

Zonta Says NOW Think Tank – Saturday 1 May 2021

3 pages of information from PIP Val Sarah:

"an odd collection of items for your interest, mainly press cuttings, in no particular order, but mostly generated from the Ballarat area ... note the number of women heading up the action!"

ZERO CO

is hoping to raise \$50,000 to fund more ocean clean-ups. In their first 24 hour underwater clean up in Sydney harbour they collected over 200 kilos of waste from deep dark corners of the harbour. Their comment: *"It was a little bit epic and a whole lot of awesome."*

FOOD RELIEF

220 Hidden Orchard Volunteers (led by President Ellen Burns) picked fruit from overladen trees in backyards and public spaces in the region, harvesting almost 400 kgs of fruit for donation to Food is Free, SecondBite, Uniting, the Salvation Army and about 35 food relief charities. Any damaged fruit is donated to the Ballarat Wildlife Park and Wala Animal Sanctuary, so nothing is wasted.

REPAIR CAFÉ

Community group Repair Café Ballarat is holding monthly events in conjunction with the new Ballarat Tool Library with more than 30 Volunteers making up the repair team with a diverse range of skills. So far, they've repaired 98 items, saving 245 kgs of items from landfill.

EDUCATING SUSTAINABILITY

On a permaculture farm property just outside Ballarat, Mara Ripani is hosting tours of her property which offers a balance between biodiversity, habitat and areas for food production. She has planted 2000 native trees, has a thriving wetland with aquatic plants which is a vital water source for birds, amphibians and insects, while green manure cropping is also undertaken growing sacrificial crops to build organic matter in the soil. Visitors can tour the farm's berry orchard, fruit orchard, kitchen gardens and nut paddocks... what a woman!

MUNICIPAL ACTION

Cr. Josh Milligan is interim president of the Municipal Association of Victoria. Speaking of **product stewardship**, he says

"A step in the right direction will be the implementation of a Victoria-wide container deposit scheme ... to improve recycling behaviour, reduce litter, and provide recyclers with a clean stream of material while increasing the proportion of material recovered and available for reuse, remanufacture and recycling ...and attach a price to products that better reflects whole-of-lifecycle impacts as well as providing opportunities for community organisations to generate revenue."

GENDER EQUALITY

The Gender Equality Act 2020, the first of its kind in any jurisdiction in Australia, came into effect recently in Victoria, according to Cr. David Clark, newly-elected President of the Municipal Association of Victoria and a local man. He says that *"under this statewide legislation, more than 300 public sector organisations, which includes local government, must put in place actions that will make a difference for the lives of all Victorians. The Gender Equality Action Plan will look at a range of serious and important issues, including gender pay equity, workplace sexual harassment and recruitment and promotion"*. The Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector has been established, with Dr. Niki Vincent appointed as the Commissioner (a woman).

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGE

Alfredton Rotary Club is running an inaugural environmental challenge to raise awareness of climate change, pollution, and threats to native habitats, encouraging the community to pitch green solutions to big sustainability problems – *“these could be as simple as adopting a park, highway, or street, or recycling common items around the home to prevent waste, like plastic, bottle tops and food scraps”*, according to President David Sanders. Concepts surrounding wind, solar, tidal or geothermal power generation, or energy savings through insulation, shading and heat-storage could also be explored. With sponsorship from a wide variety of organisations and committees, the Challenge closes on May 19, with \$1500 worth of prize money and an opportunity for mentoring.

TOY AND BOOK EXCHANGE

On the second Wednesday of each month, Marketing Manager Katerina Tasmourtzis of Coltman Plaza in Lucas, a newer suburb of Ballarat, holds an exchange at the Centre, to help reduce the environmental impact of unloved toys and books ending up in landfill – *“not only helping parents save money, but also stimulating a child’s imagination”*, says Katerina, *“allowing parents to connect and build friendships in a similar way to mothers’ groups.”*

PLASTIC BOTTLE TOPS GET A NEW LIFE

Local couple Ashlee and Adam Slater have been interested in recycling for years – their core new business is Zero Plastics Australia, using 3-D printing and recycled plastic 3-D ink filament. Plastic lids are shredded by Ballarat Regional Industries and the product is melted down and pressed into either shapes with moulds or sheets with the large hot presses. The business is expanding into more intricate designs, and so far the business has managed to move and transform almost 500 kgs of plastic in a year. The Slaters are also involved with Lids for Kids, and a charity called SOEL, the Southern Ocean Environmental Link which delivers education services and packages to kids.

GARDENS FOR WILDLIFE

A new Ballarat pilot program is helping residents create wildlife-friendly spaces in their gardens, contributing to the survival of wildlife by providing suitable habitat for birds, insects, frogs, lizards and other animals. 12 trained volunteers manage the native garden program which offers benefits such as saving on water, reduction of maintenance and costs, and connection with nature which is good for your health! It also offers more seeds, flowers, textures and foliage for native animals. The program is auspiced by the Ballarat Environment Network in co-operation with the City of Ballarat and Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, and is run mainly by women..

SCHOOL STUDENTS TAKE UP THE CHALLENGE

Jenny Perks, Co-founder and Director of Upstart Challenges, speaks of a program developed with the Australian year 8-10 curriculum in mind. Encouraging entrepreneurial mindsets, the program asks participating young people to develop STEM-centric products that could solve and help with real-world problems. Renewable energy technology, an open-water rescue watch, an environmental app, and a community activity program are just some of the solutions pitched at the past Upstart Challenges here in Ballarat. Jenny says:

“If they (students) want to go into general employment or tertiary education, creative thinking, problem solving, communication and teamwork are very solid skills workplaces are looking for.

PHASING OUT SINGLE-USE PLASTIC ITEMS

Back in March, Victorian Environment Minister Lily Di Ambrosio announced that more single-use plastic items would be phased out and banned by 2023. These items include plastic straws, cutlery, plates, drink stirrers, polystyrene for and drink containers and plastic cotton bud sticks. Shattering to think that currently each Victorian sends an average of 68 kilos of plastic to landfill each year!

ON THE GRID

Mars Australia (based in Ballarat) has transitioned to renewable electricity of the power at its Australian factories and offices. Developed by renewable energy independent power producer Total Eren and using electricity from the Kiamal Solar Farm, the effort is part of the company's global commitment to reduce gas emissions by 67 percent by 2050. The Kiamal Solar Farm is the biggest solar project in Victoria, with an eventual grid output of 200 megawatts from 718,000 solar panels.

SOLAR PANELS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY LIVING IN SOCIAL HOUSING

Mary Debrett is President of BREAZE, Ballarat Renewable Energy and Zero Emissions, responsible for the installation of 52 kilowatts of solar panels and batteries installed on McCallum Disability Services Residential Homes in Ballarat and nearby St. Arnaud. This was part of the Grampians Renewable Energy Program funded by the Victorian Government, with similar support to 7 other entities in Ballarat including the Ballarat General Cemetery. The BREAZE Social Solar program draws on public donations and government and philanthropic grants, and is currently running a One Dollar for One Watt Public Fund Appeal to enhance their support for social housing.

INPUT WANTED ON CLIMATE STRATEGY

Mel Douglas is acting manager of community and partnership programs with The Grampians Climate Adaptation Group, looking at climate in relation to agriculture, biodiversity, heat, storms, fire, water, health and economy with a view to where the region aims to be in 5, 10 and 30 years. The group consists of representatives from government, agencies, business, agriculture, universities and sustainability groups. She says: *"We are developing this regional strategy to (determine) how we can adjust and thrive in our changing climate"*.

TURNING PLANTS INTO POWER

MADE Energy is a small, local start-up business with big aspirations coming to the aid of 50 plus farming businesses in the area. While talking to farmers about power consumption, the group learned about the huge amounts of money farmers spend on diesel and fertiliser, which inspired them (a group of 3 guys associated with BREAZE) to pursue anaerobic digestion, which operates a bit like a cow's stomach, using microbes in a controlled environment to digest organic matter and turn it into methane and digestate. The methane can be purified and upgraded to renewable natural gas which can replace diesel fuel. The digestate can be turned into a rich, natural fertiliser to replace the traditional commercial fertilisers. These measures will decrease the cost of key farming inputs and improve the quality of products, while keeping the process local.

DIVERTING WASTE FROM LANDFILL

Hepburn Shire near Ballarat is taking part in an organic waste collection trial, collected material to be composted for community use. Of interest is what can be composted: raw or cooked meat and dairy to coffee grounds, eggshells and vegetable scraps as well as lawn clippings, prunings, branches and weeds. Lou Ridsdale from Ballarat's Food is Free Inc., said the system was something Ballarat desperately needed too, supporting the introduction of a safe and responsible organic waste removal service. *"We believe it is time to close the loop on food waste and build a circular economy-based alternative which leads to healthier people, a healthier environment plus new jobs and the establishment of next-generation workforce skills"*, she said. The City of Ballarat Council is developing a roadmap for such a scheme.

100% RECYCLED AND RECYCLABLE

Coles are advertising Multix Greener – plants-based snack-bags, sandwich bags, and cling wrap, plus brown baking paper, and alfoil. The recycling is via the RedCycle program – www.redcycle.net.au

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