

Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC)

Rapid Response to Litter after rainfall

Project Report 2023



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The MCMC *Rapid Response to Litter after Rainfall* program is proudly funded by the Cities of Darebin, Merri-bek, Whittlesea and Yarra. The program is supported by the Friends of Merri Creek, Friends of Edwardes Lake and the Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek. Thank you to Elahe Sarafian for helping with data analysis.

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1. Introduction

In 2023, Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) continued to grow the [Rapid Response to Litter after Rainfall](#) (RRLC) program. MCMC supported a broad range of litter clean-up events conducted by residents and local conservation groups including Friends of Merri Creek (FoMC), Friends of Edwardes Lake and Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek. In 2023 these groups had increased access to litter collection kits and improved streamlined data collection forms and data submission procedures.

The RRLC program was established in 2018, via a grant from the Port Phillip Bay Fund. The aim of the program was to support the local community to safely remove litter from the waterways of the Merri Creek catchment and to extend the existing litter clean-up program run successfully for over 21 years by [Friends of Merri Creek](#). As well as the tributaries and wetlands within the Merri Creek Catchment, in 2021 the program extended to the Plenty River and Moonee Ponds catchments.

The program continues to be generously funded by the Darebin City Council, Merri-bek City Council, City of Yarra, Whittlesea City Council and just recently, the City of Hume. Funding has enabled MCMC to provide residents and local groups with advice, equipment and support to organise their own clean-up events.

Our many litter clean-up volunteers never have a shortage of litter to collect. While Melbourne's 2023 rainfalls were not as high as 2022¹, 'flashy' urban creek flows continued to inundate the Moonee Ponds, Merri and Edgars Creek catchments.² Ninety-five per cent of litter that washes up on Port Phillip Bay beaches begins its journey after being dropped on suburban streets. From cigarette butts to plastic bottles, most of the litter dropped on our streets is washed into the stormwater system by rainfall³. After heavy rainfall events, stormwater deposits a large amount of litter on the banks of the creeks. This litter combines with locally generated litter dropped along creek-side paths, picnic areas and nearby sports facilities. As a result, creek corridors will continue to be a focus location for litter collection.

Litter clearly has both amenity and ecological impacts. Over 2.5 billion pieces of litter and microplastics are estimated to flow into Port Phillip Bay each year from the Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers⁴. In MCMC's experience, concern about levels of litter in Merri Creek is the most frequent 'negative' comment made about the condition of the creek by users of the Merri Creek Parklands. This has been confirmed by Melbourne Water, who identified the reduction of litter as a key objective for improving the values of Melbourne's rivers and creeks.⁵ It has also established targets for relative 'absence of litter' in waterways. The target for Merri Creek is to move from 'moderate absence' to 'high absence' of litter in the lower Merri. Currently, the upper Merri has a 'high absence of litter'. The target for the [Moonee Ponds Creek](#) is to 'retain the current 'high absence of litter'', while the [Plenty River lower](#) aims to increase from the current "moderate absence" to "high absence" of litter. The [Upper Plenty River](#) target is to increase from the "high" to a "very high" absence of litter.

¹ [melbrainaccum2023.png \(548x424\) \(baywx.com.au\)](#)

² [platypusSPOT | 'Flashy' flows a problem for urban creeks](#)

³ [2020 Litter tracking - Melbourne waterways | Healthy Waterways Strategy](#)

⁴ Port Phillip EcoCentre. October 2020. [Clean Bay Blueprint- Microplastics in Melbourne](#)

⁵ Healthy Waterways strategy 2018-2028 and report card. This is a strategy for managing waterways in five catchments of Port Phillip and Westernport region. [Report card | Healthy Waterways Strategy](#)

2. Location of litter community clean-ups (maps: www.litterwatchvictoria.org.au)

Figure 1: Litter clean-ups within the Plenty River catchment, 2021–2023 (City of Whittlesea). Red dots indicate clean-up locations.

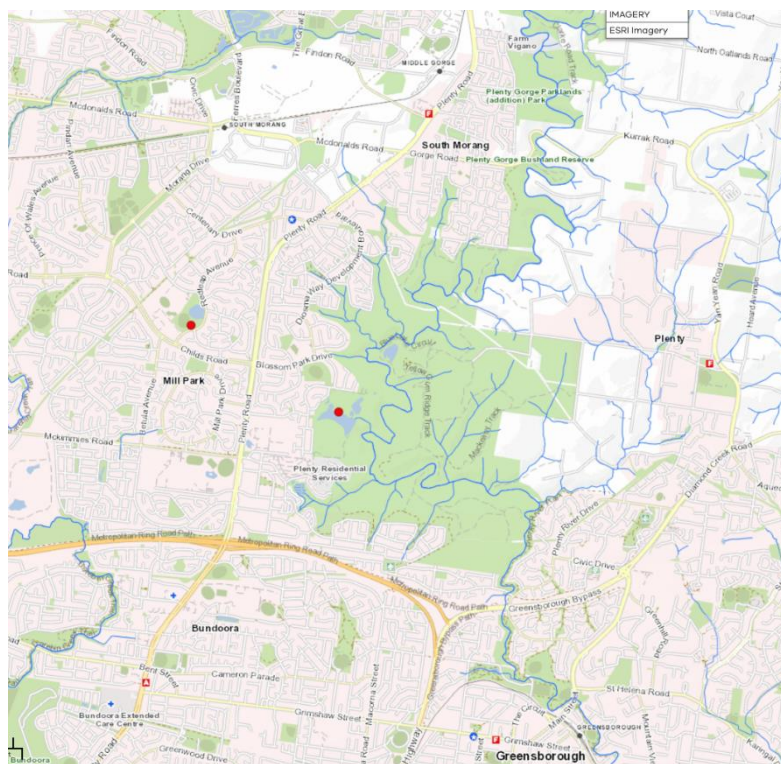
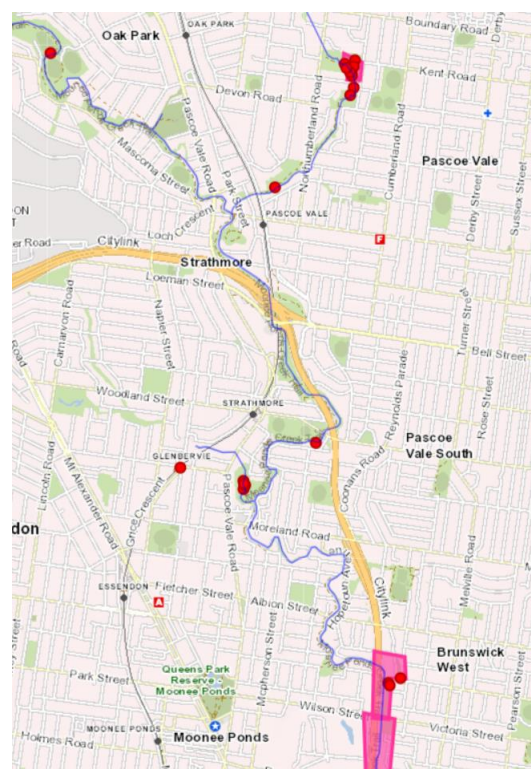


Figure 2: Litter clean-ups within the Moonee Ponds Creek catchment, 2020–2023 (City of Merri-bek). Red dots indicate clean up locations.



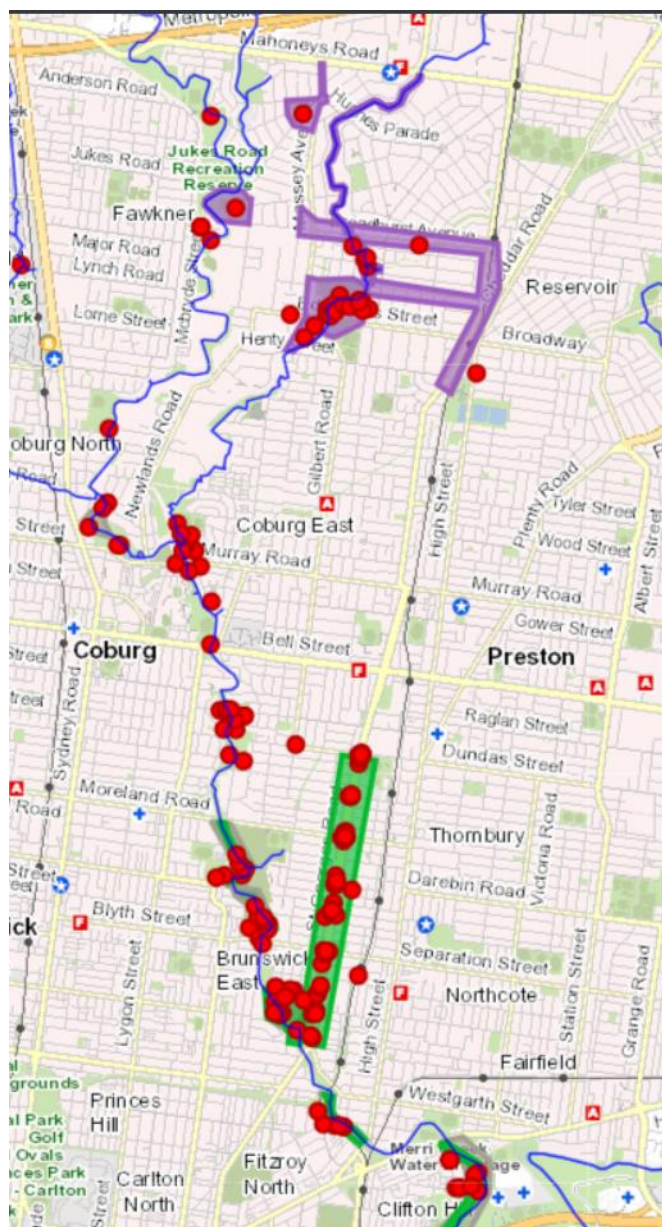


Figure 3: Litter Clean Ups within the Merri Creek Creek catchment 2018-2023 (Cities of Darebin, Merri-bek & Yarra) Red dots and shaded coloured areas indicated clean up locations.

Figure 4: Litter Clean Ups within the Merri Creek Creek catchment 2023 (City of Hume) Red dots and shaded coloured areas indicated clean up locations.

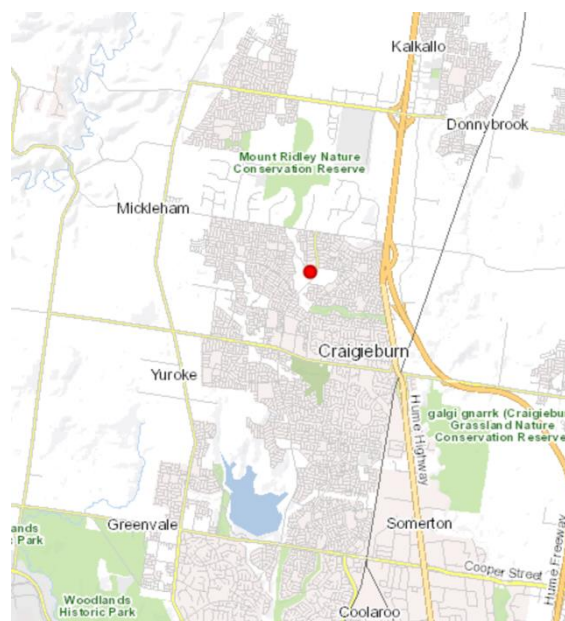


Table 1. MCMC-delivered community clean-up events, 2023. Volunteer hours total: 198*

Date	Group	#Participants	#Sessions	Location	Funder
23/02/2023	ELK Clothing	19	1	AH Capp Reserve, Preston	City of Darebin
05/03/2023	Chain of Ponds community	25	1	Moonee Ponds Creek	City of Merri-bek
06/04/2023	Xavier College student placement program	4	1	Merri Creek, Fawkner	MCMC
30/04/2023	Clifton Hill Cubs and Scouts	20	1	Merri Creek, Hall Reserve, Clifton Hill	City of Yarra
12/05/2023	NICE (Business)	9	1	Merri Creek, near Rushall train station, North Fitzroy	NICE (fee for service)
14/06/2023	Thornbury Primary School	60	3	AH Capp Reserve, Preston	City of Darebin
22/06/2023	Walker Street Kinder	19	1	Merri Creek, Hall Reserve, Clifton Hill	City of Yarra
17/07/2023	Trevi Pay (Business)	7	1	AH Capp Reserve, Preston	Trevi Pay (fee for service)
02/08/2023	Brunswick East PS Parent's Group	25	1	Merri Creek, Brunswick East	Friends of Merri Creek
17/08/2023	Edgars Creek Nature Play group	14	1	Edgars Creek, Coburg	Friends of Merri Creek
27/08/23	Community event	21	1	Merri Creek, Fawkner/Reservoir	Friends of Merri Creek
04/09/2023	Walker Street Kinder	22	1	Merri Creek, Hall Reserve, Clifton Hill	City of Yarra
05/09/2023	Walker Street Kinder	22	1	Merri Creek, Hall Reserve, Clifton Hill	City of Yarra
01/11/2023	Preston Secondary College	35	1	Edgars and Merri Creek, Coburg	City of Darebin
02/11/2023	Preston Secondary College	35	1	Edgars and Merri Creek, Coburg	City of Darebin
09/11/2023	Preston Secondary College	40	2	Edgars and Merri Creek, Coburg	City of Darebin
13/11/2023	Abergeldie Complex (Business)	5	1	Merri Creek. Hare St, Fawkner/Reservoir	Abergeldie (fee for service)
14/11/2023	Lake Park Kindergarten, Coburg	26	1	Merri Creek, Coburg	City of Merri-bek
16/11/2023	Lake Park Kindergarten, Coburg	32	1	Merri Creek, Coburg	City of Merri-bek
18/11/2023	Community event with Merri Paddle	20	1	Merri Creek, Coburg	City of Merri-bek
10/12/2023	Community event	15	1	Malcolm Creek, Golden Sun Moth Park, Craigieburn	City of Hume
	TOTALS	475	24		

*School and Early Years participants are not included

3. Community clean-ups with MCMC

The 2023 data MCMC submitted to the Litterwatch Vic data portal recorded that 849 people participated in 75 events.

The full list of events can be accessed in **Appendix A**

Table 1 lists the groups to which MCMC staff delivered education sessions in 2023. Photos of some groups are below:



Above: Thornbury Primary School students complete litter clean-up and surveys at Merri Creek, AH Capp Reserve, Preston



Corporate groups were another major audience this year including NICE staff who cleaned up the Merri near Rushall train station.



A new edition for 2023 was the Brunswick East PS Parent Club (BEPS) collecting litter on the Merri in Brunswick East.



Clifton Hill Scouts and Cubs focussed their efforts on the Merri banks near Hall Reserve, Clifton Hill.



Early Years groups participating in litter clean ups included Lake Park Kinder, Coburg.



MCMC hosted community clean ups including with the [Merri Paddle](#) on the Merri in Coburg (above) and on Malcolm Creek in Craigieburn (below)



4. The data: what litter is being found and removed?

MCMC uploads the litter data collected from clean-ups to the [LitterWatch Victoria data portal](#). This publicly accessible system allows users to manage and view different datasets from all over Victoria. The mapping features of the portal provide centralised access to litter records and provides tools to compare litter from different areas and time periods.

The 2023 data MCMC / FoMC/ Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek and Friends of Edwardes Lake submitted to the LitterWatch Victoria data portal showed that 849 participants helped out at 78 events. In total, 75 litter surveys were logged and 110,392 pieces of litter were collected.

The full list of litter clean-up events (or surveys) can be accessed in Appendix A.

The three most common litter items collected at all sites in 2023 were, in order:

- Unidentifiable plastic fragments and remnants (macro-plastics ie above 5mm)
- Polystyrene fragments and remnants (macro sized ie above 5mm)
- Single-use food packaging / packets (chip, snack and lolly packets)

By far the largest portion of all the litter collected at both sites was single-use plastic bags and plastic food packaging. These items are found intact and also as broken up smaller pieces, or remnants, known as secondary macro-plastics.

Table 2: 2023 Litter data in categories

Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC)	
Total of 14,892 pieces of litter collected	
Total of 456 participants	
Total of 23 sets of litter data entered in the LitterWatch portal	
Top 5 litter items collected	
Unidentifiable soft plastic remnants / fragments	5409 (frag) +2422 (soft) =7831
Food wrappers (soft includes metallic type) chips, confectionary	1,659
Polystyrene fragments	1,147
Plastic beverage bottles (includes caps and labels)	964
Unidentifiable hard plastic remnants	496

Friends of Edwardes Lake	
Total of 23,382 pieces of litter collected	
Total of 56 participants	
Total of 3 sets of litter data entered in the LitterWatch portal	
Top 5 items	
Unidentifiable soft plastic remnants / fragments	9700 (frag)+1500(soft) =11,200
Cigarette butts	3,009
Paper fast-food packaging (incl paper bags)	2,800
Toys / party poppers	1,601
Paper napkins	1,000

Friends of Merri Creek	
Total of 14,892 pieces of litter collected	
Total of 77 participants (regular volunteers participated on multiple events)	
Total of 32 sets of litter data entered in the LitterWatch portal	
Top 5 items	
Cigarette butts	1,948
Food wrappers (includes metallic type) chips, confectionary etc	1,714
Unidentifiable soft plastic remnants / fragments	928
Paper fast-food packaging (incl paper bags)	843
Paper sheets/ remnants / brochures	594

Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek	
Total of 30,082 pieces of litter collected	
Total of 260 participants	
Total of 16 sets of litter data entered in the LitterWatch portal	
Top 5 items	
Unidentifiable soft plastic remnants / fragments	8,975(soft) +500 (micro) = 9,545
Unidentifiable polystyrene fragments	6,047
Food wrappers (includes metallic type) chips, confectionary etc	3,703
Paper fast-food packaging (incl paper bags)	1,976

Thank you to the Cities of Darebin, Hume, Merri-bek, Whittlesea, and Yarra and the Friends of Merri Creek for their funding and continued support of this program.

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Appendix A

Community Litter events within the Plenty River, Moonee Ponds and Merri Creek catchments 2023- Grouped by group organiser, then dates

Date	Group Name	Litter Collection Location	Participants
4/01/2023	MCMC	Merri Ck Trail, Hare St, Fawkner	2
23/02/2023	MCMC	Merri Ck, Halwyn Cr Preston (AH Capp Rsv)	21
29/03/2023	MCMC	Merri Wetlands near Northcote HS	7
18/04/2023	MCMC	Merri Ck Trail, Hare St, Fawkner	6
27/04/2023	MCMC	Merri Ck Trail, Hare St, Fawkner	6
11/05/2023	MCMC	Merri Wetlands near Northcote HS	5
14/05/2023	MCMC	Merri Ck, Rushall Station, Nth Fitzroy	9
14/05/2023	MCMC	Merri Ck Trail, Walker St, Clifton Hill	20
14/06/2023	MCMC	Merri Ck, Halwyn Cr Preston (AH Capp Rsv)	60
22/06/2023	MCMC	Merri Ck Trail, Esplanade, Clifton Hill	19
17/07/2023	MCMC	Merri Ck, Halwyn Cr Preston (AH Capp Rsv)	7
8/08/2023	MCMC	EH Jones Rsv, Harrison St Brunswick East	30
17/08/2023	MCMC	Edgars Ck, Ronald /Danathian St Coburg	14
5/09/2023	MCMC	Merri Ck Trail, Esplanade, Clifton Hill	22
5/09/2023	MCMC	Merri Ck Trail, Esplanade, Clifton Hill	25
6/11/2023	MCMC	Merri Ck/Edgars Ck conf, Outlook Rd Coburg	35/ 2 surveys
8/11/2023	MCMC	Merri Ck, near McBryde St Fawkner	22
9/11/2023	MCMC	Merri Ck/Edgars Ck conf, Outlook Rd Coburg	18
13/11/2023	MCMC	Merri Ck Trail, Hare St, Fawkner	5
14/11/2023	MCMC	Park Lake Reserve, Chene Pd, North Coburg	20
16/11/2023	MCMC	Merri Ck Trail, Hare St, Fawkner	32
18/11/2023	MCMC	Merri Paddle – both sides of creek	20
10/12/2023	MCMC	Malcom Creek Craigieburn	16
8/02/2023	FoMC	Tram stop	2
5/03/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 34 Miller St	3
5/03/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 32 Normanby Av	2
5/03/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 33 Hutton St	2
8/03/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd tram stop 27 Westbourne Gv	4
14/03/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 28 Sumner Ave	4
22/03/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 29 Arthurton Rd	4
30/03/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 32 Normanby Av	3
6/04/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 30 Gladstone Av	3
13/04/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 34 Miller St	3
21/04/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 32 Normanby Av	3
17/05/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 32 Normanby Av	2
22/05/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 34 Miller St	3
5/06/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 32 Normanby Av	3
22/06/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 30 Gladstone Av	2
29/06/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 28 Sumner Av	3
29/07/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 34 Miller St	3

6/08/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 30 Gladstone Av	3
6/08/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 32 Normanby Av	2
9/08/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 27 Westbourne Gv	3
13/08/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 32 Normanby Av	3
17/08/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 29 Arthurlton Rd	1
31/08/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd tram stop 27 Westbourne Gv	1
7/09/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 32 Normanby Av	1
14/09/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd tram stop 27 Westbourne Gv	1
5/10/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 32 Normanby Av	2
5/10/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 30 Gladstone Av	1
9/10/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 28 Sumner Ave	1
2/12/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 28 Sumner Ave	2
2/12/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 32 Normanby Av	3
2/12/2023	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path tram stop 32 Normanby Av	3
8/03/2023	Friends Moonee Ponds Ck	Five Mile Creek	53
31/03/2023	Friends Moonee Ponds Ck	Westbreen Creek Lower	22
5/04/2023	Friends Moonee Ponds Ck	KWJoyce Reserve, Westbreen Ck, Pascoe Vale	22
12/04/2023	Friends Moonee Ponds Ck	Strathnaver/JP Fawknor Reserve	12
7/05/2023	Friends Moonee Ponds Ck	Five Mile Creek	18
16/05/2023	Friends Moonee Ponds Ck	Kensington - south of Racecourse Rd	6
11/06/2023	Friends Moonee Ponds Ck	Glenbervie Stationers	15
18/06/2023	Friends Moonee Ponds Ck	Westbreen Creek Upper (East Branch)	15
11/08/2023	Friends Moonee Ponds Ck	Five Mile Creek	15
11/08/2023	Friends Moonee Ponds Ck	Kensington - south of Racecourse Rd	6
19/09/2023	Friends Moonee Ponds Ck	Kensington - south of Racecourse Rd	7
19/09/2023	Friends Moonee Ponds Ck	Otway Crescent Drain (linked to Roxborough Park)	5
27/09/2023	Friends Moonee Ponds Ck	Northern Golf Course	2
28/11/2023	Friends Moonee Ponds Ck	Moonee Ponds Ck – Otway Cres Drain – Roxburgh Park	6
26/03/2023	Friends of Edwardes Lake	Edwardes Lake	30
16/04/2023	Friends of Edwardes Lake	Edwardes Lake	6
15/10/2023	Friends of Edwardes Lake	Edwardes Lake	20