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If you would like to support the work of Saltbush Balnarring Beach by donating or volunteering, please get in touch:

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Welcome to the Spring 2022 Newsletter.

This Spring, we have welcomed several school groups for community service work at Saltbush, and held our Spring Working Bee. With the support of volunteers, staff, board, teachers and students, our gardens, windows and pathways are looking better than ever!

We are enjoying the task of creating more welcoming outdoor spaces on site. Our guests have planted out our veggie garden, which is thriving, and students and staff from Clonard College provided a colourful book box, herb wall and outdoor seating. These are just a few of the contributions we have received this Spring that have made a difference to our site. Read on for more details...

As we get ready for a busy summer, we wish you and your families a happy holiday season full of peace and good times.

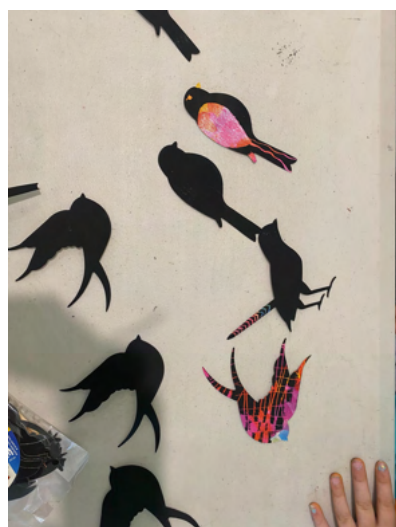
Rachel Connor  
General Manager

# WINTER / SPRING SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAMS

Since our last newsletter, we have run two fantastic school holiday programs across Winter and Spring. Running one program across each school holiday period instead of two allowed for our guests to choose between having an independent stay with their family during the holidays, or to join the program. These programs have been lovingly created by Jade Warner, as a way to engage children and their guardians with nature and their inner imagination and creativity.

During our Winter program, we had a variety of facilitators conducting low pressure activities including craft days and cooking classes. Our long-time volunteer Dani brought boxes full to the brim with home grown lavender to make scented drawer sachets, and dyes made from vegetables and flowers to create beautiful water-paint artwork. Our cooking instructor Jill led us all in putting together a feast to share - the choc chip cookies were a crowd favourite! As always, we held a welcome meal and games day, which are always laid-back activities to welcome guests to Saltbush.

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# WINTER / SPRING SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAMS



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Our Spring program had a focus on sensory play. As the days became warmer, we took our group out to the Wilderness for a scavenger hunt and animal spotting, coming across plenty of birds and skinks, before enjoying a Mexican fiesta feast and campfire. We all enjoyed a beach day together, created sandcastles, and rock rambling. We foraged for shells and seaweed to create a natural mandala, and some of us saw our first ever crab!



We love running our programs, where families can come together to play, meet others, and enjoy some planned activities. We are grateful to our volunteers and facilitators; Shane, Dani and Jill, and to all our participants, for making our programs so much fun!



# OUR GUESTS AND SERVICES

Since 1989, when the Presentation Sisters of Victoria bought the property at Balnarring Beach, we have welcomed more than 30,000 people!

The most common type of booking is for independent stays. Guests book a house for a week or weekend. Families, individuals or groups bring their own food and enjoy their time away for rest and peace however they choose. In addition to independent stays, Saltbush also run School Holiday Programs and Carers Retreats.

Most of our guests are women and children, and 60% are referred by community service organisations or funded by NDIS. Here is what some of our guests have to say about their time with us at Balnarring Beach.

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## **Why was a holiday at Saltbush Balnarring Beach valuable to you?**

To recharge the batteries

I was able to be with caring people who they too were experiencing the overwhelming difficulties we encountered continually.

It was a time to bond with one another and just focus on us as a family.

Such a rare opportunity to enjoy the peace and self-reflection, with lasting benefits.

A chance at accessing unique places and be apart of a different world, other than same city living.

The retreat enabled me to have time out from my caring role, to relax and to have fun and companionship with other carers.

## **What do you enjoy about Saltbush Balnarring Beach?**

The serenity, the sunrises and sunsets, the birdlife and seeing the koala.

The (carers retreat) enabled me to relax and engage in enjoyable fun activities and to join in conversations with other participants. The cottage I stayed in was clean, comfortable and so contributed to an enjoyable stay.

The peace and quiet.

The activities were relaxing and a great time with other carers. The meals were great, the activities were fun and interesting and the living spaces were excellent.

The staff went above and beyond - extremely professional and compassionate staff.

# WHAT'S ON AT SALTBUSH

## HOUSE 4 FLOORING UPGRADE

We have now upgraded the flooring in House 4 with thanks to CCI Giving's Communities Taking Steps grant. We love to be able to freshen up the houses like this to improve guest experiences at Saltbush.

Saltbush GM, Rachel Connor was pleased to participate in a Community Partner Event held in November by CCI Giving. CCI Giving supports many small, worthy charities who attended the event. Rachel says "it was wonderful to connect with so many hard working groups and learn about their work".



## JACQI RUSSO ART & DESIGN

Thank you to Jacqi Russo for her donation of beautiful origami paper and decorative paper chain sets, embellished with her own designs. Jacqi has provided significant help to Saltbush in the designing of our new website, and these origami sets will be wonderful gifts for our guests this holiday season.

## ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE ECHUCA FLOOD RELIEF APPEAL

At St. Joseph's College in Echuca, over 40 students and their families have been affected by the recent flood disaster, with many forced to evacuate flood-damaged homes. Kildare Education Ministries has established a flood relief fund for those wishing to make a financial contribution. The Brigidine Education Relief Fund will support flood-affected students and families in the St. Joseph's College community with school fee relief, school uniforms, accommodation and food supplies, with 100% of the fund proceeds being directed to these students and their families. The Brigidine Education Relief Fund is administered by Kildare Education Ministries and all donations are tax deductible. You can donate here:

If you require a receipt for tax purposes, please email Padraig Mccahey with your name, date of donation and amount deposited. [padraig.mccahey@kildareministries.org.au](mailto:padraig.mccahey@kildareministries.org.au)

Brigidine Education Relief Fund  
BSB: 083 004  
Account: 56 697 6440  
Please include St Joseph's College in the reference field

# WHAT'S ON AT SALTBUSH

## AVILA ALUMNAE NETWORK

We extend our gratitude to the Avila Alumnae Network, particularly Dani Swindle-Hurst, for selecting Saltbush as their Charity of Choice, and their generous donation toward the Nanospace activity centre. Your donation will assist Saltbush in improving the quality of the Nanospace and its service to our guests.



## THE FLOCK / FLOCK OZ

Saltbush has undertaken a community project called The Flock. The Flock was initially developed by Pūkorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre in New Zealand and the Overwintering Project. This project aims to bring awareness to the migratory birds of the Mornington Peninsula region and the importance in keeping their habitats safe. Saltbush has collaborated with artist Kate Gorringer-Smith, who was Saltbush's first Artist-in-Residence, the Red Hill Men's Shed, and various schools to create one hundred wooden bird silhouettes. Star of the Sea in Brighton and Marian College in Sunshine West assisted in the painting and lacquering of these birds, while students from St Joseph's Echuca rendered a wall at Saltbush for these birds to be installed. At the Flinders Fringe Festival in February 2023, we invite you to come and help finish the last of these birds, where they will then be installed around Saltbush (more on page 10).

## BIRDLIFE MORNINGTON PENINSULA

Birdlife Mornington Peninsula has generously gifted Saltbush with The Reader's Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds. We are so grateful to connect with Birdlife Mornington Peninsula, particularly Pam and Susan, who volunteered at our Carers Retreats. On our retreats, we were educated on the birds found at Saltbush and the broader Mornington Peninsula, and taken on a fascinating bird-spotting expedition in the Saltbush Wilderness! Thank you Birdlife for this wonderful gift, which is available in the Saltbush office for guests to borrow.



# WHAT'S ON AT SALTBUSH

## SALTBUSH WORKING BEE

In October, Saltbush held a working bee with the support of the Mornington Peninsula Shire. With this grant, Saltbush engaged with Merricks Nursery to plant local indigenous shrubs and groundcover around the House 6 rockwall and north-facing gardenbeds of each house. During the working bee, we completed the house 6 garden planting and mulching, trimming of trees, powerwashing of the entryway, and sanding of picnic tables across 31 volunteer hours. With the remaining plants, Saltbush engaged with several schools volunteering at Saltbush, who planted out the remaining gardenbeds and set up compost bins at each house. We are thankful to the Mornington Peninsula Shire, our working bee volunteers, the school students for their participation, and Merricks Nursery for their assistance.



## SALTBUSH VEGGIE PATCH

Our veggie patch has been growing very well this Spring, with thanks to one of our guests for their work weeding and planting the boxes. Along with the new freestanding herb wall created by Clonard College, we have some fresh things growing for our guests to take as they please. Our little herb garden is located next to the office car park.

## COMMUNITY WORK COLLABORATIONS

This year, Saltbush has had the pleasure of engaging with a variety of schools to collaborate on community service projects at Saltbush. Students across Year's 9, 11 and 12 VCE and VCAL from Marian College Sunshine West, Marian College Ararat, Clonard College Geelong, St Joseph's College Echuca, and Star of the Sea College Brighton have all participated. These groups of students and teachers stay at Saltbush while completing projects that are designated based on the goals and objectives of the group.

For the VCAL students of Marian College Sunshine West and St Joseph's College, and the Year 9's at Marian College Ararat, tasks were designed in partnership with the students based on their skillsets and the skills they were interested in learning. These included furniture painting, mulching and gardening, window and deck cleaning, wall rendering, and green waste compost installation. It is so helpful for Saltbush to be able to engage with schools for these tasks, as we often rely on community service and volunteers to achieve site-related projects. CONTINUED PAGE 8

# WHAT'S ON AT SALTBUSH

## COMMUNITY WORK COLLABORATIONS CONTINUED...

Star of the Sea's Ave House contributed to Saltbush's community project, The Flock, painting wooden shorebird silhouettes in creative ways to be situated on site at Saltbush. This was an excellent opportunity for the students to be involved in something incorporating the work of other groups and volunteers, in true community project fashion.



Alternatively, the students of Clonard College did not attend Saltbush, but instead engaged in a long-term project. Students presented project ideas to Saltbush staff, received feedback, attended virtual site tours, and created their projects at school. These projects - including outdoor book boxes, vertical herb gardens, and outdoor furniture and game sets - were brought down by Clonard staff to be installed, while with the teaching staff also completed community work around the houses and gardens. This type of community service was a great way for students to have creative licence and responsibility, while providing wonderful projects that improve the Saltbush site and help make guest experiences more enjoyable.

By choosing Saltbush as a place to hold school camps and community service activities, especially during the off-peak winter months, schools are supporting Saltbush through booking our accommodation and making positive changes to the site for our guests. Saltbush has availability between May and November 2023 for school groups looking to participate in community service. We would love for schools to get in touch through using the Saltbush website enquiry form.





# NOURISH FOR CARERS RETREATS



We have officially completed our 2022 Nourish for Carers Retreats! At Saltbush, many of the guests who stay with us are in a caring role, and we have learned how challenging the role is, both through the full-time, unpaid nature of the work, but also the difficulty in accessing carer support. Through the Victorian Government’s Supporting Carers Locally Program, we looked to develop a retreat where carers could come and join slow-paced activities, meet fellow carers, and rest, reconnect and recharge.

In developing our two November retreats, we reflected on the potential barriers stopping carers from accessing a holiday and acknowledged that it can be very difficult to organise caring responsibilities for a full week away. To address this, we reduced our programs to two nights and three days. Additionally, this was the first time we held a co-facilitated retreat with the Peninsula Health Carers Network (PHCN). As these retreats were shorter, we instead ensured all meals were provided, including breakfast packs and many shared meals at the Nanospace. We enjoyed DIY spa days and bush exploration, as well as some sessions facilitated by the PHCN, and a lot of time to share stories with fellow carers and enjoy the peace of Balnarring Beach. One of our carers even did some gardening – something that she enjoys when at Saltbush!

We always recognise the highly valued though often under-appreciated role of carers, and hope to continue providing opportunities for carers to take time for themselves and feel rejuvenated.



# COMING UP AT SALTBUSH...

## JANUARY SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAM

We are coming up to our January Youth Adventure Program at Saltbush. These 2 weeks of programs will incorporate surfing, beach days, and picnics for our guests, as well as ticketed activities for families to attend in their own time. While we are fully booked for our January program, we are now taking bookings during our Spring and Winter school holidays. You can use the enquiry or referral form on our website to make a booking or refer a family.



## HOLIDAY SEASON DONATIONS

This December, we are inviting donations to support our guests coming to Saltbush throughout the holiday period. Our new website has a [Support Us](#) page where you can donate, to raise money for supporting families who cannot afford a break or holiday.

Flinders Probus is generously donating non-perishable food, sunscreen, and beach packs for our upcoming January Youth Adventure Program. We are grateful to the groups and individuals who help Saltbush support our guests and better their experience at Balnarring Beach.

## FLINDERS FRINGE FESTIVAL



In 2023, Saltbush will be holding a stall at the inaugural Flinders Fringe Festival from 17-19 February. Here we will ask the community to help complete our community project, The Flock, which will be installed at the Saltbush site. We hope to see you there!



# THE CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

This issue of our Newsletter shows that Spring 2022 has been a time of much activity and new growth at Saltbush Balnarring Beach. We have run successful School Holiday Programs and Nourish for Carers retreats. We have welcomed many guests who have finished their stay at Saltbush feeling renewed and refreshed.

We have welcomed volunteers who have helped with the programs and working bee during this very wet Spring! Our grass just keeps on growing! We have welcomed many students and teachers from schools who have generously donated their time, talents and resources to improve and maintain our facilities and grounds for the benefit of our guests. We have also continued to welcome local community groups that make our local community at Balnarring Beach so special. Our staff are now busily preparing for Summer when we will be hosting many guests enjoying a summer holiday.

The Board and staff have continued to work hard behind the scenes to strengthen Saltbush so it may continue in the years ahead. We have a new website, a new staff member and we continue to reduce our impact on the environment and raise awareness. We are now planning for some significant upgrades to our site in accord with the Masterplan.

The Board has taken the first steps in developing a fundraising campaign to help us attract the funds required to improve our site and grounds, upgrade our houses and ensure that Saltbush is able to continue its important work long into the future.

At this busy time of year as Christmas rapidly approaches, we would be very grateful to receive any donations that will help us to continue to welcome and support our guests.

I wish you all a happy, joyful and peace filled Christmas.

Phillip Steele  
Chairperson

