association also supported volunteers through **Conservation Volunteer Australia** (CVA).

A description of conservation work, upstream of Riverbend Historical Park, April 2005:

A huge amount of blackberry and boxthorn was removed, including general rubbish. Blackberry and boxthorn were removed up to the old boundary fence between Pante's farm and the Riverbend Historical Park. The rubbish pile was estimated at 35 metres x 1.5 metres. The residents remain enthusiastic and have asked for another date to be arranged for May/June.



Due to some inappropriate plantings at **Riverbend Historical Park**, **John Forrester** prepared a **Werribee River and Catchment Environs Revegetation Standards**, with the purpose to consider guidelines for future work in the catchment.

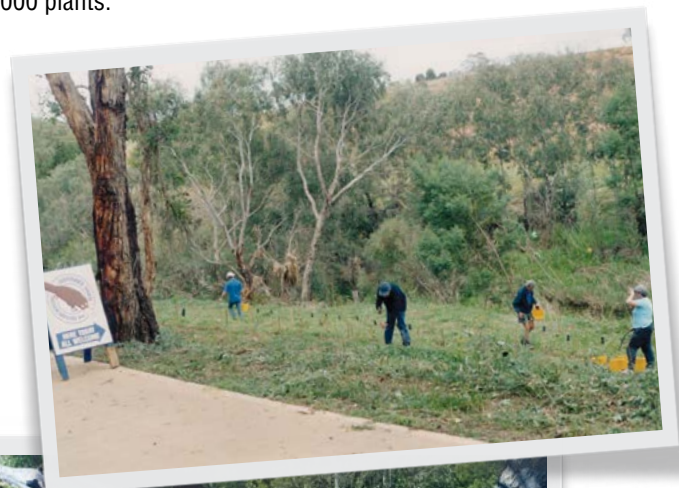
The local area was flooded in 2005, following heavy rains totalling around 140-160mm between 1-3 February, and leading into some significant clean-ups.

In 2007, Council employed a **Flora and Fauna Officer**, firstly **Colleen Miller** followed by **Justin Horne**.

Plant identification sessions conducted by committee members on railway reserves beside the Geelong to Melbourne line had recorded the critically endangered **Pimelea spinescens ssp. spinescens** at the Bulban Rd site. This find led to a joint application with **Wyndham City to Vic Track** to protect and improve grasslands. Funding was obtained by NatureWest in 2007, and was spread across sites at Werribee, Little River and Melton.

Pimelea spinescens was also found at a development site on **Lollypop Creek**, necessitating Wyndham Council to pursue a VCAT order to protect this area.

In 2009, Wyndham Council began work on the eastern side of the river between Shaws Road and the Cottrell Street ford, planting over 14,000 plants.





Friends of Groups

The **Friends of Skeleton Creek** continued restoration plantings along the Skeleton Creek with WRA joining them for the occasional working bees.

The **Friends of Werribee South** continued involvement with WRA by attending meetings, and working collaboratively. This group was particularly active in the **Coastal Strategy Taskforce** advocating for facilities for boat access, parking, toilets and a BMX track. A drain from irrigated farms was a shared concern as was the damage to the saltbush in Grahams Wetland Reserve, caused by mini and motorbike riding.

With the mention of one tiny species of **Mollusc**, found only on the Werribee South and Geelong foreshore, the Committee were interested to know if this could be researched and the facts used to protect this area about which they felt passionate.

The **Friends of Werribee South** went on to receive an Award for Excellence presented by **Sheryl Garbutt, MP for Lalor** in 2002, for their advocacy and on-ground work; however, this group wound up in 2003. WRA was asked if an amalgamation was possible, but this was never formally adopted.

WRA were supportive of the **Friends of Lollypop Creek**, who became incorporated in 2003. Unfortunately, this “Friends of” group did not prosper, mainly due to lack of ongoing interest by locals.



New car park at Presidents Park Heaths Rd, November, 2004



Friends of Werribee Sth and WRA very concerned about litter at Werribee South Beach, 2002



The WRA Committee was a signatory and collaborator for a grant with **Catchment Management Authority** and Wyndham Council for restoration works at the **Heathdale Glen Orden Wetlands**. In 2007-08, this saw the start of improvements to the 35 hectares of open space located centrally within the estate.

During this time, Wyndham Council began to organise **Community Friends Forums** and these featured for a number of years.

Following the funding from **Werribee Plains Vision, Melbourne Water** took up **Waterwatch**, and some members were trained up to conduct water quality testing along the Werribee River.





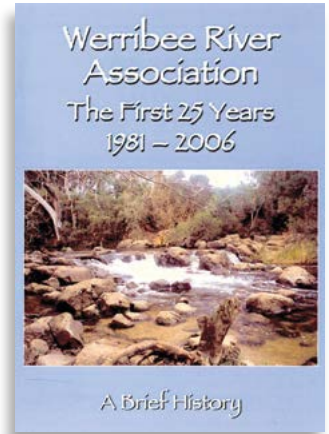
25th Anniversary

In 2006, WRA celebrated its **25th anniversary** by holding a number of special events to mark its achievements. An anniversary dinner was held on Saturday 1 July at the Werribee Bowling Club with speakers including inaugural committee members, **Darryl Wells** and **Joan Hodge**.

The inaugural Committee Members wanted to gain access to the Werribee River at a time when property titles still extended to the middle of the River... The forerunner of WRIVA, the Werribee River Conservation League had started well in

the mid 1970's but found it was ahead of its time in trying to sway public opinion as to the need for conserving the local natural environment... To the credit of the WRIVA members, they have held firm despite numerous set-backs... The future of the Werribee River Association will be assured if we maintain the standard set by those who have served the group so ably in the past.

History prepared by Heather Noble 2006



Community engagement & education

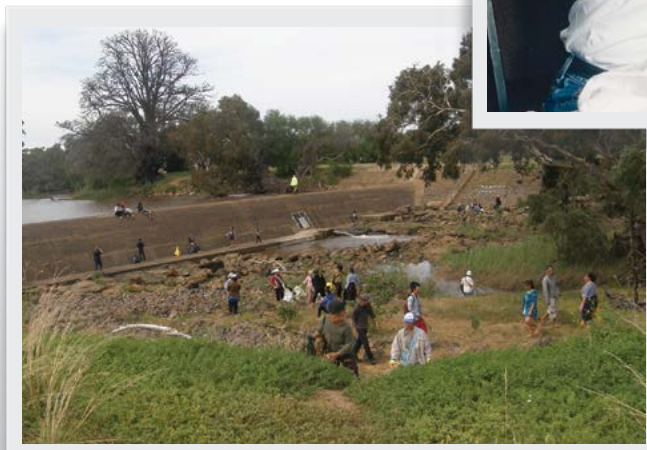
WRA were actively involved in community education, regularly speaking to school groups and leading guided walks.



Guest speakers were invited to committee meetings covering Aboriginal history, conservation, fauna and flora, and environmental flows. The committee would also organise their own educational site tours to visit grasslands, forests and to see what other groups were doing.



The committee joined the **Friends of You Yangs** and the **Arthur Rylah Institute** for **Bat Surveys** at Bungey's Hole. 50 people attended including the members of **Werribee District Anglers Club**.



Whilst the **platypus** was always a keen focus, and further surveys were carried out in 2009, the committee were also excited with an **echidna** being spotted on New Farm Road in 2003 and a **growling grass frog** in Riversdale Drive in 2008.

Support of **Clean-up Australia Day** continued during this decade; these working bees had become a regular part of WRA's annual calendar of events.



The Committee did not participate in **Weerama** for a couple of years, but they did approach the **Weerama** Festival Committee for a Sustainability theme and this was eventually agreed upon for 2006.

In 2008 they organized a bus tour as part of Weerama and were involved in judging the **Weerama Sustainable Garden Competition**.



A new species

In 2003, a very large **Blue Box** tree became the focus of committee discussions. **Phil Hawkes**, who independently carried out a lot of weed removal in the area, had brought a particular tree to the Committee's attention. This would eventually lead to the classification of a new species, the **Werribee Blue Box** *Eucalyptus baueriana* subsp. *Thalassina* in 2011.

Phil Hawkes was doing voluntary clearance of boxthorn and has uncovered a large blue box (Euc. Baueriana?) at end of Guyra Court. Is it a dugout canoe tree? Does it have some sort of registration? Does it need some protection? Heather to check details with local Koori group.

Neville Walsh, Victorian Herbarium, says it may be another species. We have been asked to supply specimens of different plant life cycle parts, GPS location and other detail for accurate DNA identification. Alex has been the initiator in this discussion.

Meeting Minutes 2003

Valuing history

WRA had always had a strong appreciation of the history of the Werribee township. Back in 1987, they organised a commemorative rock and plaque to acknowledge the first bridge crossing at Cottrell Street Ford, and in 2000 another project aligned to the town's history would unfold.

The **Manor Wall Restoration Project** was an initiative of **John Forrester** (WRA) and **Lance Potter** (Rotary Club of Wyndham), commencing with their own independent weed removal along Wattamolla Avenue in 1999-2000, near the site of former **Manor Homestead**, which burnt down in 1966.

The Manor homestead was built in 1895 by Capt. Percy Chirnside, son of Andrew and nephew of Thomas Chirnside, who had been the largest pastoralists in Wyndham, and had built the Italianate mansion at Werribee Park as their main residence.



John and Lance went on to liaise with descendants of the Chirnside Family and local residents to create a memorial to The Manor. Funding was obtained for the project to finish removal of the boxthorn, create a memorial wall, install seating, and provide landscaping and plantings.

A decade later, at a time of low river flows, John Forrester noticed some bluestone artefacts in the river below the **Manor Wall Restoration Project**. With a crane provided by **Melbourne Water**, these artefacts were removed from the river and installed around the Manor Wall memorial garden. The stone work was remnant from the entrance to the house.

Some early awards

In 2001, **John Forrester** and **Alex Smart** were both awarded **Centenary Medals**. In 2002, **John Forrester** was awarded an **Environment Award** from **Wyndham City**.

In 2007, WRA received an **Environment Award** from Wyndham City, that recognized the value of the Indigenous Plant Survey that they organised.



Changes to Victorian Legislation and related developments

The **Planning and Environment Act 1987** was enacted to establish a framework for planning the use, development and protection of land in Victoria in the present and long-term interests of all Victorians. The latest version, the **Planning and Environment Amendment Act 2021** was extended to protect sites of heritage importance.

The **Victorian Water Act 1989** was enacted to provide the framework for allocating surface water and groundwater throughout Victoria. Authorities and individuals were permitted to use water either through bulk entitlements, or licences for irrigation purposes.

The **Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994** defines the purpose of the catchment management authorities for regional and integrated catchment planning, community involvement, and weed and pest management. The catchment authorities defined in the Act in 1994 are Corangamite CMA, East Gippsland CMA, Glenelg Hopkins CMA, Goulburn Broken CMA, Mallee CMA, North Central CMA, North East CMA, Port Phillip and Western Port CMA, West Gippsland CMA, and Wimmera CMA.

The **Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999** was established to protect matters of national environmental significance on Commonwealth land and covers actions taken by the Commonwealth.

The Water (Resource Management) Act 2005 is a reform of the former Water Act 1989, to set up the environmental water reserve. For the first time, rivers and aquifers were given a legal right to a share of their own water.

The Yarra River Protection (Willip-gin Birrarung Murrong) Act 2017 recognises the connection of the traditional owners to the Yarra River and its Country. The act sets out principles for environmental protection, community access, recreational amenities, and the need for coordination between all levels of government and government agencies when designing policies and programs in relation to the Yarra River land.

Waterways of the West (WoW) is a community-led approach announced by the Victorian Government in August 2018 that works to ensure the protection of waterways in Melbourne’s west. **The WoW Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC)** follows on from the recommendations of the **Yarra River Action Plan (2017)**, which recognised the need to reconsider the planning and policy context for other urban waterways. The MAC will consider the network of waterways within the Maribyrnong and Werribee Catchments, as defined by **Melbourne Water’s Healthy Waterways Program**. This includes the Maribyrnong River, Werribee River and the Moonee Ponds Creek, their tributaries and other rivers, creeks and wetlands such as Stony Creek, Kororoit Creek and Lollypop Creek.



The Committee Executive Roles 2000-2009

Year AGM	President	Vice-President	Secretary	Treasurer
2000	Glenyce Deneys	Heather Noble	Dorothy Davies	Kim Monk
2001	Glenyce Deneys	Heather Noble		Kim Monk
2002	Glenyce Deneys	Phil Richards	John Forrester	Kim Monk
2003	Phil Richards	Glenyce Deneys	John Forrester	Kim Monk
2004	Phil Richards	Glenyce Deneys	John Forrester	Kim Monk
2005	Alex Smart	Glenyce Deneys		Kim Monk
2006	Alex Smart	Glenyce Deneys	Scott Thomson	Kim Monk
2007	Alex Smart	Glenyce Deneys	Scott Thomson	Kim Monk
2008	Alex Smart	Glenyce Deneys		Kim Monk
2009	Alex Smart	Glenyce Deneys	John Forrester	Kim Monk

Strategic developments for the committee

Alex Smart stepped down as President after many years of service, and John Forrester returned to the role. Most committee members at the start of the decade were renewed, with new WRA members getting involved on the committee.

In 2015, the committee began work on their first **WRA Strategic Plan 2015-18** and a review of their purpose and Model Rules. As a move toward professionalism, the Committee began the process of applying to be a **Registered Environmental Organisation**, creating a public fund and being able to accept tax deductible gifts. Having **Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR)** status would open up opportunities for grants from philanthropic sources.

WRA's 2015-18 Strategic Plan affirmed the need to professionalise and to have paid staff to support activities, without relying on a small number of long-term, volunteer members. The work was certainly growing and the organisation began to focus on financial planning in order to secure a place or hub of its own.



Wombat Forest Mining Site L-R Gayle Osborne (Wombat Forestcare), Harry van Moorst (WREC), John Forrester (WRA), November 2014

Riverkeeper Role

The role of a **Werribee Riverkeeper** was a concept in development from around 2008, with John Forrester investigating joining the **Waterkeeper Alliance** for a more formal use of the term Riverkeeper. One of the conditions of joining the Waterkeeper Alliance was that the WRA needed to become a professional organisation.

John Forrester attended the **Waterkeeper Conferences** in the USA for four years between 2014-2018, providing an international perspective to the group on waterways management.

John also investigated other systems of practice by waterway protectors including the Georges River **Combined Councils Committee** in Sydney.

WRA was formally included in the **Waterkeeper Alliance** in 2014, and this enabled WRA to become an official waterkeeper under this international alliance.

John Forrester assumed the role of **Werribee Riverkeeper**, working closely with the **Yarra Riverkeeper, Ian Penrose** and his successor **Andrew Kelly**, as well as **Port Phillip Baykeeper, Neil Blake**, fostering firm and lasting partnerships.

Funding from the **Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation** provided a collaborative research project for the three waterkeepers, to develop a local waterway protector network.

John was awarded the **Wyndham City Volunteer (Environment & Sustainability) Award** in 2014 for his role as **Werribee Riverkeeper**.

Riverkeepers play a vital role

I liked your editorial (*The Age*, 7/11) about the Yarra River. But why label the fact that it has a riverkeeper as "quaint"? Waterkeepers all over the world are fighting for rights to drinkable, fishable, swimmable water. Dams and reclamation works are ruining culture, livelihoods, wildlife and the environment. South American waterkeepers are fighting corporations to keep their water for the people. American keepers are fighting huge pollution concerns – coal, fracking, oil, chemicals. In parts of Asia, they have massive problems – dams, pollution and rubbish dumping.

Port Phillip Bay has big problems with plastic, plastic nurdles and all, and our own Port Phillip baykeeper was recently awarded for his work in the field. Recently a local paper described me as a "self-appointed" riverkeeper, when waterkeepers must meet various governance standards, be licensed, and are affiliated with Waterkeeper Alliance, an international, non-profit organisation led by Bobby Kennedy jr. Waterkeepers act independently and give good advice, speaking up for the community's right to access their river, just as the Yarra riverkeeper has done for 10 years. Instead of "quaint", why not "saint"?

John Forrester, Werribee riverkeeper, Werribee

WHEN YOU'RE A WATERKEEPER Every day is World Water Day



In 2015-16, **Melbourne Water** began to provide a source of funding to WRA. Initially as a contract with agreed outcomes, and later as a corporate sponsorship, these funds were retained by the organisation, until a salaried position came into effect in 2019.

John Forrester's many years of engagement and advocacy for the Werribee River is acknowledged in Melbourne Water's booklet Know Your River - Werribee River. On page 6, it includes:

Community Champion

John Forrester – Werribee Riverkeeper who has worked for many years on plans, policies and initiatives to protect and revitalise the river and catchment.

...

Werribee River Association plays an important role on behalf of the community by developing programs, strategies, and funding opportunities and we're always eager to gain new and enthusiastic members.

Following the City's extensive consultation towards a **Wyndham 2040 Vision**, Council adopted Portfolio Committees. The newly formed **Environment & Sustainability Committee** was chaired by **Cr Peter Gibbons** and membership from the Werribee River Association was well represented on this portfolio committee.

In 2015, **Cr Peter Gibbons** raised a motion, which was passed, to create a report on the Health and State of Werribee River.

Wyndham City will conduct the research to prepare a comprehensive report with identified goals for the river and its health. Reporting back in 2016 Council have written to a number of bodies asking for increased flows and water allocation to the Werribee River with Council conducting audits of gross pollutants traps to assess effectiveness. Traps are cleaned as required, based on manual inspections.



Waterkeepers L-R Andrew Kelly Yarra Riverkeeper, Neil Blake Port Phillip Baykeeper, & John Forrester, Werribee Riverkeeper, February 2016

WRA and particularly the Werribee Riverkeeper would become active with all the lead environmental and waterway partners. **A snap shot of these engagements & submissions with key partners 2010-2016 follows:**

- 2010** Werribee City Centre / Wyndham 2040 Vision Forum, Wyndham City
- 2011** Werribee River Catchment Advisory Round Table, PPWCMA
- 2011** Healthy Waterways Strategy, Melbourne Water
- 2011** Coastal Strategy – River to Skeleton Creek, Wyndham City
- 2011** Grassland Management Conference, Wyndham City
- 2011-13** Werribee River Biolink Action Plan, supported by LeadWest
- 2013** Biodiversity Policy Steering Committee, Wyndham City
- 2013** Weed Management Framework, Wyndham City
- 2014** Litter Reduction & Prevention Strategy Discussion Paper, Wyndham City
- 2014** Biodiversity Policy, Wyndham City
- 2014** Environmental Sustainability Strategy & Policy Development Committee, Wyndham City
- 2015** Werribee River Environmental Water Management Plan, Melbourne Water
- 2015** Wyndham Open Space Strategy submission, Wyndham City
- 2015** Cobbledick's Ford Management Plan, Wyndham City
- 2015** Water Action Plan 2015-20, Wyndham City
- 2015** Marine Plastics Inquiry submission - A Stream of Litter, Australian Senate
- 2015** Meeting with Chief of Staff - Minister for Environment, Victorian Government
- 2015** Public workshop about values of Werribee River, Melbourne Water
- 2016** Environment & Sustainability Strategy 2016-40 submission, Wyndham City
- 2016** Waste & Litter Strategy 2016-40 submission, Wyndham City
- 2016** Water Plan submission, DELWP
- 2016** Street Tree Strategy Community Reference Group, Wyndham City
- 2016** Draft Port Phillip Bay Environmental Management Plan workshop, WRA, Wyndham City, DELWP
- 2016** Water for Victoria submission, DELWP

A focus of the waterways and catchment remain

The Committee continued to monitor sites and issues such as the **Werribee Sewer Aqueduct bridge**, the swale at Mortimer St which had been damaged by the flood in January 2011, and the need for a **fish ladder** to support fish and eel migration up the river.



After nine years of investigation and perseverance, the **Werribee Blue Box** was scientifically described and designated *Eucalyptus baueriana* sub species *thalassina* in 2011. This is the catchment's own unique tree. The Committee acknowledged the work that former President **Alex Smart** put into getting this species recognised.

With environmental flows now being recognised and valued, the Committee was very pleased with news that **Lake Merrimu** was to provide 10% of its capacity as environmental flows for the Werribee River in 2011.



The Committee was concerned with the release of waste water by **Western Water** into the lower Werribee River, necessitating further investigation.

WRA joined the community's strong opposition to the removal of trees, mainly Sugar Gums, at **K Roads cliffs**, attending meetings and advocating for a broad long-term plan for management of this regionally important site.



With the growing calls for action on **climate change**, WRA aligned with partner agencies over concerns for **coal seam mining** in the Bacchus Marsh area, and threats to endangered species such as the **striped legless lizard** in the area.

The Committee joined in an official objection to a planned residential development located adjacent to **Riverbend Historical Park**, with the issue ultimately being taken to the **Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal**. This development was subsequently amended and downscaled, with the developers having to revise their plans.



Drainage concerns continued, and in 2015, WRA prepared a media release sent out widely to state and local government authorities - **Bulban Rd drain 'Why does this go ON?'** Melbourne Water did attend to a clean-up of some of the litter, and carried out investigations to upgrade this drain's infrastructure.



Five threats to the river were outlined in a WRA brochure in 2015:

A. Better water quality.

Major reports about the river and other catchment waterways show ongoing poor water quality.

B. More water.

Environmental flows are beneficial, but the reality of climate change calls for more flows which will provide swimmable, fishable, drinkable water for the community.

C. Smarter litter legislation.

Litter and plastic threaten platypus, fish, birds, amenity, and tourism. Voluntary clean ups cannot cope, costs are rising for all levels of government, harmful chemicals are entering the human food chain. Government, manufacturers, retailers and consumers must work together to lower this ever-growing threat.

D. Planning and setback controls.

These will ensure the community has ample physical and visual access to a natural river, vegetated waterways and wild spaces in the environment.

E. Protection.

There will be 749,000 people living in 3 towns along the River in the River's 3 municipalities by 2036. The river needs its values and qualities secured and proclaimed, to protect the river for the people for all time.

In the Annual Report for 2015, John as President reviewed the issues:

Reduced rainfall, over-regulation of the river, in stream barriers, ongoing low flows, blue-green algae, Azolla sp. coverage, lack of native fish, lack of water quality data, inefficient infrastructure, lack of community consultation, lack of care and promotion, and, the need for a linear park status for the river.



The new **Werribee River Park** in **Cocoroc** opened to the public in 2011. As WRA was monitoring the site and had been involved in infrastructure proposals, the group was invited to become a Friends of Group for the park. This arrangement was formalised in 2012.

Aside from plantings on this 260-hectare site, the organisation built a strong relationship with **Parks Victoria**. From this WRA began an involvement with Parks Victoria with regards to the **Werribee Township Regional Park**, proposed for Tarneit.

The concept of corporate sponsorships was discussed by committee members in the early 1980s, but this had not developed beyond an occasional donation. In 2012 **Holcim Australia**, who operated quarries in the local area, contacted the Werribee River Association to engage their employees in some on-ground restorative works.

The first corporate planting day with **Holcim** in partnership, along with **Birdlife Australia**, was conducted along **Cheetham Creek** in Point Cook in 2013. This site continued to be planted out for the following three years, with the specific aim to protect wetland wildlife.

During this time, plantings and pest and weed control conducted by **Wyndham City** and **Melbourne Water**, particularly around Bungey's Hole and downstream to the Maltby Bypass, were an encouragement to the committee members.

Working with others

There was a clear and strong alliance with the newly formed **Western Melbourne Catchment Network (WMCN)**, which attracted funding from Wyndham City for a Coordinator. **Colleen Miller** took on the role. This important local partner, later renamed **NatureWest**, was an initiative by WRA and the Werribee Open Range Zoo. WRA Committee member **Bruce Boddington** would go on to become the President of **NatureWest**.

Colleen acted as facilitator to Landcare and Friends of Groups across the catchment, conducting many activities and educational sessions, which complimented the work of the Association. WRA and **WMCN** held a combined AGM in 2014 at the **Eco-Living Centre**, which resulted in many more attendees than former years.

WRA also worked closely with the **Western Region Environment Centre (WREC)** and the three organisations were jointly located at the **Eco-Living Centre** in Ridge Drive, Wyndham Vale.

Restoration work continues

Many successful plantings continued during the period 2010-2016. These were usually conducted by a small number of members in partnership with church groups, secondary school students, Scouts, Guides, Venturers and like-minded organisations.

Planting sites included along Cheetham Creek with the support of students from **Carranballac College**, at **Manorvale Primary School**, along the river near Tesron Crt, Werribee, on private land in Little River, and at Werribee River Park, under the banner of **Friends of Werribee River Park**.





War on Waste

The first community led litter project in Wyndham was set up in 2012 by WRA and other partner agencies. Titled **LitterWatch – a local initiative with global outcomes**, this project would become a significant focus for WRA for the next three years.

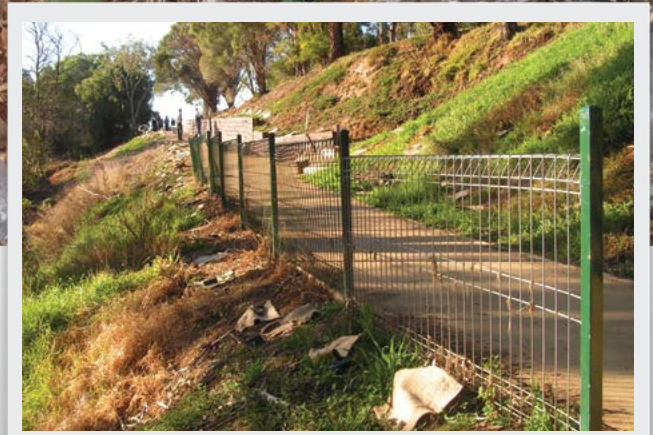
LitterWatch is a local initiative by concerned organisations and groups; plastic litter is a major threat to our environment. Plastic does not disappear. It ends up in our oceans, even if dropped in Wyndham, somewhere in metropolitan Melbourne or even inland, it will last for a long time, causing irreparable damage.

The LitterWatch project went on to be a finalist for a **Keep Australia Beautiful Victoria Award** in 2016.

In partnership with a **Deakin University** student, Lachlan Siphthorp, WRA conducted research in 2015 into the effect of litter and water quality on the Werribee River. This work culminated in a public meeting and launch of **A Stream of Litter Report**, which in turn supported the Wyndham Council in securing funds for an audit of gross pollutant (litter) traps, and subsequent maintenance and works improvements.

One of the other significant outcomes of the LitterWatch Project was the commencement of **Beach Patrol 3030**, a monthly litter clean-up group, with the support of litter champion, **Rob Bradley**. Rob, who had joined the WRA committee, attended litter workshops and underwent training, which began a liaison with some of the **lead agencies** involved in litter work, such as, **Beach Patrol Australia**, **Tangaroa Blue**, and **Boomerang Alliance**.

In 2016 Rob Bradley was awarded the **City of Wyndham's Community Volunteer Award (Environment & Sustainability)** for his work in LitterWatch and for establishing Beach Patrol 3030.



L-R John Forrester, Rob Bradley with award and certificate, and Harry van Moorst, receiving the Wyndham Environment & Sustainability Award 2016



Community engagement

Community engagement, education and clean-ups continued during this period. As an example, in 2012, two tonnes of rubbish was removed from the Wyndham community by 85 people working with **WREC, Wyndham Community Education Centre, Wyndham Interfaith Network**, and members of the general public, assisted by **Wyndham City Council**.

Communication and publicity have always been a part of the operations of the Association and with the growing digital age, the organisation obtained its own email address. The Werribee River Association continued to produce emailed newsletters, undertook another review of the website, and commenced using Facebook.

WRA participated in **National Tree Planting Day**, an initiative that commenced in 1996 and has grown into Australia's largest community tree-planting and nature care event. These events, many of which occurred in Presidents Park, involved many community partners.

Talks continued to be delivered to groups like the **Werribee Retired Persons Group, Karen Community, Gardeners of Wyndham, Werribee Women's Group**, and local **Probus** and **Rotary Clubs**. **Heather Noble** and **John Forrester** continued to provide educational sessions in schools.

Community walks and tours were held to **K Road Cliffs**, the wildflowers and grassland reserve at **Truganina Cemetery**, along **Laverton Creek**, to **Western Treatment Plant** and **Royal Botanic Gardens**, Cranbourne. The group also travelled to the Lerderderg River to see a fish ladder installed by **Southern Rural Water**, and had an involvement in **Catch a Carp Day**.

WRA members hosted community **citizen science** activities to identify and record possums, birds and frogs. The longest running piece of citizen science are the bird surveys at **Werribee River Park** undertaken by **John Forrester** from 2013-2021.

WRA also participated in community events and festivals, i.e. **Werribee Multicultural Diversity Festival, Children's Week Picnic**, and **Sustainability Expos**. WRA continued to be involved in Weerama, until 2018.



In 2015, **Heather Noble** was approached by **Wyndham City Libraries** to conduct an activity celebrating Wyndham's local history. The subsequent three-hour tour from the CBD library upstream to Davis Creek, and downstream to the estuary and return, proved to be very popular each November, running until 2019. The Covid version of this tour became a power point presentation for 2020. These tours have further enabled sessions for the **Visitor Information staff, Building Blocks** participants (a Council leadership program), and for members of the **Wyndham Interfaith Network**.

One interesting activity during this period was an **archaeological dig at the Chaffey Irrigation Pump Site 2** beside the Werribee River in Tarneit.

*This took place on Sat 16th July on a cold frosty morning. The activity proved to be informative and enjoyable. Members in attendance were able to assist with digging and discussion. **Werribee District Historical Society** to inform WRIVA of next steps.*

Meeting Minutes 2011



Platypus talks and surveys

In 2010, WRA obtained funding and appropriate approvals to organize taxidermy for a locally found, deceased platypus and to possess the resultant **platypus specimen**. The WRA platypus, mounted and displayed in a case, would have a busy time visiting schools, festivals, scout groups and community events.

In 2012, a public meeting on platypus with Geoff Williams from the **Australian Platypus Conservancy**, told of the environmental and anthropogenic disturbances, including the long-term drought experienced throughout south-eastern Australia, extraction of water for urban and agricultural use, fragmentation of populations by weirs, habitat egradation, litter, and predation.

Recent platypus numbers in the Werribee River have been low due to drought, removal of vegetation and increasing amounts of litter. WRIVA is very concerned about the future of the platypus in the Werribee River. In a netting survey in September 2012 no platypuses were caught.

WRA Newsletter 2012



The Committee Executive Roles 2010 - 2016

Year AGM	President	Vice-President	Secretary	Treasurer
2010	Alex Smart	Glenyce Deneys	John Forrester	Kim Monk
2011	John Forrester	Glenyce Deneys		Kim Monk
2012	John Forrester	Glenyce Deneys		Kim Monk
2013	John Forrester	Glenyce Deneys		Kim Monk
2014	John Forrester	Glenyce Deneys	Minutes Secretary Robyn Thomas	
2015	John Forrester	Glenyce Deneys	Secretary Terry Scott Minutes Secretary Robyn Thomas	Glenyce Deneys
2016	John Forrester		Secretary Terry Scott Minutes Secretary Bruce Boddington	Robyn Thomas

New staff and new projects

In the first 35 years of the Association, staff were composed of committee members and community volunteers. This changed in 2015 when the organisation secured funds from **Melbourne Water** for a part-time Werribee Riverkeeper.

Two part-time roles, for separate two-year projects, were also filled during this period through the **Port Phillip Bay Fund**, a Victorian State Government grant program designed to improve the health of Port Phillip Bay.

From early 2018, **Dr Teresa Mackintosh** worked as the in-house **Science Officer**, mapping pollution in the waterways of Wyndham in a project called **Bridging Troubled Waters**. This involved incursions and excursions, sampling macroinvertebrates from the Werribee River, and engaging citizen scientists to use the Epicollect App to record the condition of the river. The project report is available in full on the WRA website.

The second project, called **Litter Blitz**, was undertaken by Litter Blitz Officer, **Claudine Lagier**, and later **Liam Coombes**, who engaged schools, community groups and the general public in strategies to reduce litter at the source.

Sustained outcomes of the Litter Blitz program include the ongoing litter groups, and a close partnership with **Bacchus Marsh Platypus Alliance**, and **Jodie Valpied**, for future collaboration and project development in the upper Werribee River catchment

Committee in transition

The Committee continued to allocate roles to members. Further work on **publicity and marketing** was led by **John Marks**, resulting in new marketing collateral and resources, such as a branded marquee and kayaks, as well as hosting broad appeal events, like the Winter and Autumn Forums, conducted for several years.

Another role identified was for Coastal Protection, and **Rob Bradley** attended **Coastal Forums**, monitored and reported on sites, and continued his leadership role with **Beach Patrol 3030**. Rob joined the Werribee Riverkeeper in partnership with the **Port Phillip Bay EcoCentre** for microplastics surveys and sand profiling in Werribee South.



The WRA Staff at the AGM, L-R Liam Coombes, John Forrester, Dr Teresa Mackintosh, October 2019



Sustainable Water Strategy Meeting, Docklands, May 2021



Bridging Troubled Waters Science Officer Dr Teresa Mackintosh



In 2018, two longstanding members stepped down from office, namely **Terry Scott**, who had looked after memberships and **Robyn Thomas**, who had undertaken the duties as Treasurer for 7 years. Their contribution was recognised in the annual President Report 2018.

Strategic Plan 2019-2024

Following a series of meetings and workshops in 2018, the Association published its **Strategic Plan 2019-2024** with a long-term vision.

A healthy Werribee River and catchment waterways by 2070, giving life to a modern, sustainable and culturally rich community.

WRA Strategic Vision 2019-2024

This strategic plan identifies five focus areas of community engagement, education, organisation development, partnerships and science.

In November 2019, the Committee nominated to become a **board**, with a priority focus on governance and support for the strategic directions.

Another milestone for the board, and the organisation, was the undertaking of a **business plan** in 2021 with a clear plan and financial targets to continue to expand staffing, partnerships, programming, memberships and marketing.





Financial security

Gaining **philanthropic status** was deemed vital to the Association's security, as it facilitates access to philanthropic funding. WRA thus became a registered charity in January 2017. It also achieved tax-deductibility (DGR) status in 2019 after pursuing this for several years.

The first philanthropic funding was obtained in 2020 from the **Ross Trust** providing three years part-time funding for a Community and Business Development Manager. **Lisa Field** was appointed to this role.

In 2020-21, WRA attracted funds from **Western Water** for a **Progressing Platypus Project** and from **DELWP** for a trail project to engage culturally diverse community members into Landcare and on Country educational tours. This funding supported the organisation to employ their first **Education Manager, Charlotte Williamson** and **Regeneration Officer, Maryann Weatherill**.

This boost of funds and new staffing moved the association into a professional environmental agency.



Planting Day with Holcim at Presidents Park 2021

Strategic partnerships

WRA has worked closely with **Melbourne Water**, providing tours for its staff, collaborating in the collection of environmental DNA (eDNA) for platypus surveys, and in the campaign to ban unsafe opera net usage in Victoria, and on the development of the **Healthy Waterways Strategy**.

The first **Healthy Waterways Strategy** in 2018 helped inform the **Rivers of the West** campaign, a campaign that **Environment Justice Australia** (EJA) worked collaboratively with WRA, Friends of Steele Creek, Friends of Maribyrnong Valley, western metropolitan Councils, community members and other partners.

The **Rivers of the West** campaign followed on from the successful introduction of the **Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017**.

EJA's inspirational work on the **Rivers of the West** campaign and their involvement in the **Yarra River Action Plan**, has led to the State Government's announcement in August 2018 of the **Waterways of the West**, which was a joint Minister for Water and Minister for Planning initiative.

WRA was delighted to be funded by **DELWP** to lead the development of a student-led vision for **Waterways of the West**, involving six schools and over 50 students in 2018, and again invited to submit a proposal for an engagement and education program targeting culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

In 2021, WRA was a key stakeholder in the **Lower Werribee Waterway Amenity Action Plan**, identifying improvements for public amenities and the landscape along the Werribee River. Partner agencies involved included **Bunurong Traditional Owners, Melbourne Water, DELWP, Wyndham City, Western Melbourne Tourism, Zoos Victoria** and **Parks Victoria**.

WRA works closely with Wyndham City Council, on Portfolio Committees and on the Wyndham Refuse Disposal Facility Waste Management Community Reference Group, and has provided input for the City Forest and Habitat Strategy, Wyndham Coastal Strategy, Volunteering Strategy, Wyndham Resilience Strategy, and on draft masterplans for Wyndham Park, Chirnside Park, and Presidents Park, as well as soft engineering systems for stormwater outlets in Werribee.

A snapshot of catchment advocacy and engagements

- State Government for the future port facilities in Port Phillip Bay
- Environment Management Plan for Port Phillip Bay in 2016-2017
- Melbourne Water's refresh of its Healthy Waterways Strategy 2017
- Rivers of the West Community Taskforce 2017-2018
- Contributing to the investigation in relation to the protection of our forests for water supply by the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council 2018
- Submission to the Central Region Sustainable Water Strategy Review 2018
- Waterways of the West 2018-2020
- Waterways & Drainage Consumer Council, Melbourne Water 2019-2020
- Yarra River Strategic Plan 2020
- Submission to the Strategic Extractive Resource Areas Pilot Study 2020
- Submission to the State Government's Environment Infrastructure Inquiry 2020
- Submissions of local data & reports to Victorian Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability 2021
- Membership on the Strategic & Technical Taskforce, Victorian Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability 2021
- Waterkeepers Australia Strategic Planning Initiative 2021
- Lower Werribee Waterway Amenity Action Plan 2021



Lower Werribee Waterway Amenity Action Plan group members, May 2021

A growing voice

Local papers have always provided an opportunity for the Association's media coverage, but new sources have included interviews on various radio programs, articles in **The Age**, and feature spreads in **Victorian Landcare Magazine**. WRA's work was also included in presentations at the **Ecocity World Summit** in July 2017.

Familiar issues being voiced

"...with urbanisation of course, in the last twenty to thirty years we've had rapid amounts of stormwater, far more water going into the river than ever used to be the case, because the land used to hold the water whereas now we put it into pipes and drains and away it goes and it's in the river in an hour or less than an hour after it falls. And of course, that's taking things with it like litter of course which is the obvious, but the less obvious things like pollution from cars and detergents and dog droppings..."

**John Forrester, Werribee Riverkeeper,
ABC Radio 774 Melbourne, April 2018**

Some emergent issues

... older neighbourhoods in the area had established trees but the urban heat island effect was noticeable in newer suburbs. You don't have that tree canopy cover to be riding under or walking under. Where there are new trees ... they're still not providing shade over the walking trails. So, on a hot day, you don't have anything. You're surrounded by concrete, basically.

**Lisa Field, Chairperson, Werribee River Association,
The Age, May 2021**



Landcare and affiliations

WRA continues to build Landcare partnerships across a range of contexts:

Corporate

Working with **Holcim Australia**, WRA oversaw the placement of thousands of plants along the riparian strip at **Presidents Park**. Clean-up activities were also undertaken at Guyra Court and Prouse Place, Werribee between 2017-21.

Statutory authorities

In partnership with **Parks Victoria**, almost 8000 plants were planted and cared for at **Werribee River Park** between 2016-2021. The organisation has also conducted walks, bird surveys, and supported related initiatives to further the Park's development.

Local council

In 2017-18 Wyndham City and WRA set up the **Friends of Cobbledick's Ford**. Committee members **John Marks** and **Gary Gale** took up the lead roles to support monthly plantings, weeding and maintenance work.

Community and business

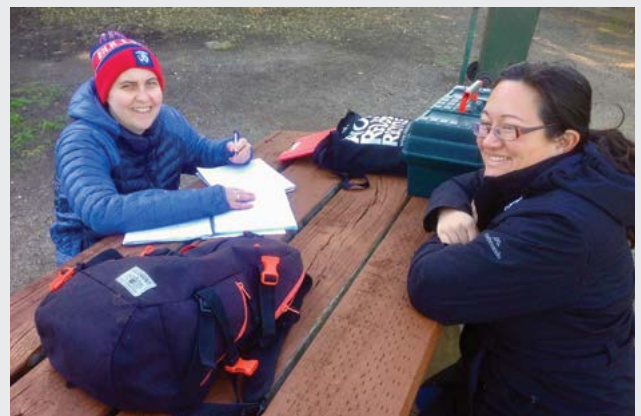
In partnership with **Carranballac College**, over 2000 plants were planted on a site along Cheetham Creek in 2017. Another 1500 plants were planted along the Werribee River near Mambourin St, Werribee in 2019, involving local residents. **Wyndham Central College**, **GenU** and **Plantmark** have also been engaged in WRA projects through the Friends of Cobbledick's Ford.

Academic partnerships

WRA partnered with **Monash University** and **Melbourne University** for a project to test the nutrient inputs to Port Phillip Bay between 2018-2019.

Membership and networks

WRA is a financial member of **Landcare Victoria Inc.** (LVI) for membership, insurance, networking and the purposes of advocacy to the state government and others. WRA submit annual reports to LVI on membership and contribute to the Victorian Landcare Program Group Health Survey and other initiatives.



WRA affiliates with the **Victorian National Parks Association** as a small group member, recognising the VNPA's great work for land and water management, native plants and animals and citizen science.

WRA is a member of the **Anti-Toxic Waste Alliance Inc.**, formed to understand the implications of illegally stored waste dumps across Melbourne and their impacts on waterways and communities.

The Werribee River Association joined with **Environment Justice Australia, Yarra Riverkeepers, Environment Victoria** and many other environmental organisations in 2021 in a joint statement, calling for consultation in the development of the new **Sustainable Water Strategy for the Central and Gippsland regions of Victoria.**

Build on and develop new strategic partnerships which assist the river – Objective Four

We want to continue to work with and further strengthen strategic partnerships with major stakeholders. Continue with the 'Pride in the Werribee River' program to attract corporate and individual membership. Continue nurturing relationships with businesses in the west of Melbourne. Develop relationships with Traditional Owner groups and the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community. Build relationships with community groups and organisations by offering support and auspicing other services. Further strengthen relationships with regional Waterkeeper groups.

WRA Strategic Plan 2019-2024

7 dead platypus

In September 2018, 7 dead **platypus** were found in an illegal net at the junction of the Davis Creek and Werribee River in Tarneit. The Werribee River Association were contacted when two girls discovered the dead platypus whilst collecting litter from their kayaks.

The matter was reported to State Government department of **Fisheries and Wildlife**, and the animals were inspected by platypus scientists from **CESAR Australia** (Platypus Spot). Investigators conducted a thorough analysis of the dead platypus and the scene. The dead platypus included 5 females and 2 males.

It is illegal to use enclosed yabby traps including opera house and folding frame nets in, on or next to Victoria's public waters.





Litter programs

WRA continues to tackle litter through direct action, advocacy and community education. The **4 clean-up groups** supported by the Association include:

Beach Patrol 3030 commenced in 2015 by **Rob Bradley** and supported by **John Forrester**; **Love Our Street 3030** commenced in 2018 by **Lisa Field** and **Nick Alderson**; **Love Our Street 3029** commenced in 2019 by **Karen Hucker** and **Ruth Mihelcic**; and, **Love Our Street 3024** commenced in 2020 by **Melissa Newcombe** and **Lisa Field**.

These groups are all coordinated by community volunteers, who host monthly clean-ups, record and enter data and raise awareness of the harmful impacts of litter. The groups also join in various campaigns, including the campaign for a container deposit scheme.

The Big Bottle is coming to Werribee

Werribee's Beach Patrol group is celebrating their third Birthday in style - with a 3m-long giant Coke bottle from the Boomerang Alliance. Together they join the chorus of thousands of Australians, calling for a state-wide container deposit scheme in Victoria – one of only two Australian states yet to commit to such a scheme. Beverage containers recycled through container deposit schemes are collected and the number of containers littered on beaches and road sides is drastically reduced.

Media Release, Boomerang Alliance 2018

After years of campaigning, a container deposit scheme is due to come into effect in Victoria in 2023.

WRA continues to lead and supports **Clean-up Australia Day** events, business clean-ups, and one-off litter events, such as **Paddle Against Plastic** in 2019. Volunteer leaders also undertake spot cleans, responding to litter incidents.

The organisation has developed many supportive partnerships through this work on litter, namely with **Wyndham City, Melbourne Water, DELWP, Beach Patrol Australia, Ocean Crusaders, Conservation Volunteers Australia, Point Cook Open Spaces, Port Phillip EcoCentre, Boomerang Alliance, Bacchus Marsh Platypus Alliance, Moorabool Shire Council, Zoos Victoria, Parks Vic**, service clubs and the business community.

WRA's work in litter reduction extends well beyond the kilos removed, and aligns with advocacy, community resilience, education and civic pride.



Communications and branding

The WRA **website** undertook another major review in 2017, including all newsletters, reports and features for membership application and renewal, as well as donations. **John Forrester** had produced over 40 newsletters across 6 years. In November 2018, the newsletter was transferred to Mailchimp due to a growing subscriber base.

Social media has proved to have a significant and positive impact on attracting volunteers, and aiding in event creation for the organisation, however some early mistakes have been improved upon. The **Facebook** page which opened in 2011, and had close to 100 LIKES after its first year, grew to over 4000 LIKES in the next 10 years.

WRA opened an **Instagram** account in 2020 and a **LinkedIn** account in 2021. **Twitter** activity began in 2014 as @werribeerivkeep.

The acronym **WRA** was adopted in 2020, replacing the acronym WRiVA, first used in 1981 by the Werribee River Association.

Membership

In the very beginnings of the Association, WRA members were only committee members and their families. In 1981, membership fees were set at \$2 for individuals and \$5 for families. Over time, the membership to the Association grew to approximately 30 in the 1990's, including many more people who had connection to the organisation, and wanted to show their support. Now with more marketing and a greater organisational profile in the community, this number is growing.

In 2021, there are 200 members subscribed to the Association and the fees are \$20 for individuals, \$30 for families and \$50 for businesses to join. These fees have been consistent for many years.



Community environmental programming

Community engagement is a key objective of WRA's strategic directions - conducting activities on land and waterways, in partnership with the community. WRA aims to support learning, and provide connection to and protection of nature.

WRA has run events as part of Wyndham City's **Green Living Series** and **Wyndham Learning Festival**, and has joined with other stakeholders for their environmental festivals and events. **Weerama** was once the significant festival for the township of Werribee, but has now discontinued.

WRA supported the **Wyndham Rotary Fun Run** for many years, and joined with **Transition Wyndham** for various events. The organisation has hosted stalls with **Wyndham Council**, **Shoestring Gardening**, at **Festival by the Bay**, and at **Manor Lakes Community Day**, as some examples.

WRA received City of Wyndham funding for a **Small Boat Festival** in Werribee South. Instead of a larger event, several smaller **On Waterway Days** have been held, thus enabling the community an opportunity to come and try kayaking at Bungey's Hole.

Living through the pandemic

The declaration of a world-wide pandemic in March 2020 has affected everyone. WRA staff and Board have adapted to meeting online and working remotely, ensuring staff and volunteers are safe, whilst learning to pivot and reposition the work, to ensure that the organisation continues to have a positive impact for the Werribee River catchment and its community.

Landcare and **educational work**, disrupted by the pandemic, has been adapted, with resilience becoming vital for both the community and the organisation.

Waterwatch water quality testing at Bungey's Hole, Werribee has experienced disruptions. A citizen science program, established in 2014, conducting monthly water quality testing, was cancelled on several occasions during periods of social restriction.

The nature **photographic competitions** organised by WRA during times of social restriction in 2020 and 2021, attracted a combined participation of over 200 people, submitting almost 1200 photographic entries.

The **Love Our Patch** project was developed by **Love Our Street 3030** Coordinator, **Lisa Field** who saw the opportunity to adapt.

All group programs for litter work and Landcare ceased, but an innovative approach of encouraging individual community members to go out and collect litter part of their daily social exercising, enabled this work to continue.

Through online meetings, a new Facebook group, leadership and support, community volunteers started to re-connect and go out each week to undertake cleans.

Article, Star Weekly, Sept 2020





Education

In 2017, WRA commissioned **Cave Mann Productions** to create a plastic awareness theatre performance which was shown to ten schools in Melbourne’s west. Also in 2017, WRA contracted in two teachers to work in three schools, and sponsored students to attend the **Teaching Kids Conference** where 150 students from five schools participated in peer led environmental education.

WRA has a long history of delivering educational sessions to schools and the community with unique programs to reconnect to the local environment and engage community environmental leadership.

In 2021 WRA began a more formal approach in actively marketing education programs including **Riverkeeper Walks** and a **Be Waterways Smart** program, covering a range of topics from wildlife science, geology, waterways management, and litter. The employment of an Education Manager has and will continue to further this work.





Awards

The organisation and key personnel within have attracted an impressive range of awards.

Behind each award is a story of dedication and service in achieving valuable work for the environment and the community. Here is a summary, some offering further insight.

WRA Committee Armando Aragon, Lisa Field, John Marks, John Forrester and his family, at Government house receiving the Victorian Premier's Volunteer Champion Award 2019

- 2019** John Forrester, Werribee Riverkeeper received a Victorian Premier's Volunteer Champion Award for Leadership
- 2019** Lisa Field, Leader of Love Our Street 3030 received the Wyndham City, Volunteer of the Year - Environment & Sustainability Award
- 2018** WRA received the Environmental Justice Australia - Rivers of the West Award

Helen and Jos van den Berg & John Forrester

John as the Werribee Riverkeeper has been advocating for the health of that river for many decades... John was one of the key figures in the Rivers of the West work, involved in the critical work of community engagement and organising, lobbying politicians, and advocating big picture ideas including planning controls focused on 'liveability', and a Biolinks corridor all the way along the Werribee River... Helen and Jos have been fierce advocates for the environment and communities of the western suburbs since the 1970s... Without Helen's organising skills, the Rivers of the West program could not have happened. Jos' vision and dedication have helped to regenerate vital green spaces in their local community... The western suburbs and Melbourne as a whole owe Helen, Jos and John a great debt of gratitude.

- 2018** WRA shared the Environment Victoria - Platypus Alliance Award
- 2017** Bruce Boddington, WRA Committee Member and active in litter work received the Wyndham City, Volunteer of the Year - Environment & Sustainability Award
- 2016** Alex Smart, WRA President, Medal of the Order of Australia in the General Division for service to conservation and the environment
- 2016** Rob Bradley, WRA Board Member and Leader of Beach Patrol 3030 received the Wyndham City, Volunteer of the Year - Environment & Sustainability Award

- 2015** John Forrester, Werribee Riverkeeper and environmental leader in the west, received the Keep Australia Beautiful Victoria Dame Phyllis Frost Award
- 2014** WRA received Environment Victoria Recognition Award for its outstanding commitment to Victoria's environment
- 2013** John Forrester as Werribee Riverkeeper received the Wyndham City, Volunteer of the Year - Environment & Sustainability Award
- 2007** WRA received the Wyndham City Environment Organisation Award
- 2002** John Forrester received the Wyndham Quality Community Plan Platypus Environment Award
- 2001** John Forrester received the Commonwealth of Australia Centenary Medal 2001 for services to the environment through Werribee River Association and as a Rotarian
- 1999** WRA received the Wyndham Quality Community Plan Platypus Environment Award



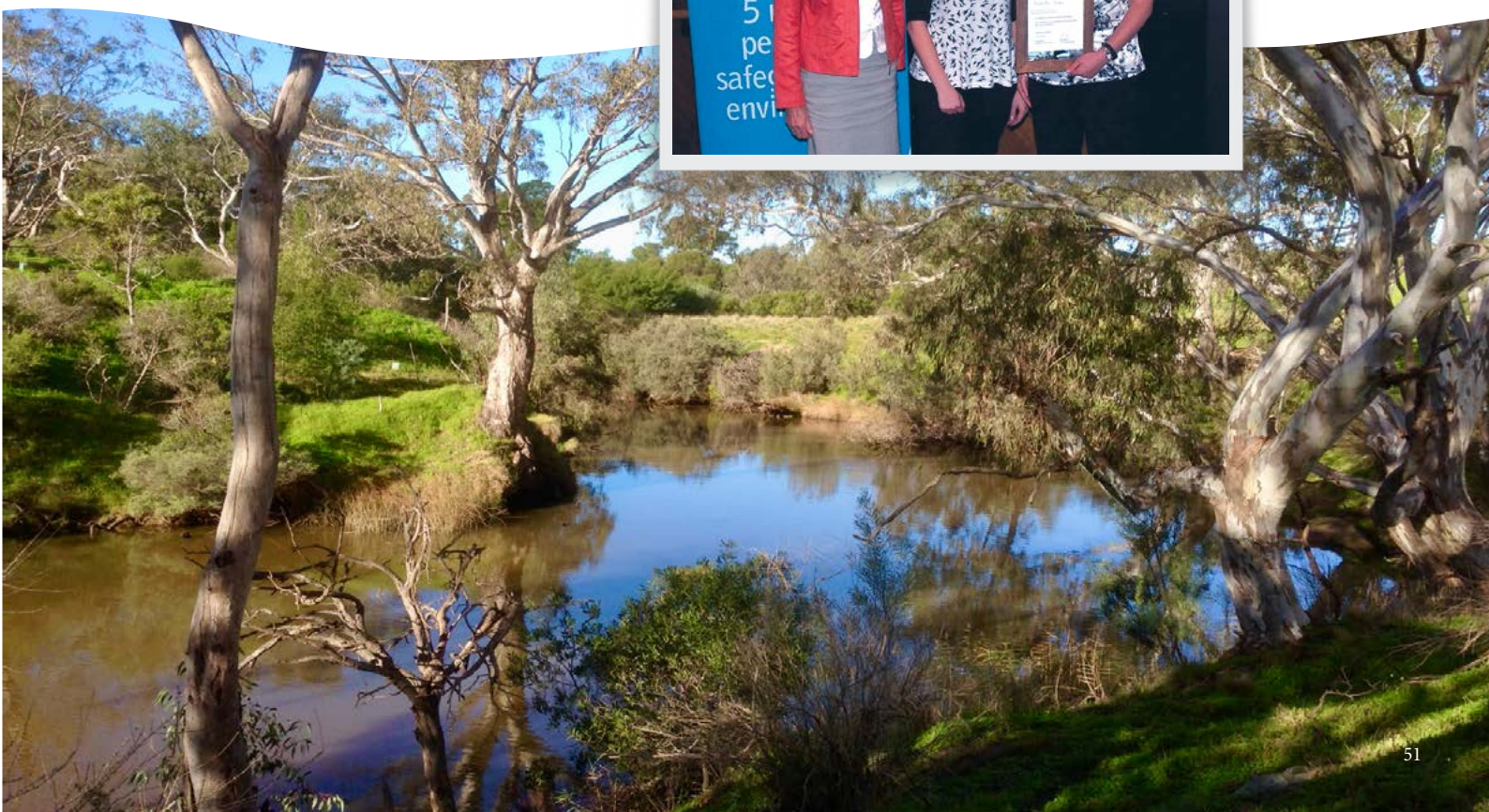
Lisa Field receiving the Wyndham City, Volunteer of the Year -Environment & Sustainability Award, 2019



Jos & Helen van den Berg (Friends of Steele Creek) & John Forrester receiving the Environmental Justice Australia - Rivers of the West Award, 2018



Heather Noble on the left and Robyn Thomas on the right receiving the Environment Victoria Recognition Award, 2014



Describing WRA's worth

WRivA has a membership and volunteer base of around 400 people, who work on water quality, revegetation, litter and sustainability as well as developing pride in the waterways of the west among old and new generations and communities.

From 2016-2018 our people worked in excess of 3000 hours, and at \$30 an hour (standard grant in-kind hour rate) have added more than \$100,000 value to the Werribee River catchment by practical hands-on activity alone. Added to that is \$500,000 of grant and sponsorship funds we have brought into the catchment over that period.

If we add on the value of our advocacy and submissions to strategies such as Port Phillip Bay Environmental Management Plan, Waterways of the West and other policy and planning initiatives, and the benefits they offer, our contribution is in excess of \$3.6 million dollars or \$1.2 million per year.

Annual Report, 2018-19

But the river is not alone, a determined group of volunteers led by WRivA is planting trees, educating our kids and adults, raising awareness and providing advocacy about climate change and environmental issues, cleaning the beaches, analysing water quality, looking for DNA, teaming up with scientists from several universities and cataloguing the wildlife. This is – without any doubts - an important time to be involved and make a difference. Thank you.

Armando Aragon, President's Report, 2019

A place of our own

The original Committee met at various locations over the years, including:

Community Centre in Synnot St, Werribee, now **Wyndham Community & Education Centre**;

Centenary Hall, in Watton St, Werribee, now the site of **Wyndham Cultural Centre**;

Milking Research Centre in Sneydes Rd, Werribee, now the **CSIRO Food Innovation Centre**;

Animal Research Institute in South Rd, Werribee, part of **CSIRO**;

Old Shire Offices, corner Duncans Rd and Watton St, Werribee, the home of the **Werribee District Historical Society** and offering space for artist exhibitions;

Eco-Living Centre, 28 Ridge Drive, Wyndham Vale, with a range of environmental and community groups using this space over the years, including **Weerama**, **Western Melbourne Catchment Network** (now NatureWest), **Western Region Environment Centre**, and **Shoestring Gardening**.

In 2018, the organisation rented a small office in Bridge Street, within the central business district of Werribee, with the aim of increasing exposure and connection to the mainstream services in Wyndham. This aligned with the Riverkeeper's membership on the **Committee for Wyndham** and in joining the **Werribee Business and Tourism Association** and Board. Financial support for this was granted by the **Waterkeeper Alliance**.



COVID-19 restrictions compelled WRA to close its office at Bridge St and a make a return to the Eco-Living Centre in Wyndham Vale.

In 2021, a business case is being developed to support the development of a new community **Enviro-Hub** which will catapult Wyndham in leading the way to a holistic approach to environmentally sustainable living practices. It is proposed that the Enviro-Hub will be the future home of the WRA, supporting education, engagement, and stewardship of the Werribee River catchment.

The Werribee River and our western waterways are under great stress, with litter, poor quality stormwater and low flows compounding difficulties for our endangered platypus, and making life less pleasant for our growing human population which depend on our waterways for much of their walking and outdoor life. People are being asked to tolerate higher impacts on their comfort, health and their environment - rainfall is decreasing, days are growing hotter, wildlife are suffering. We need a better future.

WRA Media Release, Joint statement on the Central and Gippsland Sustainable Water Strategy July 2021



The Committee & Board Executive Roles 2017 - 2021

Year AGM	President	Vice-President	Secretary	Treasurer
2017	John Forrester		Terry Scott	Robyn Thomas
2018	Armando Aragon	Kathryn Williams	Gary Gale	Jatin Shah / Nathan Williams
2019	Armando Aragon	Kathryn Williams	Gary Gale	Nathan Williams
Year AGM	Chairperson	Vice-Chairperson	Secretary	Treasurer
2020	Lisa Field	Kathryn Williams	John Forrester	Kerry Zarb
2021	Kathryn Williams	Rob Bradley	John Forrester	Nathan William

Werribee River Association

Celebrating **40** *Years* 1981-2021
LET'S WALK TOGETHER

40 YEARS OF WATERWAYS PROTECTION

1981 - 2021



PO Box 74, Werribee, Victoria 3030, Australia
E admin@werribeeriver.org.au
riverkeeper@werribeeriver.org.au
W www.werribeeriver.org.au



Together, we can connect to and protect the Werribee River and its waterways

Supported by

