

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

Mount Eliza Association for Environmental Care

June 2018 Newsletter

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Bush Rejuvenation Sets Tongues Wagging

Victory Reserve - Most of Victory Reserve has a rich cover of 'Swampy Woodland' vegetation. When the final recapping of the tip cell was ordered by the EPA it was very sad to watch the natural regeneration that had taken place since the closure of the tip destroyed and exotic grasses sprouting. The number 1 enemy at the moment is exotic grasses. The Friends along with Naturelinks then burnt and slashed two small plots as an experiment and the burnt plot grew back thick and green, mostly *Microlena*, the slashed plot showed little new growth.

Early in 2017 we reduced the canopy of swamp paperbark over a large tongue orchid (*Cryptostylis subulata*) zone. We feel that this has contributed to two plants flowering with eight flowers each, a further fifteen orchid plants are showing healthy leaf. We also guarded most plants to stop Rabbits eating their leaf and flower stems. These orchids are growing on the edge of the old tip cell. The soil was put there to seal off the tip or to cap it. This soil must have had a seed bank as lots of local grasses, sedges and shrubs started to regenerate.

Naturelinks has been helping manage the exotic grasses by spraying and slashing at appropriate times of the seasons. We hope for more flowering Tongue orchids next spring and with the aid of a native wasp hope pollination will mean many more orchids in the future.



Also in Victory Reserve Ross Simpson translocated Greenhood plants which were on the fire track and in danger of being mowed or destroyed by trucks pulling the mower twice yearly. These relocated greenhood plants survived the move and are showing signs of flowering in their new location next month. Well done to Ross for showing this initiative.

Port Phillip Bay Harbours a Destructive Secret

At our Annual General Meeting Professor Stephan Swearer spoke about the destructive nature of purple sea urchins in our bay. Research is highlighting that many of our kelp beds are being destroyed by sea urchins that have reached plague proportions due to unfiltered waste water and fertilisers entering our bay which in turn creates algal mats that urchins feed on.

The purple sea urchin is responsible for a 90 per cent reduction of the kelp in Port Phillip Bay's marine sanctuaries and this reduces all fish habitat. Purple sea urchins can live up to 20 years and some black varieties 100 years.

Sea Urchins are being removed as part of a trial cull led by ecologists at Deakin University and Melbourne University. However it is now realised that there are too many urchins for culling alone. Lobsters were the only predator of urchins and they have all been taken from Port Phillip Bay's ecosystem. It has been estimated there are 50 million urchins in our bay.

High grade Urchins are an Asian delicacy and sell for \$300 kg so with this in mind Prof. Swearer is endeavouring to start a business farming urchins. But it's not that simple, our urchins have very little roe and are hollow inside due to lack of nutritional feed. Agrifutures in Queenscliff are experimenting with feeding up urchins taken from our bay using pellet fed thereby making them ready for selling. It takes 12 weeks to feed urchins up. At present there is only 3 license holders who can harvest urchins with limits that will not stop there population increase.

Many areas are being looked at in the hope of correcting the imbalance in our bay. These include:

- Capturing Nitrogen in our waste water before it enters the bay.
- Green engineered structures submerged to form reefs that all shellfish can use
- Oyster reef restoration
- Mangrove restoration
- Kelp bed restoration

Importantly Prof. Swearer spoke about the State and Federal Government's efforts to use solutions that through research will inform new approaches to managing environmental issues. Kelp beds play a very important role in this process because they are natural carbon storage places.

If you missed our AGM you missed a very interesting and informative talk.



Clean Up Australia Day

On March 4th Ranelagh Club together with Des had approximately 10 members volunteering to clean up the beach in front of the club. Whilst Jeff had 11 members picking up south of Earimil Bluff.

Much of the rubbish collected was generated where bathing boxes were situated. Many bags were filled.



Appreciation Shown for Leaders Outstanding Contribution.



Two Bays Road MPSC Redesign

New works proposed by the Mornington Peninsula Shire are to see 200 trees removed from Two Bays Road. MEAFEC has requested plans and is following these works. It is always amazing to see how little is done to protect trees that will never be replaced.

Road humps will be installed to slow traffic but a tree cannot be used in the same manner.

Also related to these works, previous Two Bays Road works saw street water diverted from settling ponds (below) which feed into the pondage system of Mt Eliza Regional Park. This has meant with less water in the settling ponds they remain empty and water unfiltered feeds directly into the pondage system and hence our bay.



Photo right: One of two settling ponds which remain dormant.

Friends Groups

MOUNT ELIZA CFA 3rd Sunday
monthly 9:30am to 11:30am



EARIMIL CREEK 3rd Saturday
monthly 9:30am to 11:30am



BADEN POWELL RESERVE weekly
Tues 10am Coralie 9787 7228



WILLIAMS ROAD BEACH Friday
weekly 10am–3pm Ann9787 7228



MOOROODUC QUARRY meets 4th Sunday of
each month from 10:00am till Noon.
Call Paul 0468 582 577



VICTORY RESERVE 3rd Sunday
monthly (Aug to Nov) from 1 to
4pm. Call Gerard 0418 505 290



BANOOL RESERVE 2nd Sunday
mthly 10am–12. Ross 9785 1243



Coming Event:

In August MEAFEC along with the Mt Eliza Scout group will be running a program to stimulate young minds. One of the projects being offered will be highlighting the use of plastics and the damage plastic waste products cause to marine life and waterways.



With this in mind many of our members have started collecting plastics rubbish from Mt Eliza beaches. Many of which are small micro beads. These can be found in particular where water flows from our streets into the bay.

It is planned to make a mosaic of all the objects found, this will be mounted on the Scout Hall wall.



The four circled objects in the 150mm square section of sand (right) were found on the bank of Earimil Creek (above) and demonstrate the volume of plastic in the sand. There are many more, can you find them? 17?

Your 2018 Membership is Due

Your Annual Subscription for 2018 is now due and can be paid by direct credit at the Bendigo Bank BSB 633-000 Account Number: 155719453 \$5 students, \$15 single and \$25 family