



February 2023 Volume 7  
SPECIAL EDITION

## Showcasing Sustainability at Rotary's Melbourne Convention

**By Dr. Pat Armstrong, ESRAG Chair**

This special newsletter features the many exciting events that will take place at the Rotary International Convention (RICON) 2023 in Melbourne, Australia, 27-31 May, including wonderful opportunities for fellowship and learning in the days just before the Convention.

Read on to discover:

- The story behind RICON Sustainable Convention in Melbourne 2023
- Why Melbourne stands out for sustainability
- Discover our Sustainable RICON Program!
- ESRAG Environment Actions Summit May 25th
- RAGTime - celebrate the impact of Rotary Action Groups
- RICON Breakout Sessions support our ESRAG presenters
- Volunteer for our House of Friendship Booth to promote ESRAG
- Environmental excursions planned for May 24-26
- Announcing ESRAG's Green Events Handbook
- Use ESRAG Flight Carbon Estimator and donate to RI for flights to and from Melbourne



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**The Story Behind RICON's Sustainable Convention in Melbourne**



February 20, 2019 – On this date, I was one of the Rotarians interviewed on Australian national TV, [Channel 9](#), as we made a big announcement: “Melbourne has just been chosen as the [preferred location to host Rotary International Convention in 2023](#).”

Fast-forward to 2023. We have overcome bushfires, flooding, earthquakes and a global pandemic: and we are still standing. Challenges came at us one after the other, but now we are proud to share with you the breakthrough [sustainability features of RICON in Melbourne](#).

[Read More](#)

*Photo: Vic Grosjean with RI President Jennifer Jones at the Rotary International Convention planning meeting in Melbourne in 2022. Vic has served on ESRAG's Board and is Past President of Melbourne City Rotaract Club.*

## Why Melbourne Stands Out for Sustainability

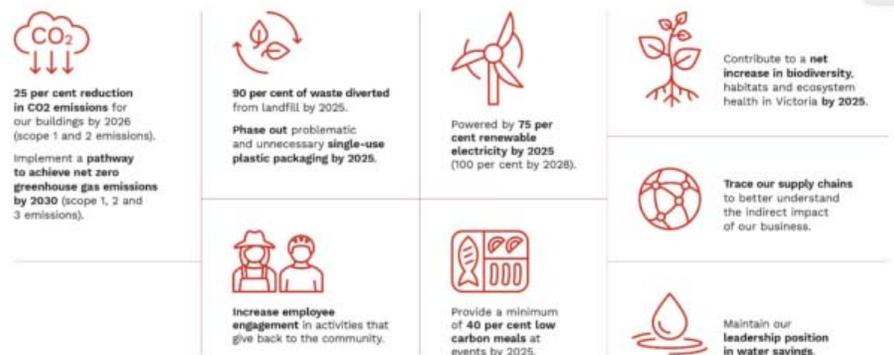
By Vic Grosjean

Melbourne is an impressive location for Rotary's Sustainable Convention for many reasons, including the city's transport system, green hotels, sustainable venues, and resources for event planning. The city also has many policies and initiatives in place to promote environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

**Our transport system:** We are providing attendees access to an extremely safe and reliable transport system (train, trams, buses) to travel for free across the Metropolitan Melbourne area during the duration of the convention! The Melbourne tram network, the largest operational urban tram network in the world, is powered by electricity and has a high capacity. It helps to reduce the number of vehicles on the road and decrease congestion with low carbon emissions. You can offset your flight CO2 emissions using ESRAG's [Flight Carbon Estimator](#) and download our [transport recommendations and sustainable itinerary](#).

**Our venues:** Our [venues are exceptionally sustainable](#). The Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre is a 6-Star Green Star rated building and a LEED Gold certified building, which means it is designed and constructed to be energy-efficient and sustainable. The building features rainwater harvesting, green roofs and solar panel generation, and has a strong commitment to sustainability. At the venue, you will be served delicious low-carbon meals from locally-sourced products. Our food waste reduction program will ensure you have a positive impact.

*Graphic: Melbourne Convention Center's sustainability plan.*



# Discover our Unrivalled Sustainable RICON Program!

By Vic Grosjean



Come early and join our hand-picked exceptional selection of environmental events at [RICON 2023](#) in Melbourne. Don't miss our pre-convention series of events, starting with a series of exciting sustainable tours to environmental projects in Melbourne and the May 25 ESRAG Environment Action Summit followed by RAGTime, the evening networking event for Rotary Action Groups. Rotary International has selected three ESRAG breakout sessions showcasing projects on rivers, plastics solutions, and the Plant-Rich Diet. Visit ESRAG's House of Friendship booth to discover an array of wonderful projects you can replicate

and learn more about what sustainable Melbourne has to offer. Finally, bring a digital resource back to green your club and district meetings: the first edition of ESRAG's Green Event Handbook.

Remember – We cannot make the Melbourne Rotary International Convention sustainable without your support. So make sure to use Sustainable Transport, Keep it Digital, and Minimise Waste:Reduce, Reuse and Recycle! And for those willing to go the extra mile, please [join our volunteer team](#).

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## ESRAG Environment Actions Summit May 25

By Pat Armstrong

If you are arriving in Melbourne ahead of RICON, you will not want to miss this ESRAG Environment Action Summit on Thursday, 25 May. To be held in a central Melbourne location, this Summit will feature leading environmental keynote speakers and showcase a number of outstanding Rotary environmental projects. After this inspiring introduction, delegates will work in breakout groups to develop practical ideas for Rotary club and district environmental projects. These ideas for projects will then be collated and produced into environmental action guides and made available to Rotary clubs and districts worldwide. This will be the chance for you to share some of the innovative projects of your club and district and to also learn from speakers and other delegates.



Keynoters: Professor David [Karoly](#) and Patrick McCafferty

You will hear from two outstanding keynote speakers:

**Professor David Karoly** is an honorary Professor in the School of Geography, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences and an honorary Senior Research Fellow in Melbourne Climate Futures, having retired from CSIRO at the end of January 2022. He is an internationally recognised expert on climate

change and climate variability.

**Patrick McCafferty** is Managing Director at Yarra Valley Water and Chair of the Thriving Communities Partnership. Yarra Valley Water was the first water utility to join the UN Global Compact, a global organisation with a strong sustainability focus. Aligning its operations to this Compact, Yarra Valley Water uses anaerobic digestion for sewage management and treatment and to convert food waste to renewable energy. It also recycles water from sewage for use in homes, parks and sports grounds.

Our prospective speakers and topics include:

- Salvador Rico: Cleaning the Rivers of the World
- Christopher Puttock: Mangroves Restoration
- Rob Anderson: Rotarians for Climate website
- Clari Nolet: Lithium-Ion Battery Recycling (A Program of Impact)
- David Brawn: Environmental Envoys to Engage Rotary Clubs
- Colin Scobie: Oyster Shell Reef Restoration
- Trees for Survival
- Pat Armstrong: Light up Timor Through Enterprise

Tickets - which include lunch- are US \$60 for Rotarians, and \$30 for Rotaractors, but ESRAG members get a 15% discount! Click here to [register](#).

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## Inviting you to RAGTime at Royal Botanic Gardens

*By Pat Armstrong*

**RAGTime**  
Celebrate the Impact of  
Rotary Action Groups  
Pre-RICON

**25 May 2023, Thursday**  
**19.00 - 21.00**  
**Royal Botanic Gardens  
Melbourne/Jardin Tan**  
US\* **\$60 Rotarians**  
**\$30 Rotaractors**

Canapes • one free drink provided  
Cash bar available

Registration  
Mix, Learn and Collaborate with members  
from Rotary Action Groups and  
Rotary leadership

Rotary

Following the inaugural and successful RAGTime in RICON 2022 in Houston, Texas, the DNA RAG is organising a second RAGTime in Melbourne on Thursday, 25 May in the Jardin Tan room at the glorious Royal Melbourne Botanic Gardens.

This is a unique opportunity to greet members of ESRAG face-to-face after another year of Zooming, and to meet, learn from and share ideas for joint projects with members of the other 26 Rotary Action Groups. You will also be able to have informal conversations with Rotary staff and our Rotary International leaders.

Your ticket includes canapés, one free drink, and a bountiful spread of Rotary

goodwill.

If you are planning to arrive early for RICON, this is an event that you will not want to miss. [Click here to register](#).

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## Vote on Environmental Excursions for May 24-26

**By Ted Waghorne, Chair,  
ESRAG Oceania Regional Chapter**

There are lots of environmental projects going on around Melbourne, and when you come for RICON 2023 we would like to take you to visit some of these. The tours are anticipated to be on Wednesday, Thursday morning and on Friday just prior to RICON, so please come early to go on a tour or two, and also attend the ESRAG Action Summit and the RAGTime evening reception.

We would love to have [your feedback](#) on the tours that interest you most so we can make sure there is a place for you. The tour options currently being considered include:



- **Maribyrnong River Wildlife Corridor:** hear from the Yarra River Keeper about litter clean-up and what is being done to reduce polystyrene pollution. Possibly enjoy a boat cruise up the Maribyrnong river to a Rotary supported wildlife corridor planting. Proposed activities include tree planting, a BarBQue lunch, and bus returns.
- **Visit a bat colony in Melbourne:** There is a large Grey Headed Flying Fox colony living on the banks of the Yarra. These native megabats have their camp in Yarra Bend Park with colony numbers rising to around 35,000 in summer. This will be a walking tour along the banks of the Yarra, possibly just prior to sunset when hundreds of bats stream into the sky.
- **The Green Line and Rotary's involvement** - The City of Melbourne is creating a Green Line along the northern side of the Yarra River in the Central Business District with the support of the Rotary Club of Melbourne and Rotarians for Bees. Whilst this project is early in the planning stages, our visit will give you an overview of the proposal and its environmental aspirations: to improve river health, create a connected ecological river corridor, provide environmental education, increase tree canopy and mitigate impacts of flooding and sea level rise, We will also visit wetland trials currently being constructed.
- **Visit Donations in Kind:** Rotary Donations in Kind West Footscray is a volunteer-based recycling facility, a project of Rotary Australia World Community Service, (RAWCS). DIK collects and redistributes goods, principally donated by companies, hospitals and educational institutions. The goods are destined for developing countries and to disadvantaged individuals in the local community and are distributed through Rotary club projects and the wider NGO network. Visit the warehouse and see the vast range of goods prevented from going to the tip but finding a very needy home and discuss how this project is managed.

Other tours being considered include the **city's top green gardens and environmentally sustainable buildings** in the Central Business District. We look forward to hearing your thoughts and interests. Please [take this short poll](#) to let us know your preferences.

*Photo: Donations in Kind rescues tons of sturdy Australian furniture and equipment that would otherwise go into landfills, and ships it to schools, hospitals and other vital services around the world. Visit their warehouse near the harbour to find out how. Credit: [Rotary DIK](#).*

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## **ESRAG Breakout Sessions at RICON**

**By Pat Armstrong**

ESRAG presenters - all leaders of major environmental initiatives - will present three exciting breakout sessions during the May 27-31 Rotary International Convention. This year's breakout sessions are:

- Adopt a River (ESRAG and UNEP): Salvador Rico of [Cleaning the Rivers of the World](#)
- Stop Plastic Pollution: Lori Cloutier, Co-Chair, ESRAG [Plastics Solutions Task Force](#)
- Plant-Rich Diet - A DELICIOUS Climate Solution: Ambaree Majumder, Co-Chair, [Plant-Rich Diet Task Force](#)

Go along and support these outstanding environmental leaders! Check the RICON 2023 website for dates and times of these sessions.

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## Volunteer for ESRAG's House of Friendship Booth

**By Barb Sheehan,**  
**ESRAG 2023 RICON Volunteer Coordinator**

We're now recruiting volunteers for the ESRAG booth at the House of Friendship. Are you coming to Melbourne for RICON 2023? Could you spare a few hours to volunteer on the ESRAG stand? This is an opportunity to experience the fun and friendship of being involved on the booth, sharing the ESRAG message and learning about Environmental Sustainability projects happening all over the world.

The House of Friendship will be located at the Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre, close to the city centre and a short walk from Flinders Street Station.

Training will be provided prior to the event. Please complete the ESRAG House of Friendship [volunteer registration form here](#). We realise that your availability may change once the RICON program is released, and we will swap people around so that you don't miss the sessions you really want to attend. See you there!



*Having fun and pitching in at the ESRAG exhibit in Houston in 2022: eminent Australians and other ESRAG luminaries, from left: Yavuz Atila and Karen McDaniels (USA), Past Rotary President Ian Riseley and current ESRAG Chair Pat Armstrong (Australia), and Karen Kendrick-Hands (USA). Photo credit: Ariel Miller.*

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## Announcing ESRAG's Green Events Handbook

**By Pat Armstrong**

Rotary clubs and districts have traditionally conducted in-person events, such as conferences, PETS and District Assemblies. The Covid pandemic compelled us to conduct these events virtually, but as the

number of cases declines worldwide, many clubs and districts are returning to in-person events. Now that Rotary International has embraced the Environment Area of Focus, we are all now more conscious of the environmental impacts of these events.

Following the success of "[ESRAG & World Environment Day: A Handbook for Rotary Clubs](#)," developed in partnership with the UN Environment Programme, ESRAG is finalising a second - the Green Event Handbook - to Rotary clubs and districts guidelines and tools to help reduce the environmental footprint of their events. This new handbook will be launched at RICON.

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## **Use ESRAG's Flight Carbon Estimator**

If you're flying to Melbourne to attend RICON and are concerned about the carbon emissions from your flights, then you can use the [ESRAG Flight Carbon Estimator](#) to calculate the approximate carbon emissions from your flights.

Based on this estimate, you can compensate for these emissions by making a voluntary donation to the Environment Fund of The Rotary Foundation. Your donations will support Global Grant projects that address the causes of climate change by reducing emissions and sequestering carbon.

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## **The Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group**

operates in accordance with Rotary International policy, but is not an agency of, or controlled by, Rotary International.

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