

Green Action News

MOBILISING PEOPLE TO SAFEGUARD OUR ENVIRONMENT

ISSUE 13 • SUMMER 2010

Unwrapping the election result

What the new Coalition Government means for our environment

PLUS

The in's and out's of the Murray Darling Basin plan



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Contributing writers
Amelia Young, Domenica Settle,
Josie Lee, Kelly O'Shanassy,
Mark Wakeham, Melissa Howard,
Michele Burton, Nina Bailey,
Vicki Kyriakakis,
Victoria McKenzie-McHarg.
Editor
Vicki Kyriakakis
(03) 9341 8125
editor@environmentvictoria.org.au
Fundraising enquiries
(03) 9341 8109
fundraising@environmentvictoria.org.au
Membership enquiries
(03) 9341 8100
admin@environmentvictoria.org.au
Media enquiries
(03) 9341 8127
louise@greenmedia.org.au
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www.environmentvictoria.org.au

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Next task: getting on with business.

> **Kelly O'Shanassy**, Chief Executive Officer

The election has come and gone. The dust has settled. And we have a new Premier and Government in town. Premier Baillieu and the Coalition now lead the state. So what does it mean for our environment?

LET'S BE HONEST — there's no glossing over the fact that the Coalition's election promises on the environment were far weaker than the other major parties. They don't support replacing Hazelwood, or the draft Murray Darling Basin Plan. And they want to reintroduce cattle grazing in Victoria's national parks. While they do have some positive environmental policies – like increased water and energy efficiency; water recycling; and a target to reduce Victoria's greenhouse pollution by 20 percent by 2020 – they failed to release a climate change policy and have no clear plan to reach the climate target.

So things look a little grim for the environment right now, and it's hard not to feel a little hopeless.

Then I remember something. At my first meeting with Premier Brumby

nearly four years ago, he scoffed at the idea of replacing Hazelwood. But in the end, we convinced him. He said it was impossible to return water to rivers, so we showed him how. He said no to many environmental challenges, so we gave him the solutions and lobbied and cajoled and prodded and poked until he said yes.

We did it once. We will do it again.

In winning the election, the Coalition took on the responsibilities of government. They are ethically and legally bound to safeguard our environment, combat climate change, rescue our rivers and protect our forests. So our job remains the same: provide the solutions for clean energy, healthy rivers and sustainable lifestyles. Then – along with the broader community – campaign for them until they do it.

Our goal hasn't changed. We're still working to mobilise all 5 million Victorians to safeguard our environment. And that task still lies ahead. The change of government also changes the opportunities at hand. There'll be new politicians looking to make an impression, and a new government looking to show that they're prepared to 'build the future'. That's why we'll be picking ourselves up, dusting ourselves off and getting on with the job. I hope you'll join us as — more than ever before — we need your voice and support. (See page 15).

Yes, the job will be hard. But I ask you in all sincerity – when has it ever been easy?

On behalf of Environment Victoria, I'd like to wish you all a safe and happy festive season. We look forward to working with you again next year to get bigger and better results for our environment.

Unwrapping the State election

> Mark Wakeham, Campaigns Director

It was the result that few saw coming. Until the last 48 hours of the election campaign, all the polls indicated Labor would be returned to office – albeit with a reduced majority. The election results, however, tell a very different story. With a new Coalition Government already moving to implement its agenda, Campaigns Director, Mark Wakeham, unwraps the surprise election results and talks about what it means for our environment in the next four years.

ON 27 NOVEMBER, Labor's primary vote plummeted in the eastern and south-eastern suburbs. The Coalition looks to have picked up 45 out of 88 seats in the Legislative Assembly. The Upper House result is unclear as we go to press, but it's likely the Greens, and possibly shareholder activist Stephen Mayne who has been a strong advocate for action on climate change, will hold the balance of power. Overall, it's not the result many were expecting less than two days out from the election.

But what does it all mean for the environment? In the days since the election, we've been working to answer that question.

In the lead-up to the election, the Coalition's environment agenda was significantly weaker than the ALPs. In fact, the Coalition failed to release any environment or climate change policies before the election at all — despite promising them repeatedly. It didn't give us a lot to go on.

There were some bright spots. For instance, the Coalition promised strong urban water efficiency, recycling and stormwater policies that will reduce pressure on the Yarra, Thomson and Goulburn rivers and reduce the need to use energy intensive desalination. And of course, they committed to turning off the north-south pipeline and diverting that water to our rivers. Much of their water policy was influenced by our research report: "Water Security, Healthy

Rivers: Environment Victoria's vision for Melbourne".

On climate change, the Coalition supports Victoria's legislated target to reduce emissions by 20 per cent by 2020. They also adopted a number of policies we secured in the Brumby Government's White Paper, including a target for 5 per cent of the state's electricity to come from large scale solar by 2020. They also support a target to improve the energy efficiency of all Victorian homes to 5-star, and an expansion of Victoria's energy efficiency target. They are promising an inquiry into a gross feed-in tariff for renewable energy — a campaign that Environment Victoria worked hard on last year. These promises give us a starting point for action, even while many of them lack detail or a timeframe at this stage.

But there's no use sugar-coating it. In many areas their policies are unclear and in the worst cases, could actually take us backwards on our environment.

On rivers, the Coalition opposes the draft Murray Darling Basin Plan and is investigating the possibility of new and expanded dams. On natural environment issues, past fights will have to be fought again to keep cattle grazing out of the Alpine National Park. The promised 'peace talks' on forests are now on hold. *(...continued next page)*



Victoria voted. But what do the results mean for our environment?

THERE'S NO BETTER TIME TO BECOME A GREEN ACTION PARTNER

The next four years are going to be big. With a new Coalition Government in the box-seat, we'll have our work cut out for us to make sure we're moving forward for our environment, not backwards! We know we can do it — with your support. By becoming a Green Action Partner, and making a monthly contribution, you'll be providing crucial support to help us keep fighting the good fight for our environment. Become a Green Action Partner today by filling in the form on page 15 and help us create the safe climate, diverse and healthy ecosystems, and sustainable communities Victoria deserves.

The first 100 days

THE FIRST 100 days of the new government are going to be ones to watch, with Ted Baillieu already making moves to start implementing the new agenda. So we've gotten busy too, releasing our snapshot of all the environmental commitments made by the Coalition — the good, the unclear and the really ugly.

'COME THE NEW YEAR, WE'LL BE SETTING THE AGENDA, DELIVERING STRONG AND FEISTY CAMPAIGNS...'

Our job will be the same as it always was: to keep the new government honest against all of their election promises and work hard to change policies that are bad news for our environment.

The Coalition has made a very specific commitment to review the planning, regulation, pricing, legislative changes and management required to

improve the sustainability of Victoria's water use in their first 100 days of office. We'll be working with the new government to ensure this review delivers for the environment.

We'll also be seeking further detail where existing policy commitments are vague, in particular the Coalition's lack of a plan to meet their 20 percent emissions reduction target. And where policies are missing — such as on climate change and the natural environment — we'll be working to ensure that the Coalition develops a plan that is in proportion with the threats we face.

After spending most of our time focused on Victorian politics for the past 12 months, we'll also have more work to do federally. We're proud of the work we did to put Hazelwood on the state and national agenda. We may now be able to achieve our campaign objective of replacing all of Hazelwood power station more rapidly by focusing some of our efforts federally. So we'll be working to ensure that the much-promised carbon price delivers the replacement of

Hazelwood and a transformation of our energy supply.

Similarly, ensuring that the Gillard Government stands firm on the Murray Darling Basin Plan will be critical to securing the future of northern Victoria's rivers, the Red Gum National Parks, and the health of the Murray-Darling system as a whole.

We'll be evaluating our campaigns and setting new strategies for the changed conditions and the year ahead.

We'll be taking a much needed break for Christmas. But come the new year, we'll be setting the agenda, delivering strong and feisty campaigns, and calling it like we see it — just as we always have. Thank you for all your support this year, and strap yourselves in for the ride ahead!

Download your copy of our Coalition snap-shot at:

www.environmentvictoria.org.au/blog/posts/where-coalition-stands

For more information on the state election results and what it means for our environment, contact Mark Wakeham at mark.wakeham@environmentvictoria.org.au

(...from page 3)

But it is perhaps on climate change that we face our biggest set-backs. Our hard-won commitment to begin the closure of Hazelwood power station is now off the state government's immediate agenda — though we are confident we'll still achieve an outcome in the next 12 months. The Coalition has no clear plan on how it will achieve its 20 percent reduction target. Nor does it have a commitment to deeper, scientific targets. Like the ALP before it, it is likely to support the proposed HRL new coal-fired power station for Victoria. And building wind farms will be harder if the Coalition sticks to its planning policy and makes it more difficult to build a wind turbine than any other industrial development.

So we've got our work cut out for us in these next four critical years. And it won't be easy. However, we're up for it. With your support, we moved the ALP government significantly on climate change in recent years. We can do it again with the coalition.



Environment Victoria put all major parties in the hot-seat at our Election Q&A just days before the state election. Over 130 people turned up to hear then Shadow Minister, Mary Wooldridge, then Environment Minister, Gavin Jennings, and Greens MP, Greg Barber outline their vision for Victoria. We'll be keeping the heat on the Coalition over the next four years, to make sure we get results for our environment.

Replace Hazelwood campaign leads the way — Thanks to you!

> **Victoria McKenzie-McHarg**, Safe Climate Campaigner



We knew that taking on a campaign to Replace Hazelwood – Australia’s dirtiest power station – with clean energy was going to be tough. We’ve never closed a polluting power station in Australia for climate change reasons. But say what you like, here at Environment Victoria we like to play big. And we couldn’t have run this campaign without you.

WITH THE THREAT of 12 new coal fired power stations slated for development across the country, and the dual disappointment of the CPRS and Copenhagen talks in 2009, we knew many Victorians were tired of talking about climate change. We also knew, that to tackle climate change, we needed to be ambitious and inspire renewed commitment to action across the community. And this year — with your help — we did it.

We took on a massive campaign across the state (and country) calling on our state and federal leaders to commit to Replace Hazelwood. In the process, we engaged tens of thousands of people and made replacing Hazelwood the number one environmental issue in the state election. It even made federal election news!

Our first win came mid-year when the then Brumby Government committed to replacing a quarter of the power station by 2014. Brumby was also talking to the Federal Government about how they could help replace the lot of it. It was hard work to get them there, and we

really couldn’t have done it without your support.

When we publically launched the campaign on the steps of Parliament in May this year, we had no idea just how big or successful the campaign would become. With your incredible support, we managed to raise \$150,000 to fund our campaign, and we’ve been getting results with every dollar.

We launched a report showing exactly how Hazelwood could be replaced with clean energy projects ready to go now. With the help of local action groups and communities across the state, we reached thousands of Victorians through letterboxing, doorknocking, public meetings and meetings with MPs. We held a National Day of Action to Replace Hazelwood, drawing actions from groups across Australia. We put up massive billboards across Melbourne that ran in five locations for months on end and reached millions of people. We lobbied federal politicians in Canberra and state politicians here at home. We travelled to the Latrobe Valley and Gippsland where we spoke with the

local people and groups on how to achieve a just transition for workers and the community.

We ran advertisements on the issue in local papers across Metropolitan Melbourne and letterboxed tens of thousands of households about our campaign. Over 5000 people joined us on the streets of Melbourne to rally to replace ALL of Hazelwood. And we presented over 7000 petition signatures that we’d collected over the year (along with Friends of the Earth and local community groups) to representatives of the major political parties at our Election Q&A. Even now we’re continuing to get strong media coverage on the issue.

Unfortunately, despite our best efforts we could not get the newly elected Baillieu Government to commit to Replace Hazelwood, or set a timeline for moving away from our dependence on coal. They haven’t closed the door on it, and in fact have acknowledged that it’s an important issue, but they have no clear plans. So we’ll be continuing our campaign to get the Coalition to commit to replace ALL of Hazelwood. And we’ll need your help to get them across the line.

Thanks to your efforts though, our community is now aware of and calling for action on Hazelwood. And the campaign has re-energised the Victorian climate movement. We’ve got the company willing to close the station. The unions have acknowledge Hazelwood will inevitably close and the community strongly supports it. As we head into a new year and new government, Environment Victoria is ready to continue the work ahead to get the whole shebang replaced.

Thank you again — for your financial support, your volunteer hours, your names on our petitions, your letters to MPs and the Premier, your letters to local papers, your attendance at our events and rallies and your commitment to helping us see this campaign through.

Stay tuned for more as we continue this campaign into the new year to ensure Hazelwood is replaced in this next term of government.



Victorians are ready to reap the rewards of energy and water efficiency.

Opportunity to lead for new Coalition Government.

> **Josie Lee**, Safe Climate Campaigner

The massive election year is finally over, and it's time to assess the progress we've made in our One Million Homes campaign. Safe Climate Campaigner, Josie Lee, reports that the surprise Liberal-National Coalition victory will deliver some improvements, but the big opportunities are still out there for the taking.

DURING THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN, the Liberal-National Coalition recognised the need to upgrade Victoria's homes and expressed strong concern about household utility bill price rises. Like the Brumby Government, it committed to improve the energy rating of existing homes to 5-stars.

However, unlike the ALP's 2020 target date, the Coalition's goal was opened with a general commitment to achieving it 'as soon as possible'.

The Coalition has also supported expanding the state's energy efficiency target to small and medium enterprises but they haven't said anything about whether they'd support doubling the

target in line with the Brumby Government commitment. Now that they are in power, we'll be calling on them to provide ambitious and detailed plans to achieve the 5-star energy rated homes and energy efficiency target commitments.

In other commitments, the Coalition Government has promised to:

- Maintain energy efficiency and water rebate schemes, public housing and low income energy efficiency programs;
- Invest \$40 million to extend the water efficiency rebates to heavy water using appliances;
- Redevelop the Black Balloons program to provide practical energy efficiency

and emissions reduction advice for households and small business; and

- Massively increase energy concessions for low income households.

Here at Environment Victoria, however, we believe it's not enough to increase energy concessions to protect households from rising prices. Keeping concession growth at pace with price rises will create an increasing budgetary burden. It also presents a constant risk that they will be cut.

And unlike efficiency programs, concessions do not deliver benefits to the environment, economy or green job creation.

That's why we'll be working hard to ensure that the new Coalition Government recognises the long-term financial and environmental gains to be had from household energy efficiency. And we'll be pushing them to invest in the thermal and water efficiency our homes need to protect families from future utility price rises and a hotter, drier climate.

For more information and updates on our One Million Homes program, visit us online at www.environmentvictoria.org.au/onemillionhomes

What the election means for our water and rivers

> **Amelia Young**, Healthy Rivers Campaigner & **Mark Wakeham**, Campaigns Director

It's one of our most pressing environmental challenges, but neither of the major parties really came to the table for Victoria's rivers. And when it came to committing to watering the River Red Gum Parks, the politicians were conspicuously silent.

WATER WAS ALWAYS set to be one of the big issues of the election, with the Coalition campaigning on affordability of water and electricity bills. After good winter rains the Brumby Government failed to convince the electorate that expensive infrastructure projects like the desalination plant and the north-south pipeline were necessary. There wasn't a lot of talk, however, from politicians about river health. And there was no commitment to watering our River Red Gum Parks despite our best efforts – and yours. So what does the election of the Baillieu Government mean for our rivers?

Well there are some positive aspects of the Coalition's water policy. One of the first decisions of the new government will be to turn off the north-south pipeline when it's not needed. This will give our northern Victorian rivers up to 75 billion litres extra water in most years. It's a significant amount, but its only around 10 percent of what the science shows those northern rivers need for healthy environmental flows. There's also no guarantee that water will reach the floodplain ecosystems in the River Red Gum Parks.

Elsewhere the Coalition promised to honour "existing Labor Government commitments to additional environmental flows in the Yarra, Thomson, Murray and Snowy Rivers", though there's no word on many other rivers across the state. You might remember that we began our work this state election year by calling for water that's been promised to fifteen rivers across the state to be delivered. The Coalition's election promise in this area means eleven rivers are still waiting for a

commitment to deliver what's been promised to them.

They've also committed to treat environmental water entitlements as equal to other entitlements. This hopefully means that rivers will not take a disproportionate share of the pain in dry times. We're keen for more detail on this announcement.

There were also some very positive water efficiency commitments. For instance the Coalition promised to improve water pricing to increase financial rewards for water conservation efforts by making consumption account for 60 percent, rather than 30 percent of bill prices. They are promising to increase storm-water harvesting and water recycling, and are setting up a task force to provide advice on how we can use water more sustainably which will report in the first 100 days of government.

We also congratulate the Coalition on their promise to retain the Victorian Environment Assessment Council (VEAC). We look forward to participating, and encouraging your involvement in the promised investigation into the 'condition and management alternatives for freshwater-dependent ecosystems such as rivers, wetlands, estuaries and groundwater'. This was one of our key asks in our Victorian River Rescue Package: 2010 State Election Policy Priorities and we welcome the announcement.

Other policy commitments, however, are more worrying. The Coalition has stated that they oppose the draft guide to the Murray Darling Basin Plan. If the Plan is to be effective and revive the rivers of the Murray Darling Basin it will need the willing participation, not active opposition, of the states, to deliver no less than 4,000GL of water to the environment. The Coalition also appears to be entertaining the idea of new or expanded dams, funding multiple feasibility studies for projects in northern and eastern Victoria.

We're proud of our campaign efforts over this year. Ironically while the Winter



We took our Rivers message straight to Parliament House in the lead-up to the state election campaign.

and Spring rains provided many of our rivers with a welcome reprieve in 2010, they also eased the political pressure to get water back into rivers. But we all know that our problems of over-extraction won't be solved by a single wet year. We need long term solutions and allocations for our rivers.

Next year, we'll be continuing our campaign to get a reliable water allocation for the River Red Gum Parks, we'll be working to strengthen the Murray Darling Basin Plan and we'll be keeping the Coalition honest on their positive commitments while working to change their negative ones.

So your support will be more important than ever as we continue to build a movement for our rivers. Thank you for all your help this year. With Victorians like you adding your voice to our call for a fair share of water for our floodplain ecosystems and rivers, they stand a fighting chance of getting a decent, lifesaving drink.

Keep up-to-date with our campaign to Rescue Our Rivers at www.environmentvictoria.org.au/rescueourrivers

Hazelwood Rally draws thousands



5000 people walked down the streets of Melbourne to demand the replacement of ALL of Hazelwood in the next term of government.



Five thousand people gathered on the streets of Melbourne last month to walk to Parliament House and demand the replacement of ALL of Hazelwood Power Station with cleaner energy by 2012. The turn-out put politicians vying for the community vote on notice – Victorians want real action to reduce our greenhouse emissions.



Even the family pet's taking the message to the street.



The renewables were just itching to dump coal and go clean.



The crowd gathered outside Parliament House to watch the Hazelwood smoke stacks take a tumble.



Our planet, our choice.



IPCC Scientist, David Karoly, made the argument for replacing Hazelwood.



Environment Victoria's Safe Climate Campaigner, Victoria McKenzie-McHarg got the crowd off to a big start.

Future of the Murray-Darling up for grabs

We need your help to ensure the survival of the Murray.

The Murray-Darling Basin is the world's fifth largest river system and returning it to health is an ambitious project. One that's never been attempted on such a large scale. So it's no wonder that the release of the Murray Darling Basin Authority's (MDBA) Guide to the Proposed Basin Plan in early October met with a rocky reception. But was it all warranted? Healthy Rivers Campaigner, JULIET LE FEUVRE takes a closer look.

TAKE ACTION NOW

- > Sign our online petition to federal Water Minister, Tony Burke
<http://tinyurl.com/2vleqfm>
- > Make a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the impacts of the Plan
www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/ra/murraydarling/index.htm

THERE'S NO DISPUTING that the Murray-Darling Basin needs help. After years of over-extraction of water, nearly all its rivers are in poor condition. Its water bird and fish populations, and its wetlands and forests have been decimated. The vast majority of Victorians, both inside and outside the Basin, recognise that something desperately needs to be done.

The argument is over what, where and how much.

In its Guide, the MDBA determined that to return the Basin to good health, up to 7600 billion litres need to be returned to it as environmental flows. Yet, the Authority has, at this point, ruled out returning more than 4000 billion litres.

Their argument is that the social and economic impacts of doing so would outweigh any potential environmental gains. But the MDBA hasn't produced enough evidence to back this claim up. What's more, it hasn't looked at the costs to society of allowing the current environmental decline to continue. And the benefits and opportunities created by restoring the Basin to health are yet to be explored.

Now even the lower amount is at risk because of pressure from interest groups.

It's important to remember that considerable progress has already been made towards returning water extraction to sustainable levels. And nobody is being forced to give up water without compensation. The Commonwealth Government is paying market value for the water it's buying. Governments are also investing heavily in irrigation modernisation. If these two processes work together, along with improvements in on-farm efficiency, we'll end up with an irrigation industry in northern Victoria that has a smaller eco-footprint, but is highly efficient and sustainable in the long-term.

So it's time to stand up for our rivers and tell the Authority to hold their nerve. They need to look at scenarios for returning more than 4000 billion litres to the Basin and reap the benefits of healthy ecosystems to basin communities and Australia as a whole. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to resuscitate the Basin and its communities, and we can't afford to miss it.

The Draft Basin Plan will be available in 2011. Look out for it on our website and consider making a submission. Meanwhile, there's something you can do for our rivers right away.

Keep up-to-date with our campaign to Rescue Our Rivers at www.environmentvictoria.org.au/rescueourrivers

After four years, it's a wrap

> **Domenica Settle**, Project Officer,
Sustainable Living Program

"I'm so glad you came down here to run these projects!" That's what Rae, one of 2,118 direct participants had to say about our Regional Sustainable Living Program. After four awesome years, the program has now come to an end. And as we pack up the last bits and pieces, write reports and file away documents, it's worth taking a moment to think about all the wonderful things we've achieved together with communities across Victoria.

IT ALL STARTED on the Mornington Peninsula four years ago, when we first rolled out our projects with young people, senior citizens and people on low incomes. Back then we had a lot of ideas and experience but our new way of working with the community was still untested. Four years later, the results speak for themselves

Over the four years, our Regional Sustainable Living program ran over 236 workshops and events, helping people save an estimated 3,500 tonnes of greenhouse gas and 82,000 kilolitres of water each year. That's the equivalent of almost 2,000 backyard swimming pools and taking 800 cars off the road.

We've run youth projects in central Victoria and worked with lower-income communities in Frankston. We've even taken on Geelong, the Surf Coast and the Otways. And everywhere we went, the reaction was the same.

"It was fantastic. Ten out of ten," was the opinion of one of partners, Marcia, from our central Victoria project. "We got so much out of it, we just learnt so much," was

the feedback from Judy, one of our senior participants. Judy now has a big water tank, natives in the front garden instead of a lawn, and a bucket in the shower.

It's people like Judy and Marcia who've helped our program make a real difference for our environment. But it's been about more than just saving energy and water. It's also been about connecting communities and inspiring people to make changes that will last long after Environment Victoria has packed up and headed back to Melbourne.

A new chapter opens as we say goodbye to our award-winning Regional Sustainable Living program.

After taking part in our seniors project, participants in central Victoria started a conservation project in a local park, got community groups focusing on sustainability, and ran their own seniors sustainability day. As participant Faye says, "there are all these little connections that have happened."

And so the program went, changing hearts and minds along the way. Minds such as that of Michelle, a participant in our Latrobe Valley program this year. Michelle said she wasn't particularly interested in sustainability to start with. But the talk of food and gardens got her thinking, and soon she had a plan for a community gardening project to get her community sharing food.

Rae's story sums it up best though. She was so enthusiastic about our workshops, that now she's running her own and has even started her own sustainable gardening group. She's started up a community newsletter, and a monthly sustainability column.

"I'm so glad you came down here to run these

projects," she says. "I wasn't sure what to do with myself in this area. It's been a real life-changer for me."

Over the last four years, we've worked with many organisations and community groups — without whom these successes wouldn't have been possible. Environment Victoria would like to sincerely thank each and every person involved in the delivery of the Regional Sustainable Living program.

And we would like to thank the Victorian Government for funding the program.



KLER DOH: Working for a greener future

> Nina Bailey, Sustainable Living Project Manager



The future's looking bright for our latest environmental ambassador thanks to a bit of study and a lot of passion.

WHILE HE SAYS he "lived in darkness" back then, his journey since has been one of discovery and growth. Moving to Australia as a refugee in 2009, these days he's an impressive environmental leader thanks to Environment Victoria's Multicultural Leaders in Sustainability (MLS) program.

"In 1994, I fled to Thailand with my parents," Kler Doh says, "and moved in to what the Thai government called temporary refugee camps, which turned to be 15 years of my life spent there... I could see no further study, no good job, no hope and no better life for my future."

Things changed four years after applying to settle in Australia, when he and his family were finally accepted. Kler Doh now lives in Sunshine in Melbourne's west, and even in this short time has shown what a natural leader he is. He's involved in Karenni youth groups, helped organise the traditional Karenni Dee Ku harvest festival and joined our Multicultural Leaders in Sustainability Program in Sunshine, where he definitely shone as a champion for the environment.

He translated for other Karenni young people during the MLS program, and led his project group to deliver a water education day called "Water — It's Our Life". He's deeply concerned about the environment, and wants to use his knowledge and experience

"Since I was born, until I was eight years old I lived in the war crimes area. I moved place to place, hiding in the jungle from the Burmese militaries."

These are the words of Kler Doh, a 26 year old Karenni man from Burma.

from MLS to help his community here in Melbourne. He hopes to return one day to Burma and help his Karenni community to keep their environment intact and prosperous.

Speaking at Environment Victoria's AGM, Kler Doh explained why programs like MLS are so important. His speech moved many of our members in the crowded room.

"It is very challenging for me to catch up and begin feeling normal life, without skills and without qualification and because I can't get a job. Without job I can't move forward and begin a normal life. That is why it is so important that people who have a refugee background — especially young people — need more education support and more free training, not just in skills and education but also in how to adjust in normal society and life, when they have become used to living a refugee's life in a refugee camp."

"MLS training is very good training for us, because we learned about leaders, environment such as planting trees, saving water, saving energy, about waste and we organised a small project. During this MLS training we have fun, food, we learn about different cultures and the lives of others and their experiences whilst helping each other learn new education and knowledge. All of these are so beautiful for us."

Watch Kler Doh on our new film about our MLS program in Brimbank on EV TV on our website:

<http://www.environmentvictoria.org.au/media/new-film-about-multicultural-leaders-sustainability-brimbank-2010>

Celebrating GreenTown's successes

> **Melissa Howard**, Uni of Melbourne Intern & **Nina Bailey**, Sustainable Living Project Manager

Einstein said, "Not everything that counts can be counted," and we know what he means. How can you use a percentage to measure community mobilisation? Numbers are great, but we think the real story is told best by the people who are at the heart of the change.

THAT'S WHY WE recently invited participants from our GreenTown project and our project partners to come to a celebration at CERES Environment Park and share their stories with us.

GreenTown brings together members of migrant and refugee communities and teaches them to do sustainability assessments of homes in their community. At the celebration we heard about a woman in the Arabic-speaking community who was reluctant at first to have the GreenTown assessor visit her - but after he did, she followed his advice and saved over \$1000 on bills in seven months! Even better, she spent the money she saved on a rainwater tank and used it to water a new vegetable garden.

And she wasn't alone.

Many of our participants spoke of the pride and community empowerment that has come from GreenTown. Sharon from the GreenTown Indigenous program said that it's "helping us see how to do it ourselves, and lead the way, and get our mob back looking after our land."

Over the next few months, our GreenTown 1 assessors will be doing more sustainability assessments, and we'll be doing thorough evaluation of the project, thanks to extra funding from the Sustainability Fund. GreenTown 2 will start in 2011 with Ringwood's Burmese community and multicultural communities of Collingwood housing estate.



Participants of our GreenTown Indigenous program make their sustainable changes count.

NOW THE GREENTOWN WORD IS SPREADING EVEN FURTHER.

Our programs have inspired many people to do more. Here's just a few that are up-and-coming:

- The Alevi Community Council of Australia recently secured funding to run a new project with the Moreland Energy Foundation (MEFL) and Yarra Valley Water to bring Turkish-language sustainability education to new communities in Moreland, Dandenong and Mildura.
- Our East African program partner, Flemington Neighbourhood Renewal, has joined with Environment Victoria again and secured funding from Sustainability Victoria's Neighbourhood Renewal fund. 'Flemington Green' will continue GreenTown's work with Flemington's East African communities and also engage the Chinese community and one other cultural community to take green action.
- Flemington Neighbourhood Renewal is also working with us and the Moonee Valley City Council to pilot a recycling program at Flemington public housing estate, where currently there's no recycling service.
- MEFL has been granted Climate Communities funding to deliver sustainability education materials to culturally diverse communities in Moreland.

For more information, contact Nina Bailey on (03) 9341 8123 or nina.bailey@environmentvictoria.org.au.

Multicultural leaders wrap it up for the year



Our Multicultural Leaders in Sustainability program has wrapped up for another year as a group of 18 young people from Sunshine take on their mantles as ambassadors for our environment.

THEY CAME FROM many different backgrounds — Karenni, Burmese and Chadian, to South Sudanese, Ethiopian and Vietnamese. But they came together for a single purpose — to learn more about the environment they live in and become leaders for change.

From April through to August, participants attended weekly training sessions that taught them how to live sustainably, become leaders in their community, communicate effectively and run their own projects. With field trips to Sugarloaf Reservoir and a three-day camp in Gippsland, there was also ample opportunity for the newly-arrived young people to learn about Victoria's natural and built environments.

They put their new-found knowledge to immediate use, running projects in their local communities to share what they'd learnt about the environment. These included presentations on saving energy and reducing waste to a Karen church congregation in Werribee and to a Brimbank multicultural youth group; a multicultural native grasses planting day alongside Kororoit Creek in Ardeer; and a 'Water — It's Our Life' education day and field trip to Greenvale Reservoir.

Thanks to their own efforts and actions they took to educate others, participants managed to save 501,119 litres of water a year. That's the same as 12 backyard pools! They also saved 19,301 kilograms of CO₂e a year (equal to 386,020 black balloons) and prevented 1.4 tonnes of waste from going to landfill each year. Read more about participant Kler Doh's story on page 12.

What next for sustainable living

> Michele Burton, Sustainable Living Project Manager

2011 is shaping up to be another good year for the Sustainable Living Team, with three new projects on the cards. We'll be working with everyone from the Chinese Community in Flemington, to young people from multicultural backgrounds in Sunshine. So, get ready for a big one!

FIRST OFF THE BAT next year will be a brand new Green Town project, working with the Burmese community in Ringwood, and the entire multicultural community in the Collingwood Public Housing Estate. As with previous GreenTown programs, we'll be training up members of the community to deliver household sustainability audits to their friends, families and communities. There will also be workshops, field trips and an art project in Collingwood. The projects will build on our successful programs run this year and we'll be continuing our work with current participants and partner organisations. (See our article on page 13 for more).

We'll also be expanding on our GreenTown work with the East African community with a Flemington Neighbourhood Renewal program. This project will see us working with three different cultural groups — including the East African and Chinese communities — to deliver sustainability workshops and field trips. And we'll be starting our second intake of our Multicultural Leaders in Sustainability project in Brimbank, with some of our participants from our first intake acting as mentors for a new batch of enthusiastic young ambassadors.

So here's to another big year of helping thousands of Victorians live more sustainably.

Green Action partner?

YES. I'M IN!

The next four years of state government are a critical window for action on our environment and climate change. That's why we need your help. Become a Green Action Partner today and help us make the next four years count.

The Coalition's election platform included some positive news for our environment: greater water efficiency; water recycling; improving the star-rating of existing homes; returning water to the Yarra, Thompson, Murray and Snowy Rivers; and supporting a target to reduce Victoria's greenhouse pollution by 20 percent by 2020.

But their lack of formal climate or environment policies have left many questions unanswered.

The fact of the matter is, many Coalition policies will take our environment backwards. They plan to reintroduce cattle to Victoria's National Parks, they have no clear plan to replace

Hazelwood, and they oppose the draft Murray Darling Basin Plan.

That's why we need to make the next four years count for our environment. And we need your support to do it. By becoming a Green Action Partner and making a monthly contribution, you'll be choosing a highly effective way to contribute to a healthier environment. It's a tax-deductible donation and will ensure that we remain a strong and independent community voice, putting forward positive solutions for our environment and our future.

Don't let the new Coalition Government get away with putting our environment last.

Become a Green Action Partner today. And help us create a safe climate, diverse and healthy ecosystems, and communities that live and consume more sustainably. So what do you say? Are you in?

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Help us to help you by telling us a little bit more about yourself. (All information will be kept strictly confidential).

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All Biodiversity Healthy Rivers Safe Climate Sustainable Lifestyles Smart Stuff (Less Waste)

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Talk to us:
Phone: (03) 9341 8100
Email:
admin@environmentvictoria.org.au
Fax: (03) 9341 8199

PO Box 12575
A'Beckett Street, Victoria, 8006

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