



Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre

Annual Report

August 2020 to August 2021

Our vision

A place where everyone can connect with nature to improve health and wellbeing and be inspired to care for our precious natural environment



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Message from the Chair



The last year has been a very challenging year for us all due to the pandemic, but one good outcome is that people have been encouraged to exercise outdoors. Many wonderful photographs, observations and questions about nature have appeared on social media from those who are really starting to notice our natural world. This positive trend is very pleasing, and I hope it will continue as we learn to live with COVID and begin to interact with each other once more.

Another positive outcome of this very difficult time is that our attention has been drawn to the importance of nature for our own health and wellbeing. We are hearing about the dreadful increase in mental health issues following lockdowns, but we are also learning about research programs that show how being in nature is so good for us.

Fortunately, thanks to our talented volunteers, we were still able to hold our open days and workshops. Our annual recognition of World Mental Health Day in October 2020 was held online and was a very positive and well attended event.

In February 2021 we were able to hold our World Wetlands Day celebration at our home at Truganina Explosives Reserve. What a wonderful day it was, with activities for all and we were able to present our signed MOU and catch up with our strategic partners who are all helping us design a purpose-built centre.

Every year the organisation Keep Victoria Beautiful gives Sustainable Cities Awards to recognise and celebrate positive actions taken by communities in urban areas to protect and enhance their local environments. We were delighted to be Highly Commended in the Environment Award category in 2020.

I am thrilled to be able to congratulate Melissa Sheedy, our social media coordinator, on her appointment as Hobsons Bay's Young Citizen of the Year in 2021. Mel was also awarded the Leadership Development Grant by the Wettenhall Environment Trust for her outstanding contribution to our organisation and to the natural environment. Well done and well deserved, Mel!

Thank you all – our supporters, our partners, our members and volunteers, and especially our program leaders and the Committee of Management who give so much of their time, knowledge and skills to Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre Inc. We can only achieve our vision to connect people with nature through your generous time and commitment.

I look forward to meeting you all face-to-face next year and I hope that everyone who has rediscovered the natural environment during lockdowns will continue to enjoy it and perhaps join us in working together to ensure that nature is nurtured for future generations.

Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre Incorporated (HBWC Inc) Strategic Directions

Following incorporation in 2018, our working group identified four key areas that will enable us to work towards our vision. Our aim is to provide opportunities for:

Recreation for Health and Wellbeing

Providing community activities through open days and walks either face to face or online. We encourage everyone to spend time in nature during lockdowns through our social media posts

Education and Learning

Holding actual and virtual workshops and talks to raise awareness of the natural environment as well as promoting the benefits of nature to our own health and well-being.

Conservation

Engaging with other organisations for conservation activities such as working with Deakin University's Blue Carbon Lab in their wetlands research and taking on the Birdlife Australia role of the Guardian for the Cheetham and Altona Key Biodiversity Area.

An Inspiring Meeting Place

Working with our strategic partners - Hobsons Bay City Council (HBCC), Deakin University, Melbourne Water, Greater Western Water, Ecolinc Science and Technology Innovation Centre, Cirqit Health and Birdlife Australia and Grimshaw Architects on the development of a concept design for our future wetlands centre at H D Graham Reserve.

In 2020/2021 we have been limited in the number of activities we can hold at our temporary home at Truganina Explosives Reserve, Altona due to the pandemic. Fortunately, through the use of online tools, we have been able to continue with our open days and workshops. Our social media posts have encouraged everyone to take their exercise out in nature whenever possible. All our activities are advertised through our website at <https://hobsonsbaywetlandscentre.org.au>, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/hobsonsbaywetlandscentre/> and Instagram page [hbwetlandscentre](#).

HBWC is very keen to welcome new members so if you are not already a member and would like to join us, please find our membership form on our website or contact one of our committee members. If you would like to volunteer with us, please let us know how you would like to help.

Our continued success is only possible because of the commitment and dedication of our volunteers with support from small grants and in-kind assistance from other organisations.

Our Organisation

Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre Incorporated can only operate through our dedicated volunteers that provide skills, expertise and their time to make our work possible. Our volunteers are passionate about the natural environment and our community and we are so grateful for all their help.

Our Values

In October 2020 our members were invited to help our Executive Committee define our values as an organisation to guide us into the future. We were very fortunate to have Hayden Raysmith AM volunteer to facilitate an online session for us to articulate and agree on our values.

Our values define who we are, what we stand for and how we will achieve our purpose. They are the foundation for our policies, actions and behaviours and uphold the vision of the organisation. They let everyone else know what is important to us and how we will engage with them. Decisions we make will reflect our values and be directed towards achieving our aims. Our values require all who work in or for the organisation to embrace and reflect those values.

Inclusivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect for people from all cultures, identities and abilities • Respect for indigenous culture and heritage • Caring for people, community and the natural environment • Connecting to members, volunteers, participants and partners
Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being honest and accountable • Being fair and ethical • Being transparent and open
Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning from the past, embracing new ideas and adapting to change • Being courageous • Demonstrating best practice in pursuit of excellence
Stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurturing of healthy, sustainable ecosystems, biodiversity and protection of species • Promoting the wellbeing and hopes of the community through the natural environment • Delivering careful, ethical and professional governance of the organisation • Creating a legacy for future generations
Promoting joy and wonder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a sense of fun, awe, curiosity and inquiry • Opening people’s eyes to the natural world • Inspiring people to explore and appreciate nature and the rich tapestry of ecosystems, particularly across Hobsons Bay

Volunteers – Ambassadors for Nature

Over the year, HBWC Inc has moved rapidly along its journey to establish a Centre which will provide a gateway to the wetlands and connect people with nature. Every part of that journey was managed by volunteers with only the occasional limited project funding for short term roles. Volunteers also battled COVID restrictions but admirably took to working online via Zoom. Members volunteered their time, and membership doubled over the year, totalling 58 at August 2021.

When completing a Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning survey assessing volunteer hours in not-for-profit organisations, HBWC estimated that 30 volunteers had contributed at least 3,870 hours in 2020-2021. We are so very, very grateful to all those people who have given up their time and contributed their energy to be ambassadors for nature in our wonderful wetlands. Our volunteers are supported by our Volunteer Coordinator, Sandra Wilson.

Committees

From August-October 2020 the organisation continued to be managed by an Executive Committee elected from the Working Group of members at the previous AGM:

Dr Marilyn Olliff (Chair), Jacqui Bramwell (Secretary), Nick Olliff (Treasurer), Cr Sandra Wilson, Penny Bell and Sandy Gonzalez de la Vega (Student Representative).

Following our Annual General Meeting in November 2020 a new Committee of Management was elected:

Dr Marilyn Olliff	Chair,
Penny Bell	Deputy Chair
Jenny Mitchell OAM	Secretary
Nick Olliff	Treasurer
Jacqui Bramwell	Until 6 June 2021
Sandra Wilson	
Gordon Lescinsky	
Kevin Wood	
Craig Rowley	From 31 July 2021

As for previous years, we continue to share our workloads across teams and subcommittees. Members and volunteers are invited to join in to help in any of the areas:

Centre Development – Working towards a purpose -built centre.

Team leader: Gordon Lescinsky

Public Relations and Events (PR & E) – Connecting with our community

Team leader: Penny Bell

Citizen Science – Bringing science to everyone

Team leader: Nick Olliff

Governance – Strengthening our organisation

Sub-Committee Chair Marilyn Olliff to June 2021, Kevin Wood from June 2021

Our Partnerships

Strategic Partners

Our significant progress during the year would not have been possible without the support of our strategic partners. In February 2021 we signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Hobsons Bay City Council (HBCC), Deakin University, Melbourne Water, Greater Western Water, Ecolinc, Cirqit Health and Birdlife Australia to commit to working together to achieve our vision and purpose.

Hobsons Bay City Council continues to support our community activities by allowing us the shared use of Truganina Explosives Reserve, COVID permitting, and providing grants and in-kind assistance for our open days and workshops. The support and advice from the HBCC Conservation Team has been invaluable. HBCC also supports the development of a purpose-built centre by providing funds for the development of an architects brief and to engage an architect to design the centre. A project steering group with HBCC and HBWC meets weekly to progress this project.

With our partners we will be able to provide opportunities for:

- Relaxing with family and friends in the natural environment and more formal programs to improve health and wellbeing.
- Education for all ages - nature play for the very young, secondary and tertiary students, through to research programs and adult education.
- Environmental Conservation focussing on our wetlands and waterways, engaging in conservation initiatives and inspiring everyone to care for our local key biodiversity areas and of course Cheetham Wetlands, the internationally recognised Ramsar wetlands nearby.

Other Partners and Supporters

HBWC Inc continues to engage with other organisations at both government and community level. We are building lasting relationships with the Bunurong Land Council and other Traditional owners, the Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, through the concept design of the proposed new centre and in future operations.

Parks Victoria, Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (CMA), Corangamite CMA, Greening the West, Lead West, Altona Village Traders, Truganina Explosives Reserve Preservation Society, Louis Joel Arts and Community Centre and many other groups and organisations have joined in the conversation and support us in enhancing the health and wellbeing of everyone and our natural environment.

We are registered with Wetlands Link International, a world-wide wetlands network to share our journey with other centres and learn more about wetlands. Our volunteer, Jackie Kerin, is helping us build our relationships with other centres along the East Asian Australasian flyway.

Our Program Areas

Our work is managed, and our progress achieved, through the activities of our volunteer teams and subcommittees.

Public Relations and Events – connecting with our community

Objective: to promote the centre and invite community participation in events that help people connect with nature.

Successful outcomes:

- Two open days, six workshops, walks and talks,
- 1285 Facebook and 861 Instagram followers and
- Over 300 subscribers to our quarterly eNews.

Our enthusiastic and talented Public Relations and Events team, led by Penny Bell, continued to engage with our community despite the onerous pandemic lockdowns experienced during the year.

Penny is supported by Sandra Wilson (strategic adviser), Rob Mancini (creative director), Melissa Sheedy and Ella Henson (social media coordinators), Rebecca Gelsi (events coordinator), Dave Witty (until June) and Carol Challis (newsletter editors), Penny Rawlins, Christine Rockley, Phillipa Marchbank, Jackie Kerin and Sally Lock.

Engaging with the community

Last October we recognised World Mental Health Day and welcomed the migratory birds back for the summer. COVID restrictions meant that these Open Day activities were online. A conversation with volunteers Dr Rebecca Patrick and Sandy Gonzalez de la Vega *Hope, Coping and Wellness: Mental health benefits of connecting with nature* was the highlight of the day.

We were fortunate to hold our World Wetlands Day celebration at the Truganina Explosives Reserve in February between two lockdowns. Hobsons Bay City Council provided significant assistance on the day and we had a huge range of nature-based activities including walks and talks, a citizen science event with Deakin University's Blue Carbon lab and many fun activities for kids making it a really wonderful event for over 250 visitors. We displayed our signed Memorandum of Understanding with our partners at the celebration, and Vice Chancellor of Deakin University, Professor Iain Martin, spoke about plans for a new Wetlands Centre. Our thanks go to Rebecca Gelsi, our Events Coordinator, for organizing a wonderful day and to Jenny, our secretary, for a robust Covid-19 plan to make sure we could all meet face to face.

Our workshop program continued to be very successful with six workshops using a combination of online and face-to-face activities. Thanks to our workshop presenters, Gordon Lescinsky, Chris Rockley, Rob Mancini, Rob Walsh and the HBCC Conservation Rangers Suzette Rodorega and Andrew Webster.

Our workshops have been supported by generous grants from HBCC, including HBCC's Recovery and Reconnection Grants program, aiming to reconnect people following COVID restrictions. This allowed us to introduce a project focussing on a sustainable workshop delivery system, coordinated by Chris Rockley. This project is not only organising workshops but is documenting the program and processes for use into the future.

A walking working group is developing a series of wetlands walks for the wider community once we are out of lockdown. Many of our volunteers participated in events hosted by others including presentations at Altona Primary School, Louis Joel Arts and Community Centre and the Day by the Bay Festival.

Reaching out online

Many of our talks and workshops are available through our website and social media posts. Volunteers Melissa and Ella create inspired Facebook and Instagram posts on a regular basis, and Rob and Terttu Mancini look after our website.

Centre Development – working towards a purpose-built centre

Objectives:

- to develop a feasibility study and business plan to ensure that the purpose-built centre achieves the vision of the HBWC.
- to engage with key partners for the mutual benefit to all of a purpose-built Wetland Centre in Hobsons Bay.

Successful outcomes:

- Published Feasibility Study
- Signed MOU
- Engagement of Architects.

We are working towards a purpose-built wetlands centre to be located close to Laverton Creek at HD Graham Reserve, adjacent to Truganina Park. The Wetlands Centre will enable us to provide areas of relaxation and learning close to the rich biodiversity of Hobsons Bay and the western region and help us demonstrate that our local environment requires ongoing habitat protection and management.

The HBWC Centre Development team was led by Jacqui Bramwell and Gordon Lescinsky at the start of 2020/2021, continuing the development of the Feasibility Study and strengthening our partnerships with key organisations. The study was published on our website in October 2020.

In 2019/2020 HBCC engaged Associate Professor Phillip Roos from Deakin University's School of Architecture and Built Environment to facilitate the partner roundtables and to develop an architects' brief for the centre. On completion of the architects' brief in November 2020, Phill continues to work with the team on a pro-bono basis.

In December 2020 a Project Steering Group (PSG) was formed and chaired by HBCC Strategic Project Managers, initially Margaret Scanlon who, after her move to Southern Grampians Shire, was replaced by Paris Zenonos. The PSG meets weekly and includes Gordon Lescinsky, Marilyn Olliff and Phill Roos.

In July, HBCC appointed Grimshaw Architects, with a team of specialist consultants, to complete the concept design of the proposed centre. The Grimshaw team includes expertise in biophilic design, wetlands landscaping, indigenous design and culturally responsive engagement practices, ensuring that our new centre will be designed to be aligned with the natural environment for the best possible visitor experience.

Gordon now leads the team and is supported by many of our volunteers who bring valuable skills and knowledge to the discussions including Dr John Kean, Dr Mike Weston, Dr Rob Walsh and Kevin Wood. Our thanks also go to Adrian Davey from Altona's Birdcage Café for his ongoing advice as a café proprietor,

Phill Roos for architectural support and to HBCC for funding the development of the Concept Design, facilitating the Project Steering Group and for contributing their skills, enthusiasm, and experience.

We are looking forward to the next stages in our exciting journey towards a purpose-built Centre, which will focus on raising funds for the building itself and its operations.

Citizen Science and Conservation

Objective: to identify and encourage Citizen Science projects that will engage people with the environment.

Key outcomes:

- Blue Carbon Lab event
- Learning about gall midges
- Appointment as Key Biodiversity Area (Cheetham and Altona) Guardian.
- KBA health report published.

In addition to working with our community and on our proposed new centre, our organisation is committed to working with other organisations to enhance and protect the natural environment.

Citizen Science

While the Citizen Science team's objective is to identify and encourage Citizen Science projects that will engage people of all ages and backgrounds with the environment, COVID restrictions throughout the year impacted on what could be achieved. Our Melbourne Waterwatch activities had to be put on hold as volunteers could not gather or were prevented from travelling. The break in activities has presented time for reflection on future Citizen Science projects while occasional activities could still be carried out during short breaks in restrictions.

Our Citizen Science team leader, Nick Olliff, is working with other volunteers who are keen Citizen Science supporters to make plans for when we have emerged from COVID restrictions. Despite the restrictions, Nick, with help from Lance Lessels, Marilyn and Gordon has:

- collected some data on Gall midges in the beaded glasswort in our saltmarshes for Deakin University
- continued to work with the Blue Carbon Lab Citizen science projects and facilitate the activity at our February open day
- Purchased pond dipping nets and a lens for recording macro invertebrates to make future water sampling easier to manage
- Facilitated a meeting with Hobsons Bay City Council, Deakin University's Blue Carbon Lab and local community organisations to share ideas for future blue carbon projects
- Liaised with Australian Citizen Science Association to discuss future Citizen Science projects in our area

Key Biodiversity Guardianship

We were delighted to be appointed the guardian of the Cheetham and Altona Key Biodiversity Area by Birdlife Australia. As the Guardian of the KBA, we are entrusted with the collection of data that will help determine national and global conservation priorities and actions. This is an important role, one that will help protect this significant area and its biodiversity.

Nick Olliff started the process in October 2020 and passed it to Kevin Wood to take on the role of completing the annual KBA health check. Kevin's work involved liaising with the relevant government organisations to report on their management practices for the area and compiling the data generated by Birdlife Australia and other amateur bird surveys.

Our Chair, Marilyn, with help from other volunteers, has made presentations to promote our work at a range of community and government meetings, including the Port Phillip Bay (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar Site Coordinating Committee; Landcare Australia; Greening the West and the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority.

We continue to liaise with international and national networks including Wetlands Link International and the People and Parks Foundation. With assistance from Jackie Kerin, we are building our relationships with other wetlands centres along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway to promote activities along the birds' migratory flyway from Australia and New Zealand to their breeding grounds in the Arctic summer.

Governance – the way we do things

Objective: to set out the way we do things for an effective, efficient and happy organisation.

Key outcomes:

- Engaged pro-bono legal team
- Achieved Charity Status
- Application for Deductible Gift Recipient Status lodged
- Updated Rules of Association
- Memberships acknowledged and approved
- Insurance maintained

The Governance Sub-Committee aims to address key governance areas to enable the organisation to pursue its purpose effectively and meet its legislative and regulatory obligations.

One of the key tasks was to develop our purpose to ensure that it met the expectations of our organisation, our community, our strategic partners and for registration as an environmental organisation.

At the last AGM in November 2020 the following purpose was approved and incorporated into our Rules of Association:

Purpose and objects

- The purpose of the Association is to protect and enhance the natural environment along the north-western shoreline of Port Phillip Bay.
- Without limiting the ways in which the Association may achieve its purpose referred to in subrule (1), the specific objects of the Association are:
 - a. providing opportunities for the community to engage in nature-based activities to benefit their health and wellbeing and enrich their appreciation of nature;
 - b. providing facilities where people of all ages can learn about the natural values of the area and ways to care for it;
 - c. protecting the biodiversity of the wetlands for future generations through conservation and research; and
 - d. establishing an accessible and inclusive centre to inspire people to volunteer and work together for the benefit of the wetlands.

Our secretary, Jenny Mitchell, has worked tirelessly to ensure that due process is followed to meet any government obligations that are required by a community-led not-for-profit organisation.

Jenny worked closely with the pro-bono support of White and Case International Law Firm to apply for charity status from the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission. Our application was successful and we received Charity status earlier this year. We are now in the process of applying to the Register of Environmental Organisations to provide us with Deductible Gift Recipient status to enable our donors to receive tax exemptions for their donations.

We are particularly grateful to White and Case, Justice Connect, who brokered the connection with White and Case, and to Hobsons Bay Community Fund who covered expenses associated with our application.

Our Governance Subcommittee was led by Marilyn until May 2021 when Kevin took on the roles as Subcommittee chair. With strong support from Jenny, Nick and Craig Rowley, the Subcommittee continues to develop the necessary policies and procedures needed for our organisation

Our Publications

We produced a number of publications between August 2020-August 2021, and also worked with partners to produce others. These included:

Feasibility Study 2020, detailing the need for a sustainable wetlands centre in Melbourne's west (HBWC, October 2020)

Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre Architecture and Landscape Brief (Dr Phillip B Roös, Ms Lana Van Galen, Dr Simon Kilbane, Prof David S Jones, and Ms Emma Duncan, Live+Smart Research Laboratory, School of Architecture & Built Environment, Faculty of Science Engineering and Built Environment, Deakin University, 2020)

Cheetham and Altona Key Biodiversity Area Annual Health Check Report (HBWC, 2021)

ENews (HBWC, quarterly 2020 and 2021)

Financial Report for the financial year 2020/2021

Treasurer's Report

Income was derived from State and Local Government grants, membership fees, donations, events and tickets for workshops. Five paid workshops were held during the year and two Open Day Events, one at the Truganina Explosives Reserve, the other online, with fees paid to presenters. Other expenses related to equipment, including a laptop computer, stationery, on-line training for volunteers, and promotional material.

Balance in the HBWC Inc bank account at 1 July 2020 was \$14,955.09 and at 30 June 2021 was \$31,608.50. Membership at 1 July 2020 was 24 and at 30 June 2021 was 52 being an increase of 28 members. The balance carried forward comprises \$20,939.00 allocated funds and \$10,669.50 which is unallocated. There was an underspend of \$1,130.00 on the grant awarded by Hobsons Bay Community Fund (HBCF) to assist with the DGR application process. This was due to much of the legal work being given pro bono to HBWC. This has been ear marked to assist financing future Open Day Events with approval from HBCF.

Successful Funding Applications

Provider	Amount requested	Completion Date	Purpose
HBCC - Small expenses grant	\$500	Dec-21	Admin expenses/ insurance
HBCC - Vibrant Communities Grant	\$4,510	Dec-21	Workshops for 2021
HBCF – Community Impact Grant	\$1,500	Jun-21	Application for DGR status costs
HBCC – Recovery and Reconnection grant	\$15,800	June-22	Community engagement and workshops

Financial Statement 2020/2021

Balance carried forward		\$14,955.09
Income:		\$
Bank Interest	15.70	
Grants	22,310.00	
Memberships (52)	1,040.00	
Donations	973.76	
Workshops and Events	1,603.22	
Total		25,942.68
Expenditure:		
Insurance (2)	833.80	
Equipment	2,849.82	
Training courses	1,000.00	
Workshops	2,198.0	
Events	843.50	
CAV Fees and Rules changes	429.40	
Office supplies and stationery	474.75	
T Shirts	660.00	
Total		9,289.27
Balance:		
Total		31,608.50

Public Funds Account

As part of our bid to become a registered charity with DGR status we have set up a Public Fund Account which currently has zero funds.

Nick Olliff
Treasurer

18 October 2021

Contact us

We welcome new members, volunteers and supporters throughout the year.
Membership forms are available on our website at www.hobsonbaywetlandscentre.org.au
Please contact us through email HBWCgroup@gmail.com or message us through FaceBook
<https://www.facebook.com/hobsonsbaywetlandscentre/>



Partners



We acknowledge the Bunurong people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land and waterways of Hobsons Bay and pay our respects to their Elders past and present. We also extend our respects to the Elders past and present of the Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri.