

# BELLARINE CATCHMENT NETWORK



## ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024





## **Bellarine Catchment Network**

865 Swan Bay Road, Mannerim, Victoria, 3222

[www.environmentbellarine.org.au](http://www.environmentbellarine.org.au)

[www.bgevc.com](http://www.bgevc.com)

**Front cover image:** Students from Star of the Sea Primary School enjoying a canoeing session out on Swan Bay as part of our Ramsar Grant, funded by the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority.

**officeworks**

Printed and supported by Officeworks Geelong.

## **Acknowledgement of Country**

Bellarine Catchment Network acknowledges Wadawurrung, Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community.

We are committed to ensuring that everyone is treated with dignity and respect regardless of their ability, cultural background, religion, ethnicity, gender identity, intersex status or sexual orientation.





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# ABOUT BELLARINE CATCHMENT NETWORK

Bellarine Catchment Network (BCN) is a non-government, incorporated body and registered charity that is governed by a volunteer committee of management.

The network is made up representatives from 39 key catchment and coastal organisations (both government and non-government) with an integrated catchment management focus. This includes environment groups, 'Friends of' groups, land managers, community groups, Landcare and Coastcare.

BCN offers a variety of services to educational institutions, the wider community, other environmental organisations, businesses and government bodies. We run a number of programs and projects in Geelong and the Bellarine Peninsula including citizen science, on ground works and the facilitation of environment focused events and activities.

**Our Vision** is for 'Healthy, flourishing and diverse ecosystems cared for by an aware and engaged community.'

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**PRESIDENT** Vicki Perrett

**IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT** Graeme O'Leary

**VICE PRESIDENT** Beth Ross

**SECRETARY** Margot Busch

**TREASURER** Geoffrey Waite

**GENERAL MEMBER** Jon Duthie

**GENERAL MEMBER** Andrea Dennett



# NETWORK MEMBERS

Australian Parents 4 Climate Action  
Barwon Coast Committee of Management  
Barwon Estuary Project  
Barwon Heads Association  
Bellarine Bayside Foreshore Committee of Management  
Bellarine Landcare Group  
Bellarine Peninsula Orange-bellied Parrot Regional Group  
BirdLife Bellarine  
Borough of Queenscliffe  
Breamlea Coastcare  
City of Greater Geelong  
Clifton Springs Curlewis Coastcare  
Coastcare Victoria  
Conservation Volunteers Australia  
Corangamite Catchment Management Authority  
Drysdale Clifton Springs Curlewis Association  
Friends of the Barwon  
Friends of the Bluff, Barwon Heads  
Friends of Begola Wetlands

Friends of the Bellarine Rail Trail  
Friends of Buckley Park  
Friends of Edwards Point  
Friends of Hooded Plover Bellarine  
Friends of Indented Head Woodland Nature Reserve  
Friends of Ocean Grove Nature Reserve  
Friends of Point Richards  
Friends of Ramblers Road  
Friends of the Red-capped Plovers  
Friends of Yellow Gums  
Geelong Environment Council  
Geelong Field Naturalists Club  
Geelong Sustainability  
Greening Australia  
Ocean Grove Coastcare  
Parks Victoria  
Queenscliff Environment Forum  
Southern Ocean Environment Link  
SpringDale Neighbourhood Centre  
Swan Bay Environment Association

Clifton Springs Curlewis Coastcare following a successful weeding event in Clifton Springs supported by BCN and Alison Marchant.



# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

*Vicki Perrett*

It's my pleasure to report that Bellarine Catchment Network (BCN) had a very successful year in 2023-24. BCN has continued to fulfil its purpose as an environmental charity, focused on its strategic goals of activating, engaging and empowering people to care for the environment. In collaboration with our network members and partners, BCN has delivered a wide range of educational activities, bush regeneration and environmental services across the Bellarine and Greater Geelong.

Amongst many worthwhile achievements, I would like to highlight the following programs, projects and outcomes.

- **Impactful Network** - Uppermost is the Network itself. It really is an exemplar model of collaborative environmental conservation. As of June 2024, we have 39 member organisations comprising Landcare, Coastcare, Friends of groups, community groups as well as land managers, local government and authorities. The Network involves over 3400 active volunteers and has nearly 40,000 followers. It's pleasing to see new groups emerging and seeking to join the Network each year. This year, we welcomed the Friends of the Red-capped Plover.
- **Summer Program** - The holiday season provides us with a wonderful opportunity to connect with and educate visitors to our region, especially families and children.
- Last summer, through our ongoing partnerships with land managers and Coastcare Victoria, BCN helped deliver the biggest summer program yet.
- **Renovation of Bellarine Environment Centre** - Thanks to a major infrastructure grant (\$350,000) from the City of Greater Geelong, much-needed renovations were achieved at our main facility. A project team including staff and committee expertly managed the works, which were completed on schedule and below budget. Now BCN and BLG staff have a contemporary and accessible work environment. Network members can access the free Community Meeting Room and improvements to storage sheds have streamlined the borrowing of BCN's extensive equipment and resources by members and local community groups.
- **Regeneration of Murrk Ngubitj Yarram Yaluk** - A personal favourite is the partnership project with Barwon Water to regenerate the old Bellarine Basin site.
- As a Friend, it's exciting to observe long-dormant native plants reappearing, once smothering weeds are removed. Bunjil's regular appearances high above us are a special treat. In collaboration with the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, our staff and the volunteers, the site's biodiversity is steadily improving.
- **Strengthening Partnerships** - This year BCN collaborated with 12 organisations including: Barwon Water, Barwon Coast, Bellarine Bayside, Bellarine Community Health, Bendigo Bank, Borough of Queenscliffe, City of Greater Geelong, Committee for Geelong, Country Women's Association, Geelong Cemetery Trust, Hive Gallery and Ocean Grove Rotary. BCN is keen to continue strengthening and diversifying these partnerships. We also appreciate our long term partnerships with Bellarine Landcare and the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority.

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

*Vicki Perrett*

- **Organisational Achievements** - Hard work by the Leadership Team and the volunteer Committee has delivered the following outcomes:
  - A turnaround from a net loss of \$55,702 last year to an operating profit of \$95,272 this year.
  - An improved balance sheet that will enable BCN to recruit more staff in FY2025.
  - A revised organisational structure that better supports BCN's strategy and growing demands.
  - Valuable business sponsorships from Davidsons, GravlT, and Officeworks Geelong, which have helped reduce operational costs.
- **Networking & Climate Advocacy** - BCN's strategy is guided by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Network members recognise the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to stabilise the earth's climate and protect nature.
  - On behalf of the Network, I've participated in briefings and advocacy efforts with local, state, and federal politicians, making submissions on topics such as waste management, circular economy, clean energy, and nature laws.
  - In 2024, BCN became a member of the G21 Sustainability Pillar. I have enjoyed representing the Network at Pillar meetings, the Annual Forum and on the Clean Economy subgroup while Matt has joined the Nature Positive subgroup.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For a small organisation, BCN punches above its weight. Our significant achievements are the result of the considerable expertise, passionate commitment and consistent professionalism of our staff. I would like to thank our wonderful team led by Matt Crawley (Executive Officer) and Naomi Wells (Coastal and Biodiversity Program Leader) plus Daniel Morrison (Biodiversity Field Officer) and Sophie Small (Bellarine Landcare Group's Landcare Facilitator).

I wish to sincerely thank my fellow committee members: Graeme O'Leary (Immediate Past President), Margot Busch (Secretary), Beth Ross (Vice President), Geoffrey Waite (Treasurer), Andrea Dennett (General Member) and Jon Duthie (General Member). After five years as President, Graeme O'Leary deserves special acknowledgment for his significant and sustained contributions to BCN. He's also been a great support for me as the incoming President.

In closing, no doubt we can all agree that the Bellarine is a very special place that deserves to be recognised as a Distinctive Area and Landscape (DAL) and protected from the negative impacts of pest species, population growth and climate change. I congratulate all network members and their many volunteers for their ongoing conservation of our flora and fauna. Together we will continue to protect and enhance our region's biodiversity and ecosystems and strive to make Country healthy.



**VICKI PERRETT**  
President

# ACTING TREASURER'S REPORT

*Graeme O'Leary*

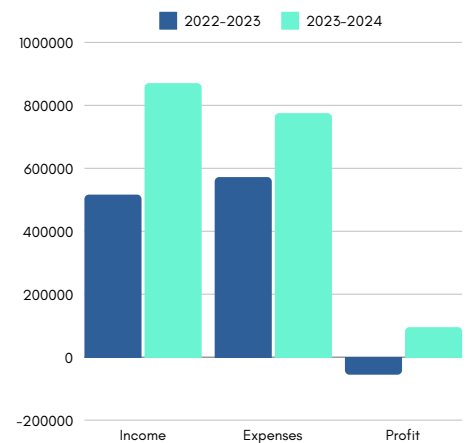
As BCN is now a registered charity, we must comply with the regulations of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). With a total annual revenue over \$500,000, BCN is classified as a medium charity. The ACNC requires financial statements to be based on the accrual accounting method, not cash, as we've previously used.

Put simply, cash basis accounting records transactions when you pay or receive money, whereas accrual basis accounting records them when you get a bill or raise an invoice. Previously the BCN balance sheet did not include accounts receivable. The accrual method increases our assets by \$20,020 and raises our GST liability by \$1820.

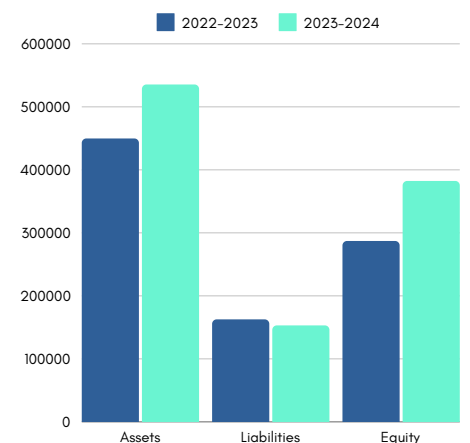
The opinion of the Independent Auditor's Report was positive stating that the financial report gave a true and fair view of BCN's financial position and performance as at 30 June 2024 and complied with the relevant Australian Accounting Standards.

In 2023-24, BCN improved its balance sheet with an increase in equity of \$95,273. This result positions BCN well to appoint more staff in FY2025. Going forward we're confident accrual accounting will provide much a more accurate picture of the organisation's financial position and performance.

Profit and Loss	30 June 2024	30 June 2023
Income	\$ 870,472	\$ 516,390
Expenses	\$ 775,200	\$ 572,092
Profit	\$ 95,272	\$ (55,702)



Balance Sheet	30 June 2024	30 June 2023
Total Assets	\$ 535,491	\$ 449,798
Total Liabilities	\$ 153,102	\$ 162,681
Total Equity	\$ 382,389	\$ 287,117





# EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

The BCN staff commitment to deliver programs and projects for our Network and partners continued during 2023-24. Continued alignment with our Strategic Plan through projects and partnerships aligning to the goals to Activate, Engage and Empower was a focus for the team.

Team members continued to deliver important projects with new partners including Bellarine Community Health with the Land, Sea and Me program and existing partners such as Geelong Cemeteries Trust with revegetation, school activities and bush regeneration. Our team supports the community through their expertise in community engagement and education, and technical skills across pest plant and animal management, plant identification, and biodiversity protection and enhancement. Along side these technical skills the BCN team supports the community through advice, advocacy, grant applications and delivery.

BCN continued to support and auspice projects for our member and aligned groups, whilst staff members are represented on numerous committee's, reference groups and conference presentations. There are examples of how the team implement core project areas, whilst continuing to reach outwardly and support the community in diverse ways.

This year provided the team with a challenge to deliver more projects and initiatives on reduced staffing hours. This has enabled the Network to plan to meet our growing demands for the 2024-25 year and beyond and expand our staff and resources to meet these growing demands.



**MATT CRAWLEY**  
Executive Officer



**NAOMI WELLS**  
Coastal and Biodiversity Program Leader



**DANIEL MORRISON**  
Biodiversity Field Officer



**SOPHIE SMALL**  
Bellarine Landcare Group, Landcare  
Facilitator

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

## *Bellarine Environment Centre Upgrade*

For the past 10 years, the Bellarine Environment Centre on Swan Bay Road has supported amazing outcomes across Geelong and the Bellarine. With our continually growing network, an upgrade to the facilities at the Bellarine Environment Centre was needed. In early 2023, BCN successfully acquired funding through the City of Greater Geelong's Infrastructure Fund to provide much needed upgrades and updates to the Centre. We are very grateful for the support and funding provided by the City.

This grant enabled us to upgrade the meeting room, kitchen and office spaces making them comfortable and user-friendly for our network. We were able to provide ways to accommodate people with wheelchairs and disabilities through a unisex, all abilities toilet, via an accessible entrance, and disability parking. We also upgraded our storage sheds to allow ease of access for network members to borrow our equipment and resources and have also installed a car port on the property to safely store our community trailers, again for ease and accessibility for our network members.

BCN committee members and staff worked extremely hard to coordinate and manage this construction project and we are grateful for their contribution. The Community Meeting Room has already been used by many Network members, providing a free, accessible and comfortable space that supports many projects and outcomes to help benefit our environment and our community.

We also want to thank Barwon Water for supporting us through the build by allowing us to use their shed at Murrk Ngubitj Yarram Yaluk as a temporary office space for 6 months. Without their support, we would not have been able to continue running school days, monthly weeding working bees, our entire summer program and our ongoing biodiversity works.

**Left:** Jim Mason with BCN staff and committee at the launch of the Centre.

**Right:** the Centre's free Community Meeting Room.



# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

## *Murrk Ngubitj Yarram Yaluk*

In 2023-24, we kicked off our partnership with Barwon Water by continuing to facilitate the monthly 'Friends of Murrk Ngubitj Yarram Yaluk'. In Wadawurrung, this name means 'headwaters of continuous flowering river' and has become a unique opportunity to engage community in the benefit of bush regeneration and biodiversity preservation. Throughout the year, over 150 volunteers have attended these working bees, contributing their time each month to remove 3ha of weeds from this reserve including Red Inkweed, Serrated Tussock, Cats Ears and South African Weed Orchids. Collectively they have contributed over 380 volunteer hours at this site.

This hard work has already paid off through visible and significant regeneration outcomes being observed. Throughout the year, BCN also facilitated additional events with support from Barwon Water including a family-friendly activity over the April school holidays, a 1-year birthday event supported by Barwon Water and numerous site visits for interest groups such as the Geelong Field Naturalists Club.

Each month, BCN also worked alongside the Gobata Dja team from the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, continuing to control and manage weeds across the site. Members from BCN's Biodiversity Team have worked hard throughout the year to conserve and improve vegetation biodiversity at this site.

BCN is grateful for the partnership with Barwon Water, and their dedication to preserving and protecting this unique reserve that will soon become a public reserve that all can enjoy.

We would like to deeply thank all the volunteers who have contributed their time at this site - your efforts have led to significant conservation outcomes and is very appreciated.

**Left:** Volunteers at the 1-year celebration event. **Bottom:** A locally rare species discovered thanks to the removal of weeds. **Right:** Children at the April family-friendly day.



# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

## Summer Program

During January 2024, BCN had our biggest summer season yet, thanks to the support of our project partners including Barwon Coast, Bellarine Bayside, the Borough of Queenscliffe, Coastcare Victoria and the City of Greater Geelong. Over the entire month, we facilitated 17 events and engaged with over 1000 people about our local coastal environment, native plants and animals and local volunteer opportunities.

Below is a snapshot of the summer activities facilitated across our region:

- Coastal Education Stall at Barwon Heads and Ocean Grove
- Coastal Education Stall at Eastern Beach x 2
- Beachcomb events for local Surf Life Saving Clubs x 3
- Rockpool Rambles for Summer By The Sea x 3
- Beachcomb events at Portarlington, Indented Head and St Leonards x 4
- Beachcomb events at Clifton Springs and Curlewis x 2
- Beachcomb event at North Geelong
- Coastal Education Stall at the Portarlington Mussel Festival

Thank you to all the volunteers and community groups who helped at each of these amazing events including Breamlea Coastcare, Clifton Springs Curlewis Coastcare, Friends of the Bluff, Friends of Edwards Point, Friends of the Hooded Plover Bellarine, Friends of Point Richards Flora and Fauna Reserve, Friends of Ramblers Road and Ocean Grove Coastcare.

Your contribution is vital and appreciated.

**Top Left:** BCN staff and volunteers from local groups at the Barwon Heads Coastal stall.

**Bottom Left:** Beachcomb participants with Matt at Portarlington. **Right:**

Beachcomb participants with Naomi at Clifton Springs.



# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

## *University and Reference Support*

Once again during 2023–24, BCN supported higher education through opportunities such as work placements and attendance at external events and activities. We value these partnerships with tertiary institutions and see ourselves as a vital link between students and hands-on learning opportunities.

Below is a snap shot of this support:

- BCN Work Placement for Deakin University students x 2
- BCN Placement for Deakin University Masters student
- Federation University Project Placement Outdoor and Environment
- Numerous TAFE and university attendance at activities and events.

## REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE AND REFERENCE GROUPS

Committee and staff represented BCN on a number of external committee and reference groups this year, and also presented at the following forums and conferences.

This year saw the following representations:

- Barwon Water Environmental Advisory Committee
- City of Greater Geelong + Bellarine Rail Trail Stakeholder Group
- Corangamite Catchment Management Authority Community Engagement Network
- Deakin University Environmental Sciences Advisory Board
- Geelong Port Community Liaison Group
- Give Where You Live Loaned Executive Program
- G21 Sustainability Pillar Member
- State Landcare Conference – presentation on BCN delivery and governance model

**Left:** Deakin Coastcarers after a successful weeding activity.

**Right:** Deakin University Work Placement student James.



# OUTCOMES

The below outcomes reflect the broad reach that Bellarine Catchment Network has, from engagement at festivals and school environment days, to resources provided to partners, and grant outcomes. We would like to thank our network members, partners, funders, volunteers and supporters for helping us achieve these outstanding outcomes.

Thank you to all the volunteers, students and participants for joining us this year.

**4,100**

people engaged

**190+**

community events

**24**

school events

**4.6HA**

weeds removed

**3,260**

plants revegetated

**7,000**

resources distributed

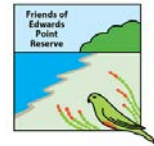


# NETWORK MEMBERS

Thank you to the representatives of all our member groups and organisations who have been part of the network during the 2023-24 financial year. Your contributions to the protection and preservation of our local environment and community is enormous.



Bellarine Peninsula Orange-bellied Parrot Regional Group



Friends of Indented Head Woodland Nature Reserve



Friends of the Red-capped Plover



Queenscliff Environment Forum



# SPONSORS & PARTNERS

## SPONSORS

We want to say a special thank you to **Davidsons**, **GravIT** and **Officeworks Geelong** for their sponsorship. These local businesses support us by providing book-keeping and accounting services, IT support and through printing services. Your contribution is vital to allowing us to continue doing the work that we do for the community and environment.



## PARTNERS

Thank you to all our funders, project partners and supporters for helping us achieve such great outcomes in the 2023-24 financial year. Your continuing support is vital to help us fulfil our mission of preserving and protecting our environment.







@bellarinecatchmentnetwork

**MORE INFORMATION**

Visit [www.environmentbellarine.org.au](http://www.environmentbellarine.org.au)

[www.bgevc.com](http://www.bgevc.com)

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