

MEDIA RELEASE



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COASTAL CHAMPIONS RECEIVE PRESTIGIOUS VICTORIAN AWARDS

More than 150 volunteers from 350 community groups and representatives from ports and waterways authorities, tourism, local government, environment and conservation bodies gathered to honour volunteer coastal champions last night at the prestigious Victorian Coastal Awards for Excellence 2003.

Deputy Premier John Thwaites presented the Awards with Victorian Coastal Council (VCC) Chairman, Diane James, at Cargo, Venue 45, Docklands recognising voluntary commitment to protecting and restoring our local coastal and marine environments.

The Awards, a joint initiative of the VCC and the Coast Action / Coastcare Program, recognise outstanding contributions to the protection and restoration of coastal sites, buildings and wildlife.

Eleven recipients, chosen from more than 70 nominations, received awards for their individual or collective contributions to protecting and enhancing Victoria's coast.

The VCC estimates approximately 70 million visits are made to the Victorian coast each year, placing enormous pressure on this fragile eco-system. Diane James said that there needs to be much more recognition of those volunteers committed to smarter, environmentally sustainable outcomes.

"Tonight is all about recognising the effort and contribution made by volunteers, local government and other foreshore managers to preserve and restore our coastal and marine environments so that others can enjoy it for generations to come.

"Most of us take our coast for granted and tonight is not only about recognising the award recipients but also learning from them and their work. We also hope that this recognition will inspire other Victorians to get involved in contributing to sustainable outcomes for our coast and marine environments."

The Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Mr Bob Whiteway of Sandringham. Bob has been committed to marine and coastal conservation for over 40 years and most recently was instrumental in the proclamation of the Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary.

The VCC is the peak body for strategic planning and management of the Victorian coast.

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