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# **MARINE CARE RICKETTS POINT INC**

**ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2017**

**PRESENTED TO THE  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**20 FEBRUARY 2018**

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## Our Organisation

### Membership

In 2017, we had over 250 people on our membership database. Thirty-two new members (individuals or families) joined during 2017. This is an excellent result.

Peter Dibbs, a long-time member, kindly took over the membership officer role in 2017. Towards the end of the year, another long-time member, and snorkel leader, Amy Stace-Smith, took over this role and plans to continue in 2018. Thanks to them both for this work.

A couple of changes to the system this year has resulted in more members paying their annual dues on time.

Firstly, Peter reminded members early in 2017 that they had dues outstanding, and secondly, the Treasurer Kim Wright emailed all members in November reminding them that 2018 fees were due by 31 January 2018. These changes meant that members have paid dues promptly, and mainly through our direct deposit system, which is much easier for our Treasurer. Thank you to all those who have responded.

As well as maintaining membership records, the membership officer also manages the Google-groups mail system. Google-groups is used by the committee and specific identified people for group communication to all members to provide news, updates and notices.

### Finance

Our long-standing Treasurer, Kim Wright, has provided separately a copy of the 2017 financial statement.

After 10 years in the position, Kim will stand down as Treasurer at the 2018 AGM. Kim has been a great Treasurer and supporter of MCRP. His scientific, diving and snorkelling skills, and experience will be sorely missed on the Committee. He will continue to contribute to MCRP, including through his ground-breaking work on designing and recording collection plates for oyster and mussel spats.

### MCRP website

Virginia Mosk has maintained the website for the last 2 years. Our thanks to Virginia for this.

We foreshadowed in the last Annual Report that the website would be revamped in 2017, and we're pleased to advise that it was completed in October 2017.

The web address remains the same <http://marinecare.org.au>.

Virginia investigated web designers and Beth investigated software. Based on Committee approval, we used web designer Mohamed Harare from Harsons Graphics to design the site, and moved to Wordpress software.

Mohamed's price was excellent value, and he was flexible and generous with his time during the work. We had specified, amongst other things, that we wanted the design to be easy to use on smart phones, and he delivered well. Wordpress was our chosen software because it is the most popular free website management or blogging system on the Web, supporting more than 60 million websites. It is the Australian

standard in free website software, synchronizes well with smart phones (which is now how most people check information) and is much easier to use and maintain than our previous Joomla system.

Virginia and Beth worked on content and photographs, and had several meetings with Mohamed over many months to get the layout, usability, content and search engine optimization right.

While there are always things to correct and tweak, we have had lots of positive feedback from members to say the new website is a great improvement and much more usable, particularly on mobile phones. Further relevant videos and posts will continue to be added. Our thanks to Virginia and Beth for their work in the upgrade.

Virginia has prepared some instructions on how to use Wordpress for the current subject-experts in our group (e.g. Hazel Stanworth as Beach Patrol 3193 Leader and David Langmead as Snorkel Co-ordinator), so that they can update their individual subject areas as required.

We are looking for someone to take over the website administrator role in 2018 if anyone would like to volunteer.

## **Social Media**

Social media is now vital for all community groups in providing real-time information about what's happening, where and when. We use it extensively and it complements the more comprehensive, long-term information found on our website.

### **Facebook**

Maddy Heath (who is also one of our new snorkel leaders) maintains our Facebook page. Our thanks to Maddie for this.

Our Facebook page allows all members to quickly communicate events, comments, news stories and videos relevant to Marine Care.

Maddie and several other members have added significant new content added by, including some magnificent videos. This has generated a lot of interest in the wider community. Our increasing stats reflect this:

**Weekly Total Reach:** 831 285 ↑191.6%

**People Engaged:** 264 36 ↑633.3%

**Total Page Likes:** 539 536 ↑0.6%

If you have not already done so, please visit our Facebook page for wonderful photos and videos. We encourage you to post relevant information. And be sure to LIKE us!

### **Twitter**

In 2017 Asher Judah set up a Twitter account, focusing primarily on our 3193 Beach Patrol activities. The tweets have been sending out alerts about our beach cleans, our beach clean statistics, and answering queries from the public. Our followers are growing each week.

As a result of contact through one such tweet, a student made an excellent video about our 3193 Beach Patrol history and what we do. You can view this video on our Facebook page.

Tremendous potential exists to improve public awareness of our activities through social media, as well as to recruit more volunteers and members.

## **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 for his tireless and generous work in this area.

## **New Meeting Venue**

We have moved our members' meeting/speakers' evenings to the Beaumaris Seniors Centre from the Beaumaris Life Saving Club.

While the location of the BLSC is beautiful, concern had been expressed for some time about safety and the facilities of the venue. Beth Jensen negotiated with Bayside City Council to secure the use of the Beaumaris Seniors Centre on the third Tuesday evening of the month, and we held our first members meeting there in October 2017. We now also hold our committee meetings there.

The Centre is warm in winter, well equipped and maintained, well-lit externally at night, and has good external car parks. Member feedback has been very positive.

## **Working with Children Checks**

Following changes to Victorian legislation in August 2017, we now require all program leaders, including all Snorkel leaders and Beach patrol leaders, to obtain a Working With Children Check (which the Victorian Government provides free to all volunteers.)

This ensures that our programs continue to operate at the highest safety and probity levels, as well as conforming to legislative requirements.

## **Our Programs**

### **Snorkelling Program**

Our formal Saturday morning summer snorkelling season kicked off once again in November 2017, and will continue until 31 March 2018. It continues to be very successful and popular. We have excellent, 20+ attendees, at most snorkelling event. Participation is restricted to current financial members of MCRP.

As usual, we've had to cancel some Saturday snorkels due to poor water quality (too much stormwater carries bacteria including E. coli) or weather (adverse wind conditions make it too rough). This goes with the territory in snorkelling, however.

David Langmead continued again as coordinator of the program for the summer season 2017-2018, for the fourth year. Thank you, David, for this work. In addition, Mick Morley has taken on the creation of the roster of snorkel leaders, and keeping an eye on how it's going. His friendly and efficient work has been of great help.



### **Qualified leaders**

For safety reasons, we need at least two snorkel leaders at each event, based on the number of people attending.

To share the workload around, we ask all snorkel leaders to commit to leading at least 5 sessions per season. This way the same people don't end up doing all the work and getting burnt out.

The committee approved the training of 4 further snorkel leaders in 2017. This brings our total number to 8. The leaders are: David Langmead (Coordinator), Mick Morley, Terry Valentine, Gayle Kiteley, Amy Stace-Smith, Clementine Heath, Hannah Baker, and Vlodik Zmyslony. It is good to see new people being prepared to take this further step.

### **Published Snorkelling Information**

We provide detailed information and tips on snorkelling in Port Phillip Bay and at Ricketts Point on our MCRP website. It reflects both our commitment to safety and to fulfilling our role of educating and informing the public about the Sanctuary. This information is the best freely-accessed information we've seen on snorkelling in Port Phillip Bay. It was updated with the 2017 update of the MCRP website.

We also send out emails each week (usually Wednesday night) 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.

### **Insurance and Parks Victoria (PV)**

As predicted in discussions in 2016, Parks Victoria (PV) confirmed in February 2017 that it would not provide any public liability insurance coverage for MCRP snorkelling activities. This is contrary to all previous PV advice, and is a great disappointment, as we had undertaken many safety and procedural upgrades to conform to its requirements.

Please note that MCRP has our own public liability insurance, for leaders and members. We do not, however, provide any personal injury insurance for participants. All our snorkelers are required to sign a form each year acknowledging that personal injury insurance is their own responsibility.

### **Great Victorian Fish Count**

The annual Great Victorian Fish Count (GVFC) is organised by Gayle Kiteley. Thanks to Gayle for her work here. Because of poor snorkelling conditions, the Count was not held until 16 December 2017.

We had an excellent turnout of approximately 30 people, and saw many fish species. (More fish seem to be around later in the season, as the water is warmer).

The GVFC is organised annually by the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) to collect important information on the distribution and relative abundance of some of Victoria's unique marine life. This year, for the first time, 10 relatively common sharks and rays were added to the Count. Stingrays were the focus this year to highlight the senseless and cruel slaughter of rays around the state, a practice which in 2017 was banned by the Victorian Government.

This excellent State-wide citizen science project asks all volunteers around the state to input their data into one standard database. It provides an important longitudinal fish data base. We are the only group to have contributed to the Great Victorian Fish Count each year since its inception 13 years ago.

## **Beach Patrol 3193 Ricketts Point**

Hazel Stanworth took over as Beach Patrol Leader in April 2017. She has been doing a great job.

Collaborating with 3193 Beach Patrol Australia, we have involved our local community in monthly beach cleans since 2014. In 2017 we undertook 10 beach cleans, only having to cancel one in December due to adverse weather. We have covered 4 different locations this year:

- Beaumaris Yacht Club (3 cleans)
- Beaumaris Life Saving Club (3 cleans)
- Seaweed beach/Watkins Bay (2 cleans)
- Half Moon Bay, Black Rock (2 cleans)

Over the year 245 volunteer hours have helped clean up our beaches! The largest number at one beach clean was in June where there were 32 of us!

During 2017 we collected and removed 154 bags of litter from the beaches at Ricketts Point, totalling approximately 510Kg in weight. Plastic items (mostly fragments) and cigarette butts are the most common type of rubbish collected. Significant amounts of bottles and cans were found on some beach cleans, for example 190 bottles and cans were recorded on our beach clean in April. The majority of these were found in the foreshore vegetation and car park areas. We have also recorded 10 syringes over the year (6 from the beaches at Half Moon bay). Surprisingly we only found 1 nurdle!

Each month there is always something a little different found, a few to list; shoes, car battery, gas cylinders, metal trellises, ear plugs and a sleeping bag!



### **Special beach clean events**

In March we joined with the Marine Mammal Foundation at Ricketts Point for Clean Up Australia Day 2017. We also collaborated with the Half Moon Bay Surf Life Saving Club for their BAWE (beach, art, waste & environment) project, raising awareness of litter in the bay by making art out of rubbish.

From November, we started counting balloons during our beach cleans. The data will support Melbourne Zoo's campaign 'When balloons fly, seabirds die'. Unfortunately, our End of Year/Christmas celebration after the December beach clean, had to be cancelled due to bad weather.

### **The harm caused by litter**

On our beach clean in May we witnessed first-hand the impact rubbish in the bay can cause to our marine ecology. A pelican was entangled in fishing line with 2 plastic bottles attached. We reported the bird to the Marine Response Unit at Melbourne Zoo, who sadly on many occasions was unable to capture the pelican. The pelican was later seen with the line still attached but without the bottles. We can only hope that eventually the line came loose.

### **Appreciation for our volunteers**

Whilst some of the litter we collected washed up from the Bay, there was equally as much litter dumped in the foreshore vegetation and car park areas. The majority of bottles, cans and cigarette butts found over the year have been located in these areas. Removing this litter has no doubt prevented it from reaching the bay and polluting the marine environment.

Our beach cleans are so important. They have helped keep our beaches safe and reduced the impact of litter to the marine life in the bay and Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary. The data we collect has helped to provide evidence for environmental and political campaigns.

Since the beach cleans started in 2014, 925 volunteer hours have collected 1,607Kg of rubbish. This equates to 552 shopping bags worth of litter, including 1070 bottles and cans. It has all been down to the efforts and commitment of our Marine Care and Beach patrol volunteers.

Thank you!





## Members' Speaker Evenings

Virginia Mosk has been organizing the member's speaker's nights. Our thanks to Virginia for this.

In early 2017, when we were still located at the Beaumaris Life Saving Club, we experimented with holding our speaker's evenings every month through until May, on the basis that members might find the extra activities valuable, interesting and provide further friendship and networking opportunities. We also invested in solar lights so that people would find it easier to leave the venue at the end of the night.

We found, however, that the meetings were not as well attended as we had hoped, and the monthly organization proved challenging.

The Seniors Centre at Beaumaris, however, is bright, warm and safe. It is therefore much more conducive as a venue to holding meetings throughout the winter months as well as the warmer months. The Committee therefore believes we could experiment with extending the speaker's nights through winter. This would allow us to maintain our two-monthly schedule, which seems to suit many people. So apart from the AGM in February, member's meetings will be held in April, June, August, October and December 2018 on a trial basis. We will look forward to your comments on the extended 2018 program.

## 2017 Speakers

This year we hosted some good, strong speakers.

### 21 February 2017

**Professor Stephen Swearer**, Marine Biologist at the University of Melbourne, spoke about *Restoring the lost kelp forests of Port Phillip Bay*.

He and his team work on the Reef Ecosystem Evaluation Framework (REEF) project funded by the Victorian Government, which was established to examine the effect of sea urchins and potential anthropogenic stressors (sediment and nutrients) associated with urbanisation on the local and system-wide dynamics of rocky reefs in Port Phillip Bay (PPB), Victoria. He was an engaging, spirited speaker who had us enthralled from start to finish. He said that there would also be future possibilities for MCRP to engage with his team to conduct a Citizen Science project.

### 21 March 2017

**Professor Ian Rae**, Honorary Professorial Fellow in the School of Chemistry at the University of Melbourne, spoke about, *the Friends of Williamstown Wetlands' litter project*.

Friends of Williamstown Wetlands Inc. (in conjunction with Hobsons Bay City Council and Parks Victoria) extended its activities to the newly-reconstituted Paisley-Challis Wetland. While concentrating on revegetation of degraded land, the group has always paid attention to litter control and has participated each year in Clean Up Australia.

### 16 May 2017

**Brad Jessup**, a human geographer and an environmental law specialist at the University of Melbourne, spoke on *Reflecting on Justice and the Channel Deepening Project*.

The Victorian bureaucracy is pondering a state strategy on Environmental Justice to fulfil an election promise of the current Andrews Labor Government. Given the timeliness of questions of environmental justice, his engaging and interesting presentation reflected on the most controversial of Victorian projects over recent times – the Port Phillip Channel Deepening Project.

### 17 October 2017

**Dr Matt Edmunds** from Australian Marine Ecology, was to speak to us on *Fifteen years in the life of Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary - the challenges and successes in understanding the ecology and area-based management*. Unfortunately, Matt had to cancel his talk at the last moment.

However, very fortunately, our good friend **Professor John Buckeridge**, Natural Resources Engineering, RMIT, Melbourne, stepped in at the eleventh hour to give us a delightful and enthusiastic talk all about the *Local fossils found in the Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary*.

John's book on *Birds of Rickett's Point Marine Sanctuary* has also sold like hotcakes at our talks. Many thanks to John for his humour, flexibility and generosity – we all had a very enjoyable night!

### 17 December 2017

**Dr Tim O'Hara** from Museums Victoria, spoke on *Ocean Biodiversity and Climate Change*.

Tim has been Senior Curator of Marine Invertebrates at Museums Victoria since 2001. In this role, he investigates the distribution of biodiversity across the ocean seafloor, by combining data from museum collections from across the planet. He gave a great presentation about his work and latest expedition. He presented some of his latest findings and put them in a wider ecological and biogeographical context, showing how marine biodiversity is distributed across the oceans and how this may be altered by climate change.



We have a list of eager people who would love to speak to our community in 2018 and 2019. Virginia said it has been a pleasure to work with all individuals involved; everyone coming from their heartfelt passions for the ocean and the appreciation for the great work that MCRP does. Thank you all for your valued input!

## Citizen Science

Over many years, Ray Lewis, OA has been our leader in citizen science around the Sanctuary. He has published several books in this area.

In 2017, his Greypath Productions supported and published two further, excellent books – *Birds of the Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary* by Kate Loxton and John Buckeridge, and *The Fossils of the Urban Sanctuary* by Fearghus McSweeney and John Buckeridge.

MCRP had previously made a financial contribution to the *Birds* book to ensure its printing. As a result, we were able to offer members copies at a significantly reduced price. These were eagerly snapped up by our members as Christmas presents.

Further projects include:

- Ray has trained a number of MCRP members as guides to conduct various **2018 Summer by the Sea** Events including rock pool rambles; seagrasses and seashell walks; sea country walks; indigenous plants, their use and history walks. In 2017 Ray extensively revised his original Activity Leaders Guide for publication. This will be ready in 2018 and will form the basis for further expanded training of MCRP members and others in conducting citizen science education sessions.
- Kim Wright designed a mussel and oyster spat collection frame to support the Port Phillip Oyster Reclamation Project. This framework has been adopted as the standard and is now used Bay wide. A number of people have helped Kim produce more of these for the project.
- We are working with RMIT on the establishment of a ground truthing team for a genomic species predictor of Bay species.
- After an attack on a boy locally by so called sea lice (which became world news), we set up a capture experiment and had the species identified.
- We briefed an overseas student team on the evolution of Citsci in Australia and our local projects.
- We drafted an approach to *Undaria spp* spring capture, (now waiting on spring time) to determine a more effective removal regime for this exotic species.



## Our Policy actions

### Building relationships with stakeholders

In the last few years, we have been active on the policy front, and in extending our relationships with key stakeholders, both at government and non-government levels.

While we were disappointed with the reaction of Parks Victoria to the snorkelling insurance issue, we have continued to build strong relationships with them. We have been actively engaged with the local Parks Victoria ranger, Emily, who has provided a wealth of information from long experience. We continue to

advocate for a greater presence of Parks Victoria rangers at the Sanctuary, and hope this might occur in 2018, as some new resources will be devoted to coastal rangers. We were successful in obtaining a \$500 grant from Parks Victoria to offset some administrative costs, and to obtain further Beach Patrol supplies.

We re-engaged with Bayside Environmental Friends Network in 2017, which has provided a useful exchange of information. As part of this re-engagement, we organised an extensive number of **Summer by the Sea activities** for January 2018, which is organised by MCRP, Coastcare and Bayside Council.

We provide members with information about relevant public forums, and of campaigns asking you to support core issues (such as banning single-use plastic bags). In February 2017, several members of MCRP participated in a Tangaroa Blue workshop conducted with Bayside Council seeking input in how best to ensure consistent data across a range of organisations.

### **Reporting Offences in the Sanctuary**

Poaching, speeding by motor craft, and other offences in the Sanctuary seem to be on the rise.

As part of our commitment to education, we've prominently featured where and how to report offences on the home page of our new website. We have emailed our members to remind them to report offences, and to provide photographs and videos.

The reason for this is two-fold – to ensure that we help catch offenders, and to ensure that the Fisheries agency has a record of these offences, so they can build a picture of what is happening.

Because of this greater publicity, members tell us they're now actively reporting sightings of poachers, etc. to government agencies. It is only in this way that we can stop some of the more blatant breaches that occur, particularly of abalone poaching.

A significant example was when we spotted a motor boat anchored right next to the Marine Park sign one Saturday morning, fishing for abalone. We took photographs, and reported them to Fisheries on their 24/7 hotline. Fisheries have since told us that they have identified the people concerned. Our members have also taken photographs of poachers and their vehicle and number plates, who were illegally fishing and killing in the Sanctuary and passed on the Fisheries who were fast to act. This is great news, and we hope provides reassurance to members that reporting will bring action.

Because of this greater contact with Fisheries, we are building a good rapport with them, and will be seeking feedback on their activities in 2018.

### **Marine Pollution & Debris - Plastic Bags Ban, Container Deposit Scheme, Balloons etc**

Debris and pollutants, particularly plastics, are major causes of marine animals' deaths.

We have advocated strongly in various forums for reduction of litter and pollutants in the Bay. This has included advocating to the State Government to ban single-use plastic bags. We have asked members to write in support.

Because of extensive lobbying by many organisations, and just before the Northcote by-election, the government announced in 2017 it would ban single-use plastic bags. It is now taking public submissions on this matter to decide how to proceed. This is a great victory for marine life, and many thanks to all who contributed to this result!

We will continue to advocate for a 10c container recycling deposit scheme and eliminating plastic balloons from celebrations. To read up more about these devastating effects, please visit our website under Beach Patrol.

### **Black Rock Revetment**

In 2017 we undertook extensive discussions with Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning (DELWP) about their proposal to build a revetment at Black Rock, from the edge of the Ricketts Point Sanctuary north along the Black Rock beach front, to protect against erosion.

We joined with several concerned local residents, groups and the Sandringham Foreshore Association to present one view.

Our main concern is that the revetment be moved 30 metres to the north of the boundary of Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary (at about Quiet Corner, or opposite 4<sup>th</sup> Street), to minimise damage to the Sanctuary and to preserve the reef just outside the Sanctuary, which is an important asset to the Sanctuary.

We became aware only late in the piece that the DEWLP proposal required sign-off by Parks Victoria, which had not been involved actively to date. Beth Jensen therefore wrote to Parks Victoria in late November asking them to consider the issues we had raised, including possible alternative approaches.

We also met with Bayside Council Mayor Laurie Evans, who also made representations to DEWLP.

We were disappointed to receive DELWP's response, in December 2017, advising they are not prepared to reconsider because of their assessment of the need to mitigate further expected erosion, storms and rising sea levels because of climate change, and their view that a revetment is the only way to deal with this matter. We are awaiting a response from Parks Victoria. In the meantime, we are undertaking further investigation with our own experts, and will take stock in early 2018 about further action.

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

Bayside Council has been working on improving their signage at Ricketts Point for some time – since about mid-2015.

Following our written comments in October 2015, a further meeting onsite in September 2016 with us, other local environmental/community groups, and Parks Victoria and Fisheries Department to discuss draft signage, and our further written comments, there was a long hiatus.

This was the result of several staff changes at Bayside Council. We are assured that this is now back on track.

At our request, the new Bayside Council officer met with Beth Jensen, and Dennis Young of Bayside Friends of Native Wildlife on 1 December 2017 to update us on progress. The draft signage presented caused some concern. Previous consultations from a large group of stakeholders do not seem to have been taken into account, and there were some bi-laws errors.

We have been assured by the Council officer that these comments will be taken on board. Council intends to have further internal and departmental consultation, and to develop new signage concepts, which will then be provided for community groups to comment.

## **Protecting Beaumaris Bay**

MCRP is a member of the Beaumaris Bay Consortium set up to help protect the unique fossils and other features of Beaumaris Bay. We have continued to support A/Professor Vicki Kotsirilos for the listing of the Bay on the National Heritage Register. Our members have been asked to also show their support to Bayside Council.

We supported the formation of a new organization, Bayside Earth Sciences Society, in October 2017. Their goal is to help protect our unique fossil area in Beaumaris, particularly around the Beaumaris Motor Yacht Squadron area, which has an outstanding world-leading fossil area, and to educate people about their value. We see their role as complementary to our own.

## **Thank you**

Finally, many thanks to all members for your volunteering and active participation in our organisation. Many thanks also, to all the committee members and others who contributed to this report.

**Elizabeth Jensen**

**President**

**February 2018**

## Appendix A

### Marine Care - Ricketts Point Inc.

#### *Statement of Purposes*

1. To foster species diversity conservation of the Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary through:
  - a) the regeneration of the once abundant plant and animal life of the sanctuary,
  - b) the protection and preservation of the natural environment of the sanctuary, its features and its indigenous flora and fauna,
  - c) the educating and informing of the community about the role and values of the sanctuary,
  - d) community involvement in and enjoyment of the sanctuary in accordance with the above aims,
  - e) the advancement of knowledge of marine life and its environment.
2. To establish and maintain a public fund to be named *Marine Care Fund*, for the specific purpose of supporting the environmental objects/purposes of the Association.

## Appendix B

### MCRP Committee of Management – 2017

- President** Elizabeth Jensen  
(email [elizabethjensen@outlook.com](mailto:elizabethjensen@outlook.com); m 0419 354 998)
- Treasurer** Kim Wright
- Secretary** Virginia Mosk  
(email [Virginiamosk@gmail.com](mailto:Virginiamosk@gmail.com); m 0408 800 685)
- Membership Officer** Peter Dibbs/Amy Stace-Smith

#### **Other committee members**

Ken Blackman  
Val Royale  
Hazel Stanworth  
Jinty Wilson  
Gayle Kiteley  
Asher Judah