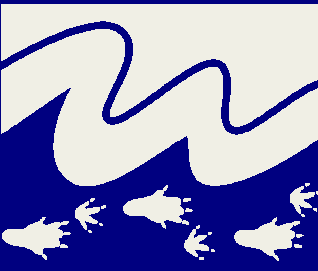


MERRI CREEK



MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Merri Creek flows south from the Great Dividing Range near Wallan to join the Yarra River in Abbotsford, four kilometers north-east of Melbourne's CBD.

Merri Creek Management Committee Inc. (MCMC) is an environmental coordination and management agency formed in 1989 to achieve a shared vision for the waterway corridors of the Merri Creek Catchment. Its members include all municipalities in the catchment: Darebin, Hume, Moreland, Whittlesea, Yarra and Mitchell, plus the Friends of Merri Creek and the Wallan Environment Group.

Representatives from these groups form the Committee of Management that guides MCMC's activities.

MCMC's primary aim is to ensure the preservation of natural and cultural heritage, and the ecologically sensitive restoration, development and maintenance of the Merri Creek and tributaries, their corridors and associated ecological communities. It employs specialist and dedicated staff and its programs are funded by Council members, by state and federal grant programs, by competitively won tenders, by grants from philanthropic organisations and through sponsorship.

MCMC's mission

MCMC respects and honours the spirit of the land and its peoples, indigenous plants and animals, and works with the community to preserve, restore and promote the Merri Creek, its catchment and neighbouring region as a vital living system.

Wurundjeri acknowledgement

MCMC acknowledges the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation as the traditional custodians of the land of the Merri Merri. We pay our respects to the Elders past present and future.

Above photo: Launch of the Sumner Loving project in March 2014 including a Welcome to Country by Uncle Bill Nicholson

Annual Report

2013-2014



President's Report 2013-14

It is 25 years since the Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) and the Friends of Merri Creek were established. In that time, MCMC and the Friends have played a major role in transforming the Merri Creek valley from a weed-infested, rubbish-strewn wasteland to attractive native bushland. However, continuing maintenance is needed, while other areas await transformation, so our work will need to continue for at least another 25 years!

The first-ever fundraising appeal for the Merri Creek Environment Fund raised over \$7,000, which will help fund the digitising of our image collection, publicity of our achievements over 25 years, and a revegetation project in Fawkner.

Merri Park in the Sumner Estate, Northcote is a key site that was transformed from a works depot to indigenous parkland in the early years. It is being revisited through the *Sumner Loving* project, which celebrates and builds on the community's relationship with their local park through a grant from the State Government's Communities for Nature program. MCMC is delivering the project with the Friends.

Our partnership with the Wurundjeri continues. An innovative project at Ngarridjarrang (Central Creek Grasslands) encouraged regeneration of wildflowers by disturbing the soil. We're also working with the Wurundjeri Narrap Land Management Team, especially in the three-year *Habitat Heroes* project in Fawkner, funded by the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust.

MCMC and the Friends co-hosted a National Landcare conference field trip to

the Merri Park Wetland in September 2014 with the theme: 'Indigenous land management in an urban environment'. Wurundjeri Elder and Narrap Team Leader Dave Wandin and MCMC subsequently presented an overview of experiences of "Sharing caring for Wurundjeri Country."

MCMC was involved in precinct structure plans and planning for the Growling Grass Frog corridors through the proposed urban growth areas of the middle and upper Merri catchment. We will continue to advocate for measures to mitigate the impacts of urbanisation on the health of our waterway-related ecosystems.

In response to the drawdown of MCMC's financial reserves over recent years, a working group is overseeing a review of our business operation. Meanwhile, successful introduction of new software has streamlined project management and information systems.

Our net carbon emissions have been reduced through installation of solar panels on the MCMC office roof in East Brunswick in partnership with the Moreland Energy Foundation Ltd.

The achievements documented here wouldn't have been possible without the dedicated, skilled and knowledgeable staff of MCMC, and I thank all those who worked for the Committee this year. Best wishes to longstanding Parkland Team Leader, Ben North, in his new role in local government. Thanks also to the council officers, councillors and community volunteers who contribute to our work.

Ann McGregor, President



Planning and Coordination

Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) is funded by each of its member Councils to work on issues affecting biodiversity, stream health, landscape, heritage and amenity along waterway corridors in the Merri catchment. This funding also supports our governance structures and processes.

Our biggest focus this year was again on impacts of the massive expansion of urban growth in the upper Merri catchment. We also strongly advocated for the creation of public open space in some key locations along the lower Merri.

We made comments on: 11 planning permit applications, seven planning scheme amendments, one Structure Plan and two whole-of-water cycle assessments for new precincts.

We were involved in: master-planning for Growling Grass Frog habitat, workshops for Integrated Water Cycle Management planning and a study of ground-water dependent ecosystems, all in the Growth Corridor; meetings about the upgrade of the Wallan Sewage Treatment Plant, a working group for a new wetland in Coburg, and providing ecological information for upgrades to the Merri Shared Trail.



Parkland Management

Our Parkland Management Team restores, revegetates and maintains indigenous vegetation at over 60 sites in the environs of Merri Creek, its tributaries and adjoining catchments. We also do ecological surveys. A key aspect of all our work is providing opportunities for community involvement.

This year we planted 14,550 plants. Of these, 3% were trees, 6% shrubs, 87% ground-storey and 4% semi-aquatics.

Our 2014 [Flora and Fauna report](#) outlines key sightings and discoveries from the year.

Community and volunteer contribution

The Parkland Team hosted 49 community events including weed management, surveys, harvesting of seed, planting, and cultural activities.

642 community, student and corporate volunteers contributed 1,821 hours to restoring and monitoring the Merri Creek environs (worth over \$54,630).

337 people attended planting events, 106 people helped with weeding and 75 people participated in surveys for birds, Golden Sun Moth and Yam Daisy.

Staff from four corporate organisations volunteered 185 hours of restoration work.

267 people attended presentations, workshops and other engagement events.



Our vegetation management, survey and engagement activities were funded from the following three areas:

Recurrent funding from local government

The Parkland Team delivered vegetation improvement, management and community engagement works through on-going funding agreements with member councils Darebin, Hume, Moreland and Yarra.

Regional and State grants

We delivered projects to the value of \$325,000 funded by state and regional grants programs. This included \$200,000 worth of work for Friends groups to implement grants obtained by the Friends. We provided critical assistance to the submissions for these grants.

Eleven projects focused on waterway vegetation across 15 sites from Northcote to Beveridge

Ten projects focused on terrestrial vegetation including grasslands and stony knolls at 13 sites.



Photos: Top: Plant salvage at Beveridge in March prior to installation of gas pipeline at Merri Creek.

Above: Large-flowered Geranium - MCMC helped to conserve this species through translocation.

Bottom left: Swamp Everlasting, a vulnerable species thriving where highly competitive weeds have been controlled as part of a Melbourne Water grant at Hernes Swamp along a railway reserve in Wallan.

Below: In February 2014 over 500 metres of Merri Creek frontage in Fawkner was burnt by an arson attack which narrowly missed damaging houses and factories.

Contracts

MCMC's Parkland Team continued to maintain 'bushland' areas for local government contracts including sites along the Merri Creek in Moreland and Ngarri-djarrang native grassland in Darebin.

Contracts with other agencies included: Dept of Environment & Primary Industries for rare plant translocations, Melbourne Water for weed works and ongoing restoration at Galada Tamboore; APA Group for weed control and revegetation to mitigate the impact of a new gas pipeline crossing the Merri in Beveridge; Parks Victoria for post-burn weed control at Galgi Ngarrk Grasslands, City of Moonee Valley to burn a grassland in Keilor East, RMIT to lead student excursions at Galada Tamboore, Victorian Indigenous Nurseries Cooperative to show seed collectors remnant vegetation for seed collection.



This year several projects used a 'focal-species' approach: devising and assessing conservation actions that target a single species and also benefit the broader ecosystem. Focal species included Large-flowered Geranium, Spiny Rice-flower, Golden Sun Moth and Plains Yam Daisy.

Fire, both ecological burns and wildfires, generated other projects, in particular the opportunity to revegetate a 1.9 ha site in Fawkner in the aftermath of a dangerous arson attack.

Details of some of these projects can be found on our [website](#).



Catchment Program

Our Catchment Program Team worked with 2,642 people this year in 191 educational and engagement sessions across 7 programs (in addition to Waterwatch) with key support from Darebin, Moreland, Whittlesea and Yarra Councils.

Our Indigenous focus continued with a weaving workshop with Gunditjimarara artist Bronwyn Razem for Wallan Environment Group; a feature interview on Radio 3KND with Wurundjeri Elder, Dave Wandin; making Wurundjeri-style digging sticks with Merri and Edgars Creek Confluence Restoration Group and presenting 'On Country in Darebin' for Darebin Best Start Aboriginal Early Years Forum.

There was a strong focus on waterway impacts from industrial areas near Edgars Creek Thomastown through projects *Waterway Friendly Workplaces* (for Whittlesea Council) and *Pollution Hotspots No More* (state government grant). We extended our engagement to reach 28 industrial workplaces and involved the Thomastown Secondary College and Neighbourhood House, SP AusNet and the University of Melbourne's Centre for Aquatic Pollution Identification and Management.

The Victorian Women's Trust Grosvenor Foundation supported the *Women's cross-cultural exchange through science in the field* project involving nearly 100 students and staff from Darul Ulum College in Fawkner learning about the environment.

Waterwatch

MCMC again hosted the *Merri Waterwatch* program which incorporates sections of the Moonee Ponds Creek, Darebin Creek and the lower Yarra River as well as the Merri. It is part of the 20 year old *Waterwatch Victoria* program. We were funded by Darebin, Mitchell, Moreland, Whittlesea and Yarra Councils and Melbourne Water. This year we held 75 educational sessions at 17 schools for 1,407 students. We also ran 19 talks, tours and training events and participated in 12 community festivals, reaching 1,062 participants.

With funding from Whittlesea Council we began assessing the efficiency of rainwater tanks and creating frog bogs linked to tanks in schools and neighbourhood houses.

We held catchment tours and volunteer recognition events with Friends groups for Edgars Creek, Malcolm Creek and Westgate Park. New monitors were recruited for frog census monitoring and we collated Friends of Merri Creek bird survey data.

In-stream health

Merri Waterwatch supported seven volunteer groups to monitor 12 sites for water quality and biological health. Results showed that the Merri's water quality is still poor. The upstream rural reaches were less polluted than the lower urbanised reaches.

Higher than usual pH (alkalinity) levels were seen in the lower Merri over autumn of 2014 (8.4 - 8.9) and high levels of phosphate continued at all sites over the whole year. All collected water quality data is on the [Victorian Waterwatch database](#).

Photos: Top: NMIT Conservation and Land Management students at a frog habitat survey.

Above left: Plains Yam Daisy seeding.

Bottom left: This hemmed in, polluted and weed infested reach of Edgars Creek in Thomastown was the focus for raising awareness of local businesses on downstream pollution effects.



Financial Report

Summarised Balance Sheet as at 30th September 2014

	2014	2013
EQUITY:		
Retained Funds - Start	30,567	87,482
Transfer to/from Env. Fund Reserve	(7,455)	(2,194)
Add Surplus / (Deficit)	18,981	(54,721)
	42,093	30,567
Environment Fund Reserve Balance	39,007	31,552
Retained Funds - End	81,100	62,119
Represented By:		
Current Assets:	728,491	513,721
Fixed Assets:	78,447	117,601
TOTAL ASSETS:	806,938	631,322
Less:		
TOTAL LIABILITIES:	725,838	569,203
NET ASSETS:	81,100	62,119

Summarised Statement of Income & Expenditure For the twelve months to 30th September, 2014

	2014	2013
INCOME:		
Grants		
Municipalities	598,684	556,127
Other Government	127,929	135,440
Non Government	15,942	162,750
Contracts	538,335	476,304
Profit on Sale of Fixed Assets	2,195	-
Sale of Publications	435	884
Environment Fund Donations	7,165	1,828
Interest & Sundry Income	13,971	22,660
Total Income:	1,304,656	1,355,993
LESS EXPENDITURE:		
Wages, Salaries & Oncosts	1,151,063	1,213,404
Materials & Plant Hire	46,523	51,629
Vehicle Running	22,742	20,771
Admin, Project & General	85,604	79,370
Depreciation & Leave Provisions	(20,257)	45,540
Total Expenditure:	1,285,675	1,410,714
NET SURPLUS / (DEFICIT):	18,981	(54,721)

The above reports have been summarised from the audited financial statements of the Merri Creek Management Committee for the year ended 30th September 2014. The full financial statements and the Auditor's report are on the MCMC website.

Treasurer's Note: It is pleasing to note the turn around from last year's deficit, in part due to our new integrated project management and accounting system. Nevertheless we still face the challenge of rebuilding our Retained Funds to a healthier level.

Auditor: MCMC's Auditor is Fred Gerardson, Registered Company Auditor, Colville Williams & Co. P/L, Lower Plenty. We thank him for his additional pro-bono work during the year on our new integrated project management and accounting system.

Merri Creek Environment Fund: We gratefully acknowledge the 37 generous donors to the Merri Creek Environment Fund, including the Schudmak Family Foundation.

Member Representatives and staff 2013-2014

Committee of Management 2014:

(With number of meetings attended in brackets – max. 4)

City of Darebin:	Cr Bo Li (1), Alison Breach (3), Luke Sandham (1).
City of Hume:	Cr Drew Jessop (<i>Vice President</i>) (4), Damien Harrison (<i>Secretary</i>) (3).
City of Moreland:	Cr Lenka Thompson (1), Vince Andreana (4).
City of Whittlesea:	Cr Stevan Kozmevski (3), Rebecca Passlow (1), Kristen Jackson (2), John Nankervis (2).
City of Yarra:	Carrie Lindsay (0). (<i>No Councillor rep. appointed.</i>)
Shire of Mitchell:	Cr Kevin Mulroney (0).
Friends of Merri Creek:	Ann McGregor (<i>President</i>) (3), Allie Dawe, (<i>Treasurer</i>) (3), Nicole Lowe (<i>Vice President</i>) (4), Pascale Pitot (4), Nick Williams (4), Louise Wright (<i>sub.</i>) (1), David Redfearn (<i>sub.</i>) (1).
Wallan Environment Group:	Rob Eldridge (3).

Sub-Committees in 2014:

The following Sub-Committees met during the year: Executive Sub-Committee, Finance Sub-Committee, and the Merri Creek & Environs Strategy Implementation Sub-Committee. Reports were issued in lieu of Planning & Issues Sub-Committee meetings.

MCMC Staff:

Manager:	Luisa Macmillan
Admin/Information Officer:	Ray Radford
Administration Officer:	Monica Williamson
Finance Officer:	Ruth Rankin
IT Manager/Strategic Projects:	Tony Faithfull
Cleaner:	Emily Jordan, Akash Bhalla

Catchment Program Team

Special Engagement Programs Coordinator:	Angela Foley
Waterwatch Coordinator:	Jane Bevelander, Trevor Hausler

Parkland Management Team

Conservation Program Manager:	Katrina Roberg
Team Coordinator:	Ben North, Dave Woods
Ecological Restoration Planner:	Brian Bainbridge
Ecological Technical Assistant:	Michael Longmore (part time)
Team Leader:	Megan Maroney
Team Members:	Sarah Bates, Jim Brien, Aaron Eulenstein, Malcolm Hauser Clayton Fenech, Michael Longmore, Amy O'Dell.
Temporary Team Members:	Peter Barrow, Tom Dell'Oro, Jason Hannon, Ben Hodgins, Kyvelie Tsolakis.



Merri Creek Management Committee

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ABN: 13 025 599 242.