

The logo for MEAFEC is written in a large, white, stylized font with a black outline, set against a background of a scenic landscape with a river and trees.

Mount Eliza Association for Environmental Care



December 2015 Newsletter

ABN 64 566 184 275 ASN A0018210M

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Grant and Donation Put to Good Use in Moorooduc Quarry

Mt Eliza Morning Garden Club have donated to MEAFEC \$500 towards a project of our choosing and at the same time Mornington Peninsula Shire also provided \$3000 which we are putting to good use in restoring vegetation in the quarry. Naturelinks have been recruited to complete the task of weeding the section to the right of the top look out deck and then on the left side of the stairs leading down.

Work commenced on Friday 20th November with 3 people removing woody weeds such as Sallow Wattle, Sweet Pittosporum, Flax Leaf, Broom, boneseed and Gorse. After removal of the woody weeds scrambler control will follow with the removal of Bluebell Creeper, Blackberry, Bridal Creeper, Asparagus Fern and Wonga Vine.



All these plants are detrimental to our native bushland so if you have them growing in your garden it would be wise to remove them. Birds eat the seeds and spread them through their faeces. I have had many plants in my garden which have arrived by this method.

Naturelinks workers busy removing Pittosporum

Foreign geological material on Moondah Beach

The use of foreign geological material in natural areas for paths and structures is not always in keeping with nature conservation. Protecting the integrity of the natural geology, landforms and soils can be as important as the protection of flora and fauna.

A good example is Moondah Beach which is significant for its geological diversity. Three *Sites of Geological and Geomorphological Significance on the Coast of Port Phillip Bay* are documented for Moondah Beach (Victorian Resources Online http://vro.agriculture.vic.gov.au/dpi/vro/portreg.nsf/pages/port_lf_ppsites_sig-map). This geological diversity is reflected in its diversity of natural free rocks, with a remarkable 10 types occurring.

The Moondah Beach landing of the Melbourne Business School – Mount Eliza was damaged by a storm surge in June 2014. The Mount Eliza Foreshore Advisory Group wrote to the school regarding the damage and how it might be repaired. The concern was that the importation of unconsolidated foreign material would reduce the geological integrity of Moondah Beach as any such material would disperse along the beach.



The business school and the planning department of Mornington Peninsula Shire supported this principle. However, the maintenance department of the Shire was not aware of the issue and placed unconsolidated material on the landing for beach cleaner access in March 2015.

As it is within the storm surge zone, this material will inevitably be mobilised and swept away to contaminate another beach. Not only does this affect the geological integrity of the beach but it has the potential to deposit sharp inappropriate material on beach's used by the local community and so is likely to reduce the amenity. The restored access is temporary while the contamination is permanent if the material is not removed – not a solution at all.

**Moondah Beach landing -
Underlying landfill exposed by storm surge in June 2014**



Currently the Shire is considering removing the loose rocks and replacing them with Flexmat geofabric, which is an appropriate material in this sensitive area. It is often not sufficiently realised that nature conservation has as much to do with the geosphere as with the biosphere. Alternatives to the use of loose foreign geological material in natural areas are usually available and should be used wherever possible.

MEAFEC believes it's time that the *Sites of Geological and Geomorphological Significance on the Coast of Port Phillip Bay* are protected in the Mornington Peninsula planning scheme using Environmental Significance Overlays. The City of Casey is doing exactly this with its sites at present and other councils should do likewise.

Unconsolidated material placed on landing in March 2015

Earimil Estuary Group (EEG)

The plants are thriving! After our Sunday 23rd August 2015 planting day at Ranelagh beach. Approximately 300 plants were installed by a coordinated team from Green Army, Mornington Shire natural Systems Team, Ranelagh Club, and MEAFEC.



The species planted include Rhagodia, Tetragonia, Poa grass, Bower Spinach and Correa.

Now in November, the plants are thriving - many of the plants are approaching 1 m tall. Most have quadrupled in height. Approximately 2 weeks ago we sprayed herbicide to reduce the encroaching grass and other weeds. A follow up weed control is planned for January 2016.

In between the plants propagated are some quality plants from natural regrowth.



Somewhere in the abundant weeds is Earimil Creek!

We have applied for a Melbourne Water Community Grant to implement Weed control and revegetation along the banks of the Earimil Estuary where it crosses the Foreshore reserve. Last week we were visited by a representative from Melbourne Water to look at the area we plan to weed and replant with local indigenous plant species using the grant.

Mount Eliza Secondary College

As many of you may have read in the local Newspaper and seen driving by Mt Eliza Secondary College, the Principal authorised a second clearing of the site without any further consultation with the community. This action left MEAFEC with no choice but to resign from the working party our letter of resignation is printed below.

We write to express our extreme disappointment at the total destruction of indigenous vegetation at the site. The construction of soccer fields has destroyed all remnant vegetation, with fields extending to the site boundary. The removal of all vegetation has changed the landscape character of the site irrevocably. This represents the worst possible outcome and entirely refutes the undertakings and representations made to the Working Party during the meetings.

The resultant extension of the proposed plans is a stain on the environmental aims and directions previously expressed by the school, and demonstrates a total disregard for protection of Mount Eliza vegetation. This represents a poor example of an environmental outcome for students and the wider community.

There is no point in our involvement with the Working Party MESC Land, as there is nothing remaining to protect or nurture.

MEAFEC hereby resigns from this Committee

The principal Angela Pollards response was "Thank you. I acknowledge receipt of your letter".

The governments "offset program" saw offsets for the removal of vegetation from MESC here in Mt Eliza go to **Little River** 51 Kilometres south west of Melbourne Central in the vicinity of Geelong and Wyndham local Governments. This means Geelong benefited from our loss of native bushland it will never be replaced in Mt Eliza. From this outcome it has come to our attention that Mt Eliza has no government approved "offset" sites. MEAFEC is now pursuing this issue.

Other Issues MEAFEC are Pursuing

Widening of Mt Eliza Way

Along with the new roundabout Mornington Peninsula Shire Council are widening Mt Eliza Way which could potentially mean the removal of up to 100 trees and plant species. We emailed members on 7/11/15 requesting you to formally object to the removal of 47 trees and at the same time the MEAFEC committee objected to the proposal on the grounds a more sensitive approach could be taken to preserve the native vegetation. If you wish to follow this issue it is Planning Application P15/1638. The Mornington Shire arranged a meeting November 26th to discuss their plans. The outcome from this meeting is unknown at time of printing this Newsletter. We will keep you informed. Our next Council meeting is scheduled for Thursday 3rd December.

Twin Freeway Service Centres Peninsula Link Freeway, Baxter

In brief, construction of the twin Freeway Service Centres (FSCs) project commenced with the southbound Fuel Service Centre on Monday 30th June, 2014 following the approval of all necessary plans and documents by the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council on 27th June, 2014.

The major construction works have been completed and the Southbound FSC opened for business on 23rd July, 2015. Site clean-up (construction compound areas) will be completed in January 2016.

When MEAFEC approached the MPSC planning department, the owner building the Service Stations and Monash University who helped with setting guide lines for pollution issues we discovered no one was following up to make sure environmental protection issues were being enforced. To this end we attempted to get access to the site and hear from the owners how they plan to protect Balcombe Creek from Hydrocarbons and other chemicals but our request was denied. However MPSC when requested by MEAFEC is now following up our concerns and have been granted access to the site and will report back to us in due course.

This issue is of concern to Friends Groups who work along Balcombe Creek and the wider community both in Mt Eliza and Mornington because the FSC's are close to the Balcombe Creek. We are fortunate that the MPSC has water quality records from Balcombe Creek which have been taken for many years and will allow for comparison in the event of any overflow from the FSC's.

The Year 2015 in short

With another year almost over the MEAFEC Committee are finding the face of Mt Eliza is changing and our commitment to preserving native vegetation challenged in many ways. From our Newsletters you can see we are no longer just dealing with MPSC to help when issues present themselves. We require the assistance of many different areas such as Government Departments who know the laws such as the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act, Universities for water testing, Melbourne Water to preserve water quality and Ecology professionals to understand tree decline. The MEAFEC Committee are increasing their knowledge with every issue that presents itself and believe with your continued support we will help preserve native Flora and Fauna in your local community.

Our dedicated group leaders continue to do an amazing job donating their time and skills on a weekly basis. Thank you Ann, Jeff, Ross, Gerard and Coralie.

But most of all the MEAFEC committee would like to thank you our Members and Volunteers for believing that the environment in which we live is worth protecting.

Thank you to our Members, supporters and volunteers we wish you happy Christmas and a safe New Year.