

Aboard Sengo

February 2015



Continuing the first big journey

Further adventures between Sydney to Melbourne

In February we continue our learning curve and new experiences with the completion of the journey to Port Phillip Bay. Crew are now less uncertain about overnight sails but can't say they are yet used to, or happy with, the altered sleeping regime.

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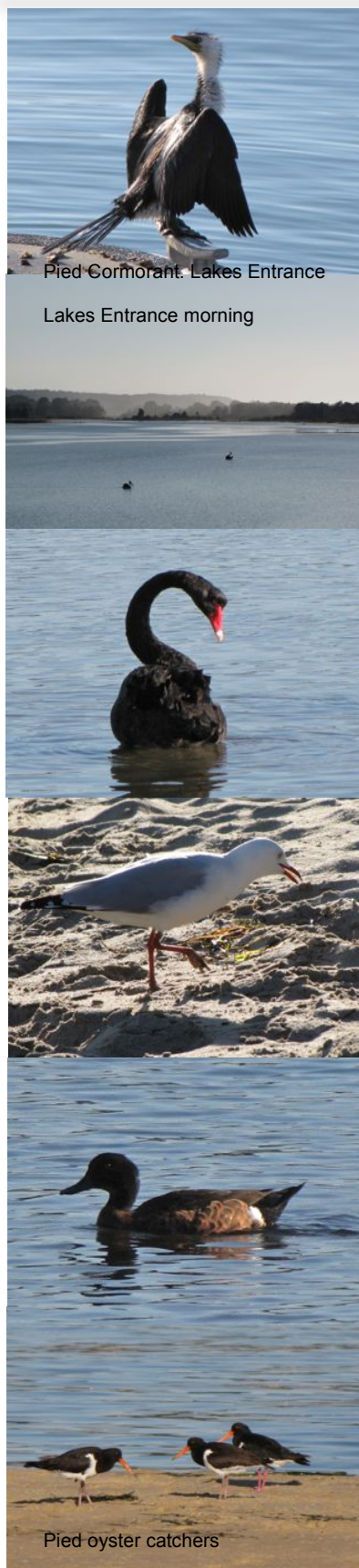
Gippsland Lakes to Wilsons Prom

The whole of the Gippsland Lakes system is listed under the international RAMSAR convention and we saw many more bird species here than we did when we visited the previous RAMSAR listed site in Botany Bay. This may have been however because we spent more time exploring this area. Unfortunately due to the history of the site, and the fact that us 'boaties', and the local fisherman, want the ability to get in and out of the lakes, the salinity of the whole area has been affected by the opening of the entrance at Lakes Entrance and the continual dredging to keep it accessible. As a result the local lakeside vegetation has changed to more salt tolerant species. I am not sure if there have been any definitive studies done on the effect this has had on/ or change in faunal species over time, but would have most definitely had an effect on the feeding habits of migrating birds.

The weather forecast kept changing – as forecasts do –and we found ourselves inside the Gippsland Lakes for 10 days.

From Duck Arm we headed back to Paynesville on somewhat false pretenses (thinking that the dark stripe down the side of the tinnie engine might mean an engine service; but after conversation with a local mechanic the tinnie probably only needs a good hard run), and managed to snag the 48 hour spot on the floating dock outside the yacht club. The weather wasn't ideal for heading out into the lakes so we stocked up on more food and started planning for the continuing trip west.

Looking for a little land based exercise we noted on a schematic of the town (see maps at <http://www.visitpaynesville.com.au/>) that a couple of walks seemed to lead away from Paynesville at the north and the south coasts. Noting that a road seemed to cross between the ends of them we decided to combine them and do a loop. It took us a good two hours.



Pied Cormorant. Lakes Entrance

Lakes Entrance morning

Pied oyster catchers



The Paynesville Heritage Trail comprises a series of interpretive signs around the foreshore outlining the aboriginal cultural and Australian historical maritime features of the town. Where this trail ends, at Sunset Cove, the local landcare group have adopted the continuation of the track until Grandview Road. This track is easy walking passing between private property and private jetties. Noting the number of agapanthus plants yet to have their flowers cut off means the landcare group have their work cut out for them. A board at the start of the track lists the animal/bird and plant species likely to be seen.

We left the track at Grandview Road but the aim of the project is to join the track so it creates a walking trail right around Newlands Backwater.

Leaving the coast we walked Grandview Road across to Lake King. The view is typical of country Victoria – eucalypt lined road reserve with bare-ish paddocks beyond; some with very little grass, and some with grass that has yet to be grazed, often with scattered



Paynesville Eagle Point Shared Path



Paynesville Eagle Point Shared Path

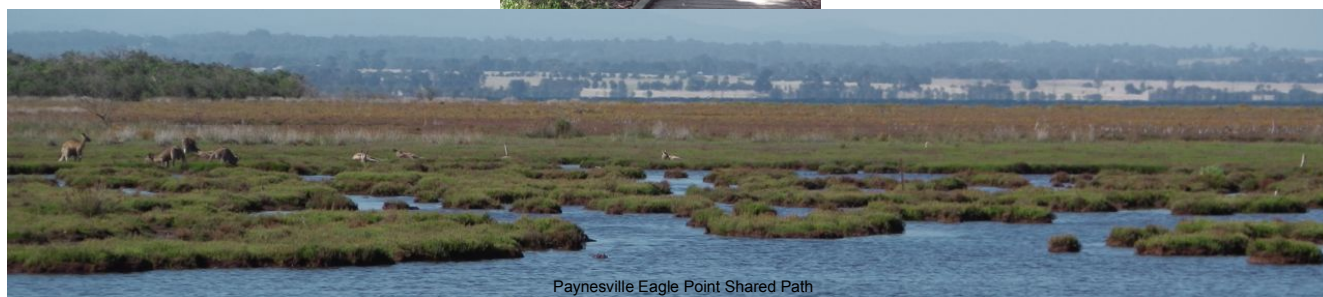


Paynesville Eagle Point Shared Path

patches of bracken. Bracken is such a great plant. I don't know why people want to get rid of it. It provides home for small birds and animals, shelter for kangaroos (don't get me into the argument but no, they don't eat enough to worry stock (I've seen it)), and protects the ground beneath it from the hot, drying sun. Unfortunately it also provides cover for foxes and rabbits (a couple of which we saw frolicking around).

Once at Eagle Point we followed the **Paynesville to Eagle Point Shared Path** back to town. The 1.7 km track looks somewhat like a rail trail at the beginning – wide and flat with generous edges - and is suitable for bikes. The interpretation boards point out the historical and natural features of this trail including the significance of the Ramsar listed wetlands along the shore.

At the Paynesville end small separate signs amongst the tea trees inform you the council is undertaking studies into mosquito management (and of course we got bitten by mossies whilst I was reading these!)



Paynesville Eagle Point Shared Path

Sperm Whale Head and Tambo Bay

We had been informed of walking tracks at Sperm Whale Head and were looking forward to exploring these but when we finally headed across the weather was not conducive to docking to the wharf, so we anchored some distance off and juggled the tinnie across to the wharf instead. Once off the beach, and in amongst the tea trees and heath you wouldn't have known it was blowing a strong south-easter just a few meters away. Armed with a photograph of the leaflet from the internet and having glanced the walking tracks on the interpretation board we headed off in the direction of Killarney swamp. We knew we didn't have the time to walk all the tracks in this area but we figured a walk to the bird hide at the swamp would take us around 2-3 hours and we'd get to have a look at some wildlife as well.

Well, we walked a little further than the 2- 3 hours, having taken several unhelpful tracks, some of which ended up in overgrown or lost ends. When we finally got to the bird hide, we were hungry, it was past midday and hot (probably the worst time to be trying to



Walking track Sperm Whale Head



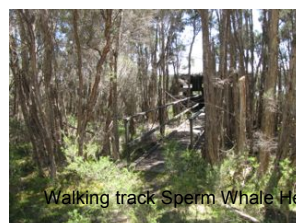
Walking track Sperm Whale Head



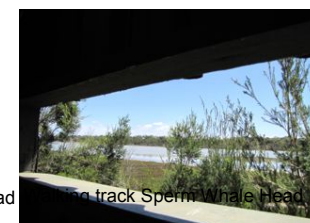
Walking track Sperm Whale Head



Jetty Sperm Whale Head



Walking track Sperm Whale Head

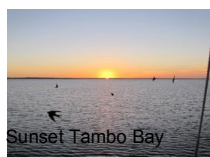


Walking track Sperm Whale Head

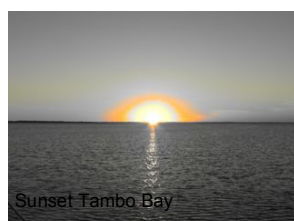
spot birds). The hide clearly hadn't been used for some time as brush was across the path, spiderwebs dominated one side of the viewing area and any posters that were there were long beyond being helpful. The only bird within viewing distance was a lapwing and with a few almonds keeping us sane (but not sated) we found our way back to the boat for a late lunch. We did see a few birds along the tracks though; mainly honeyeaters and blue wrens. And there was the odd macropod, probably wallabies, jumping around in the bush.

Tambo Bay

The most peaceful sunset of our time so far was at Tambo Bay. We were the only boat anchored here and a wide westerly view with very light winds ensured a magical (and blissfully silent) sunset.



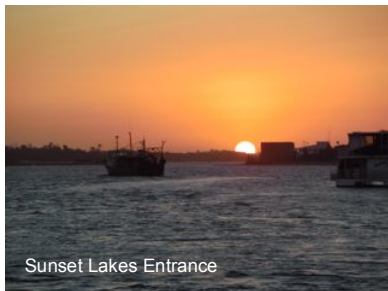
Sunset Tambo Bay



Sunset Tambo Bay



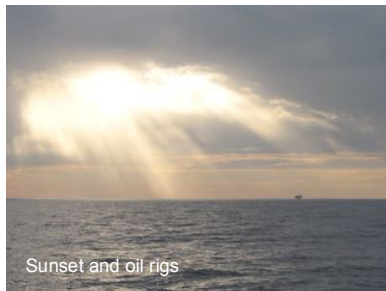
Sunset Tambo Bay



Sunset Lakes Entrance

We spent our last night in the Gippsland Lakes at Lakes Entrance to ensure we could get a quick, clean exit from the area. And after a lovely sunset, and some forgettable fish and chips (and a really forgettable bottle of white wine) we packed up to await our departure the next day.

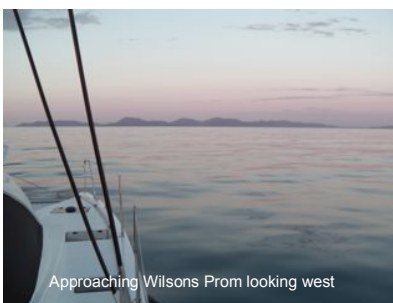
We left the entrance at Lakes Entrance at 1.30pm under a sunny sky and a few minutes before the official projected slack water period. The wind was favourable and within a good range for sailing and we averaged around 8 knots; and at one point got up to 12.5 knots. Unfortunately, the wind only lasted for just over half of this journey's leg and the motors went on for the second section (around midnight). As the clouds started to gather, there was the threat of rain but the storm seemed to stay north of us, hugging the coast. The clouds made for a lovely sunset as we skirted through the last of the oilrigs and settled down for another (essentially uneventful)



Sunset and oil rigs

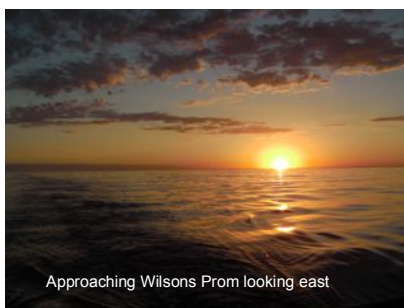
overnight sail.

As we approached Wilsons Promontory the western view was serene. The water was like glass and a pink tinge penetrated everything.



Approaching Wilsons Prom looking west

Turning in the opposite direction, the most striking sunrise I've seen so far was occurring. The photos will show you the contrast of



Approaching Wilsons Prom looking east

our east and west views. As we got closer to land, the pink disappeared and the sunny blue sky welcomed a normal scene. But the change was coming and the clouds were rolling in – over



the top of the hills, creeping in like bashful children wanting ice-cream – slowly but methodically. It was 8am and we headed for Refuge Cove. We could see there were already 3 masts anchored there and because of advice from two independent sources that the holding in Refuge may not be all that strong in a blow, we headed for Sealers Cove instead. Sealers Cove is more open and exposed but has a better hold (my reasoning was I'd rather cop a bit of wind and know I am not going to move than to have potentially a



Sealers Cove

bit less wind and be on anchor watch after an overnight sail).

As it turned out, this was a mixed decision. Yes, we were out of the wind, but

we ended up with the swell. All 2 – 2.5 meters of it - beam (side) on! After a time of contemplation, and an ever-increasing roll, we bit the bullet and decided to head for Refuge. Admittedly I may be exaggerating but I have now had an experience that almost rivals the visuals from The Perfect Storm. Or that's how it felt anyway.....we turned from our protected corner into these 2.5 meter swelly waves and 29 knots of apparent breeze. I have no idea how the cats went – hopefully they were somewhere where the

landing was soft. I was hanging on for dear life, wedging myself in between the winch and the corner upright of the helm roof. Eventually we were washed into Refuge (one minute you are going up 2.5 meter waves and then falling off the back of them, and the next minute, because you have to turn across them, you find yourself see sawing violently from side to side). Our first attempt to anchor put us a little close to the boat on our stern so we headed behind him, closer to shore. This was fine until

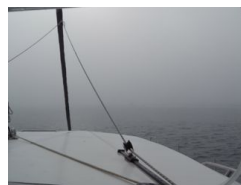
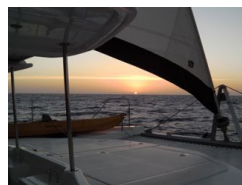
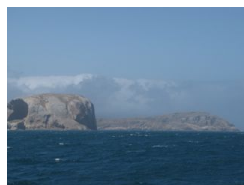
we found we had half a meter under us with a still dropping tide so thought it prudent to move again. On dusk! The only spot left was basically across from the entrance where a bulk of the wind (we were protected a smidge) and all of the waves were making their way through. It was a bumpy night with an anchor watch (and the rocky shore behind us).

Having survived the night – where, gratefully the anchor didn't move – we prepared to leave for Port Phillip Bay.

Wilsons Prom to Port Phillip Bay

One would think that the big step in February would have been to get from Lakes Entrance to the Port Phillip Bay heads with little, if any, complications. However the final approach and arrival into Port Phillip Bay provided an unexpected challenge. Enshrouded in fog we proceeded slowly through the heads

(under motor) and nearly took out two dive boats in the process. We had been honking our horn, as per international regulations, every couple of minutes so they should have heard us coming. Neither of these boats had lights on and the visibility was less than 20 meters. Who puts a dive boat out in 'pea soup', without lights, in an entrance to a shipping port (albeit the minor entrance)? A motor around to the east, and a horn fest with the Queenscliff and Sorrento ferries (at least they were following regulations with regard to the horn in restricted visibility) found us adjacent to the Rye Pier where we put the anchor down at 11.30 (ish) and then put ourselves down to bed. Lunch was at 4.30 when we finally got up. This was Wednesday 13th February.



Port Phillip Bay

As it turned out Thursday 14th February was a beautiful day and we had guests. The wind picked up a little but was not enough, nor from a direction, to be of any real consequence. Until the evening! And then the wind direction changed. And then the waves came – from varying directions. Apparently this is known as the Port Phillip Chop – 1 meter high and 1 meter in between – not comfortable! The boat in this case, was almost as uncomfortable as it was at Sealers Cove and whilst we had almost everything battened down, the giraffe (the kettle) fell off the stove at 4.30 am in the morning (as I hadn't put the stove barriers on) and I spent the next half hour mopping up spilt water. Neither of us had been sleeping so Andrew stated that as soon as it got light we were going to move. He threatened to leave then but I was reluctant to move in the dark.

So, at the first available opportunity, the engines were put on, the anchor was lifted and we were off.

Just about then, one of the ropes to our tinnie broke and all of a sudden we had a boat in suspense off the davits. Fortunately we had the bow and stern ropes of the tinnie

tied tightly to the life lines of Sengo's stern so we spent a few frustrating minutes (with Sengo in autopilot in a relatively small area of safety in the wind and the chop) trying to hoist the stern of the tinnie (engine attached) back to a stable hanging position. It turns out, on inspection, that one of the strops had given way with the force that's been placed on it (there has been a fair bit of bouncing around over the past few months).

Immediate emergency sorted and Sengo back on course, Andrew then had the engines going for about an hour whilst I was trying to sleep. Of course, as soon as I rose up to the helm station to take over a couple of hours later, the engines came off and we were able to sail along with the genoa quite happily. All I had to do was avoid the tanker coming the other way. The wind was still northerly – which is why we'd copped the chop at Rye as the fetch would have been coming in from Williamstown – but was due to change. There was also a 90% chance of rain. The wind died off

during my shift and our speed eventually went down to 2.8 knots (I could have increased this by changing direction but would have ended up either way off course or in the Geelong shipping lane). However, I should have taken notice of the other catamaran (we'd spotted with AIS) who was a little ahead of us. He had clearly put his engines on and I originally thought this was to get through the narrow section of channel we have to follow before the next tanker. I suspect however that he'd seen the weather forecast as whilst we were in the narrow channel (having let the tanker go before us) it started to rain. And then it bucketed. It flashed lightening and it roared thunder. Terrific! I put my wet weather gear on in order to put the anchor down (near the Geelong Baths) and we hunkered inside when all had settled.....

It was after 5pm. We'd put the anchor down around 4.30 and had lunch (a tin of baked beans – we were

scraping the bottom of the barrel as the day's original plan was to go food shopping at Rye!), the tinnie was let out the back and we continued on with the day. However, during our evening movie entertainment, the wind picked up again, swinging around to the north and we were now experiencing close to the same situation as the previous night. We had to do something with the tinne – it was bouncing violently out the back (despite the fact we had two ropes on it) so we decided to try and hoist it again. Subsequent to say, despite horrendous waves, a couple of impacts with the davits, a couple of impacts with Sengo (fortunately these last two were minor) we managed, after several aborted attempts to hoist and tie the tinnie back up. I highly suspect if we hadn't done this then we would have had a turtle tinnie in the morning. I am also pleased to say there was minimal swearing. There was a large amount of water in

the tinnie and I managed to get most of it out via a small bucket (thankfully without getting too much of it over me.) The problem now was the wind. The forecast change had come in early, the next available opportunity to get off the Sengo looked like Sunday and the contractors we required to help us to fix the problem wouldn't be available on a weekend. We were again out of fresh food.....

Geelong

Sunday 17th February was the day all the crazies came out. Well, just the day all the jet skiers come out and they clearly don't give a damn about the waves they are creating. This makes it awfully hazardous trying pour hot melted butter into the muffin mixture or trying to get the cooked muffins out of a hot oven. The culprits were constantly heading across from one side to another out the front of the sea baths, and occasionally around us toward the cruise ship that turned up in the morning.



Our tinnie, which was hanging out the back since the morning's sojourn into Geelong was bobbing up and down in its own version of rough seas. Cilla had given up and gone inside – she doesn't like the sudden unexpected slap of the waves on the hull. Tiger had resigned to the noise and was sitting on the stern seat, occasionally staring blankly at the 'skis but more often



than not had his head down in a feigned snooze. Small power boats were also out, dragging behind them blown up tyres with young children gripping fiercely to the handles. It was due to be 33 degrees and I had contemplated a swim – but hadn't been sitting in the sun to get hot enough and I wasn't going in the water with the jet skis about.



At one stage in the late afternoon, I had to lunge to stop the tinnie smashing



into the side of Sengo and woke Andrew up from his afternoon snooze in order to get the tinnie back on the davits. It was a rocky, and somewhat risky, exercise. I was not happy.

We managed to catch up with two lots of friends in Geelong, pick up some new wire strops for the tinnie davit system, rule out the idea of putting a third reef in the main sail (we'll continue as we have been by dropping it altogether should the wind get that strong) and I've managed to buy some more clothes – not that I technically need any more clothes but a cull of the existing lot was needed. The t-shirts with holes and stains in them have to go – one must have some sort of decorum!

Limeburners Point

After a couple of days boat bound I was itching for some land-based exercise

and a stroll east along the Eastern Beach led us to Limeburners Point. Here limestone was burnt in purpose built kilns to supply lime for motar, used in building until the early 1900's. There is a plaque near the top of the Point that says there are a few old kilns nearby that are worth exploring. We tried to find them but ended up on the wrong side of a fence that was labeled 'Danger'. I will have a chat to an historian next time we are in the area to see if we can locate the kilns.

In an environmental twist of



the day, the concern from locals regarding the effect of the pollution from such works on the Botanical

Gardens led to the closure of some kilns on the western side of the Point.

In the unsuccessful effort to find the kilns, we did however, find our way to the top of the local golf course and admired the view during a well-earned rest at one of the tee off areas

The golf course is on both sides of the road with one hole actually straddling the road (the tee off is on one side of the road and the hole on the other.) A sign warns golfers to give way to traffic.

Williamstown

As we had decided against the installation of the third reef, there was now no need to stay in Geelong and we took the opportunity to head toward the top of Port Phillip Bay. We had booked the Marina for Monday 23rd but seeing that White Night was on Saturday 21st we arranged to come in earlier. We



spent a couple of nights on a public mooring at Williamstown watching the constant stream of cargo ships arrive. The view is terrific (if you like city views) and you can understand the Williamstown locals making a fuss about the new dock area being built that will block their view. They are working at all hours to build the new facility and the constant pole driving whist we were there had the curious effect of a reverberation (with a couple of seconds delay) under our hull.

The conditions turned out to be perfect to come into

MarinaYE (Yarra's Edge) on Friday. We had measured our height (using a long builders tape and the topping lift) to ensure we could fit under the Bolte Bridge (we had a couple of meters to spare although we did purposefully come in at low tide). If you look up as you go under a bridge it never seems that there is much clearance. We docked with no trouble and then took the rest of the day off.

Docklands Melbourne

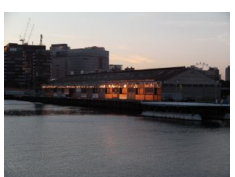
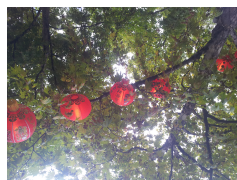
Yarra's Edge is a small marina (apparently there are 5 small marinas up here) with limited but clean

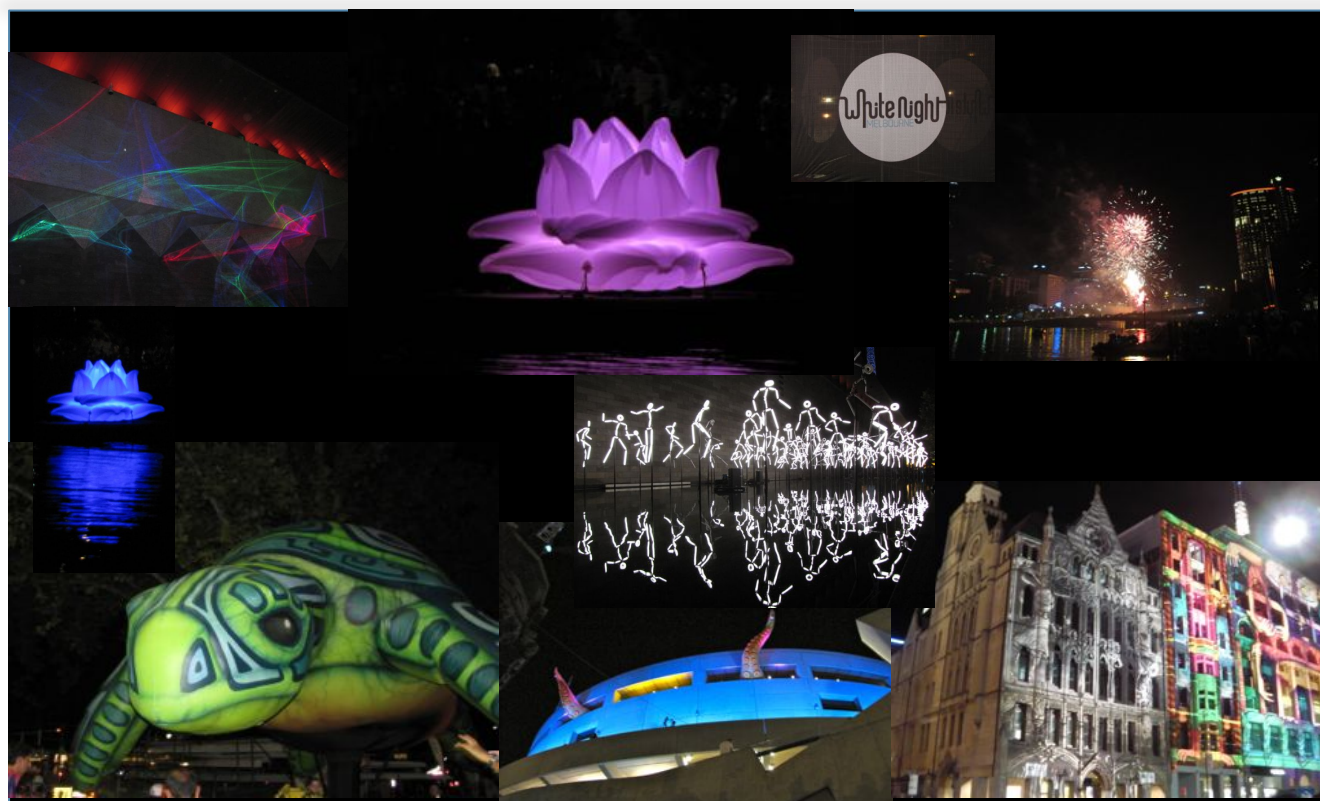
facilities. There is access to a washing machine (which at the time of writing you don't need to pay extra for) and available during office hours is a small (air conditioned) lounge area with a television, a computer and printer, a sink, microwave and dishwasher and pod coffee machine.

The location is great as you are on the extension of Southbank and only have to walk upriver to come to shopping, restaurants, the casino, Southbank and public transport.

Yacht Racing

We had the opportunity to go yacht racing from Royal Yacht Club in Williamstown. The boat was Next Moment – the boat Andrew used to sail on - and it was a great evening out. We were, of course, ballast and kept out of the way of the normal crew. Unfortunately the battery on my camera ran out of charge so there are some great photos that could have been – but weren't – including the one with the tanker towering over us! It was fun, although we are now not used to the heel of a mono hull. We are also used to going faster!





White Night

On 21st February, a storm cell hit Melbourne at 4.30pm and my visions of attending White Night were in doubt. Surely it can't go ahead in this – thunder, lightening and what looked like hail. However, the weather cleared up, probably much to the relief of the organisers, and we again were looking forward to an interesting evening out.

Initially the advertising for White Night suggested you avoid the crowds by starting after 11.30pm. The later advertising suggested the quieter times would be between 3am and 4am. We had intended to go early with a friend and then perhaps later if inclined. As the banquet at the middle-eastern restaurant took 1.5 hours (probably should have taken 30 minutes) it was 9pm before we started anyway. It was 1pm before we got back and we didn't really see much. The events/features are scattered over a large distance and just seeing one small corner of the event took hours. Despite being in walking shoes my feet were killing me and my calves were ready to give up. Subsequently, we didn't head out

The rest of February was taken up with appointments and friends and some days we were fitting in five events from breakfast to midnight (and despite seeing a lot of people I am sorry that we couldn't fit everybody in). We missed Chinese New Year by 1 day, I found my aging male optometrist had turned into a young woman, and I discovered efficient ways to get across Melbourne on public transport trams.