



Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre

Annual Report

August 2019 to August 2020

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



Contents

Message from the Chair.....	3
Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre strategic directions	4
Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre Volunteer Working Group 2019/2020.....	4
HBWC Executive Committee 2019/2020	5
HBWC Community Supporters 2019/2020	5
Key partners	5
Hobsons Bay City Council	5
Deakin University:.....	5
Department of Education & Training’s Ecolinc Science and Technology Innovations Centre.....	6
Melbourne Water	6
City West Water.....	6
Birdlife Australia	6
Cirjit Health	7
Subcommittee Reports	7
Feasibility Study and Business Plan – working towards a purpose-built Centre	7
PR & Events – connecting with our community	8
Revenue – securing funds for our future	9
Governance – the way we do things	9
Citizen Science – science projects for all	9
Financial report for the financial year 2019/2020	10
Successful funding applications	10
Treasurer’s Report	10
Financial Statement 2019/2020	11
Contact us	12

Message from the Chair



Over the last year our organisation has made great progress in working towards our vision to connect all people to nature. It has of course been more difficult during the last few months with the Covid-19 pandemic but our wonderful volunteers have risen to the challenge.

Highlights of the year included our two themed open days, World Mental Health Day in October 2019 with Dr Justin Lawson from Deakin University's School of Health and Social Development telling us how being outdoors makes our brains work differently and World Wetlands Day in February 2020 with Dr Maria Palacios and Dr Melissa Wartman from Deakin University's Blue Carbon Lab increasing our understanding of carbon sequestration in saltmarsh areas. These two critical areas of research highlight how vital it is for us, as humans, to engage with nature from all perspectives and strengthened our resolve to achieve our vision.

2020 arrived with terrible bush fires, and while they didn't reach Melbourne we did experience the smoke and haze from hundreds of kilometres away making us aware of the distress experienced by both our rural neighbours and their natural environment.

When the Covid-19 pandemic arrived in March we could no longer use our temporary home at the Truganina Explosives Reserve or meet with our friends and neighbours due to lockdown, but our volunteers continued to work through online meetings and social media. One of the few positive outcomes of the lockdown was that our local community took the opportunity to spend more time outdoors, discovering the flora and fauna of our area and sharing their enjoyment of nature through social media.

During the year we have continued to develop very strong connections with our key partners Hobsons Bay City Council, Deakin University, Melbourne Water, City West Water, Ecolinc, Cirqit Health and Birdlife Australia. As a result, in March our proposed wetlands centre was listed as a regional priority by Hobsons Bay City Council and in July it was promoted as an enabling project in the North and West Melbourne City Deal - a plan for our region for the next 20 years.

Writing this message in our Annual Report gives me, as Chair of the Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre, a perfect opportunity to publicly thank you all – our supporters, our working group members, and especially our Team Leaders and Executive Committee who continue to contribute so much of their time and resources to our organisation. I look forward to working with all our volunteers as we continue to develop our ongoing engagement with the wider community and our plans for a purpose-built centre.

If you are not already a member, please do join us on this very exciting journey as we look forward to engaging with one another, learning about our natural world and just being in nature in the post-Covid world.

Dr Marilyn Olliff, Chair

Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre strategic directions

We are making great progress in our aim to create an accessible and inclusive wetlands centre that provides opportunities for:

- recreation for health and wellbeing
- education and learning in our natural environment
- conservation and research programs to care for nature
- connection with others at an inspiring meeting place.

Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre has two main areas of activity: Operations where we engage with the community in nature-based activities and Centre Development where we work with our partners to develop a new purpose-built Centre.

Operations are led by our PR & Events and Citizen Science teams through ongoing engagement with the wider community offering a range of nature-based activities. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic we provided activities from our temporary home at Truganina Explosives Reserve. We had to limit our activities to online engagements from March to July but are now looking forward to holding outdoor activities and face to face workshops as we emerge from lockdown. All activities are advertised through our website at <https://hobsonsbaywetlandscentre.org.au/>, quarterly newsletter, Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/hobsonsbaywetlandscentre/> and our Instagram page [hbwetlandscentre](https://www.instagram.com/hbwetlandscentre/).

The Centre Development is progressing well. A Council budget allocation from Hobsons Bay City Council (HBCC) in 2019/2020 to complete our feasibility study and commence a detailed concept design has enabled us to make significant progress. The Centre Development team is working closely with our partners and we are well on the way to engaging an architect for a detailed concept design by the end of the 2020/2021 financial year.

The purpose-built Centre will be located near the bank of Laverton Creek at the south-east section of HD Graham Reserve, adjacent to Truganina Wetlands and Truganina Park. This will enable us to provide areas of relaxation and learning close to the rich biodiversity of Hobsons Bay. It will help us demonstrate that our local environment requires ongoing habitat protection and management. Our Centre Development team is working closely with HBCC through their implementation of the H D Graham Reserve Master Plan.

We have a very exciting year ahead. After our 2020 AGM on 5th November 2020 we are looking forward to working with our Committee of Management, members and volunteers.

Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre Incorporated 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.

Volunteer Working Group 2019/2020

The Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre Volunteer Working Group grew to 24 volunteers with a wide range of experience, skills and networks keen to work together to achieve our vision. Six members of the working group formed an executive committee to develop a strategic plan that set and prioritised tasks to progress the centre.

Executive Committee 2019/2020

Dr Marilyn Olliff	Chair and Governance Subcommittee leader
Jacqui Bramwell	Secretary and Feasibility Study Subcommittee leader
Nick Olliff	Treasurer and Citizen Science Subcommittee leader
Cr Sandra Wilson	Revenue Subcommittee leader
Penny Bell	Public Relations and Events Subcommittee leader
Sandy Gonzalez de la Vega	Student Representative, social media and events manager

Community Supporters 2019/2020

Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre is supported by many local people and organisations that provide in-kind help from time to time.

We would particularly like to acknowledge Jackie Kerin, Loraine Callow, Carol Challis, Matt McArthur, Sharon Walsh, Kristine Konings, Julie Hayes and Susie Ingles from NatureWest for their generous help with our Open Days.

We are very grateful for the help and advice provided by Dr Phill Roos and Lana Van Galen from Deakin University and Adrian Davey from the Birdcage Café with our Centre Development workshops and the provision of space at the Louis Joel Community Centre for the roundtable meetings.

Key partners

Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre has made significant progress this year in the development of a purpose built centre thanks to our key partners.

Hobsons Bay City Council

- continues to permit the shared use of the Under Keeper's Quarters, Truganina Explosives Reserve, Altona
- has provided financial support for activities through small community and environmental grants
- has invited HBWC to participate in the implementation of the HD Graham Reserve masterplan which includes the establishment of a wetlands centre
- recognises the opportunity to facilitate health and recreation, education and conservation programs in an inspiring, accessible meeting place, enabling inclusive outdoor experiences in nature for vulnerable cohorts such as the elderly, and people with disabilities.

Deakin University

- has given approval to continue partnership development through the Deakin/Hobsons Bay Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
- recognises the opportunity for the proposed centre to support the University's ongoing research interests in the area, including long-term migratory shorebird conservation, blue carbon and the health benefits of connecting with nature

- recognises the opportunity for a field studies centre to facilitate a number of teaching programs delivered by the School of Life and Environmental Science, and School of Health and Social Development (such as health benefits of contact with nature and ecological determinants of health).

Department of Education & Training's Ecolinc Science and Technology Innovations Centre

- is located in Bacchus Marsh to provide specialist wetlands education services statewide, however cannot meet current and projected demand
- could second a teacher to the Centre and hire teaching and lab space to deliver wetlands education to primary and secondary schools, in line with the model Ecolinc have adopted with the Deep Creek Environment Centre in Cardinia shire, which opened on 26 October 2019.

Melbourne Water

- supported the initial development of the Centre by the provision of \$10,000 from the Liveability Fund for the development of the feasibility study and contributed to the development of the architects brief for the Centre Development
- provides support on Melbourne Waters grants and incentives programs (Liveable Communities Liveable Waterways)
- provides advocacy at the strategic level through programs such as Waterways of the West and other Government-led opportunities
- supports the ongoing Citizen Science WaterWatch program at Truganina Wetlands (Notla Drain) and attended HBWC open days in 2019 and 2020;
- provides advice and support regarding waterway and wetland values, vegetation plantings and impacts of centre on these values.

City West Water

- supports the concept of a wetlands centre and has contributed to the development of the architect's brief for the Centre Development
- has discussed stormwater harvesting infrastructure to irrigate the Wetlands Centre site and provide recycled water for public toilets
- acknowledges that harvested stormwater could also sequester carbon from freshwater wetlands, and ensure year-round water inflow into Truganina Wetlands
- is working with HBWC and HBCC on the potential for funding for infrastructure in relation to stormwater harvesting.

Birdlife Australia

- has welcomed the Hobsons Bay Wetland centre as an affiliate which can operate as a hub for at least eight of the threatened species conservation programs underway in this nationally significant Key Biodiversity Area, from the mouth of Laverton Creek and including the Ramsar site.

Cirqit Health

- is a health innovation hub in Melbourne's west that aims to bring the community together and reinforce the foundations of health. Representatives from Cirqit Health participated in the Centre Development round tables
- in January 2020 colleagues and friends of Dr Mukesh Haikerwal AC visited HBWC to share ideas on providing relief and recovery through nature-based activities
- HBWC and Cirqit Health will continue to develop this relationship based on the understanding that being in nature is beneficial to the health and wellbeing of everyone.

Subcommittee Reports

Projects are managed and completed through five subcommittees.

Feasibility Study and Business Plan - 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.

The subcommittee is led by Jacqui Bramwell with Gordon Lescinsky, Penny Bell, Mike Weston and Rebecca Patrick. The subcommittee is now referred to as the Centre Development Team.

HBWC used funds from Melbourne Water to engage Ross Allen from Loci Environment & Place Inc. to work on the feasibility study and business model for the Centre. Loci is a nonprofit organisation supporting city shaping practitioners to deliver healthier environments and people. Ross worked closely with the team and provided a final draft of the document in April 2020.

We would also like to thank Melissa Butler, Deakin University, who prepared a health and social impact assessment for the feasibility study as part of her research requirements for Masters of Public Health, Deakin University. Melissa's assessment provides useful insight into the relationship between the beneficial impact of nature on health and social outcomes and the proposed wetland centre.

Between December 2019 and June 2020 three round tables were held with our key partners: Deakin, HBCC, MW, CWW, Ecolinc, Birdlife Australia and Cirqit Health. The discussions were led by Dr Phill Roos, Associate Head of School - Industry Engagement and Director Live+Smart Research Lab at Deakin University. Phill explored the ideas from each partner and then fed them into the development of an architect's brief for a purpose-built centre.

We continue to strengthen relationships with other partners including Parks Victoria, the Catchment Management Authority and other State Departments, local businesses including Adrian Davey from the local Birdcage Café, and LeadWest, an advisory committee to the six local government councils of Melbourne's western region.

In March our proposed wetlands centre was listed as a regional priority by Council and in July it was promoted as an enabling project in the North and West Melbourne City Deal, a plan for our region for the next 20 years.

PR & Events – connecting with our community

Subcommittee objective – to promote the centre and invite community participation in events that help people connect with nature.

The team is led by Penny Bell, with Sandy Gonzalez de la Vega, Rob Mancini, Dave Witty, Melissa Sheedy, Sandra Wilson and Penny Rawlins.

During the year we held three very successful workshops encompassing art, science and nature with Chris Rockley, Rob Mancini and Rob Walsh.

We held two themed open days:

- World Mental Health Day with Dr Justin Lawson in October telling us how being outdoors makes our brains work differently, we had over 100 visitors, and a range of activities for all ages, and
- World Wetlands Day with Maria and Melissa from Deakin's Blue carbon lab increasing our understanding of carbon sequestration in saltmarsh areas. We had about 200 visitors and again a range of activities.

We are very grateful to Dr Rebecca Patrick, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Health, Deakin University, who provides ongoing advice and assistance in relation to HBWC's aim to promote health and well-being at our community events as well as for our Centre Development.

After the World Wetlands Day event in February, Sandy Gonzalez de la Vega, our event coordinator left us to take up a placement and complete her degree. She did some really wonderful work including organising our open days. Sandy has now moved on to her last year at University but still keeps in touch.

As well as walks and talks at the open days we have hosted many small groups for nature-based activities, including a bus trip to Cheetham Wetlands led by Dr Mike Weston, Associate professor, Faculty of Science, Deakin University for staff from Wyndham and Hobsons Bay Councils. This was a very important exercise to raise awareness at both councils about this highly significant Ramsar site and we are very grateful to Mike for his advice and assistance at our events and for our Centre Development.

We also walked and talked with the Melbourne photographic group from Birdlife Australia, visitors from the Hunter Valley Wetlands Centre and Dr Mukesh Haikerwal and his colleagues and friends from Cirqit health.

In addition, several of our volunteers took our message out to other events such as the Sea Shepherd festival and the fete at Williamstown Primary School.

Through our social media, we continued to grow our following (we have almost 1000 Facebook and 700 Instagram followers) and capture people's imagination through regular posts. This outstanding effort is thanks to Melissa Sheedy, who HBWC supported to achieve a Wottenhall Trust Leadership award for her work and ongoing development in environmental education.

With a Council grant Wain Fimeri, local award-winning filmmaker, created a wonderful video to showcase our wetlands that is available on YouTube and has been shared far and wide.

Through a federal grant managed by Jenny Mitchell, we launched a stunning website that was developed and is now maintained by Rob and Terttu Mancini.

Our beautiful quarterly online newsletter is sent to more than 250 supporters thanks to Mandy Pritchard for the first two editions and now Dave Witty. You can find our newsletters on our website.

Revenue – securing funds for our future

Subcommittee objectives: To source and secure funding opportunities to make HBWC vision a reality.

The team has called on several volunteers to complete grant applications to help us grow our organisation and hold community events. This year the Centre has successfully raised over \$25,000.

The scope of the subcommittee includes:

- identifying potential sources of capital and operational funding, tied and untied funding
- ensuring alignment with Strategic Plan and Feasibility Study
- maximising the potential for future financial sustainability
- applying for small grants and holding fund raising events

Jenny Mitchell and Rob Mancini have added a GiveNow donate button to our website to help secure additional funds. Jenny is now working to register HBWC as a not for profit charity with Deductable Gift Recipient status.

Governance – the way we do things

Subcommittee objective – to set out the way we do things for an effective, efficient and happy organisation.

The team is led by Marilyn Olliff with Nick Olliff and Sandra Wilson. Significant progress has been made in the development of our governance documents including:

- our values
- our rules, roles and responsibilities
- volunteer management
- legal obligations
- strategic planning and quarterly review
- master contact list database
- document management.

Citizen Science – science projects for all

Subcommittee objective – to identify and encourage Citizen science projects that will engage people with the environment.

The team is led by Nick Olliff with assistance from Gordon Lescinsky, Rob Walsh, Lance Lessels and Sandy Webb. Our Citizen science volunteers continued with Melbourne Water's Waterwatch and are engaged with Deakin University's Blue Carbon Lab in a science project in our saltmarsh. The team continues to develop their skills and work closely with other organisations that provide citizen science opportunities such as the Arthur Rylah Institute, the Victorian National Parks Association and Hobsons Bay City Council's conservation rangers.

Unfortunately, citizen science activities have been put on hold since March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Financial Report for the financial year 2019/2020

Successful funding applications

Provider	Amount requested	Completion Date	Purpose
HBCC - Small expenses grant	\$500	Jun-21	Admin funds for HBWC
HBCC - Vibrant Communities Grant	\$4,670	Jun-21	Funds for 6 professional workshops in 2020
CMA's Ramsar Grants Program 2019-2020	\$2,200	COVID Delay	Coastal weed workshop
Federal (Gellibrand) Stronger Communities Grant	\$10,000	Completed	Website development
Federal Government Volunteers grant	\$4,300	Jun-21	Volunteer support costs
HB Community Fund	\$1,500	Jun-21	Legal assistance with DGR
HBCC - Small expenses grant	\$500	Dec-21	Admin expenses/insurance
HBCC - Vibrant Communities Grant	\$4,510	Dec-21	Workshops for 2021

Treasurer's Report

Income derived from Government and HBCC grants, membership fees and donations was used to fund two major events, three workshops and a wetlands tour, a promotional film, completion of the HBWC feasibility study and launch of the HBWC website.

Owing to COVID – 19 restrictions the AGM was delayed and since the end of the financial year HBWC has received further funding and the balance as of 5 Nov 2020 was \$18,591.

Membership at 30 June 2020 was 24.

Financial Statement 2019/2020

Bank balance brought forward	12,719.93
Income:	\$
Interest	37.69
Membership	160.00
Workshop & Events takings	1,285.70
Grants	23,237.00
Donations*	759.75
Total Income:	25,480.14
Expenditure:	
Bank fees	1.40
Workshops & Events	3,406.98
Insurance	322.50
CAV lodgement fees	59.20
Web site development	7,700.00
Wetlands promo film	2,500.00
Feasibility Study	8,734.20
Misc**	520.70
Total Expenditure:	23,244.98
Balance for 2019/2020:	+2,235.16
Bank balance carried forward	14,955.09

*Donations includes float from 2018/2019, sausage sizzles, raffles etc. as well as direct donations.

**Misc includes incidental running costs such as stationery, office equipment, first aid etc.

Nick Olliff
Treasurer

20 October 2020



Partners



Contact us

We welcome new 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/>

We acknowledge the peoples of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of these lands and waterways and pay our respects to all Elders past, present and emerging.