



NEPEAN CONSERVATION GROUP INC

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Nepean Conservation Group's Mission is

To lead and inspire the community to appreciate, recognise, conserve, protect and celebrate the environment of the Nepean Peninsula.

The NCG acknowledges and pays respect to the Bunurong people, the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters of the Nepean Peninsula.

NCG Winter 2026 Newsheet



Fungi, Sorrento Back Beach, Mornington Peninsula National Park, June 2026. Photo: Ursula de Jong

Welcome to your NCG Winter 2026 Newsheet. We do welcome your feedback and engagement.

Our 2026 committee members are: Ursula de Jong (President), Jane Byrne (Vice-president), Catherine Walker (Treasurer), Eddy de Jong (Secretary); General committee members: John Atchison, Chris Dunn, Lisa Howard, John Trewarne. Ollie Cable has resigned from the NCG committee for personal reasons. We thank Ollie for her time with us and wish her well.

Contacting us: info@nepeanconservationgroup.org.au

President: president@nepeanconservationgroup.org.au

Welcome to our Winter 2026 NCG Newssheet. There is much to report in this Newssheet and lots of NCG engagement opportunities. We have had very busy months and now take the opportunity to report back to you, and to thank our many volunteers who have given of their time and energy for our Nepean Peninsula environment.



NCG STALLS

On Friday 24 April, we set up a stall outside CBA Bank Sorrento, Ocean

Beach Road, being on duty from 10.00am-2.00 pm. Thank you to Jane Byrne, our vice president for organising this [pictured below with Eddy de Jong]. We had a perfect day! We had lots of passing foot traffic from the Sorrento Writers Festival – many visitors, and some interested conservationists from across the city and the State. We handed out brochures, postcards, and chatted to people about the NCG, the work we do and invited them to join the NCG.



On Saturday 2 May we took part in the inaugural Rye Festival with an NCG stall, on duty from 8.00am - 4.00pm. We thank Catherine Walker our Treasurer [shown below with John Trewarne] for organising this one. It was a wonderful opportunity to be part of a larger community event, with lots of people around. Weather very windy and cold! We handed out brochures, postcards, and chatted to many people about the NCG and invited them to join the NCG. We had a plant and weed identity competition and gave away tube stock of indigenous plants to those with correct answers! People had to name 10 plants/ weeds and then could select a plant for their garden. A number used our brochure to help with identification – lots of fun was had by many. Others thought the task too difficult and were happy to purchase tubes at \$5.00 each.



Our Living Culture ramble and meditation finally took place on Sunday 26 April – 12.00-3.00pm, 16 Beach, Rye – Thank you to Ursula de Jong for organising this one.

Third time lucky! We had an absolutely beautiful day. Unfortunately, it clashed with numerous other events and only a small group were able to enjoy this very special event. We met at 11.45am at 16 Beach carpark, opposite the café, on Tasman Drive, Rye, 3941.



The Nepean Conservation Group in conjunction with Living Culture www.livingculture.com.au enjoyed a very special Living Culture Guided Walk followed by a Yidaki-led Meditation on Sunday, 26 April 2026. It was an educational, engaging and empowering way to complete the work undertaken in the 2024-2025 PPBF grant, “Stewardship of the Bay: conserving the coastal environment - Portsea to Rye”. The NCG is most grateful to the State Government for ongoing funding via grants to undertake vital environmental conservation work on the Nepean Peninsula.

The informative two-hour guided walk was led by Hudson from Living Culture. We had plenty of time to ask questions, discuss issues and enjoy the day!



We learned much of the history of this cultural landscape, the meaning of country to the Bunurong and Boonwurrung people; the use of plants, their habits, their relationships to one another, medicinal uses, food plants, flora and fauna ecology; we discussed our experiences of place and why the environment here on the peninsula is both unique in terms of biodiversity and habitat, and critical to the well-being of the inhabitants of

the greater metropolis. It offers respite to city dwellers, but more than that, it is a place where Nature still dominates, and where humans can learn how to live far more sustainably. In nurturing Nature, we are nurtured by Nature. We discussed climate change impacts, and observed first-hand the stress on our vegetation, and in turn on our fauna and birds. Unpredictable wild weather and storms, as well as erosion along this dynamic coast means it is constantly changing.



This “strangler” plant was used to make nets for fishing; we spotted the Jacky lizard who is a master of disguise! The clifftops with prostate vegetation surviving in a harsh habitat, and moss waiting for winter rains to be replenished and grow.



The Yidaki-led Meditation with Uncle Lionel on the didgeridoo commenced at 2.00pm at the Divide.



The Divide above; Lionel and Hudson below.



We learned to relax into Country, and through Lionel, to understand this as a remarkable place of healing if we allow that for each of us. We were asked to share something of what we hoped for as we gathered here. The peregrine falcon hovered over us as we came to rest. We shared some Anzac biscuits baked by Cath. We made ourselves comfortable on the dunes, closed our eyes, listened to the breath of the wind, to the crashing of the waves, felt the warmth of the sun, were touched by salt borne on the wind. We were encouraged to breathe in and out with the didgeridoo, to reflect inwardly, silently on our own lives. We left feeling a little less stressed; and refreshed as we walk back along these beautiful tracks, from the cliffs inland ... thank you Lionel.



Point Franklin to Shelley Beach ramble Saturday 9 May 2026, 10.00-12.00

noon. We thank John Atchison for organising this wonderful ramble – a small adventurous group braved the unpredictable weather! John reports:

We met at the end of Franklin Rd, entering off Pt. Nepean Rd turning right from Sorrento. 5 people attended with 2 people joining later. The weather was mixed with misty rain and periods of sunshine. On this ramble we visited Fort Franklin, Portsea Camp, Cliff Cottage, Barrett's Point and Shelley Beach.



Fort Franklin is a small but historically interesting coastal fortification located near Sorrento on the Mornington Peninsula.

Early Purpose (1870s–1880s): Fort Franklin was constructed in the late 19th century as part of Victoria's broader coastal defence network. At the time, there were fears, especially after the Crimean War and rising European tensions, that foreign naval powers (notably Russia) might attack key ports. To protect the entrance to Port Phillip Bay, several fortifications were built, including Fort Franklin, which worked alongside the nearby batteries and forts, particularly at Point Nepean and Queenscliff.

Strategic Role: Positioned to guard shipping routes entering the bay; equipped with coastal artillery (now removed); operated as part of a coordinated defence system with forts at Queenscliff and elsewhere. However, it was never used in combat.

Decline and Obsolescence: by the early 20th century, advances in naval technology and changes in military strategy made smaller forts like Fort Franklin obsolete. Larger and more modern installations replaced its defensive role.

Today: the site is now largely a historic ruin; managed as part of local heritage conservation efforts; offers scenic views and insight into colonial-era defence planning; it's often overlooked compared to larger nearby sites, but it's an important piece of the Mornington Peninsula's military history.



Portsea Camp has a long and distinctive history on the Mornington Peninsula, shaped by defence, social welfare, and community use.

Early origins (pre-camp): the site sits near Point Nepean, an area of major strategic importance. From the late 1800s, nearby land was used for coastal defence, quarantine, and military purposes as part of protecting the entrance to Port Phillip Bay.

Establishment as a camp (1930s): Portsea Camp itself was established in the 1930s during the Great Depression. It was originally set up as a charitable holiday camp for disadvantaged children, particularly from Melbourne. The idea was to give kids fresh air, structure, and a break from difficult urban conditions.

War years (1940s): during World War II, the camp and surrounding areas were heavily influenced by military activity. The nearby Point Nepean forts were active, and the region became more restricted, though the camp's core purpose as a children's facility resumed after the war.

Post-war growth (1950s–1980s): in the decades after WWII, Portsea Camp expanded significantly to become one of Victoria's best-known youth and school camps. Thousands of children attend for holidays, school excursions, and leadership programs.

Facilities grew to include dormitories, dining halls, sports grounds, and beachfront access. It developed a reputation for character-building programs, outdoor activities, and social inclusion.

Later years and community role: into the late 20th and early 21st centuries, Portsea Camp has continued operating as a not-for-profit organisation, adapting to: School camps and group accommodation; Corporate and leadership retreats; and Community and youth development programs, using the local environment to great advantage.

Recent changes: in recent years, the camp has faced financial and operational challenges, leading to: Periods of closure or restructuring; Changes in ownership and management; Ongoing debate about the future use of the site, given its prime coastal location and heritage value.



Cliff Cottage: the cottage was built around 1887, during a period when coastal defence of Port Phillip Bay was a major priority. It originally served as the residence of the Master Gunner at Fort Nepean. This role was important: the Master Gunner was responsible for maintaining artillery and overseeing defensive operations at the entrance to the bay.

Military use (late 1800s – mid 1900s): the cottage sits within what was historically part of the Fort Franklin / Fort Nepean defence complex, overlooking the strategic shipping channel known as “The Rip.” It later housed military personnel during both World War I and World War II, when the area was heavily fortified. Surrounding the cottage are still-visible gun emplacements, bunkers, and fortifications, reflecting its role in Australia’s coastal defence network.

Transition to community use: after the military period, the land became part of what is now Portsea Camp, a long-running charitable camp for children. The cottage was retained as part of the camp’s infrastructure and heritage buildings.

Restoration and current use: in recent years, the cottage has been restored as heritage accommodation, preserving its original character while adding modern amenities. Today it operates as a short-stay property, with proceeds supporting the charitable work of Portsea Camp.

Barret’s Point: the point is believed to be named after an early European settler or local identity (likely the Barrett family connected with early grazing or landholding in the 19th century, though records are sparse). This section of coast was historically used for: coastal observation and navigation reference points; informal fishing and access tracks; proximity to military activity around Point Nepean (quarantine station, forts).

Barret’s Point	Shelley Beach
	

Shelley Beach: Shelley Beach is one of the most picturesque bay beaches on the Mornington Peninsula, located between Sorrento and Portsea along Port Phillip Bay. It is known for its calm clear water, private jetties, colourful boatsheds and steep vegetated cliffs above the beach. The beach is relatively sheltered and popular for swimming, paddleboarding and walking. Access is via tracks from Franklin Road and Hemston Avenue, although parking is very limited. Historically, Shelley Beach has been affected by significant coastal erosion, particularly after the deepening and widening of Port Phillip Heads shipping channels in 2009. Several boatsheds at the western end have been damaged or lost due to subsequent sand movement and cliff erosion.



NCG GRANTS AND WORKING BEES

COAST CARE GRANT SORRENTO BACK BEACH

We had a fine sunny Friday on 1 May 2026 and worked all morning. A team of seven planted 200 plants in areas that have been cleared and prepared under this grant on the upper track at Sorrento Back Beach, meeting at the old ticket office, MPNP, Ocean Beach Road, Sorrento on the way to Coppins Lookout. A tray of indigenous plants:



We made guards, before digging holes, upending tubes, planting, staking and guarding and watering. The NatureLinks team ensured that we safely managed the uneven terrain. This grant has now been successfully signed off and the NCG has applied for another so that we can continue this critical work to nurture this sensitive environment in this magnificent coastal location.



Coast care grant volunteer workers on site – enjoying the weather and the satisfaction of regenerating this coastal site.



MPS PLACE MAKING GRANT Bridgewater Bay wild coast precinct – three successful working bees.

Wednesday 22 April 2026 11.30am -12.30pm We met in MPNP, at St JohnsWood Road Carpark. Our task was planting 150 indigenous plants in the St JohnsWood Road linear bushland reserve with a group of 25 children from St Joseph's Primary School, Sorrento – many of the indigenous plants have been propagated by the children for our bushland reserves. We had perfect weather – so much so that some of the children watered each other as well as the plants!! Thank you to the children, the teachers, the NatureLinks team and the NCG volunteers for a job well done.



Saturday 30 May 2026 9.00-11.30am Bridgewater Bay, MPNP.

A group of NCG volunteers and NatureLinks people met in **MPNP, St JohnsWood Road Bridgewater Bay Carpark at 8.45am**. We undertook to plant 155 indigenous plants – guarding, digging, de-tubing, staking and watering on this very uneven terrain. This is the third planting we have undertaken in this area of the MPNP – amazingly many plants have survived. The polygala is decidedly less and the moonah woodland is thriving, as indigenous plants are colonising the space once again, helped by our supplemental planting. On Friday 26 June the NatureLinks contractors did another sweep through removing and mulching polygala and boneseed and Italian buckthorn. A hand weed is still to be undertaken of polygala seedlings and smilax.



Thursday 25 June 2026 1.30 pm – 2.30 pm

The NCG met with ten grade 4 children from St Joseph's Primary School, Sorrento, their teachers and NatureLinks personnel at St JohnsWood Road Carpark.

We planted 155 indigenous plants, mainly grasses this time, in the St JohnsWood Road linear bushland reserve. We worked efficiently and well – the children had fun and the environment is feeling nurtured. We are so grateful to all involved. And delighted that we have been blessed with lots of follow up rain.



JULY EVENTS – YOU ARE INVITED Thursday 16 July 2026

ENVIRONMENT CIRCLE 2026

DATE	Thursday 16 July
TIME	5.00 – 6.30 pm
VENUE	Sorrento Portsea RSL



Topic: Caring for the environment on the Nepean Peninsula

Speaker: Dr Ursula de Jong, President, Nepean Conservation Group Inc

Dr Ursula de Jong is President of the Nepean Conservation Group, which has been caring for the environment on the Nepean Peninsula since 1973. She is an architectural historian and researcher of place and an Honorary Associate Professor in the School of Architecture and Built Environment at Deakin University. A member of the Heritage Council of Victoria and the National Parks Advisory Council, she is a heritage advocate and an environmental activist. She lives in Blairgowrie.

The principal purpose of the Nepean Conservation Group is the protection, conservation and enhancement of the environment of the Nepean Peninsula through

- conserving and promoting significant natural areas
- mitigating vegetation loss
- creating resilient habitat corridors and biolinks for wildlife
- highlighting issues affecting the environment, and
- promoting ecologically sustainable development principles.

This work has never been more urgent. In the last decade alone the NCG has successfully applied for grants to undertake hands-on work on the ground. Working in partnership with the MPS, Parks Victoria and Bushland Friends Groups and volunteers we have raised over \$750,000 – with every cent spent on our environment. Ursula will highlight a few of these grant projects to demonstrate their need and the beneficial environmental outcomes achieved.

COST: \$5.00 donation

Join us at 6.30 for a meal in the RSL Thai Restaurant

Environment Circle meets third Thursday, February to November 2026

[View this email in your browser](#)



Newsletter June 2026

Sunday 12 July 2026

Regenerating Carranya Walk & Talk

WITH GREG HOLLAND
PRESIDENT MORNINGTON PENINSULA LANDCARE NETWORK

This short presentation, followed by a walk and talk, will explore the regeneration of a 16 acre Main Ridge property, Carranya, from what was predominantly bare paddocks to an extensively revegetated area that made careful use of the existing topography and soil variations.

A multi-year biodiversity survey of the revegetation has documented over 1,210 indigenous species, most of which have been archived on iNaturalist. We also recently gained a Trust for Nature Covenant, which means that the revegetation will be protected forever.

The walk and talk will discuss the various revegetation stages over the last decade, and you will see the beginning of the last stage, which is to replace all pastures with native grasses and herbs.



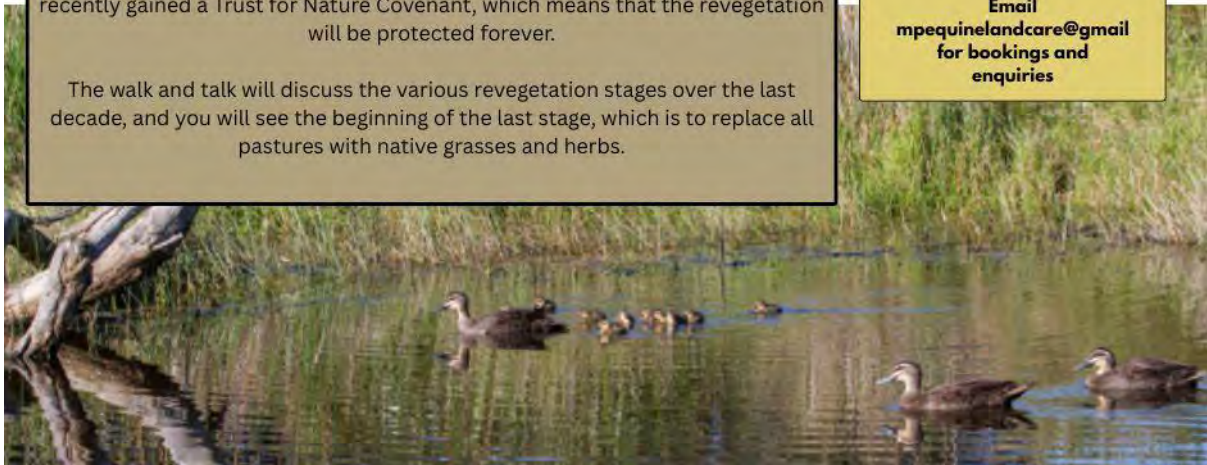
Sunday 12th July

9.30 until 11:30
morning tea/coffee
provided

Free Event

Main Ridge address
provided on registration

Email
mpequinelandcare@gmail
for bookings and
enquiries



26th of July is National Tree Day

The MPLandcare Network are again hosting an event for the Greens Bush to Arthur Seat (Bernie's) biolink. This event will involve revegetating a significant area along Splitters Creek to improve the connectivity and extent of vegetation along Splitters Creek.

To Register for National Tree Day Event

Southwest Mornington Peninsula Landcare presents:

DEEP LISTENING *to Nature*

**THURSDAY 16 JULY
7.30 - 9 PM
@ FLINDERS CIVIC HALL**

*with
Andrew Skeoch*

How can we engage our hearing to connect more deeply to nature around us?

Acoustic ecologist, Andrew Skeoch, will guide you into hearing the communications of nature; developing your listening skills, identifying species by ear, recognising behaviours and repertoire, and finding empathy with the voices of other beings.

Deeper listening also allows us to hear the integrity of entire ecosystems, and reveal what the interactions of creatures tell us about how natural systems function to achieve sustainability.

Andrew's presentations are an immersive weaving of evocative recordings, fascinating spectrogram analysis and original ideas. You'll hear the natural environment around you in a whole new way.



**BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL
REGISTER FOR FREE**

[HTTPS://WWW.EVENTBRITE.COM.AU/E/DEEP-LISTENING-TO-NATURE-WITH-ANDREW-SKEOCH-TICKETS-1989349379546?AFF=ODDTCREATOR&KEEP_TLD=TRUE](https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/deep-listening-to-nature-with-andrew-skeoch-tickets-1989349379546?aff=oddtcreator&keep_tld=true)



Discover land management ways used to sustain a

Bunurong Forest Garden

Sunday July 19th

9.30am - 12.00pm at

Shoreham Camping Ground

Meet at Fisher street carpark



Adam Magennis, is a prominent Bunurong Traditional Owner and cultural landscaper, Kaptify, who represents our local Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation. He will reveal how an indigenous garden can flourish in Shoreham.

A FREE event thanks to the Victorian Landcare Grants - Melbourne Water, for a grant to the Shoreham Community Association.

Morning tea will be provided.

Please book via QR code or contact:

shorehamcommunity@gmail.com





From VNPA:
Welcome to the Winter 2026 issue of our quarterly magazine, *ParkWatch*.

With a state election due this year, we take stock of how nature has fared across [Labor's three terms in government](#). Our state nature timeline maps out the highs – banning cattle grazing, ending native forest logging and creating the central west national parks – alongside the lows, including loophole logging and now cuts to key institutions and agencies.

This edition continues exploring the [aftermath of January bushfires](#) across our state, focussing on Ruffy/Longwood; examines the [lack of a plan for Western Port Bay](#) in the State Budget; investigates the destruction of [Snow Gums at Mount Macedon](#) in April; and rejoices in the highly successful [Grasslands Resurrection forum](#).

From the alps to the mallee, we bring you nature news from right across Victoria. Plus, we've got Krefft's Gliders, Batwing Moths and Spotted Wobbeongs! For the first time in over 300 issues, our cover star is an invertebrate: an Edwards' Alpine Crane Fly, photographed by [Reiner Richter](#). Our land and marine invertebrates quiz celebrates this milestone.

[Read the full edition online](#)

[Read the Winter 2026 edition online now](#)

Please find the MPS 2026 Winter Friends Groups Newsletter attached to this email – enjoy!

Sorrento Surf Lifesaving Club – 10 July 2026 update



SSLSC 10 July 2026.

Members of the NCG committee attended the open day on 7 June 2026. Members of the SSLSC, the wider community and interested visitors were given a conducted tour of the facilities by the building contractors. We learned that the construction will be completed in November 2026. Thereafter the SSLSC will begin the process of moving in. This has been a difficult and complex build. We were told that space allocations for all uses have not yet been determined; the superstructure had to be built in galvanised steel not timber due to planned on-site accommodation; egress and ingress for vehicles, equipment and surf boards etc have yet not been decided; there is not enough water pressure for this site; there is not enough electric power for this site. While this is designated an emergency shelter in case of bushfires, it is not sustainable or self-sufficient in terms of water/ power. There is provision for a restaurant and a bar on the first level. The carpark, infrastructure and walking tracks are yet to be rehabilitated.



SSLSC Open day 7 June 2026.



Illustrations: Madi Mercer @ [ghostgum](#)

This NAIDOC Week has marked **50 years** since NAIDOC became a national movement celebrating the strength, culture, and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

It's an important milestone. And in [environmental justice](#), it's also a reminder of a very long story...

[READ MORE](#)

For more than 65,000 years, First Nations peoples have cared for Country, protected ecosystems, upheld Law, and fought for the right to continue doing so. Long before Western environmental law existed, there were sophisticated systems of governance, responsibility and stewardship grounded in Country.

Across NAIDOC Week, we've been celebrating some key milestones of First Nations environmental justice - from the **Yirrkala Bark Petitions** and the **Wave Hill Walk-Off**, to **Mabo**, the **Uluru Statement from the Heart**, **Treaty** and the First Nations leaders continuing that legacy today.

As part of that, we've reflected on many of the remarkable people we're privileged to work alongside.



Monica Morgan, who achieved a landmark legal victory against racial vilification. **Brendan Kennedy**, helping shape the next chapter of Treaty for the Tati Tati Nation. **Lorraine Williams** and **Tibby Quall**, fighting to protect the sacred Larrakia site of Binybara/Lee Point. **Ruth Langford/Tipruthanna**, asserting Law in Country before the courts. Professor **Anne Poelina**, taking climate justice to the United Nations. And **Zhanāe Dodd**, leading a new generation of First Nations climate advocates. These leaders' stories show that environmental justice didn't begin in a courtroom. It began with caring for Country.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THEM HERE

We hope you'll take a few moments across NAIDOC weekend to explore this **remarkable legacy and the leaders carrying it forward today.**

Elizabeth McKinnon & Nicola Rivers, Co-CEOs, Environmental Justice Australia

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NCG submission Draft Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme Review 2026.

On 29 June 2026 the NCG submitted a response to the Draft Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme Review 2026. We highlighted three areas: Neighbourhood Character Improvements; Improved Vegetation and Natural Systems Retention and Bushfire Management reform. We noted the importance of integration of strategic plans across the Shire; and that priority is given to outstanding recommendations from the 2023 review. We agree that the MP is a special place – and therefore should not be treated on the same manner as the rest of Metropolitan Melbourne. The NCG therefore supports the local strategic context, and the localised planning statement which recognises the MP as a special area, distinctly different from Metropolitan Melbourne. In this context recognising and understanding place is crucial.

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On 9 July 2026, Ursula de Jong attended the Peninsula Climate Alliance General Meeting online.

This was the first general PCA meeting following changes at the MPSC, following Anthony Marsh's resignation, and election to State Parliament. On the agenda were the Shire Climate Plan Meeting 25 May (Minutes are on the web) LINK: <https://www.peninsulaclimatealliance.org/post/peninsula-climate-alliance-contributes-to-climate-resilience-planning> ; noting the renaming the Shire climate committee from Climate Emergency Community Reference Group to Climate Resilience Plan Advisory Committee. Updates were provided on Western Port Terminal [https://www.linkedin.com/posts/strategic-priorities-report-marine-and-ugcPost-7477490481644392448KQZP/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAAHc4agBnOdekERQvAUuMvZFdXCafMFpTyO] and the Cerberus Land Release. Members of the PCA are on community reference groups for these. The PCA will make submissions as needed.

The upcoming State election was noted, and possible collaboration with Environment Victoria considered. The general strategy and PCA Exec Recommendations are: that the PCA focus specifically on climate matters; there will be no candidate forums, nor developing how to vote cards; and to seek candidate views on items of interest to PCA members. Next meeting to be advised.



Wallaby spotted in the MPNP early in the morning – after following footprints for months. Two healthy wallabies bounding across the tracks and vegetation, as well as along the beach on Bass Strait was a wonderful sight to behold. June 2026.

As always, we do welcome your feedback and engagement.

info@nepeanconservationgroup.org.au