

MELTON ENVIRONMENT GROUP

No. AOO4OO49F

A.B.N 47 411575097

PO BOX 481 MELTON 3337

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2014

CORPORATE MEMBERS

Western Land Services



"Western Land Services are specialists in environmental management techniques, weed & vermin control."

Champion Agribusiness at the Victorian Small Business Champion Awards for 2007 & 2008 & 2007 Melton Business Excellence award, 2009 Powercor Melton Business Excellence Awards & 2009 Apprentice of the Year award.

MEG ONLINE

Website: <http://meltonenvironmentgroup.org.au/>;

Facebook: check for coming MEG events; [:http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/pages/Melton-Australia/Melton-Environment-Group/139259387879](http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/pages/Melton-Australia/Melton-Environment-Group/139259387879);

Nature out West is a blog created to highlight the beauty & diversity of Melton's flora & fauna, as well as its more spectacular landscape. <http://natureoutwest.wordpress.com/>;

NEXT MEG MEETING

- There will be a working bee / meeting on Sunday 19th January.
- MEG's next meeting will be Wednesday 19th February 2014.
- MEG's annual Social Day at Blackwood will be in March, to avoid fire danger.

MEG meetings are on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, at 7:30, at Don Nardella's office in Alexandra St (beside Ambulance Station).

SUMMER

Summer 2013 began with a very hot day, followed by intermittent hot & cold weather. Rainfall over the month however was low, stressing many of our recent plantings. Hopefully the remainder of summer will not be scorching hot & dry like last summer!

MEG CHRISTMAS BREAKUP



On Sunday 15th December MEG held its 2013 Christmas breakup & BBQ at Navan Park. Carmen & Peter, Elaine & Doug, Geraldine, Bronwyn & Paul with Tom, Annabelle & Evelyn, & Jenny & Daryl all enjoyed a BBQ lunch at the BBQ's beside the adventure playground. It was a beautiful day with large numbers of people enjoying a day at the park.

DAME PHYLLIS FROST PROJECT

Once again local indigenous seeds were collected & given to Judy Allen at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre for propagation. Most of these were collected from our own plants at Brookfield, many

Winner of Melton Shire's 2009 Community Achievement Award: Arnolds Creek Biolink

Winner of KABV / Sustainable Cities Award 2013: Protection of the Environment: Arnolds Creek Biolink



Category Winner

Keep Australia Beautiful Victoria
Sustainable Cities Awards 2013

sustainability.vic.gov.au/KABV

of these from plants propagated by the women at the Centre.

While collecting seeds at Brookfield it was noticed that almost all the *Eutaxia diffusa* bushes here (aka Bushpeas or Egg & Bacon) had copious loads of seeds, all ripe & ready to be picked. In the wild most *Eutaxia* bushes seem to drop their seeds sporadically, with a few bushes ripening all at once. As seeds are more readily collected from these copious seeding individuals, we may be unconsciously selecting these forms for propagation & planting. This makes for easy seed collecting after they have flowered. Hopefully this trait is also of environmental value to the plants!

Again, many thanks to Judy Allen, Helen Scott & the women of the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre for their help in restoring Arnolds Creek!

COMING MEG EVENTS

Working Bee at Brookfield

Sunday 19th January 10.00 – 12.00

MEG will begin 2014 by removing weeds at Brookfield.

Meet at Arnolds Creek in Black Dog Drive (near the Black Dog Drive Bridge) just west of the roundabout at the corner of Coburns Road & Black Dog Drive. There is a small kindergarden carpark here & access is very easy. The site is child friendly, with no steep slopes. Melways Map 336 Ref G11.

Evening Bird Walk at Melton Botanic Garden February TBA

We will have a late afternoon / evening walk beside the lake at Melton Botanic Garden. We should hopefully see a number of waterbirds as they come in to roost for the night.

Social Day at Blackwood March TBA

MEG's annual Social Day at Blackwood will be in March, to avoid fire danger.

MEG BIRD GROUP

MEG bird walks will shortly be scheduled for 2014, beginning in February, with venues & dates.

Venues being considered are:

- Caroline Springs wetland

- Eynesbury Forest
- Strathulloh Woodland
- Melton Botanic Garden
- Toolern Regional Park
- Melton Gilgai Woodland
- Long Forest Mallee

Other suggestions for bird walk venues in the local area are invited.

- *For safety reasons walks in Eynesbury, Strathulloh, Melton Gilgai & Long Forest Mallee will not take place on fireban days.*

GRANTS

Western Water Frances' Environment grant

MEG is about to place an order from Western Plains Indigenous Nursery for planting at Brookfield in 2014.

MEG successfully applied for a Western Water Frances' Environment grant, for in kind support & \$1,100 for plants & restoration works at the Arnolds Creek Biolink Project at Brookfield as part of Western Water's 2013 Environmental Grants Program. This grant also includes the offer of Western Water staff participating in environment work at Brookfield.

Melbourne Water grants

MEG has also applied for two separate Melbourne Water grants, for \$5,000 each.

- Grant 1 is for environmental works along Arnolds Creek at Brookfield.
- Grant 2 is for the Brookfield Residents Group, in partnership with MEG, for environmental works on Arnolds Creek (West).

COMING ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

Marine activities for school groups

Williamstown Dec – end of Feb

'Parks Victoria in Williamstown manages Jawbone Marine Sanctuary and Point Cooke Marine Sanctuary. Over the summer period (Dec – end of Feb) we will have an experienced Marine Biologist named Jacqui Pocklington working for us who will be performing the duties of a Marine Intern.

I would like to invite you to take advantage of this rare opportunity and book in a date for activities such as Rockpool Rambles, Sea snail measuring or any other beach activities with an environmental focus.

Activities would be tide dependent (low tide), so if you are interested, please contact me with a date

President: Daryl Akers
Secretary: Doug Godsil
Meetings:

Phone: 0438 277 252
Environmental Advisor: Peter Sell
3rd Wednesday of the month at Don Nardella's office in Alexandra St (beside Ambulance Station) at 7:30

email: darylakers@gmail.com
Website: <http://meltonenvironmentgroup.org.au>

and I will inform you of the time of low tide. If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact me.'

Toby, Acting Marine Ranger, Parks Victoria, Williamstown: Toby.Stringer@parks.vic.gov.au;

World Wetlands Day

Sunday 2 February 2014, 8:45 am – 3:00 pm

Richard Akers of Waterwatch writes:

'Celebrate World Wetlands Day!

Visit Melbourne Water's Western Treatment Plant for a complimentary wetlands tour.

To celebrate World Wetlands Day and the 2014 theme: Wetlands & Agriculture: Partners for Growth, we invite you to take a tour of the conservation areas at the Western Treatment Plant in Werribee.

'Bring your binoculars and see how many different bird species you can see in one visit. Our Ramsar listed site is home to thousands of migratory shorebirds, who fly in from the northern hemisphere each summer.

'Our Discovery Centre will also be open for you to learn more about the latest projects from Birdlife Australia and Melbourne Water.

'Can't make it to Werribee? You can also visit the Edithvale Seaford Wetlands Education Centre to learn more about Melbourne's wetland areas. '

Sunday, 2 February 2014, 8:45 am – 3:00 pm

Tour 1: 9:00 am - 11:30 am

Tour 2: 9:30 am – 12:30 pm

Tour 3: 12:00 pm – 2:30 pm

Western Treatment Plant, New Farm Road
Werribee, Melways reference: 205 E12

Bookings are essential, places are limited.

Bookings open 2nd January, to book, call Melbourne Water on 131 722.

Richard Akers; A/Manager Healthy Waterways
Waterwatch Program, Customer & Community,
Melbourne Water; (03) 9742 9297, 0467 724
375, 990 La Trobe Street, Docklands, 3008.
P O Box 4342 Melbourne 3001;

melbournewater.com.au; [Enhancing Life and Liveability](#).

PLEG Exhibition of Environmental Art Melton Visitor Information Centre 4th – 28th February 2014

Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group invites artists to contribute works of art to an

Environmental Art Exhibition in February 2014, with a focus on our local natural environment.

The Art Exhibition will be a celebration of the natural environment of the Melton region. The art exhibition will be part of the Sustainable Living Festival, Australia's largest and oldest sustainability festival. The exhibition will be a depiction of Melton's local wildlife, wildflowers, scenes and nature in all sizes shapes and forms; including local landscapes: Grasslands, Grassy Woodlands, escarpments, gorges, volcanoes etc. The medium can be by paintings, drawings, collage, mixed media & photographs.

(Note: only one artwork per artist)

(deadline for submissions 31st January 2014)

One artist will receive a 4 day Botanical Art Beginner Workshop (cost \$349).

There will also be a Peoples' Choice award, judged by visitors.

Melton Visitor Information Centre, 323 High Street, Melton, VIC, 3337 (Mel Ref: 337 B9) Open daily 9am - 5pm 9747 7300; visitor@melton.vic.gov.au; www.melton.vic.gov.au/visit;

Application Form on <http://pinkertonforest.com/>; or contact Daryl Akers phone: 0437 277 25;

darylakers@gmail.com;

Birding at Pinkerton, Bush's Paddock & Eynesbury: Sunday 16th February 09.15am

Birdlife Australia & PLEG invite the community to join them birding at Pinkerton & Bush's Paddock in the morning, Eynesbury Forest in the afternoon. Toilets & coffee shop at Eynesbury (composting toilet at Pinkerton). These sites are not usually open to the public & are home to a large variety of woodland birds. About 140 bird species have been recorded at Pinkerton & about 125 at Eynesbury to date.

Dave Torr: 9749 5141 or davidtorr@gmail.com,
Mob 0400 566 656(BLA) or Daryl Akers: 9743 2495 (PLEG), or www.birdlife.org.au/events;
Gates open 9.15am, walk starts 9.30:

Meet at Pinkerton Gate - Pinkerton Forest
Pinkerton Forest is on Mt. Cottrell Rd (Melways Page 7 near the right side about 1/3rd the way up or Map 221 on newer Melways), which runs between Greig's Rd and Boundary Rd. From Greig's Rd there is a group of 2-3 houses on the right after about 2km – entrance to the forest is IMMEDIATELY after these.

If approaching from the south (Boundary Rd) Pinkerton Forest is IMMEDIATELY before the 1st house on the left.

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

2013 confirmed as Australia's hottest year on record: Bureau of Meteorology 3 January 2014

'Today's release of the Bureau of Meteorology Annual Climate Statement 2013 confirms Australia has recorded its hottest calendar year on record.'

'Average temperatures were 1.20°C above the long-term average of 21.8°C, breaking the previous record set in 2005 by 0.17°C.'

'All states and territories recorded above average temperatures in 2013, with Western Australia, Northern Territory and South Australia breaking their previous annual average temperature records.'

'The year started with a persistent heatwave in January, with Australia recording its hottest day (7 January), hottest week, and hottest month on record. A new record was set for the number of consecutive days the national average temperature exceeded 39°C - seven days between 2 and 8 January 2013, almost doubling the previous record of four consecutive days in 1973.'

'Other significant climate events of 2013 include:

- *Ex-tropical cyclone Oswald caused heavy rain and flooding along the east coast in late January, with many coastal areas from Sydney to Cape York receiving more than 200mm of rainfall in 24 hours, and Upper Springbrook in the Gold Coast hinterland receiving 1496mm in eight days.*
- *The highest temperature recorded during 2013 was 49.6°C at Moomba in South Australia (12 January), the highest temperature in Australia since 1998.*
- *The January heatwave saw a number of severe bushfires in south eastern Tasmania and in Victoria, where bushfires were particularly widespread.*
- *Tropical cyclone Rusty was the most intense tropical cyclone to make landfall in 2013, causing flooding in the Pilbara and Western Kimberley in late February.*

- *An early start to the fire season saw major bushfires in the Blue Mountains during October, the most destructive in the region since 1968.*
- *Tropical cyclone Alessia crossed the coast near Darwin in late November, the earliest tropical cyclone to make landfall in the Northern Territory in 40 years.*

'Nationally, Australian temperatures have warmed approximately 1°C since 1950, consistent with global climate trends. Globally, each of the past 13 years (2001 to 2013) have ranked among the 14th warmest on record.'

BOM Media Release: 3rd January 2014

http://www.bom.gov.au/announcements/media_releases/ho/20140103.shtml;

MELTON'S WOODLANDS

Eynesbury Forest



Gold-dust Wattles blooming in Eynesbury

Eynesbury Forest, at 288 hectares, is one of Victoria's largest remaining stands of Grey Box, & the largest one south of the Dividing Range. It is a reminder of the Grey Box Woodlands that once covered much of this region, along with vast areas of rolling grasslands. In springtime the woodland comes alive with masses of yellow & gold wattles & bushpeas, as well as numerous smaller wildflowers. This is one of several woodlands in this vicinity, ie Pinkerton Forest, Bush's paddock Woodland, Strathtulloh Woodland & Five Ways Woodland, Eynesbury being by far the biggest.

'In a landscape ecology context it is clear that, particularly for birds, the Eynesbury, Pinkerton & Bush's Paddock patches function as a single

system – each one important for ongoing ecological function in the others.’

As per: Pinkerton Forest and Bush's Paddock: flora and fauna report 2007

129 bird species have been found here to date, but more species are observed here each year.

The woodland provides refuge to many threatened birds that depend upon woodland remnants such as Eynesbury, including many listed in the ‘Victorian Temperate Woodland Bird Community’

Several are listed under a National Action Plan for Australian Birds:

Brown Treecreeper, Speckled Warbler, Diamond Firetail



Speckled Warbler in Eynesbury January 2014

The Speckled Warbler and Diamond Firetail are listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988.

‘Both the Zebra Finch & Southern Whiteface are rare in the Greater Melbourne area. The Southern Whiteface is particularly rare now, and the Mt Cottrell-Exford area down to the You Yangs is probably its stronghold in south-central Victoria’

As per: Pinkerton Forest and Bush's Paddock: flora and fauna report 2007



Diamond Firetails in Eynesbury (Chris Luniardi)



Spotted Pardalote in Eynesbury

Endangered birds in Eynesbury include:

- Speckled Warbler
 - Small endangered ground nesting birds especially vulnerable to cats
 - Threatened in Victoria under FFG Act
 - Southern Whiteface
 - ‘persists locally only at Eynesbury near Melton & the You Yangs’
 - ‘Eynesbury in low numbers’
 - Brown Treecreepers
 - ‘Persists in Eynesbury, Long Forest, Brisbane Ranges & You Yangs’
 - ‘locally their numbers are low & their range contracting’
 - Jacky Winter
 - ‘Listed on Threatened Victorian Woodland Bird Community (FFG Act)’
 - Diamond Firetails
 - Threatened in Victoria under FFG & declining in much of Victoria
 - Brown-headed Honeyeater
 - ‘Listed on Threatened Victorian Woodland Bird Community (FFG Act)’
- (as per Birds of the Long Forest 1889-2005)



Jacky Lizard at Eynesbury

President: Daryl Akers
Secretary: Doug Godsil
Meetings:

Phone: 0438 277 252
Environmental Advisor: Peter Sell
3rd Wednesday of the month at Don Nardella's office in Alexandra St (beside Ambulance Station) at 7:30

email: darylakers@gmail.com
Website: <http://meltonenvironmentgroup.org.au/>

The presence of the relatively large Jacky Lizards would provide a ready food source for predatory birds, possibly explaining the large numbers of raptors here, as well as Kookaburras.

More photos of wildlife in Eynesbury Forest on <http://natureoutwest.wordpress.com>;

MELTON WILDLIFE

Sacred Kingfisher at Brookfield



In December this Sacred Kingfisher was seen at Brookfield over several days. It was last seen foraging in the small restored woodland site beside the village fence. These small brilliantly coloured birds, about the size of a Starling, are like miniature blue-green Kookaburras! These birds migrate to our region in the warmer months and are often seen in Melton woodlands & gardens in summer; they are more commonly seen in woodlands than by rivers. They nest in small tree hollows. A pair was recently observed breeding at Exford a couple of years ago. They are often seen along Arnolds & Toolern Creeks, as well as Melton Botanic Garden. Wildlife corridors are important for these & other migratory birds as they use these to migrate across the countryside.

More details & photos on:

<http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/species/Todiramphus-sanctus>;

Tawny Frogmouth at Brookfield

This Tawny Frogmouth was also seen at Brookfield in December. A group of Rainbow Lorikeets appeared to be settling into the tree for the night but their unusually noisy screeching gave away the presence of the frogmouth. Frogmouths are nocturnal hunters & are quite common although not often seen due to their cryptic habits

& excellent camouflage. They are unrelated to owls (with which they are frequently confused). Details of Tawny Frogmouths on: <http://australianmuseum.net.au/Tawny-Frogmouth>; & http://www.backyardbuddies.net.au/buddies/Tawny_frogmouth.html;



This makes a total of 52 bird species observed at Brookfield, but we are continually discovering new species there. Many of these have returned after revegetation of the creekside. Birds such as Buff-banded Rail, Stubble Quail, Reed Warbler, Golden-headed Cisticola, & Little Grassbirds have now been seen & heard in the reed beds. Reed Warblers & Cisticolas first discovered the newly created reed beds but more lately the Little Grassbirds, with their distinctive mournful whistle, have moved in also. Our Willy Wagtails nest each year in the Black Wattles beside the creek. Buff-banded Rails nest among the reeds, Welcome Swallows nest under the bridge, while Ravens, Magpies & honeyeaters nest in the trees.

Little Pied Cormorant	Pelican
White-necked Heron	Greater Egret
White-faced Heron	White Ibis
Straw-necked Ibis	Buff-banded Rail
Stubble Quail	Yellow-billed Spoonbill
Wood Duck	Mallard
Pacific Black Duck	Black-shouldered Kite
Kestrel Hobby	Brown Goshawk
Boobook Owl	Rock Pigeon
Spotted Dove	Crested Pigeon
Common Bronzewing	Galah
Little Corella	Long-billed Corella
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Rainbow Lorikeet
Purple-crowned Lorikeet	Eastern Rosella
Crimson Rosella	Musk Lorikeet

Red-rumped Parrot	Grey Shrike-thrush
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Blackbird
Willie-wagtail	Red Wattlebird
New Holland Honeyeater	White-plumed Honeyeater
Magpie	Magpie-lark
Little Raven	Common Myna
Starling	House Sparrow
Tree Sparrow	Reed Warbler
Golden-headed Cisticola	Welcome Swallow
Sacred Kingfisher	

Tachinid Fly 'another first for Melton!'



Local wildlife photographer Nora Peters recently found this magnificent Tachinid Fly (*Amphitropesa elegans*); identified for Nora by the museum.

As Nora states:

"...if you research the name there are no images on Google 'Tachnidae Fly, (*Amphitropesa elegans*)' so another first for Melton!"

Apparently there are only two specimens in the museum. As the species name '*elegans*' suggests, this is a very elegant fly! This is yet one more example of the wealth of wildlife found here. The rich diversity of invertebrates in Melton more than matches the diversity of larger & better known wildlife such as birds & kangaroos. Info on other Tachinid Flies is on:

http://www.brisbaneinsects.com/brisbane_tachinid_sl/;

LOCAL WILDLIFE

Southern Brown Treefrogs in Bacchus Marsh

During rains IN 2013 a Southern Brown Treefrog (*Litoria ewingi*) was heard calling from a backyard pool in Bacchus Marsh. These small treefrogs are similar in appearance to the Whistling Treefrog

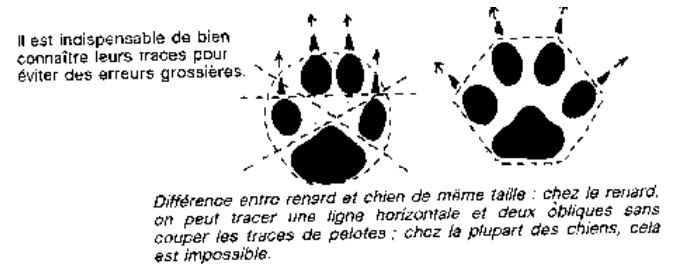
(also heard locally). The call is similar but slightly different. The Southern Brown Treefrog can be heard in Melton in Little Blind Creek, as well as upper Toolern Creek. Details of this frog, including the call, are on:

<http://frogs.org.au/frogs/species/Litoria/ewingi/>;

Fox tracks

Foxes are common in & around Melton. Their tracks are often seen on dirt tracks, especially after rain.

This illustration demonstrates the difference between fox & dog tracks. The fox track is on the left & the dog track is on the right. Both are quite similar. Straight lines can be drawn between the pad marks on the fox track, whereas this cannot be done on a dog track.



According to Dept of Primary Industry & Regions South Australia:

'Fox paw prints are different from dogs

If you see a front paw print, draw a line above the two middle pads. If the line does not intersect the back of the top two pads, you have a fox track.'

http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/137541/bio_pest_fox_fact01.pdf;

MEG LIBRARY

MEG has a library of books, reports & CD's which are available for reference or borrowing:

Books

Flora of Melbourne

Australian Plants Society Maroondah

Plants of Melbourne's Western Plains

Australian Plants Society, Keilor Plains Group

Plains Wandering

Ian Lunt, Tim Barlow & James Ross

Attracting Frogs to your Garden

Kevin Casey

A Field Guide to Frogs of Australia

Martyn Robinson

Bush Regeneration: recovering Australian

landscapes Robin A Buchanan

President: Daryl Akers
Secretary: Doug Godsil
Meetings:

Phone: 0438 277 252
Environmental Advisor: Peter Sell
3rd Wednesday of the month at Don Nardella's office in Alexandra St (beside Ambulance Station) at 7:30

email: darylakers@gmail.com
Website: <http://meltonenvironmentgroup.org.au/>

Attracting Wildlife to your Garden

Rodger Elliot

Habitat Corridors: their role in wildlife

management & Conservation Andrew F Bennett

Green Guide to Birds of Australia*Peter Rowland***Photographic Guide to Birds of Australia**

Jim Flegg

Long Forest: Mallee at the Back Door*Friends of Werribee Gorge & Long Forest Mallee***Jacks Walk Notes: Day walks in Bacchus***Marsh area* Jack Myers**The Nestbox Book***Gould League of Victoria***Trees of Victoria: an illustrated field guide***L. Costermans***Insects of Australia***E. Riek***Trees of Australia***H. Oakman***Orchids of Bendigo***Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc***Greenpages Directory 2008***Eco-culture & sustainability lifestyle***Australian Native Plants**

A M Blomberry

Native Trees & Shrubs of South-eastern Australia

Leon Costermans

Garden Book of Native Plants

Alan Seale

Trees of Victoria & Adjoining Areas

Leon Costermans

Seed Collection & Propagation

Pentland Hills L&care & Natural Heritage Trust

Macedon Ranges Flora

Riddells Creek Landcare

Environmental Weeds: Guide for SE Australia

Kate Blood

Birds in Frankston & Mornington Peninsular

Larry Wakefield & BOCA

Greenology: how to live well, & be green

Tanya Ha

Sites of Botanical Significance in the Western**Region of Melbourne** Keith McDougall**Moths of Victoria** Peter Marriott**Part 1: Silk Moths & allies****Part 2: Tiger Moths & allies****Part 3: Waves & Carpets****Part 4: Emeralds & Allies****All About Australian Bush Gardens**

Maloney, Walker & Mullins

Beginners Guide to Wetland Bird identification

Melbourne Water

Revegetation: what to plant, where & how in the Moorabool Shire area Grow West**Environmental Reports****Extension of Services: Werribee catchment**

Melbourne Water

Melton Sewerage Upgrade

Western Water

Port Philip Native Vegetation Plan

PPW CMA

Western Water 2007 Annual Report

Western Water

Regional River Health Strategy

PPW CMA & Melbourne Water

Kororoit Creek: Regional Strategy 2005-2030

Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, Melton Shire

Securing Our Natural Future: I& & biodiversity

Victorian Government

Environmental Reports on CD**State of Catchments in the West Seminar 2006**

PP&W CMA

River Landscapes

Australian Government- Land & Water Australia

Kororoit Creek: Regional Strategy 2005-2030

Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, Melton Shire

Native Vegetation plan 2006

PP&W CMA

L& & Water Australia

Research reports & publications 1990 – 2009

**HAPPY NEW YEAR****Happy New Year to everyone from MEG**

Just heard on the radio that 30,000 people die of gunshot violence in America each year! Unbelievable!

Thank God we live in Australia!

Take care out there on the roads!

President: Daryl Akers

Phone: 0438 277 252

email: daryljakers@gmail.com

Secretary: Doug Godsil

Environmental Advisor: Peter Sell

Website: <http://meltonenvironmentgroup.org.au/>

Meetings:

3rd Wednesday of the month at Don Nardella's office in Alexandra St (beside Ambulance Station) at 7:30