



East Gippsland

Partners/Sponsors Natural Heritage Trust, East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, Gippsland Coastal Board, East Gippsland Water, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Department of Primary Industries, Environment Protection Authority, East Gippsland Institute of TAFE - Forestech, East Gippsland Shire Council, East Gippsland Fishcare, Coast Action/Coastcare, SGS Environmental Services.

Monitoring Information 26 Groups, 48 participants, 64 sites. **Education Participation** 7993 participants.

Coordinators Megan Burns, Becky Van Der Heyden, Joshua Puglisi.

Water batons cover a lot of ground

'Our lakes are precious - pass them on' was the theme for a relay that took place over the whole Gippsland Lakes catchment. The Gippsland Lakes relay covered over 600km, involved 2500 students from 75 schools and highlighted the size of the lakes catchment area and the impact of human activity on the Gippsland Lakes.

The relay started in all corners of the catchment and batons became water vessels that were passed continuously downstream from school to school, with each school adding their own water sample to the baton.

When the batons finally reached the Gippsland Lakes, they were transported by boat to Lakes Entrance. At Bullock Island, water from each baton was symbolically poured into the lakes to represent the union of the catchments' rivers.



"The relay shows that communities are linked to the catchment and they all have an impact on our waterways and lakes system" said Gippsland Lakes Project Officer, Becky Van Der Heyden.

Students collected water samples from the Latrobe, Thomson, Macalister, Avon, Mitchell, Nicholson and Tambo rivers and tested them for salinity, temperature and turbidity. Throughout the relay, students learnt about the threats and issues affecting the Gippsland Lakes and discussed ways to address them.

"Many were astounded to realise that the water in their local stream makes its way in to Lakes Entrance, well over 100 kilometres away", West Gippsland Waterwatch Facilitator, Tammy Dawson said.

"The hands on approach to learning encouraged students to think about the consequences of their actions" said Linda Court, a science teacher from Bairnsdale Secondary College.

A celebratory DVD was produced about the relay for all participating schools. The DVD documents the different activities undertaken during the relay and puts into perspective the size of the catchment and the fact that all actions throughout the region can have an impact on the health of the Gippsland Lakes.



Top Trafalgar Primary School students carrying the baton down the catchment. **Centre** Bruthen Primary School fetching a water sample to add to the Tambo River baton. **Right** Students from St Paul's Anglican Grammar adding their water sample to the baton.