

**Keep Australia Beautiful
Australian Clean Beaches Awards 2009**

**Capel Sound Foreshores VIC
Winner: Protection of the Environment category award**

Introduction

Capel Sound Foreshores is located 1 ½ hours south east of Melbourne and borders Port Philip Bay.

The Foreshores take in a number of publically accessible access ways to the beach, a Caravan Park managed by the Committee, and excellent launching facility and a wonderfully restored native habitat.

The area is well served by a DSE Coastal Management Plan.

Community Partnerships

- Recognises achievement in community beautification, presentation and pride.
- Recognises communities which proudly preserve and value cultural history.
- Recognises partnership achievements by government and/or business with local communities.

The first thing I saw when brought into the newly refurbished Administrative Building was a fine display of a range of awards, many from Keep Australia Beautiful – always a great sight to see.

Well resourced – good facilities for volunteers and workers – the Committee have invested in tools and equipment which assist Volunteers and Staff. For example, newly renovated and equipped work shed extensive range of hand tools and motorised equipment, and a new truck.

Have established excellent relationships with Melbourne Water, the Department of Sustainability and the Environment, local education providers (TAFE and primary and secondary schools) and businesses to secure funding and staff. Out of these relationships, a number of employment opportunities have been made available to students who have gone through training on site – great for the local economy and often means locals don't have to travel to Melbourne to find work.

In the area there are many organisations involved. Parks Victoria have authority up to high water, local Council runs the adjacent park, and local businesses operate adjacent to the Foreshore, and it appears that while there have been differences of opinion in the past, the stakeholders are working together – with the benefit of new ideas and practices being communicated to other areas through the Group's networks such as the Victorian Coastal Camping and Combined Foreshores organisations.

This support is also reflected well in the fact that Rohan managed to pull together the displays, my tour and brought together all the people I met with (e.g. local schools, business, Melbourne Water, TAFE representatives, Water Watchers, the Committee etc etc) in less than two days.

Environmental Innovation

-Recognises achievement through innovation by community, government and business under the principles and practical actions associated with environment protection and sustainability.

Innovation through self reliance - Virtually self funded through camping fees, partnerships and ability to secure grants from utilities and agencies.

The Committee, Volunteers and Staffers stage awareness and fund raising events throughout the peak season to encourage and foster and appreciation for the coastal zone and its flora and fauna. Music and film nights are staged, colouring in competitions, all with an environmental perspective (sometimes using the wonderful "Connie Cards"), have been extremely popular with visitors and locals alike, with the result of raising some serious money to assist with the completion of programs and projects. This fundraising is often backed up with like funding from organisations such as Melbourne Water.

The Committee work hard to ensure youth have opportunities to turn the theory learnt in classrooms or lectures halls can be put into effect by undertaking practical onsite work to help conserve and enhance the Foreshores' environment.

Resource Recovery

-Recognises achievement in community litter management and reduction including the undertaking of litter audits, and litter education programs.

-Recognises achievement in resource recovery and waste management including initiatives which conserve resources, water or energy minimisation practices; the recovery and reuse of materials including packaging, and the appropriate disposal of non-recyclable materials.

A solid commitment to keeping the Foreshores area litter free and to encouraging locals and visitors alike to do the same. My specific acknowledgment to "Ranger Ken" for his dedication to keeping the park in tip top shape – well done! Ken's activities are ably supported by Rangers who are active in the Park seven days a week.

Excellent services are provided to encourage all to keep the area litter free, through strategic placement of recycling bins and litter points. Regular bin pick up and maintenance of the park and foreshores are strategic and religiously maintained

Recycling bins strategically placed around the Park and beaches, along with an overall ethos of don't destroy what you come to enjoy appears to avoid much of the littering issues experienced elsewhere.

All green waste is reused on site, with fallen limbs etc reused to provide barriers and additional habitat.

Protection of the Environment

-Recognises achievement in the protection of the natural environment and, specifically, the preservation of native flora and fauna.

"Norm's Play Area" is thoroughly impressive, where the group have restored, through extensive weed eradication and concerted efforts, a number of hectares of degraded park area into virtually pristine habitat for the Swamp Skink and Swamp Rat. Extensive audits (every log is tagged) and ongoing monitoring ensures best practice environmentalism in this habitat corridor, which links with the Nepean National Park and Greens Bush areas.

The community is well resourced – good at securing grants, and have invested in tools and equipment appropriate to get the job done. The Committee undertake regular fund and awareness raising entertainment nights during the season which assists in the conservation of the area.

The Committee have a strategic plan to rid the area of feral animals such as black rats, foxes and feral cats, much of these funded by agency support.

I saw some excellent publications detailing the history of the conservation works undertaken over the years, and saw the plans to keep the initiative moving forward into the future.

Awareness raising activities (movies, activities, colouring in competitions etc) for local and visiting children.

The active Coast Action group assists with dune rehabilitation and has a strong membership of around 20 participants. This group is backed up by an active WaterWatch Team, who undertake bi monthly testing in the local waterways.

It is obvious that these actions have encouraged shared ownership in the area evidenced by no graffiti and well maintained and cared for facilities.

Water Conservation

-Recognises sustainable water management within communities which has combined innovative water conservation and water re-use initiatives at the private, industrial and municipal levels, benefiting society and nature.

The Group have secured funding for water tanks where the water is used to flush the toilets in many of the Parks 8 ablutions blocks – further funding has been sought to cover the park 100%

Use of run off to assist plant propagation and use of locally provenanced low water need stock, with a passion for removing non indigenous water intensive stock.

A committed and respected Water Watch Team (well done Malcolm and Doris) with an impressive testing kit, and ambitions to broaden the testing further afield.

Energy Conservation

-Recognise sustainable energy management within communities which has combined innovative energy conservation initiatives at the private, industrial and municipal levels, benefiting society and nature.

There are 8 ablutions blocks within the park, along with a number of storage structures and administration areas. Where possible, energy management systems are in place, or planned for as buildings are refurbished or replaced.

Young Legends

-Recognises environmental achievement through youth initiative and/or by a community, which encourages and promotes youth initiative and environmental education.

Excellent links to local primary and secondary institutions, such as Rye, Totgarook and Rosebud schools.

My thanks to Brian Ridgeway (Principal) and Geoff Patterson (Teacher) of Rosebuds Secondary School for bringing the Three J's and one P along – it was great to hear their responses to my questions.

There's a focus of the Committee to bring children into the many activities held on the beach during the Season, i.e. numerous colouring in competitions (prizes supplied by local businesses), sand castle building competitions and movie nights (was it Madagascar??). All these events are backed up with environmental messages which encourage locals and visitors alike to become aware of their environment and protect it.

Special Thanks

My sincere thanks to Rohan and the Team

A big appreciation to Norm – for the work dedicated to 'Norm's Playground' and for his work as designer of the excellent board walks which have been funded by the Bendigo Bank

The Foreshores Committee for their camaraderie and commitment

(I must catch up with Sophie for a coffee and cake next time I'm in the area)

Dean from Melbourne Water for representing the agency during my visit, and for his support of this Group and the area

Dave from Moolooloo Cafe for the excellent catering and coffee

Jo from KAB for co-ordinating and chaperoning me around (again!).

<http://maps.google.com.au/maps?f=q&source=s_q&hl=en&geocode=&q=capel+sound+victoria&sll=-25.335448,135.745076&sspn=38.351567,41.835938&ie=UTF8&ll=-38.363607,144.875658&spn=0.008244,0.010214&t=h&z=16>.