

yrka bulletin

The quarterly newsletter of Yarra Riverkeeper Association (yrka)
Issue 15 Spring 2009

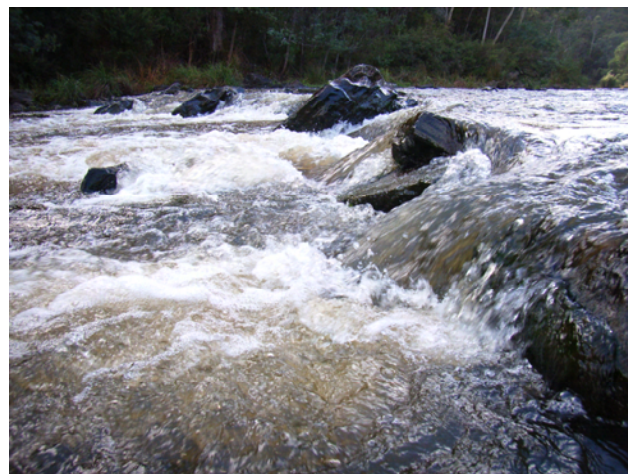


Politicians learn about the Yarra.

Yrka's boat continues to provide a valuable and unique perspective of the Yarra. Recent passengers have included politicians, Josh Frydenberg, candidate for Kooyong (left), Kelly O'Dwyer, candidate for Higgins (middle), and Michael O'Brien, MLA for Malvern (right)

Yarra gets a welcome "fresh" →

High rainfall at Mt Baw Baw in September caused flows in the Yarra to exceed 2 billion litres a day (at Yarra Glen), or 10 times the average in the previous 8 months. Such naturally occurring "freshes" this time of year are vital to river life, particularly the threatened Macquarie Perch. In accordance with environmental guidelines, Melbourne Water reduced pumping from the Yarra for a week to enable the flow to pass downstream. Whilst the halt to pumping was criticized in the press as a "waste of water", yrka has publicly defended the action by Melbourne Water. This was the first substantial spring fresh since 2004. In subsequent weeks, more rain in the catchment lifted river flows to over 4 billion litres a day for a short time, notwithstanding the resumption of maximum water extraction. These flows are a welcomed relief for the Yarra, as its health has suffered badly from many years of inadequate water and the government's decision to withhold much needed environmental flows.



River Soiree is a Sell-out Success

River and culture lovers caught the punt across to the Yarra's picturesque Herring Island for an uplifting afternoon of poetry on 17th October. The soiree featured the talents of Melbourne poets reading theirs and others' river poems: Jennifer Harrison, Kristin Henry, Ross Donlon, Alice White, Charles D'anastasi, Lorin Ford, Connie Barber, Bob Morrow and Anne Carson. Over \$1200 was raised from the sell-out gathering to support yrka's work. Thanks to yrka member, Anne Carson for organizing the successful event and to Parks Vic, Convent Bakery, Kanteen Café, Friends of Herring Island and the poets for this generous contributions.

Vital Research on Yarra Estuary

Yrka recently hosted a river tour for scientists studying the Yarra estuary (from Johnson Street to Westgate Bridge). Funded by Monash University, Melbourne Water and the EPA, they are examining links between the river's low flows, its low dissolved oxygen, and its ability to cycle nitrogen. If the Yarra struggles to process the large quantities of nitrogen compounds stemming from leaky sewers, street runoff and land-clearing, the ecosystems of both the estuary and Port Phillip Bay suffer. Findings will inform policy makers about the role of Yarra environmental flows in maintaining vital functions critical to the health of the bay.

Reflect, Celebrate and Welcome

On October 9 the yrka community celebrated its 2009 successes at a well attended barbeque in the beautiful setting of Currawong Bush Park. It was an enjoyable opportunity to meet new members and reflect on river issues and yrka directions. In our AGM held afterwards, we welcomed the following new and enthusiastic members to our committee of management, Mark Aitken, Todd Holman, Richard Home, Rob Glavich, and Dr John Merory. Mark, Todd, Richard and Rob are "graduates" from our *Yarra Champions* workshop earlier in the year. John is President of the Riverlands Conservation Society.



← Partners in Water Conservation

Several times since June yrka has contacted City West Water (CWW) about a persistent and sizeable (60litre/min) water flow from the Gipps St main drain in Abbotsford. Since there was little rain, the constant flow over several months was puzzling and worrying. Subsequent investigations by CWW revealed several leaks in water mains and from a fire hydrant. We are pleased that CWW has now repaired the leaks, because they waste precious water and unnecessarily increase upstream extraction from the Yarra.



Our Riverkeeper Ian Penrose was a finalist for the City of Melbourne's 2009 *Melbourne Award* for contribution to the environment. Ian said it was in recognition of yrka's achievements in speaking up for the Yarra, Melbourne's most important natural asset.

The Eternal Quest and Hoary Chestnut In our formative years, yrka has been funded largely by grants from Melbourne Water and the EPA. As we grow in strength, and our role as the primary "voice" of the Yarra River has greater urgency, we seek a broader range of supporting partners. Whilst initial discussions have been held with participants in the water industry, we welcome suggestions from our members and friends as to potential sources of funding. Please mention our important work to your friends and business colleagues, and the fact that donations to yrka are tax deductible.

Waterkeepers Australia winds up

The 15 waterkeeper groups in Australia, including yrka, have resolved to wind up voluntarily their umbrella organisation, Waterkeepers Australia Ltd, because the cost/effort in running it exceeded the benefits. This is not a reflection on the ongoing need for community groups to protect their local waterways, only that this particular organisation was not effective. There is no detrimental impact on yrka's activities.

Join yrka today!

Yrka is a grassroots community organisation concerned with the health of the Yarra River from source to mouth. The strength of yrka depends on its membership numbers and commitment.

Please pass this bulletin on to like-minded individuals and groups, along with the yrka membership form, available at: www.yarrariver.org.au



Yrka is grateful to Melbourne Water and to the EPA for their grants to fund our river monitoring, community education and advocacy activities.

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