



**Working out ...** Conservation Volunteers Australia's Peter Angouras takes a breather with a spot of bird watching during a Green Gym Session in Newport Lakes. In the background from right are CVA's Heidi Fisher, Hobsons Bay City Council's Libby Dunlop and volunteers visiting from Korea Suk Yeong, Sangduk Lee and Lis Schoenborn.

Picture: GLEN CAMPBELL.

## Gym helps cut the waist

BY HAMISH HEARD

DUMBBELLS and aerobics classes will be traded for wheelbarrows and shovels at a new "green gym" where members will get fit by getting their hands dirty at Newport lakes.

Conservation Volunteers Australia chief executive officer Colin Jackson said the program would help people achieve their new year's fitness resolutions while doing their bit for the local environment.

"Research has shown that undertaking conservation and gardening activities is as good for your health as going to the gym," Mr Jackson said.

"The Green Gym is perfect for people who want to do something healthy but who don't want to join

a sports team or exercise indoors."

The volunteer organisation has banded together with the Department of Sustainability and Environment and Hobsons Bay City Council to offer the program.

Co-ordinator of DSE's Go For Your Life program, Dianne Marshall, predicted the prospect of enjoying sunshine and fresh air while getting fit would entice locals to join the scheme.

"It is not about push-ups," Ms Marshall said.

"Green Gym activity sessions involve people in practical conservation activities as a form of healthy exercise while improving our environment at the same time."

Participants in the scheme will help care for Newport Lakes unique wetlands, forest and park-

lands that are home to 86 species of frogs and birds.

Activities will include pruning, planting, mulching, weed control and bird observation and monitoring.

Hobsons Bay Mayor Bill Baarini called on residents to join the Green Gym.

"There are plenty of different ways in which volunteers can help to improve the Newport Lakes environment while surrounded by the tranquil beauty of the reserve," Cr Baarini said.

Sessions will run between 9am and 1pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays starting this week.

Anyone wanting more information should call Conservation Volunteers Australia on 1800 032 501.