

# MARINE CARE RICKETTS POINT INC

## COMMITTEE REPORT FOR 2016 – TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 21 FEBRUARY 2017

### Membership

In 2016, we had more than 175 registered members. Twenty members (individuals or families) joined the Group during 2016. Our previous very able membership officer, Kathy, who has set up our system and managed our membership list for the last few years, has resigned from the committee. Jinty has taken over this role, for which we are very grateful. She now manages the Google-groups mail system including membership inquiries, and maintaining membership records. Google-groups is used for group communication with members to provide updates or notices.

### Finance

Our long-standing Treasurer, Kim Wright, has provided separately a copy of the 2016 financial statement.

### Snorkelling Program

Our program continues to be very successful and popular.

David Langmead continued again as coordinator of the program for the summer season 2016-2017.

Thank you David for this work.

The formal snorkelling season kicked off once again in mid-November with the Great Victorian Fishcount, with Gayle leading that activity.

We have had excellent attendances, 20+ attendees at each snorkelling event. Participation is restricted to current financial members of MCRP. Unfortunately, we have had to cancel snorkelling on a number of weekends because of poor water quality (too much stormwater, which carries bacteria including e coli) or adverse wind conditions, making it too rough.

Last year we continued the program through to March, as the weather was good. Attendances supported this decision. We will continue to snorkel into March 2017 this year, weather permitting.

#### Qualified leaders

We have six qualified snorkel leaders. This gives us flexibility to cover for absences.

#### Snorkelling Information

We send out weekly emails to members advising of the snorkel location and likely conditions for the following Saturday, with links to tide, wind and other information. Updates are sent on Fridays, and, sometimes, on Saturday mornings, if conditions change.

We already provide significant general information on the website about snorkelling. However, the website is undergoing a major revamp in early 2017, and as part of that, we hope to provide even more information about snorkelling then.

## **Parks Victoria (PV)**

In about November 2016 we received the sad news that a scuba diver had died on a PV-sponsored dive. As a result, PV advised us that they are revising their policies on all PV-linked activities, including our snorkelling activities. At their request, we met with representatives of PV in about early December 2016, who explained their position and advised that they would inform us of developments, probably by mid-January 2017. We have not yet heard back from them.

At the December 2016 meeting, we were told that the PV-sponsored program of training our first aiders was on hold, pending the review. This is very disappointing as we had already received advice from PV that we had been approved by PV for funding for this training, and had provided to them the names of members to undertake the training. Again, we await further advice on this.

## **Beach Patrol**

Our 3193 Ricketts Point Beach Patrol continued to strengthen in 2016.

In the last year, we contributed over 670 volunteer hours to collect over 1055 kgs of litter. We collected over 500 bottles and cans from various areas of the sanctuary. The most common material collected is plastics – both large and small pieces and too many thousand cigarette butts.

Consistent with previous years, we are seeing a great deal of small bits and pieces of hard plastic, as well as LOTS of plastic film remnants (bits of plastic bags, wraps, etc.), straws, packets and containers for food. These can take a long time to pick up, being so small and light, but they really are such a huge problem as these smaller pieces cause such extreme havoc to birds and marine life.

We have all seen painful TV and press coverage about the damage of these plastics being caused to marine and sea life, including the green sea turtle which breeds along Australia's eastern seaboard. Many of these creatures are literally slowly and painfully starving to death because of the plastic obstructions in their guts.

Virginia has commented: 'Hopefully our work is making a difference, and the coverage continues to spread wider and wider. I personally cannot understand anyone throwing down their rubbish and cigarette butts. I have had one-on-one chats with the tradies working on the Level Crossing Removal at the end of our street, and also other tradies working on building sites in Bentleigh. They all seem so conditioned to flicking their cigarette butts in the gutter not thinking at all where it is going. I have tried to teach them that each time they do this a sea creature will die due to their carelessness.'

Attendance numbers have been strong throughout all different types of weather; rain, hail, wild winds and extreme heat.

Many people on the beach come up to ask us what we do, primarily because of our bright T-shirts, and we give out lots of our small business cards to new people. We find that many people who join Beach Patrol 3193 (which is free to join) subsequently join MCRP as a paid up member, so it's a great source of new members.

There is a tireless group of volunteers who help organise and analyse the rubbish. We then place this data on the Beach Patrol Australia website and the Ecocentre at St Kilda's website. This forms the basis

for making policy submissions to government and feeds into the larger 'Turn Off the Tap' project funded by the Victorian Government to help reduce the amount of litter entering the Bay.

Beth handed over her coordinator role, heading her last beach patrol in April 2016, and Virginia took over from June 2016. Asher Judah has kindly headed up beach patrols in January and February 2017, despite his busy schedule with a young family, as well as work, commitments. Many thanks to Fran and Peter Dedrick, Diana Whaley, Dave and Mick Morley, Patrick Cullin, David and Lynne Hall, and Peter Ruchen among others.

## **Citizen Science and MESAC**

Our Citizen Science officer, Ray Lewis, OA, has had a busy year, as usual, with both Citizen Science work and the Marine Education, Science and Community Centre (MESAC) – of which MCRP is a founding member.

Achievements include

1. We are members of the Citizen Science Association of Australia
2. We are in the process of filming an Intertidal Reef Life video for schools
3. We have played a role in the upcoming second and third books in the Urban Sanctuary series, Beaumaris Fossils and Foreshore and Sea Birds.
4. We have held one intertidal survey and have developed a new booklet to manage such, which has been tested on MCRP volunteers and will be used early in 2017 at our next such survey
5. Kim Wright has taken the lead in developing a mussel spat collection regime which has been adopted by the VNPA.
6. We have provided various student project ideas on request. The latest being a very successful mapping of all plants by abundance/ location/ and name, with images, across the sanctuary's foreshore land.
7. We have given a series of educational PDF videos at our members' meetings
8. Our committee have established a new, marine science oriented, speakers list
9. Our excellent marine photographers have provided endless images to various institutions for use in the science arena,
10. We have run an introduction to marine photography course.
11. We have made informed comment on many environmental proposals especially Marine
12. We have worked with Council on various issues such as the sandbagging of local cliffs in danger
13. We have developed a fossils interpretation regime for visitors to the area.
14. We helped Sandringham Secondary College develop a marine science unit for years 7-9.
15. We continue to take local environmental tours, that are outside the ambit of Gould League.
16. We have compiled an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage PDF.

### **MESAC**

The proposal for a physical centre at Ricketts Point to house MESAC is

- now at State Government Investigation level, (Education Department and DELWP),
- has recently been presented to Victoria's Chief Scientists, and
- has been accepted as a Bayside Council Project to be supported into the next formal feasibility and costing stage.

## **Policy action**

### **Improved Land Signage at Ricketts Point**

Bayside Council has been working on improved signage at Ricketts Point for some time. Following our written comments in October 2015, Council in about September 2016 asked us, and some other local environmental/community groups, to meet with them, Parks Victoria and Fisheries Department to discuss the proposed signage onsite. This was very useful. While there have been attempts within agencies to reduce and simplify signs, as supported by most groups and Bayside Council, Fisheries advise they have legal obligations which limits the extent to which they can contribute to this goal of reduced, simpler signage. The Bayside Council officer indicated that they would get back to us with draft revised signage, and that they hoped to have all signage changed by the end their financial year (ie June 2017). We await their draft signage.

### **Ricketts Point Water Speed Limits**

After some 12 months of discussion, led by Peter Detrick, Parks Victoria installed in December 2016 5knott limit signs on the boundary marks/ piles that make up the seaward boundary of the Sanctuary. Formal gazettal of the restricted speed limits was due to occur in December 2016. Dave Moore from Parks Vic advised that once gazettal had happened he would liaise the Water Police, Transport Safety Victoria and his Parks Victoria colleagues to monitor and enforce speed restrictions within the marine sanctuary. Well done to Peter and other marinecarers who ensured this happened, thus making the Sanctuary much safer for snorkelers and swimmers.

### **Melbourne Water 10 Year Environmental Plan**

Melbourne Water is finalising it's 10 Year Port Phillip Bay Environmental Plan, after a series of consultations which included accepting written submissions, providing a draft for further comment, holding community consultation groups, and accepting further submissions.

We provided written submissions and a number of members of MCRP attended consultations. We emphasised, including through our committee member Ken Blackman, that there needed to be much greater emphasis on measurement, assessment and evaluation of achievements against goals. Consultation has now closed, and we look forward to seeing the final Plan, which will have a huge impact on our Bay and on Ricketts Point. Many thanks to all who contributed.

### **Strengthening Parks Victoria**

Parks Victoria sought input in late 2016 from the community on ways to strengthen Parks and Parks Vic role. This included by providing comments on their website about what we would like to see done. Other people could then vote on the ideas put up there.

Many of the most popular comments on the site related to Parks Vic having more respect for, and using, volunteers more productively, as well as comments about the extent to which continuing savage State Government cuts to this portfolio over a long period of time, by both Liberal and Labor governments, have decimated basic programs which Parks Vic no longer carry out eg feral animal and weed control, paths and signage maintenance etc. It will be interesting to see what if anything comes out of this process, especially in terms of funding for the organisation, its core work, and volunteers. Many thanks to all MCRP members who contributed their views to this Parks Vic initiative.

### **Marine Pollution and Debris**

Debris and pollutants, particularly plastics, are major causes of marine creatures' deaths. We have continued to advocate in various forums for reduction of litter and pollutants in the Bay. This has included supporting representations to the State Government on bans on plastic bags from supermarkets (did you know that even in the Northern Territory major supermarkets do not provide free plastic bags?) and a 10c container recycling deposit scheme. Our important work with Beach Patrol, particularly with litter counting, helps make the case.

As part of its nation-wide Marine Debris project, Tangaroa Blue has been seeking input in how best to ensure consistent data across a range of organisations, without creating significant extra work, especially for volunteers. We have provided input to these discussions. Tangaroa Blue will follow this work up with workshops in a number of areas, to discuss ways to reduce litter at the source. Members of MCRP will attend workshops in February 2017, which are being conducted in conjunction with Bayside Council.

### **Members' eNewsletter**

Ray continues to produce our monthly newsletter, which always contains an impressive array of photographs and information on the Sanctuary. Contributions are always welcome. Many thanks to his tireless and generous work in this area.

### **Members' Speaker Meetings**

During 2016, we continued to hold 4 members' meetings per year (including the AGM) at the Beaumaris Life Saving Club with guest speakers, as well as informal get-togethers in the park. These were very well attended.

In 2017 we are increasing the number of speaker nights, to hold a meeting on the third Tuesday of each month in the warmer months, from January until May. Virginia and Ken have lined up an impressive list of speakers who will talk on marine science matters.

We will be interested in your feedback on this increased number of meetings.

### **MCRP website**

Virginia Mosk maintains the MCRP Website and Maddy Heath maintains our Facebook Page. Many thanks to them both. This has increased our reach and generated a lot of interest in the wider community. Check them out if you haven't already done so and post your observations and photos on Facebook.

For 2017 the Committee has agreed to migrate our webpage to new software, to make it easier to update and to use on mobile phones. There will also be increased information content on the web. Virginia and Beth will work on the web content.

We expect that the new site will be fully functional and up and running smoothly by the middle of the year. Please give us your feedback when you see the new site.

Beth Jensen, A/President

Virginia Mosk, Secretary

8 February 2017