



## **Quarterly Newsletter 2026**

### **Healesville Environment Watch Inc**

Happy New Year and welcome to the first HEWI Quarterly Newsletter for 2026. After a slow start, summer is finally with us!

There are several events that HEWI will be involved in over the coming months and we look forward to seeing you there.

Bronwyn Baade  
President/Secretary

### **Vale**

We were saddened to hear of the recent passing of Lou Sbalchiero, who made a significant contribution to both HEWI and the wider community.

Lou was an inaugural member of Healesville Heritage Watch (HHW) in 1989. Its mission was to protect the built and natural environment of Healesville, which included historical buildings and the natural environment. At the first AGM, Lou became the group's first Vice-Chairman and he gave a report on their Platypus Study Group. Lou's subsequent environmental activities were often associated with protecting platypus and improving habitat, a remit carried on by HEWI today.

He was also a member of Bushlink, which cleared weeds from the waterways in Queens Park and Coronation and propagated indigenous plants at Healesville Sanctuary for revegetating the riverbanks and surrounds. Many fun planting days were held in Queens Park and along the Watts River, with Lou and his family.

At HHW's 1995 AGM, due to the activities of the group being more concerned with the natural environment, the group voted to change its name to Healesville Environment Watch, and processes were set in motion to achieve this. The first AGM of what we now know as HEWI (Healesville Environment Watch Inc) was held in September 1996.

From 1997-1999, Lou was the Chairman of HEWI and in 1998 was acknowledged for his ongoing commitment to local environmental issues and leadership. Bushlink had disbanded, but HEWI formally took over local planting activities and protected platypus in Queens Park with a project involving Melbourne Water, Council, Swinburne TAFE students, primary school students and members of the public. Clean Up Day events commenced, with the first one based at our Healesville Market Stall. Lou didn't go "dumpster diving" but was always the first to wade into local streams to remove tyres, shopping trolleys and even a TV!

Lou served as a HEWI committee member from 2007 until the 2023 AGM. He became our C3777 Liaison Officer and headed up our new WaterWatch Working Group with Mt Toolebewong Landcare. He monitored the health of the Watts River and Badger Creek by taking monthly water samples, and Autumn and Spring freshwater invertebrate samples. His talents as an educator came to the fore when we did junior Waterbug activities in Queens Park, with Lou in the creek collecting critters in the net to amaze Healesville Primary School students. During one of our regular sessions, Lou scooped up a rare Mountain Galaxia (fish) and this prompted Council to feature it in their calendar.

Lou became our WaterWatch and Grace Burn Project Co-ordinator in 2012, and we turned our focus to protecting the Grace Burn by encouraging local residents along this creek to take up Melbourne Water grants to remove weeds and replace with indigenous species. He worked with council to improve the Farnham Rd Reserve by supporting weed control, the removal of rubbish, restricting vehicle access with new bollards, and improving access for walkers across a wet gully. For the Grace Burn Project, Lou and others risked being apprehended by the police as graffiti vandals, when he spray painted "protect our waterways messages" on storm water drain covers along Healesville's main street, and along Don Rd. He also made and wore 'Splash' the platypus in the parade along the main street during a community event.

Lou's environmental action wasn't just through HEWI – in 2018-2019 he was on the steering group to establish Healesville Community of Renewable Energy (HCoRE) and became a committee member of this new group for several years.

In 2014, Lou was awarded a Life Membership for his many years as a committee member and his significant contribution to the ongoing success and positive impact of HEWI on our community.

His legacy as a positive role model for HEWI members will endure, not just with our members but with the wider community of Healesville and beyond.

## December Highlights

Early December saw around 20 HEWI and Mt Toolbewong Land Care In. members get together for our Christmas break up at Brungergalk (Coronation Park). A beautiful balmy evening with lovely company, beautiful food to share and lively discussion.



We also had a stall at the Healesville Community market, a beautiful sunny day with lots of people out and about throughout the day.

We had free plants and a variety of information to give to community members who stopped to have a chat and engaged with over 30 people, with some interest in joining HEWI.



## In the Community

### Badger Creek Community

**Spotlight Walk and Talk: Discovering Badger Creek's Nightlife** – from Karen Garth

We had a great nocturnal animal talk and supper at the Badger Creek Hall followed by a spotlight walk at Badger Weir recently, with 16 participants. We observed 12 Greater Gliders including two young ones, and heard 2 Boobook Owls, White-striped Freetail Bats and an Eastern Ringtail Possum. We also learnt from one of the participants of a recent sighting of a rare Brush-tailed Phascogale in Healesville.

### No Reason 4 Rubbish NR4R

A very active and dedicated group, created by local resident Cindy Deluca. The group states that: "There is no good reason why litter should be in these places or dumped in the bush, the Yarra Ranges is a wonderful place to live, I think we can all agree on that. However, we have a BIG problem and that is rubbish!

Our goal is simple - to engage like-minded people who care for the environment and want to help end this. Families, friends, local footy/cricket clubs, community groups - we are calling for all "Rubbish Warriors" to join in the fight against litter in the Yarra Ranges.

Our NR4R Facebook page is a platform to share ideas, suggestions, photos of litter hotspots, shoutout for 'Rubbish Warriors' or perhaps you are able to adopt a road in your area; possibly your own street! We will post regular updates, ideas, safety measures and photos."

## **Upcoming Events**

Thursday 12th February, 7.30pm: **HEWI Committee Meeting**

Location: Rm 1 Healesville Living and Learning Centre. All members welcome.

Sunday 1st March 9.30am – 12pm: **Clean Up Australia Day**

Mt Toolbewong and District Landcare Inc. will now have a Clean Up event on Sun 1 March at Badger Creek to remove weeds from our revegetation sites and remove rubbish in and along the creek. 9.30 am start, with morning tea, BYO gloves and a cup.

Location: corner Bluegum Dr and Badger Ck Rd.

RSVPs to [sectoolebewong@gmail.com](mailto:sectoolebewong@gmail.com).

6-7 March: **Connecting Community Festival 2026**

This annual festival brings together people of all ages for a jam-packed program of events.

HEWI will have an information stall on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March along with many other Community groups. Volunteers would be appreciated.

Location: TBA 10am – 2pm

**Save The Date - Environmental Volunteers Celebration & Reserve Tour**

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March, 10.30am - 2pm**

**Queen's Park, Healesville**

A tour of the fantastic revegetation projects by Mt. Toolebewong & District Landcare and Healesville Environment Watch Inc.

**Further details to follow.**