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Media Release

STUDENTS HELP MONITOR YARRA HEALTH AND IDENTIFY A CURE

Secondary students will become Melbourne's new water agents next week when they join forces to investigate the health of the Yarra River.

On Monday, August 27 and Tuesday, August 28, students from Alphington Grammar, Preston Girls Secondary School, St Kevin's College, Melbourne Girls' College, Lynall Hall Community School, Xavier College Burke Hall and Strathcona Baptist Girls Grammar will carry out a variety of water and habitat tests of the Yarra.

It marks the first time that tests for E-coli in Melbourne's waterways will be done by members of the public.

The tests are part of the MYRiver Yarra program, a bold concept that sets the goal of engaging young people and their communities throughout the Yarra River basin in informed, active and empowered volunteer participation.

MYRiver Yarra is a collaboration between OzGREEN, Environment Victoria, and the Yarra Riverkeeper Association. The program is supported by the Department for Victorian Communities Volunteer Support Grants. It is based on OzGREEN's Eureka Award winning program that has been running in Murray-Darling basin since 2002.

After studying their test results, the students will determine the issues facing the Yarra catchment that are of most concern to them, envision how they'd like things to be in the future, and develop strategies for actions they will take.

They will present this information to a youth-led community forum at the Computershare Conference room, 452 Johnston St, Abbotsford on Friday, August 31 between 3pm and 5pm.

The Yarra provides about 69 per cent of Melbourne's water supplies, but

OzGREEN CEO Sue Lennox said the river was stressed by drought and the impact of urban living.

“It’s about getting these young people out and seeing first hand what’s going on, and powering them up to galvanise actions for the river,” Ms Lennox said.

“The main focus of the program is engaging youth passion, voice and commitment, and then following up their capacity to work as agents of change to help bring the river back to life.”

“Students will not only learn more about the environment, but they’ll develop leadership skills and have a real role in the future of a Melbourne icon.”

Photo opportunity: Secondary students carrying out water tests at various sites along the Yarra.

For interview:

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