

Turtle Talk



E-news for members & friends of the

Our Network was formed in response to the turtle crisis caused by 2011's very hot summer, when many of Perth's metropolitan lakes dried up resulting in widespread turtle deaths and a mass rescue of debilitated turtles.

Although our official name is Turtle *Oblonga* Rescue & Rehabilitation Network Inc., or TORRN for short, we will also be using Turtle *Oblonga* Network as a trading name.

HAPPY BELATED VALENTINES DAY



OUR LATEST NEWS...

HATCHLINGS A GO-GO!!!

Just prior to going to press with this E-News we received a clutch of eggs that were accidentally dug up. We are extremely happy to report that several have hatched and are doing well (so far) in our newly purchased incubator. Further reports will follow ☺



TURTLE SHOP

Please support us by purchasing something from our Turtle Shop. We will also have selected items available for sale at coming events, so bring your wallets!



COMMUNITY INFORMATION SESSIONS

Our second community information session held at Piney Lakes on January 31 was a great success. Here are just some results of the craft activities undertaken by some of the kids of varying age groups at the Piney Lakes sessions - pictured below. We thought that the papier mache turtle was a standout!

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We have been invited to participate in additional sessions for the City of Melville and hope to be able to hold similar talks for other metropolitan Councils in future.

If you know of a group or association that may be interested in hearing about the network and oblong turtles, please contact [Dianne](#).

News continues....



TURTLE TAXIS

Since the beginning of this year we've been fielding calls for turtles in trouble. It didn't take us long to realise that we that we needed a small phone network as well as a small trial-group of turtle taxis to spread the workload around. As a result we now have three 24hr phone numbers for the Perth metropolitan area - North, South and East. Calls to these numbers will then be redirected to a small group of members participating in a trial turtle-taxi service which will need to be refined and expanded once, with experience, we determine the strengths and weaknesses of the idea.

Would you know what to do if you found a turtle?

We suggest you download our updated [document](#) and place a copy in your glove box - just in case.

Add our emergency mobiles into your phone...

0424 727 411 East Metro

0424 727 624 South Metro

0414 476 867 North Metro

If, for any reason, the number in your area doesn't answer, please call one of the other numbers.

TURTLE RESCUES

We've been amazed by the variety of situations, and locations, where turtles have been found. Every rescue is different and we are learning so much from each turtle rescued. These turtles were taken into care this summer for 3 very different reasons:

- **Thorpie**, a great swimmer, was found wandering on the hot asphalt road, dehydrated, dazed and confused. She had gone to high ground to lay her eggs but became disoriented due to high curbs and overheating on the road; she could not find her way back to the wetland. Turtles, like most reptiles, are very efficient at absorbing heat from their surroundings but become heat stressed at temperatures over 30 degrees C and need to dive into deep cold water. The rescuer had the presence of mind to put Thorpie straight into her filtered garden pond and later contacted TORRN. Abrasions on the plastron and under the chin were infected and had to be surgically cleaned out under a general anaesthetic. After 2 weeks of dry-docking and medication, Thorpie's wounds are healing and soon it will be time to go back to the wetland.
- **Nosey**, an adult male was found on the shore of Matilda Bay with a wound across his face that involved the right nostril and eye. It appeared that

fishing line had cut right through the nose and the eyelid was swollen shut. After a trip to the vet for assessment and an X ray to be sure that Nosey had not swallowed any fishing tackle, he was placed in a hospital tub. After a few days of medication, the eyelid swelling reduced and an undamaged eye appeared. Nosey was one of the lucky ones; turtles can die from swallowing bait fish attached to fish hooks and lead sinkers.

- A juvenile male, **Juvie**, was found with multiple lacerations to the plastron (lower shell). Juvenile turtles are very quick, they need to be in order avoid predators that are part of their ecosystem. Dogs were never a part of that system but more and more we see turtles with injuries from dog attacks. Juvie managed to escape but could have died from his injuries had he not been rescued. It is so important to keep your dogs on the leash when walking by wetlands. Dogs are curious creatures and instinct takes over the second they see a turtle basking in the warm shallow water's edge. By the time you reach your dog it is often too late for the turtle whereas, if it was leashed you could avoid a disaster. After several weeks in dry dock Juvie has made a full recovery and will soon be released.

PS. We're too busy to be creative with names for our turtle patients; the first name which comes to mind is the one which sticks.

- **Two turtle eggs** were retrieved from a garden pond. As turtles don't lay their eggs in water, it is thought that these eggs may have been dropped into the pond by Ravens who like to dunk their food in water. The eggs are perfectly symmetrical and look like small pebbles. Although we're not sure yet whether the eggs are viable, they are currently being incubated in our new reptile incubator. If you find any turtle eggs you need to know that, unlike birds' eggs, reptile eggs should not be rotated and that they require very careful handling. An egg carton padded with tissues is perfect for the temporary storage-transport of turtle eggs.





TURTLE RELEASES

Nosey, the turtle which was rescued from Matilda Bay with a fishing line cut to his snout, was recently released. Lake Claremont had been targeted for its relocation as we didn't know which lake Nosey could have come from. However, Lake Claremont which is in a pitiful state was not an option. More recently there have been reports of dead turtles in the area. With the rapid drying of the SW corner of WA, we're going to have to look further and further south for future re-locations. As turtles live for about 80 years, any relocation site should be a long-term option.

THE THINGS WE DO ...

In the process of looking for a suitable release site for Nosey, I was advised that the lake at Pelican Point was in "good condition". Having been caught out before by enthusiastic but often ill-informed ideas on what constitutes a lake in "good condition" for turtles, it was necessary to check the lake out in person. After climbing through a hole in the fence and bush-bashing (whilst wishing I'd worn my gum-boots) I was finally able to reach the lake from the shoreline of the river. The lake proved to be salt-water. In the absence of a chemist I had to employ the tongue test to find out just how salty it was. Eeuw! Did I really do that? Clearly, I have survived the experience to type this tale. I have subsequently added a salinity meter to my Christmas wish list!



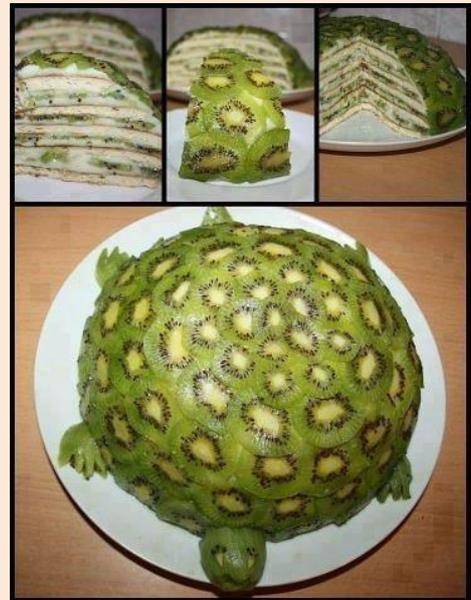
And . . . Whilst most of Australia's been on holidays, Chair-Secretary Ruth has been carrying a heavy workload this year. In an effort to help I offered to catch some *Gambusia* for a ready supply of feeder-fish. Ruth already has a similar set-up for mosquito larvae and bloodworms (midge larvae). Having offered, I then wondered just how I was going to catch these fast little feral fish. I did think I may have to ask to borrow neighbouring Member Valerie's grandson, Conor, for the exercise.

After consulting my personal information guru, Google, I discovered that *Gambusia* liked **9-Grain Bread!** Who knew? So set off with a bucket, a small aquarium net and a slice of bread. Too easy! Fun too, and I didn't even have to get my gumboots wet! Ruth was delighted with my haul: It doesn't take much to make turtle people happy!!!
Dianne

RECIPE CORNER

What about making this **KIWI TURTLE CAKE** for your next party?

Google it or email [Karen](#) if you'd like the recipe.



DON'T FORGET ...

Consider helping out at your local wetland on **CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY** - this coming Sunday 3rd of March.



EVENTS PAGES



TORRN TURTLE REHABILITATION WORKSHOP - SUNDAY 28 APRIL @ CANNING RIVER ECO EDUCATION CENTRE

Our one-day turtle rehabilitation workshop will be held on Sunday 28 April 9.00am-4.30pm to coincide with the release of the first edition of our husbandry manual.

The workshop will be conducted by Ruth Haight, Veterinary Nurse and long-term reptile rehabilitator. The Workshop will be held at the modern, well-equipped and air-conditioned Canning River Eco Centre beside the Kent Street weir in Wilson.

Topics included within the three categories - *Housing, Triage & First Aid and Rehabilitation Nursing* will include-

- Housing, Husbandry & Equipment
- Rescue, Triage & First Aid
- Water Quality, Testing and equipment
- Diseases & Injuries
- Stress Reduction
- Diet and Feeding Techniques
- Juveniles & Hatchlings
- Basic and Advanced Nursing
- The importance and value of Record Keeping
- Release assessment
- Release and Re-location considerations

The costs for this workshop will be on a sliding scale of \$10, \$20, \$30 for Members which is related to how many of the last year's workshop segments (Housing and Triage & First Aid) have already been completed*. Members who have completed one or two segments are encouraged, and welcome, to attend for the whole day (at their reduced rate) as our information base is constantly growing and changing. Cost for non-members is \$50. Our comprehensive Husbandry Manual (bound and in hard-copy format), which will only be available to

workshop participants, will be at an additional cost of \$20.

** If you attended **two** workshops last year, the cost will be \$10, If you attended **one** workshop last year, the cost will be \$20, and if you attended **no** workshops last year, the cost will be \$30.*

Continuous tea and coffee is included. Lunch is available at you own cost from the adjacent Canning River Cafe, or you may bring your lunch from home - the modern, well-equipped kitchen includes a microwave. There's plenty of free parking.

Numbers will be limited by the capacity of the venue. Payment in advance is required to secure your place. Payment may be made by cheque to our postal address (C/- 9 Lindsay Street, Kalamunda, 6076) or by direct deposit into our bank account using your name as the reference. Please email [Dianne](#) once you've made your payment, so that she can track it in the system.

Name Turtle Oblonga Network (our Trading Name)
Bank Bendigo Fremantle
Branch 633-000 BSB 144 516 366

DEC SPECIAL TOPIC TALK, CARE OF FRESHWATER TURTLES - THURSDAY 14 MARCH 6:30-8:30PM @ DEC BENTLEY

We sent members advice that this talk presented by DEC/Perth Zoo had been rescheduled along with the registration form earlier in February. If you haven't already registered to attend, please contact [DEC](#) as soon as possible.

Topics being covered in the talk include:

- Anatomical location and organ involvement in shell fractures.
- Triage and first aid care
- Shell fracture care & managing foreign bodies
- Basic Options for medicating
- Hospital setup for sick/injured
- Nurse management relating to feeding techniques, swimming/wound protection.

Events continue....



TORRN GENERAL MEETING - SUNDAY MARCH 10 @ WHITEMAN PARK



Our first General Meeting for the year will be held at Whiteman Park at 10am on Sunday 10 March. Tea and coffee will be provided. Feel free to come along earlier to talk turtle, to network and to meet some very special guests - the cutest hatchlings you will ever see - which may be in attendance!!!

WORLD WETLANDS DAY SEMINAR - FRIDAY 1 FEBRUARY @ COCKBURN WETLANDS CENTRE, BIBRA LAKE

TORRN was a workshop presenter at this information-packed day. Ruth (Presenter) and Dianne attended and were enthralled by the amount of information available and the wonderfully knowledgeable people present.

It was exciting to hear of the work being done to restore lakes and wetlands, not just their surroundings. Lots of interesting people to listen to, and to meet, and lots of new ideas. Any seminar involving wetlands, by default, involves Oblong Turtles so all present were like-minded souls. Bliss!

Our friends and colleagues from the *Friends of the Western Swamp Tortoise* had a poster display but, regrettably, no turtle choccies.

An exciting discovery was a poster display on floating vegetation "islands" which have the ability to naturally improve, and maintain, water quality. These floating "islands" would also provide a great combined basking platform/hide for turtles.



ENVIROFEST - SUNDAY APRIL 14 @ WHITEMAN PARK



TORRN has been asked to participate at the Whiteman Park ENVIROFEST a relatively new event in its 3rd year. The aim is to educate the public and increase awareness of environmental issues, including wildlife. A number of environmental government agencies, not for profits and retailers will be there to celebrate all things environmental. In past years these have included Birds Australia, Chidlow Marsupial Hospital, Kaarakin Black Cockatoo Conservation Centre and Men of the Trees. *More details will follow in future E-News editions.*

OBLONGS - FACT or FICTION...?

DOES SIZE REALLY MATTER???

Females are larger....?

- Yep this one is **TRUE**.
- Adult females can weigh between 1-2kg.
- Whilst adult males tip the scales around 500g.

Males have longer tails ..?

- **TRUE** again.
- Their cloaca is beyond the edge of the shell.

It's easy to tell how old an oblong is...?

- **FALSE**. Like trees, turtles grow according to food supply, not age
- We can simply estimate their stage in life:
 - Hatchling <5cm
 - Juvenile 5-15cm
 - Adult >15cm



A perfect illustration: The larger female below with a smaller male on top!



FEATURE ARTICLE



OBLONG TURTLE RELOCATIONS FOR THE KATANNING "DRAIN TO LIVING STREAM" PROJECT

The Project

In 2011, the Katanning Land Conservation District Committee (LCDC) secured funding from the Western Australian State Governments Natural Resource Management community grants scheme to return a section of the Katanning Creek to a living stream.

For decades it has been a steep sided square channel, full of weeds and rubbish, ignored by locals despite it flowing under the main street and past the popular aquatic centre. Many people don't realise this 'drain' is actually the headwaters for Police Pools and Lake Ewlyamartup.

This project will see the Shire of Katanning, Katanning LCDC and landcare volunteers working together to restore natural bank batters, improve flow, revegetate and enhance the waterway. The result will be a natural living stream, balancing ecological values with good water management, and contributing directly to the restoration of Lake Ewlyamartup.

The Turtles

In 2012 Katanning Landcare staff sought advice from the local DEC Office, on handling the creek's turtle population to ensure their welfare prior to the commencement of the project's earthworks.

The initial intention was to house the turtles with school children or volunteers during construction as a method to

raise awareness about turtles and their environment, however sourcing the correct housing, equipment and husbandry advice was proving a challenge.

The aptly timed WA Wildlife Rehabilitation Council newsletter announced the formation of the new *Turtle Oblonga Network* and relevant turtle housing workshops to be held in Perth. Contact was made and Ruth Haight responded -- a familiar name from times, many moons ago, spent at Kanyana.

As an interested resident, LCDC committee member, and landcare volunteer, I attended the workshops and realized that the initial housing idea would result in unnecessary confinement of healthy turtles. Then again, with earthworks looming in the peak of summer and a lack of rain there were also concerns that turtles could not be healthy, but stressed/starved/nesting and therefore not in a position to move themselves on.



The Relocators

Further contact with the *Turtle Oblonga Network* netted hearing about a "fauna relocation team" heading down to Katanning the following week to undertake approved fauna relocation services for the Water Corporation. The team, "Fauna for the Future", founded by Darren Darch, formerly a Tambellup resident and earthworks contractor in the Great Southern, were recruited to relocate turtles from the Pinwernying Dam, 5km east of Katanning, which had already been partially drained (through community usage) to allow for repairs and improvements. The Water Corporation had followed the necessary processes for the relocation of turtles, and for the first time utilizing the professional services of



Darren Darch to facilitate the safe relocation to a nearby wetland area.



"Fauna for the Future" Darren and Denise (wife and photographer) drove from Geraldton to visit the creek / relocation sites with Katanning LCDC Chairman Ernie and the big turtle relocation was scheduled to take place that afternoon. But, the heavens opened and the tail end of Cyclone Narelle dumped 25mm of rain on Katanning but cleared enough by late afternoon to allow the FFTF team to search for turtle tell-tale signs -bubbles!

The chorus and sighting of Motorbike frogs and tadpoles kept the team and bystanders entertained. FFTF also met with local residents, whether from curiosity or just walking their dogs, and this was an opportunity to glean and provide information-- one resident on the southern side of the creek stated the turtles were currently nesting in her backyard.

FFTF also removed a heap of debris from the section including plastic bottles, black plastic, a rusted old bicycle frame, and later used syringes. The creek was overgrown with a couch-like grass, and possibly native rushes, which was considered to be an impediment to the movements of young hatchlings.

The Approvals

Last minute arrangements were made applying for a DEC Regulation 15 licence (aka "*Application for a licence to take fauna for education or public purposes [fauna relocation and/or education]*"). The "Reg 15" requires a separate licence for each relocation project, providing justification, handler names, removal and relocation sites etc.

Day one, two young turtles were caught, which were likely last year's hatchlings. Day two, one adult female measuring 20cm was captured and released, while an elusive juvenile kept the team on their toes throughout the remaining two days. All were healthy specimens, as the current creek conditions were not as bad as anticipated initially, which was a relief.

On the last day Darren assisted landcare volunteers to install a mesh barrier fence on either side of the 200m to discourage other turtles from entering this cleared section. The Shire gave the approval to install these on the proviso it be removed if further rains and debris built up. The resulting mesh barrier wasn't pretty, but it sufficed, so we thought!



Over the weekend, a local resident and landcare volunteer and his two young daughters, spotted an additional two adult turtles attempting to escape from the closed off section, having possibly pushed through a weak point in the barrier, and now wanting out. The resident and daughters in tow, relocated the two turtles 50m across the road to nearby Piesse Dam, also part of the creek system. Regular checks are continuing to ensure there are no more stranded turtles, and so far, so good.

Co-operation and Co-habitation

This side project just screamed for some local promotion and community awareness - the Katanning Landcare Centre informed the local "Great Southern Herald", and that same day, all relevant parties (Shire of Katanning Engineering Works Manager, the District Landcare Officer, Darren Darch and landcare volunteers) met onsite at the Katanning Creek for a brief interview and



photoshoot - needless to say, the turtles (not present at the time) "graced" the article when it was finally published - 'they' were obviously much more photogenic, much to our relief!

Check out the article "Turtles get new home in creek clean-up project" that was published in the Great Southern Herald via the [In the Media](#) section on our website.

Despite the shallow depth of the large puddles in the creek, we were surprised at the critters habituating within- Motorbike, Banjo and Slender Tree frogs have been heard and seen here, we could see developed tadpoles, gambusia (an introduced species of fish, also doubling as turtle food), various species of macro-invertebrates and iridescent dragonflies swooping around. Even a White-faced Heron flew nearby, before landing within the creek, thankfully after our young turtles had been relocated.



All photos in this article are courtesy of Darren Darch from Fauna for the Future. Thanks Darren!!

Carnaby's Cockatoo frequent Katanning and nearby farms and reserves, and the active, but small local Wildflower Group planted a few "cockatoo garden beds" in previous years with *Hakea* and other species which the Cockatoos are known to feed upon - these plantings have yet a few years to go before they are bearing seed, but will further improve the amenity of the site, and will complement the nearby Living Stream riparian vegetation plantings when the project is completed, and all grown up!

Thanks are extended to Darren Darch and his Fauna for the Future team, The Shire of Katanning and the Katanning LCDC (Landcare Centre) for working together to ensure the welfare of the turtles during this important process.

By Committee Member, Carla Tassone

BUTTERFLY DRINKS A TURTLE'S TEARS

Elvis Costello fans will recognise this line from *Deep Dark Truthful Mirror*. However, it's not a fanciful lyric but based on fact.

In the Amazon, butterflies alight on turtles' heads to drink the salty brine from the turtles' eyes!!!



WHAT THE HELL IS A QR CODE WE HEAR YOU SAY??

Don't worry, we didn't know until recently either ;)

Originally designed for industrial uses, Quick Response or QR codes have become common in consumer advertising.

Smartphone users can install an app with a QR-code scanner that can scan the displayed code and direct the phone to a website of a company, store, or product associated with that code providing specific information.

See if you can download our latest "what to do if you find a turtle" document via your smart phone...



We will be using this code (and others?) within our publications to help spread our message. Future uses may include adding the code onto signs at local wetlands or turtle crossing hotspots.



TURTLE TALES & CASE STUDIES WITH DR AMY

TAKE A BREATH !

Like us, chelonians have paired lungs for respiration, which sit underneath their hard shell. A major difference however is that chelonians lack a diaphragm and most of their ribs are fused with their shell, which prevents expansion of the chest. Instead chelonians rely on muscle, head, and limb movements to breathe in and out through their nares (open mouth breathing is unusual and often signifies respiratory disease).

Like all other Australian chelonians, the oblong turtle is aquatic. Whilst it is necessary for aquatic chelonians to surface for air, certain species are also capable of absorbing oxygen through their cloacal bursae. This so-called "underwater respiration" enables chelonians to remain submerged for prolonged periods of time. ¹



A juvenile flat-shelled turtle (*Chelodina steindachneri*) surfacing for air. Photo courtesy of F. Biemel.

References

1. Mader, D.R. 2006. Reptile Medicine and Surgery (2nd edition). St Louis, Missouri: Saunders Elsevier, pp. 84-85.

By Committee Member, Dr Amy Northover BSc BVMS MVS (Conservation Medicine)

and speaking of bum-breathing turtles.... check out a great new kids book titled "Oh Dear, That's my Rear" in the [Books](#) section of our website.

SPREADING THE WORD: E-NEWS, ONLINE & SOCIAL MEDIA

PICS..... If you have any pictures of Oblong turtles (and/or stories about them) for inclusion into the next Turtle Talk OR the website/Facebook page, then [Karen](#) would love to hear from you.

OLD STUFF..... Have you been out of the loop or want to re-read something? Find previous editions of the TURTLE TALK E-News [here](#).

NEW STUFF..... Please note that the following pages were recently updated on our website... [Books](#), [In the media](#) and [What to do if you find a turtle](#).

WEBSITE...We welcome your suggestions and comments about our website see www.turtleoblonganetwork.org.au



We are currently on **107** likes and counting... Please share things of interest with your friends, as this may also assist us in gaining more likes and subsequent members.

AND SPEAKING OF MEMBERSHIP.....

- ❖ INDIVIDUALS = **64** +3 PENDING APPROVAL
- ❖ GROUP MEMBERS = **1**
- ❖ FRIENDS ON OUR MAILING LIST = **34**

To those of you who are receiving/reading this newsletter, but have not yet joined us as a member - shame on you! Numbers count. Just by becoming a member you are helping. The more members we have, the more supporters our turtles have which will be of benefit when we are lobbying on their behalf. Membership is FREE but you'll still need to complete a membership form. [Download Membership Form](#).

CHANGED ADDRESS, EMAIL OR PHONE?

Remembering that we might need to mobilise our forces in the event of emergency, it would be great if our lists of members and friends were always up to date. Please email [Karen](#) any changes to the above.



Turtle Oblonga
Rescue & Rehabilitation
Network

Turtle Talk

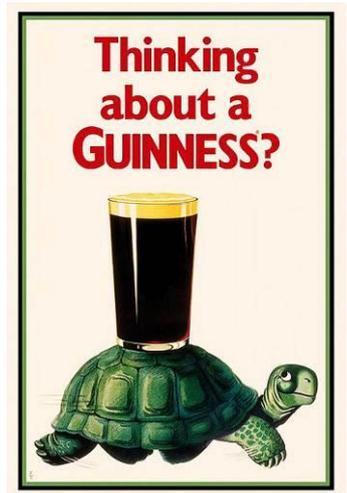
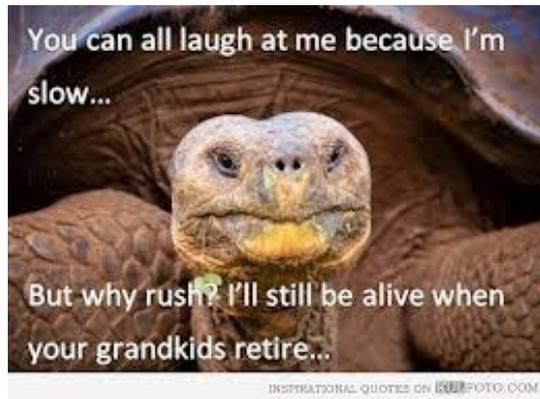
February-March 2013



☺☺☺ AND JUST FOR LAUGHS ☺☺☺



LIKE ONE OF YOUR FRENCH GIRLS



WE NEED YOU!!

If you have some spare time and would like to get more involved - please get in touch with one of us ...

TORRN COMMITTEE MEMBERS & CONTACTS



The Committee Members have a variety of experience and include administrators, veterinarians, vet nurses, wildlife volunteers & rehabilitators affiliated with many wildlife centres across Perth.

Chair-Secretary **Ruth Haight**
Treasurer **Dianne Hunter**
Membership **Karen Cavanough**
Merchandise **Barbara Wright**

Committee Member June Butcher
Committee Member Michelle Hazelwood
Committee Member Dr Amy Northover
Committee Member Carla Tassone

EMERGENCY MOBILES

0424 727 411 East Metro
0424 727 624 South Metro
0414 476 867 North Metro



www.turtleoblonganetwork.org.au

If, for any reason, the number in your area doesn't answer, please call one of the other numbers.