

Deep Listening Ceremony and Community Concert

Over two hundred people gathered at the Penguin Parade Visitor Centre to help launch Phillip Island Conservation Society's new Eco Arts project 'For Our Future'. The Phillip Island Nature Park generously donated the use of their venue for the event.

The Launch began with a powerful and moving ceremony led by Traditional Custodian and long-time resident of Millowl, Uncle Steve Ulula Parker. Uncle Steve welcomed everyone with a Smoking Ceremony, paying tribute to his Ancestors and acknowledging the importance of caring for Country. At an emotional moment in the Ceremony, he honoured the memory of Cassius Turvey and spoke about the importance of looking after young people and keeping them safe.



A Deep Listening Ceremony followed, featuring First Nation Elders and artists, including poetic text from Uncle Herb Patten (Gunnai) and Lisa Kennedy (Pairrebeene/Trawlwoolway). Matua Arnold Tihema from Aotearoa (New Zealand) sang a song about the Maori God of the Ocean, 'Tangaroa Whakamautai'. In full regalia, Aurelio Denasha, an Ojibway dancer and cultural educator from Minnesota USA, performed a ceremonial dance, The Crow Hop.

Rev Ian Turnnidge was the Master of Ceremony for the event and created an inclusive atmosphere, welcoming and weaving together different elements of the community. Local artist, John Adam, read out a message gifted to him almost fifty years ago by Uncle Roy, an Aboriginal Elder from Roper River (Yugul Mangi). Uncle Roy's strong words affirmed an ancient and on-going connection to Country. Community artist Camille Monet decorated the room with whales painted by Aboriginal artists from

the Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Centre and large shearwaters and frogs. Jessica Berry, Manager of the Cowes/San Remo branches of the Myli Library, set up a display of books relevant to the project's ecological and intercultural themes. Mayor Michael Whelan officially launched the project, speaking about the Council's deep commitment to environmental and climate-related issues.

An intergenerational Community Concert followed, bringing everyone together. The Middle and Junior School Choirs from Newhaven College, led by Diana Clarke and Nina Prideaux, performed a number of environmental songs, supported by a House Band of musicians and singing leaders, led by Mal Webb. Phillip Island Nature Park's Ranger Pip Cleeland engaged the community with stories, poetry and dancing that celebrated bandicoots and penguins and demonstrated the richness of incorporating different ways of knowing. At the end of the Concert, Ranger Pip took visitors on a conservation walk and talk to Summerlands Beach while Terry Melvin showed two of his environmental films in the theatrette.

Comments after the event included:

'Eco Arts is a wonderful concept. Community uniting to protect what we love in a positive way through music and art.'

'This event was so wonderful, thank you. I love the way we can bring community together and connect to Country.'

'I'm so grateful to have had the opportunity to be here and share and witness such uplifting and significant work.'

When asked to choose words which described how community members felt after having participated in the event, responses included: 'Uplifted, hopeful, connected, inspired, joyous, determined, energised, connected.'



A film of the event can be seen here ...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vCa-tObeGo&t=7s>