

## Action Group's Report for MRSG's 2019 Annual General Meeting

### Famers' Markets



- We have build a strong and diverse leadership team
- We are utilising the MRSG online tools from Google
- Low to no cost online marketing reaching 4 times as many engagements. Will hopefully in time lead to more patrons
- Started a new market in Macedon and expanded the market with 35% more stalls in Woodend
- More community engagement - Landcare / scouts
- More MRSG more often, the September market had 7 Action Groups present
- Engaging with the master plan and have a short term plan with MRSC

Robert Bruhn



## Home Produce Exchange



After being run by Helen Scott for the past few years, the Woodend Home Produce Exchange has now changed hands to Liana Quach who is working alongside Bruce Hedge and Alice Aird to run the swap table at the Woodend Farmers market each month.

The table has seen many conversations, amazing produce and all kinds of other interesting things being swapped and shared. It continues to be a roaring success with crowds of people waiting for the countdown at 10am on the first Saturday of every month!

Liana Quach



## Kyneton Transition Hub

KTH is part of the world wide Transition Town movement which is based on learning self-sufficiency and resilience in the face of declining oil supplies and climate change.

KTH promotes sustainable and resourceful ways of growing edible plants through the use of wicking beds, hugelkultur, mini hot houses, making biochar, compost tea and promoting permaculture.

The 2019 Macedon Ranges Sustainable Living Festival was a great success for our group. We collaborated with the Permaculture Garden Action Group to produce 2 popular talks on hugelkulture and wicking beds with practical demonstrations in the Garden.

KTH also attended the first Macedon Farmer's Market and the May Woodend Farmer's Market (for the first time). Each month KTH has an information stall and produce swap at Kyneton Farmer's Market. Many come to chat and to swap produce.

In November 2018 KTH gave away about 140 vegetable seedlings for the Kyneton Agriculture Show Treasure Hunt Show Bag. About 100 Boomerang bags were decorated and taken away.

#### KTH Groups:

The Kyneton Boomerang Bags group continues to produce great bags from a huge array of donated materials. They are distributed to about 6 businesses in Kyneton. Working bees are held first Monday of the month 1pm to 3pm and the group are looking for volunteers – no experience necessary.



Permies at the Pub meet at the Shamrock Hotel Kyneton every 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday in the month, some are very knowledgeable about permaculture and some know very little. It is very popular and attracts at least 15 to 20 people each time. We exchange seeds, seedlings, news, ideas and stories about our gardens, and recently had 2 speakers on permaculture.

The Community Garden is situated in the grounds of the Kyneton High School. There are over 14 wicking beds which produce an array of vegetables, herbs and other plants. There are also fruit trees and chickens. Sometimes produce is given to the Community Lunches held each Wednesday at the Kyneton Mechanics Institute. Always looking for helpers.

Kyneton Community House gives great support to KTH with giving away boomerang bags, providing a storage room and space to hold working bees.

Kyneton and District Town Square Co-Op Ltd would like the old Kyneton Primary School site to be placed in community hands to run a community hub. More members would help boost their application to the State Government. Over the year they have hosted community meetings, gained co-op status, and introduced voting by sortition, picnics, working bees and a lunch in the Kyneton Mechanics Institute.

Seed Savers: Lyn Godfrey leads the Seed Savers group formerly of Riddells Creek. She has a collection of seeds which are distributed at the various Farmer's Markets and Sustainable Living Festival. Seeds are harvested mainly from her garden and the Community Garden.

Our weekly cuppa and chat is held at Hamster Café every Friday morning, High St Kyneton, and Silvana Predebon, Environmental Policy and Sustainability Officer for the Shire, recently attended to talk to us about communities learning and acting on climate change and the latest Council news.



The Open Edible Gardens event is held in conjunction with the Kyneton Daffodil and Arts Festival in September 2019 and, despite the wet, cold weather there were approximately 600 visits to 11 Open Edible Gardens over the 2 days. Visitors can talk to the gardener and learn their methods of sustainable gardening. Three primary schools participated for the first time and felt it was a great time for the students to show off their hard work.



KTH has enjoyed being a new Action Group of MRSG and thank them for all their help and encouragement. It all keeps us very busy.

KTH would like to thank: Ralf Thesing who visited Sustainable Malmsbury to talk about energy projects, to Peter, David, Rob and MRSG committee who have also given us support and encouragement during our move towards Sustainable Malmsbury.

Websites: <https://mrsg.org.au/kyneton-transition-hub> [www.kynetontransitionhub.com](http://www.kynetontransitionhub.com), [www.kynetononline.org](http://www.kynetononline.org)

Facebook sites: Kyneton Transition Hub, Kyneton Boomerang Bags, Kyneton Permaculture at the Pub, Kyneton Seed Savers, Kyneton and District Town Square Co-op Ltd. For information about Transition Towns: <http://www.gmagazine.com.au/features/2677/towns-transition?page=0%2C0>

Nea Gyorffy

### **Movies that Matter**

Throughout 2019, the Movies that Matter action group has continued to show a selection of sustainability-themed films in a friendly social atmosphere at the Norma Richardson Hall in Woodend. Highlights from the year include:

- October 2018 - Teaming up with the MRSG Waste Action Group to screen *The Clean Bin Project*, an inspiring Canadian documentary about a couple who aim for a waste-free existence. Lisa Richards from WAG helped cater for the event, with an impressive small container of plastic wrappers the only resulting waste to landfill
- March 2019 – screening of *The Reluctant Radical* – a heartfelt story of one man's journey to becoming an environmental activist that resonated strongly with many in the audience
- May 2019 - screening of *Living The Change* – an inspiring solutions-focused documentary, with MrVeg catering with a fabulous plant-based spread
- October 2019 - supporting Gisborne Secondary School's screening of *2040* – the new documentary that explores what the future could look like by the year 2040 if we simply embraced the best solutions already available to us

Come along and join us for our last film of the year on Friday 29 November 2019 in Norma Richardson Hall.

Big thankyou to Jasmine Hufschmid, Bridgid Soames, Lisa Richards and Claire Rowland for their help organising MTM and to all our friends who come along for the movies each time.

Anita Foerster

## **Renewable Energy**

Our main project is still the Macedon Ranges Community Energy Park – a \$50m - \$80m hybrid wind, solar and battery storage renewable energy development to be located in the pine plantation around 6km south of Woodend. Our major achievements have been the Minister for Planning granting an exemption from the shire wide ban on wind facilities to enable our project to go to a planning stage. In addition the State Minister for the Environment and Climate Change Hon. Lily D’Ambrosio announced the beginning of the consultation process for the project at the Sustainability Festival in March this year. Our next step is to formally achieve tenure to the site – a process involving detailed discussions between ourselves, our project partner Windlab, the landholder - Hancock Victoria Plantations, and the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning.



Other projects have been the promotion of renewable energy around the Shire. Our efforts include the successful installation of an \$83,000 solar system for New Gisborne Primary School, and other projects for which submissions have been lodged.

Special mention should be made of Barry Mann, Ralf Thesing and Al Reid, who have now been working on the renewable energy park project for more than 10 years.

Thanks also to Ben Cumming, Jan Corigliano, Jon Morgan, Pete Walsh, Vicky Wilks, Paul Tagell, Karl Kny, David Gormley-O’Brien and Geoff Burns and his colleagues at Windlab.

Bruce Mildenhall

## **Sustainable Homes**

### This Year

The main objective of Sustainable Homes this year was to increase involvement, and we achieved this in spades! “Volunteerism” in the group increased dramatically. We didn’t make our target of engaging 60% of the group’s membership in voluntary capacity\*, but we got pretty close (51.3%): an outstanding result, considering that our “signed up” membership almost doubled! The group currently has 191 members.

### Sustainable House Day

As in previous years MRSG supported the Renew’s Sustainable House Day in September. Five member families generously opened their homes: Jocks Gully at Ashbourne, Anne Road Strawbale, Lot 6, and UDH in Woodend and Cool Temperate

1980s BV Retrofit at Newham. MRSG also supported three other properties with volunteers and/ or advertising.

Sustainable Homes AG provided publicity via the August and September farmers' markets in Woodend, the August farmers' market in Mt Macedon, local media including newspaper and podcast interviews and a poster/ postcard campaign.

AG members assisted with signing-in visitors on the day.



Council supported the event with a bus tour which included two of the member homes and two others.

### Other Events and Activities

We set out to run 4-6 events, including Sustainable House Day, during the year and delivered 3.

#### Sustainable Living Festival

Sust Homes AG presented two speaker sessions, one on compact housing (including Tiny Houses), and one on Passive House.

#### Speaker Night

Richard Keech, a respected authority on home energy efficiency retrofits, shared experience from his own home retrofit and hundreds of inspections of other homes at a meeting in May.

We refined our approach to promotional activity with help from Helen Scott (Produce Exchange). Member engagement via the website didn't take off as we'd hoped, but the website has provided a conduit for sharing information via the MRSG newsletters, now being published on a regular basis.

During winter we welcomed a cohort of new members from a local service club. They are currently engaged on two retrofit projects with the aim of improving occupant health and wellbeing in winter, and propose to tackle further projects referred in 2020. These projects provide potential for other members to contribute, and an opportunity for learning the practical skills of retrofitting.

#### 2019-2020

In 2020 we will align local participation in Sustainable House Day with MRSG's Sustainable Living Festival (which will be held later in Spring). Many other Sustainability Groups run their events separately from the national event, and we hope the change of date will give us opportunities to try some new ideas and enable more visitor participation. We're already on the lookout for homes to include in the program!

Our experience organising speaker events this year has revealed the challenge of making them cost-effective. We will try some different ideas in 2020, including tapping the experience of our members (in voluntary capacity) and selecting topics that will support projects being run by other AGs.

We will bring members opportunities to develop their retrofit skills via the home retrofit project and some workshop-style activities, and for those planning new homes, a visit to a "best practice" display home and discussion of options.

In Brief:

Measure	Explanation	2018 result	2019 target	2019 result	2020 target
Participation in AG events other than SHD	Total number of participants in activities organised by Sustainable Homes Action Group, regardless of their membership status or Action Group affiliation	-	180	66	100
Volunteerism	Action Group members contributing time and skills in support of Action Group activities.  Performance improves if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>more AG volunteers are involved in running and publicising events during the year</li> <li>there are more member contributions to the website</li> </ul> * Calculation is explained below	14%	60%	51.3%	60%
Sustainable House Day participation	Total number of visitors at properties supported by MRSG	474	500	476	500
Membership	Number of MRSG members affiliated with "Sustainable Homes" in their profiles	100	100	191	191

\* *Volunteerism ratio calculation:*

Count all instances of member volunteer activities and express as a percentage of the AG membership. For example, for 2018:

*AG members opening homes: 1*

*AG members participating in (organised) SHD publicity (including making props): 8*

*AG members engaged as volunteers on SHD: 5*

*AG member contributions to the website: 0*

*Total =14*

*Expressed as percentage of 100 members =14%*

*Note: Percentage of members who volunteered time and skills was less than 14%; some members volunteered on more than one occasion*

Sue Barker

### **Sustainable Living Festival**

Last March the Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group celebrated its tenth annual Sustainable Living Festival. By all accounts it was a very successful event. The Woodend weather was very well-behaved; indeed, the day was perfect. The Woodend Community Hub location, shared by Woodend Neighbourhood House, Cobaw, MRSG, and the toy library, was an attractive, coherent space with access to power and amenities and its deciduous trees provided welcome shade for stallholders and visitors.

We followed two precepts from the previous couple of Festivals which had worked well: 1) that the Festival should be held at the same time and in the same proximity of the Woodend Community Farmers' Market, thereby almost guaranteeing a large host of visitors; and 2) that admission to the Festival should be free, thereby not excluding anyone from the opportunity to attend and learn various aspects of sustainable living.



This time we added two more aims: 1) that the Festival should be waste free; and 2) that in addition to providing as per usual an arena for local businesses and non-profit organisations to exhibit their sustainable living products and activities, the Festival should give equal billing to the twelve action groups of the Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group, enabling them to showcase to the general public their good work and activities. The resultant activities and demonstrations were impressive.

Sustainable Homes provided a series of short seminars on tiny houses and passive houses; Woodend Bee-Friendly Society brought the Honey-Bubble Caravan and spoke to visitors on how to make their gardens more attractive to pollinating insects and birds; Permaculture Garden teamed up with Transition Town Riddell and Kyneton Transition Hub, using the permaculture garden to give demonstrations of growing food at home; M.R.V.E.G provided delicious meals (I was particularly impressed with the Buddha Bowls), and the Waste group used a special washing up trailer, hired from Mount Alexander Sustainability Group, to clean and re-use any crockery or cups at the Festival; the effervescent and persuasive Home Produce Exchange corralled visitors to the Festival precinct; the Farmers' Market group helped with the setting up and practical running of the day; and Movies that Matter invited the Zucchini Clan who provided music for "free-range" kids. Other groups closely affiliated with MRSRG like Boomerang Bags, Woodend Community Bags, and the Woodend Repair Café (run by Woodend Neighbourhood House) contributed to the sense that the Macedon Ranges has an enviable number of community groups committed to transitioning to a more sustainable way of life.





A highlight of the festival was the long-awaited announcement from the State Government exempting our proposed Community Energy Park from the blanket ban on wind power in the Macedon Ranges Shire. This important step was the result of much hard work by our Renewable Energy Action Group and our State representative, Mary-Anne Thomas.

Heart-felt thanks to the SLF co-ordinator, Sharon Kittson, for such professional organisation and marketing, Lulu Cockram at the Library, and Chloe Green at Woodend Neighbourhood House, and to each of the action group leaders who made this Festival such an effective and memorable event.

Dr David Gormley-O'Brien

### **Sustainable Malmsbury**

Sustainable Malmsbury arose from the community workshops and Action Plan funded by Macedon Range Shire Council in early 2019 to establish grass-roots community projects to adapt to and mitigate climate change. We joined MRSRG as an Action Group in August 2019 and our momentum is growing!

This year we have been successful in securing a Council grant for our Energy Efficiency Initiative. We are working with Malmsbury Primary School to reduce their energy use and demonstrate the simple things that can be done at home to improve comfort, reduce energy use and bills. We are planning a community workshop and training up volunteers to do basic home and small business energy audits, with the goal to raise awareness and work toward Zero Net Emissions in Malmsbury.



Sustainable Malmsbury are excited to hear initial meetings have occurred regarding the installation of a large-scale solar photovoltaic (PV) system at the Malmsbury Youth Justice Centre (MYJC). This would be a huge step toward Zero Net Emissions. As part of our Community Solar on Local Businesses initiative, Sustainable Malmsbury will encourage the MYJC to source their energy from renewable sources and explore ways this could also directly benefit the Malmsbury community. We are also keen to hear from other Malmsbury businesses that would be interested to install a solar PV system.

Finally, we have also had three successful Community Produce Swaps as part of our Malmsbury Food Web, beginning at the Malmsbury Town Hall Flea Market and now established as part of the new monthly Malmsbury Farmers' Market. The Produce Swaps have been a fantastic way to build community connections, reduce 'food miles' and share knowledge and skills about food.



If you would like to be involved or have any ideas or contacts to help with any of our projects, please email us at [sustainable-malmsbury@mrsg.org.au](mailto:sustainable-malmsbury@mrsg.org.au)

Kathryn Allen

### **Transport Action Group**

Transport Action Group advocates for sustainable transport solutions for the whole community by promoting walking, cycling, e-cycling, PT, car-pooling/sharing and electric vehicles. We are interested in urban planning; new shared paths, crossings safe infrastructure design; end of trip facilities; and urban design which encourages incidental activity.

We represent a diverse membership from retirees to young families, both long term and new residents. Our leadership team is Jon Bartlett, Rohan Clear, Jem Richards, Ralf Thesing, Emilie Van de Graaff and Pene Rice, Action Group Leader ([transport@mrsg.org.au](mailto:transport@mrsg.org.au)).



Since forming in August TAG has:

- Had several AG meetings to work out our collective priorities
- Held a stall at the Woodend Farmers Market introducing ourselves to the public and exhibiting newly released MRSC - Shared Trails Feasibility Study
- Attended the National Road & Traffic Expo in Melbourne for VicRoads, TAC, Regional Roads, Heart Foundation, DELWP & Bike Bendigo presentations
- Prepared a public statement regarding lowering Speed Limits on Avenue of Honour to the media following another road death - Statement is posted on MRSG website.
- Set up social media pages, documents, events

New government initiatives focussing on safety, walkability & incidental activity:

- VicRoads - Movement & Place
- TAC - Toward Zero Campaign
- ARSF - Aust. road Safety Foundation held - Rural Road Safety Week - August
- DELWP - Plan Melbourne - 20 minute neighbourhoods
- Heart Foundation - Healthy Active by Design - Urban planning for Health
- Bike Bendigo - Bike Palooza - October
- Bicycle Victoria - Ride 2 Work - October
- Victorian Government - Walk/Ride/Scoot to School

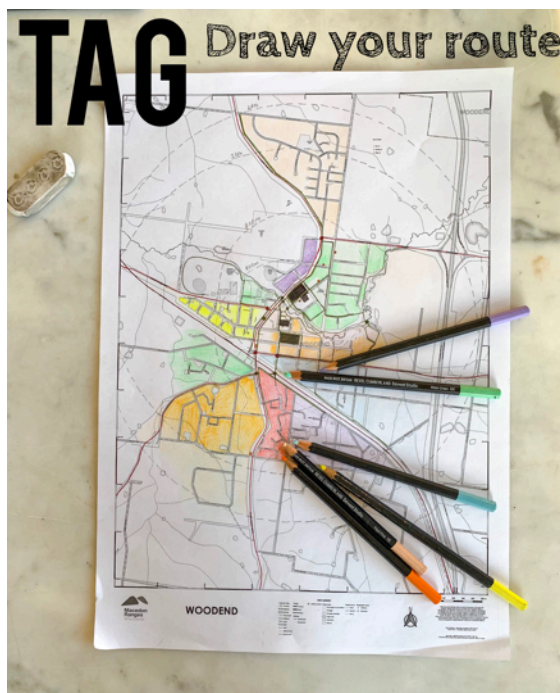
TAG has prioritised focusing firstly on Active Transport for the coming months within the Woodend Township. We are currently mapping pathways used by the community to school, work, shops etc. identifying barriers to activity.

We will be:

- Holding listening posts at the Woodend Farmers Market
- Holding polls on FB page
- Investigating case study in Bendigo (Bike Palooza)
- Providing information
  - Children need a minimum of 60 min/day, Adults 30 min/day
  - 800m is optimum travel distance (20min)



- \$1 invested in walking infrastructure = \$13 decongestion, health & environment
- 75% of people surveyed by the Heart Foundation would walk 800m
- 20 years ago 75% children did
- Built environment discourages walking
- 37%\* car trips less than 3kms
- 53%\* car trips less than 5kms
- 70%\* children driven to school
- 80%\* live within 3km of school
- if 50%\* of short car trips were walked 2.4M walking trips = \$3.2M saving
- Melbourne. NB: Within the Woodend township no-one has further than 2km to travel



Current aims are:

- Provide TAG members at critical crossing points within the Woodend Township on 31st October and encourage as many children to walk/cycle scoot to school safely. We need to investigate legal requirements
- Provide bike ride/training loops for all the public leaving from the Woodend Farmers Market each month for an hour around Buffalo track. Parents to accompany children. We need to investigate legal requirement
- Visit local schools and talk to the children about Ride/Cycle/Scoot to school month
- Participate in Ride 2 Work Day

Future aims are:

- Advocate for safe crossings construction
- Advocate for speed reductions
- Advocate for safe infrastructure
- Investigate planning of Shared Trail to Hanging Rock from Woodend via 5 Mile Creek
- Hold a Car free High Street day festival
- Investigate reinstating prioritised walking path to Woodend Railway Station
- Investigate urban master planning of High Street design.

Although we are all passionate cyclists/walkers we advocate for ALL sustainable transport.

Pene Rice

### **Vegetarian Eating Group**

MR VEG has had a very interesting and exciting year. Our aim is to support people in the Macedon Ranges to eat more veg, more often. Supporting the population to eat more plant-based food and less meat contributes to the development of more sustainable food systems, agricultural practices, a reduction in GHG emissions and improvements in human health and animal welfare. The potential for dietary change



to support positive environmental outcomes was highlighted in 2019 IPCC's Land and Climate Change report, released in August.

The MR VEG team is largely new this year and full of active, fired up members who are keen for transformative dietary change. It includes vegetarians, vegans and flexitarians.



Our activities for the last year have focused around:

- 1) Building a community of people interested in eating more veg which, importantly, extends beyond MRSG members
- 2) Demonstrating and providing education on how to eat more veg more often
- 3) Inspiring change by showcasing creative, delicious plant based food and ways in which eating this food can transform your life
- 4) Supporting and expanding plant based meal options in the Macedon Ranges (in restaurants/cafes)

In terms of outcomes, we have:

- Grown our newsletter subscriber list from 100 to 204 between Nov 2018 to now, and sent out monthly newsletters with great recipe contributions from across MRSG
- Established and maintained an active facebook community of over 300 members, most of which are not from MRSG or already subscribed to our newsletter
- Started and maintained an instagram feed to promote veg options in the Macedon Ranges (in restaurants and cafes) which has 170 followers
- Hosted a range of social events to build a VEG community and encourage recipe sharing (3 pot lucks, 2 dinners, 1 movie day)
- Catered numerous events for MRSG and external groups/businesses
- Engaged people at the monthly Woodend Farmer's market on the question of how to eat more veg whilst selling food and fundraising
- Hosted successful fundraisers - selling veg sausages! (who would have thought!) and buddha bowls (at the Sustainable Living Festival)
- Hosted a very successful workshop in the Woodend Library on how to "eat more veg more often"
- Raised over \$1,500 in net income to fund future activities.



In the next year, we are going to get more strategic with our engagement and set realisable goals to guide our work. Our leadership team is open to new members of all backgrounds and interests and importantly DIETS. If you would like to join or contribute to our upcoming planning day, please get in touch.

Claire Rowland

### **Waste Action Group**

In November 2018, the Waste Action Group wrote a group manifesto, identified our vision, mantra and values, and listed long-term goals and intentions for the group. These are:

- A Container Deposit Scheme in Victoria
- End single-use plastics at Macedon Ranges events by 2020
- Change attitudes by educating on waste, resource recovery and littering
- Build and improve community-based small actions that reduce waste and litter
- Water fountains in public spaces and shopping centres by 2020

- All food waste out of landfill via composting, worm farms and in Green (organics) bins from 2020

Since then, we have initiated several successful projects towards these goals.

The Terracycle Recycling stalls at the Woodend and Macedon Farmers' Markets have been very popular and we have successfully trained people to bring us their rubbish! The market has been a fantastic place for sharing knowledge, taking action and building connections. We now collect 12 different streams of waste, and have returned a total of 22 kgs of batteries for recycling with Envirostream, and approximately 1000 units (about 15 kilos) of beauty and dental waste for recycling with Terracycle. We have earned 1,234 points with Terracycle, and raised \$12.34 towards a charity of our choosing. (We haven't chosen yet!).

In the 2019-2020 budget, Macedon Ranges Shire Council allocated funds plus a trailer to develop a Wash Against Waste trailer with the aim of eliminating single-use plastics and food waste from small to medium sized community events. This project is taking shape nicely, and we see the trailer as an opportunity to support Council's new Food and Organics (FOGO) scheme as well as extending our grassroots education on waste and recycling.

The Waste Action Group along with Plastic Free Woodend (not part of MRSG) joined forces with the Plastic-Free Victoria Alliance (PVA) at the start of 2019. The PVA instigated a campaign for a container deposit scheme (CDS) in Victoria – the last Australian state or territory to have one. Waste Action campaigned at the Sustainable Living Festival on this issue, collecting over 30 photographs of people who supported the campaign. With our support, Macedon Ranges Shire Council wrote letters to MP Lily D'Ambrosio and MP Mary-Anne Thomas stating Council's support of a CDS and urging the Victorian government to implement a scheme.



We are very pleased to support Council's decision to roll out a FOGO collection scheme in the Macedon Ranges. This action will significantly reduce organic matter heading to landfill where it generates dangerous levels of methane. The Waste Action Group is working with the Waste Education Officer and Resources Team at Council to support the community as waste collection around the shire adapts to the current waste crisis.

Education on waste and recycling is at the heart of our group's activities, and we have been active in the community in several ways. In addition to the regular market



stalls, myself, Joe Pickin and Sally Scanlan have given public talks on waste and recycling. We are assisting Macedon Primary School with its year-long War on Waste project. Waste Action supported community rubbish clean-ups undertaken by the Woodend Neighbourhood House and 2<sup>nd</sup> Woodend Scouts by registering the clean-ups, providing bags, gloves and tongs, and recording the collected rubbish. Lastly, our cheeky “Get Waste-Ed” pub sessions have got off to a good start and provide some much-needed light relief for the group as we continue to tackle the enormous issue of waste.

Lisa Richards

### **Woodend Bee Friendly Society**

#### **Handing over the reins of leadership**

Emma Collins resigned as Action Group Leader after 12 months of leading the group and Samantha Rixon, another founding member has taken over the position. The enthusiasm and energy that Emma brought to her leader role ensured a great year for the group and her ongoing contribution as Events and Education Coordinator is much appreciated.

#### **Other leadership team movements**

The Woodend Bee-Friendly Society sadly farewelled one of our founding members, Nev Spears. Nev made a fantastic contribution over the years including managing our yearly meeting program, and was always willing to share his extensive beekeeping knowledge with the group. Shelly Andrews, our much loved honey joy maker and fundraising coordinator also left the team due to competing commitments. We welcomed two new members to the leadership team – Nikki Barker and Drew Ramselaar. Nikki will be taking the fundraising coordinator role and Drew will inject some fresh ideas into our annual meeting schedule.

#### **Autumn beekeeping long course**

Earlier this year the WBFS ran a two day beekeeping course for 21 participants. This was a mammoth effort and a great result for the club who has largely relied on our Bee Legend and Guru Jim Sansom to deliver training. The participants were armed with all the information they will need to embark on their beekeeping journey, or not as some realised how much time, effort, money and education it requires and so will plant bee-friendly gardens instead!





### Spring beekeeping short course

This year we will be delivering a short Beekeeping Course to get budding beekeepers ready for Spring swarms. This is a 4 hour beginners course that will cover the bare essentials of beekeeping.

### Annual bee handling day – October

Our annual bee handling day will be held on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> October in place of our regular meeting. This is an opportunity to get would-be beekeepers face to face with bees and to gain confidence in handling the hive. This is run by our leadership team members who kindly open up their homes and their hives.



### Beekeeping Club Conference

In June this year, Emma Collins, Paul Green, Matt Barry (a.k.a. Matty Be) and Sam Rixon all attended the Annual Victorian Bee Club Conference that was hosted by Costa from ABC Gardening Australia. It was a fantastic and informative day with passionate beekeepers and club leaders from across the state. The Woodend Bee-Friendly Society is one of the largest groups in Victoria and are quite well known – not bad for being only 5 years young!

### Bee Biosecurity Workshop

In February Paul Green and Sam Rixon attended the Bee Biosecurity Day held by Agriculture Victoria. With ever increasing biosecurity threats, it is more important than ever to keep our bees as healthy and disease free as possible. Australia is the only continent that is still free of the dreaded varroa mite, and therefore our honey and beeswax products are the purest in the world.



### Macdon Ranges Sustainable Living Festival

For the 4<sup>th</sup> year running, the WBFS had a presence at the MRSLF. As usual, there is a lot of interest out there for beekeeping and our very own Sally Scopel was up on the stage talking about keeping bees without keeping bees – i.e. bee-friendly gardening.

In summary, the Woodend Bee-Friendly Society continues to thrive and we really appreciate being part of the wider MRSG group.

Samantha Rixon

### **Woodend Permaculture Garden**

The Woodend Community Garden is a productive garden where we employ ecologically-friendly, sustainable practises. The garden design and ethos are intentionally built upon the domestic model; the inclusion of the food we need and love, animals, wildlife, perennials, and local input reliance. From a strictly gardening perspective we focus on enhancing soil health, explicitly structure as well as content. We had a very positive Sustainable Living Festival, with many queries and shared activity with the Kyneton Transition Hub showcasing domestic gardening solutions in our region.



Our prime aim in this public arena is to learn about the vegetables we love, discover new ones, and trial different ways of growing them. Each year, we plan a wide variety of interesting projects designed to increase our ability to grow our own food. We do not want vegetable gardening to be boring or low value; we want people to get the most out of their garden that they can. This years project (Sept 2019-Aug 2020) is "Grains, Pseudo Grains and Pulses: Growing our own high protein foods."

The biggest obstacle that we face is ensuring that the garden is sufficiently watered. This year, thanks to the generous cheque from the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, we shall be in a position to install drip irrigation to make the watering use and activity more efficient over the summer months.

Our aim is to show that an average home-sized backyard can produce abundant, varied and vital food crops, and that doing this can be a fascinating, fun, and rewarding experience.

Sara Gormley O'Brien



## Youth Action Group

My name is Isabella and I am the leader of the newly formed Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group: Youth Action Group or MRYAG! for short.

Here is my report:

I attended the School Strike Climate Rally in Melbourne Friday the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2019 with 150,000 others and accompanied by local youth. This Strike was inspiring, impressive and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to participate in such a significant event and to have the support of MRSG.



I also represented MRSG at the Macedon Range Shire Council Grant Evening where I accepted the \$6,000 Sustainable Living Festival Grant from the CEO and the Mayor. I thanked Council and spoke on MRSG's behalf about our initiatives, our achievements and our goals.

I lead with these two events as they perfectly link to the overall goal of MRYAG which is to "provide a place for the Youth in the Macedon Ranges to act on climate change and stop the destruction of our planet."

Presently MRYAG is completing our processes to ensure members can join with the approval of their parents or guardians, to ensure we have a safe place for young persons to participate. Our membership age is 10 to 18 and the membership fee is \$1 per annum. Once we finalise the membership forms, memberships will open in few weeks.

Over the next year MRYAG plans a number of actions including:

- Peaceful protests at Coles and Woolworths and other large supermarkets on the overuse of plastic and the plastic novelty toy promotions such as Woolworths Oshies and Coles Mini Shop;
- To submit a youth petition to Macedon Ranges Shire Council asking they

declare a Climate Emergency and then work with Council to develop serious, achievable and genuine goals to address this Emergency.

- To make contact with all the secondary schools in the Ranges and through presentation, membership drives and educational talks, invite those students to become members of MRYAG.



In conclusion I believe MRYAG is ready to take a role in demonstrating to all that today's youth are concerned about climate change and are informed about solutions and are willing to do something about it.

Isabella Lane (age 14)