



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Regional towns take top Awards

Benalla has won Sustainability Victoria's *2006 Tidy Town – Sustainable Community Award* for the second year in a row.

The announcement was made in Benalla, where guests from regional Victoria attended the 24<sup>th</sup> presentation of the *Keep Australia Beautiful Tidy Towns – Sustainable Communities Awards*.

*Tidy Towns – Sustainable Communities* is regarded as the most successful long-running award program recognising the environmental work being done in regional Victoria.

“It was a very competitive year, which we believe reflects the concern being shown by communities as they strive to find ways to contribute to creating a more sustainable environment,” said Keep Australia Beautiful Victoria, Chief Executive Andrew McLorinan.

Three winners shared the prestigious individual award, the Dame Phyllis Frost Award.

Winners of Award categories are judged on individual projects. The *Tidy Town - Sustainable Community Award* is judged on the overall effort being made by one town or Rural City.

### The winners are:

Sustainability Victoria's Tidy Town - Sustainable Community Award  
**Benalla**

Community Government Partnership Award  
**Talbot** - Talbot Community Information and Resource Centre

Sustainability Victoria's Innovation for Sustainability Award  
**Koonwarra** - Waste Wise Village

EPA Victoria's Biodiversity and Conservation Award  
**Benalla** – Carpet Python, Lima Stringybark & Partnership with Environmental Students

AFGC Packaging Stewardship Forum's Litter and Resource Recovery Award  
**Wedderburn** - Plastic Bag Free Initiative

Community Pride Award  
**Loch** - Sunnyside Park & Lock Up project



Cultural Heritage Award

**Tarrington** - Laternenfest & Cultural Celebrations

Sustainability Victoria's Young Leaders Award

**Hastings** - Hastings Schools and Mornington Peninsula Shire Youth Services Shed

AFGC Packaging Stewardship Forum's Proud Schools Award

**Ballarat** - Ballarat Grammar Junior School

Dame Phyllis Frost Award

**Jan Ballard** (Dimboola)

**Rae Wilkinson** (Orbost)

**Chris Thorne** (Benalla)

**Ends**

Keep Australia Beautiful Victoria, Chief Executive Andrew McLorinan is available for interview – call him on 0409 387 934.

A full description of the Awards can be downloaded at:

[www.kabv.org.au/Files/TT/JudgesBrief2006.pdf](http://www.kabv.org.au/Files/TT/JudgesBrief2006.pdf)

For further information: Ian Williams, Palace, 03 9696 1600 or 0412 543 543.

**Full project descriptions follow over page...**



## **Tidy Towns - Sustainable Cities Awards Overall Winners**

### **Sustainability Victoria Tidy Town - Sustainable Community Winner**

Benalla

Lodging an impressive 13 projects in these Awards, Benalla has emerged a clear winner with many diverse projects ranging from the Indigenous Gardens at Moira Reserve to the Balanced Productive Soils Project.

The Indigenous Gardens at Moira Reserve aim to combine the history and heritage of the district prior to European settlement and will feature an 8m wall displaying a python motif and eventually there will be a boardwalk through the neighbouring bushland.

The three-year Balance Productive Soils Project is a joint partnership between 14 local Landcare groups, the Department of Primary Industry, Button Bulk Fertilisers and Melbourne University. Extensive tests are helping to determine the balance of soil nutrients and biota needed for sustainable, healthy and productive pastures. The projects have promoted discussion of alternative methods of farming and grazing.

### **Community Government Partnership Award**

Talbot

Talbot Community Information and Resource Centre

In 2000, Talbot started a program to create a vital community hub in the heart of the town using two heritage buildings: the former Commercial Hotel and the neighbouring drapery shop, London House. This former "bomb site" has been transformed into a thriving civic centre - the Talbot Community Information and Resource Centre.

The foundation for this development was a partnership, requiring the co-operation of the Talbot community, its businesses, the Shire Council as well as State and Commonwealth governments. The Talbot Farmers Market, The Friends of London House Community Garden and Café hospitality training are just some of the groups that are evolving as the community makes best use of the Centre.

### **Sustainability Victoria's Innovation for Sustainability Award**

Koonwarra

Waste Wise Village

Working closely with the Gippsland Waste Management Group, Koonwarra undertook to become Australia's first Waste Wise Village. Organisers established a Waste Trail with waste disposal information at the Community Centre. Annual waste audits are held to monitor efforts and to date the town has nearly achieved a 100% removal of plastic bags from all activities.

Koonwarra is also the base for South Gippsland Freecycle, a global non-profit organisation interested in avoiding the dumping of goods into landfill by offering an internet forum for those who want them. The Gippsland region already has 127 members who dispose of unwanted goods in this way.



### **EPA Victoria's Biodiversity and Conservation Award**

Benalla

Carpet Python, Lima Stringybark and Partnership with Environmental Students

Carpet Python

Janice Mentiplay-Smith from the Department of Primary Industries has been instrumental in the battle to save the Carpet Python from extinction. The Carpet Python, mainly found in the Warby Ranges and Chesney Vale area, is an endangered species in Victoria.

Janice got the support from many local farmers by explaining that the Carpet Python is a useful addition to any farm as it feeds mostly on rabbits and mice and it's major predator is the fox, a known menace to farmers. Their baiting efforts resulted in fox numbers being reduced by two-thirds.

The Carpet Python Project is a joint effort involving the Warby Range Landcare Group, the DPI, the State Government and Parks Victoria.

Lima Stringybark

The Lima Stringybark is a remarkable tree, one not found anywhere else in the world and is classified as endangered. At last count there are about 1,500 of them in the Swanpool district, most of them on one 20-hectare property. Janice Mentiplay-Smith has helped to raise the awareness of this endangered tree by saving the one that stands opposite the Swanpool cinema.

The Stringybark is a rare tree as it proves difficult to regrow, is easily damaged by livestock, does not compete well with weeds and likes to have bare earth around it. The Township Tree in Swanpool became the catalyst for a concerted campaign to save the species including signs, leaflets on how to spot a Stringybark, fridge magnets and brochures for distribution to Swanpool households.

Partnership with Environmental Students

Latrobe University Dept of Environmental Management and Ecology students, together with the Benalla Flood Mitigation Scheme and the Rural City of Benalla have formed a partnership to tackle flood mitigation around Benalla. Students have plotted 17,500 trees and shrubs and studied flood flows and existing vegetation to determine obstruction to floodwaters. They will remove 5,000 trees and prune others to improve floodwater flows. The project involves monitoring regrowth of trees removed and aims to maximise the efficiency of herbicide treatments and to increase the understanding of pruning response in native and exotic species.

### **AFGC Packaging Stewardship Forum's Litter and Resource Recovery Award**

Wedderburn

Plastic Bag Free Initiative

In December 2005, Loddon Shire became the first shire in Australia to go plastic bag free. The initiative was developed by the Chairman of the Central Murray Regional Waste Management Group (CMRWMG) and was sponsored by the Loddon Shire Council, Ellwaste and CMRWMG.

The council ordered 10,000 cloth shopping bags that are sold for \$1 from most stores in Wedderburn. All supermarkets and shops have been very supportive of the initiative, and the council and the community are to be congratulated for their achievements.



### **Community Pride Award**

Loch

Sunnyside Park & Lock Up project

The Loch Community Development Association (LCDA) is the central coordinator for many local community groups. Having completed an Urban Design Framework, the LCDA were able to plan new amenities while retaining the old. With incredible cooperation between community groups, Loch has seen large town projects come to fruition, for the benefit of all residents. The result is a small town reflecting immense pride for the new amenities they have created and the many heritage areas that have been proudly maintained and featured.

Dedicated volunteers regularly maintain completed project areas, ensuring the township stays clean and presentable for residents and visitors alike.

### **Cultural Heritage Award**

Tarrington

Laternenfest & Cultural Celebrations

Tarrington was originally known and settled as Hochkirch, however during WW1 the name was changed due to its German heritage. The town is steeped in its German origins and its history and culture is celebrated by many.

The town's most prominent event is Laternenfest, a children's festival of lanterns which originates in Germany. The Festival of Light celebrates St Martin's Day, signifying lighting up the town in preparation for winter. In Australia Laternenfest celebrates Advent.

The evening begins with a community BBQ of Bratwurst sausages, sauerkraut and mustard. This is followed by the raffle of a Gingerbread House. Following the BBQ, a church service takes place and once dark, the community light up the lanterns they have made. The Fire Brigade lead the parade through the streets, the Tarrington Brass Band play German music and the culmination is a feast of traditional cakes back at the local school with children providing the entertainment.

### **Sustainability Victoria's Young Leaders Award**

Hastings

Hastings Schools and Mornington Peninsula Shire Youth Services Shed

The Westernport Chamber of Commerce and Industry approached the local Secondary College and two primary schools in Hastings with a creative competition. The brief was to design a logo to identify the township of Hastings. The winning design would be used on all promotional material related to the town and prizes offered to the winning entries and their schools. A Year 8 girl was the eventual winner of the competition.

As a part of their environmental education program, Year eight students at Western Port Secondary College have undertaken to build a frog bog in their grounds. This wetlands area is adjacent to the large vegetable plots and an award winning hen house. A further project being developed is to create a suitable habitat for the endangered orange-bellied parrot that annually migrates to the Hastings area.

The Mornington Peninsula Shire Youth Services Shed was established to provide services for the youth of the area. It is partly funded by Federal and State money but predominantly from the local Shire. The 'Shed' is a wonderful venue for young people to gather in a secure atmosphere and participate in many activities such as snooker, air hockey, foosball or use of the Play Station on a giant screen.



### **AFGC Packaging Stewardship Forum's Proud Schools Award**

Ballarat

Ballarat Grammar Junior School

Students at Ballarat Grammar Junior School enjoy their Gardening Club where they mulch, plant, grow and munch on the end result of their efforts. There is also an Anti Pollution Squad where individual and collective commitments are encouraged towards a variety of projects. Recycling, tree planting, worm farming, cleaning up litter and field trips to learn more about endangered species are some of the activities involved.

In addition to working towards becoming a Waste Wise school, Ballarat Grammar Junior School has a sistership program in place with the Hatu Bulico school in East Timor, building a cross-cultural bridge with sister students. The children are working together, making personal connections, developing values, building commitment and appreciating natural beauty – all key elements of the Junior School's philosophy.

### **Dame Phyllis Frost Award**

Jan Ballard (Dimboola)

Jan Ballard is known in Dimboola as the "Wheelbarrow Lady". Getting around almost daily with a barrow full of plants and tools (including a leaf blower), Jan has established gardens and native nature strips throughout the town. Her creations, built without council help but for the tacit loan of weedsprays and such, include a roundabout garden, a lane-side row of agapanthus and further mulched garden patches in front of the Senior Citizens' Club, at the entrance to the football oval, bordering the Post Office, gracing the bus stop and in many other spots. It really is a staggering individual effort.

Rae Wilkinson (Orbost)

Rae has been the driving force behind Orbost's Tidy Town efforts for the last ten years. She has been a dedicated worker in many areas and ensured the town's many projects are included in the Tidy Towns Program. Rae coordinated various groups and made sure all involved were working towards the same maximum effort for Tidy Towns. She has worked tirelessly as Tidy Town's coordinator for her hometown of Orbost. Rae is now moving on to other pursuits, and many will sadly miss her energy and organisational skills. She deserves commendation for her dedication, commitment and passion for this cause.

Chris Thorne (Benalla)

Chris Thorne is a Koori representative on the Benalla Indigenous Reference Group, and a key part of the Typo Station program as well as the Indigenous Gardens at Moira Reserve. He is passionate about preserving Aboriginal heritage and very keen to get young people involved in the process and have them take pride in their community.

Chris spends a day talking with the youths who attend the five-week course run at Typo Station. The program aims to give troubled young people the opportunity to build resilience, initiative and life skills for a positive future. Chris talks about indigenous culture including how to make and throw a boomerang.