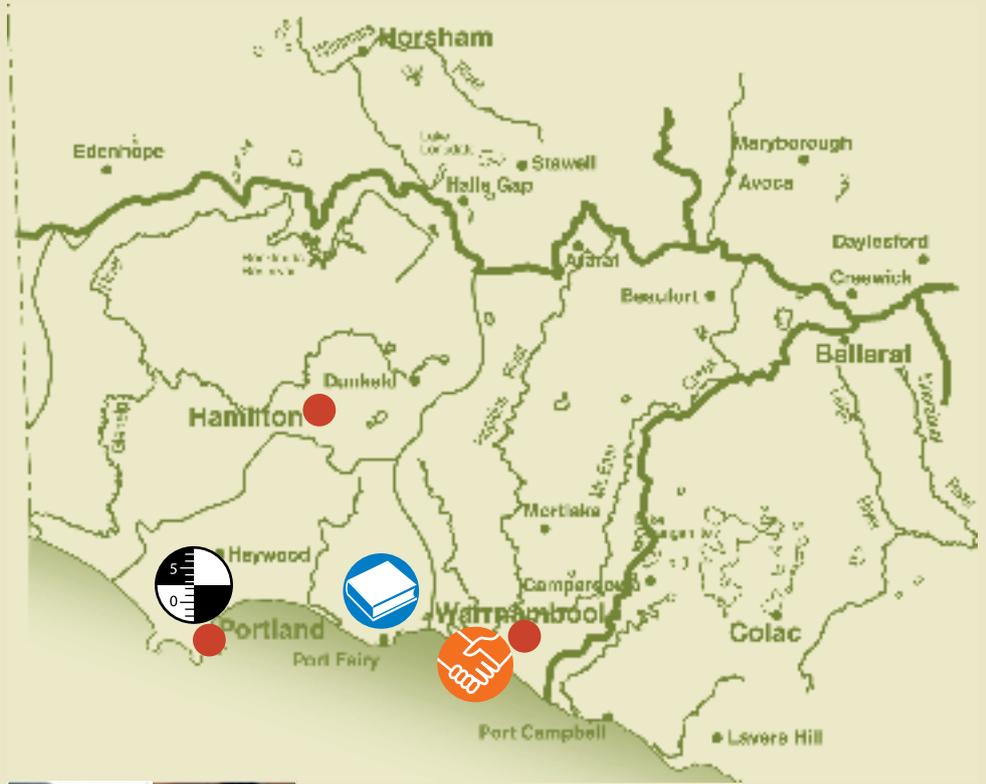


Glenelg Hopkins 2007/08



Monitoring Information
35 groups, 52 participants, 90 sites
Education Participation
5,500 participants
Coordinators (FTE) 2
Program Budget \$255,000



● Waterwatch Coordinators



David Nichols



Tim Covey



Jennie Sparke



John Miles



Richard Hodgens

Partnership makes the most of a good resource

“The trailer gives people the knowledge to understand aspects of the environment that they may not have considered in the past – it is a fantastic way of informing the community around these sorts of potential impacts, and we are excited to be able to be involved.”



The two new catchment education officers have been able to spread the ‘care for catchment’ message further in the Glenelg Hopkins region.

The Glenelg Hopkins education catchment trailer got a good work-out this year thanks to support from Portland Aluminium for an intensive four-month education program.

Two additional catchment education officers ran a new education program that gave many residents in the Glenelg Hopkins catchment the opportunity to learn more about the importance of healthy waterways.

Dave Williams and Niall Shiells took the interactive catchment trailer to schools, community and shopping centres in major towns in the south-west from April to June.

The catchment trailer gives everyone – from children to adults – a fascinating insight into how rivers, creeks, land and people all affect one another.

Built in 2006, the trailer is regularly the centrepiece of the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority and Waterwatch’s presence at festivals and events.

“We realised it could be used even more

effectively if we developed an intensive education program,” says David Nichols, Hopkins-Portland Catchment Coordinator.

“We wanted to go beyond schools and events, to reach out further to the community.”

For many years Portland Aluminium has been a strong supporter of environmental education in the region.

David says the company’s sponsorship of the education program has been instrumental in getting the catchment trailer out on the road and into the community.

Operations Manager at Portland Aluminium John Osborne said the education program was a great opportunity for the company and Waterwatch to work together to add value to the community.

“At Portland Aluminium we see sustainability as encompassing financial, social and environmental impacts. It is about ensuring that future generations will live in strong communities and can take pleasure in the natural environment that we all enjoy today.

New landholders, new enthusiasm

 A group of new landholders in the Portland area is determined to improve their creek, which has suffered years of neglect.

Wattle Hill Creek is Portland's only fresh water course and around 150 years ago provided the town's drinking water. Over time, the creek became overrun by weeds and fell into a poor state.

Now, a change of land use has brought new enthusiasm for rehabilitating the creek; land along the middle sections of the creek has been subdivided into many small 'hobby farms'.

In 2002, Gordon and Kath Page bought their 3 ha (7.5 acre) property on the creek, just beyond the town's limit. Gordon is President of the Wattle Hill Landcare Group, which was reformed in early 2007 after a decade in recess due to lack of numbers and interest.

"There were no trees on our property when we arrived," says Gordon. "In six years we've planted about 1800 trees and we've tried to

return it to what it would have been before the land was extensively cleared."

In July 2007, the Pages hosted a Family Fun Day to build awareness about environmental issues and get people involved. About 35 people enjoyed the chance to join habitat surveying, do water quality tests and get a feel for the macroinvertebrate communities living in their stream.

The Landcare group signed up to be Waterwatch monitors, and since December have been monitoring monthly at three natural springs along the creek over a distance of 1.5 km.

"The results have been interesting," says Gordon. "One site has consistently high pH levels and at the next site, not far away, the reading is quite normal."

The group has received grants to undertake revegetation works along the creek and hopes that their Landcare efforts will be reflected in positive changes to the water quality in the long term.



Wattle Hill Creek Landcarers enjoy the Family Fun Day.

"A change of land use has brought new enthusiasm for rehabilitating the creek."



A young student enjoys learning about macroinvertebrates at the 2007 Victorian Youth Environment Conference.

"This 'kids teaching kids' model of education has the best chance of achieving cultural change in the way we view, use and perceive our natural environment."

Kids create their own education revolution!

 Normally known for its annual gathering of Folk music lovers, Port Fairy experienced a convergence of a different kind in August, when 250 students from around the state gathered for the 2007 Victorian Youth Environment Conference.

In the lead up to the conference, students worked with expert mentors for many months, putting together presentations about environmental issues affecting their local area to give to their peers.

"This 'kids teaching kids' model of education has the best chance of achieving cultural change in the way we view, use and perceive our natural environment," said conference organiser, Cathy Oke from Firestarter.

Waterwatch was one of the key players in the behind-the-scenes organisation; involved with the steering committee from the outset.

Glenelg Hopkins Waterwatch worked directly with three of the 14 schools in the lead up to the conference, providing field trips, class

visits, information, equipment, support and above all confidence to these schools and students.

Glenelg Hopkins Waterwatch was the sole sponsor of Day 2 – the 'Environmental Project' component of the conference. This entailed funding and organising a dozen different environmental activities for the students to participate in.

Activities included learning an indigenous song and dance, bird sketching, rockpool rambling, canoeing, seed sorting and construction of fish habitat. Waterwatch also ran a ponding activity – a typically hands-on affair like all of the activities that were arranged.

"The entire conference was considered a great success," says Richard Hodgins, Glenelg Hopkins Waterwatch Facilitator. "Ever since the conference I've had teachers and students telling me how wonderful it was and how much they learnt. They are really grateful that such a major event was held in our region."

Partners and Sponsors of the Glenelg Hopkins Waterwatch Program National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, Environmental Protection Authority, Portland Aluminium, Wannan Water, Greening Australia, DPI Fisheries, Fishcare, Coastcare/CoastAction, Warrnambool City Council, Moyne Shire Council, Southern Grampians Shire Council, Waste Reduction Group, Windamara Aboriginal Corp.