

yrka bulletin

The quarterly newsletter of Yarra Riverkeeper Association (yrka)
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Minister Holding with yrka's Rod Ingham (left) and Ian Penrose (right)



Martin Foley MP (right) hearing from yrka's Rob Wright and Ian Penrose

Yrka members lobby state political leaders

Yrka members have taken up the call to meet their local state politicians to discuss sustainable water policies that will secure Melbourne's water needs and protect the Yarra.

Low water flows are now one of the most worrisome problems for the Yarra. In 2009, the total amount of water that flowed down the river was only 17% of its long-term average natural volume ("natural" meaning if no water were extracted). Ongoing low flows have put the river at great risk and are inconsistent with the concept of ecological sustainability. The culprits are low rainfall, the large amount of water extracted to supply Melbourne and the delayed provision of necessary environmental flows.

Solutions to this dire situation have been the subject of numerous recent meetings that yrka members have had with politicians from both the government and opposition parties. Amongst those listening have been the Minister for Water, Tim Holding, the Minister for Environment, Gavin Jennings and the Labor Caucus Environment and Resources Committee. Yrka is urging a policy shift towards a long term sustainable water future in which Melbourne's main water sources are stormwater capture and recycled water, and the Yarra can retain most of its natural flow. The politicians have welcomed our input. Let's hope that this is reflected in better water policies - for the sake of our river and that of future Melburnians.

TAKE ACTION TO SAVE THE YARRA
Arrange a meeting with your state MP
(and invite Riverkeeper Ian)

A peddle down the river Melbourne's unpredictable weather did not deter those who enjoyed yrka's guided bike ride beside Gardiners Creek and the Lower Yarra in April. Riders stopped at curb-side rain gardens and newly constructed wetlands where experts explained the latest techniques in stormwater management. At Burnley Harbour and on Morell Bridge, stories were told about how the river has been reshaped. The day's highlight was the chance to get close and familiar with two of Melbourne's wonderful waterways.





A bridge too far Yrka added its voice to those of many community groups and individuals who objected to a Deakin University proposal for another bridge across Gardiners Creek in Burwood. The bulk of the proposed 200 metre long 11 metre high structure would occupy public parklands nurtured through decades of community effort. Its construction would effectively place public land in private hands, and would also destroy 115 trees and an ancient patch of Swampy Woodland, a bank-side plant community classified as Endangered by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment. After a spirited public forum and nearly 500 written objections, Whitehorse Council refused a planning permit for the bridge. Photo (left) shows the Swampy Woodland community on the site.

EPA sponsors yrka

The state’s pollution watchdog, the EPA, has once again provided yrka with generous sponsorship. CEO, John Merritt said, “EPA Victoria believes the Yarra Riverkeeper Association is providing a valuable community service and gives tangible support to the work of the EPA.” Yrka is grateful to the EPA both for this grant and its expert advice on pollution issues in the Yarra. Recently John Merritt and EPA Chair, Cheryl Batagol enjoyed an on-river tour lead by yrka – see photo (right) of yrka boat under beautiful Morell Bridge.



Beyond the Billabong... Join us on Sunday 27 June for a brisk, wintry walk around Wilson Reserve beside our Yarra River in Ivanhoe. Hear from experts about the billabongs, local wildlife and fascinating history. Marvel at the area’s natural beauty. For details and bookings, contact Sue at sueo67@gmail.com or 0403 962 885.




Australia’s “otter” The native water rat or Rakali is often sighted on yrka patrols. With its powerful hindquarters, webbed feet and muscular tail, the animal is superbly adapted to swimming and diving. It forages for fish, insects, crustaceans and carrion. The Rakali is much larger than the common rat, growing to 1.2 kg, and has long silky fur, once prized in the garment industry. While still seen occasionally in suburban creeks and wetlands its habitat is under threat as banks are disturbed and burrow sites are lost. Sightings of Australian water rats can be reported to the Australian Platypus Conservancy and will assist research into this fascinating animal.

<http://www.platypus.asn.au>

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, the EPA and the Ruffin Falkiner Trust for their grants to fund our river monitoring, community education and advocacy activities.

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