

Management report to Council

Agenda item 14.1

Land use planning information

Council

Endorsement of Yarra Strategic Plan

27 April 2021

Presenter: Tiffany Crawford, Co-Director Climate Change and City Resilience

Purpose and background

1. This report seeks endorsement of the Yarra Strategic Plan (the Plan) (Attachment 1).
2. The *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murron) Act 2017* (the Act) requires the Yarra River corridor collaborative management to deliver the Plan and a community vision. The Act designates the Council as a Responsible Public Entity (RPE) and sets out RPE obligations including the requirement to endorse the Plan.
3. The Plan was developed by Melbourne Water in consultation with the Yarra Collaboration Committee (YCC), a governance group made up of the 15 state and local agencies who manage the Yarra River corridor including Melbourne Water, the Department of Environment Water, Land and Planning (DELWP), City of Melbourne, and the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.
4. The draft Plan was endorsed by Council on 29 October 2019 and released for public consultation by Melbourne Water from January to March 2020.

Confidentiality

5. Pursuant to sections 3(1c) and 66(5) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, the information contained in this report is confidential due to the land use planning information it contains which could encourage land speculation if prematurely released.
6. The Plan is a jointly owned document that requires endorsement by all RPEs and the responsible Ministers under the Act. DELWP has requested the Plan remains confidential until the responsible Ministers and Cabinet endorse the Plan and approve public release.

Key issues

7. The Plan intends to transform the Yarra River management, provide intergenerational protection to the river and its parklands and recognise the intrinsic connection of Traditional Custodians and the community. It guides local planning, identifies immediate actions and outlines long term collaborative management between agencies and Traditional Custodians.
8. The Act applies the Plan and its principles to three categories of land: Yarra Strategic Plan area; Yarra River Land; and Greater Yarra Urban Parklands. DELWP will identify land that can be declared in the Municipality under the Act.
9. Declared land will need to be managed in line with the Yarra Protection Principles and the 50-year community vision. These align with City of Melbourne's Open Space Strategy vision and goals. The declaration will only apply to public parcels of Crown and government freehold land.
10. The draft Plan only included formal input from the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation. Melbourne Water and DELWP have now consulted with all three Traditional Custodian groups City of Melbourne engages with, and the Plan acknowledges the cultural connections to the Yarra River, Birrarung.
11. Subject to resourcing, City of Melbourne will collaborate in delivering the Plan's actions and priority projects where relevant and will submit implementation reports to the lead agency to inform an annual report to the Birrarung Council.

Recommendation from management

12. That Council:

- 12.1. Endorses the Yarra Strategic Plan (the Plan) prepared by Melbourne Water in consultation with the Yarra Collaboration Committee.
- 12.2. Makes this resolution and the report public, once the Plan is endorsed by all responsible public entities and released to the public.

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 3 of 175)
2. Yarra Strategic Plan (Page 5 of 175)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. The Yarra Strategic Plan is a key component of the Act.
2. RPE's including the Council:
 - 2.1. Must not act inconsistently with any part of the Plan that is expressed to be binding on it (in its capacity as Council or committee of management).
 - 2.2. Must have regard to the Yarra protection principles and those parts of the Plan not expressed to be binding on it, when performing a function or duty or exercising a power under the Act, the *Local Government Act 2020* or the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* in relation to Yarra River land.

Finance

3. The Plan references financial commitments City of Melbourne has already made publicly that will enhance amenity and connect the community to the Yarra River.
4. The Plan mentions opportunities for future projects and alignment, however there is no expectation for City of Melbourne to increase its level of funding to deliver these initiatives beyond what has been already committed. Rather, the Plan is seen as an opportunity for City of Melbourne to highlight these existing commitments, help coordinate investment across all entities managing the river, and to attract grant funding to implement these and other initiatives in future.
5. As part of the development of the Plan, Management tabled a range of projects and initiatives that Council is proposing which will help achieve the community vision. Most notably, \$700,000 has been allocated by DELWP for "Floatlands" as a priority project in the Plan. This innovative project, identified in the Yarra River Birrarung Strategy, will trial floating wetlands on the Yarra River. Located within the heart of the city, the floating wetlands will support the community's connection to the river and the environment by providing a place of refuge and learning.
6. Resourcing for annual reporting and collaborating on priority projects will be considered on an annual basis.

Conflict of interest

7. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a material or general conflict of interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Health and Safety

8. The 10 year performance objectives of the Plan include improving the rivers parklands to support community wellbeing and improving the water quality of the Yarra, these objectives provide opportunities to improve the health and safety of people visiting the Yarra.

Stakeholder consultation

9. Stakeholder consultation of the Plan was led by Melbourne Water.
10. The Plan was developed in partnership with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation. The actions in the Plan respect and support Traditional Custodians to co-manage the river and its lands.

11. Melbourne Water also consulted with Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation and Boon Wurrung Foundation. The plan acknowledges that the area downstream of Dights Falls is contested land and the plan embraces both Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong Boon Wurrung culture and heritage.
12. The Act details that Melbourne Water as the lead agency, prepare the Plan in consultation with the RPEs. The RPEs include:
 - 12.1. DELWP
 - 12.2. Melbourne Water
 - 12.3. the Victorian Planning Authority
 - 12.4. the Port Phillip Westernport Catchment Management Authority
 - 12.5. the Department of Transport
 - 12.6. Parks Victoria
 - 12.7. Eight local governments (Melbourne City Council, Boroondara City Council, Nillumbik Shire Council, Stonnington City Council, Manningham City Council, Banyule City Council, Yarra Ranges Shire Council, Yarra City Council).
13. The first phase of engagement, beginning in September 2017, focused on finding out what the community valued about the Yarra River to inform the development of the long-term community vision. Over 2500 contributions were collected.
14. In February 2018, Melbourne Water brought together 24 passionate citizens, known as the Yarra River Community Assembly, to write the community vision for the Yarra. Members of the assembly heard from experts, including Wurundjeri Elders and community, about the history of the Yarra and its significance to Traditional Custodians. The group used the stories gathered from the broader community to write the Yarra River 50 Year Community Vision. The vision was launched in May 2018 and provides direction for the Plan to ensure the river remains a proud part of Victoria's identity.
15. Between May and August 2018 Melbourne Water undertook community engagement to build the content of the draft Plan. This engagement included a series of community workshops, an online survey and an interactive online map.
16. The draft Plan was launched on 22 January 2020 and was open for public consultation until 29 March 2020. During this final phase, stakeholders and community were consulted in a variety of ways on what they would like to see incorporated into the final Plan. These included stakeholder briefings, focus groups by invitation, community pop-up events, online surveys and written submissions.
17. A panel was appointed by the Minister for Water, as required under the Act, to consider submissions on the Land Use Framework. The panel conducted a public hearing and submitted recommendations to be considered in the final Plan.

Relation to Council policy

18. The recommendation is consistent with Municipal Integrated Water Management Plan and Nature in the City Strategy as it relates to improving the water quality of the Yarra River and protecting its land, floodplains and billabongs to achieve greater biodiversity. It is also consistent with the Open Space Strategy in improving the rivers parklands and the Yarra River Birrarung Strategy.

Environmental sustainability

19. In developing the Plan, environmental sustainability issues and opportunities have been considered. The Plan will deliver on 10 year performance objectives which include improving water quality, biodiversity and protecting the natural beauty of the Yarra River corridor.

BURNDAP BIRRARUNG BURNDAP UMARKOO

YARRA STRATEGIC PLAN



A 10-year plan for the Yarra River corridor
— 2022 to 2032





Credit: Melbourne Water,
pair of Masked Lapwings, South Yarra

A ground-breaking plan to protect and enhance the Yarra River, Birrarung

The Yarra Strategic Plan:

- is the very first plan to protect and enhance the Yarra River and its parklands as one living and integrated natural entity
- is, proudly, the first plan for the Yarra River developed in partnership with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation. The actions in this plan respect and support Traditional Owners to co-manage the river and its lands
- fosters river management without borders; the state and local government authorities involved in managing the river and its parklands co-designed this plan and will work together, with communities, to protect the Yarra along its length
- connects planning law and water management, for the first time, to protect the natural beauty and health of the Yarra River's landscapes
- supports and builds on the 50 Year Community Vision, which was developed by more than 2500 Victorians who described their long-term aspirations for the Yarra River corridor
- builds on its 'sister' strategy, the regional *Healthy Waterways Strategy*, to deliver multiple-partner priority projects for a healthy river and lands
- outlines a pioneering plan to improve and celebrate the Yarra's parklands for a growing population – protecting important environmental and cultural values while enabling an array of outstanding river and parkland experiences.

The phrase Burndap Birrarung burndap umarkoo means 'good for Yarra is good for all'.

Acknowledging Aunty Gail Smith from the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation for the language work.

The story of the Yarra and its parklands

The Yarra River has flowed for at least 100 million years. Initially, it joined with the Werribee, Patterson and Little Rivers, draining directly into Bass Strait. With rising sea levels, between 8000 and 6000 BC, the basin flooded forming Port Phillip Bay, moving the 'mouth' of the Yarra some 50 kilometres inland. The river continued to shift and cut new paths across the landscape, with its current position helping shape Melbourne.¹

From the near-pristine flanks of Mount Baw Baw, the Yarra River flows for 242 km through its forested catchment, agricultural land, townships and suburbs into the heart of Melbourne and out to Port Phillip Bay.

The Yarra is a valuable natural asset that supports the community by providing water for potable and agricultural uses, areas for recreation, and protected areas that allow native flora and fauna to thrive.

The river is a key contributor to Melbourne's famous liveability; it encourages people to exercise, appreciate, enjoy, observe and explore. It provides an estimated \$730 million in value to the community annually, with recreation and aesthetic benefits the largest contributors. This is in addition to the significant value provided by the river as the city's main water supply.

To the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, the river is known as the Birrarung, meaning 'river of mists and shadows'. It is the sacred lifeblood of Country, providing food, water and meeting places, as well as being a central element in their cultural, economic and spiritual life. The role of the river has been captured and carried in oral memory for tens of thousands of years.

Colonisation led to large-scale devastation of the Aboriginal population in Victoria. In direct contrast with the harmonious management of the river by Traditional Owners, early colonists', land clearing, sewage and industry polluted the Yarra's lower reaches.

From 1835 onwards, the Yarra became a focal point for colonial settlement. Access to fresh water, proximity to good grazing lands and a river port helped to establish Melbourne as an international centre for commerce and industry. The river also played an important role in the social lives of settlers; it was a popular place to swim and gather for public events (and remains so to this day).

Ships were able to sail up the river to the turning basin below the Yarra Falls (Queensbridge Square). However, the meandering nature of the ancient river could not accommodate the shipping demands of a growing city. Beginning in the 1860s, widening, dredging and straightening of the river allowed for safe navigation by larger and larger ships. These works also helped to ease flooding in the city. Today, there are many visible reminders of the Yarra's rich maritime history, including the wharves, vaults and warehouses dotted along the lower part of the river.

Early Melburnians were well aware of the value of parks for human health and wellbeing, with areas of Yarra Bend first reserved for parklands in 1877. The Metropolitan Town Planning Commission's *Plan for General Development* (1929) identified land along key waterways, including the Yarra, as future open space networks. It wasn't until the middle ring suburbs developed during the 1970s that many of these parklands were realised, with Warrandyte State Park opening in 1975, and Westerfolds Park in 1977. The Yarra Ranges National Park was established more recently in 1995, and the central business district's Birrarung Marr in 2002.

Though the river's course has changed naturally over time, colonial settlement resulted in rapid shifts in the flow of the river. It has been diverted from its natural course; widened, dredged and, most significantly, dammed to create reservoirs to store water for homes, farms and industry. Land clearing for agriculture has resulted in less water being absorbed by the landscape, faster runoff speeds during storms and higher rates of erosion. Urbanisation has meant more hard surfaces from roofs, pavements and roads. When it rains now, more water flows into the river at higher speeds bringing with it litter and pollution from streets and stormwater drains.

The shifts in natural flows have removed the natural cues and conditions for fish and platypus to breed. Before controls and regulations were put in place, the river would flood more frequently, expanding and contracting across the floodplain, to exchange nutrients and support river and floodplain ecosystems. Since 2011, releases of water from reservoirs have been used to mimic natural flows and wetting events that used to occur, helping to restore some of the functions of these important ecosystems.

Over the last century, there have been several successful government and community-led campaigns to improve the health of the Yarra River and its lands. As Melbourne faces its third, and largest, wave of population growth, modern governance and management will be more important than ever to protect the Yarra.

CONTENTS

The story of the Yarra and its parklands.....	01	Part 1 – Working together to deliver the community vision.....	18
Ministerial foreword.....	04	Collaborative management of the Yarra.....	19
Wurundjeri foreword.....	05	Managing the Yarra River corridor.....	20
Bunurong foreword.....	06	Priority projects.....	36
Preface.....	07	10-year performance objectives and collaborative actions.....	38
Why this plan was developed.....	07	PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE 1: A healthy river and lands.....	38
Strategies, policies and plans that informed the Yarra Strategic Plan.....	12	PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE 2: A culturally diverse corridor.....	50
10 year performance objectives.....	14	PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE 3: Quality parklands for a growing population.....	54
How this plan works.....	14	PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE 4: Protecting the natural beauty of the Yarra River corridor.....	64
Scope of the Yarra Strategic Plan.....	16		



Credit: Doug Gimesy,
Grey-headed flying fox, Yarra River



**Part 2 –
Land use framework..... 67**

Overview: the Yarra River at the centre of
planning..... **68**

Maps supporting the land use framework..... **74**

Upper rural reach..... **82**

Lower rural reach..... **98**

Suburban reach..... **112**

Inner city reach..... **128**

APPENDIX A —
Map showing Registered Aboriginal Party
(RAP) boundaries..... **142**

APPENDIX B —
Strategic Cycling Corridors..... **144**

APPENDIX C —
Community and partner input..... **146**

APPENDIX D —
Implementation and monitoring of the plan **148**

APPENDIX E —
Decision-making framework..... **152**

APPENDIX F —
Environmental net gain..... **155**

APPENDIX G —
List of actions..... **156**

APPENDIX H —
Map of Yarra Catchment showing Bushfire
Management Overlay..... **164**

APPENDIX I —
Map of Yarra Catchment showing land
prone to flooding..... **166**

Glossary..... 168

Endnotes..... 171

MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

The Yarra River, Birrarung, together with its parklands, is the lifeblood of Melbourne. It flows through and nourishes our forests, farms, towns, suburbs and the city. It is a place where we can rest, play and enjoy.



Credit: Melbourne Water,
Yarra River inner city reach

The Yarra River, Birrarung, has a rich heritage and powerful stories that are culture-defining and city-shaping. Every day, its green parklands and vibrant open spaces offer new experiences to thousands of locals and visitors. To its Traditional Custodians, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong peoples who have cared for it since time immemorial, the Birrarung has a profound and unique significance. The Yarra River 50-year Community Vision sagely concludes: What is good for the Yarra is good for all. Or, in the Woiwurrung language: *Burndap Birrarung burndap umarkoo*.

The Yarra Strategic Plan (*Burndap Birrarung burndap umarkoo*) has been developed over four years, enriched by the partnership with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and community input. We commend the significant work that all organisations and community representatives have put into this plan.

The plan puts the interests of the Yarra, Birrarung, and the communities that love the river at the heart of future land use planning and decision making. It respects and supports both the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong Traditional Owners to co-manage the river and its lands on their Country. It embeds actions to protect and enhance the Yarra, Birrarung, and its parklands as one living and integrated natural entity.

The Yarra Strategic Plan fulfils the Victorian Government's commitment to care for the environment along the Yarra River, Birrarung, corridor. It secures the river's social, recreational and economic benefits for future generations. The landmark *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murron) Act 2017* enshrined in law the protection of the river and its management as one living and integrated natural entity. The plan contains tangible actions and identifies planning guidance that will keep the river and parklands alive for the benefit of everyone.

Our collective goal is to sustain a healthy Yarra, Birrarung and parklands for many generations to come. What is good for the Yarra is good for all.



Signature of Hon Lisa Neville MP.

Hon Lisa Neville MP
Minister for Water



Signature of Hon Richard Wynne MP.

Hon Richard Wynne MP
Minister for Planning

WURUNDJERI FOREWORD

We, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, are the Traditional Owners of a large area of Country that includes the lands through which the Birrarung flows- from its source through to the sea. The Birrarung, which has sustained us for millennia, forms part of our Dreaming. We have inherited a sovereign responsibility to care for and manage the Birrarung and its lands.

Historically, our peoples' rights to the management of waterways, have been excluded from legislation, planning, management policies and programs.

Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung (Ancient Spirit and Lore the Yarra) outlines our aspirations for the Birrarung and this policy sets out our future plans for the social, cultural, economic, environmental and heritage outcomes for the Birrarung. It is an evolving policy and process.

With our recognition in the *Wilip gin Birrarung murrn (Yarra River Protection) Act 2017* our people also gained a legislative mechanism and a formal process through which to engage with responsible public entities to work collaboratively and oversee the governance of the Birrarung and its lands as one living entity.

Our inclusion in the Act was highly significant because for the first time a legislative mechanism included a placed-based approach to the management of a waterway – pairing right Country with the right people – our people. Our future work regarding waterway and land management on our Country will also be founded on bespoke placed based legislation which articulates our role.

Within the context of this significant governance reform, the Yarra Collaboration Committee, through the implementation of the Yarra Strategic Plan has committed to embedding our continued inclusion in formal, resourced, and self-determined partnerships for culturally appropriate management of the Birrarung and its lands.

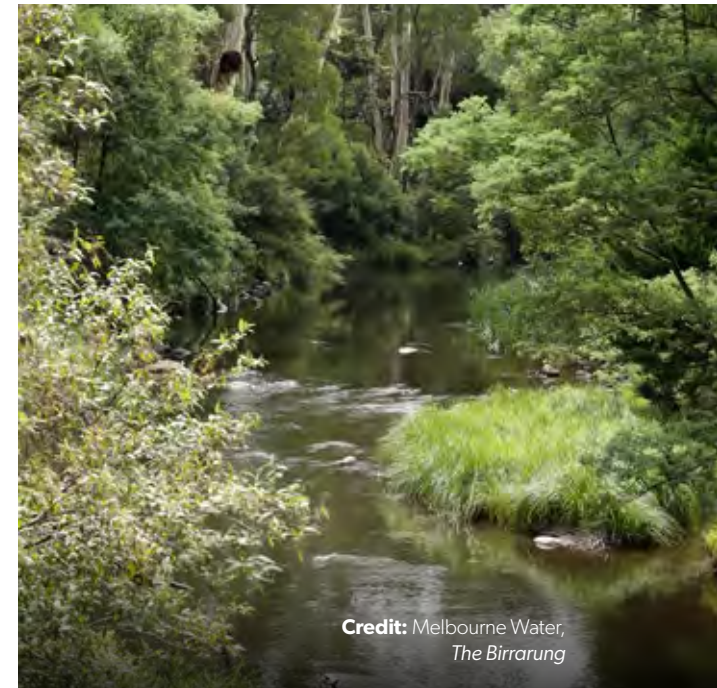
Through supporting our aspirations for water justice, the granting of unencumbered water rights and embedding our active participation in management of the Birrarung and its lands, we believe that the Yarra Strategic Plan will deliver the necessary changes needed to realise broader reforms.

We look forward to working with all partners to see the Yarra Strategic Plan come to life and remain hopeful that once the actions defined in the plan are implemented the Birrarung will continue to sustain not only our people, but all communities who rely on the Birrarung, for centuries to come.



Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Community

Wurundjeri
Woi-wurrung
Cultural Heritage
Aboriginal Corporation



Credit: Melbourne Water,
The Birrarung

BUNURONG FOREWORD

The Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation represents Bunurong people's rights and interests and manages the statutory responsibilities of the Corporation.

Bunurong people are once again recognised as the rightful custodians of much of what is now known as greater Melbourne. We pay our respects to and thank our Ancestors and Elders for their words and stories of country as passed down through the families.

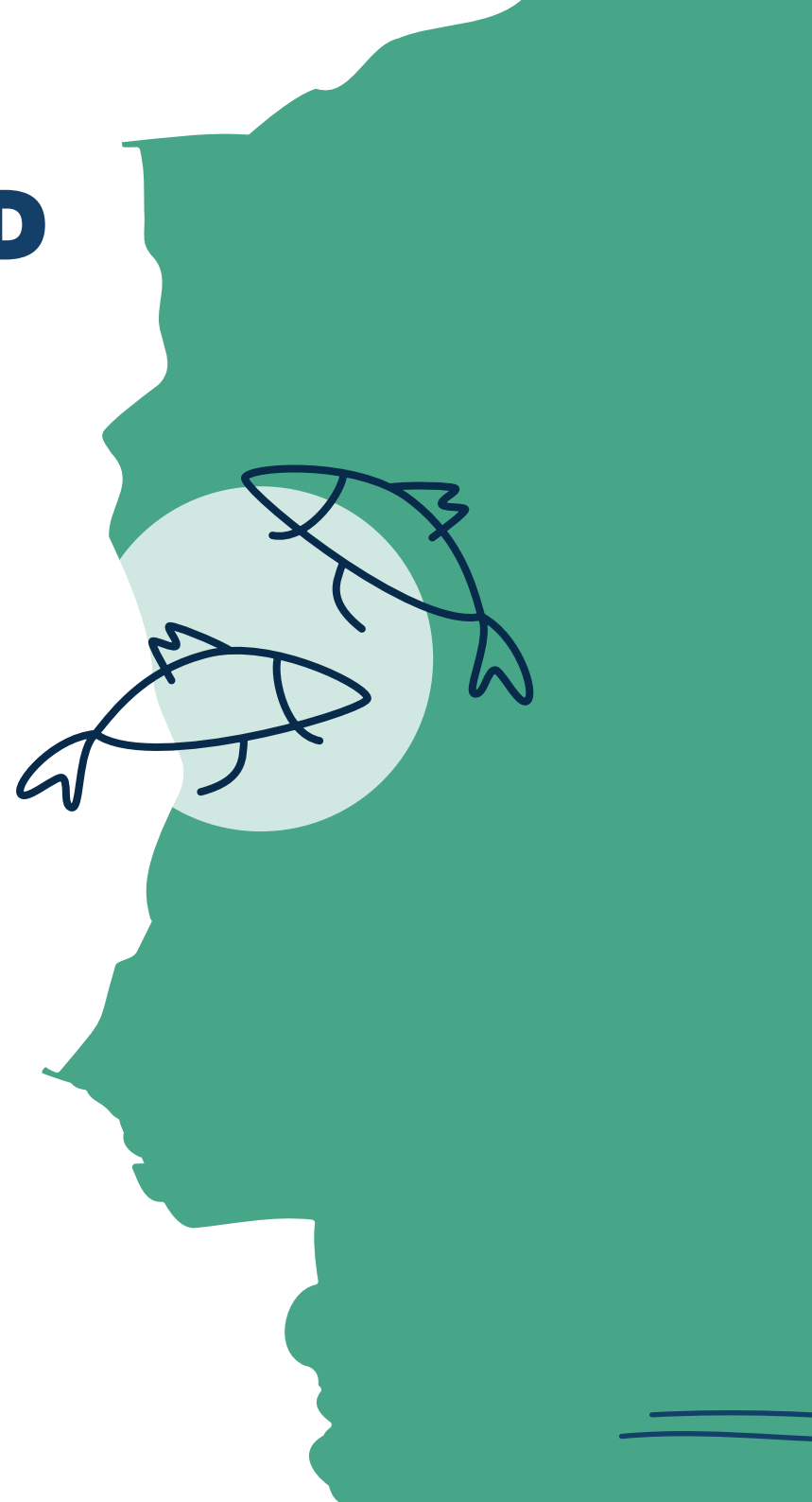
Over the last 35,000 years Bunurong people have adapted to a range of significant changes within their Country. Our stories of the Bay flooding with water, asteroid impacts near Cranbourne, Arthurs Seat once being an Island, volcanic activity in the western suburbs, the great floods, fires and earthquakes all speak of such events. Around 10,000 years ago, before the Bay flooded with water, the Birrarung extended all the way out to the heads and out via a large waterfall which covered the entire area in mist. This is how the river earns its early name 'the river of mist'. This part of the river, up to the point the river became fresh water, was Bunurong Country.

Bunurong people were amongst the first Indigenous people in Victoria that were involved in cross-cultural entanglements with Europeans, and though reduced to just a handful of individuals by the mid-1800s, we are still here, and we continue to maintain our cultural obligations to care for the people, the flora and fauna, the lands and the waters within the Bunurong cultural landscape, which is alive with our stories.

Over 2000 generations of our people have been here before us. Archaeological excavation within our Country has already demonstrated about 30,000 years worth of occupation. These sites can show us how our ancestors interacted with their environment and how that interaction changed over time. We regard all evidence of our people's occupation as sacred.

All of our Country is highly significant, every square inch, every rock, every leaf, every dune and every artefact. If we could attribute the cause of this blanket high significance rating of our Country to any one thing, it would be that in Melbourne especially, so much has been destroyed and lost as the city grew, and so quickly. If you lose enough of something, what little you have left becomes so much more important. Similarly, when someone passes, their earthly possessions become more important to those they left behind.

Every part of our Country is of high significance to our people past and present.



PREFACE

The Yarra Strategic Plan is a requirement of the *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrong) Act 2017* (the Act). It is the first plan to protect and enhance the Yarra River and its land as one living and integrated natural entity.

Fourteen state and local government authorities, as well as Traditional Owners, care for the river and its land, each looking after the river corridor within their own remit of responsibilities. These agencies invest over \$50 million annually, through projects and programs to improve the environment and Yarra communities.*

The Yarra Strategic Plan adopts a holistic ‘river without borders’ approach. It:

- integrates, coordinates and harmonises the plans, regulations and investment programs of authorities and organisations
- identifies key gaps in activities, and proposes a series of actions to address them over a ten-year period
- brings statutory planning and land and waterway management together for the first time setting out directions for future land use and development for the entire river corridor
- recognises the rights of Traditional Owners, as articulated in the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples, particularly to conserve and protect the environment of traditional lands.

The plan does not take the place of Yarra-relevant policies, plans and strategies made under statutes such as the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, the *Environment Protection Act 2017* and the *Water Act 1989*.

The plan will be a living document with ongoing review, commitments and oversight.

* As of 1 January 2022 Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority has been integrated into Melbourne Water. Any action or responsibility allocated to them as a responsible public entity within the Yarra Strategic Plan is now the responsibility of Melbourne Water.

Why this plan was developed

Shifting the foundation: new law and policy for the Yarra’s care

In 2015, the Victorian Government established the Yarra Ministerial Advisory Committee to provide recommendations for improved management, promotion and protection of the Yarra River. The committee was assisted by Elders representing the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to provide the cultural framework. Following extensive consultation, the committee made 30 recommendations, which included developing a Yarra Strategic Plan to align objectives and integrate decision-making.

Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrong) Act 2017

To refocus the way the Yarra is managed and protected, the Victorian Government worked with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to deliver the *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrong) Act 2017*. This legislation enshrines in law the protection of the Yarra and acknowledges the significance of the river to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, highlighting their ongoing role in its management.²

This legislation was introduced into parliament by Elders of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people. It is the first Victorian legislation with a dual Indigenous language title and

preamble. The phrase Wilip-gin Birrarung murrong means ‘keep the Yarra alive’.

The legislation combines Traditional Owner knowledge with modern river management expertise, setting the context for the Yarra Strategic Plan. The Act calls for collaborative management, driven by the development and implementation of the Yarra Strategic Plan and a long-term community vision. Together, these documents will ensure that the Yarra is protected ‘as one living and integrated natural entity’.

Birrarung water policy – Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung (Ancient Spirit & Lore of the Yarra)

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation developed *Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung*, meaning ‘Ancient Spirit and Lore of the Yarra’, to define their ambitions for planning, policy and decision-making for the Birrarung. *Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung* was launched in May 2018, and the aspirations within it continue to evolve.

The policy has informed the plan, ensuring that the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung’s aspirations for the river are prioritised and Traditional Owners are included in the ongoing management of the Birrarung. The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation is self-determining its participation in the plan, and many actions within the plan align with its aspirations. This is part of the Victorian Government’s commitment to meaningful partnership with Traditional Owners on their Country.

The Yarra Strategic Plan provides a step change in managing the Yarra in the following ways:

Addressing the impacts of climate change and population growth

While planning and investment have maintained the city's liveability, the *State of the Yarra and Its Parklands 2018 Report* indicates that the river is already experiencing the impacts of climate change and population growth. Key threats to its health are litter, sewage, pollution, urban development and invasive species, that will be exacerbated by climate change and population growth.³

The plan addresses the impacts of climate change and population growth in two ways: Part 1 includes actions to better understand and address the impacts of climate change and population growth on biodiversity and the values provided by parklands and waterways; In Part 2, the land use framework provides spatial directions for land use in the corridor in the context of a warmer and drier climate and increased frequency of intensive rainfall events causing flooding.

Outlining a better way to manage the river collaboratively

The success of this plan hinges on a sincere commitment by all relevant authorities and organisations to collaborate and work beyond boundaries and to manage the river corridor as one living and integrated natural entity. It is important that investment in activities and projects consider upstream and downstream benefits and impacts more broadly, as well as lateral connections.

Underpinning this shift to collaborative management is the plan's decision-making framework that ensures organisations consider the impacts of their work and policies on Yarra River land and look for opportunities for collaboration and alignment. The framework will also guide partnerships with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, strengthening the ties of recognised Traditional Owners with management of their Country.

Emphasising the rights and aspirations of the Traditional Custodians of the Birrarung

In line with the *United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, the plan has been developed with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and will include Traditional Owners in decision-making and determination of priorities on their Country as the plan is implemented. The plan also builds on the ratification of international and local documents that prioritise Indigenous land and water rights, as well as Connection to Country.

Promoting the ties of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation on their Country, and supporting customs and management practices, will help ensure the success of the plan. By blending Traditional Owner knowledge with new science, the plan seeks to protect the Yarra for future generations, while promoting opportunities for self-determination among Traditional Owners. Caring for Country is also an important land and water justice aspiration for Traditional Owners, which will be achieved by actively including Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation in developing and implementing the actions in the plan and the land use framework on their Country.

There are two registered Aboriginal parties recognised under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* that cover Country that the Yarra River flows through. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation cover the majority of the Yarra, Birrarung, from the city to the mountains (see boundary map in **Appendix A**). Downstream of the city, the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation have been recently recognised as the registered Aboriginal party for this Country. Bunurong Country covers the lower reaches of the Yarra estuary out to Narrm (Port Phillip Bay).

The plan aims to bring to the fore cultural land and water management practices, while acknowledging the close cultural and spiritual connection the Traditional Owners maintain with the Birrarung and its parklands. Traditional Owners will, as self-determined, hold a place in the governance throughout the plan's implementation, and act as planners, decision makers and delivery agents on their Country alongside local and state authorities.

The involvement of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people from the plan's outset, including tabling in Parliament the *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Bill 2017*, and their contribution of the Wurundjeri aspirations for the Custodianship of the Birrarung (pp. 23 to 35), has grounded the plan in Traditional Owner perspectives, enabling the river corridor to be viewed as one living and integrated natural entity.

Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation were appointed by the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council as a Registered Aboriginal Party for a portion of the Yarra Strategic Plan area on 1 July 2021. The Yarra Strategic Plan recognises each of the Birrarung's Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung and the Bunurong people. It is acknowledged that the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation take a different view to the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council on the boundary of the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Traditional Country, as is represented in the Wurundjeri Foreword and their Custodianship of the Birrarung chapter.

Currently, there are Treaty negotiations underway in Victoria, which may in coming years impact how the Yarra Strategic Plan is implemented. In line with the government's commitment to self-determination, DELWP's *Pupangarli Marmarnepu (Owning our future) Aboriginal self-determination reform strategy 2020-2025* aims to enable self-determination for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians.

Respecting the river as one living and integrated natural entity

The Traditional Owners have always considered the Birrarung to be the lifeblood of Country. It flows across organisational boundaries, encompassing the land and waters of the river as well as its unique ecosystems. The Act and the plan return to this holistic view that recognises the Yarra and its lands as a connected entity – requiring focus, care and reverence across all reaches of the river.

Agreement to collaborate in decision-making, align investment in actions, and to use statutory planning mechanisms, including the land use framework, will cement this holistic view of the river as one living and integrated natural entity.

Environmental net gain

The Act stipulates that there should be 'net gain' for the environment in the area of Yarra River land arising out of any individual action or policy that has an environmental impact.

The intent of this clause is reflected in several actions in Part 1 of the plan, and directions in the land use framework (land use directions) in Part 2 of the plan. Additionally, environmental net gain has been incorporated into the plan's decision-making framework to ensure that all projects and programs considered on Yarra River land provide net gain.

Using planning law to protect the whole river corridor

For the first time, waterway and land use planning are connected within a single, integrated plan. Including the land use framework marks a step-change in how the river is managed by ensuring that activities on both public and private land deliver on the plan's performance objectives and protect the Yarra and its significant values.

As Melbourne grows in population and continues to experience the impacts of climate change, the land use framework will ensure that the Yarra is a central consideration in land use planning and development. The framework provides broad direction at a whole-of-river scale, while also recognising the myriad of landscapes and environments with differing degrees of development, access, land use and management.

In implementing the plan, the land use framework will be embedded in the planning schemes of eight local governments and state planning policy.

Incorporating transport infrastructure

Victoria is investing in new and upgraded road and rail infrastructure to allow for greater frequency and reach of transit options as well as improving the state's freight capacity. Melbourne's transport system needs the capacity to cope with an additional 10.4 million trips a day by 2050 — up from the current figure of 12.5 million trips a day. Projects already identified by the Victorian Government as critical to Melbourne's growth, including West Gate Tunnel, Level Crossing Removals, Metro Tunnel, North East Link and the Suburban Rail Loop were added in a *2019 Addendum to Plan Melbourne* which aims to guide Melbourne's growth to 2050.

Under the Act the plan is required to incorporate any agreed strategic transport infrastructure including identified current or future river crossings and principle bicycle networks. More detail on current and proposed transport infrastructure is included in the land use framework in Part 2. Information on strategic cycling corridors that intersect with the Yarra in the suburban and inner city reaches is provided in **Appendix B**.

Involving the community

An initial step in developing the plan was forming the Yarra Collaboration Committee, with representatives from state and local government authorities and the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation. Melbourne Water, in collaboration with the committee, designed and implemented a four-phase engagement strategy (see **Appendix C**, and 'Imagine the Yarra' website (<http://www.imaginetheyarra.com.au>)).

The Yarra River Community Assembly, made up of 24 people from communities along the river, was formed to write the vision for the Yarra. The assembly also came together to test whether the directions of the draft plan aligned with their vision. Development of the plan has been informed by community feedback, background studies, and complementary strategies and policies already in operation (see **Figure 1**).

Although the production of the Yarra Strategic Plan was led by Melbourne Water, the plan is a whole-of-government initiative, co-designed with the Yarra Collaboration Committee, and guided by the community.



Credit: Melbourne Water,
Yarra River, central Melbourne

Yarra River 50 Year Community Vision

The Act calls for a long-term community vision that identifies the community's 'values, priorities and preferences' managing the Yarra. The vision sets out the community's long-term aspirations for the Yarra and the plan provides an overarching policy and planning framework to bring the vision to life.

The vision was launched in May 2018 by the Hon. Lisa Neville, MP, Minister for Water, the Hon. Richard Wynne, MP, Minister for Planning and the Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio, MP, Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change.

'As the Traditional Owners of the Birrarung and its surrounding country, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung will bring their unique knowledge, connections and understandings of the River and the wider Yarra catchment into the Yarra Strategic Plan to enhance the integrity of the Plan.'

– Nhanbu narrun ba ngargin twarn Birrarung

Yarra River 50 Year Community Vision

Our Yarra River, Birrarung, is recognised around the world as an iconic example of a nurturing relationship between a river and its community.

Flowing from source to sea, it is the resilient lifeblood of past, present and future generations of Victorians. It connects and enriches our flourishing city, suburbs, regions and beyond.

Our Yarra River, Birrarung, its essential role in our lives and its rich history, are respected, understood and protected. It has cared for us for thousands of years and will for thousands to come.

The vital and continued role of Traditional Owners as custodians of the River, and its role in their culture, is recognised and celebrated.

Our Yarra River, Birrarung, and its diverse surrounding landscapes provide a place of refuge, recreation, learning and livelihood. It brings communities together and supports sustainable local economies.

Its clean waters and connected network of thriving green spaces nurture biodiversity, and deepen the relationship between people and nature.

Our Yarra River, Birrarung, is respected as a sacred natural living entity and everyone takes responsibility for its care. Its health and integrity are paramount and uncompromised.

What is good for the Yarra is good for all.

Strategies, policies and plans that informed the Yarra Strategic Plan

INCEPTION

**Yarra River Protection
(Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017**

DEVELOPMENT

NHANBU NARRUN BA NGARGUNIN TWARN BIRRARUNG (BIRRARUNG WATER POLICY)

Provides the ambitions of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung for planning, policy and decision-making in the Yarra River corridor.

CORE STRATEGIES AND POLICIES INFORMING THE YARRA STRATEGIC PLAN

PLAN MELBOURNE 2017–2050

A policy under Direction 6.5 seeks to protect and enhance the health of urban waterways including the Yarra River.

WATER FOR VICTORIA

The Yarra River is identified as a priority waterway in Water for Victoria. Action 3.1 seeks to improve arrangements for urban waterways by responding to the Yarra MAC recommendations of which the Yarra Strategic Plan is one.

STATE OF THE YARRA AND ITS PARKLANDS REPORT

Provides a baseline from which to measure the outcomes of the plan’s 10-year performance objectives.

VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS FRAMEWORK 2018–2023

The VAAF self-determining actions and principles has been used to guide partnership and decision-making with Traditional Owners to develop the Yarra Strategic Plan.

HEALTHY WATERWAYS STRATEGY 2018

Outlines water quality targets for values and conditions of waterways across the Yarra catchment, informs implementation of actions in the plan and provides a basis for monitoring and reporting on outcomes.

PROTECTING VICTORIA’S ENVIRONMENT – BIODIVERSITY 2037

Highlights the need to protect native vegetation and waterways to improve biodiversity and protect related ecosystem services.

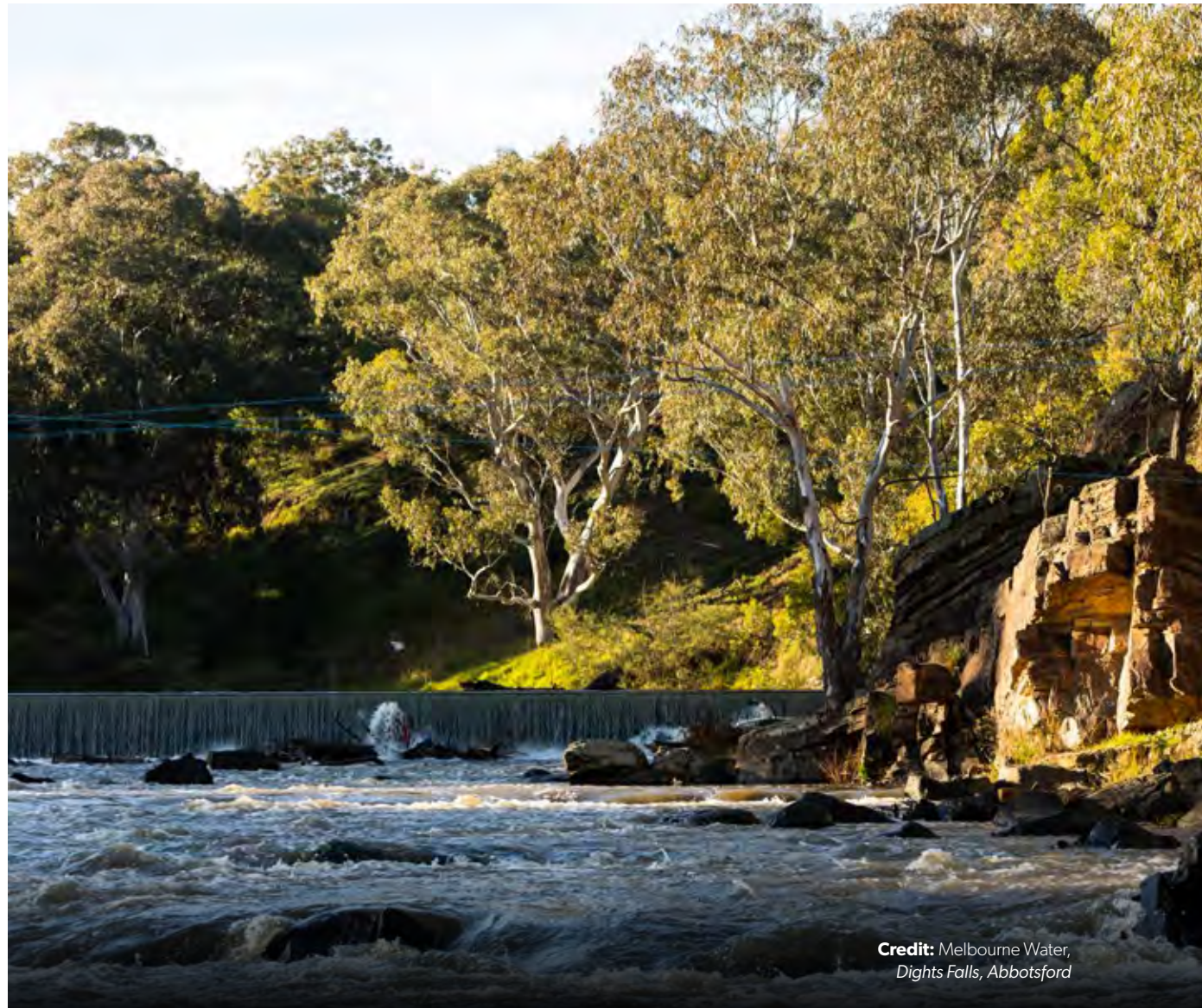
OPEN SPACE FOR EVERYONE 2021

Informs open space planning within the Yarra River corridor.

BACKGROUND STUDIES

- Key gaps and opportunities for areas of high environmental and landscape value
- Cultural heritage scoping study
- Demographic study
- Land use framework gap analysis
- Yarra River social research
- Economic benefit of the Yarra River

FIGURE 1. Strategies, policies and plans that have informed the Yarra Strategic Plan



How this plan works

This plan has two parts: Part 1 – working together to achieve the community vision, and Part 2 – land use framework.

About Part 1 – working together to achieve the community vision

In Part 1, the plan acknowledges the history of Traditional Owners and recognises their intrinsic relationship to the Yarra River, Birrarung. It identifies the responsible local and state government authorities already investing in and managing the Yarra, and outlines a modern governance approach to enable these authorities and Traditional Owners to work together to manage the river as one living and integrated natural entity.

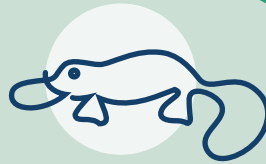
Also in Part 1, are four performance objectives, which represent the change the community is seeking for the Yarra over the next 10 years. These objectives set the foundation for achieving the 50 Year Community Vision and alignment with the Birrarung Water Policy. They also align with the protection principles in the Act and the objectives contained in the Yarra River Action Plan.

Nested under each of the performance objectives are collaborative actions to be carried out over the next 10 years (see page 41). Completion of these actions will be dependent on the availability of funding.

Part 1 also includes priority projects to immediately begin the work of the plan (see page 36).

Decisions about the implementation and timing of actions and projects listed in the plan will be made in line with government policy and budget processes.

10 year performance objectives



A healthy river and lands

Improving the water quality of the Yarra River and protecting its land, floodplains and billabongs to achieve greater biodiversity.



A culturally diverse river corridor

Acknowledging, protecting and commemorating the rich heritage of the Birrarung and its stories.



Quality parklands for a growing population

Improving the river's parklands to support community wellbeing and strengthen the relationship between the Yarra River, its community and visitors.



Protecting the natural beauty of the Yarra River corridor

Respecting the significance of the Yarra River's landscapes. Where we build, we will protect and celebrate the river's natural beauty, landscapes and views.

About Part 2 – land use framework

Part 2, the land use framework, provides broad direction for future land use and development, to protect the river and its values. Implementing the land use framework through planning schemes will ensure that land use and development, on both public and private land, can deliver on the plan’s performance objectives outlined in Part 1.

As well as providing whole-of-river directions, the land use framework provides directions for each of the river’s four ‘reaches’: upper rural, lower rural, suburban and inner city.

Within Part 2 significant places and new areas for protection have been identified together with related opportunities for future projects and alignment with other plans and strategies.

The land use framework will be translated into local and state planning policy, whereas the collaborative actions in Part 1 will be delivered through partnerships, collaboration and discrete funding opportunities.

PART 1 - WORKING TOGETHER TO DELIVER THE COMMUNITY VISION

Custodianship of the Birrarung

Traditional Owners bring their unique knowledge and understanding of the river to the plan. Their involvement in policy planning, decision-making and management of the river will help preserve and restore the wellbeing of the Birrarung.

Collaborative management

A collaborative approach for investment and management for the protection and improvement of the Yarra, including use of a transparent and coordinated decision-making framework for activities and projects affecting Yarra River land.

Collaborative actions for the next 10 years

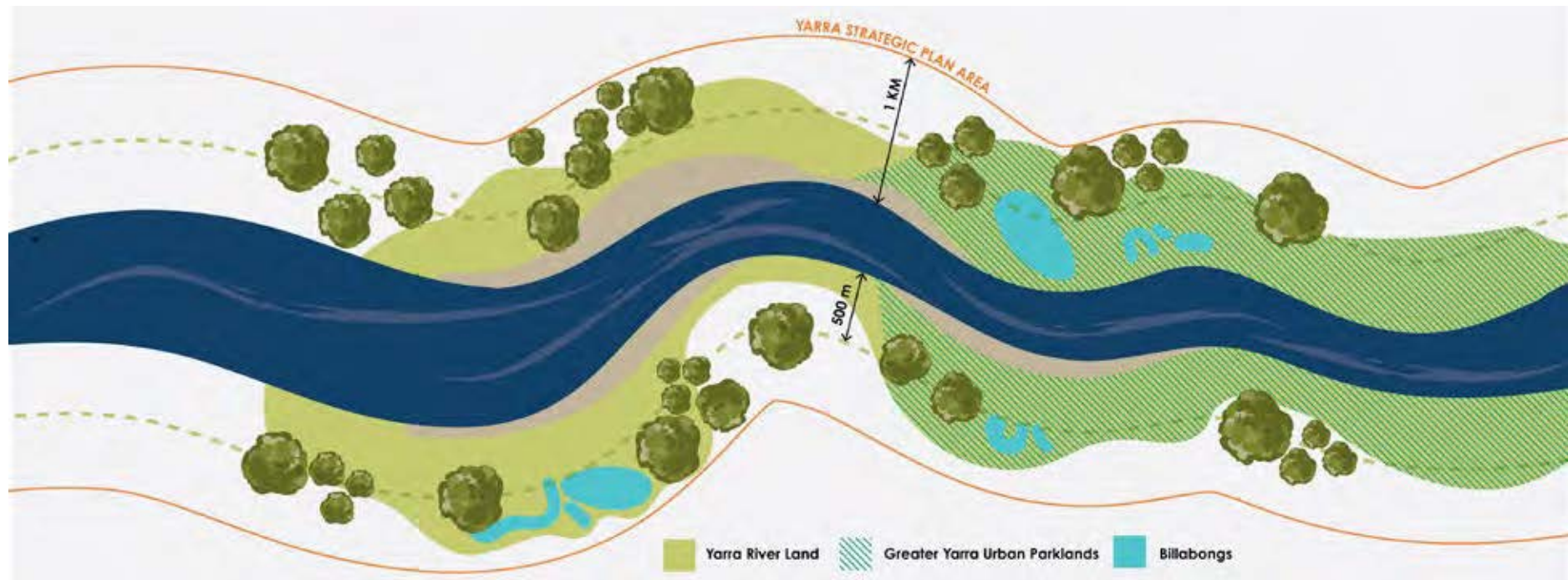
A series of collaborative actions and priority projects to achieve the four 10-year performance objectives.

PART 2 - LAND USE FRAMEWORK

The land use framework is a regional framework with a spatial structure to ensure future land use and development align with the 10-year performance objectives, community vision and Birrarung water policy. Operating at three distinct scales - whole-of-river, reach and local - it sets broad land use directions, while recognising existing landscapes and environments.

Scope of the Yarra Strategic Plan⁴

To guide and manage activities on public and private land, the Act designates three categories of land to which the plan applies.⁵



Yarra Strategic Plan area defines the boundaries of the plan. The area includes land of any kind located within 1 km of the banks of the Yarra River. Some areas are defined as excluded land.⁶

Yarra River land is designated to allow for coordinated management of public land along the waterway. Yarra River land is the largest category of land protected by the Act. It includes the bed, soil and banks of the Yarra River, and Crown and state government-owned land parcels within 500 m of a bank of the river.⁷ Yarra River land does not include private land and some areas are defined as excluded land.⁸

Greater Yarra Urban Parklands recognises the network of parklands along the Yarra River as one of Melbourne's greatest open space assets that enhances the city's economic prosperity, vitality and liveability. At present, Greater Yarra Urban Parklands include Yarra River land that is zoned as public open space between Punt Road, South Yarra, and the urban growth boundary in Warrandyte.



Credit: David Hannah,
Kookaburra, Yarra River

PART 1 – WORKING TOGETHER TO DELIVER THE COMMUNITY VISION



Credit: Melbourne Water,
Row boats, Studley Park

Over the next 10 years, transformative and collaborative action will be vital to protect the Yarra and its parklands against future decline triggered by climate change and population growth.

To help guide this step-change in management, the community assembly distilled the 50 year Yarra Community Vision into four performance objectives. These objectives address the environmental, social, recreational, cultural and management protection principles of the Act.

In turn, the state and local government authorities identified in the Act, together with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, have identified whole-of-river and transformative actions to progress the performance objectives.

These objectives and actions set the foundation for achieving the community vision and alignment with the Birrarung Water Policy, and make up Part 1 of the Yarra Strategic Plan.

Collaborative management of the Yarra

State and publically owned lands along the Yarra corridor have been declared 'Yarra River land' to enable their coordinated management and ensure the continued health of the river. Collaborative management of the river will rightly see Traditional Owners and authorities working together to manage Yarra River land.

Each of the organisations involved in the Yarra's management traditionally deliver work within their remit making the most effective use of funds available to them.

The Yarra, however, flows through and beyond all geographic boundaries and requires a more holistic approach to its management. For this reason, the Act calls for modern governance and for state and local authorities to work together to manage the river as one living and integrated natural entity (see **Appendix D**). This is achieved through the Yarra Collaboration Committee, which currently:

- includes representatives of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and responsible public entities with responsibilities for managing the river
- is a long-term governance arrangement, which aims to evolve in its sophistication and approach over the coming years
- will oversee the delivery of the plan and ensure works on Yarra River land are aligned through the application of the decision-making framework (see **Appendix E**).

In order to implement the plan, the Yarra Collaboration Committee recognises that long-term change needs to be embedded in the way organisations work together, and proposes four changes to implement over the next 10 years:

- The Yarra Collaboration Committee will oversee implementation and ensure whole-of-government decision-making for Yarra River land.
- Member organisations will coordinate investment decisions on Yarra River land through use of the plan's decision-making framework.
- All stakeholders, including communities, will be involved in taking care of the river, evolving over time to include more direct community input.
- Traditional Owners and government agencies are supported in their transition to deliver the 50 Year Community Vision, Yarra Strategic Plan and Birrarung Water Policy.

Managing the Yarra River corridor

The plan has been prepared by Melbourne Water in collaboration with these members of the Yarra Collaboration Committee:

Yarra City Council: local government responsible for riverside suburbs including Burnley, Richmond and Abbotsford.

Over 20 km of the Yarra River runs through Yarra City with approximately 275 ha of Yarra River land in the council area.

Banyule City Council: local government responsible for riverside suburbs including Ivanhoe, Heidelberg and Lower Plenty.

Over 20 km of the Yarra River runs through Banyule, with approximately 281 ha of Yarra River land in the council area.

Nillumbik Shire Council: local government responsible for riverside suburbs including Eltham and Bend of Islands.

Over 45 km of the Yarra River runs through Nillumbik, with over 1000 ha of Yarra River land in the council area.

INNER CITY REACH



SUBURBAN REACH



SUBURBAN REACH

Manningham City Council: local government responsible for riverside suburbs including Bulleen, Templestowe and Warrandyte.

Over 50 km of the Yarra River runs through Manningham, with over 1000 ha of Yarra River land in the council area.

Boroondara City Council: local government responsible for riverside suburbs including Hawthorn, Kew and North Balwyn.

Over 23 km of the Yarra River runs through Boroondara, with approximately 164 ha of Yarra River land in the council area.

Stonnington City Council: local government responsible for riverside suburbs including South Yarra and Toorak.

Approximately 4 km of the Yarra River runs through Stonnington, with 16 ha of Yarra River land in the council area.

Melbourne City Council: local government responsible for the municipality of Melbourne, within the inner city reach of the Yarra River.

Over 10km of the Yarra River runs through Melbourne City.

Yarra Ranges Council: local government responsible for the largest area of the Yarra River. Its area stretches from the lower rural to the upper rural reach.

Over 130 km of the Yarra River runs through the Yarra Ranges, with more than 100,000 ha of Yarra River land within the council area.

LOWER RURAL REACH



LOWER RURAL REACH





Parks Victoria: responsible for managing an expanding and diverse park network across Victoria. Parks Victoria manages a significant portion of the parklands along the Yarra River, in particular Yarra Bend Park, Yarra Valley Parklands, Warrandyte State Park and Yarra Ranges National Park. Parks Victoria is responsible for navigation and water management from Port of Melbourne to the source of the river.

Parks Victoria manages over 70,000 ha of Yarra River land throughout the river corridor.

Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority: develops and oversees the implementation of the Regional Catchment Strategy. Responsible for the planning and coordination of land, water and biodiversity management in the catchment. The authority's functions were integrated into Melbourne Water on 1 January 2022.

Head, Transport for Victoria and VicTrack: plans, builds and operates an integrated, sustainable and safe transport system across Victoria. Responsible for long-term planning and development of the transport network throughout the Yarra River catchment, including integrating public transport with other modes such as cars, cycling, and walking.

In addition to members of the Yarra Collaboration Committee, key partners in managing the river include:

Victorian Environmental Water Holder: responsible for holding and managing the Yarra's environmental water entitlements.

Environment Protection Authority: Victoria's environmental regulator to prevent and reduce the effects of pollution and waste.

Victorian Fisheries Authority: managing healthy and sustainable fisheries for all Victorians.

Yarra Valley Water: the primary water and sanitation service provider in the Yarra River catchment. Greater Western Water and South East Water provide similar services in separate areas in the inner city.

Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation: registered Aboriginal party for Country downstream of the city. Bunurong Country covers the lower parts of the Yarra estuary out to Narm (Port Phillip Bay).

Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions: focuses on building thriving places and regions and supporting inclusive communities. Leads the planning, designing and curating of Fishermans Bend Business Precinct and is responsible for Docklands as a business precinct.

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation: registered Aboriginal party covering Country through which the Birrarung flows. They bring their unique knowledge, connections and understandings of the river. Their interdependent relationship with the environment provides a blueprint for holistic management of the river and its lands.

Victorian Planning Authority: works with councils and local communities, government agencies, landowners and developers to plan for strategically important precincts in the inner and middle rings of Melbourne.

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP): creates liveable, inclusive and sustainable communities with thriving natural environments. DELWP brings together Victoria's climate change, energy, environment, water, forests, planning and emergency management functions into a single department.

DELWP oversees more than 47,000 ha of Yarra River land throughout the river corridor.

Melbourne Water: responsible for the environmental management of all waterways (including the bed and banks of the Yarra River) and major drainage systems in relation to water quality, flood protection and floodplain management affecting the river.



Legislative requirements for responsible public entities

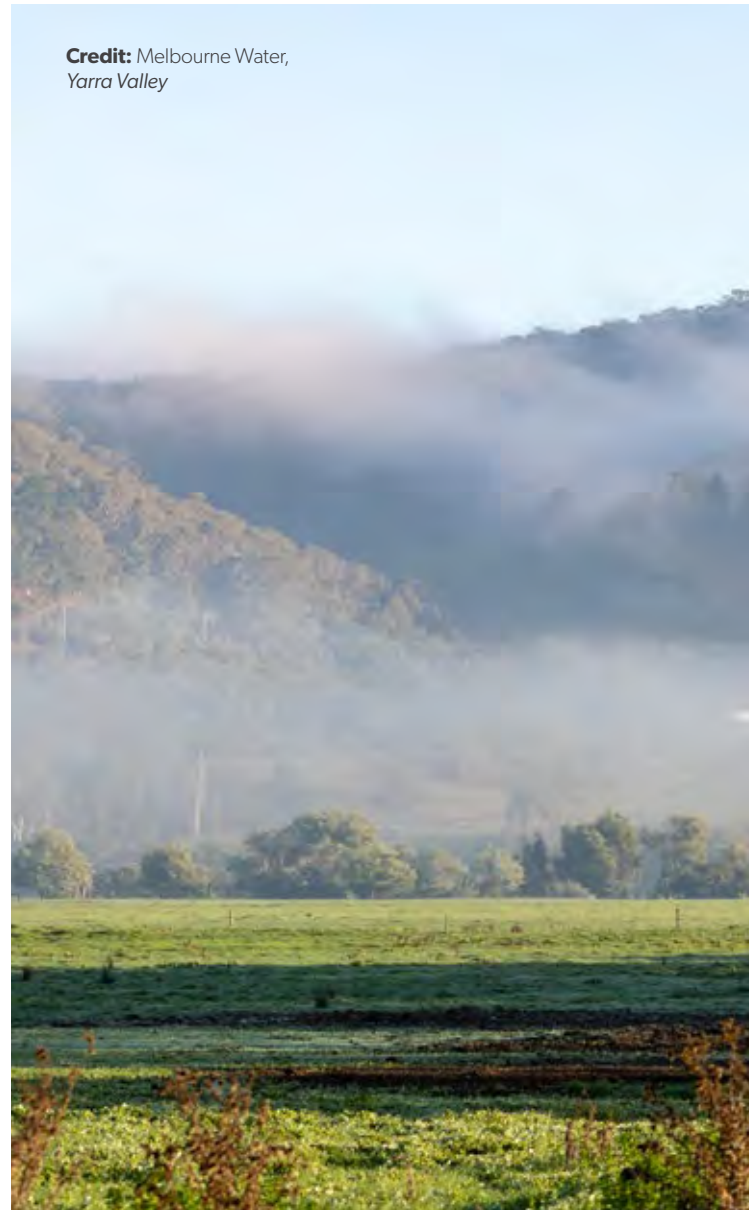
The primary legislation for all responsible public entities was amended to ensure alignment with the *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017*. The various acts now set out the following obligations of responsible public entities in relation to Yarra River land:⁹

- Responsible public entities must not act inconsistently with any part of the Yarra Strategic Plan that is expressed to be binding on the entity when performing a function or duty or exercising a power under specified legislation in relation to Yarra River land.
- Responsible public entities must have regard to the Yarra protection principles, and those parts of the Yarra Strategic Plan not expressed to be binding on the entity, when performing a function or duty or exercising a power under specified legislation in relation to the Yarra Strategic Plan area that may affect Yarra River land.
- The obligations above do not apply where the responsible public entity's function, duty or power relates to a declared project within the meaning of the *Major Transport Projects Facilitation Act 2009* (e.g. section 64JA of the *Transport Integration Act 2010*).

The *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017* requires responsible public entities to prepare a report on their implementation of the Yarra Strategic Plan. These reports will highlight activities and projects that contribute towards the plan's performance objectives, and will inform the annual report prepared by the lead agency for the Birrarung Council.

The *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (Part 3AAA) sets out the following requirement for planning authorities in relation to Yarra River land:

- A responsible public entity which is a planning authority must not prepare an amendment to a planning scheme that relates to Yarra River land that is inconsistent with anything in the Yarra Strategic Plan expressed to be binding on the responsible public entity.
- Any planning scheme amendment to zoning controls that allows for Greater Yarra Urban Parklands land to be used in a way that is inconsistent with the Yarra Strategic Plan be ratified by both houses of Parliament (in accordance with section 46AAB and 46AAC of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*).



Credit: Melbourne Water,
Yarra Valley

Custodianship of the Birrarung

The Yarra Strategic Plan is, proudly, the first plan for the Yarra River, Birrarung, developed in partnership with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.

The following dedicated chapter authored by the Corporation (Water Unit) and its Elders, 'Custodianship of the Birrarung' is a powerful inclusion for the plan, outlining the history, aspirations and opportunities for Caring for Country and water justice for the Birrarung.

We, the Woi-wurrung, the First People, and the Birrarung, belong to this Country. This Country, and the Birrarung are part of us.

The Birrarung is alive, has a heart, a spirit and is part of our Dreaming. We have lived with and known the Birrarung since the beginning. We will always know the Birrarung.

Bunjil, the great Eagle, the creator spirit, made the land, the sky, the sea, the rivers, flora and fauna, the lore. He made Kulin from the earth. Bunjil gave Waa, the crow, the responsibility of Protector. Bunjil's brother, Palliyang, the Bat, created Bagarook, women, from the water.

Since our beginning it has been known that we have an obligation to keep the Birrarung alive and healthy—for all generations to come.

Preamble of the Wilip-gin Birrarung murrong Act 2017

Credit: Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Possum skin cloak created as part of the Birrarung Stories Project

Introduction

We, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people have a deep cultural obligation and a birthright to look after the Birrarung (Yarra River) – to make sure the river and its lands are healthy and continues to support all life now and for generations to come. As Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people we do not separate the Birrarung from Port Phillip Bay (Narm) or regard the Birrarung as segmented according to reaches, nor disassociate the corridor from the rest of the rivers' catchment. The landscape, through which the Birrarung flows, from its source to the sea, is one integrated, living, cultural landscape. As such, we want to be self-determining and active partners in the ongoing management of the Birrarung and its lands with all responsible public entities who contribute to the management of the Birrarung as one living entity.

This chapter provides an overview of our aspirations for co-management of the Birrarung and emphasises key areas of focus for us in the Yarra Strategic Plan and its implementation – including water justice, significant places and the decision-making framework for transformational projects.

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Peoples connection to the Birrarung

As the Traditional Owners of the Birrarung we are the first and only Aboriginal people with the cultural, legislated and moral authority to speak for this Country – our Country. We have an unbroken relationship with our Country which extends north to the Great Dividing Range, west to the mouth of the Werribee River, south to the mouth of Mordialloc Creek and east to Mount Baw Baw.

For thousands of years prior to European contact, the Birrarung was central to the civic, commercial (trade), cultural and ceremonial lives of our people. The wealth of our Country was immediately evident to Settlers. From 1835 onwards, Melbourne grew out from the banks of

the Birrarung which allowed it to become the vibrant city it is today. However, this has come at great expense to the Birrarung and our people. Only one of the Woi-wurrung clans survived European settlement, the Wurundjeri Willam balluk clan of the Birrarung.

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation

We are represented by a peak body established over 35 years ago – the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (the Corporation). Predominantly employing Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and other Aboriginal people, the Corporation is a self-funded charity which provides opportunity for engagement with our people and culture.

The Corporation operates in a complex federal, state and local government legislative and policy ecosystem including planning and environmental statutes. The Australian Government has also ratified UN declarations that have a bearing on how the State should work with Traditional Owners.

Two significant Victorian legislative frameworks that the Corporation operates within include the Victorian *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act (2006)* (the Corporation was appointed as a Registered Aboriginal Party in 2008 and 2021 over a portion of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country), and the *Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn Act (2017)* which identifies and acknowledges us as Traditional Owners of the Birrarung.

Alongside Victorian state departments, local government authorities are priority partners for the Corporation given the large number of them are on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung traditional homelands.

A core focus of the Corporation's work is the protection, preservation and revitalisation of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung culture and cultural practices and expression of culture in a contemporary way.

The Corporation, is also active in the governance of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country, including working with the state and its other agencies and partners to achieve this. To this end, the Corporation offers several key services including: Cultural Practices for events (Welcome to Country, Smoking Ceremonies as well as yidaki performances), Cultural Heritage services, Cultural Consultations, Language and Naming, Cultural Education (including tourism) experiences, Natural Resource Management, Research, and more recently Water centred collaborations with selected responsible public entities.



Credit: DELWP,
First reading of the bill, June 2017

'The Birrarung is part of our identity.'

– Aunty Margaret Gardiner

Corporation's response to the Wilip-gin Birrarung murrong Act 2017 and Community Vision - Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung (Ancient Spirit and Lore of the Yarra)

Wilip-gin Birrarung murrong Act 2017 (the Act)

The Act is the first piece of Victorian legislation with a bilingual title and preamble in Woi-wurrung language and it acknowledges the privileged position of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as Traditional Owners of the Birrarung. This recognition and empowerment of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung language, values, and Elders was a profoundly important moment not only for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, but also Indigenous Australians and First Nations peoples globally.

The bill itself was introduced to Parliament by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders, who delivered an address on the significance of the proposed legislation.

In response to the Act and Community Vision, the Corporation facilitated a community driven process whereby the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community gathered to determine their aspirations for the Birrarung and a framework for their involvement in the development of the Yarra Strategic Plan. The deliberative process also shaped the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung vision for the Birrarung – complementing and strengthening the broader Community Vision.

Together, the Community Vision and *Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung* underpin the Yarra Strategic Plan and set the aspiration and expectations for what needs to be achieved in management of the Birrarung as one living entity.

Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung

Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung is an important document that outlines expectations about the nature of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung involvement in the development of the Yarra Strategic Plan. This plan outlines Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung contributions to the objectives of the Yarra Strategic Plan, the decision-making framework and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung performance objectives and targets.

Further, *Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung* unambiguously sets out the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung priorities for the Birrarung. The policy provides clear guidance to government, stakeholders and all responsible parties on engagement with the Corporation with respect to planning, policy and decision-making. The policy highlights the Corporation's intention for collaboration and partnerships alongside its expectation for these to be culturally respectful and appropriately and adequately resourced – through human and financial resources.

Securing and protecting the footprint of the Birrarung is essential for the health of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and Country, the wellbeing of the diverse river communities and indeed the city of Melbourne.

Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung is not intended as a static response to the Act or Community Vision. Like other key policy documents that inform the strategic direction of the Corporation, *Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung* will be responsive to policy shifts and pressures on Country, including threats from large infrastructure projects, both the sale of and/or inappropriate access of Crown land, changes in land use and rapid urban expansion and agricultural intensification. The performance objectives and targets in both *Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung* and other key internal policy documents underscore the need for a whole of system approach, including the need to establish cultural and environmental corridors that connect areas beyond the Yarra River lands.

The following projects were identified by the Corporation as immediate priorities in response to the context within which the Act was introduced, and are reflected in the priority actions of the Yarra Strategic Plan:

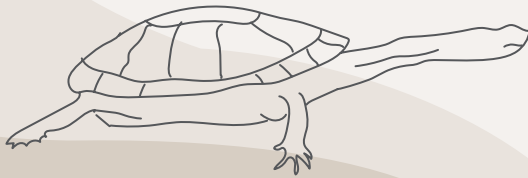
- Cultural practice, knowledge and cultural mapping
- Direct meaningful engagement with Abbotsford River Structure Plan
- Direct meaningful engagement with Bulleen-Banyule Cultural River Precinct Structure Plan
- Bolin Bolin Billabong complex rewatering, research and practice.



Credit: Melbourne Water,
Launch of the community vision and *Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung*, May 2018

'Having our name in the Act finally gives us a legal mechanism to have a say about the Birrarung. We want to protect our homelands'

– Allan Wandin



Bringing the intention of the Act to life for the benefit of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people

The responsible public entities who will deliver and implement the 40 actions of the Yarra Strategic Plan have a significant responsibility to deliver the social, cultural, economic, environmental and heritage outcomes that the Act anticipates for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people. This will sit alongside delivery of broader educational outcomes,

to which the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people aspire, as outlined in *Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung*.

Serendipitously, although the Act reflects a planning land use framework, the Minister for Water has ultimate responsibility for the Yarra Strategic Plan and deliverables through its implementation. This ideally positions the plan as the vehicle responsible for executing the directives of the Act to support both the land and water justice aspirations of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.

Caring for Country is an important land and water justice aspiration for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people which we believe can actively be achieved through Part 2 – land use framework.

The opportunity for achieving water justice and water rights for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung through the actions of the Yarra Strategic Plan is particularly evident and inclusion of Action 8: *Support the aspiration of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people to pursue justice for their people and County via delivering water justice through water rights, participation in water management and broader water reform*.

To understand and contextualise this opportunity it is critically important to understand that historically, Aboriginal peoples' rights to water have largely been excluded from water planning and management policies and programs.

In Victoria it is estimated that Aboriginal People own less than 0.1% of all water rights. Without water rights, Traditional Owners are unable to exercise self-determination and can't decide where or how water can be used to support cultural, spiritual, environmental or economic outcomes. This exclusion denies Traditional Owners the right to care for Country, which is the essence of Aboriginal social, spiritual, economic and physical wellbeing, and the basis of cultural lore.

The time line at the end of this chapter represents a specific set of experiences to assist the reader appreciate the current context – it is not intended as an exhaustive history.

Water Justice: Yarra Strategic Plan as a mechanism for change

A recurring challenge for Traditional Owners is that legislation and associated policy is often silent on First Peoples matters, or underpinned by Settler/Colonial understandings of colonialism and culture. This also includes the perception that the cultures and interests of First Peoples are static and time locked to the environments, practises, and of societies, the First Peoples governed at the time of European settlement. It is evident in Acts written to support Traditional Owners such as the *Native Title Act 1993*, the *Victorian Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2006* and *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*, however is beyond the scope of this chapter.

In 2017, 182 years post contact, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people gained a legislative mechanism within which to formally engage with and influence the governance of the Birrarung and its lands, which is central to Woi-wurrung people's Dreaming and wellbeing.

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung participation has only been possible because the Act employed a placed-based approach, pairing right Country with the right people – the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people. Now with strategic planning and governance reform the Yarra Strategic Plan will support the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people achieve water justice outcomes.

Comprising three pillars, water justice is characterised by:

1. water rights
2. participation in water management
3. broader water and policy reform resulting in treaties and political agreements.

This definition of water justice is not a Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung concept. It has been adapted specifically for this chapter from the National Cultural Flows Research Project, which is currently considered the gold standard for water justice in Australia. This is a national initiative that aims to secure a future where Indigenous water allocations are embedded within Australia's water planning and management regimes.

Water justice for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people

'It's a living lifeline, the main highway for our resources and our spirituality.'

– Aunty Margaret Gardiner

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Water Ownership/Rights

Foundation of water justice for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people. Control and decision making over ground and surface water. The Yarra Strategic Plan and responsible public entities have the ability to support and realise this essential aspiration for the Birrarung.

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung participation in Water Management

The Yarra Strategic Plan provides an opportunity to ensure Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people's co-management of water, one of three key areas for water justice for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.

Transform Foundation to empower Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people

Reform of wider policy and governance structures on Country, including treaties and political agreements, cultural rights, better recognition of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung lore and custom with benchmarking against International Agreements. The Yarra Strategic Plan and responsible public entities have the ability to support and realise this essential aspiration for the Birrarung.



Credit: Melbourne Water, Interpretive signage trail at Pound Bend Reserve, Warrandyte State Park

FIGURE 2. Water justice for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people

The inclusion of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people in the *Wilip gin Birrarung murrong Act 2017* has allowed the Corporation participation in water management and decision-making for the Birrarung (**Figure 2**).

Actions 8 (see page 44) and 31 (see page 58) support Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people in their aspiration to progress additional rights, in particular water rights and agreement making with key agencies who manage aspects of Country. Current Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung water and land justice priorities include:

- The return of an appropriate parcel of land within the Bulleen Banyule precinct to the Corporation to establish a permanent cultural centre and base of operations. It was the first place our Ancestors requested as a Reserve from the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate in 1840.
- Appropriate development and zoning of lands within the Bulleen Banyule precinct that secures the Birrarung's footprint for the benefit of the river. The Birrarung needs its lands to enable natural systems including flooding. Planned sporting facilities and other forms of development are to be directed away from the Birrarung to more appropriate locations that are significantly set back from cultural places.
- Prioritise the hydrological functions of the Bolin Bolin and networked billabongs at current or improved levels in the face of development and infrastructure upgrades (NELP). A priority example is an in-perpetuity watering solution for Bolin Bolin billabong and networked billabongs so that they never dry out.
- Immediate moratorium on the implementation of the *Parks and Crown Land Legislation Amendment Act 2020* (commenced 1 September 2021) on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung homelands, including the Birrarung and its tributaries, until the Corporation is appropriately resourced to undertake a systematic program of cultural mapping. Consultation with Traditional Owners after legislation has been developed and enacted in law is inconsistent with the States commitment to Treaty, the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework, and DELWP's self-determination policy framework.
- The immediate drafting of a new piece of place-based legislation, informed by learnings gained from the *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrong) Act (2017)*, that protects and enhances the Maribyrrong and Werribee

rivers (including in stream water quality and flows), their catchments, and enshrines Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Wadawurrung Traditional Owner rights in law.

- Secure funds to develop a bicultural understanding of net gain imbued with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung values. Once 'bicultural net gain' is established, work with responsible public entities to implement the definition as part of the Yarra Strategic Plan.
- The development of a cohesive strategy to ensure that legislation and policy pertaining to land, water and heritage works together effectively to protect Country.
- Naming all unnamed waterways to ensure cultural heritage sensitivity overlay is more broadly applied to ensure cultural protections.
- The requirement that any planning amendments or ground works that impact upon and occur within the declared lands (1 km either side of the river) leads to a voluntary Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) process and engagement with the Water Unit.
- Securing 'cultural flows' by identifying the cultural water (volume and timing) required to sustain the natural, cultural, and spiritual values for the length of the Birrarung and its tributaries, and secure a water entitlement (unincumbered by fees and ongoing costs) required to meet those values.
- Systematic and sustained rewatering of wetlands and billabongs.
- Establishing Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Birrarung Rangers (land and water).
- Immediate cessation of sale of Crown lands where Native Title has not been extinguished and the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* can be applied.
- Protect, re-wild, rewater and/or rehabilitate significant sites.
- Water for commercial activities (cultivate native bush foods and aquaculture).
- Restoring/reintroduction of important species and ecological communities.
- Recognition and implementation of Climate Change Strategies which will reduce damage to cultural landscapes, cultural places, and cultural values.

A number of these priorities are being addressed through the actions in the Yarra Strategic Plan.

Significant sites and areas for protection

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people are often called on to outline or describe where there are sites of significance or cultural value. When referring to 'place' within Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country, it is as much based upon emotion, knowledge, stories and intangible value as it is on artefacts and tangible heritage.

Place boundaries are mutable and movable, shifting location even between individuals. These are concepts that do not always align with the modern legal process of property boundaries, values, and ownership which restrict access and defined land use.

- All of Country is important to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, being a continuous and interconnected landscape.
- Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung values do not end at property boundaries and do not just occur on Crown land.
- Some places will have values that are not public knowledge.
- There are places across Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country that contemporary Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people are yet to reconnect with as access to cultural landscapes has been disrupted for many generations.
- Place and space are conceptually different and a Place may be linked by many points through song lines, stories, view lines, and some links may be astrological.

There are also areas that are unknown, such as ancient billabongs and waterways. The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung acknowledge that the Birrarung landscape is dynamic, having changed its course over millennia. These changes are recorded within stories that form part of our oral tradition. The evidence of a changing watercourse is seen in the numerous billabongs of the Birrarung. These ancient places, filled with sediment over time, still have potential for evidence of ancestral occupation despite urbanisation. The filled billabongs are often connected hydrologically to the Birrarung and visible from aerial imagery.

Table 1 describes some areas which have known values to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and are still semi-accessible to people today. These are identified in Part 2 – land use framework. Table 2 lists sites as areas for immediate protection, which are also identified in Part 2.

TABLE 1. Publicly known Places of Significance

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people consider the following places along the Birrarung (Yarra) to be sites of significance:	
Federation Square	Traditional meeting place for cultural business and ceremonial life for the Kulin Nation.
MCG	Significant ceremonial ground that was utilised until the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people were displaced from current day City of Melbourne. A site of inter-clan cultural business.
Dights Falls	Birrarung crossing place for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung. This area is also associated with Billibellary's (Ngurungaeta) resting place.
Yarra Bend	Site of the first Aboriginal School in Victoria. Also known as an important Kulin meeting place and one of headquarters of the Native Police.
Yarra Flats	Area of significant cultural resources: food, fibre, and medicine. It was also living area for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung.
Confluence of the Maribyrnong and Yarra	High-resource area in the swampy salt flats. Higher ground on the western side for meeting and trade with other Kulin groups.
Bend of Islands	Environmental Living Zone where landowners are required to maintain and manage the environmental and cultural values of the land. Adjacent to the Birrarung (nil invasive species).
Coranderrk	Established in 1863, Coranderrk was located on the lands of the Wurundjeri-balluk clan of the Woi-wurrung. The station was established for the Wurundjeri people and members from other Kulin (Victorian) tribes who were forcefully displaced from their traditional lands some 30 years previously. The reserve, which originally comprised 2300 acres of land, was later extended to 4850 acres, and was situated on the Yarra Flats bordered by the Birrarung, Badger Creek, Watts River and the slopes of Mount Riddell (currently the Shire of Yarra Ranges).
Confluence of the Plenty River and the Birrarung	A recognised ceremonial place.
Birrarung (the Yarra) Falls	Natural crossing point for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung, located south of current-day Queen Street. This waterfall was the natural rock barrier that separated the salty tidal water from the fresh water that flowed from the Birrarung. The Yarra Falls were blasted away with explosives in the 1880s to make way for Queens Bridge and shipping purposes.

TABLE 2. Known Key Places requiring Protection

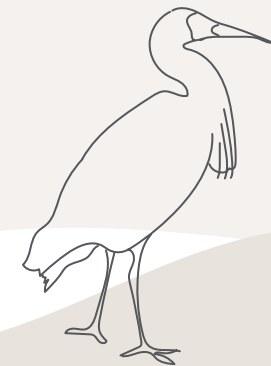
The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people have identified the following sites as areas for immediate protection:	
Bolin Bolin Billabong and connected billabongs (Banskia St wetlands and Annulus Billabong)	Traditional eel fishing ground and living area that was highly significant to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people. It was the subject of a Cultural Values Study lead by the Corporation. It was the first place that our Ancestors requested as a reserve from the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate in 1840. Multiple Creation stories are associated with this cultural landscape.
Merri Creek Confluence	Initiation place for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and associated with Ngurungaeta (leader) Billibillary’s resting place.
Brushy Creek Confluence	Ngurungaeta (leader), William Barak’s birthing place is located on the banks of Brushy Creek.
Laughing Waters (Garambi Baan)	Traditional aquacultural site, containing historic eel traps, which are actively maintained by the Corporation in association with Parks Victoria. The site of a contemporary ceremonial ground with scarred trees (dendroglyphs).
Bulleen-Banyule Flats	Important living area rich in resources. Bulleen is a place where important Settler and Indigenous relations played out within the political context of the Aboriginal Protectorate. It is currently subject to development considerations (NELP).
Yering	The ‘Battle of Yering’ occurred on the former Yering Station property, 13 January 1840. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung warriors fought troopers of the Border Police to secure the release of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Ngurungaeta (leader) Jaga Jaga.

‘Water Rangers would allow us to practice our culture without asking government permission to do so. In real terms, we could actually be custodians of the river.’

– Aunty Gail Smith

‘The river was the main source of our culture and economy. Our relationship is both physical and spiritual. Cultural Flows are a modern way of interpreting this relationship.’

– Uncle Bill Nicholson



Decision-making framework – Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Corporation engagement protocols for responsible public entities named in the Act

The Corporation has a unique organisational structure and operates from a model of consensus and representative decision-making. Engagement with the Corporation occurs across three interlinked tiers:

1. Legislation and Policy – Direct engagement in legislation and policy development with the State of Victoria regarding the interests of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and Country.
2. Partnership – Self determined agreements with other parties (i.e., relevant government agencies, non-government organisations, research institution etc.) that deliver valued outcomes in an ongoing and meaningful manner.
3. Contracted services – Of particular note in the context of the Yarra Strategic Plan is the opportunity to Care for Country via an on-ground Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Natural Resource Management presence that can focus on restoration, rehabilitation, protection, education, knowledge gathering and sharing (research).

The decision-making framework (**Appendix E**) and the below overview of protocols will support our aspirations with respect to achieving co-management of the Birrarung and its lands as one living integrated entity, and help us deliver components of *Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung* and other key strategic documents of the Corporation.

Protocols are in place to ensure Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people's sovereign rights are respected and Country is protected. There is to be an ongoing cycle of involvement between responsible public entities and the Corporation. These protocols with respect to the Yarra Strategic Plan will:

1. Support responsible public entities in developing their understanding of the rights and responsibilities of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people to Country (land, water, planning).
2. Demonstrate to responsible public entities and the broader community the value of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung inclusion and participation.
3. Support the Corporation to further engage with the community it represents including providing culturally relevant employment opportunities.
4. Further develop and consolidate cultural, environmental, social, political and economic relationships with water.

As with *Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung* these protocols will evolve over time. More detailed protocols for engaging services will be available upon the implementation of the Yarra Strategic Plan.

Due to cultural considerations the Corporation has expanded expectations of broader engagement by responsible public entities than identified in the current decision-making framework. Considering cultural sensitivities, we believe it essential in delivering on the Yarra Strategic Plan priority actions and transformational projects that responsible public entities named in the Act understand and adhere to a number of protocols. Further details of the engagement protocols associated with decision-making will be included in the implementation plan for the Yarra Strategic Plan.

This chapter is dedicated to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders and community who supported and informed the development of this work.

Special thanks to the following Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Corporation staff members: Jordan Smith and Karmen Jobling (Water Unit) and Fiona McConachie (NRM Policy Officer) who contributed to an earlier draft.

'The Yarra is one of the major transport routes. We didn't have a train system in those days, we had a water system.'

- Ron Jones

Traditional Owners journey for water rights

Pre 1788

A continent of many Nations

Prior to European settlement, First Peoples throughout Australia, used land and water without holding any formal title. The rights exercised by Australia's First Peoples over land and resources either prior to, or post settlement, should be considered property whether or not they are recognised by the State.

1835

Woi-wurrung Country (Melbourne and surrounding territories) Victoria

Europeans arrive on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country with devastating consequences for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung including successive disposessions. One of the clans survives settlement, the Wurundjeri Willam balluk clan.



1788

Terra Australis/ Australia

The British Crown declares the continent terra nullius. The experience of colonisation and legal implications of terra nullius set in train an enduring and catastrophic loss of land and water rights for A&TSI communities.

1989

Victoria

The Water Act 1989 is silent on Aboriginal/Indigenous people in either the purpose or body of the Act. Amongst its purposes are the orderly and equitable use of water resources.

1993

Australia

The Native Title Act 1993 includes water rights as a part of native title rights, but only rights to use water for domestic and personal purposes have been recognised by the courts. The Act does not provide for a right to negotiate over other water uses, cultural/environmental/commercial. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung do not have a Native Title agreement.

1998

The traditional homelands of 24 Nations (parts of southern NSW, VIC, SA, ACT).

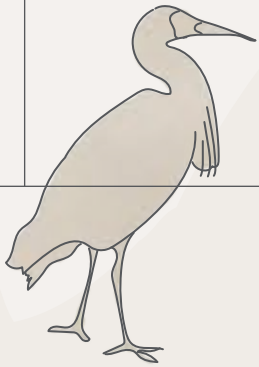
Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN) formed during the Yorta Yorta Native Title Case.

MLDRIN is an independent, representative confederation of Sovereign First Nations from the Southern Murray Darling Basin which advocates for the progression and recognition of Aboriginal water rights.

2004

Australia

The *National Water Initiative (NWI)* establishes a framework for a water market (i.e. the commodification of water) and the unbundling of land and water, which has had significant implications for the rights of Australia's First People. The NWI recognises in national water policy for the first time Indigenous rights to water. All States/Territories agree that substantial progress towards implementation will be achieved by 2010. This includes indigenous representation in water planning, for water plans to incorporate indigenous social, spiritual and customary objectives and strategies for achieving these objectives. The *Victorian Water Act 1989* was amended to allow for the separation of land and water. This has significant implications for Victorian Traditional Owners, leading to what commentators such as Katie O'Bryan call a 'double dispossession' of water rights.



2007

Australia

The *Water Act 2007* created the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) and committed to large scale water recovery for the environment under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan

The Echuca Declaration developed by MLDRIN asserts First Nations' Sovereignty, water rights, values and responsibilities, and contests ownership and management of water. It defines "Cultural Flows" as water entitlements that are legally and beneficially owned by the Nations of a sufficient and adequate quantity and quality to improve the spiritual, cultural, natural, environmental, social and economic conditions of those Nations.

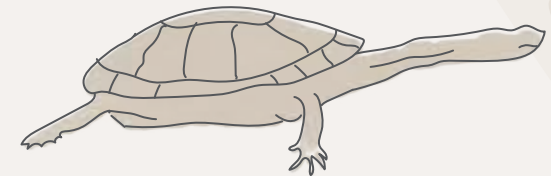
2006

Victoria

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, through their experience as Traditional Owners and the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation as a statutory authority, has formed the view that the *Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act* allows recognised Traditional Owners limited decision making on Country, specifically in regards to Cultural Heritage places defined by the Act. The Act allows for the registration of culturally significant sites, including expanses of water. The Act does not provide water rights or access to water for Traditional Owners.

The Act recognises the land immediately adjacent to named waterways as likely to have a higher potential for cultural heritage. This is presented spatially by a statewide heritage layer called Cultural Heritage Sensitivity. It is managed and updated by Aboriginal Victoria and accessible via ACHRIS, VicPlan and other government websites. It does not include registered intangible heritage or unknown or unregistered locations.

Unless on Crown land or covered by an area that has a known registered site, unnamed waterways are without a CHMP trigger and the process for naming is complex. Currently there is no single statutory authority or legislation that deals with the naming of waterways within Victoria.



2009

International/ Australia

Australia endorses *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP, 2007) with Articles 32 and 25 making direct reference to water. Specifically, the States need to consult in good faith in order to obtain free and informed prior consent prior to any project affecting territories, including the utilization/ exploitation of water and Indigenous people’s rights to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their lands (including waters) to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard.

2012

Australia

Basin Plan (Act, 2012). Chapter 10, Part 14 – “Indigenous values and uses”. 10.52; *Water resource plans must identify objectives of Indigenous people with respect to managing water resources, outcomes for water management are desired by Indigenous people, regard to be had to social, spiritual and cultural values of Indigenous people as they relate to water resources of the water resource plan area.* 10.53: Consultation and preparation of water resource plan.

2016

Western Australia

Fitzroy River Declaration

Historic statement by native title holders pledging to work together to protect and manage the Martuwarra Fitzroy River. The declaration resulted in the Government of Western Australia committing to a catchment management plan for the Fitzroy River and a national park over parts of the Fitzroy and Margaret Rivers.

2010

Victoria

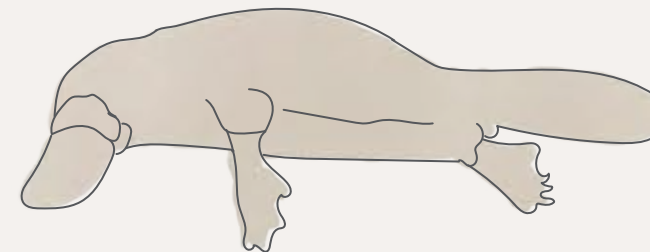
The *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* allows use of water for traditional purposes under some circumstances. This does not extend to commercial purposes, but is instead similar to the rights of non-Indigenous landholders under section 8 of the *Water Act 1989*, which provides that any person has the right to take water, free of charge, for that person’s domestic stock and use from a waterway or bore to which that person has access.

The *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* allows management agreements known as “Indigenous Land Use Agreements” with relevant authorities. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people currently do not have a settlement with the State.

Traditional Owners can only negotiate over Crown lands where Native Title has not been extinguished. The State can elect to sell Crown lands. Built forms and freehold title extinguish Native Title. Much like the rest of Victoria, the majority of land tenure on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung homelands is freehold. Crown land available for Native Title is highly limited.

The traditional homelands of NBAN membership (southern corner of Qld & northern NSW).

Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations (NBAN) was formed in 2010 as a confederation of Sovereign First Nations in the Northern Murray Darling Basin.



2016-2017

Victoria

The State introduces its first Aboriginal Water Policy as part of *Water for Victoria*. It acknowledged cultural values for water and the need for economic development, it doesn't formally commit to returning water entitlements to redress the imbalance.

The Corporation works with DELWP Planning and the Minister for Planning who facilitates the appointment of the Corporation to provide cultural guidance to the Yarra Ministerial Advisory Committee. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders table Bill which becomes the *Wilip gin Birrarung murron Act*.

2019

Victoria

The *Water and Catchment Legislation Amendment Act 2019* recognises Aboriginal values and knowledge in water resource and water planning, and enables Aboriginal participation in water/waterway planning and management, including reporting requirements for water and catchment authorities. Water planning must consider how to provide shared benefits for Aboriginal cultural values.

Recognised Traditional Owner groups given active role in development of the Central and Gippsland Sustainable Water Strategy.

2020

Victoria

The *Crown Land Legislation Amendment Act* (commenced September 2021). Prior to enactment neither DELWP or Victorian Fishing Authority consulted with any Victorian Traditional Owners despite some groups having either Native Title or Traditional Owner Settlements. This is inconsistent with the State's commitment to progress Treaty, the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework, and DELWP's Self Determination policy framework.

DELWP released *Pupungarli Marnmarnepu: Aboriginal Self-Determination Reform Strategy 2020-2025*, which commits to reconciliation, partnership, and self-determination for Traditional Owners in Victoria

Federal

New Closing the Gap outcome areas include Inland Waters. Specifically, "The inland waters target will measure progress towards securing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interests in water bodies inland from the coastal zone under state and territory water rights regimes. This will include data development to identify a nationally consistent measure for inland waters encompassing, for example, water licenses, water rights and water allocation plans). National Agreement on Closing the Gap (July 2020).

2018

Victoria

The Corporation develops a policy response to the Act and Community Vision, *Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung (Ancient Spirit and Lore of the Yarra)*.

Birrarung Council established with dedicated seats reserved for the Corporation as per the requirements of the Act.

The Corporation commences participation on the Yarra Strategic Plan and associated subcommittees.

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Wadawurrung Traditional Owners appointed to Waterways of the West Ministerial Advisory Committee to discuss policy and legislative options to protect the health and amenity of Maribyrnong and Werribee rivers and their catchments. At the time of publication, the position of both Traditional Owner corporations is that the best path forward is the immediate drafting of new place-based legislation, that protects and enhances the Maribyrnong and Werribee Rivers (including in stream water quality

and flows), their catchments and enshrines Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Wadawurrung Traditional Owner rights in law.

Victoria's new Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023 is released, which commits to self-determination, and among other things, the transfer of power and resources to communities.

Advancing the Treaty Process with *Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018* which is Australia's first piece of legislation pertaining to Treaty with the First People.

Federal

Changes to Federal Acts have resulted in changes to the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) purview. It is now able to fund water and sea programs including purchase of water entitlements, management tools for sea and water Country, and the development of Sea Country Planning.

To reflect these changes, the organisation is now known as the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC).

2017

Victoria

Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murron) Act 2017 acknowledges Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the sole Traditional Owners of the Birrarung. A "place based" piece of legislation, the Act embodies a "Right People for Country" approach.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart is produced at the National Constitutional Convention by 250 First Nations representatives from homelands across Australia and the Torres Strait.



Credit: David Hannah,
Yering billabongs

Priority projects

The plan sets out a series of priority projects and foundational actions to achieve the 10-year performance objectives. These projects recognise Aboriginal cultural values of the Birrarung and deliver stormwater and environmental water benefits for the river, including its billabongs. They are innovative, represent a shift toward collaborative management between authorities and partnership with the Traditional Owners, and will deliver significant change across the river corridor.

The Birrarung Rangers

The Birrarung Rangers project is an initiative of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation. It will ensure the ongoing involvement of the Traditional Owners in the day-to-day management of the Yarra River, Birrarung, and use of cultural land practices to care for their Country.

Led by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, the project will build on the existing work of their natural resource management team, establishing a pathway for building capacity and capability for Birrarung rangers. Once established, the rangers will provide important cultural and natural heritage management services into the future. The project will be implemented in three stages: co-design, piloting and evaluation.

Yering Billabongs

The Yering Billabongs project will see 100 hectares of the Yarra River floodplain restored to functional billabongs. Led by Yarra Ranges Shire Council, the project aims to safely reconnect the floodplain by creating ephemeral and semi-permanent water bodies to mimic natural habitats and provide water quality treatment, while also extending Spadoni's Reserve.

The first priority of the project is to reconnect remnant billabongs, improve floodplain conditions and water quality, establish riparian corridors, and enhance the existing values in adjoining reserves (Spadoni's and Murrup Brann). Project works will be staged to lay the foundation for future partnerships.

The convergence of three waterways in this location – Olinda Creek, Stringybark Creek and Muddy Creek – is an area of Aboriginal cultural heritage and working with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation will ensure these values can be protected.

By securing and enhancing these significant billabongs, this project will create opportunities for engagement, recreation, volunteering and appreciation of the river, setting the foundation for a strong relationship between the Yarra River and its communities for decades to come.

Yarra Flats

The Yarra Flats billabong complex, located between Bulleen and Heidelberg, is a historically significant area that continues to be important for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and features in their Dreamtime stories. As an area of high cultural, environmental and liveability value, the Yarra Flats billabongs have potential to deliver significant outcomes for the community and environment. This was reflected in the concept plan developed in 2013 by Parks Victoria in consultation with Banyule City Council, Melbourne Water and the community.

Melbourne Water has been provided funding to undertake a trial watering of the billabongs and design of a long-term solution for an onsite stormwater treatment wetland to supply water to these billabongs. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation are working with Melbourne Water on ecological and cultural aspects of this project.

In the longer term, the plan is to improve water quality and recreation, while providing opportunities to connect the community to the river and local environment of Yarra Flats.

Floatlands

Led by Melbourne City Council, this innovative project will trial floating wetlands on the Yarra River, within the heart of Melbourne.

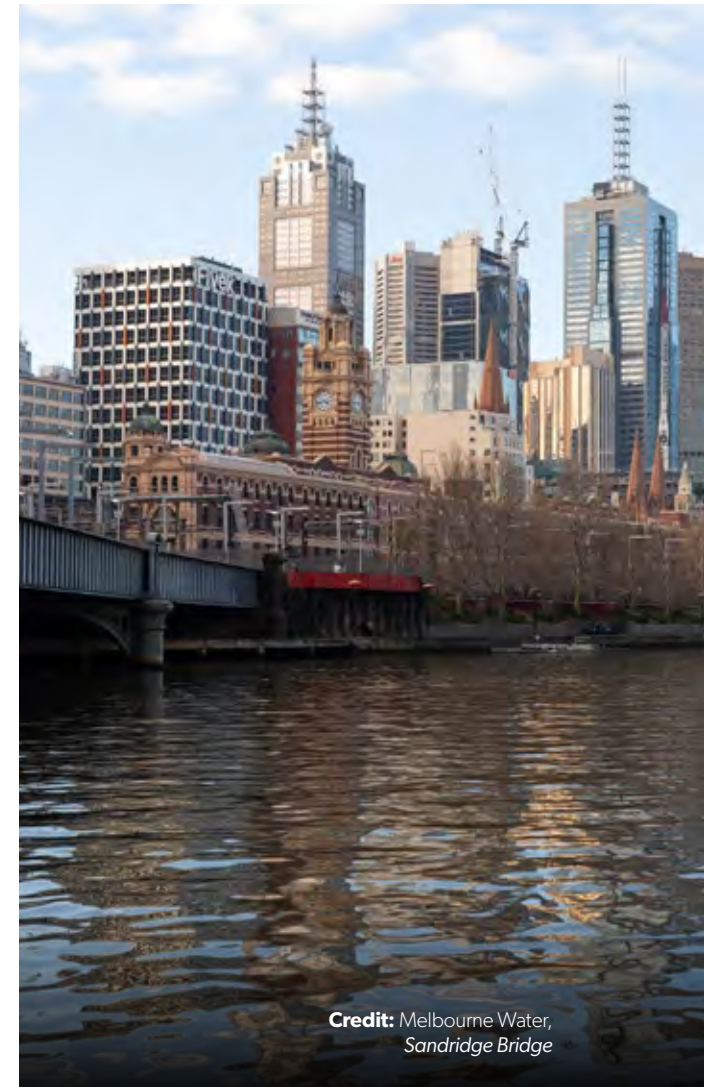
The project will support the community's connection to the river and the environment by providing a place of refuge and learning in the bustling centre of the city. While ensuring the continued safety in navigation on the river for commercial and recreational users, the wetlands will help improve water quality and provide habitat in areas of the river with concrete banks and limited biodiversity. Through collaboration between Melbourne City Council, Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, DELWP and recognised Traditional Owners, the project will highlight the iconic character of the river and provide an opportunity to incorporate native vegetation into areas of the river that have been urbanised.

The project will contribute towards an Aboriginal cultural narrative for the river, which will be developed in collaboration with the Traditional Owners. This will provide an insight into the character of a pre-colonisation river wetland.

The results of the trial will be used to determine whether floating wetlands should be installed in other parts of the river and in more permanent forms.

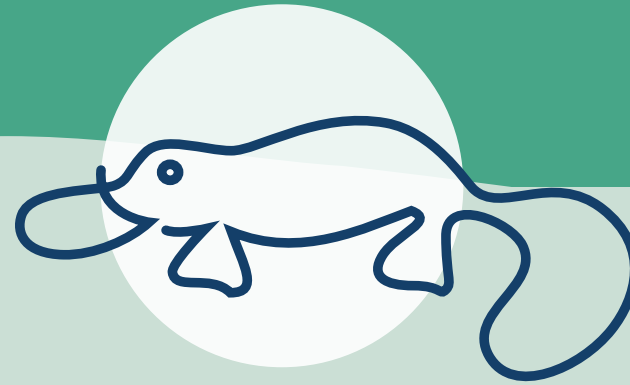
Polystyrene in the Yarra River

Led by the Yarra Riverkeeper, this project looks at the relative contribution of industries to polystyrene in the river. The project includes building a stronger evidence-based understanding of litter sources, creating educational material for community and business on the extent and impact of polystyrene pollution, improving engagement with communities, and building an open-source interactive polystyrene pollution layer into the Yarra Atlas (<https://www.yarraatlas.org.au/>).



Credit: Melbourne Water,
Sandridge Bridge

10-year performance objectives and collaborative actions



Performance Objective 1: **A healthy river and lands**

Improving the water quality of the Yarra River and protecting its land, floodplains and billabongs to achieve greater biodiversity.



Credit: Melbourne Water,
Platypus, Yarra River

THIS PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE WILL BE SUCCESSFUL IF:

- Terrestrial and aquatic habitats are improved, connected and maintained resulting in improved biodiversity, increased resilience and net gain in their overall extent and condition.
- Waterway condition/water quality is improved in accordance with targets set in the *Healthy Waterways Strategy*.
- Populations of native fish including threatened species are improved.
- Participation in land management activities by land owners, recognised Traditional Owners, managers and wider community increases, resulting in improved native vegetation, water quality and biodiversity.

With population growth, rising temperatures and decreasing rainfall, the health of the Yarra is under significant pressure. Building its resilience is crucial to delivering the Yarra River 50 Year Community Vision, which calls for the Yarra's health and integrity to be 'paramount and uncompromised'.

Water quality in the river must be improved and the surrounding land, floodplains and billabongs protected and enhanced to achieve greater biodiversity. The river is an important habitat for native fish, including the nationally significant Australian grayling, and the endangered Macquarie perch and Murray cod. More than 150 species of birds flourish along the Yarra, including the Australasian bittern, kookaburras, superb fairy-wrens, powerful owls (Australia's largest owl, listed as threatened in Victoria), and the critically endangered helmeted honeyeater (Victoria's state bird emblem).

The Yarra is also home to a myriad of Australian mammals, including platypus, koalas, echidnas, possums, sugar gliders, and a spectacular array of bats. There are over 15 species of frogs and many species of snakes.

Native vegetation along the river provides critical habitat in addition to protecting the river's water quality by filtering nutrients, reducing the inflow of sediment and stabilising its banks. Important and unique plants that live along the river include the rare Yarra gum, endangered Upper Yarra swamp gum, kangaroo grass and sweet bursaria.

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung have called for a change in how all Victorians think about and actively respect the Birrarung – not as a resource to be exploited but rather to recognise the complex, living system that is sensitive to its surrounds and a uniquely Victorian treasure. There is opportunity to work together to restore and improve the condition of the river and its lands for the future use and enjoyment of all.

Strategies and mechanisms for a healthy catchment

The Yarra Strategic Plan complements many of the existing government strategies and mechanisms, including the *State Environment Protection Policy (Waters)*, *Biodiversity Strategy 2037*, *Healthy Waterways Strategy 2018*, the *Regional Catchment Strategy*, the Yarra Integrated Water Management forum and the *Sustainable Water Strategy*. The plan does not take the place of other policies, plans and strategies; rather, it provides an overarching strategy to integrate and harmonise the many plans, regulations and investment programs of the various agencies and organisations to assist in the management of the river corridor.

While the plan focuses on achieving greater biodiversity in the river corridor, the *Healthy Waterways Strategy* sets out performance objectives to achieve targets for environmental values and conditions for waterways across the entire Yarra catchment. The strategy's Yarra Catchment Program was developed with the Yarra River 50 Year Community Vision at its heart, recognising that a healthy river requires a healthy catchment. The Yarra Strategic Plan aligns with the *Healthy Waterways Strategy*.

All the actions included were prioritised through extensive community consultation and collaboration with the Yarra Collaboration Committee. The actions will deliver on the plan's four performance objectives as well as the community vision.



Credit: Peter Robertson,
Growling Grass Frog

Water quality

Water quality is an important indicator of river health and is critical for the survival of aquatic habitat and ecosystems.

With increasing development to provide for Melbourne's growing population, there will be more hard surfaces such as concrete and asphalt. Rainwater that would previously have been absorbed by the landscape instead rushes into our rivers and creeks as stormwater, carrying with it litter and other pollutants. Stormwater can lead to poor water quality and changes to flow regimes, reducing aquatic diversity and threatening ecosystems.

Tributaries that feed into the Yarra River in the inner city reach include Gardiners and Moonee Ponds creeks. Each of these drain large urbanised catchments. There are also major drains in the inner-city reach that carry stormwater, litter and other pollutants into the river; in particular, the Elizabeth Street Main Drain that drains most of the Melbourne CBD and the Prahran Main Drain that drains much of South Yarra and Prahran.

The suburban reach has more drains and waterways that carry stormwater, litter and other pollutants into the Yarra River. These include Jumping, Andersons, Mullum Mullum, Diamond, Ruffey, Banyule, Salt, Koonung, Glass, Darebin and Merri creeks and Plenty River. These waterways run through catchments with a mix of existing urban and new greenfield development that contribute contaminants, litter and sediments to the Yarra. A prominent major drain that is known to contribute large quantities of rubbish is the Banksia Street Main Drain which services most of the shopping centre and hospital in Heidelberg.

Within the upper and lower rural reaches, rural and urban runoff enters the river via tributaries including Woori Yallock, Stringybark, Olinda and Brushy creeks. Runoff from agricultural lands may contain sediment, nutrients and pesticides, which can impact water quality in the river.

Traditional custodians of the Yarra, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung, have expressed deep concern about water quality and litter in the river.

'Rubbish, sediment and pollutants have built up and are choking the river, stopping the Birrarung from breathing clearly. The health of the Birrarung underpins the health of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, and the damage that has been done over the past two centuries is felt by all Wurundjeri people. We, along with many other Victorians, are worried that without a process of restoration and healing the pressures on the wellbeing of the river will become insurmountable.'

**– Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn
Birrarung, 2018**

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people have called for a whole of system approach to the removal of refuse and pollution. This will require the collaboration of all stakeholders and engagement with partners like DELWP, Melbourne Water, councils, Yarra Valley Water, South East Water, EPA, and non-government environmental organisations.

There are a number of programs that aim to reduce litter in the Yarra including public awareness campaigns, litter traps and clean-up days. Government agencies are working with stakeholders and community organisations to develop a consistent and coordinated approach to managing litter, including for example, funding the Yarra Riverkeeper to investigate polystyrene litter and prevention at the source. Greater education and awareness is required to ensure the community understands the impacts and sources of litter and other pollutants carried by stormwater.

Planning reforms and policy directions to improve stormwater management

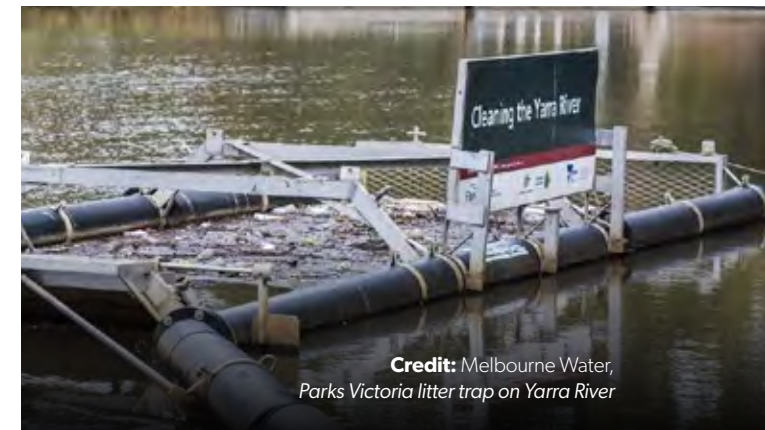
The Improving Stormwater Management Advisory Committee was established in 2018 to provide independent advice to the ministers for water and planning. The committee recommended short-term planning reforms and longer-term policy directions, with a focus on changing the planning system to improve stormwater management and encouraging integrated water management. This included new planning provisions that came into effect in October 2018 expanding the existing stormwater management requirements to commercial, industrial and residential multi-dwelling developments as well as public use developments. These stormwater management requirements previously only applied to new residential developments.

In line with the committee's recommendations, the EPA is also developing new guidance to improve capability and understanding for the design and assessment of urban stormwater treatments that will increase the removal efficiency for nutrients and pollutants.

The Healthy Waterways Strategy 2018 considers individual threats from stormwater, as well as cumulative threats such as the combination of warmer temperatures and changing intensity of stormwater flows. It also promotes reuse of stormwater for environmental, cultural, economic and social purposes.

Actions

1. Develop a place-based pilot project (in an area where stormwater is threatening the Yarra's health and amenity) to explore innovative re-use of stormwater:
 - use stormwater for urban greening, protecting and enhancing the environment
 - identify opportunities where potable water is being used for watering purposes, and can be substituted with suitably treated stormwater.
2. Implement a Yarra-specific stormwater awareness and behaviour change campaign targeted at reducing litter and contamination entering the river.
3. Increase education, awareness and regulatory compliance to reduce pesticides and chemicals entering the river (including the impacts of agricultural runoff on water quality in the upper and lower rural reaches).



Credit: Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria litter trap on Yarra River

Integrated water management (IWM)

As Melbourne's population continues to grow, it is estimated that by 2041 there will be around 140,000 additional dwellings in the Yarra River corridor – 90 per cent of these will be located in the inner city reach. Without better guidance and controls, development will increase stormwater runoff, impacting the health of the Yarra and compromising the river's landscapes and economic activities. Higher density living will increase demand for public open space as well as placing pressure on existing parklands.

Integrated water management (IWM) provides an opportunity for urban water management to address the impacts of climate change and urbanisation while delivering broader benefits to the community and the environment. Throughout the state, agencies are working together in IWM forums to identify projects and programs that manage water sustainably and enhance the resilience and liveability of our communities.



Credit: Melbourne Water,
Water sensitive urban design, inner city reach

Yarra Integrated Water Management (IWM) forum

The Yarra IWM forum, which was established in December 2017 recognises the importance of the Yarra River 50 Year Community Vision. The forum has pledged to work collaboratively to improve water system practices and deliver bold 21st century solutions for stormwater management, water sensitive blue and green infrastructure and sustainable land use planning that will ensure communities across the Yarra catchment remain healthy, prosperous and among the world's most liveable. The forum is developing their *Integrated Water Management Plan for the Yarra Catchment*, which will support investment in a range of projects, such as installing recycled water systems, stormwater harvesting schemes for urban irrigation and constructed wetlands to treat stormwater runoff and improve environmental conditions.

Actions

4. Develop the integrated water management plan (including bicultural approaches) for the Yarra catchment to optimise water cycle planning and reduce stormwater pollution into the river.

Septic tanks

Domestic wastewater is derived from bathrooms, kitchens, laundries and toilets. It includes human waste (containing pathogens), paper, soap, detergent residues and food scraps. Effective treatment and management of this wastewater is necessary to protect public health and the environment. It is managed either through discharge to a reticulated sewerage system or to an onsite wastewater treatment system – most commonly a septic tank.

Currently, across the whole of the Yarra catchment it is estimated that there are more than 30,000 septic tanks in various states of operation.

Septic systems can fail due to their age, neglect and lack of maintenance, resulting in risks to surface and ground water quality. Old systems that discharge untreated and partially treated wastewater to waterways continue to be a source of pollution. Septic tank effluent contains a wide variety of pollutants including pathogens, faecal bacteria, phosphorus, nitrogen, organic matter, suspended solids, pharmaceutical compounds and household detergents. All of these pose risks to the river.

Yarra Valley Water is the primary water and sanitation service provider in the Yarra catchment and has a critical role in improving wastewater management. Their Community Sewerage Program is targeted at properties that are not capable of onsite containment of sewage under the current council-led management framework. This includes properties with septic tanks in areas such as Eltham South, Woori Yallock, Launching Place and Warburton.

The Victorian Auditor-General's Office report Managing the Environmental Impacts of Domestic Wastewater

In 2018, an audit conducted by the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) found that, despite significant efforts, responsible agencies had not made enough progress to protect the environment and public health from poorly managed septic tanks. In general, property owners have a low understanding of their role in maintaining septic tanks, how to prevent their failure and best practice septic management. At the time Yarra Valley Water had 10,900 high-risk unsewered properties on its Community Sewerage Program, 7482 of which were in the Yarra Ranges Council.

The audit put forward a number of recommendations including the development of a standard risk assessment framework for septic systems. This included monitoring to track progress and to confirm that servicing options reduce environmental and public health risks.

To meet and exceed the recommendations of the VAGO audit, Yarra Ranges Shire Council has developed a *Draft Wastewater Management Plan 2020–2025* to assist in the critical assessment of sites that generate wastewater without the availability of reticulated sewer for disposal. Nillumbik Shire Council also revised its *Domestic Wastewater Management Plan* in 2019 to address recommendations in the VAGO audit.

In response to the audit, DELWP has established an Onsite Wastewater Steering Committee with Yarra Valley Water and the councils to action the recommendations.

Actions

5. Develop an integrated program to improve management of domestic wastewater in non-sewered areas (places serviced by septic tanks)
 - investigate the extent and location of wastewater pollution in the Yarra River and its tributaries to guide future projects and actions
 - develop and implement programs (education, compliance and infrastructure improvements) to target areas where domestic wastewater has the greatest impact on water quality.

Billabongs and wetlands

A 'billabong' is a waterbody left behind following a change in river course; it is a type of wetland usually still connected to the river and periodically flooded. 'Wetlands' are areas of permanent or temporary inundation supporting plants and animals that require wet conditions to complete their life cycle. Urban wetlands do not always need to be inundated by river flooding but can receive water from tributaries, local rainfall runoff and groundwater.

Billabongs and wetlands each have their own set of values, issues and threats, which need to be considered in establishing watering regimes.

The connection that a billabong has with the river is important because it not only provides the billabong with water, but allows the exchange of living organisms, animal and plant material and nutrients between the river and the billabong. Billabong flooding induces ecological responses including cues for plant recruitment. Yarra billabongs tend to be wet for 3–4 months of the year, followed by a drying period, which is just as important for their ecological health.

Urban development, stormwater, drainage and vegetation clearing, as well as the construction of levees and harvesting of water, means that river-fed billabongs and wetlands are not inundated as frequently and are not able to act as nursery and breeding areas for the many plants and animals previously dependent on them.

The Dreaming of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people links the billabongs, wetlands and swamps in the upstream forests, across the floodplains and out to the bay. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people have called for reestablishment of the billabong systems that are important cultural, spiritual and environmental features of the Yarra currently and historically.

There are over 21,000 wetlands and billabongs in the Yarra catchment. Many of these wetlands and billabongs have significant ecological and cultural values with deep histories going back many thousands of years. Today they are also highly valued for their recreational value as places to walk, cycle or connect with nature.

Water for the environment

Melbourne Water prepares and submits a seasonal watering proposal to the Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEWH). The Seasonal Watering Plan is issued by VEWH in July each year and guides environmental watering decisions in the Yarra. Melbourne Water, as a delivery partner, implements the seasonal watering plan.

Environmental water can be released from the Upper Yarra, Maroondah and O'Shannassy reservoirs to support ecological processes and environmental outcomes in downstream river reaches and wetlands. Environmental water delivery focuses on maintaining habitat for aquatic life and supporting the migration and breeding requirements of native fish and vegetation. The extent to which additional water (releases from reservoirs) is required to meet flow requirements varies between dry, average and wet years.

There are numerous billabongs throughout the Yarra that are drier than natural, due to river regulation and modifications to natural flow paths. Melbourne Water is implementing a landscape-scale approach to watering floodplain billabongs that will consider the ecosystem services provided by different billabongs, and indicate a watering program. The approach considers the ecological, cultural and liveability values of the billabongs.

Watering at Yering Backswamp and Annulus Billabong was considered a high priority in 2020–21. In previous seasons water has been made available for Banyule, Bolin Bolin, Burke Road and Willsmere billabongs.

The *Healthy Waterways Strategy* includes an objective to increase the environmental water reserve for the Yarra River by 10 GL by 2028 to meet ecological watering objectives and cover projected shortfalls in available water due to climate change. Plans for achieving the additional reserve will be considered as part of the *Central and Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy*, which is in preparation.

Actions

6. Investigate options to restore billabongs and wetlands on private and public land by using water for the environment to mimic natural water cycles and undertaking complementary land and water management works.
7. Work with partners, primarily Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, the Victorian Environmental Water Holder and Parks Victoria, to implement a landscape scale approach to improving the condition of wetlands and billabongs for the Lower Yarra billabongs. This must include the prioritisation of wetlands for water regime management and delivery of environmental water and cultural flows.
8. Support the aspirations of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people to pursue water justice for their people and Country
 - deliver water justice through water rights, participation in water management, and broader water and policy reform (as per the definition of water justice identified in the *National Cultural Flows Research Project 2020*)
 - deliver options to support water rights for the Birrarung such as the possibility of the reallocation of the former Amcor entitlement.
9. Work with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung to enhance knowledge, monitor and understand ecological change in prioritised Lower Yarra billabongs which have received environmental water.

Includes working with partners, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, North East Link and Transport for Victoria to protect the water levels in the Bolin Bolin billabongs from the impacts of potential groundwater drawdown. The North East Link Project, in accordance with its environmental performance requirements, is required to design the project to mitigate the changes to groundwater levels in the billabongs including undertaking pre-construction, construction and post construction groundwater monitoring.



Credit: Merrilyn Serong, Helmeted Honeyeater, Yellingbo Nature Conservation Area

Habitat connectivity

One-third of Victoria's animal species are found in the Yarra catchment, including a diverse range of fish, frogs, birds, macroinvertebrates and plants.¹⁰ A number of threatened species also call the Yarra home; this includes the helmeted honeyeater considered critically endangered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. There are only three small populations of the helmeted honeyeaters in the Yellingbo Nature Conservation Area. The Leadbeater's possum is also critically endangered and is found in the upper rural reach.

The loss and fragmentation of habitat threatens the conservation of biological diversity. Habitat links and corridors, both terrestrial and aquatic, can support increased biodiversity. These links provide habitat, can be used as pathways by animals and can allow species to move into isolated habitats to recolonise; for example, areas affected by bushfires. Habitat links also contribute to ecological processes such as seed dispersal and provide important social benefits for people as places for recreation.

While there are areas of high biodiversity, in many locations the Yarra's ecological value has been depleted by land clearing, farming and grazing and later through urban development.

In the suburban reach, the Yarra has been highly modified; however, it flows through a near-continuous network of parklands that provide critical habitat and a connection to nature.

In the inner city reach the land along the river has been highly modified, with much of the native vegetation removed. With the expected population growth and development in this reach over the next 10 years, it is vital that parklands are extended and maintained to protect native species, strengthen urban biodiversity and improve liveability (see Performance Objective 3 for actions to improve parklands).

Rehabilitating native vegetation along the river can enhance habitat connectivity for native flora and fauna and improve human health and wellbeing.

Education and awareness raising campaigns can be used to encourage landholders, river users and visitors to protect, maintain and enhance native vegetation along the river. There is also the option of using land use planning controls and directions and incentive programs to increase the width and quality of vegetation to improve connectivity between habitats on both public and private land.

Plans to restore habitat corridors and improve our natural environment

To address the trend of deterioration in riparian vegetation, the Yarra River has been allocated a 10-year priority vegetation plan in the *Healthy Waterways Strategy 2018* to restore habitat corridors by increasing vegetation extent and quality along waterways. This includes revegetation of a continuous riparian buffer at least 20 metres wide on each side of the river and its tributaries. Habitat suitability models for instream values (aquatic macroinvertebrates, fish, and platypus) were also used in combination with spatial conservation prioritisation software (Zonation) to inform planning of other works, such as stormwater management, for protection and improvement of aquatic biodiversity in the Yarra and its tributaries.

In 2017, the state government released *Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037*, a plan to stop the decline of native plants and animals by improving the natural environment. DELWP have developed tools and systems, regulations and standards, and collaborative planning processes to support implementation, which are relevant to implementation of the Yarra Strategic Plan.

Actions

10. Undertake vegetation works to strengthen terrestrial and aquatic habitat corridors to improve biodiversity. Revegetation should include species identified as culturally important to the Traditional Owners and where feasible works should be delivered by Traditional Owners groups. Priority areas include:
 - Yarra Junction to Healesville billabongs and wetlands
 - Healesville to Yering billabongs and wetlands
 - Yering to Warrandyte landscape protection
 - Kinglake to Yarra biodiversity corridor.
 (Note: this action is supported through establishing areas for protection, which are documented in the land use framework [see Part 2, page 71].)
11. Increase and enhance the extent and quality of urban greening in the inner city reach on public and private land downstream of Gardiners Creek to combat air and noise pollution, create habitat for local wildlife and reinvigorate local communities appreciation of nature and the environment.
12. Follow the goals and principles as set out in *Protecting Victoria's Environmental Biodiversity 2037* for habitat and species conservation planning. This includes using associated decision support tools, *Nature Print* and *Strategic Management Prospects* as an addendum to the plan's decision-making framework, and incorporating environmental net gain when planning for whole of river biodiversity outcomes.

DELWP and Wurundjeri Water Unit will work together to develop a bicultural approach to assessing net gain on their Country, considering cultural values and practices. They will explore ways to integrate this approach to support the Birrarung as a single living entity. Resourcing to be provided for Wurundjeri Woiwurrung participation.
13. Explore and support the use of incentive mechanisms to build skills, knowledge and capacity in restoring landscape function, protecting biodiversity, increasing nutrient and water cycling and building soil carbon for resilient enterprises that can mitigate climate-related pressures.

14. Promote the use of conservation covenants to protect priority conservation values on private land as well as enhancing habitat connectivity and, where possible, incorporating Traditional Owner aspirations and involvement.
15. Plan and undertake terrestrial and aquatic flora and fauna assessments to ascertain where opportunities exist to reintroduce and restore native plants and animals, including species that are important to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung as totems, seasonal indicators and resources required for ceremony and other uses. Selection of plants and planting methods will also consider impacts of climate change and opportunity to increase resilience.
16. Provide resourcing to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to develop and pilot flora and fauna assessments as critical planning tools for future management of the catchment. This will require external agencies providing access to relevant data.

'A time-lapsed, Bunjil-eyed view of the river over tens, hundreds, thousands of years would show a living thing expanding (flood) and contracting (drought), changing beds, looping cutoffs and billabongs, running faster or slower, in different unpredictable patterns.'

– **Kristen Otto** author of *Yarra, a Diverting History of Melbourne's Murky River*¹¹

Native fish

The Yarra River, including its estuary and wetlands, supports relatively healthy populations of native fish with value scores of moderate to very high shown in the *Healthy Waterways Strategy 2018*. There are 16 native fish species, including threatened species Australian mudfish and Australian grayling. Freshwater species such as Macquarie perch, Murray cod and river blackfish, and estuarine species mulloway, bream and estuary perch are highly valued by the fishing community.

To maintain healthy populations, fish rely on variations in natural water flows, including floods or 'freshes', to trigger breeding, spawning and migration. A large number of species, such as Australian grayling and the short-finned eel, need to be able to move between the ocean and freshwater habitats to complete critical stages of their life cycle, such as breeding. The structure of waterways is also vital to fish because they need deep pools for resting, undercut banks and logs under which to hide, and streamside vegetation as an important food source.

As outlined in the *Healthy Waterways Strategy 2018*, improvements to environmental conditions, particularly riparian vegetation, water quality, environmental flows, stormwater management and ensuring the Dights Falls fishway is effective, will ensure a score of very high for native fish in the long term.

Plans to protect native fish and restore recreational fisheries

The *Freshwater Fisheries Management Plan 2018*, provides a state-wide approach to build better recreational fisheries by bringing together fish, water and land management activities.

Ongoing education and awareness campaigns will improve understanding of the river environment, regulations, fish stocks and other fisheries-related matters.

A key measure of the success of the plan will be the extent to which its priorities are supported and implemented by the Victorian Fisheries Authority, recreational fishers, Traditional Owners and other government agencies.

Actions

17. Invest in habitat restoration and environmental watering to:
 - increase native fish in the Yarra River, its tributaries and billabongs
 - support a healthy ecosystem
 - improve opportunities for recreational fishing and cultural practices.
18. Work in partnership with angling groups to develop and implement a community education program on protection of native fish (especially for Macquarie perch and other threatened species). This will include promoting bag limits and areas where the taking of native fish is prohibited and increasing participation in monitoring and assessment programs.
19. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to lead and explore the feasibility of research projects identifying current extents, habitat needs, and best practice recovery programs for culturally valued freshwater aquatic species, which are in decline in the greater Melbourne region. This includes species such as river blackfish, freshwater crayfish and short-finned eel.

Pest plants and animals

Invasive plants and animals cause environmental, economic and social impacts on both private and public land. Pest plants can severely decrease the productive capacity of land, alter water flow, lead to erosion and provide harbour for pest animals. They can also out-compete and displace native plants and lead to loss of biodiversity. Pest animals impact vegetation through grazing, trampling and other disturbance factors. Predators such as foxes, cats and dogs threaten the survival of native animals such as lyrebirds and platypus.

Pest plants, including declared noxious weeds and native plants classified as environmental weeds, are plants growing outside of their normal range that lack natural environmental controls. This allows them to quickly establish and take over areas of native vegetation such as bushland and forests, along waterways or native grasslands.

There are 47 prohibited, 51 controlled and 31 restricted plants (declared noxious weeds) listed under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* for the Port Phillip and Westernport region, which land owners, both public and private, have a legal responsibility to control. There are no formal regulations for control of native plants defined as environmental weeds.

Weeds of a high priority for control and eradication along the Yarra include blackberry, St John's wort, willow, English ivy, spear thistle, pittosporum, African boxthorn, serrated tussock and honeysuckle.

There are a number of local strategies and programs implemented by Melbourne Water, councils and other agencies for weed management. These generally aim to reduce the spread of established weeds on roadsides, council land, other public land and private land; avoid new weed species establishing; and reduce noxious and environmental weed infestations.

Community education is another focus of local councils for managing weeds. This includes providing information to identify common garden and agricultural plants that are environmental weeds as well as methods to eradicate them, and to suggest alternative native species for gardeners to use.

Pest animals that are a high priority in the Yarra catchment include rabbits, foxes, feral goats, wild dogs, cats and deer. Currently, sambar, fallow and red deer are of particular concern in the upper and lower rural reach of the river.

Deer trample vegetation, snap shrubs and young saplings, ring-bark trees by 'antler rubbing', and make large wallows in wet areas. They also have negative impacts on agriculture, including fouling of pasture, crops and water, spread of weed and soil borne diseases, and damage to infrastructure including fences and nets. Deer are also potential vectors of livestock disease such as foot-and-mouth, and parasites that can contaminate drinking water reservoirs, e.g. *Cryptosporidium*.

Carp, an introduced fish, is a major factor in the decline of native fish. They are present in high numbers in the Yarra and are a declared noxious aquatic species.

Although authorities involved in managing the river have pest control programs, there is room for better coordination between them and with the Traditional Owners and private landowners.

This plan aligns with the government's invasive plants and animals policy framework, which adopts a risk-management approach to reduce the impact of invasive species. The aim is to prevent the entry of new high-risk invasive species, eradicate those high-risk species that are at an early stage of establishment, contain where possible species that are beyond eradication and protect key assets from the impact of widespread species.



Credit: Reg Gordon, wild deer.

Investigations and initiatives focusing on the management of deer

The *Victorian Deer Management Strategy* was released in October 2020. It sets out a long-term coordinated plan to control wild deer numbers and reduce the threat they pose to the environment, farming, public safety and Aboriginal cultural heritage.

As part of the strategy, an outer suburban management plan will be developed in partnership with local councils, Parks Victoria and Traditional Owners to identify effective measures to reduce the impacts of wild deer and make the roads safer.

The strategy is being delivered under the *Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037* and is also a commitment under the *Sustainable Hunting Action Plan*, complementing the government's expansion of the areas that deer can be recreationally hunted, and complementing the legislative changes allowing hunters to have wild deer butchered for personal use.

The strategy recognises that effective deer management requires a partnership approach between all levels of government, Traditional Owners, conservation groups, catchment managers, the hunters, the commercial deer harvest industry and the community.

Actions

20. Adopt a multi-agency collaboration and investment approach to management of invasive animals and plants in the Yarra corridor:
 - quantify and measure numbers and impact of invasive animals and plants
 - evaluate the effectiveness of existing control programs
 - coordinate the delivery of new programs and projects to control and eradicate where possible invasive animals and plants in the Yarra corridor
 - set targets for control programs over the next 10 years and monitor progress towards their achievement.
21. Build capacity of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Narrap ('Country') team to manage and eradicate deer in the Yarra catchment.



Credit: Dan Harley,
Critically endangered Leadbeater's Possum

Climate change

Victoria's climate has been undergoing rapid changes in recent decades and climate change has become a critical issue for Victoria and the world. The effects of climate change will continue well into the future impacting on temperature, rainfall, frost, sea level rise and extreme weather events including fire and flood.

Regional climate model projections, under a high emissions scenario, indicate that Victoria's average annual temperature may increase up to 2.4 degrees Celsius by mid-century compared to 1986-2005. Under a medium emission scenario, average temperatures may increase by up to 1.8°C.¹²

With conditions progressively becoming hotter and drier, during summer more people are likely to seek refuge from the heat near the river and in its parklands. There will be more stress on waterways with higher risks of algal blooms and reduced dissolved oxygen levels. Warmer and drier conditions will also affect the distribution of plants and animals and their habitats as they adjust to the changes.

Regional climate modelling also shows that, over time, annual rainfall totals are likely to decline, more so under high emissions scenarios, with the greatest decreases in the cooler seasons. Greater Melbourne's rainfall is naturally highly variable, and this natural variability will continue to dominate the rainfall over the next decade. Under a high emissions scenario, by mid-century median annual rainfalls are projected to decrease by 8 per cent, and 6 per cent under medium emissions.

With the ongoing change in Victoria's climate, the risk of bushfires is increasing. Higher temperatures and drier conditions will increase the frequency of days of extreme fire danger. The Yarra runs through landscapes that are at extreme risk for bushfires, especially in the upper reaches of the river. These bushfires not only threaten communities and their livelihoods but also Melbourne's water supply.

Flood events are predicted to become more common due to climate change, and the area of land inundated is expected to increase due to higher intensity rainfall and rising sea levels. The increasing frequency of flood events in the Yarra catchment may pose hazards to people, infrastructure and the delivery of essential services. Flood inundation and extreme storm events can cause substantial damage to property and infrastructure as well as place the health and safety of people at risk.

The Victorian Government is taking ambitious yet achievable action on climate change to safeguard our natural environment and living cultural heritage. Government action is driven by the *Climate Change Act 2017* and its long-term emissions reduction target of net zero by 2050. Victoria's *Climate Change Strategy* sets the pathway for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and building resilience of natural and built systems. This includes actions and priorities to reduce Victoria's risk and harness the opportunities posed by climate change.

Increased education, awareness and science-informed planning will help in understanding climate change risks and the adaptive capacity of the river. Planning should include practical actions to manage risks, involve communities and strengthen the resilience of the river and its surrounds.

Strategies and initiatives to manage the effects of climate change

The Victorian Government provided funding for the local development of six regional climate change adaptation strategies across Victoria including development of a *Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for Greater Melbourne*. These strategies provide an opportunity to identify and prioritise actions over the next five years. The government is also developing seven state-wide sector adaptation action plans in parallel to the regional strategies. These plans will help deliver the five-year adaptation priorities outlined in Victoria's *Climate Change Strategy*.

Local councils and statutory authorities have also prepared climate strategies and are implementing initiatives to better manage the effects of climate change and adaptation to changing climatic conditions. For Melbourne Water, priorities include reducing greenhouse gas emissions and investing in research to understand the impacts on stream flows and the species and processes that depend on them. This research is informing environmental watering programs that are helping, for example, to protect drought refuges for native fish and other aquatic species.

Actions

22. Deliver an interactive education program along the river corridor to enhance awareness and understanding around climate change and the adaptive capacity of the river.
23. Map key risks to the Yarra for climate change and develop a climate change adaptation and resilience action plan. The plan will inform responses to extreme weather events including, heat waves, drought, flood and fire, and promote land management approaches such as cultural burning to mitigate risks and assist recovery.



Credit: State Library of Victoria,
Aboriginal Australians camped near the Yarra River



Performance Objective 2:
A culturally diverse corridor

Acknowledging, protecting and commemorating the rich heritage of the Birrarung and its stories.

THIS PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE WILL BE SUCCESSFUL IF:

- Sites and areas of cultural and historical significance, as well as historical river and land based practices, are increasingly protected, recognised and celebrated.

The Yarra River has been central to the lives of Traditional Owners for many thousands of years and, more recently, those who settled in Melbourne after colonisation in 1835. Because of this intertwined history, the river holds heritage values that are both tangible (embodied in physical places) and intangible (such as cultural practices, knowledge and oral traditions). To preserve the cultural and historical significance of the river, agencies and private landowners must protect, conserve and manage the river's cultural heritage values.

The Yarra's history is deeply connected to the history of its Traditional Owners. Evidence of human settlement and land management along the Yarra can be found in stone artefact scatters, scarred trees, hearths, middens and fish traps. Numerous places along the river hold great cultural and spiritual significance for the Traditional Owners.

The Yarra also has had a rich and varied history since colonisation, with remnants of the early colony including the port and other relics of maritime trade and industry found along the river. It is vital we identify and record the cultural heritage values to ensure they are protected for future generations.

Aboriginal cultural heritage

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung lived in the Yarra Valley for tens of thousands of years before British colonisation. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people call the Yarra River 'Birrarung', meaning place of mists and shadows, and the river marks the centre of Wurundjeri Country.

During this time, the geomorphology of the Yarra River and Port Phillip Bay changed dramatically. An early colonist, William Hull, recorded the following from 'the Yarra and Coast tribes': 'the river (Yarra) once went out at the Heads, but that the sea broke in, and that Hobson's Bay, which was once a hunting ground, became what it is'.¹³

At the point of British assertion of sovereignty, Bunurong-speaking groups articulated identity in terms of coastal water systems such as bays, estuaries and coastal streams. This can be distinguished from Woiwurrung-speaking groups, who articulated identity in relation to inland water systems such as the Yarra River system.

There are many known Aboriginal cultural heritage sites along the river. One such site for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung is Bolin Bolin billabongs in Bulleen. During eel breeding season the billabongs acted as a gathering site for members of the Kulin Nation. The billabongs are still highly valued for their ecological, cultural and recreational attributes.

The original loop in the river (west of today's Docklands), which was removed in 1886, is also a known Aboriginal cultural heritage site due to its extensive low-lying wetland that provided a source of food, fibre and medicine. The confluence of the Maribyrnong and Yarra rivers is also recognised as a meeting place for Kulin groups.

The river's history and heritage are documented in numerous sources. However, no single heritage assessment exists for the Yarra River, Birrarung, and information contained in council studies is inconsistent. Pressure for new urban development may threaten the protection of these important places.

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation has commenced stage one of a mapping project to identify culturally significant landscapes along the river. Some information from this work will be shared publicly, while some sites will remain part of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people's cultural knowledge. Further mapping is dependent on the availability of funding.

To deliver a culturally diverse corridor and share the stories of the river, Aboriginal heritage assessments and interpretive and educational programs are needed that involve all Traditional Owners connected to the river.

All Aboriginal cultural heritage is protected under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*. The Act provides mechanisms for protecting and managing Aboriginal cultural heritage during land use and development activities. This includes cultural heritage management plans, which are required for high impact activities proposed in areas of cultural heritage sensitivity.

Actions

- 24.** Develop or, where existing, enhance interpretive and educational programs for sites that have Aboriginal cultural heritage values and historic heritage values. Potential sites are:
- Collingwood Children's Farm
 - Dights Falls and Merri Creek confluence
 - Bolin Bolin Billabong
 - Brushy Creek confluence.
- 25.** Deliver interactive educational programs (e.g. signage, and smart device applications) that include storytelling about the rich culture and heritage of the Yarra. Indigenous cultural intellectual property agreements must be put in place for use of Traditional Owner intellectual property and programs.
- 26.** Support a program of cultural value studies by the Traditional Owners for the Yarra, Birrarung, and its lands.
- 27.** Explore with the Traditional Owners the possibility of registering the Yarra as a cultural landscape.

Historic heritage

Prior to colonisation, the Yarra River was radically different from what it is today. The river was originally tidal up to a basalt ledge known as 'the falls' (where Queens Bridge now stands). These falls acted as a barrier to the saline tidal flows, meaning a permanent source of fresh water could be found upstream of the rocks.

In the early 1830s, colonists arrived and began to use the river for agriculture as well as shipping and trade. Enterprize Park, on the north bank of the river, is where the first Europeans landed to start the development of Melbourne. The first bridge across the river was Princes Bridge, built in 1844 and later replaced with the current bridge in 1888. The 1850s saw the beginning of the Victorian gold rush with significant changes to Melbourne. At Warrandyte, where gold was first discovered in 1851, the river was extensively mined, creating the Pound Bend Tunnel and the Big and Little Peninsula Tunnels above Warburton.

Driven by industrialisation and the importance of shipping, major infrastructure works took place on the lower part of the river in the late 1800s. The Coode Canal was constructed in 1886 to improve access for large ships to Melbourne's main docks. This included the creation of Victoria Harbour, which was dug out from swampy land in what we now call Docklands.

There are many visible reminders of the Yarra's rich maritime history including the goods sheds, cranes, dry docks, warehouses wharves and vaults dotted along the lower part of the river. The Polly Woodside tall ship and museum in South Wharf provides insights into the importance of shipping to the growth of Melbourne. This includes the Duke and Orr's Dry Dock, built in 1875 and largely reconstructed in 1901. This large timber-lined dock currently houses the Polly Woodside and is one of the few surviving relics of a once-extensive ship building and repair industry that stretched along the south bank of the river.



Credit: Heritage Council Victoria,
Polly Woodside tall ship and museum, South Wharf

Other significant sites linked to the Yarra's maritime history include the turning basin and the heritage-listed Mission of Seafarers building. The turning basin just downstream of the rocky outcrop forming the Yarra Falls and roughly in line with William Street was the furthest point that ships could navigate up the Yarra River. In 1857, the Victorian Seaman's Mission was founded to support seafarers working far from their homes. This building continues to serve seafarers coming to Melbourne today.

Trade by sea was, and is still, crucial to Melbourne's economic prosperity. Today, the mouth of the river is used for container shipping by the Port of Melbourne. The inner city reach, which is inaccessible to larger watercraft, has seen increased use for both transport and recreational boating (including kayaking, canoeing and rowing).

The Yarra's maritime history has been acknowledged and captured in policies and actions in the City of Melbourne's *Yarra River Birrarung Strategy*, which aims to deliver a culturally diverse corridor and share the stories of the river. Similarly the Yarra Strategic Plan supports working together to bring this history to life through heritage assessments and interpretive signage and storytelling in the inner city reach.

Historical records associated with the Yarra provide important expressions of Victoria's identity and experience. They help tell a story, a celebration of past and ongoing human endeavour and activity, provide a sense of community identity, and reflect a diversity of values and experiences. Loss of these places, and the loss of knowledge about them, diminishes communities.

Actions

28. Develop a holistic heritage assessment to understand historic heritage values using the Yarra River (Birrarung) Cultural Heritage Scoping Study thematic framework.



Credit: Melbourne Water,
Smoking ceremony at launch of the 50 Year Community Vision



Credit: Melbourne Water,
Kayaking in the Yarra River



Performance Objective 3:
Quality parklands for a growing population

Improving the river's parklands to support community wellbeing and strengthen the relationship between the Yarra River, its community and visitors.

THIS PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE WILL BE SUCCESSFUL IF:

- Opportunities for access to the river, community connection, recreation and cultural awareness are increased and enhanced whilst improving and protecting biodiversity.
- Areas of parklands are increased to improve habitat connectivity and reduce fragmentation.
- Traditional Owners are increasingly involved in decision-making and management of parklands on their Country.

Birrarung is central to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people's identity; it forms part of their Dreaming. A life source, the relationships between the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and Birrarung are layered – spiritual, ancestral, social, cultural and economic. The river has shaped Country and the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung world view. The Yarra has also shaped Melbourne, while the city and its surroundings have transformed the river.

The corridor of parks, reserves and open spaces along the Birrarung are a world-class natural and cultural landscape treasured by Victorians. The river weaves through the heart of the parklands, connecting communities, histories, activities, culture, art and landscape into one living and integrated natural entity.

These parklands contain a complex mix of ecosystems, including wetlands, billabongs, floodplains, creeks, tributaries, tree gorges, woodlands, rainforests, coastal marshes and an estuary.

As well as wilderness areas, the parklands include landscaped areas, playgrounds, sporting facilities, gardens, rail trails, national and state parks, and many places of environmental and cultural significance.

The parklands help secure Melbourne's world-class liveability, providing a strong connection between the health of the natural environment and human wellbeing. People obtain many benefits from being in the outdoors, including physical, psychological, cultural and social health and wellbeing. The parklands provide places for exercise, relaxation, play, learning and discovery. They provide respite from the pressures of urban living, and are often the first and most frequent contact that children have with nature.

Vision for the Yarra's 'Birrarung parklands'

Representatives of the Yarra Collaboration Committee developed the following vision for the Yarra's 'Birrarung parklands' drawing on community consultation and stakeholder input.

In 2070...The globally renowned Birrarung parklands are a sacred, living and internationally important ecological asset for Melbourne.

They are celebrated for weaving stories of Melbourne's history and people along a historic waterway through cultural heritage landscapes. Visitors to the river connect to its spirit and to each other.

The parklands are visited for refuge, recreation, learning, volunteering and livelihood. Contemporary and universally designed visitor infrastructure enable outstanding experiences that connect people to, and along, the Yarra.

These experiences make a significant contribution to the health and wellbeing of everyone in the community – regardless of age, gender, cultural background or socio-economic status.

The parklands are a place where people work together to protect natural and cultural values. Traditional Owner knowledge and practice is central to the management of cultural heritage, ecological health and biodiversity.

The rich heritage of the parklands is acknowledged, protected and commemorated. Visitor access is carefully managed to ensure protection of key sites, and education and interpretation deepens the connection of the community to a sacred living Birrarung.

Declaration of the Greater Yarra Urban Parklands

Under section 59(1) of the Act the declaration of the Greater Yarra Urban Parklands enables parklands in the vicinity of the Yarra River to be given a common identity and to be treated as one living and integrated natural asset of state significance. Declarations are intended to ensure the holistic management and protection of the river and its associated public lands, focusing on Crown and freehold government land parcels that are ecologically and strategically significant to the waterway. These declared parklands are protected from planning scheme amendments that change the zoning of that land so that the land may be used in a way that is inconsistent with the Yarra Strategic Plan, by requiring such amendments to be ratified by Parliament.

In February 2018, declarations were made for parklands between Punt Road, South Yarra, and the urban growth boundary in Warrandyte (see land use maps in Part 2). Criteria for declaration of these land parcels are that they are publicly accessible, of environmental significance and have frontage or direct relationship to the river. Additional land may be added or removed from the Greater Yarra Urban Parklands subject to provisions in the Act.

Living parklands

Parklands are critical for maintaining biodiversity in urban areas. The indigenous vegetation in these parklands provides critical habitat for native animals, supports fragile plant species, and helps protect water quality and flow in waterways.

The parklands are home to the iconic platypus and other mammals including koalas, echidnas, possums, sugar gliders, bats, bandicoots, kangaroos and wallabies. There are many species of frogs, lizards and snakes. Over 190 species of birds inhabit the parklands, with insectivores, honeyeaters, birds of prey, seedeaters, songbirds and waterbirds using the parklands for feeding, nesting and breeding.

The parklands provide critical links for biodiversity, with corridors that run along the many tributaries that flow into the Yarra. These biodiversity corridors allow species to travel between areas to find resources such as food and water and for breeding. Fragmentation of these corridors is a key risk for the survival of many species of plants and animals.

Recreation and wellbeing

The Yarra's extensive open spaces and parklands make a significant contribution to the physical, emotional and social health and wellbeing of Victorians. The proximity of the river's parklands to the city and suburbs means that these urban and peri-urban parks represent, for many people, their first and most regular contact with nature and the outdoors.

The parklands provide equitable access to natural open space and connection to the environment. Studies have confirmed that Traditional Owners' perception of their own or their community's health is closely intertwined with the health of their Country. There is central importance of land to their identity, spirituality, community and culture; in short, 'healthy Country promotes healthy people'.¹⁴

The parklands are a destination for international and local tourists and visitors, offering a diverse array of passive and active recreational activities, including sightseeing, walking, running, cycling, events, picnicking, BBQs, climbing, horse riding, bird watching, swimming, rowing, kayaking, canoeing, boating, fishing, golf, photography, nature appreciation, art and culture appreciation, camping and socialising. The parklands also support new and emerging recreational activities including electric bikes and skateboards, and flying of drones.

The Main Yarra Trail is part of an extensive network of regional shared trails that accommodate multiple user groups (particularly pedestrians and cyclists), are mostly off-road, have a relatively long and continuous length and have a regional scale, purpose and impact. The Main Yarra Trail begins in Abbotsford and follows the Yarra through Fairfield, Rosanna, Templestowe and Eltham with a proposed future extension to Warrandyte.

The *Eastern Regional Trails Strategy* (2018) recommends that councils and other land management authorities work together towards an interconnected and well-used trail network. The strategy outlines opportunities to improve condition, usability, safety and connectivity. This includes upgrades and extensions to the Main Yarra Trail, the new rail trail from Lilydale through to Yarra Glen and Healesville, and development of a Yarra River paddle trail between Yarra Glen and Abbotsford.

Major parkland attractions near the city include Southbank Promenade, Royal Botanic Gardens, National Gallery of Victoria, Federation Square, Birrarung Marr, Yarra River cruising, Abbotsford Convent, Collingwood Children's Farm, and the Studley Park and Fairfield boathouses.

Yarra Park, which includes the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), Melbourne and Olympic Parks and other stadiums, epitomises the sporting focus of many of the Yarra's parklands. Further upstream, the parklands provide a mosaic of sports ovals and playing fields for both

community and school-based sports. The wider sections of the river downstream of Dights Falls are also used for rowing, with school and club rowing sheds scattered along the banks from Hawthorn through to Southbank.

Yarra Park is culturally important for Traditional Owners. It is a gathering place and retains tangible culture in the form of a remnant scar tree. There are numerous other trees in the parklands providing cultural importance. Examples include the Corroboree Tree in Burnley Park, Richmond, and Yingabeal in the grounds of Heide Museum of Modern Art, Bulleen.

There are many places in the parklands that offer space for family enjoyment and individual reflection, such as the sculpture park at Heide Museum of Modern Art and the AIDS Memorial Garden behind the former Fairfield Hospital in Yarra Bend Park.

There are a significant number of commercial businesses providing recreational, entertainment and wellbeing services for visitors across the parklands. This includes over 100 tourist operators licensed by Parks Victoria providing river cruises, sight-seeing, horse trail riding, mountain biking, rock climbing and outdoor education activities. The Yarra also represents an idyllic location for nature appreciation activities including photography, painting and bird watching.

A large number of people participate in environmental stewardship activities and citizen science projects that contribute to their wellbeing and community connection. Friends groups and volunteers are strong park advocates and make significant contributions to the parklands. They undertake important conservation work including revegetation, weeding, trail maintenance and environmental monitoring.

Caring for Country and co-governance of parklands with Traditional Owners

Traditional Owners have cared for Country throughout time. Through embedding Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation in the shared governance of the river and its parklands, their continued role as custodians of their Country is recognised.

The *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murron) Act 2017* calls for collaborative management of the Yarra River corridor. The Act implicitly speaks to the delivery of the social, cultural, economic, environmental, and heritage outcomes that the Act intended for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, as well as the educational outcomes, to which the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people aspire and which are outlined in *Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung* (Ancient Spirit and Lore of the Yarra).

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people consider the entirety of Country a cultural landscape, and have articulated a number of locations along the Birrarung as significant (as shown on maps in Part 2). This is not a full list of significant places – only what was agreed to be shared for the plan.

Traditional Owners have important cultural, economic and spiritual connections with the Birrarung and its parklands. Hence, the importance of their involvement in their management, ensuring that opportunities for use of these parklands for cultural, spiritual, social and economic practices and connection to Country can continue.

The parklands face many challenges. Victoria's population is growing and, with it, rapid urban development and suburbs are spreading into rural areas. Additionally, the climate is changing, becoming warmer and drier with more extreme weather events. Communities, the Traditional Owners and government authorities realise that to meet these challenges we need to work differently – collaboratively and together.

Actions

29. Plan, design, and manage the river parklands as one living and integrated natural entity, ensuring that all parklands are managed to a consistently high standard and celebrate the relationship between the river and its parklands.
30. Develop, with the Traditional Owners, a consistent conservation, cultural and visitation brand identity for the Yarra and its parklands to:
 - embed in the community, recognition of the parklands and river as one living and integrated natural entity
 - celebrate the nurturing relationship between the Yarra's parklands and the community
 - encourage proactive behaviour to protect and nourish the Yarra and its parklands
 - support national and international recognition of, and investment in, the Yarra's parklands.
31. Establish formalised partnership agreements (including resourcing) with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation to manage parklands on their Country, respectively.

Balancing access and conservation

The Yarra's parklands provide a broad range of community and individual opportunities to interact with nature. However, many forms of recreation in the natural environment inherently result in localised impacts to wildlife due to human disturbance, habitat fragmentation and the introduction of non-native species. These impacts can be exacerbated with increased numbers of visitors, especially where people congregate or enter the river.

Many people have expressed a need to balance increased access with the need for conservation of areas with high biodiversity value. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people believe strongly that parklands management should consider conservation over human desires and needs.

Careful design and management of activities and facilities, including location of trails and river access points, can minimise impacts while maximising the benefits of outdoor recreation. Trails in particular can help protect resources by redirecting use away from sensitive areas, fostering appreciation of the outdoors and ensuring that users minimise impacts by enjoying the trail experience in appropriate sites and locations.

Actions

32. Investigate locations and options for improved access to the Yarra and its parklands that enable outstanding nature and culture based experiences while conserving the high biodiversity, cultural and landscape values that the community wish to protect. This includes identifying and mapping locations and options for improved:
 - on-water experience for kayak/canoe and boating access points at key locations (giving consideration to health and safety and being fit-for-purpose)
 - signage and information for on-water journeys
 - bicycle and pedestrian trail experiences
 - experience and connection to nature for recreational and leisure pursuits.

Assist Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to undertake cultural heritage assessments on any Crown land river frontages with grazing licences that are identified for camping. The *Land (Regulated Watercourse Land) Regulations 2021* only allow camping in designated sites on licensed Crown land river frontages following assessments by DELWP and recognised Traditional Owners.

Extending the parkland network

The parklands network of interconnecting linear parks, wetlands and waterways support outstanding visitor experiences and high biodiversity. These parklands along the river are one of Melbourne’s greatest open space assets, enhancing the city’s economic prosperity, vitality and liveability.

The acquisition of land for parklands can support recreational, social and cultural uses, and increase biodiversity by reducing fragmentation and improving habitat connectivity.

Currently, a number of sites within the river corridor are being prioritised for acquisition by the state government so the parklands network can be expanded and enhanced.

Actions

- 33.** Over the next 10 years, the state government to investigate opportunities to improve and extend the area of parklands and deliver on priorities for acquisition.

Infrastructure and services

Infrastructure and services have been developed to cater for passive and active recreation, which occurs on both land adjacent to the river and on the river itself. The environmental context within which these activities occur varies considerably from highly sensitive sites to significantly modified sites in urban areas.

Nearly all recreational activities within the Yarra’s parklands require built infrastructure and services that enable access to sites and facilitate the needs of users. This includes infrastructure and services such as entrance roads, car parks, pavilions, amenities, lighting, boat ramps and jetties, sports grounds and courts, and constructed paths and trails.

The community’s expectation is that the infrastructure and services for the Yarra’s parklands are assessed regularly, well maintained and updated on a consistent basis, and they should be updated and replaced in environmentally sensitive ways.

There is also an expectation that infrastructure and services are contemporary, inclusive and provide multiple benefits. There is a need to cater for a diversity of experiences that connect people with the parklands and surrounding areas, and provide for strong nature and culture-based tourism. Community infrastructure, such as education hubs, arts and entertainment spaces, are particularly important to create a broader identity for the parklands.

Actions

- 34.** Conduct a strategic assessment of infrastructure and services in the Yarra’s parklands to ensure they are contemporary, inclusive and provide multiple benefits, while respecting and protecting the conservation and cultural values of the parklands and the river.
- 35.** Consider green infrastructure investment and solutions at the local and landscape scale within parklands. Examples include constructed wetlands for stormwater treatment and creating habitat, placement of trees to improve visual aesthetics and amenity, permeable surfaces to increase groundwater recharge, and rain gardens to manage run-off from hard surfaces.

- 36.** Develop a 10-year berthing strategy for the lower Yarra River.
- 37.** Ensure access and egress for vessels to priority berthing sites along the inner city reach of the Yarra River through investment in a comprehensive dredging operation and ongoing maintenance dredging of the river to ensure boats and vessels can move safely along the river to maintain its status as a tourism precinct.
- 38.** Establish a Lower Yarra River management committee to guide commercial berthing, events and activation, and river infrastructure development and improvement. The committee’s main objectives:
- drive the development of a 10-year berthing strategy for the lower Yarra River (from Dights Falls to the Port of Melbourne) including options for commercial berthing, events and activation, and infrastructure investment
 - ensure activities and safe waterway usage is reflected in Yarra River waterway rules
 - drive the alignment of Parks Victoria and Melbourne City Council annual works programs
 - oversee the implementation of the outcomes of the Yarra Strategic Plan for the lower Yarra River.



Credit: David Hannah,
Fishing, Yarra River

Inner city reach

The inner city reach, extending from Dights Falls to the city, includes industrial areas on the river flats, well-established residential neighbourhoods, the central business district, sporting grounds, wide pedestrian promenades, and extensive areas of formal parks offering opportunities to walk, ride, picnic and relax. While each reach is highlighted here, Traditional Owners adopt a whole of river view, with all sites forming part of the cultural landscape.

Nature appreciation, walking, cycling, picnics and BBQs, rowing and dog walking are popular in this reach. Other activities include events such as White Night and Moomba, markets and celebrations in Birrarung Marr and Southbank Promenade, and tourist destinations including Abbotsford Convent, Collingwood Children's Farm and the Royal Botanic Gardens.

- 1 Melbourne is a significant traditional meeting place of the Kulin Nation with the annual Tanderrum ceremony held adjacent to the river.
- 2 Docklands, Federation Square, Birrarung Marr and other riverside locations host a range of events, including the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival and Moomba.
- 3 Threats to the Yarra parklands near the city include inappropriate development, building and construction along the river bank, and ineffective management of stormwater and litter pollution.
- 4 Melbourne and Olympic Parks and adjacent Yarra Park is integral to Melbourne's major events, tourism, sport and entertainment calendar, attracting nearly six million visitors



Credit: Parks Victoria 23



Credit: Parks Victoria 17

- 5 Yarra Bend Park is an important Kulin meeting place, featuring the site of the first Aboriginal Police Corps. It contains significant bushland, a grey-headed flying fox colony and viewing platform.
- 6 Dights Falls is a meeting place for Kulin people and the location of the first post-contact Aboriginal School in the Melbourne region.
- 7 The Collingwood Children's Farm was established in 1979 so that children living in an urban environment, often without backyards, could learn to care for animals and nature. Nearby, Abbotsford Convent houses artists' studios, performing spaces, festivals, cafes and restaurants, and gardens.
- 8 The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people operate from two sites. The community has rented office space at the Abbotsford Convent since 2007.
- 9 The Burnley circus site, originally for travelling circuses and now a large space for cultural events, features large old river red gums and sugar gums. Nearby, McConchie Reserve features fishing and bird watching at Burnley Harbour, and beneath the freeway a rock climbing wall and wetlands.

- 10 There are some 85,000 members of rowing clubs, and the annual Head of the Yarra rowing event attracts over 10,000 people.
- 11 There are excellent recreational fishing areas close to the city. Surveys at 43 sites between Abbotsford and Millgrove recorded over 10,000 fish, comprising 22 species and two types of crayfish, with native Australian smelt, common galaxias and short-finned eel, roach, Macquarie perch, common carp, redfin and brown trout the most common.
- 12 Alexandra Gardens and Domain parklands, totalling 123 hectares abutting the river, cool the city, support biodiversity, profile cultural heritage, and are important for economic development. The area includes rowing boatsheds, a skate park, the Sidney Myer Music Bowl, the Shrine of Remembrance and La Trobe's Cottage.
- 13 The Tan, a 3.8 km loop around the Royal Botanic Gardens is Melbourne's most popular running route. The gardens include the new Birrarung Gate – along the northern border where the Yarra once flowed through the gardens – celebrating Aboriginal values of place and the Indigenous landscape, plants, animals and people.
- 14 Herring Island, with its arts centre, Environmental Sculpture Park, and Summer Arts Festival, provides a sense of remoteness, with access only via water.

Suburban reach

The suburban reach, from Warrandyte to Dights Falls, is lined with a near-continuous network of parklands and conservation areas, transitioning from rural to suburban settings.

The main recreational activities in this reach are bike riding, canoeing and rowing, walking, organised sport, and visiting cafes and restaurants. Over a thousand people cycle to work every day in this reach, along a connection of trails. Other activities include cultural and sports events, festivals and markets.

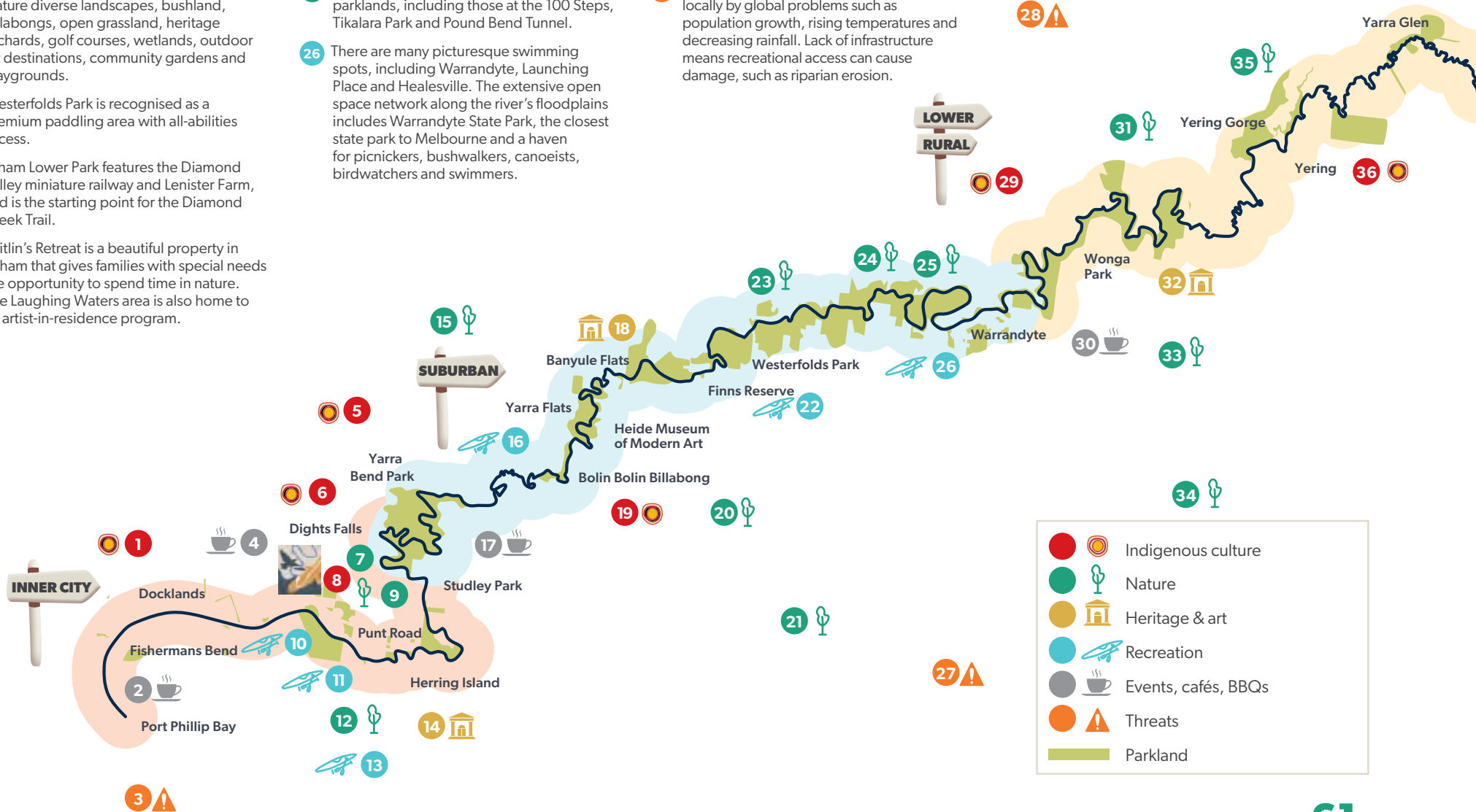
- 15 Commencing in 2011, Westgarth Kindergarten's Bush Kinder Program at the Darebin Parklands was a pioneer of the increasingly popular Bush Kinder movement in Victoria.
- 16 Many golf courses, such as Ivanhoe Public Golf Course, support recreational and environmental values of the river.
- 17 The popular Studley Park Boathouse, established in 1863 as the first boathouse on the Yarra, features a restaurant, café and boat hire. To the north is the Fairfield Park Boathouse, established in 1908.
- 18 Explore heritage and art at the Monsalvat heritage site and former artists' colony, the Heidelberg School Artists' Trail and the Heidi Museum of Modern Art.
- 19 The Bolin Bolin Billabong was a highly significant living area and gathering place for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung during iuk (eel) harvest time. Bolin Bolin remains one of many highly significant sites for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.
- 20 Wombat Bend, at Finns Reserve, is a multi-award-winning play space connecting families with nature. Melbourne's original all-abilities playground, Hay's Paddock in East Kew, opened in 1998 and quickly became one of Melbourne's most innovative and beloved playgrounds.

Experiencing the value of the Yarra Parklands

- 21 The numerous urban parks along the Yarra feature diverse landscapes, bushland, billabongs, open grassland, heritage orchards, golf courses, wetlands, outdoor art destinations, community gardens and playgrounds.
- 22 Westerfolds Park is recognised as a premium paddling area with all-abilities access.
- 23 Eltham Lower Park features the Diamond Valley miniature railway and Lenister Farm, and is the starting point for the Diamond Creek Trail.
- 24 Caitlin's Retreat is a beautiful property in Eltham that gives families with special needs the opportunity to spend time in nature. The Laughing Waters area is also home to an artist-in-residence program.

- 25 Viewing platforms overlook the Yarra and parklands, including those at the 100 Steps, Tikalara Park and Pound Bend Tunnel.
- 26 There are many picturesque swimming spots, including Warrandyte, Launching Place and Healesville. The extensive open space network along the river's floodplains includes Warrandyte State Park, the closest state park to Melbourne and a haven for picnickers, bushwalkers, canoeists, birdwatchers and swimmers.

- 27 Endangered species may be threatened locally by global problems such as population growth, rising temperatures and decreasing rainfall. Lack of infrastructure means recreational access can cause damage, such as riparian erosion.





Lower rural reach

The lower rural reach, from Healesville to Warrandyte, features open, expansive agricultural land with views across the Yarra Valley framed by surrounding mountain ranges.

The main recreational activities in this reach are visiting cafes and restaurants, picnics and walking. Other activities include visiting wineries and galleries, viewing nature, and enjoying tourism activities such as hot air ballooning.

Credit: Parks Victoria



50

- 28 Threats to Yarra parklands include pest plants and animals, inappropriate recreational usage, stock damage, litter, erosion, pollution, sewage, stormwater and agricultural runoff.
- 29 There are many sites of Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity and significance in the lower rural reach. Garambi Baan, or Laughing Waters, was where Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung ancestors practiced sophisticated and sustainable aquaculture, and the site contains historic eel traps.
- 30 Markets abound along the Yarra, including the Warrandyte Riverside Market, Wonga Park Farmers Market and Healesville Organic Farmers Market.
- 31 There are isolated open spaces and other areas ideal for walking along the Yarra, such as Spadoni's Nature Reserve and Sugarloaf Reservoir Park.
- 32 Clifford Park in Wonga Park is a significant scouting site, having held two Jamborees (1948-49 and 1955-56) and World Rover Moot in 1961, it continues to be used as a campsite by the Scout Association.
- 33 The Yarra and its parklands are inhabited by a large variety of mammals, with 38 known species within 50 metres of the river.

- 34 There are more than 25 unique vegetation communities along the Yarra, its tributaries, and within billabongs, wetlands and swamps.
- 35 There are spectacular treed gorges in Yering Gorge Bushland Reserve, and nature reserves along both sides of the Yarra from Yering Gorge to Tarrawarra.
- 36 On 13 January 1840, on the former Yering Station property, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung warriors fought troopers of the Border Police and by tricking them into armed action secured the release of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung leader Jaga Jaga. This is known as the Battle of Yering.
- 37 TarraWarra Museum of Art was established in the early 2000s as Australia's first significant, privately funded, public museum.
- 38 Vineyards comprise over 500 hectares of land in the Upper rural reach. Over 1 million people visited the Yarra Valley in 2018.
- 39 Galeena Beek cultural centre (Healesville) is one of two sites that the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people operate from. Part of the original Coranderrk Mission Station footprint, Galeena Beek was returned to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people in 2018.
- 40 People can walk, canoe and fish at Everard Park Streamside Reserve.

Upper rural reach

Much of the upper rural reach, extending from the Upper Yarra Reservoir to Healesville, is surrounded by the Yarra Ranges National Park. The river passes through a steep gorge enclosed by forests before flowing through flatter terrain surrounded by fertile agricultural land.

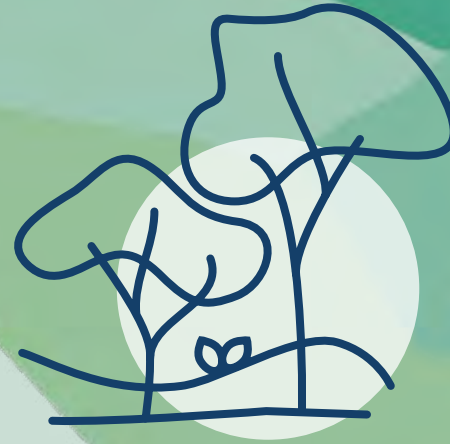
The main recreational activities in this reach are nature appreciation, picnics and bird watching. Other activities include cultural events, festivals, markets and sports events.

Credit: Parks Victoria



- 41 Coranderrk Aboriginal Cemetery and Coranderrk Aboriginal Reserve are highly significant sites of Aboriginal cultural heritage. Coranderrk Station was established in 1863 for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Taungurong people and members from other Kulin tribes who had been forcefully displaced from their traditional lands.
- 42 Warramate Hills Nature Conservation Reserve provides bushland areas with a sense of remoteness.
- 43 Bushland parks, such as the Yarra Bridge Streamside Reserve, provide access to the river in rural areas.
- 44 There are many high-value environmental areas, such as Yellingbo Nature Conservation Area critical for protection of helmeted honeyeaters.
- 45 Farming and tourism, which rely on the river and its surrounding landscape, support employment and are major contributors to the local and regional economy.
- 46 Lilydale – Warburton Rail Trail. The Giro Della Donna cycling race is held at Mt Donna Buang.
- 47 The Yarra River between Warburton and Warrandyte is designated as a Heritage River.

- 48 Events and festivals along the Yarra include the Warburton Trail Fest.
- 49 Friends Groups and volunteers make a significant contribution to the condition of the parklands and to visitor experiences. Groups are active in many parts of the parklands in all reaches of the Yarra Valley Parklands, the Bend of Islands, Warrandyte State Park, Yarra Bend Park and Herring Island.
- 50 Yarra Ranges National Park around Warburton has kayaking access points, mountain bike trails and hiking tracks.
- 51 There are many spectacular views along the Yarra, such as the Upper Yarra Reservoir Park's lookouts, Mountain Ash forests and majestic rainforest scenery.
- 52 The Yarra River corridor is exposed to many threats and pressures, including habitat loss and fragmentation, and invasive pests that threaten endangered species. Bushfires pose a risk for flora, fauna and water quality. As Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people continue to work with other groups to protect and manage Country, including weed management, and working on areas for cultural burning.
- 53 Over 190 species of birds inhabit the Yarra river, using the river and its wetlands for feeding, nesting and breeding.



Performance Objective 4:
**Protecting the natural beauty of
the Yarra River corridor**

Respecting the significance of the Yarra River's landscapes. Where we build, we will protect and celebrate the river's natural beauty, landscapes and views.

THIS PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE WILL BE SUCCESSFUL IF:

- Landscape character significance including landform features and views, is documented, measured and increasingly protected through planning policy.

The community has expressed that the river and its surrounding landscape and views are protected by planning for and managing the impacts of development and changes to land use.

The Yarra River provides natural beauty as it journeys from the mountains to the bay, it transitions through a rich variety of landscapes. In the upper rural reach, the forests create a sense of seclusion and offer a wilderness experience. Through the lower rural reach, the river's setting opens out to expansive and picturesque rural landscapes with billabongs and scattered woodlands. Within the suburban reach, the parklands and conservation areas have created a near-continuous corridor of native bushland along the river's edge, screening views of residential neighbourhoods that lie beyond. As the river flows through the inner city reach, activity and urban development are in close proximity and beauty is provided through landscaped gardens and parks.

Protect landscapes and views

The Yarra's landscapes are highly valued for their scenic qualities, environmental diversity, amenity and cultural values. There are numerous locations from which to view the river and its landscapes. This includes formal lookouts, the many bridges that provide vantage points, and recreational trails that run alongside the river and through the parklands.

Within the inner city and suburban reaches, the extensive parklands along the river's edge allow for direct access to the river and, in some places, provide an 'immersive' experience of the landscape. In the rural areas there are fewer parks and recreational trails, and opportunities to access and experience the river are more isolated.

As the city grows, there is a need to ensure land use and development along the Yarra is undertaken in a consistent way that aligns with Wurundjeri Woi wurrung people's and Bunurong people's aspirations for their Country and the community vision. The river's diverse landscapes must be protected and its vegetation corridor strengthened. Where appropriate, there is a need to create new opportunities to view, access and experience the river, while ensuring the river's continued protection.

The land use framework, in Part 2 of the plan, will be implemented into local and state planning policy to protect the Yarra's natural beauty throughout the corridor, on both private and public land.

Actions

39. Protect the river's landscapes and views through improved planning and management of the river corridor and incorporation of the Yarra Strategic Plan land use framework into local and state planning policy.

Monitor changes in land use

The Yarra River encountered by early colonialists was vastly different to the river seen today. Its banks were lined with gums, wetlands and grasslands – with creeks joining the river, and falls frequently breaking the river's flow. Since the arrival of colonialists, the Yarra's course has been progressively disrupted and the river widened in places, while the surrounding land has been modified to accommodate agriculture, housing and industry.

Today, the river supports the social, cultural, economic and recreational needs of a diverse community. The vegetation that lines riverbanks forms a significant biodiversity corridor, supporting indigenous plants and animals, and providing Melburnians with a unique connection to nature.

Despite the Yarra's cultural, social and environmental significance, the river is facing pressure from changing land use brought about by urban development and infrastructure to meet the needs of a growing population.

To help protect the river's natural beauty the Yarra Collaboration Committee will work together to support land use planning goals and directions and gather accurate information on changes in land use and development. Technologies such as satellite imagery and geospatial and remote sensing can be used to monitor and analyse land use changes to inform better policy and planning decisions. There is also opportunity to incorporate cultural techniques and knowledge in the assessment of land use change and landscape values. As part of this process, environmental assets in the river corridor can be monitored to demonstrate the value of protecting the water, land, soil, forests, biodiversity and views.

Actions

40. Set land use planning goals and monitor changes in land use using satellite imagery, geospatial and remote sensing techniques and cultural practices and knowledge.



Credit: Melbourne Water,
Yarra Valley

PART 2 – LAND USE FRAMEWORK



Overview: the Yarra River at the centre of planning

This second part of the Yarra Strategic Plan, Part 2 – land use framework, complements the collaborative actions set out in Part 1. The framework covers the Yarra River’s 242 km long corridor, setting broad direction for future land use and development to protect the river and its significant values. These directions are intended to give effect to the plan’s four performance objectives, the Yarra River 50 Year Community Vision and *Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung (Ancient Spirit & Lore of the Yarra)*.

Where required, directions will be translated into the Victoria Planning Provisions and become part of municipal planning schemes – meaning that relevant decision making on land use and development is consistent with the land use framework.

Purpose of the land use framework

The land use framework delivers on the intent of the Act and also reflects the unique characteristics of the Yarra River. The objectives of the framework are:

- to provide an overview of the Yarra River, giving spatial context to the significant places and projects, and directions for future land use
- to identify priority actions at a whole-of-river scale that strengthen statutory protections or extend protections to new areas
- to provide broad direction for land use and development that reflects the diversity across each of the four reaches
- to strengthen protections for riparian and biodiversity values across private and publicly owned lands
- to recognise significant places where localised planning opportunities and future projects will complement the Yarra Strategic Plan and align with its performance objectives.

A framework with a regional approach

The directions for future land use and development are broad and purposefully high level and, where necessary, will be translated into specific planning provisions to:

- enable appropriate statutory mechanisms, such as planning policies or controls, to be determined at a state, regional or local level
- provide high-level guidance for places of regional significance to guide precinct or local scale plans, such as the *Yarra River – Bulleen Precinct Land Use Framework Plan*
- allow responsible public entities with obligations under the *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017*, the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and other relevant acts to make informed and aligned decisions at a local level
- operate at three distinct scales – whole-of-river, reach and a local scale – enabling the Yarra to be protected as one living and integrated natural entity, while also recognising the myriad of landscapes and environments, with differing degrees of development, access, land use and management. Each scale includes spatial plans, discussion of significant values and directions and/or opportunities relevant to the area (see **Figure 3**).

Development of the land use framework has drawn on the experience of developing and implementing the many existing planning studies, strategies and projects in the Yarra corridor. The framework is designed to operate at a regional level, however it also informs planning policies, provisions and controls at local levels (see **Figure 4**). The framework does not take the place of other strategies, frameworks and policies, but operates in conjunction with existing statutory protections to ensure that the Yarra is managed as one living and integrated natural entity.

Implementation of the framework

The land use framework will be given effect in planning schemes through a state-led planning scheme amendment process in consultation with councils and the broader Yarra Collaboration Committee. This will occur through a staged delivery process.

Stage 1 – Giving initial effect to the Yarra Strategic Plan

Clause 12.03-1R ‘Yarra River Protection’ of the Victoria Planning Provisions will be updated, relevant land use directions translated into planning schemes, and the Yarra Strategic Plan referenced as a background document. This will occur following approval of the plan.

Stage 2 – Whole-of-river actions and reach-based directions

Future stages of implementation will deliver the whole-of-river actions and reach-based directions for land use and development, giving place-based effect to the land use framework, ensuring the values of the river are protected and the 50 Year Community Vision can be realised. Delivery will be multi-staged and occur iteratively across the life of the plan through state–local government joint projects.

Where implementation of the framework requires additional strategic work to be undertaken, it will be completed prior to further planning scheme amendments being progressed.

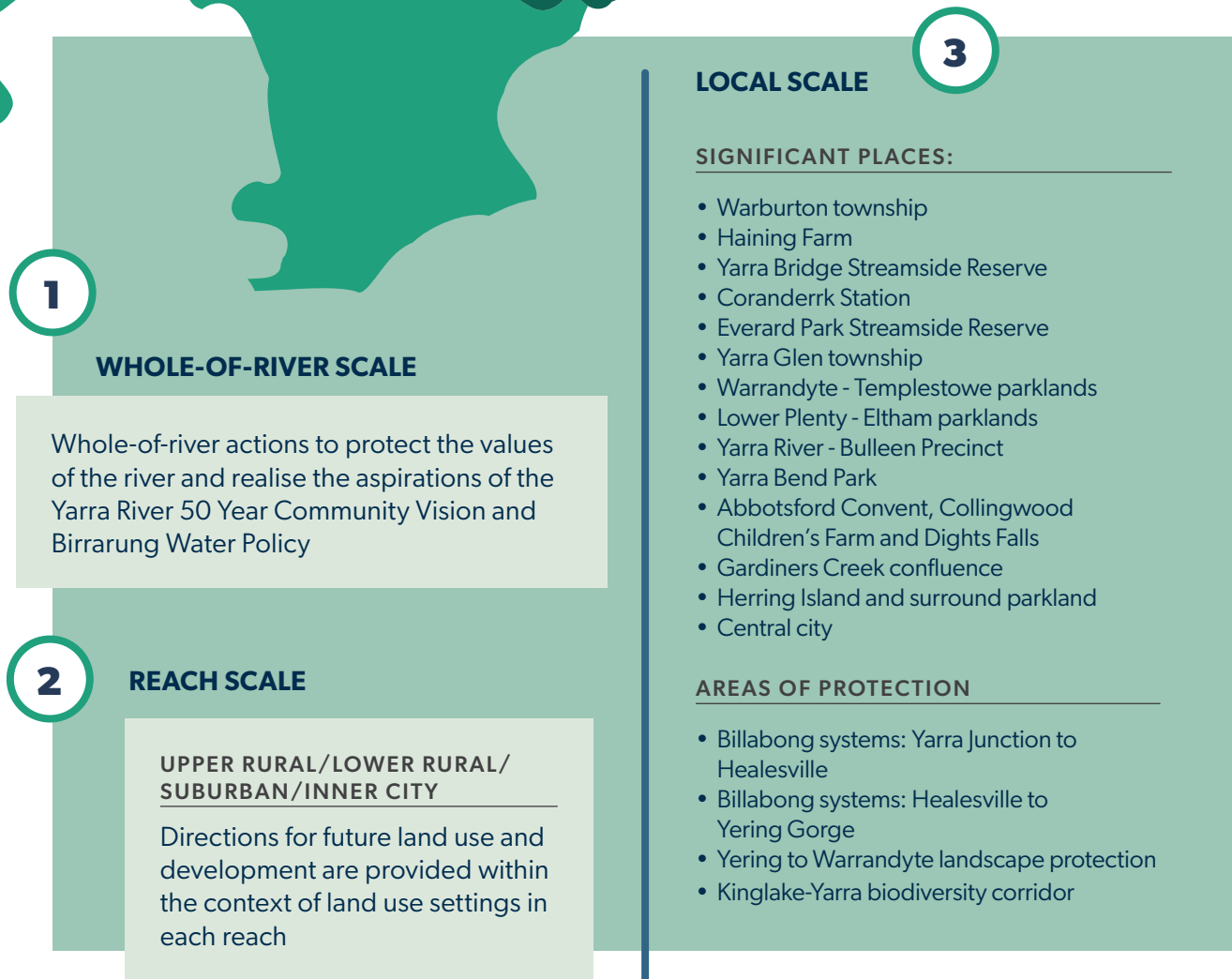


FIGURE 3. Land use framework spatial hierarchy



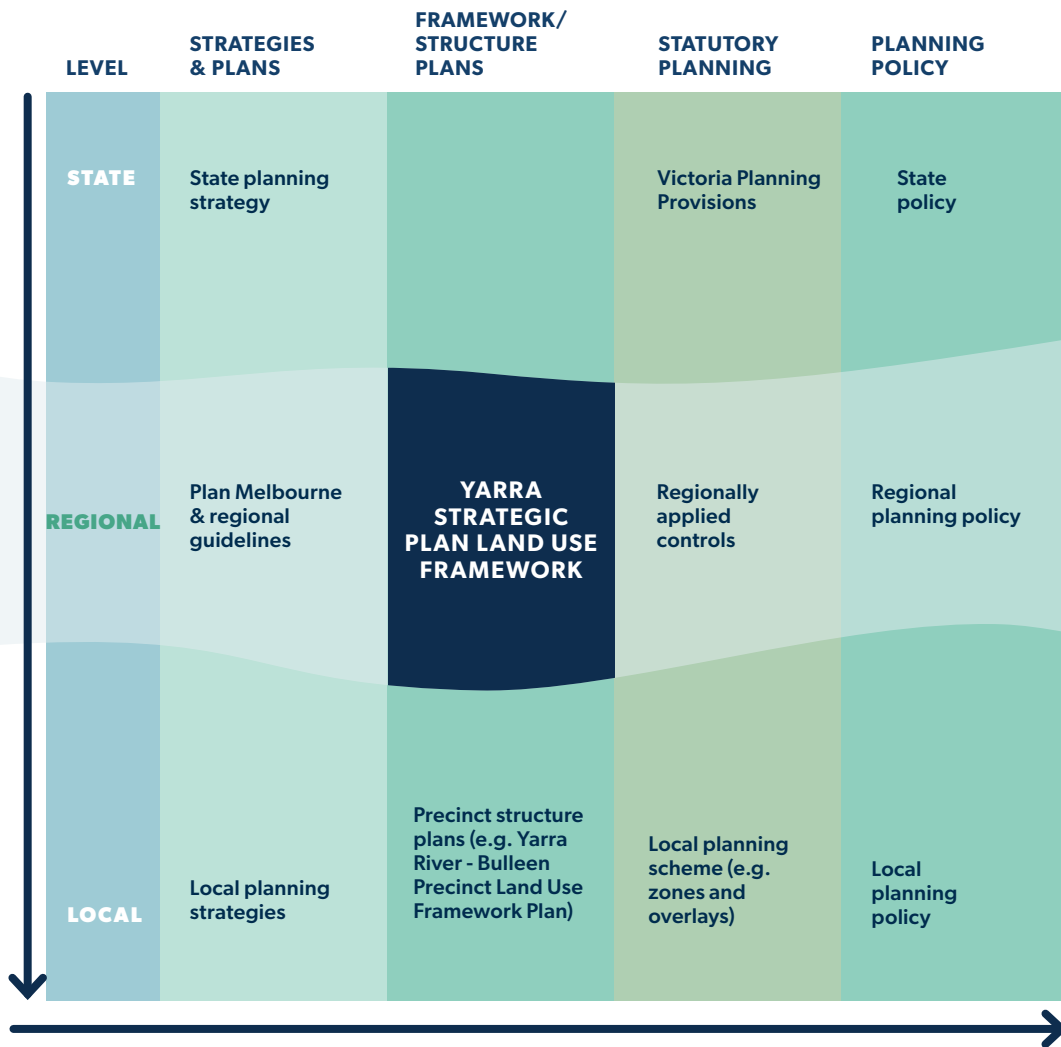


FIGURE 4. The Yarra Strategic Plan sits at a regional level in the state planning framework



Credit: Melbourne Water, Yarra at Warburton

Whole-of-river actions

The Yarra's landscapes are distinct and valued for their scenic, environmental, social, cultural and economic values. Planning controls are needed to protect those values and landscapes and to ensure that any development respects the river and its environs. A coordinated approach to planning controls for the whole-of-river will align land use and development to the community's long-term vision and protect the river's significant values into the future.

Permanent planning controls

In 2017 the Minister for Planning introduced interim planning controls between Richmond and Warrandyte to address the critical need to protect the urban reaches of the Yarra River from inappropriate development. Consistent planning overlays to manage development and protect the Yarra's landscape were made permanent by Amendment VC197 in April 2021 across the Banyule, Boroondara, Manningham, Nillumbik, Stonnington and Yarra planning schemes.

The permanent planning controls prescribe maximum building heights and minimum development setbacks and deliver tougher vegetation removal controls to support protection of the Yarra's natural landscape character. They ensure that new development avoids encroachment and overshadowing, delivering lasting protection for the Yarra's landscape and environmental values.

In recognising the significant landscape of the Yarra River and its parklands, the controls are a key mechanism in achieving the intent of the Yarra Strategic Plan in suburban areas. In addition, a suite of further whole-of-river planning actions will be delivered through a coordinated program as part of the Yarra Strategic Plan. The following projects will be undertaken through state-led projects in partnership with the Yarra Collaboration Committee.

1. New controls from Warrandyte to Warburton

New controls will be developed to streamline planning protections for the lower and upper rural reaches between Warrandyte and Warburton. Drafting of these controls will employ a similar landscape assessment approach that informed development of the permanent planning controls in the suburban reaches.

2. Coordinated approach to landscape design and native planting

To assist with the interpretation of planning controls, new guidelines will be prepared to provide advice on how landscape design and native planting can be achieved at the river's interface to deliver on the requirements of the planning controls. The guidelines will take into consideration the bicultural landscape and climate change resilience.

3. Strengthening the protection of the Yarra River's heritage values

The Yarra River is home to many thousands of sites of cultural significance. In line with the Act, Aboriginal tangible and intangible cultural values and other cultural and heritage values will be recognised and protected through the introduction of new or amended protection mechanisms such as the Heritage Overlay that is used to protect sites of significance. Part 1 of this plan includes actions under Performance Objective 2 to increase understanding and awareness of cultural heritage.

4. Strengthening protections for riparian and biodiversity values

The Yarra River corridor, as well as its tributaries and green spaces, provide vital habitat and connectivity for native animals and plants, with over one-third of Victoria's animal species found in the Yarra catchment. Many of these areas have existing protections; however, some lack the necessary control measures to protect against future development and disturbances (see Part 1, Performance Objective 1, Action 10).

Four 'new areas for protection' have been identified.

- Yarra Junction to Healesville billabongs and wetlands (page 96)
- Healesville to Yering Gorge billabongs and wetlands (page 108)
- Yering to Warrandyte landscape protection (page 109)
- Kinglake to Yarra biodiversity corridor (page 110).

For the four 'new areas for protection' the suitability of planning mechanisms or other options to provide protection will be investigated. In addition to these sites, further assessment will be undertaken to identify other areas of high biodiversity value requiring protection from disturbance, and needing the introduction and/or an update of appropriate planning controls, such as the Environmental Significance Overlay.

Land use analysis

A land use analysis has been undertaken to understand existing land uses, anticipated threats and pressures (e.g. population growth and climate change); identify values of the reach; and understand how Traditional Owners' aspirations and the community vision can be achieved.

The analysis aligns with the relevant requirements set out in Section 21 of the Act. (Further detail on the current state analysis can be found in the Yarra Strategic Plan Map Book.)¹⁵

Achieving the community vision

Each reach has its own specific community vision, priorities and values that define the community's aspirations for the reach in 50 years. The directions set out in the land use framework respond to the community's aspirations and outline the objectives for both private and public land in the next 10 years.

Directions for future land use and development

The 242 km Yarra River corridor features a myriad of landscapes and environments, with differing degrees of development, access, land use and management.

To reflect these diverse characteristics and manage the increasing pressures on the Yarra River corridor, directions for future land use and development have been categorised into six land use settings. All activities occurring within the Yarra Strategic Plan area must adhere to the directions set out by the relevant land use settings.

Land use settings include:

- **Yarra River land** – comprised of publicly owned land that has been declared for protection under the *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017*. The role of Yarra River land is to support the health of the Yarra River and, where appropriate, allow people to access the river in its most natural state.
- **Bush residential** – privately owned land used for agriculture, rural residential properties and agritourism, with many land parcels having direct frontage to the Yarra River. The low level of development on bush residential land will allow for the restoration of a continuous corridor of native vegetation along the Yarra River and its tributaries.
- **Townships** – historic townships that are focal points in the upper and lower rural reaches for community access to the Yarra River, commercial activity and tourism.
- **Suburban** – comprised primarily of residential neighbourhoods, through which the Yarra River and its parklands form a continuous landscape corridor that will be protected and strengthened.
- **Urban** – more intensely developed areas in the inner city reach that include a mix of established residential neighbourhoods, retail activity centres and key employment precincts undergoing significant redevelopment. Managing development and strengthening the Yarra River's landscape values are key directions for this land use setting.
- **Central city** – within the CBD the Yarra River is a focal point with views along the corridor framed by linked parklands, promenades and surrounding buildings.

Relevant directions for land use and development will be given effect through translation into the Planning Policy Framework. For further details on how this will occur see page 68.

New areas for protection

There are currently many forms of statutory protection in place to manage the different values of the Yarra River. These are implemented through legislation, regulation and the planning system, including:

- *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, which provides the legal framework for Victoria's planning system
- *Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018*, which declares all land within 200 m of the edge of named waterways and land within 50 m of registered Aboriginal cultural heritage places as having potential cultural sensitivity
- *National Parks Act 1975 and Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*, which apply to forested areas and many of the parklands
- Victoria Planning Provisions, including zones and overlays.

To realise the aspirations of the community vision and the *Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung (Ancient Spirit & Lore of the Yarra)*, and to deliver on the requirements of the Act, the Yarra Strategic Plan identifies new areas for protection. Protecting these areas through statutory planning measures will help safeguard against future pressures and ensure that the Yarra River is respected as a sacred natural living entity.

The four new areas for protection (outlined in the whole-of-river planning direction number 4 on page 71) have been selected by:

- Working with the Yarra Collaboration Committee and undertaking an assessment of each reach to identify areas with high environmental, landscape and cultural value. This included:
 - analysis of relevant reports and information
 - analysis of current state values mapping
 - incorporation of community feedback
 - consideration of habitat connectivity and strategic links within the corridor.
- Assessing future threats to these values and preliminary review of the effectiveness of existing protection mechanisms including:
 - assessment of the rate of change and trajectories (including climate change and population growth)
 - assessment of current protection mapping
 - analysis of planning scheme provisions allowable uses.
- Considering the full range of protection mechanism required to manage threats and protect values for future generations including:
 - whether values have been identified
 - whether protection currently exists and whether it is adequate. If protection exists but is not considered adequate in light of future threats, consider improvement. If no protection exists, propose new area for protection.

In addition to the new areas for protection, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people have identified sites of significance and areas for protection. These places have values that are known to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and are still semi-accessible to people today. There are also more places that are yet to be investigated that retain their cultural value and significance, some of which occur within the four new areas for protection. This overlap in sites and areas for protection will need to be managed in partnership with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.

Respecting significant places

Significant places have been identified to recognise their regional significance and to outline opportunities at a local scale. These places were identified in partnership with the Yarra Collaboration Committee and reflect community feedback throughout the development of the plan. They contribute to biodiversity, improve the parklands network and access to the river, protect cultural heritage and provide opportunities that improve, embrace and respect the Yarra.

Improvement and investment opportunities for each significant place are outlined and will guide delivery of future projects that align with the performance objectives of the Yarra Strategic Plan.

The land use framework identifies 14 significant places:

- Warburton township (page 90)
- Haining Farm, Launching Place (page 92)
- Yarra Bridge Streamside Reserve, Woori Yallock (page 93)
- Coranderrk Station, Healesville (page 94)
- Everard Park Streamside Reserve, Healesville (page 95)
- Yarra Glen township (page 106)
- Warrandyte – Templestowe parklands (page 120)
- Lower Plenty – Eltham parklands (page 122)
- Bulleen Precinct (page 124)
- Yarra Bend Park, Fairfield and Kew (page 126)
- Abbotsford Convent, Collingwood Children’s Farm and Dights Falls (page 136)
- Gardiners Creek confluence, Hawthorn and Toorak (page 138)
- Herring Island and surrounding parkland, Richmond (page 139)
- Central city, Melbourne (page 140).



Credit: Frank Pierce, *Powerful Owl in tree hollow, Bend of Islands*



Credit: Melbourne Water,
Kookaburra

Maps supporting the land use framework

The Act calls for the land use framework to include spatial plans for the Yarra Strategic Plan area. The maps that follow, provide the broader whole of river context for the plan.

Map 2 is a whole of river map outlining the Yarra River corridor, emphasising its catchment boundary, priority tributaries, billabongs, Yarra River land, parkland, open space and urban forest. This map provides context for performance objectives 1 and 4 (1, a healthy river and lands, and 4, protecting the natural beauty of the Yarra River corridor).

Map 3 examines the whole of the Yarra from a perspective of cultural and community importance. This map emphasises parkland and open space as well as sites of Aboriginal and cultural heritage, areas in which community activities tend to take place, and areas of attraction and tourism. This map also supports performance objectives 2 and 3 (performance objective 2, a culturally diverse corridor, and performance objective 3, quality parklands for a growing population).

Additional whole of river maps provide context for projected climate change impacts, flood and bushfire risks. Climate change modelling projects increased temperatures and decreased long-term average rainfall. Drier conditions will increase bushfire risk and periods of extreme fire danger, especially in the Yarra Valley and the upper reaches of the river. Climate change projections also indicate an increased frequency of higher intensity rainfall events, resulting in more floods, including those known as one in 100 year flood events. In the inner city reach, closer to the bay, these floods will be exacerbated by rising sea levels.

The increasing frequency of flood events will pose hazards to people, infrastructure and the delivery of essential services, causing substantial damage to property and infrastructure as well as placing the health and safety of people at risk. Whole of river maps setting out flooding and bushfire risks can be seen inlaid on **Map 2**, and in **Appendix H** and **Appendix I**.

The four distinct reaches

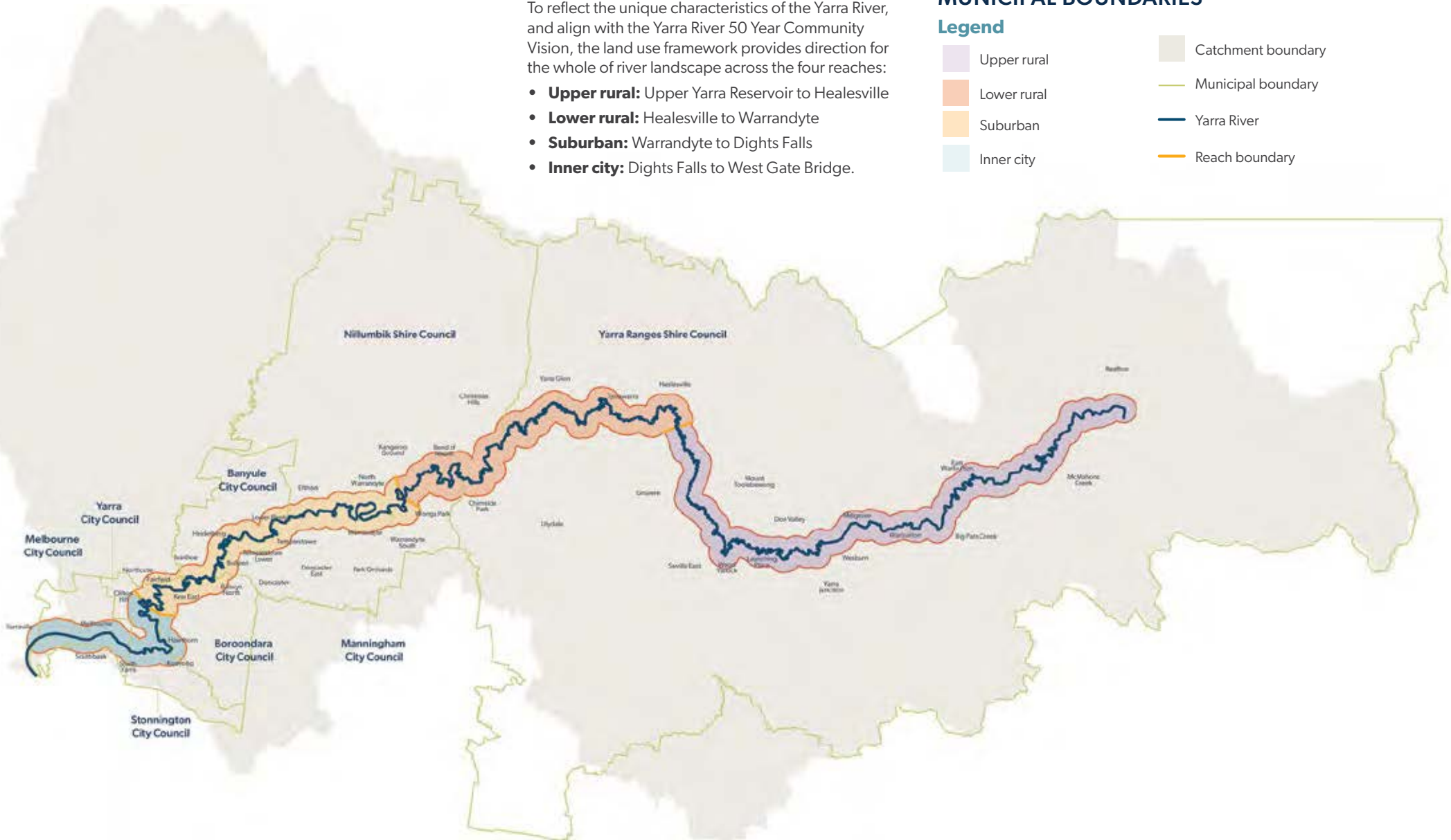
To reflect the unique characteristics of the Yarra River, and align with the Yarra River 50 Year Community Vision, the land use framework provides direction for the whole of river landscape across the four reaches:

- **Upper rural:** Upper Yarra Reservoir to Healesville
- **Lower rural:** Healesville to Warrandyte
- **Suburban:** Warrandyte to Dights Falls
- **Inner city:** Dights Falls to West Gate Bridge.

MAP 1. REACH AND MUNICIPAL BOUNDARIES



Legend

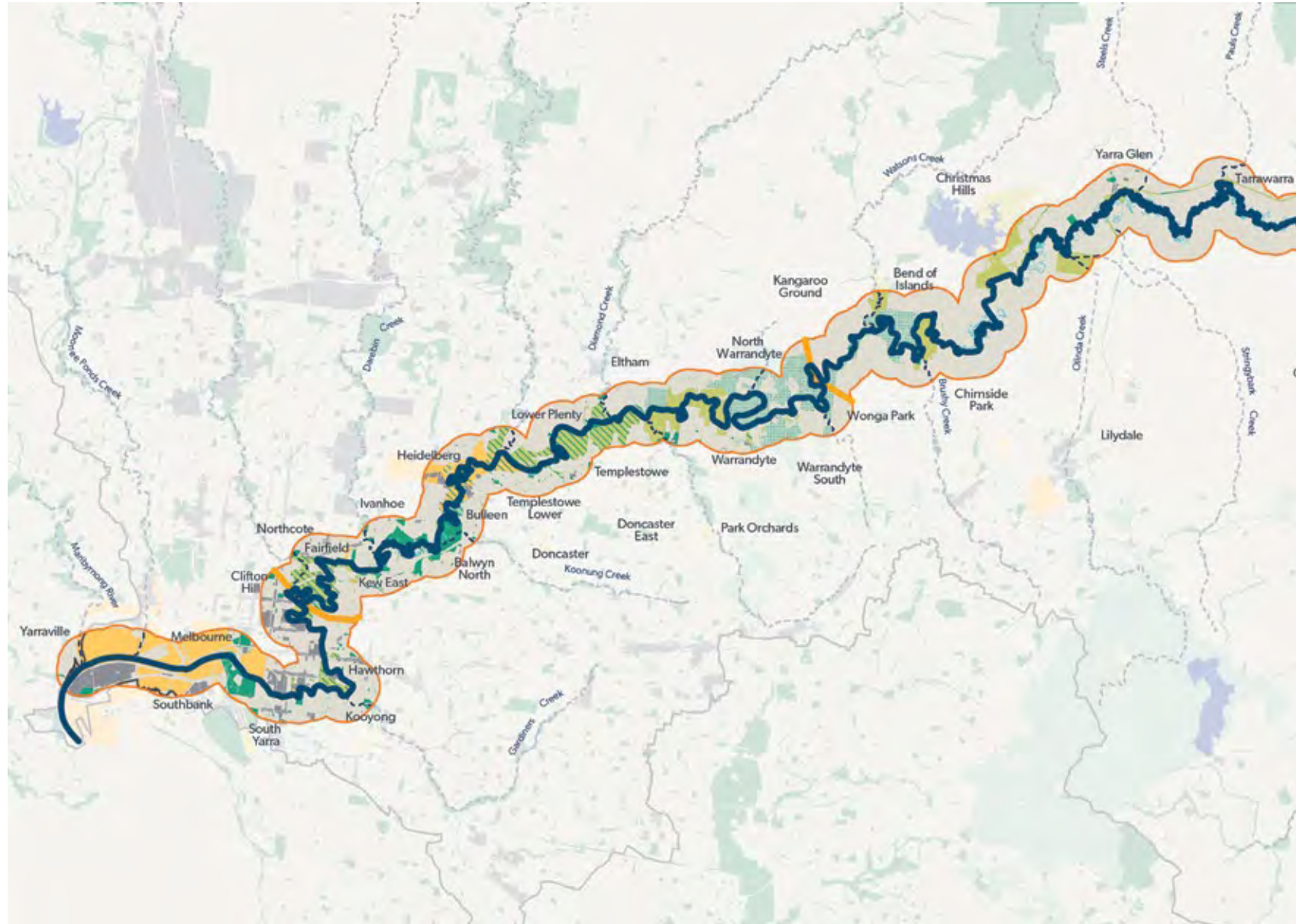
	Upper rural		Catchment boundary
	Lower rural		Municipal boundary
	Suburban		Yarra River
	Inner city		Reach boundary

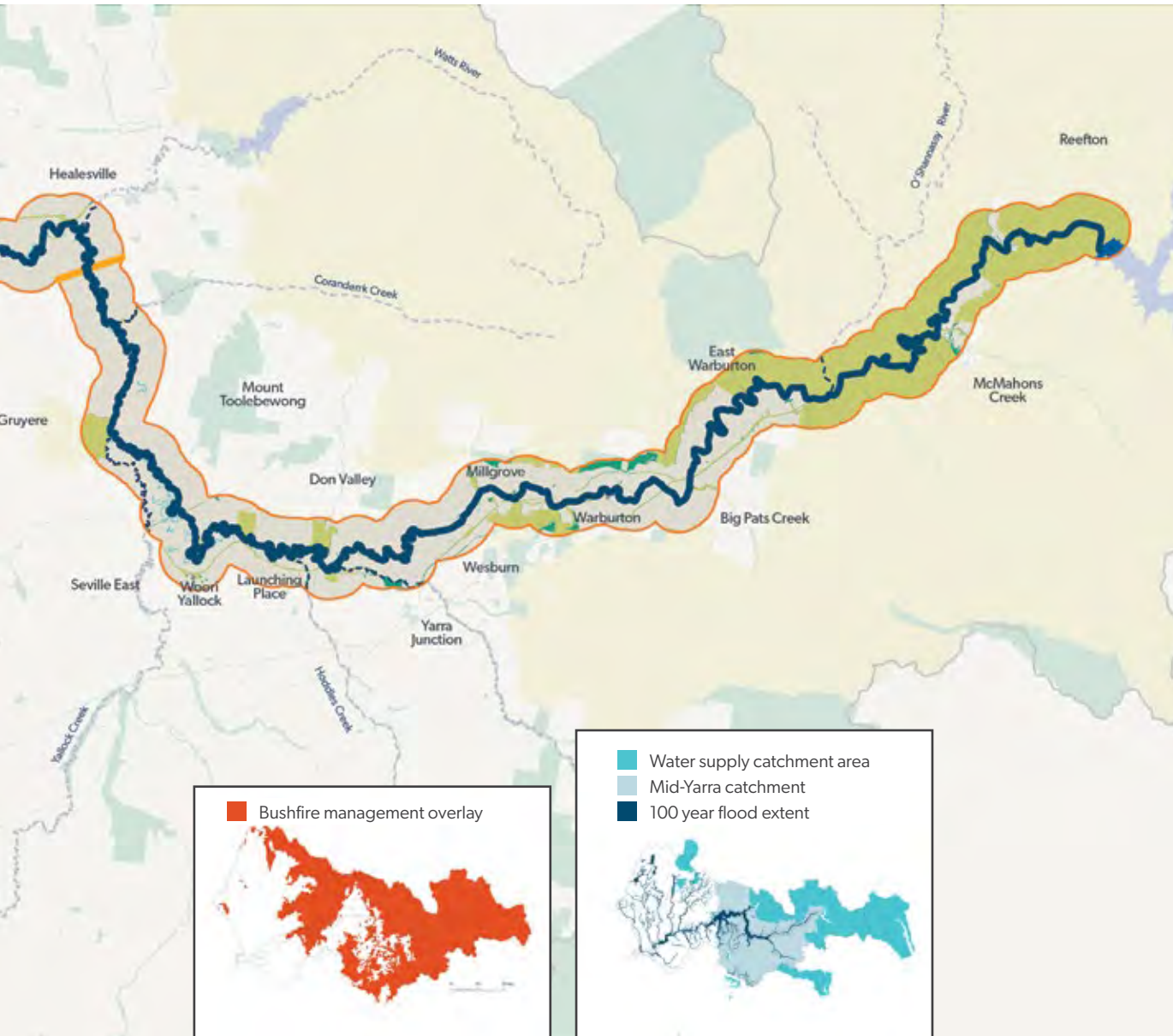


MAP 2. THE YARRA, ONE LIVING AND INTEGRATED NATURAL ENTITY

Legend

-  Reach boundary
-  Yarra Strategic Plan area
-  Billabong
-  Yarra River
-  Priority tributary
-  Catchment boundary
-  Industrial and commercial zone
-  Greater Yarra urban parkland
-  Key area experiencing development
-  Yarra River land
-  Open space
-  Urban forest





Notes

These notes apply to all maps in the land use framework.

Key views: Includes viewpoints (to and from) that offer a special place to experience the river. These include viewing platforms, lookout points and other key locations. Sourced from online engagement, Parks Victoria Asset Map, Lower Yarra River Corridor Study, Stonnington Yarra River Biodiversity Project, Middle Yarra River Corridor Study, Yarra River Social Research Report, Visit Yarra Valley Tourist Map, and site surveys (see more detail on reach maps).

Billabong: A type of wetland formed when the path of a creek or river changes, leaving the former branch with a dead end. Sourced from Melbourne Water spatial dataset.

Priority tributaries: Main rivers and creeks that flow into the Yarra River. Sourced from Melbourne Water, 2020. Additional tributaries may be identified as priority during implementation.

Key area experiencing development: Areas with the potential for urban revitalisation or renewal that may interface with the Yarra River. Sourced from Plan Melbourne, DELWP major residential redevelopment sites spatial dataset and local council mapping for major infrastructure projects and activity centres.

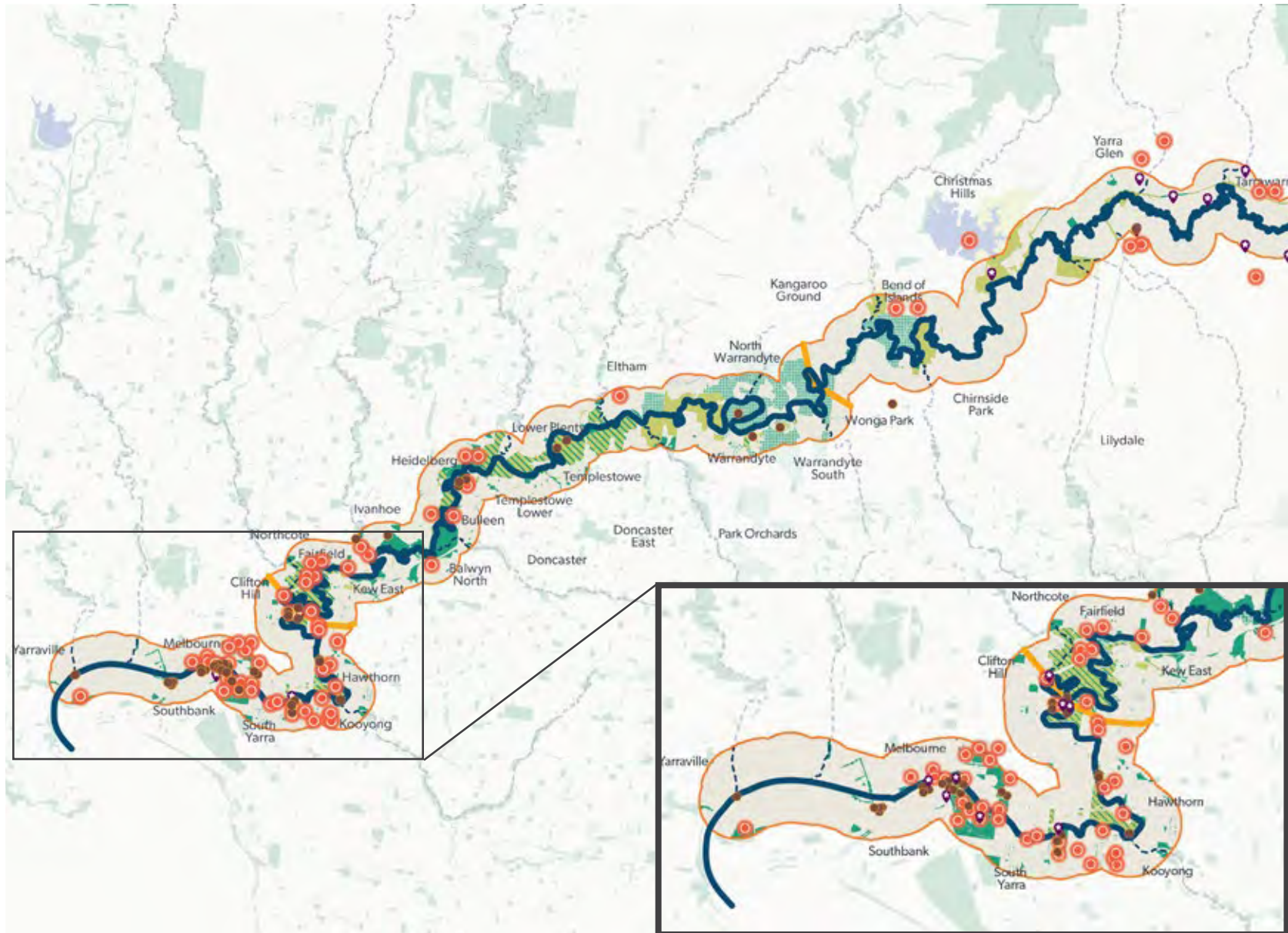
Urban forest: The Yarra River and its parklands combine with street trees, private gardens and vegetation along transport corridors and other waterways to form a critical part of Melbourne’s developing urban forest. Map 2 illustrates 50% and above percentage cover by any tree in the reaches along the corridor. Sourced from DELWP, 2014 spatial dataset. Note that in urban areas, local government is increasing tree canopy in the streetscape through strategic urban forest planning. This level of detail cannot be shown on maps at a regional scale.

Bushfire Management Overlay: Planning scheme overlay applied to areas where there is potential for extreme bushfire behaviour including crown fire, extreme ember attack and radiant heat. Sourced from the Victorian Government, in partnership with the CFA and CSIRO.

MAP 3. THE YARRA, CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY IMPORTANCE

Legend

-  Reach boundary
-  Yarra Strategic Plan area
-  Yarra River
-  Priority tributary
-  Greater Yarra urban parkland
-  Yarra River land
-  Open space
-  Urban forest
-  Cultural sites
-  Community activities
-  Key tourist destinations





Notes

These notes apply to all maps in the land use framework.

Open space: Includes municipal open space and state government owned parklands. Sourced from VEAC Metropolitan Melbourne Open Space Inventory (see more detail on reach maps).

Community activity site: Includes sites where cultural events, festivals, markets and sports events occur. The listed activities and sites should be considered as indicative of the types of use that occur along the Yarra and may change in the future. Sourced from Melbourne Water spatial dataset.

Key tourist destination: Activities, wineries, natural features and precincts in the corridor that are tourist destinations have been identified using local council data and research.

Cultural heritage site: Aboriginal cultural heritage sites and historic heritage sites. Sourced from Yarra River Cultural Heritage Scoping Study, 2018. Not all sites that have Aboriginal cultural significance are formally listed as cultural heritage sites, however they are culturally significant to Traditional Owners and require appropriate protection.







Stormwater catchments: highlight areas where integrated water management (IWM) principles be applied to reduce stormwater run-off and protect water quality in the river. Sourced from *Healthy Waterways Strategy*.

MAP 4. WHOLE OF RIVER LAND USE SETTINGS

Legend

-  Reach boundary
-  Yarra Strategic Plan area
-  Yarra River
-  Priority tributary
-  Yarra River land
-  Open space
-  Billabong
-  Area of protection
-  Greater Yarra urban parkland
-  Site of Aboriginal cultural significance
-  Significant places

Land Use

-  Bush residential
-  Central city
-  Port of Melbourne (excluded)
-  Suburban
-  Township
-  Urban





Credit: Lachie Badura,
Haining Farm, Launching Place

Upper rural reach

UPPER RURAL REACH 50-YEAR COMMUNITY VISION

Goodness flows from the top down.

Careful and innovative management of our Yarra River, Birrarung, and its neighbouring lands ensures the natural replenishment of local billabongs and wetlands and supports a continuous envelope of spectacular indigenous vegetation.

Our Yarra River, Birrarung, supports employment and the social and economic wellbeing of local communities. Those communities and their landholders provide a valuable connection with the natural environment and the water.

The potential of our reach's biodiversity is fostered and enhanced by our enthusiastic local custodians, supporting the environmental health of the entire Yarra River, Birrarung.

Land use analysis

The Yarra River in the upper rural reach is surrounded by a magnificent landscape of mountains, valleys, forests and floodplains.

Upstream of Warburton, the river is enclosed by the Yarra Ranges National Park and State Forest. Tall Eucalypt forests, filled with wildlife, meet the river in many locations providing significant ecological values.

Between Warburton and Healesville, the terrain opens out and agricultural areas become more expansive. While there are areas of high biodiversity, in many locations the river's ecological value has been depleted by farming and grazing activity close to the river's edge.

Rural townships including Warburton, Millgrove, Yarra Junction and Woori Yallock, are hubs of community and commercial activity within the rural landscape.

Public access to the river is limited to small parks and conservation areas where public land adjoins the river, short sections of recreational trails and walking tracks within adjacent forests. Access to the water for paddling is popular and there are several boat launch sites. The proposed Yarra Valley Trail will provide new connections from Healesville to the Lilydale–Warburton Rail Trail.

Coranderrk is a place of cultural significance to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and other Aboriginal people and is protected as a site of national heritage significance.

The mid-Yarra catchment, which extends through the upper and lower rural reaches is Melbourne's largest open drinking water supply catchment.

Key considerations for this reach are protecting its significant cultural, environmental and landscape values, improving habitat corridors, protecting the riverbank, billabongs and floodplains, and minimising impacts of land use or development on sensitive flora and fauna.

Warramate Hills Nature Conservation Reserve is located in this reach and contains one of the last remaining areas of undisturbed bush in the Yarra Valley. It is home to more than 200 species of trees, shrubs and grasses and provides habitat for native birds, reptiles and mammals including the endangered tree goanna. The reserve is managed by Parks Victoria and requires improvements to visitor infrastructure including car parking and walking trails and tracks.

Maximising opportunities for community connection to the river is an important consideration for the upper rural reach.

Fire and flood risks need to be carefully managed and planning scheme overlays for Bushfire Management and Land Subject to Inundation apply to large areas of this reach.

Prior to council amalgamations, the *Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Regional Strategy Plan* was prepared by the Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Authority to enable increased protection for the special features and character of the region including the former shires of Healesville, Lilydale, Sherbrooke and Upper Yarra.

Following council amalgamations and the introduction of new format planning schemes in the 1990s, the requirements of the Regional Strategy Plan that could not be readily implemented under the standard Victoria Planning Provisions were integrated into the Planning Scheme at Clause 51.03 – Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Strategy Plan and given legislative weight through the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. Clause 51.03 is unique to the Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme and provides strong protections for the region's unique values.

Existing projects in this reach include:

















- The Yellingbo (Liwik Barring) Landscape Conservation Area is being established to assist in the conservation of the area's significant biodiversity and ecological values, and a number of threatened species including the critically endangered helmeted honeyeater and the lowland Leadbeater's possum. It will also result in improved water quality and river health. The project area is made up of approximately 3,000 hectares of existing public land reserves and Crown water frontages along waterways across a broad area from Healesville in the north to Cockatoo in the south. This includes in the Yarra Strategic Plan area, the Yarra River between Millgrove and Healesville, and along tributaries of the Yarra including Little Yarra and Don rivers, Hoddles, Woori Yallock and Coranderrk creeks. The *Yellingbo (Liwik Barring) Landscape Conservation Area 10-year Plan* sets out actions and directions for the continued and future management of the area.
- Haining Farm is a collaborative project involving Parks Victoria, Greening Australia, Zoos Victoria, DELWP, Melbourne Water and the community, to transform this former educational dairy farm into a public park, with habitat for endangered native species.



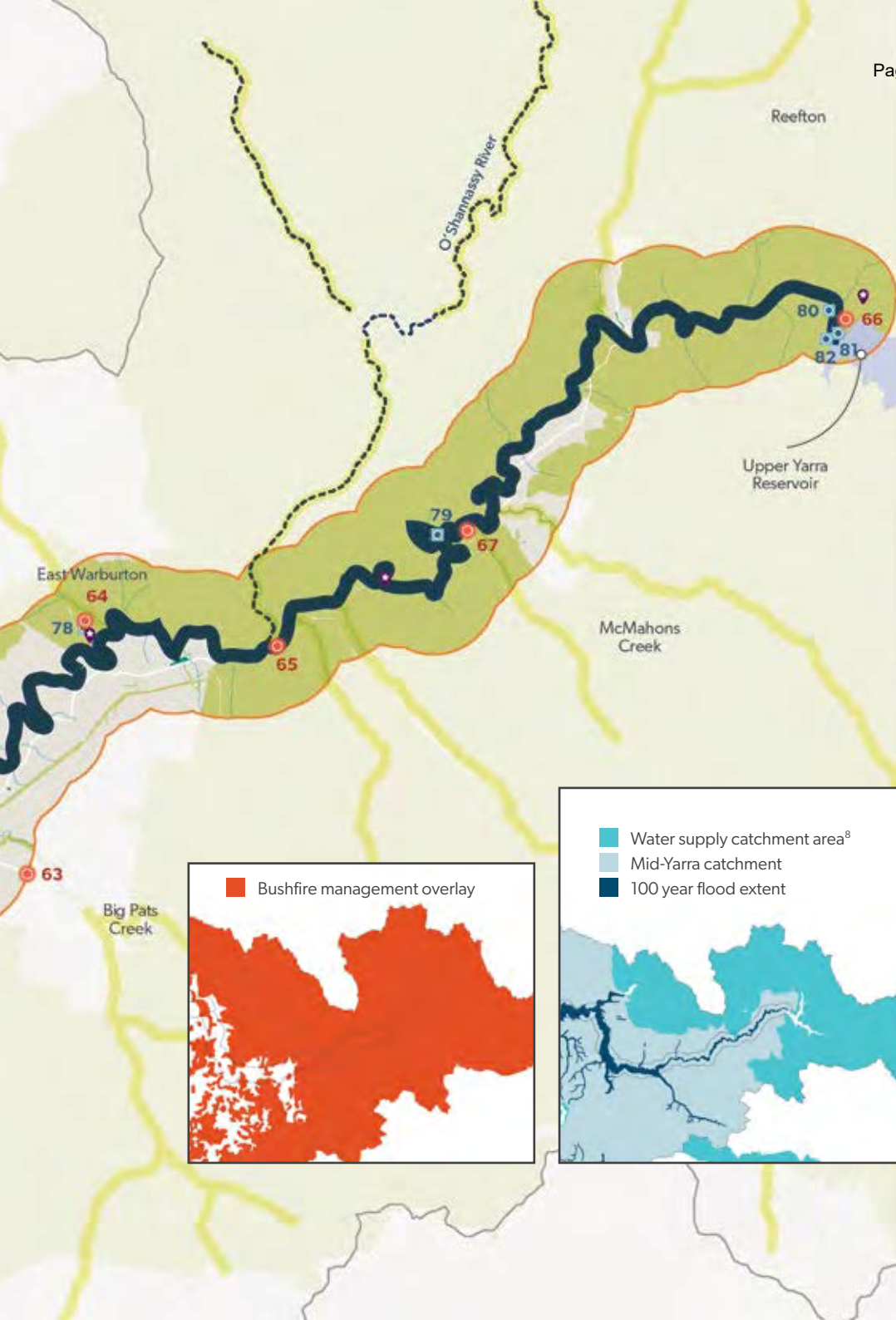
Credit: Melbourne Water,
Wedge-tailed eagle, upper rural reach

MAP 5. UPPER RURAL REACH CONTEXT

Legend

-  Key tourist destinations
-  Cultural heritage sites
-  Community activities
-  Key views
-  Wurundjeri site of significance
-  Recreational trail
-  Reach boundary
-  Yarra Strategic Plan area
-  Stormwater catchments
-  Billabong
-  Yarra River
-  Priority tributary
-  Other tributary
-  Municipal parkland
-  Yarra River land
-  High-quality riparian vegetation





Wurundjeri sites of significance

- **Coranderrk Station** Land procured by Wonga and Barak for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Aboriginal people displaced from their homelands, originally including Healesville on the Yarra River
- **Coranderrk Aboriginal Cemetery**, is located on former lands of Coranderrk Station.

Key views

70. River view, Launching Place
71. River view, Yarra Junction
72. Swing Bridge, Warburton
73. Brisbane Bridge, Warburton
74. Bramich Bridge, Warburton
75. River view, Warburton
76. River and redwood trees, Warburton
77. River view, Warburton
78. Redwood Forest, Cement Creek
79. Viewing platform, tunnel entrance, Big Peninsula Picnic Area, McMaho's Creek
80. Brimbonga Outlet Lookout, Upper Yarra Reservoir Park
81. Lower Reservoir Lookout via Bridge Crossing, Upper Yarra Reservoir Park
82. Upper Reservoir Lookout, Upper Yarra Reservoir Park

Heritage sites

This reach of the Yarra is treasured for a number of other **heritage sites** such as:

58. Coranderrk Aboriginal Cemetery, Healesville
59. Wanderstore, Launching Place,
60. Yarra Junction War Memorial, Yarra Junction
61. Inverarity Mill, Millgrove
62. Alpine Retreat Hotel, Warburton
63. Ezards Sawmill, Big Pats Creek (near Warburton)
64. Cement Creek plantation (near Warburton)
65. Cumberland Scenic Reserve, Warburton East
66. Upper Yarra Dam
67. Big and Little Peninsula Tunnels, McMaho's Creek

Tourist destinations include:

- Big and Little Peninsula Tunnels, Warburton
- Cement Creek Redwood Forest
- Warburton Township
- Upper Yarra Reservoir Park
- The Riverstone Estate, Coldstream
- Soumah of the Yarra Valley, Gruyere
- Hanrahan Vineyards, Gruyere

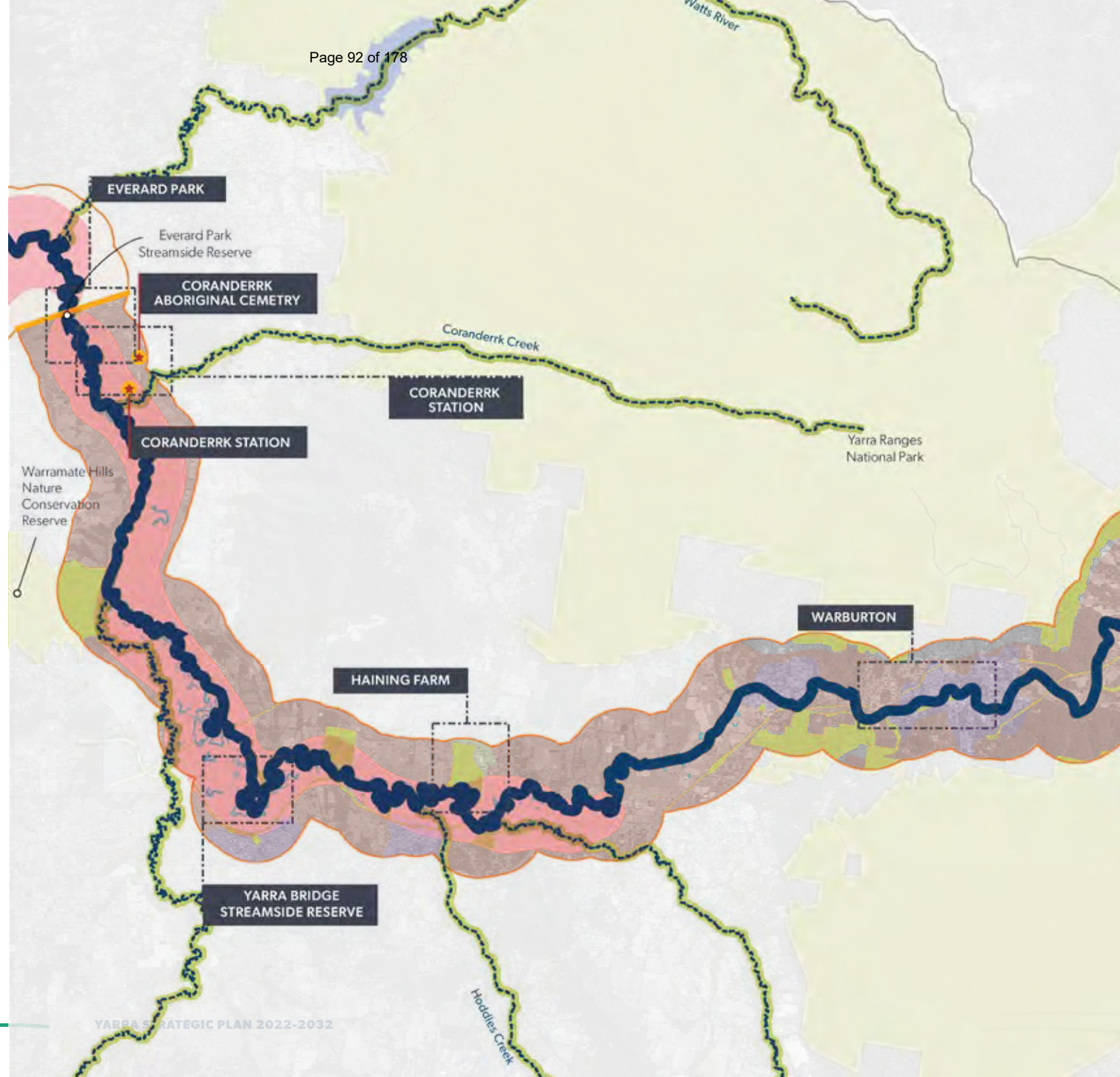
Key community activities include:

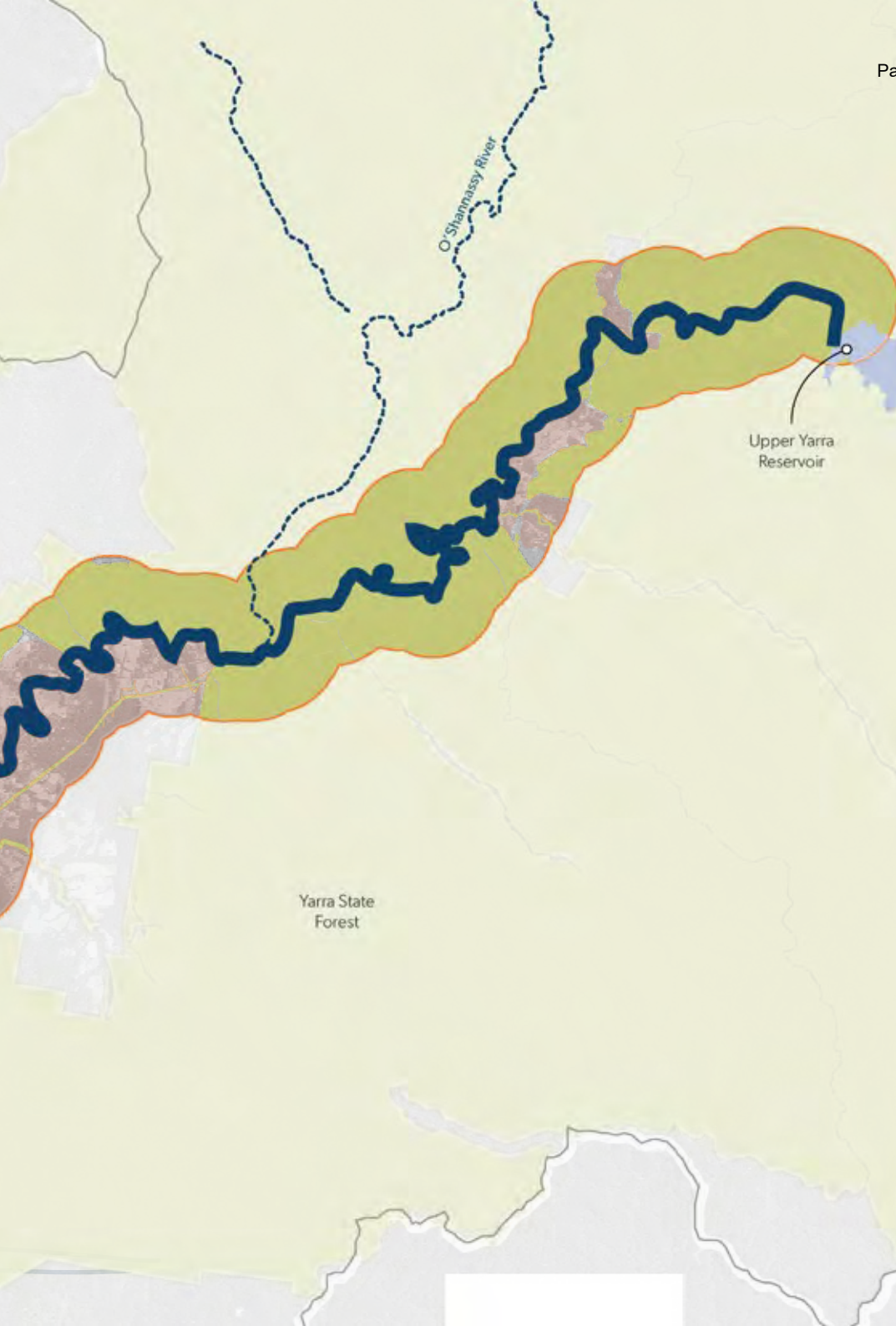
- Woori Open Day, Woori Yallock
- The River Folk Festival, Warburton
- Warburton Trail Festival, Warburton
- Warburton Market, Warburton

MAP 6. UPPER RURAL FUTURE DIRECTIONS

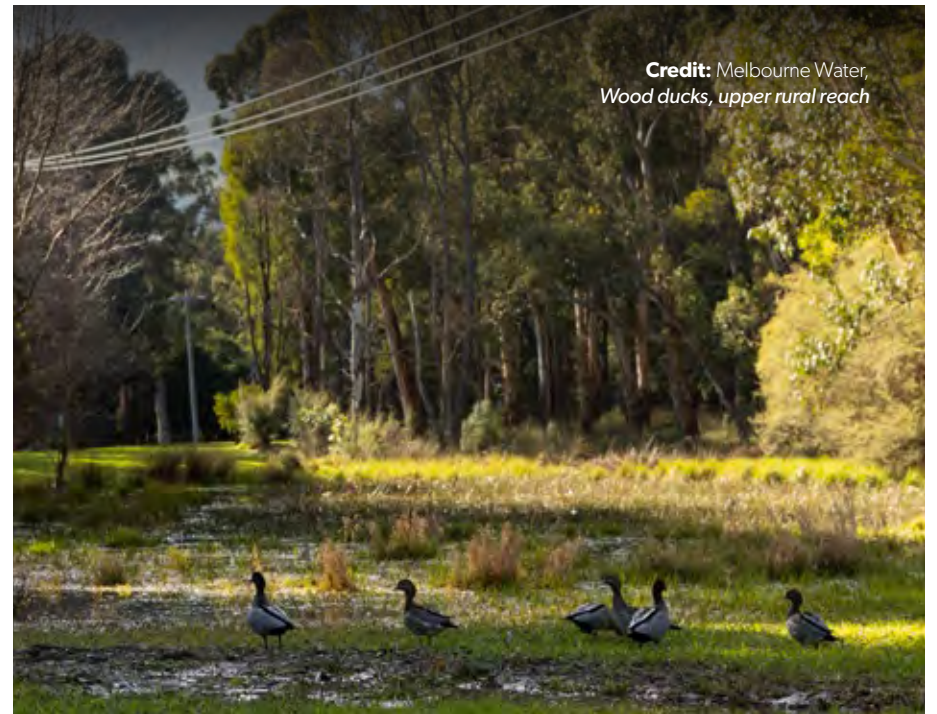
Legend

- Wurundjeri site of significance
- Reach boundary
- Significant place
- Area of protection
- Yarra Strategic Plan area
- Yarra River
- Priority tributary
- Yarra River land
- Biodiversity corridor
- Bush residential
- Township





Credit: Melbourne Water,
Yarra River, upper rural reach



Credit: Melbourne Water,
Wood ducks, upper rural reach

Community priorities and values	Resulting land use directions for the upper rural [UR] reach:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote and celebrate local cultural heritage through collaboration and community education. 	UR 2 and UR 7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop new opportunities around local tourism, including river-based learning. 	UR 3, UR 4, UR 15, UR 16 and UR 17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celebrate and promote opportunities for people to immerse themselves in the unique landscape, local wildlife and incredible biodiversity. 	UR 2, UR 3, UR 4, UR 5, UR 9, UR 11, UR 12, UR 16 and UR 17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide an expanded river access network for recreation and social connection. 	UR 3 and UR 16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster healthy local ecosystems for the river, its wetlands and billabongs, which are recharged through environmental flows. 	UR 5, UR 6, UR 9, UR 10 and UR 11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with local farming communities to ensure sustainable water use. 	UR 8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celebrate personal connections to the river. 	UR 2, UR 4 and UR 16

Directions for future land use and development in the next 10 years

The land use framework in the upper rural reach sets out future directions for private and public land over the next 10 years. This will assist in achieving the Yarra Strategic Plan performance objectives and ultimately the aspirations of the 50 Year Community Vision and the *Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung (Ancient Spirit & Lore of the Yarra)*.

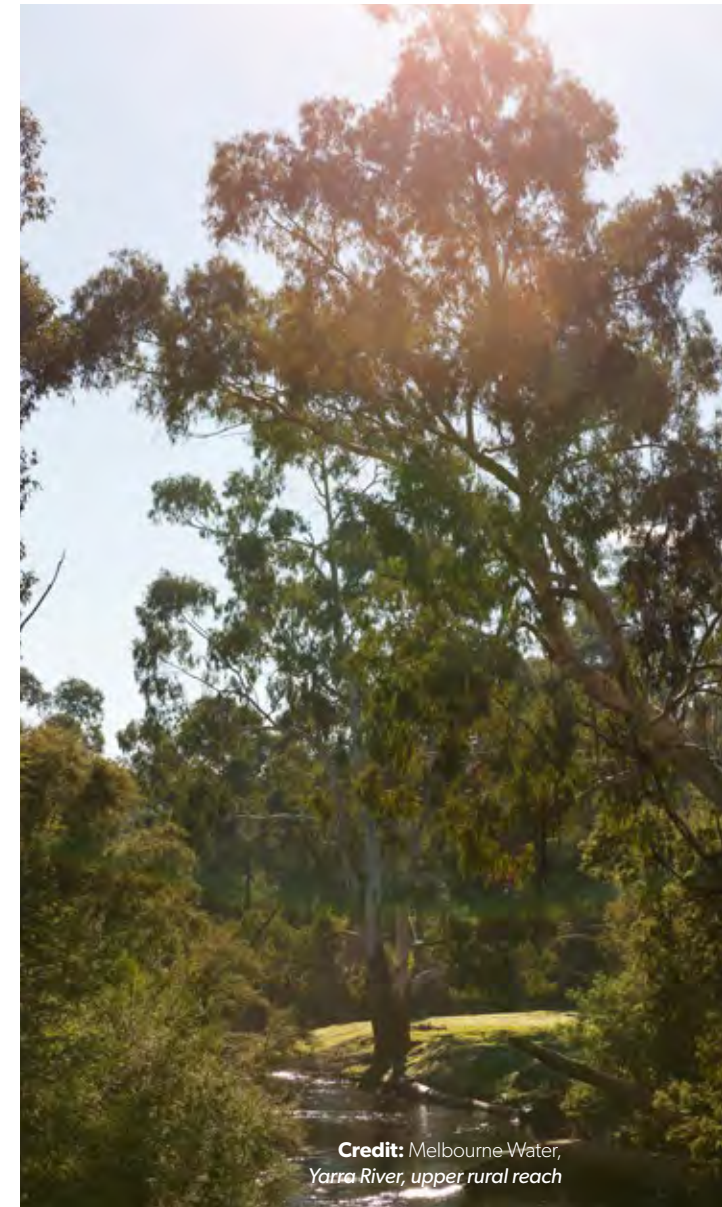
These are the upper rural (UR) land use directions.

Yarra River land		PO (Part 1)*
UR 1	Ensure decision making for land use, development and land management is guided by the Yarra Protection Principles set out in the <i>Yarra River Protection (Wilipgin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017</i> .**	PO1, PO2, PO3, PO4
UR 2	Work with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation on flora and fauna assessments to inform restoration and strengthen critical habitat, vegetation and cultural corridors.	PO1, PO2
UR 3	Create unobtrusive bushwalking tracks, where appropriate, to allow people to connect to the Yarra River.	PO3
UR 4	Ensure the siting and design of new public buildings and infrastructure complements the Yarra River's natural landscape setting and respects key view points.	PO4
UR 5	Protect and enhance native vegetation to provide habitat connections between conservation areas, and along the Yarra River and its tributaries.	PO1
UR 6	Investigate new or strengthened protection measures for high-priority tributaries.	PO1
UR 7	Partner with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to investigate ways to reflect and celebrate the story of the ancient Yarra River and its people in the design and landscaping of public spaces and parklands.	PO2, PO3

*Alignment with performance objectives in Part 1 ** Decision making can be supported by applying the decision-making framework outlined in Appendix E.

Bush residential		
UR 8	Encourage sustainable land management practices to protect the health of the Yarra River and its tributaries, while supporting the livelihood of farming communities.	PO1, PO4
UR 9	Protect and enhance native vegetation to provide habitat connections between conservation areas and along the Yarra River and its tributaries.	PO1
UR 10	Investigate new or strengthened protection measures for high-priority tributaries.	PO1
UR 11	Protect, rehabilitate and re-engage floodplains, wetlands and billabongs to sustain and enhance their natural, cultural and spiritual values and minimise water quality impacts (including Yarra Junction to Healesville billabongs and wetlands).	PO1, PO2
UR 12	Ensure the siting and design of new buildings and infrastructure complements the Yarra River's natural landscape setting and respects key view points.	PO4
UR 13	Avoid development in the floodplain.	PO4
UR 14	Ensure development in flood affected areas is informed by the <i>Guidelines for Development in Flood Affected Areas</i> .	PO4

Warburton township		
UR 15	Apply permanent planning controls to manage building heights and setbacks to protect the Yarra River landscape corridor and ensure development maintains the heritage character of townships.	PO4
UR 16	Apply permanent planning controls to ensure new development creates a positive interface with the Yarra River landscape corridor and facilitates public access to the river where appropriate.	PO4
UR 17	Improve native planting along the bank of the Yarra River to restore and enhance the natural environment.	PO1
UR 18	Investigate new or strengthened protection measures for high-priority tributaries.	PO1
UR 19	Apply integrated water management principles to optimise water supply, improve water quality and enhance flood protection.	PO1
UR 20	Ensure development in flood affected areas is informed by the <i>Guidelines for Development in Flood Affected Areas</i> .	PO4



Credit: Melbourne Water,
Yarra River, upper rural reach

Upper rural reach – Significant places



Credit: Melbourne Water,
Bridge crossing at Warburton, upper rural reach

Warburton township

Warburton is significant as the largest township in the upper rural reach and the gateway to the Yarra Ranges National Park. It is a historic rural township with significant character and cultural values. Established around the Yarra River, it provides opportunities for direct experiences of the river's environment.

Development of tourism is recognised as a priority in the Yarra Ranges' Economic Development Strategy 2012-2022, with the natural beauty of the river and surrounding environment a key feature. The Warburton Place Plan (in preparation) will guide Council's directions and actions over the next 20 years, ensuring that the town's future matches the values and culture of the area.

Opportunities for future projects and alignment:

- Develop Warburton as a destination for nature-based tourism and recreation.
- Enhance opportunities to experience the river at Warburton by upgrading the Yarra River Walk circuit trail and connections between the different public spaces along the river, as well as providing visitor facilities as required.
- Upgrade launching facilities for paddlers at Mayer Bridge.
- Provide interpretive information at key locations to share stories of the river's history and environment.
- Protect views to the river from the Warburton Highway and the Lilydale–Warburton Rail Trail.
- Strengthen the riverbank environment through additional planting of appropriate species.
- Amend existing planning controls to ensure that new buildings present a positive interface with the river and its adjoining parklands, provide adequate setbacks for planting and allow for the creation of public access to the river where appropriate.





Legend

- Key tourist destinations
- Community activities
- Key views
- Yarra River
- Yarra River land
- Municipal parkland
- Priority tributary
- Recreational trail
- Priority boat launch site
- Bridge

Haining Farm

Haining Farm is a 59 hectare property at the confluence of the Yarra and Don rivers in Launching Place managed by Parks Victoria. The property was gifted by Sir John T Reid in 1974 to the Victorian Conservation Trust for the people of Victoria to use as an environmental study park to introduce school children to rural life. Parks Victoria is currently implementing the final plan for the site to transform this former dairy farm into a new public park providing habitat for two of Victoria’s most threatened species, with opportunities for community access and education.

The aim is to provide an immersive experience, where visitors can interact with nature, see threatened species such as the helmeted honeyeater and lowland Leadbeater’s possum, and can learn the stories of the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung and the trials and tribulations of farming a flooding landscape.

Opportunities for future projects and alignment:

- Ensure efforts to increase visitation and river access are balanced against conserving ecological values.
- Develop community, education and commercial activities that contribute to the vision for environmental, social, heritage and farming history values of the area.
- Continue habitat restoration and maintenance along the waterways within and adjacent to the farm, including control of weeds and pest species.
- Develop and upgrade recreational trails and access points to the water, including connection to the Lilydale–Warburton Rail Trail.



Legend

- Key views
- Yarra River
- Billabong
- Yarra River land
- Municipal parkland
- Priority tributary
- Recreational trail
- Improved access



Credit: Lachie Badura,
Revegetation works, Haining Farm

Yarra Bridge Streamside Reserve

Yarra Bridge Streamside Reserve is an area of about 12 hectares of declared Yarra River land, just north of Woori Yallock managed by Parks Victoria. It is a significant place in the upper rural reach as it provides direct access to the river and contains one of the few billabongs in this reach that is on public land. It has a bushland character with views across picturesque farmland. Its walking tracks are well used by the community, but are in need of upgrading. The billabong provides important habitat for native wetland species, but it is at risk from pest plants and animals, especially deer. The reserve has significant potential as a place for the community to experience and enjoy the river and as a key site for billabong enhancement.

Opportunities for future projects and alignment:

- Improve environmental conditions by controlling weeds and pest species, implementing watering plans, protecting significant trees and improving habitat structure with supplementary planting (aligns with initiatives in the *Healthy Waterways Strategy* and *Yellingbo (Liwik Barring) Landscape Conservation Area 10-year Plan*).
- Upgrade recreational trails and improve visitor access and facilities.
- Improve connections to Woori Yallock and the Lilydale–Warburton Rail Trail for pedestrians and cyclists as part of the Yarra Ranges Council’s Yarra Valley Trail project.
- Review existing planning scheme controls to include additional direction to protect and strengthen the environmental and landscape values of the river edge, park and billabong.
- Ensure efforts to increase visitation and river access are balanced against conserving ecological values.



Legend

- Key views
- Yarra River
- Billabong
- Yarra River land
- Municipal parkland
- - - Priority tributary
- - - Recreational trail
- ↔ Improved access

Coranderrk Station

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation has nominated Coranderrk Station as a site of significance. The station was procured by Ngurungaeta Simon Wonga and his cousin William Barak for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people (the Traditional Owners) and other Aboriginal people who were displaced from their homelands, and established as a reservation for Aboriginal people in 1863.

Originally covering over 1960 hectares, the station extended from Watts River along the Yarra to just past Coranderrk Creek and east to the slopes of Mount Riddell. Coranderrk operated as a successful agricultural enterprise until its untimely closure by the state in 1924. From the 1890s portions were carved off the holding, and after the last Kulin resident died in 1944, the remaining reserve was divided up for soldier re settlement.

In the 1990s, 80 hectares on which stood the only surviving building – the original manager’s residence – was purchased and provided to Traditional Owners. Today it is managed by members of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community, and has benefited from significant revegetation, as well as ongoing sustainable land management initiatives. Coranderrk Station and the nearby cemetery are recognised as nationally significant heritage sites. Other small portions of the original station footprint have been returned to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community, including the Army School of Health and Galeena Beek cultural centre.

Opportunities for future projects and alignment:

- Provide support for ongoing environmental management initiatives and site maintenance to continue the rehabilitation of the land by implementing initiatives outlined in the *Yellingbo (Liwik Barring) Landscape Conservation Area 10-year Plan* and *Healthy Waterways Strategy*.
- Provide information about the site’s history and heritage to educate the community about the impact of colonial settlement upon Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal Victorians.



Legend

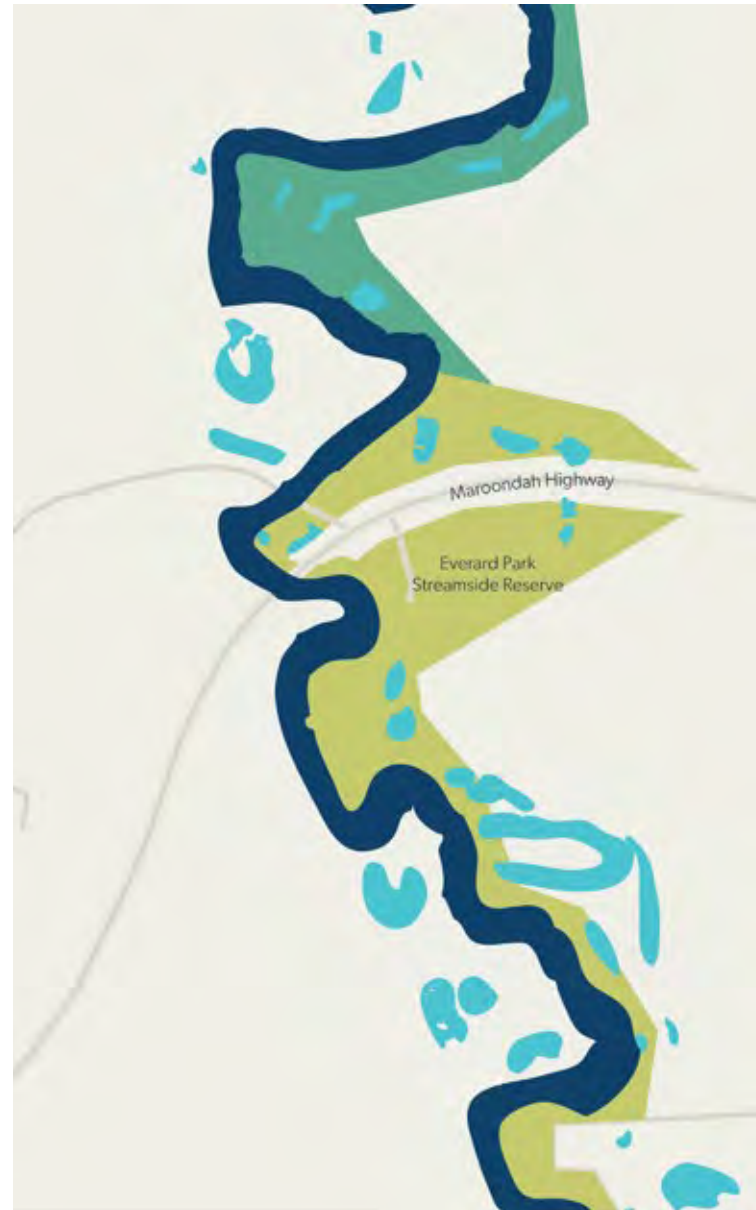
- ★ Wurundjeri site of significance
- Yarra River
- Billabong
- Yarra River land
- Municipal or State Government parkland
- - - Priority tributary

Everard Park Streamside Reserve

Everard Park is one of the few formal Yarra River access points in the upper rural reach and therefore nominated as a significant place. It is a popular place to access the river for picnicking, fishing and swimming and there is potential for it to have wider visitation, given its location on the Maroondah Highway. The park has benefited from recent planting and installation of new facilities (picnic tables and fencing), however the river's bank is degraded in some locations. Further improvements could expand the reserve's potential as a location to enjoy and learn about the river.

Opportunities for future projects and alignment:

- Support the ongoing environmental management of the park by implementing initiatives outlined in the *Yellingbo (Liwik Barring) Landscape Conservation Area 10-year Plan*.
- Provide additional visitor facilities, including information about the site's history and heritage, toilets and enhanced access and trails.
- Improve directional signage to the park from the Maroondah Highway.
- Create a dedicated access point to the water.
- Review existing planning scheme controls to include additional direction to protect and strengthen the environmental and landscape values of the river and park.
- Ensure efforts to increase visitation are balanced against conserving ecological values.



Legend

- Yarra River
- Billabong
- Yarra River land
- Municipal parkland

Upper rural reach – New areas for protection

Billabong systems: Yarra Junction to Healesville

The Yarra River's floodplains in the upper rural reach include many billabongs with high environmental, cultural and landscape value. The billabong systems are identified as a new area for protection because they are currently at risk from restricted or reduced water flow, weed and pest invasion, land clearing and cattle movement. Most of the billabongs are located on private land that is used for farming and has no public access.

Opportunities for future projects and alignment:

- Investigate with landowners the suite of options for protecting billabongs and improving their hydraulic connection, and implementing initiatives outlined in the *Healthy Waterways Strategy 2018* and the *Yellingbo (Liwik Barring) Landscape Conservation Area 10-year Plan*.
- Prepare a landscape assessment that integrates the natural and cultural values of this area. This will include mapping the billabongs and other features that have high environmental, landscape and cultural importance.
- Protect and celebrate the cultural values of areas around the confluences of Little Yarra River and Hoddles Creek.
- Strengthen planning scheme controls to reflect environmental, landscape and cultural values associated with the significant billabong systems of the upper rural reach.
- Partner with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to investigate ways to protect cultural values associated with Coranderrk Station.





Credit: Tim Brown,
Billabongs around Everard Park Streamside Reserve

Lower rural reach

LOWER RURAL REACH 50-YEAR COMMUNITY VISION

From Healesville to Warrandyte, our Yarra River, Birrarung, and its surrounding environment is embraced and cared for through a deep understanding and sense of custodianship, the way the Wurundjeri have always done.

It is embraced by a wide, mature cloak of indigenous vegetation through the flats, filled with the sights and sounds of native animals and birds.

Our Yarra River, Birrarung, is home to happy farmers, making a living and caring for the river and its lands.

People visit the river in key locations to meet and play in, on and beside the water while learning about its rich history, its Wurundjeri carers and incredible environmental values.

From Yering Gorge, our Yarra River, Birrarung, is continuously replenished by plants and animals from Kinglake and beyond, joining the river on its journey to the city.

Land use analysis

The open and expansive landscape of the lower rural reach is framed by mountain ranges. The rich soils of the floodplains support diverse land uses such as farming, agritourism and viticulture.

Within this reach native vegetation has been cleared in many places and the floodplains drained to support agriculture. The rehabilitation of natural habitat and preservation of significant landscapes is, therefore, a priority. This includes the enclosed corridor of native vegetation between Warrandyte and Yering, and significant clusters of billabongs between Yering and Healesville, all of which have high environmental, cultural and landscape value.

Sites of particular ecological and cultural significance to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people include the Brushy Creek confluence, Bend of Islands and Yering Station.

As access to the river is limited in this reach, it is important to enhance opportunities for the community to experience the river, where appropriate. This includes locations at Warrandyte State Park, Yarra Glen and Spadoni's Nature Reserve, which all have bushwalking tracks and boat launches.

The Yarra Valley Trail project is building a shared trail from Lilydale to Healesville via Yarra Glen using the existing railway corridor. Stage 1A from Lilydale to Yering Station opened in 2020. Stage 1B, connecting Yering to Yarra Glen, will feature new and repaired bridges, along with a new bridge over the Yarra River. The second stage of the trail will

connect Yarra Glen to Healesville, while the third stage will connect Healesville to the Warburton Rail Trail, joining the two major trails in a loop creating a unique recreational and cultural experience in the Yarra Valley.

The historic township of Yarra Glen is the only urban area in the lower rural reach and a hub of community and commercial activity.

This area provides around 142,000 ha of catchment for water harvesting. Water at Yering Gorge is diverted (through the 'offtake') into Sugarloaf Reservoir, north of the river. Around 33 per cent of this land is zoned for primary production, 20 per cent for residential and 23 per cent for conservation. To maintain excellent drinking water quality in the mid-Yarra catchment it is essential to reduce the risks of contaminants entering waterways now and into the future.

Fire and flood risks need to be carefully managed and planning scheme overlays for Bushfire Management and Land Subject to Inundation apply to large areas of this reach. The Land Subject to Inundation Overlay also applies to the river and its tributaries, requiring management of flood risk within the river's immediate environs.



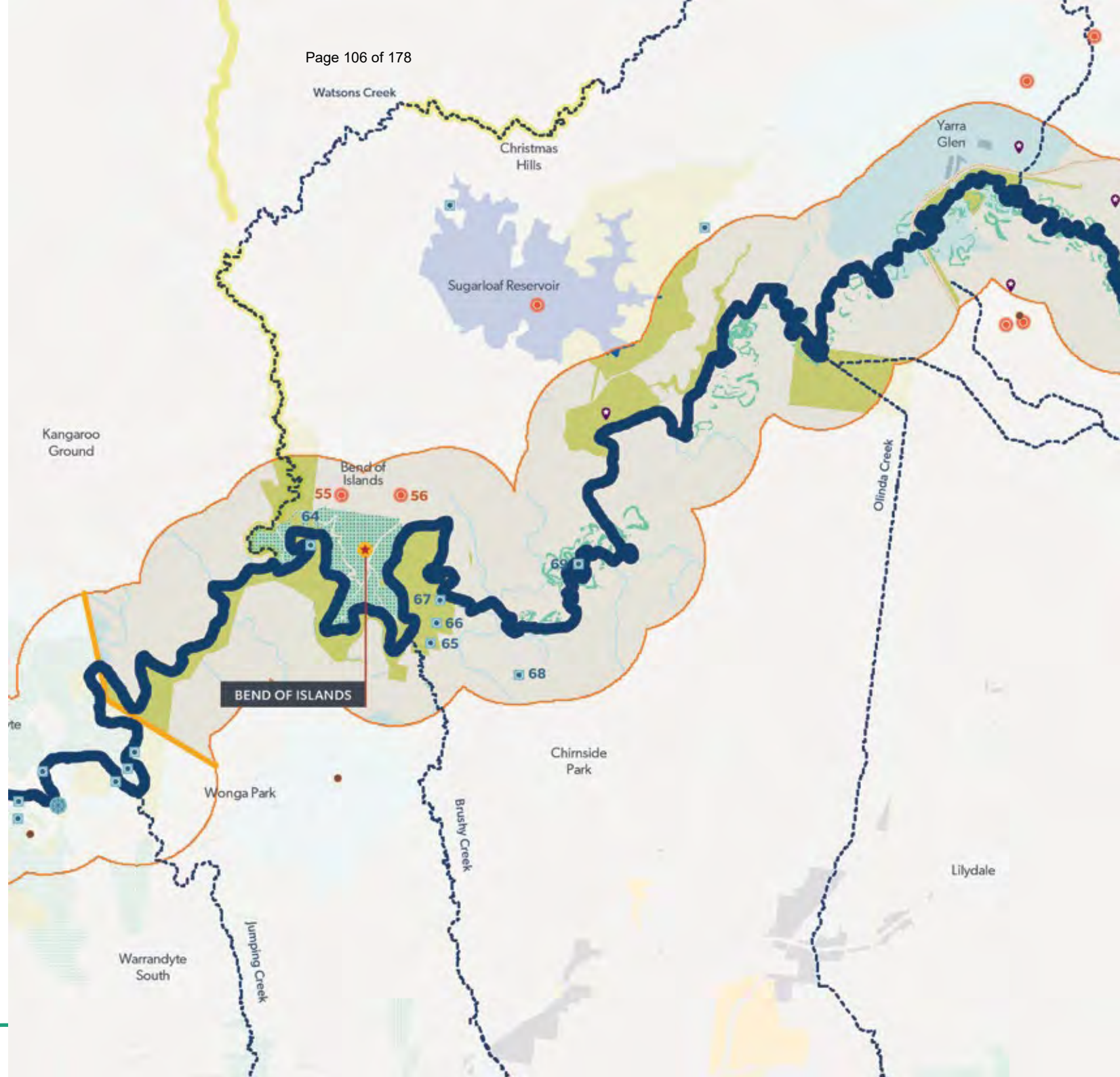


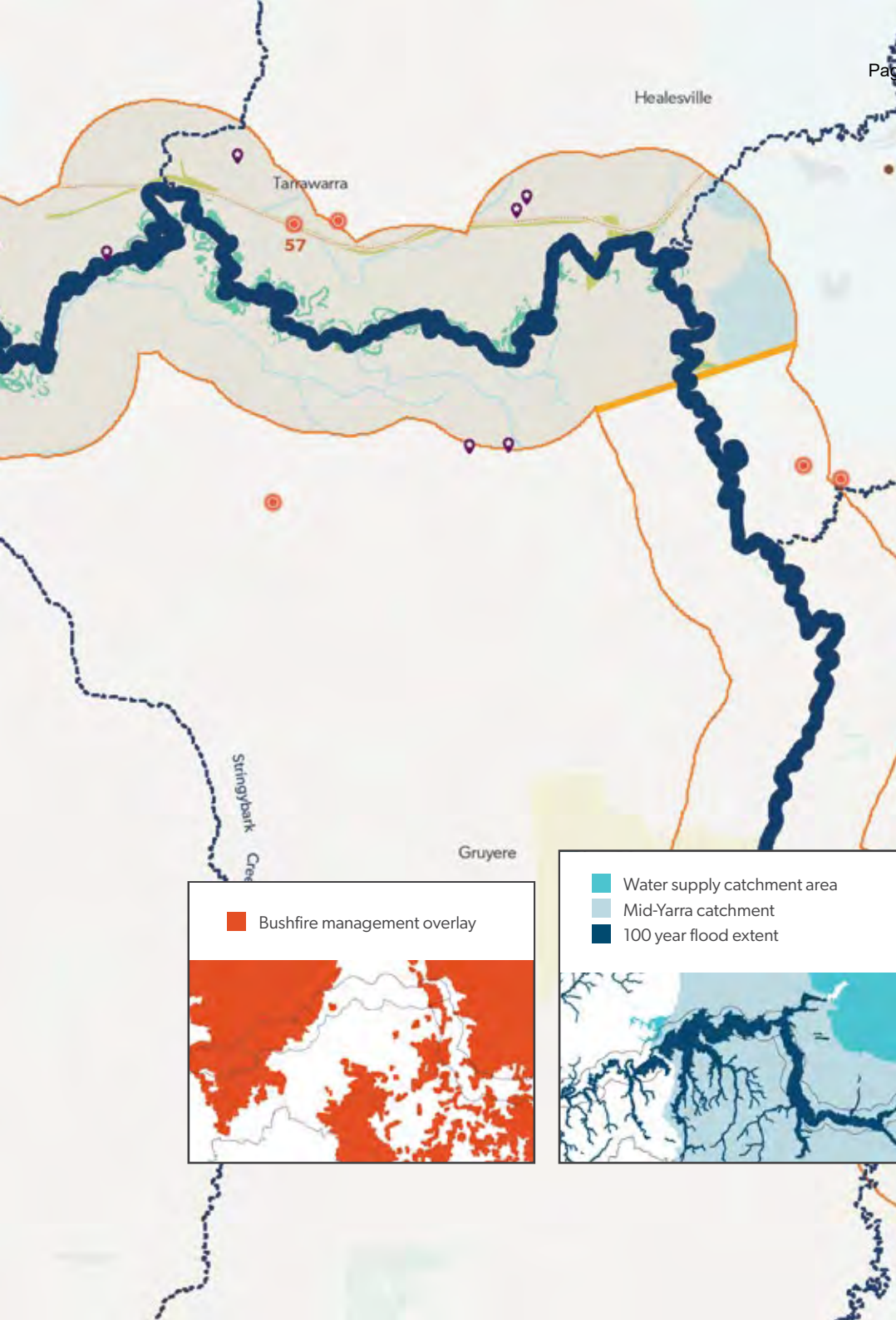
Credit: Melbourne Water,
Yarra Valley, lower rural reach

MAP 7. LOWER RURAL REACH CONTEXT

Legend

- Key tourist destinations
- Cultural heritage sites
- Community activities
- Key views
- Wurundjeri site of significance
- Recreational trail
- Reach boundary
- Yarra Strategic Plan area
- Stormwater catchments
- Billabong
- Yarra River
- Priority tributary
- Other tributary
- Urban forest
- Municipal parkland
- Yarra River land
- High-quality riparian vegetation





Wurundjeri sites of significance

Bend of Islands
Environmental Living Zone where landowners are required to maintain and manage the environmental and cultural values of the land.

Key views

- 64. Warrandyte Gorge, Wonga Park
- 65. Lower Homestead Road, Wonga Park
- 66. River view, Wonga Park
- 67. Lookout, Warrandyte State Park
- 68. Lookout, Chirnside Park, off Carnoustie Crescent
- 69. View from the river, Christmas Hills

Heritage sites

This reach of the Yarra is treasured for a number of other **heritage sites** such as:

- 55. Neil Douglas & Helen (Abbie) Heathcote house, Bend of Islands
- 56. Burns house, Bend of Islands
- 57. The Elms Slab Cottage, Tarrawarra

Tourist destinations include:

- Yering Gorge Bushland Reserve, Christmas Hills
- Yering Station, Yarra Glen
- Lubra Bend Garden, Yarra Glen
- TarraWarra Estate, Yarra Glen
- TarraWarra Museum of Art, Yarra Glen
- Maddens Rise, Coldstream
- Dominique Portet Winery, Coldstream
- Zonzo Estate, Yarra Glen
- Yarra Valley Racing, Yarra Glen
- Tarrawarra Abbey, Tarrawarra

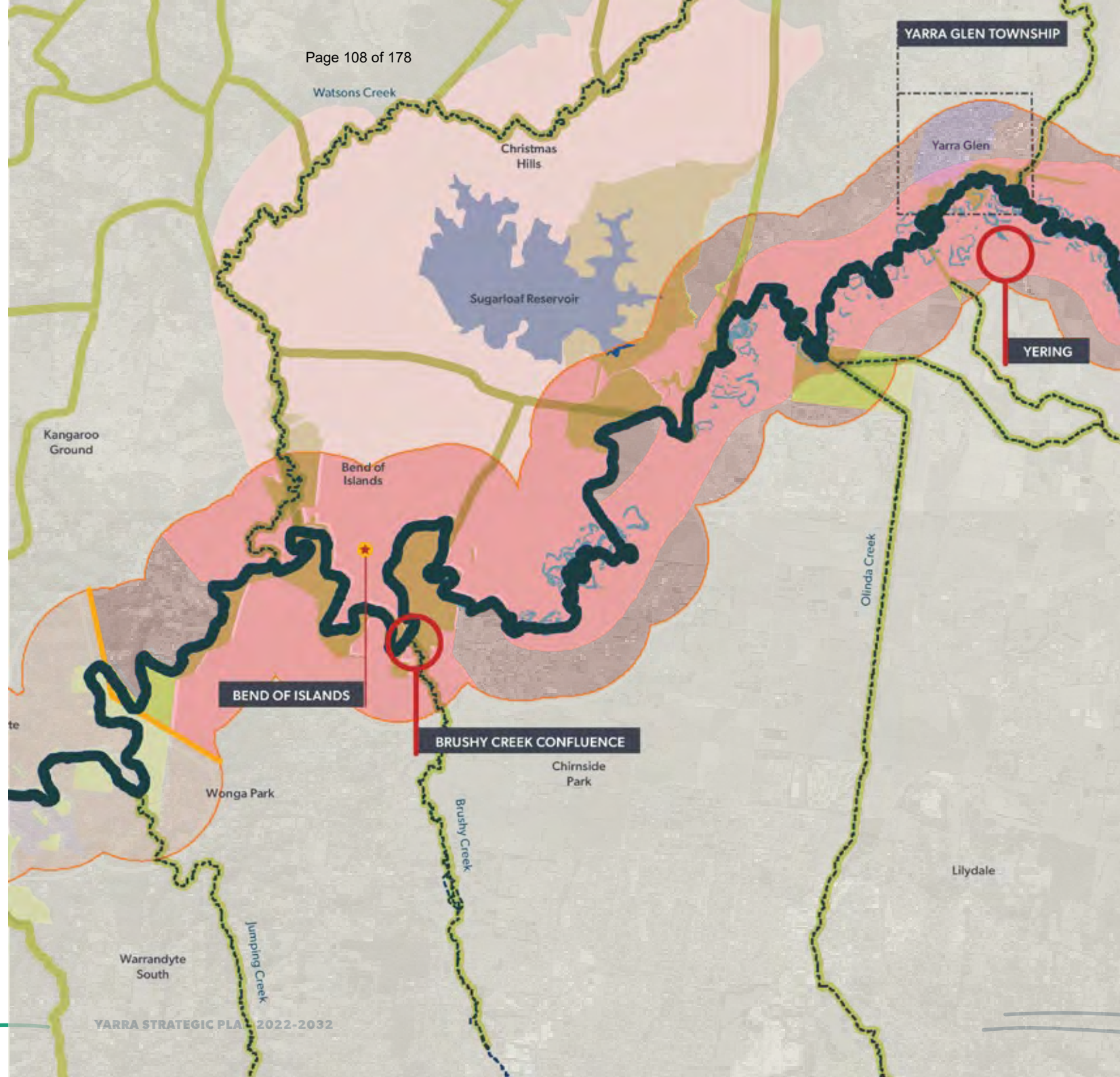
Key community activities include:

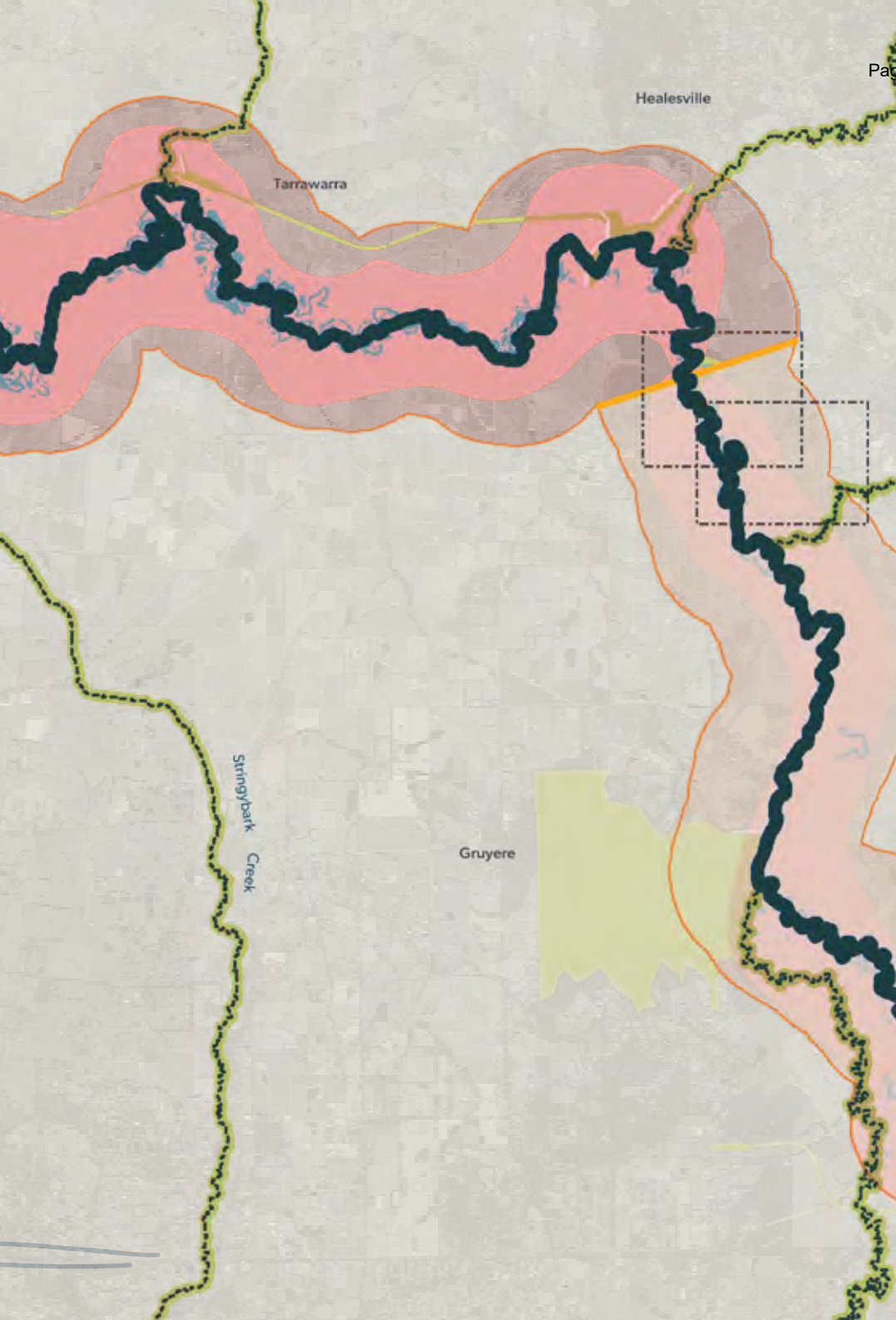
- Yarra Valley Farmers Market, Yering Station

MAP 8. LOWER RURAL REACH FUTURE DIRECTIONS

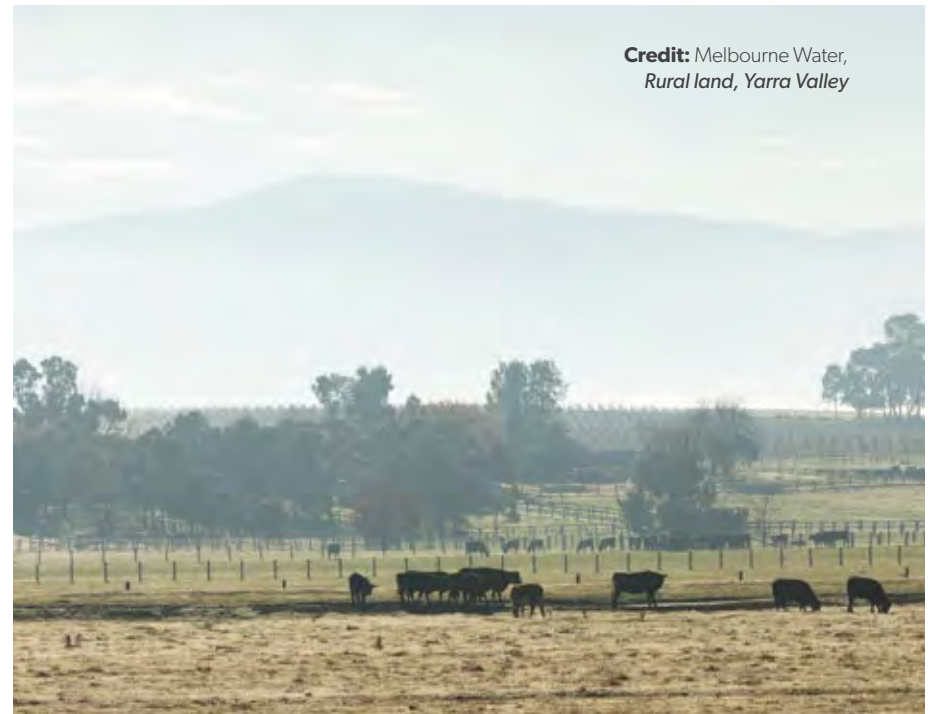
Legend

-  Wurundjeri site of significance
-  Recreational trail
-  Reach boundary
-  Significant place
-  Area of protection
-  Wurundjeri area for protection
-  Yarra Strategic Plan area
-  Yarra River
-  Priority tributary
-  Industrial & commercial zone
-  Yarra River land
-  Biodiversity corridor
-  Bush residential
-  Township





Credit: Melbourne Water,
Lower rural reach



Credit: Melbourne Water,
Rural land, Yarra Valley

Community priorities and values	Resulting land use directions for the lower rural [LR] reach:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve community access at sensitive locations to enrich local connections, while protecting the region's natural environment. 	LR 2, LR 3, LR 4, LR 12 and LR 16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring improved biodiversity to our local area, enhancing indigenous vegetation, animal, insects and fish in our habitat corridor and surrounding billabongs. 	LR 2 and LR 4 to LR 11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster and support sustainable agricultural practices that exist in harmony with the river and its lands. 	LR 8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people to protect and enhance knowledge of local cultural values and sites. 	LR 2, LR 7, LR 11 and LR 16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore innovative tourism opportunities around activities such as education, cultural heritage and fishing to showcase rural river experiences. 	LR 3, LR 4, LR 12 and LR 16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preserve the rural and bush character of the river and its landscapes through collaboration and careful management of future development. 	LR 4 to LR 15

Directions for future land use and development in the next 10 years

The land use framework in the lower rural reach sets out the future directions for private and public land over the next 10 years. This will assist in achieving the Yarra Strategic Plan performance objectives and ultimately the aspirations of the 50 Year Community Vision and the *Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung (Ancient Spirit & Lore of the Yarra)*.

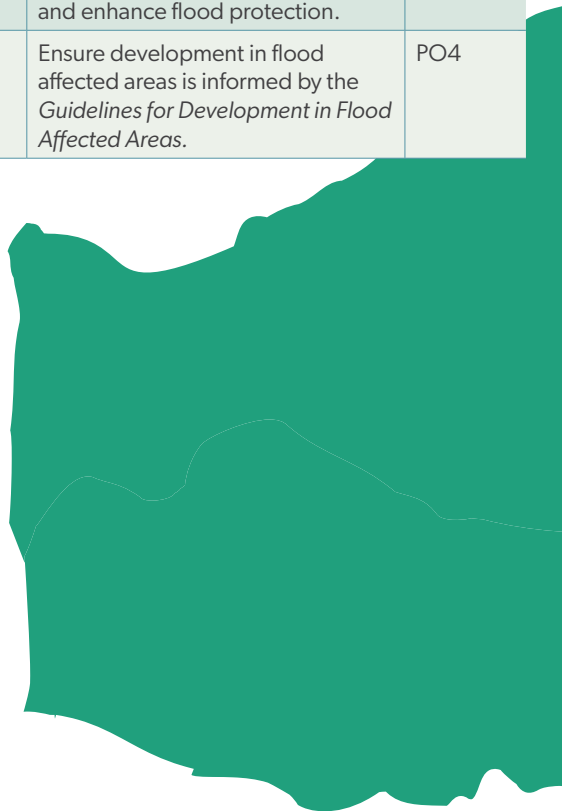
These are the lower rural (LR) land use directions.

Yarra River land		PO (Part 1)*
LR 1	Ensure decision making for land use, development and land management is guided by the Yarra Protection Principles set out in the <i>Yarra River Protection (Wilipgin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017</i> . **	PO1, PO2, PO3, PO4
LR 2	Work with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation on flora and fauna assessments to inform restoration and strengthen critical habitat, vegetation and cultural corridors	PO1, PO2
LR 3	Create unobtrusive recreational trails, where appropriate, to allow more people to access and connect to the Yarra River.	PO3
LR 4	Ensure the siting and design of new public buildings and infrastructure complements the Yarra River's natural landscape setting and respects key view points.	PO4
LR 5	Protect and enhance native vegetation to provide habitat connections between conservation areas, and along the Yarra River and its tributaries.	PO1
LR 6	Investigate new or strengthened protection measures for high-priority tributaries.	PO1
LR 7	Partner with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to investigate ways to reflect and celebrate the story of the ancient Yarra River and its people in the design and landscaping of public spaces and parklands.	PO2, PO3

*Alignment with performance objectives in Part 1 ** Decision making can be supported by applying the decision-making framework outlined in Appendix E.

Bush residential		
LR 8	Encourage sustainable land management practices to protect the health of the Yarra River and its tributaries, while supporting the livelihood of farming communities.	PO1, PO4
LR 9	Protect and enhance native vegetation to provide habitat connections between conservation areas, and along the Yarra River and its tributaries.	PO1
LR 10	Investigate new or strengthened protection measures for high-priority tributaries.	PO1
LR 11	Protect, rehabilitate and reengage floodplains, wetlands and billabongs to sustain and enhance their natural, cultural and spiritual values and minimise water quality impacts (including Healesville to Yering billabongs and wetlands).	PO1, PO2
LR 12	Ensure the siting and design of new buildings and infrastructure complements the Yarra River's natural landscape setting and respects key viewpoints.	PO4
LR 13	Avoid development in the floodplain.	PO4
LR 14	Ensure development in flood affected areas is informed by the <i>Guidelines for Development in Flood Affected Areas</i> .	PO4
LR 15	Ensure private land around the Watsons Creek confluence and Maroondah Aqueduct supports the habitat and biodiversity of the Warrandyte–Kinglake corridor.	PO1, PO4

Yarra Glen township		
LR 16	Refer to the opportunities for future projects and alignment for Yarra Glen township on page 106.	PO1, PO2, PO3, PO4
LR 17	Apply integrated water management principles to optimise water supply, improve water quality and enhance flood protection.	PO1
LR 18	Ensure development in flood affected areas is informed by the <i>Guidelines for Development in Flood Affected Areas</i> .	PO4



Credit: Melbourne Water, *Overlooking the Yarra River, Yering*

Lower rural reach – Significant places



Credit: Melbourne Water,
Flooding at Yarra Glen in 2010

Yarra Glen township

Yarra Glen is a rural town on the Melba Highway and is the only town in the lower rural reach. Several sites of notable cultural and heritage value include the historic station and tourist railway (currently under restoration), the Yarra Glen Recreation Reserve and the Murrup Brarn Yarra Flats billabongs. Two rural properties that provide a link to the history of the township and agricultural development in the area are Yering Station settled in 1836, and Gulf Station established in 1854 and now run by the National Trust.

There are several open spaces along the Yarra River at the entry point to the township, with the Recreation Reserve being a popular access point to the river.

Works are underway on the first stage of the Yarra Valley Trail, connecting Lilydale to Yarra Glen, with the second stage proposed to continue through to Healesville.

Opportunities for future projects and alignment:

- Strengthen the natural riparian environment through additional planting of appropriate species along the river.
- Enhance the Yarra River crossing on the Melba Highway as a gateway to the township and an important view to the river.
- Establish and upgrade recreational trails to connect each of the riverside spaces and connection to the township.
- Upgrade river access and experiences around the priority boat launch site at Yarra Glen Recreation Reserve, giving consideration to canoe trail and precautions at times of low flow.
- Partner with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to investigate ways to protect cultural values associated with Yering Station.
- Strengthen connections between the township and the river by integrating and interpreting Yarra Glen's heritage with the planning and design of new public spaces and buildings.
- Apply permanent planning controls to protect the Yarra River landscape corridor.
- Apply integrated water management principles to all development to optimise water supply, improve water quality and enhance flood protection for the township.



Legend

- Yarra River
- Billabong
- Yarra River land
- Municipal parkland
- - - Recreational trail
- ↔ Improved access
- Key views
- ★ Key tourist destinations
- Priority boat launch site

Lower rural reach – New areas for protection



Credit: Melbourne Water, Billabong at Spadoni's Reserve, Yering

Billabong systems: Healesville to Yering Gorge

The Yarra River's floodplain in the lower rural reach includes many billabongs with high environmental, cultural and landscape value. The billabong systems are identified as an area for protection because they are at risk from restricted or reduced water flow, weed and pest invasion, land clearing and grazing by stock. These billabongs are mostly located on private land used for farming, with no public access.

There are limited areas of public land along this reach of the river. One exception is Spadoni's Nature Reserve and the adjacent Yering Bushland Reserve, which retain some billabongs. Spadoni's Nature Reserve also contains a stand of Buxton gum (*Eucalyptus crenulata*), considered to be of national botanical significance. The reserve is where Olinda and Stringybark creeks discharge into the Yarra, both of which are significantly modified to drain the adjacent farmland and urban areas upstream. As a result, water quality in these creeks is poor, which affects water quality in the Yarra.

In addition to the important billabong systems, Yering Station has been identified by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation as an area for protection. The station is the site of a battle between Wurundjeri warriors and the Border Police in 1840. A memorial plaque in the Murrup Brarn Yarra Flats Billabong Reserve commemorates this historical event.

Opportunities for future projects and alignment:

- Investigate with landowners the suite of options for protecting billabongs and improving their hydraulic connection (aligns with initiatives outlined in the *Healthy Waterways Strategy*).
- To mitigate the risk of further degradation and to improve habitats associated with these billabong systems, set targets and invest in revegetation and habitat protection to establish a wide mature cloak of indigenous vegetation encompassing the billabongs and wetlands and providing critical habitat for native animals and birds.
- Partner with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to prepare a landscape assessment that integrates the natural and cultural values of this area. This includes mapping the billabongs and other features that have high environmental, landscape and cultural importance.
- Identify opportunities to reconnect billabongs to the river, naturalise lower reaches of creeks and re-establish riparian habitats to improve water quality of discharges into the Yarra.
- Partner with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to investigate ways to protect cultural values associated with the billabongs between Healesville and Yering Gorge.
- Strengthen planning scheme controls to protect and improve environmental, landscape and cultural values associated with the billabong systems of the lower rural reach.

Yering – Warrandyte landscape protection

The area between Warrandyte and Yering Gorge Bushland Reserve includes important landscapes around Kangaroo Ground, Yering Gorge and Wonga Park that have high scenic, environmental and cultural value. The area also has good quality agricultural land and highly valued scenic rural landscapes. It is designated as a new area for protection to ensure permanent protection in the planning scheme.

Sites of significance nominated by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation in this area for protection include the Bend of Islands and the confluence of Brushy Creek. Barngeong birthing site is a gorge at the confluence of Brushy Creek. This is the Wurundjeri birthing and female initiation site and where Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung leader and internationally acclaimed artist William Barak (1824–1903) was born. Other places of importance in the area include the Neil Douglas Natural Features Reserve, which is across the river from Wittons Reserve.

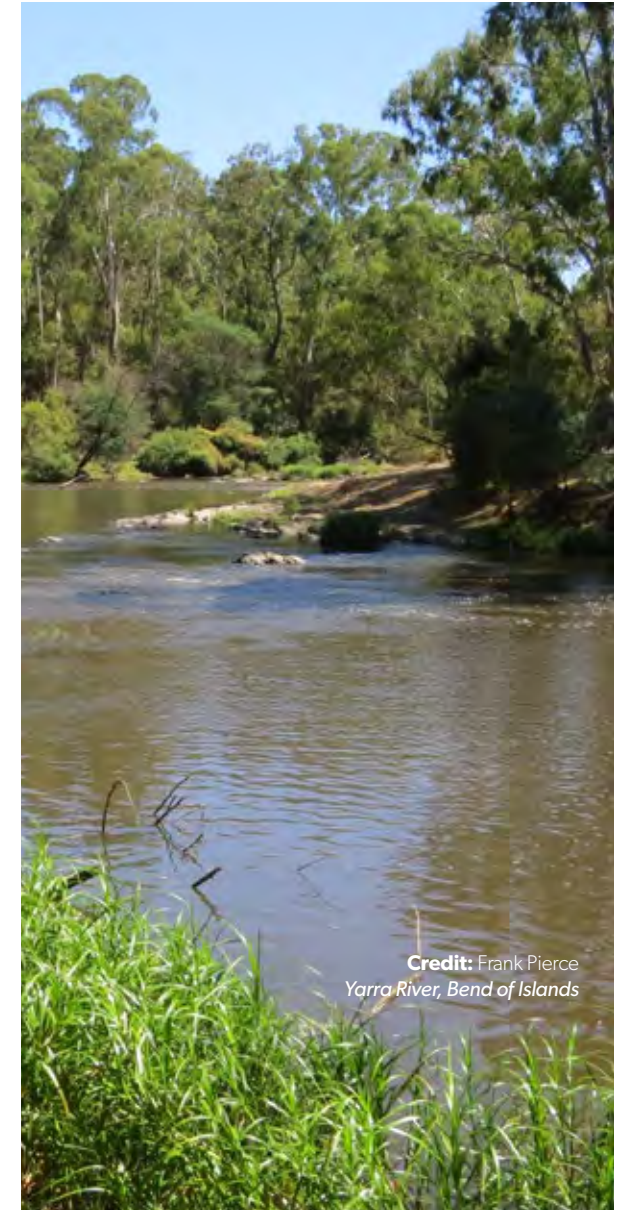
Opportunities for future projects and alignment:

- Enhance opportunities to view and experience important landscapes by boat or on foot and provide additional interpretive information about the significance of these sites at visitor access points. Ensure efforts to increase visitation are balanced against conserving ecological and cultural values.
- Partner with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to investigate ways to identify and protect cultural values associated with Bend of Islands and the Brushy Creek confluence. This may include designating days when these places are closed off to the public to allow use by Traditional Owners for cultural purposes.

- Using the approach to planning controls implemented to protect the Yarra between Richmond and Warrandyte, apply permanent planning controls in the Nillumbik and Manningham planning schemes to ensure protection of the Yarra to the Yarra Ranges municipal boundary.
- Investigate the effectiveness of planning controls and land management practices for protecting and enhancing the role of tributaries as biodiversity corridors for this section of the river (includes Brushy Creek and Jumping Creek).



Credit: Frank Pierce, *Lyrebird, female with curved tail associated with breeding, Bend of Islands.*



Credit: Frank Pierce
Yarra River, Bend of Islands

Kinglake–Yarra biodiversity corridor

The Kinglake–Yarra biodiversity corridor is identified as an area for protection as it is essential for the long-term biodiversity of the Yarra’s natural environs downstream of Yering Gorge, replenishing the river as it journeys on to the city.

The corridor is bound to the west by riparian vegetation along Watsons Creek and to the east along the escarpment. It encompasses Sugarloaf Reservoir and supports areas of very high biodiversity, with rare habitats, plants and animals, including brush-tailed phascogale, slender-tailed dunnart, powerful owl, galaxias and threatened orchid species. It facilitates a vital connection with the Kinglake National Park for animals, such as lyrebirds, and provides an avenue for recovery following bushfires.

Existing planning controls for the corridor include an Environmental Significance Overlay and a Special Use Zone 2 (Environmental Living). The environmental living zone, which covers the Bend of Islands locality, provides a unique example of ‘residential conservation’, which ensures that native flora and fauna are protected by strict regulations prohibiting the introduction of non-indigenous plants and the keeping of pets or livestock including cats, dogs, horses or cattle.

Strong community support and involvement has protected and enhanced the biodiversity of this area by protecting the biodiversity hotspots, restoring degraded land and managing pest plants and animals, including deer, which are increasingly threatening biodiversity. Councils, government agencies and private landholders work collaboratively through initiatives such as the Rivers to Ranges project and the Sugarloaf Link project. By controlling development, managing invasive species, improving the habitat quality and facilitating the movement of wildlife, it is expected that numbers of native species using the corridor will increase over time.

Opportunities for future projects and alignment:

- Define a workable boundary of the biodiversity corridor through a process of consultation with landowners and key stakeholders including Nillumbik Shire Council.
- Investigate the effectiveness of planning controls and land management practices for protecting and enhancing the Yarra–Kinglake biodiversity corridor, including assessment of current conditions and comparison with previous studies.
- Support ongoing advocacy, education, pest eradication and rehabilitation work by the community, council and state government agencies. This includes continued investment in projects such as the Sugarloaf Link project to manage weed and pest invasion.
- Resourcing the implementation of the Bend of Islands Land Management Plan and, where appropriate, promote as a model for other residential conservation initiatives.





Credit: Frank Pierce
Box-ironbark woodland in the Yarra-Kinglake biodiversity corridor

Suburban reach

SUBURBAN REACH 50-YEAR COMMUNITY VISION

Our Yarra River, Birrarung, provides a continuous network of protected parklands, providing inclusive access to all.

A covenant of custodianship is adopted by private landowners along the reach, embedding a culture of respect and responsibility for river values.

The river corridor provides a healthy natural environment, enabling swimming, relaxation and other recreational activities. Importantly, it also supports a flourishing natural ecosystem, including networks of billabongs and wetlands, for indigenous plants and animals to thrive.

This is a valued place of connection to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung culture and community, with a network of hubs of learning, play and celebration. It benefits from a united and integrated approach to governance and land management, guided by the wisdom and practices of Traditional Owners, keeping culture not just in the past but alive into the future.

Land use analysis

The Yarra in the suburban reach flows through bushland, parkland, rural areas and residential neighbourhoods. Its landscapes include steep gorges around Warrandyte, flattening out to broad floodplains and clusters of billabongs of the Chandler Basin downstream of the Plenty River confluence.

A near-continuous network of parklands along the river defines the character of this reach. The parklands include formal recreational spaces, bushland reserves, conservation areas and golf courses. The parklands are a focal point for community activity, enabling people to walk, play, canoe, picnic, cycle, sightsee and attend events. These parklands also have a vital role in protecting local communities from the impacts of flooding.

The creation of parklands has allowed a dense corridor of native vegetation to be retained, providing important habitat for native flora and fauna and connectivity for native wildlife. In many locations, this vegetation extends across private land. Investment in broad scale revegetation programs has resulted in extensive tree canopy cover and some of the highest biodiversity values along this part of the river.

In addition to providing a vital refuge from the city, the parklands are home to numerous sites of ecological and cultural significance to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, including the Bolin Bolin Billabong, Banyule Flats, Yarra Flats, Garambi Baan (Laughing Waters), Tikalara Park and confluences with Mullum Mullum, Diamond and Merri creeks and Plenty River.

The suburban reach also features important historic cultural heritage sites. The Heidelberg School of Australian Impressionism began with the painting of the unique landscapes of the Yarra Flats. The Melbourne

modernist art movement that emerged from what is now the Heide Museum of Modern Art has made a significant and lasting contribution to international modernism. The rich agricultural heritage of the area continues at Petty's Orchard and examples of colonial settlement can be found at places like Pontville Homestead at Tikalara.

The main tributaries in the suburban reach include Anderson, Mullum Mullum, Diamond, Koonung, Darebin and Merri creeks and Plenty River, all of which provide vital biodiversity links into the catchment. These waterways are also noted for their recreational trails that connect neighbouring suburbs to the Main Yarra Trail that runs along the river from Templestowe to the city. This network of trails provides opportunities for transport, exercise, recreation and sight-seeing for residents and visitors, with benefits for community connection and wellbeing.

The Heidelberg Major Activity Centre is a focal point for increased development; supporting a range of commercial, residential and community land uses. Further upstream, Warrandyte, which has historical links dating back to 1851 when gold was discovered, is a thriving residential area and tourist and arts destination.

Fire and flood risks need to be carefully managed and planning scheme overlays for Bushfire Management and Land Subject to Inundation apply to large areas of this reach.

Existing projects in this reach include:

- *Heidelberg Structure Plan* is a strategic planning project to transform Heidelberg into a more vibrant, prosperous, connected and sustainable centre, with carefully managed development and strengthened connections to riverside parklands.
- *Yarra River – Bulleen Precinct Land Use Framework Plan* works within the regional framework established by the Yarra Strategic Plan. This project will guide future land uses and connections in this area of high cultural, environmental, landscape, recreation and tourism value, which includes the Bolin Bolin Billabongs, Banyule Flats, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Banksia Park and Warringal Parklands.
- Fitzsimons Lane upgrade in Eltham and Templestowe, is a roads project to upgrade intersections and improve traffic flow and safety for commuters.
- *Land Use Framework Plans* for four regions that overlap with the suburban reach – Inner Metro, Inner South East, Northern and Eastern – are being prepared under Action 1 of the implementation plan for *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050*. These plans, which include strategies for population growth, jobs, housing, infrastructure, major transport improvements, open space and urban forests, will inform the review and update of local planning schemes.

North East Link

The North East Link is a new road link to connect the Eastern Freeway and the M80 Ring Road in Melbourne's north-east, which will intersect the Yarra River and its parklands. Twin tunnels will be constructed below the riverbed along a north-south alignment, protecting the waterway and its environmentally and culturally sensitive surrounds.

As part of the North East Link's approval, which included assessment under the *Environment Effects Act 1978*, the project has undertaken to recognise and align with relevant Yarra protection principles and have regard to the Yarra Strategic Plan. The project has been planned with involvement from the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, including in development of the project's Urban Design Strategy.

While some open space and sporting facilities will be temporarily occupied or permanently required to build the North East Link, the project also presents opportunities to develop new community infrastructure, improve open space and connectivity and deliver stronger habitat links.

Works associated with the North East Link will include landscaping within the project area that will seek to maximise habitat value and connectivity for native fauna where suitable to the landscape and location. Tree planting may also be required outside the project boundary as part of the project's strategy to achieve a net gain in tree canopy by 2045; planting sites along the river will be considered in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

Pedestrian and cycling improvements will also be provided in the vicinity of a new interchange to be constructed as part of the project at Manningham Road, Bulleen. The project's Urban Design Strategy provides further guidance on revegetation and should be referred to as a guiding document.

New community soccer facilities will be delivered at Templestowe Road, sporting grounds and club facilities will be upgraded at Bulleen Park and the Freeway Golf Course will be retained as an 18-hole facility.

The existing Main Yarra Trail between Belford Road and Burke Road will also be upgraded and a new pedestrian and cycling bridge built across the river. Major works for North East Link are expected to start in 2021 with the road anticipated to open to traffic in 2027.

Suburban Rail Loop



















Suburban Rail Loop is a proposed 90 km orbital rail loop connecting metropolitan rail lines from the Frankston line through to the Werribee line, via Melbourne Airport, better connecting Victorians to jobs, retail, education, health services and each other. As well as delivering significant transport benefits, the loop provides an opportunity to plan the services, amenity and infrastructure Melbourne will need outside of the central city for future generations.

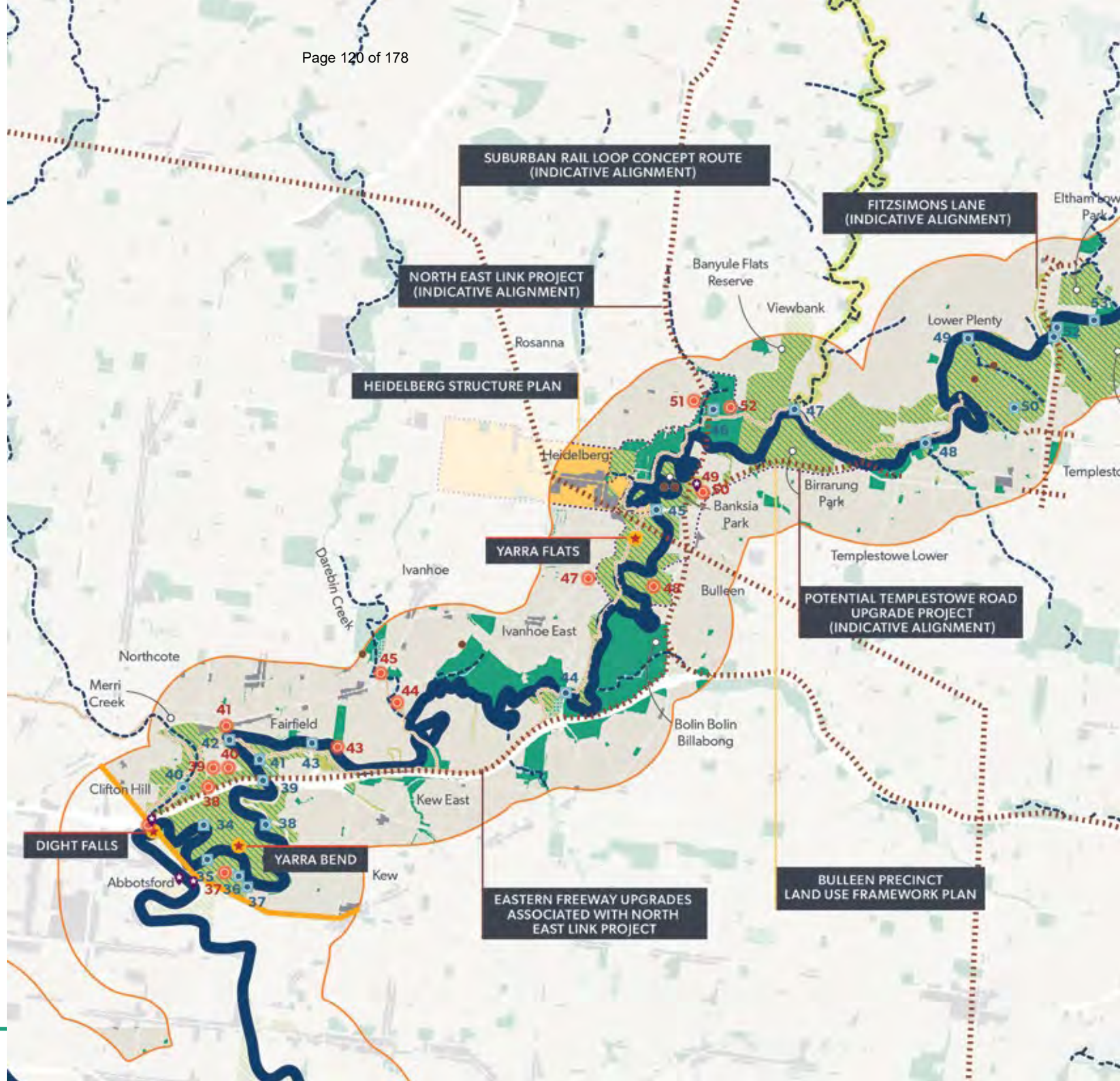
Suburban Rail Loop will be delivered in stages over several decades, with the first stage, SRL East, providing new stations and rail between Cheltenham and Box Hill. The broad alignment and precinct locations have been confirmed, which includes new underground stations at Cheltenham, Clayton, Monash, Glen Waverley, Burwood and Box Hill. Detailed planning for future stages of the project has not yet commenced. The indicative alignment of the Suburban Rail Loop intersects a number of major waterways including the Yarra River.

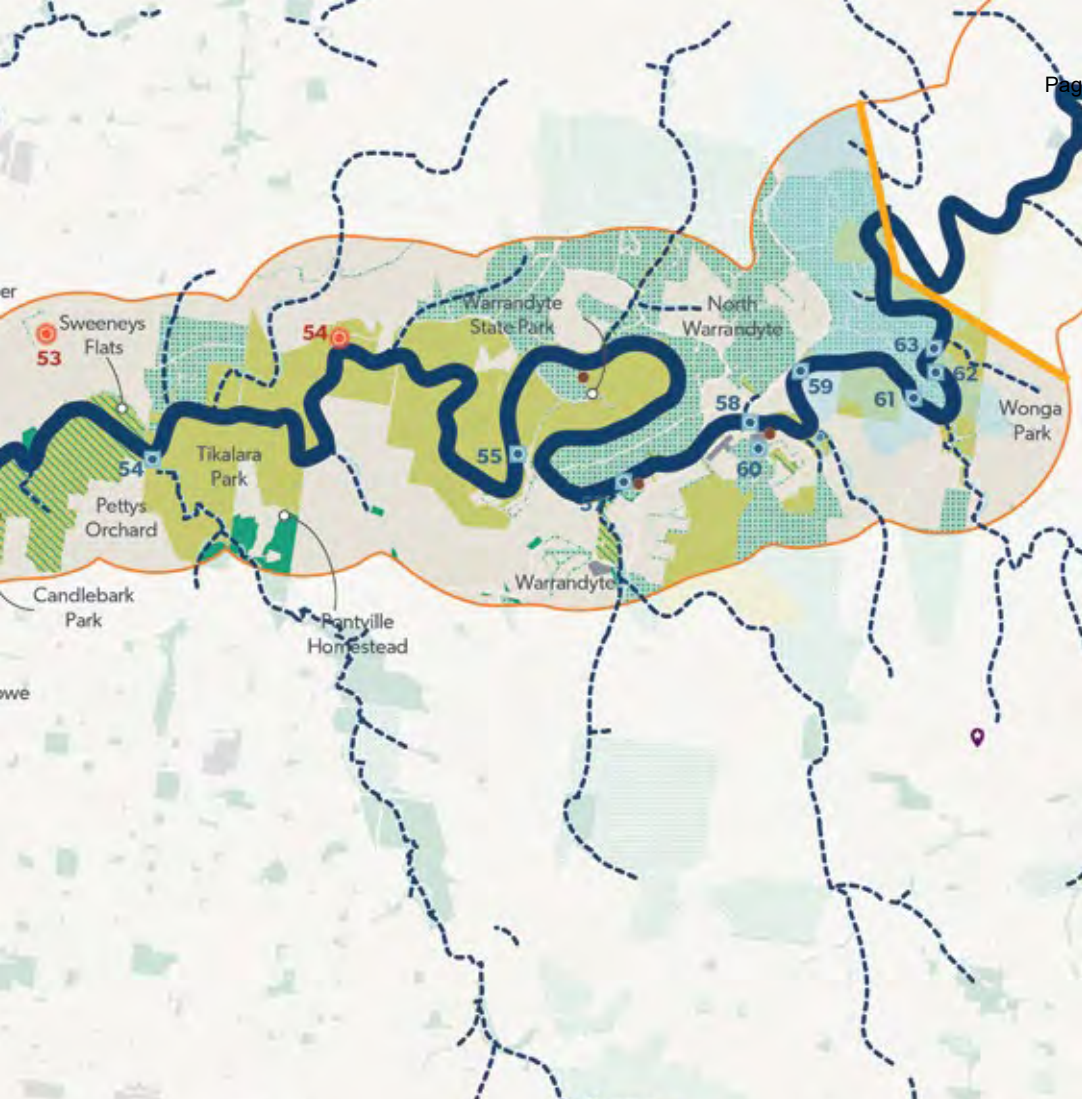
The *Suburban Rail Loop Act 2021* establishes the Suburban Rail Loop Authority to oversee the development and delivery of the project.

MAP 9. SUBURBAN REACH CONTEXT

Legend

-  Cultural heritage sites
-  Community activities
-  Key views
-  Wurundjeri site of significance
-  Recreational trail
-  Reach boundary
-  Yarra Strategic Plan area
-  Stormwater catchments
-  Billabong
-  Yarra River
-  Priority tributary
-  Other tributary
-  Industrial & commercial zone
-  Urban forest
-  Municipal parkland
-  Yarra River land
-  Key area experiencing development
-  Precinct planning area boundary
-  Transport project (indicative only)
-  High-quality riparian vegetation





Wurundjeri sites of significance

- **Yarra Flats**
Area of significant cultural resources: food, fibre, and medicine. It is also a meeting place with other Kulin groups.
- **Yarra Bend Park**
Important Kulin meeting place and the site of the first Aboriginal Police Station and Aboriginal school.
- **Dights Falls**
Birrarung crossing place where a canoe was not required.

Key Views

34. Yarra Bend Park - Loop Area Golf House Lookout
35. Kanes Bridge viewing platform, Yarra Bend Park
36. Views at Studley Park
37. Caratis Christi Lookout, Studley Park
38. Grey Headed Flying Fox Viewing Platform, Bellbird picnic area, Yarra Bend Park
39. Eastern Freeway Bridge, Kew
40. Merri Creek Lookout, Yarra Bend Park
41. Wurundjeri Spur Lookout, Yarra Bend Park
42. Fairfield Pipe Bridge, Kew
43. Chandler Highway Bridge, Alphington
44. Burke Road Bridge, Ivanhoe
45. Banksia Street, Heidelberg
46. Views at Banyule Flats Reserve
47. Yarra River and Plenty River confluence, Viewbank
48. Finns Reserve suspension bridge, Templestowe
49. Westerfolds western-most Rapids Observation Point, Templestowe
50. Manor House viewing platform, Templestowe
51. Fitzsimons Lane, Templestowe
52. Candle Bark Park River Lookout, Templestowe
53. Diamond Creek Trail pedestrian bridge, Eltham
54. Tikalara Park viewing platform, Templestowe
55. Pound Bend Reserve tunnel viewing lookout, Templestowe
57. River view, Warrandyte
58. Kangaroo Ground-Warrandyte Road, Warrandyte
59. 100 Steps Lookout Platform, North Warrandyte
60. Views from trails, Warrandyte
61. River view, Osborne Peninsula
62. Jumping Creek Reserve viewing platform, North Warrandyte

63. Sculpture on river, Warrandyte

Heritage sites

This reach of the Yarra is treasured for a number of other **heritage sites** such as:

37. Studley Park Boathouse
38. Fairlea Women's Prison, Fairfield
39. Yarra Bend Golf Club House
40. Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital, Fairfield
41. Fairfield Boathouse, Fairfield
43. Alphington Swimming Pool
44. Napier Waller House, Ivanhoe
45. Tower Hotel, Alphington
47. Snelleman House, Ivanhoe
48. Bolin Bolin billabong, Bulleen
49. Heide I and Heide II, Bulleen
50. Yingabeal tree at Heide, Bulleen
51. Banyule Homestead, Heidelberg
52. Banyule Flats Reserve, Viewbank
53. Monsalvat, Eltham
54. Garambi Baan Laughing Waters Residency Projects, Laughing Waters

Tourist destinations include:

- Heide Museum of Modern Art, Bulleen
- Warrandyte township
- Warrandyte State Park

Key community activities include:

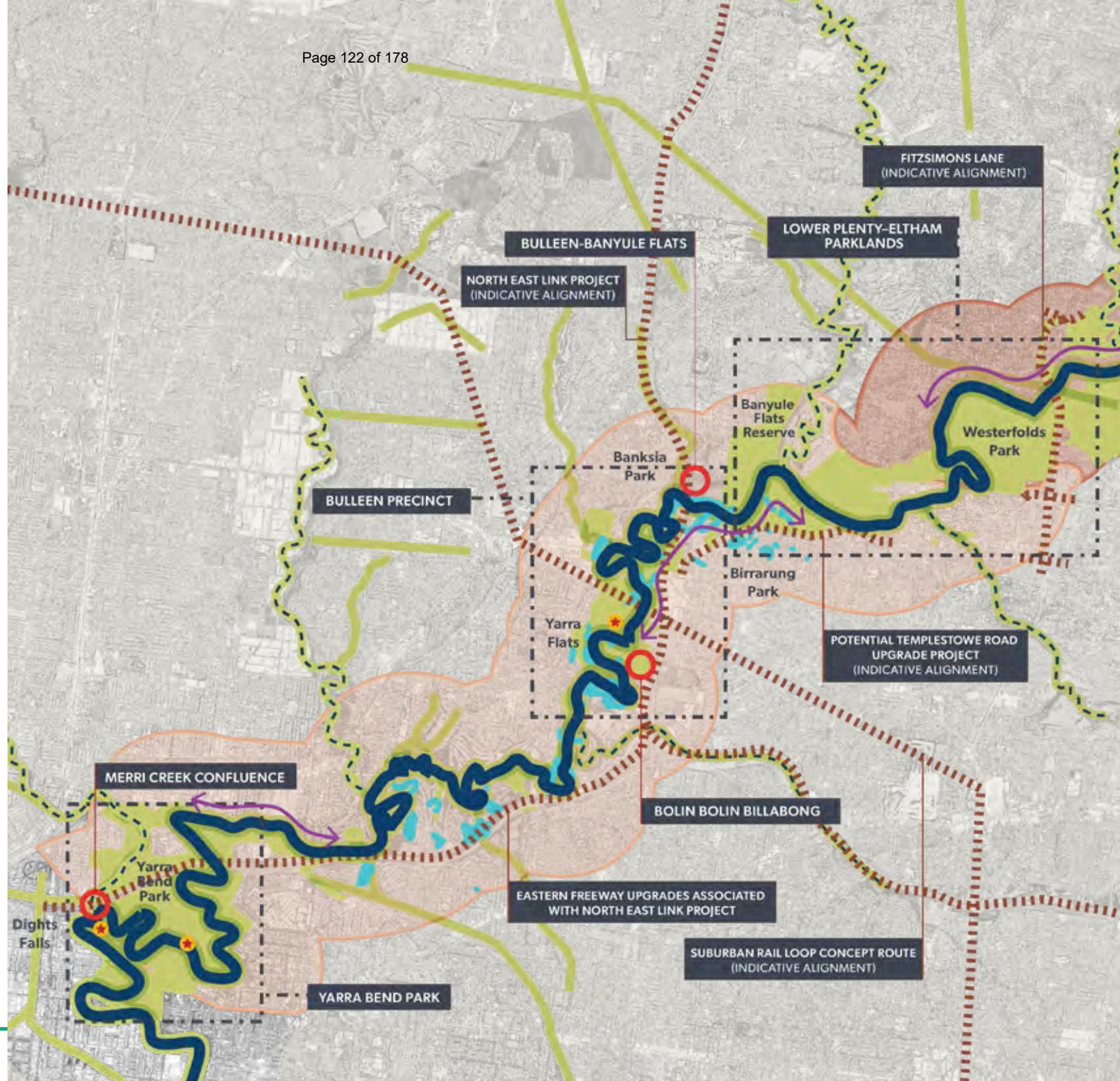
- Twilight Sounds, Heidelberg
- Kids Arty Farty Fest and Grand Parade, Heidelberg
- The Trail Running Series, Yarra Bend
- Run Warrandyte, Warrandyte
- Warrandyte Festival, Warrandyte

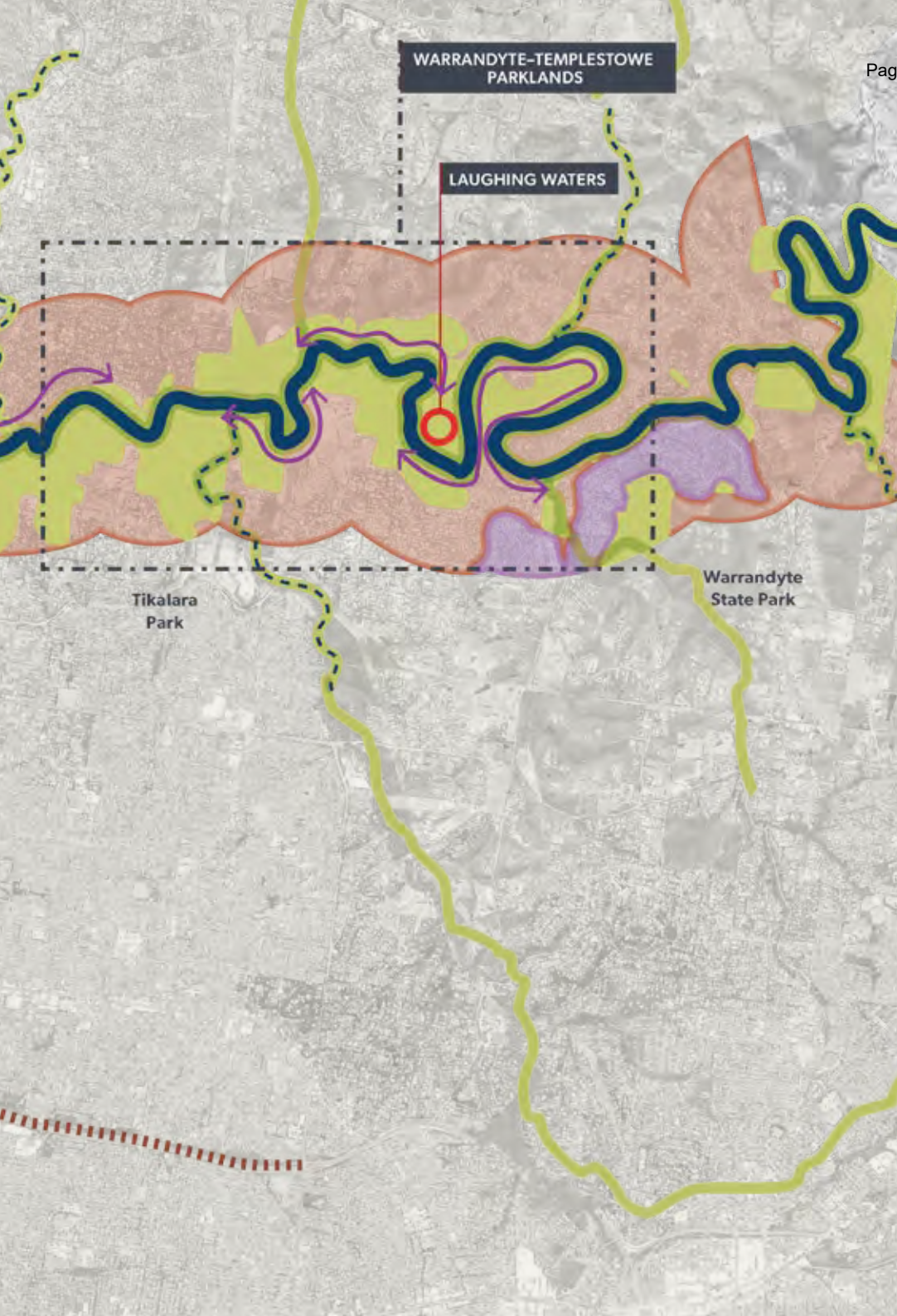
- Astronomical Society of Victoria Star Gazing Night, Westerfolds Park
- Boulevard Christmas Lights, Ivanhoe
- Warrandyte Riverside Market, Warrandyte
- Heide Makers Market, Banksia Park Bulleen
- Fairfield Farmers Market, Alphington

MAP 10. SUBURBAN REACH FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Legend

- Wurundjeri site of significance
- Reach boundary
- Significant place
- Wurundjeri area for protection
- Improved access
- Yarra Strategic Plan area
- Yarra River
- Priority tributary
- Industrial & commercial zone
- Yarra River land
- Transport project (indicative alignment)
- Biodiversity corridor
- Bush residential
- Township
- Suburban





Credit: Melbourne Water,
River access at Westerfolds Park



Credit: Melbourne Water,
Bolin Bolin Billabong, Bulleen

Community priorities and values	Resulting land use directions for the suburban [S] reach:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand the river's local parklands and trails to improve continuous access, increase biodiversity and enhance river health. 	S 4, S 5, S 6, S 16, S 17, S 18 and S 22
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celebrate our spiritual connection to the river and its surrounds. 	S 5 and S 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish new habitat for endangered birds, fish and wildlife. 	S 2, S 3, S 12, S 13, S 18, S 19, S 22 and S 23
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employ collaborative planning processes for development to ensure changes are for the benefit of the river and the advantage of all in the community, not just the few. 	S 4, S 5, S 16, S 17 and S 22
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate to provide innovative immersive experiences with nature by expanding natural river tracks and creating environmental playgrounds along the corridor. 	S 2, S 4, S 5, S 6, S 16 and S 17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities for community education and connection to Wurundjeri knowledge and cultural practice and significant sites. 	S 5 and S 7

Directions for future land use and development in the next 10 years

The land use framework in the suburban reach sets out the future directions for private and public land over the next 10 years. This will assist in achieving the Yarra Strategic Plan performance objectives and ultimately the aspirations of the 50 Year Community Vision and the *Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung (Ancient Spirit & Lore of the Yarra)*.

These are the suburban (S) land use directions.

Yarra River land		PO (Part 1)*
S 1	Ensure decision making for land use, development and land management is guided by the Yarra Protection Principles set out in the <i>Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017</i> . **	PO1, PO2, PO3, PO4
S 2	Protect and enhance native vegetation to provide habitat connections between conservation areas, and along the Yarra River and its tributaries.	PO1
S 3	Investigate new or strengthened protection measures for high-priority tributaries.	PO1
S 4	Design visitor facilities and boat launch sites to be sensitively incorporated into their natural surrounds.	PO3, PO4
S 5	Coordinate approaches to landscaping, wayfinding and the provision of visitor facilities to encourage people to view the Yarra River as one living and integrated natural entity.	PO3, PO4
S 6	Maintain diverse park landscapes that connect people to the variety of past uses and enable a wide range of visitor experiences.	PO2, PO3
S 7	Partner with Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to investigate ways to reflect and celebrate the story of the ancient Yarra River and its people in the design and landscaping of public spaces and parklands.	PO2, PO3

*Alignment with performance objectives in Part 1 ** Decision making can be supported by applying the decision-making framework outlined in Appendix E.

Bush residential		
S 8	Ensure development is screened from view from the Yarra River (and key viewing locations) by native tree canopy and understorey planting.	PO1, PO4
S 9	Ensure development is sited and designed to maintain and enhance the Yarra River's secluded and natural environment.	PO1, PO4
S 10	Implement planning controls to prescribe mandatory building heights and setbacks, to protect landscape and environmental values, and ensure new development is set back from adjoining parklands and conservation areas.	PO1, PO3, PO4
S 11	Design buildings to respect the Yarra River's sensitive landscape setting.	PO4
S 12	Protect and enhance native vegetation to provide habitat connections between conservation areas and along the Yarra River and its tributaries.	PO1
S 13	Investigate new or strengthened protection measures for high-priority tributaries.	PO1
S 14	Ensure development in flood affected areas is informed by the <i>Guidelines for Development in Flood Affected Areas</i> .	PO4

Warrandyte township		
S 15	Implement planning controls to prescribe mandatory building heights and setbacks to protect the Yarra River landscape corridor and ensure development maintains the heritage character of the township.	PO2, PO4
S 16	Ensure new development in the activity centre (on the Yarra River's southern side) creates a positive interface with the Yarra River landscape corridor and facilitates public access to the river where appropriate.	PO3, PO4
S 17	Improve public space and visitor facilities to enhance the Yarra River's role as a community focal point.	PO3
S 18	Plant additional native species to strengthen the riverbank environment and improve landscape character and views to the Yarra River from Yarra Street.	PO1, PO4
S 19	Encourage native planting to create links to the Yarra River's ancient ecology and cultural heritage.	PO1, PO2
S 20	Apply integrated water management principles to optimise water supply, improve water quality and enhance flood protection.	PO1
S 21	Ensure development in flood affected areas is informed by the <i>Guidelines for Development in Flood Affected Areas</i> .	PO4

Suburban		
S 22	Protect and enhance native vegetation – along biodiversity corridors, through parklands, private gardens and local street networks – to provide habitat connections between conservation areas and to enhance the community's sense of connection to the riverside environment.	PO1, PO3
S 23	Investigate new or strengthened protection measures for high-priority tributaries.	PO1
S 24	Implement planning controls to prescribe mandatory building heights and setbacks, to protect landscape and environmental values, and ensure new development is set back from adjoining parklands and conservation areas.	PO1, PO3, PO4
S 25	Design buildings to respect the Yarra River's sensitive landscapes and key views and ensure they sit below the height of the tree canopy.	PO4
S 26	Protect and reinforce a strong tree canopy across surrounding ridgelines to conceal views of buildings from the river and its parklands.	PO1, PO3, PO4
S 27	Apply integrated water management principles to optimise water supply, improve water quality and enhance flood protection.	PO1
S 28	Ensure development in flood affected areas is informed by the <i>Guidelines for Development in Flood Affected Areas</i> .	PO4

Suburban reach – significant places



Credit: Melbourne Water, Yarra River, Warrandyte State Park

Warrandyte – Templestowe parklands

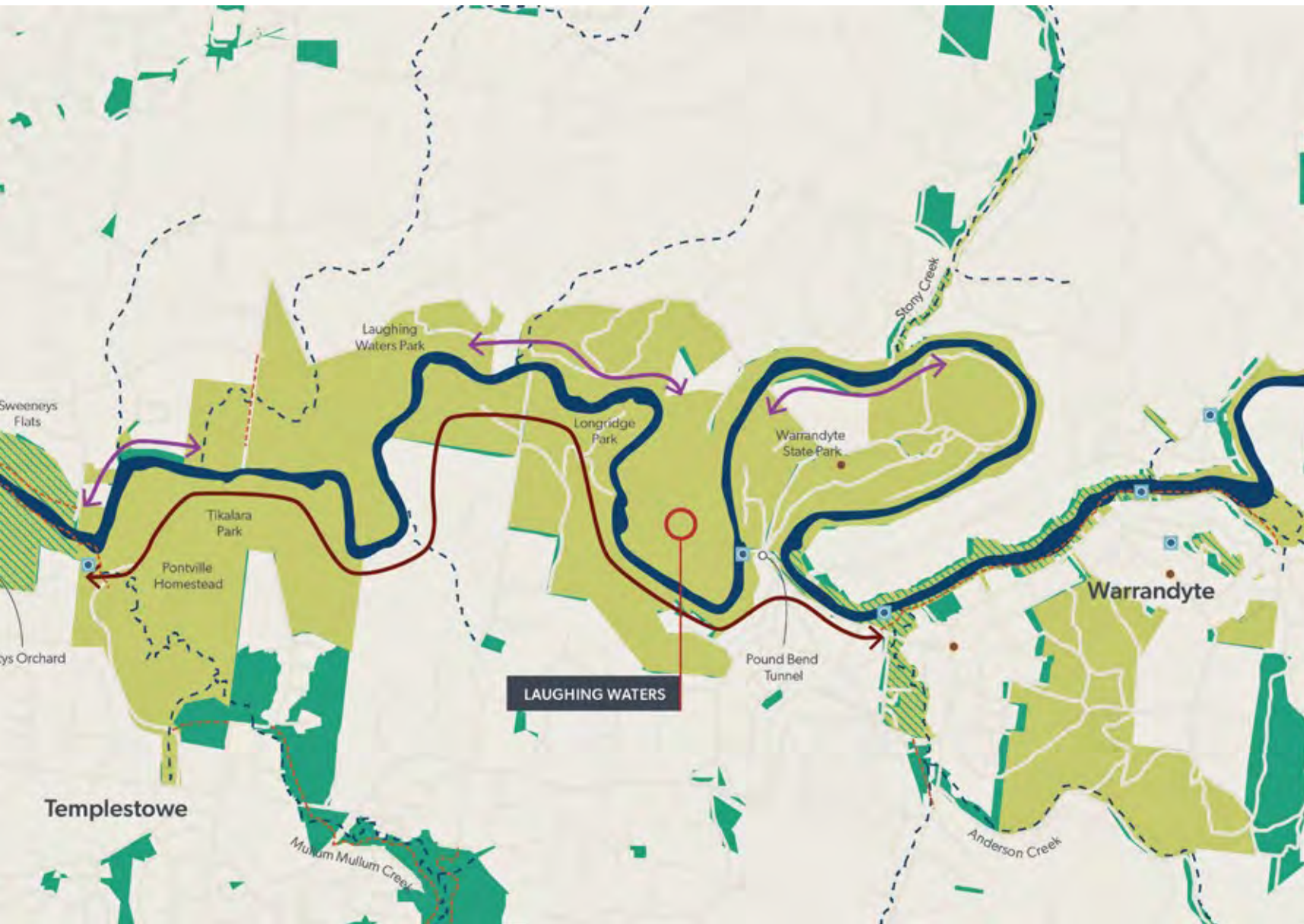
The public parklands between Warrandyte and Templestowe are of immense environmental, social, cultural and heritage value. These parklands present a range of opportunities to deliver on the community's aspirations in the suburban reach. The natural bushland character typical of these parklands supports local biodiversity and provides opportunities for the community to connect with nature. Tributaries including Andersons, Stony, Mullum Mullum and Diamond creeks, which flow through these parklands, provide important links for biodiversity and community access.

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation has nominated Garambi Baan (Laughing Waters) as an area for priority protection. This has been an important gathering place for tens of thousands of years as well as an important site for growing and harvesting food. Significantly, historic Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung iuk (eel) traps remain at the site and are actively maintained by the corporation with Parks Victoria.

Opportunities for future projects and alignment:

- Fill gaps in the network of parklands along the river and enhance activity nodes and connections between recreational trails through these parklands.
- Investigate opportunities for cross-river connections that will facilitate improved access to the river and parklands from local recreational trail networks. A key initiative includes Manningham City Council's project to extend the Main Yarra Trail from Tikalara Park to Warrandyte.
- Partner with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to investigate ways to protect cultural values associated with Garambi Baan (Laughing Waters).
- Provide safe visitor access to the heritage-rich landscapes within Warrandyte State Park. Create new recreational trails and deliver interpretative signage to connect visitors with the mining heritage of the region.
- Protect and upgrade significant buildings and sites, such as Pontville Homestead and Pettys Orchard on the south side of the river, and Birrarung House and River Bend House in the Laughing Waters precinct on the north side. Investigate options for sensitive reuse to help fund restoration projects and protect heritage values in line with community expectations.
- Improve camping facilities at Longridge Park.





Legend

- Cultural heritage sites
- Community activities
- Key views
- Wurundjeri area of protection
- Yarra River
- Yarra River land
- Municipal parkland
- Greater Yarra urban parkland
- Priority tributary
- Recreational trail
- Transport projects (indicative alignment)
- Improved access
- Extend Main Yarra Trail

Lower Plenty – Eltham Parklands

This section of the suburban reach includes a network of parklands and conservation areas with high environmental and cultural value. Connected via the Main Yarra Trail, the parklands are an important recreational asset, offering a diverse range of Yarra River experiences. There is great potential to improve recreational trails and access, establish new habitat and broaden community enjoyment of the Yarra River through a range of experiences, including nature-based recreation. The Warringal Parklands and Banyule Flats on the northern side of the river are of state conservation significance due to the extensive stands of wetland vegetation and important waterbird populations.

Opportunities for future projects and alignment:

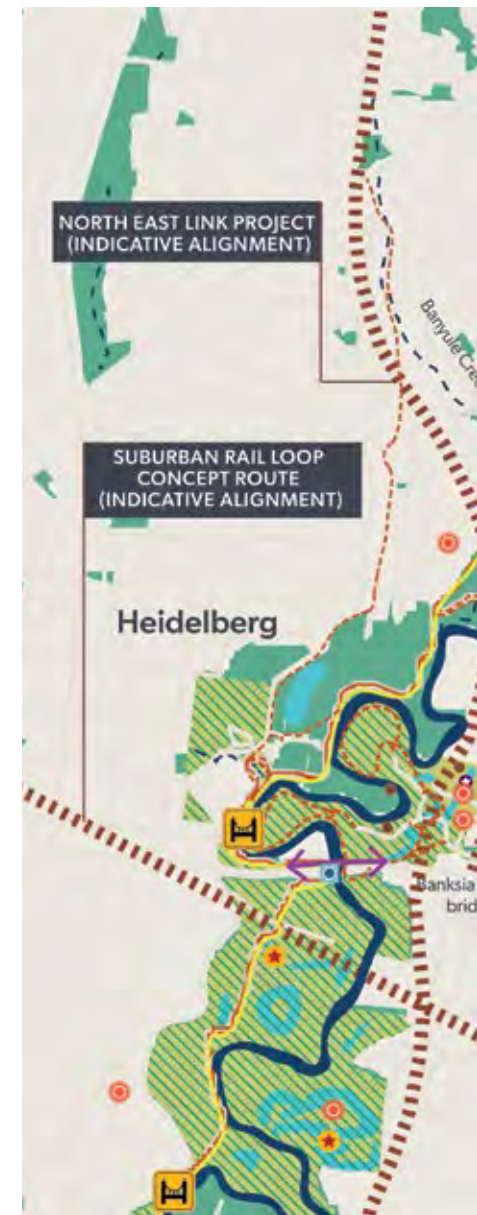
- Improve connections to and between parklands and improve access and connection to the Yarra River. This includes consideration for pedestrian and cyclist bridge crossings proposed in the draft Yarra River – Bulleen Precinct Land Use Framework Plan, which will support regional access to the local area.
- Coordinate work across Murundaka and Montpellier wetlands and investigate opportunities to expand wetlands and coordinate works with neighbouring land managers and areas. Continue to work with the local community to support their stewardship role. Consider visitor access to the sites whilst maintaining strong environmental protection and enhancement programs.
- Rehabilitate land at the end of Bonds Road, removing weeds, revegetating riverbanks and creating river access and viewing opportunities.
- Develop a biodiversity and conservation management and improvement plan for the floodplain and riparian areas adjacent to the Yarra River, including investigating opportunities to protect and improve platypus and powerful owl habitats.
- Protect the significant environmental, cultural and landscape values of the Plenty River and its confluence with the Yarra River, located within the Rosanna Golf Club site.
- Improve opportunities for paddle sports at Westerfolds Park.
- Implement (priority) initiatives identified in *Nilumbik Shire Council's Eltham Lower Park Masterplan (2008)* and additional landscape works and approved initiatives as reviewed in 2020.



Credit: Melbourne Water



Credit: Melbourne Water, Paddle course, Westerfolds Park





Legend

- Key tourist destinations
- Cultural heritage sites
- Community activities
- Key views
- Wurundjeri area of protection
- Yarra River
- Billabong
- Yarra River land
- Municipal parkland
- Greater Yarra urban parkland
- Priority tributary
- Recreational trail
- Main Yarra trail
- Transport projects (indicative alignment)
- Improved access
- Priority boat launch site
- Proposed bridge



Yarra River – Bulleen Precinct

The Yarra River – Bulleen Precinct comprises the stretch of river through Lower Templestowe, Heidelberg and Bulleen, which is home to parklands and special places with distinct natural and cultural values, including the Bolin Bolin Billabong and the Heide Museum of Modern Art.

DELWP is currently preparing the Yarra River – Bulleen Precinct Land Use Framework Plan to guide future land uses and connections for the precinct. Informed by the protection principles in the Act and the Yarra 50 Year Community Vision, the plan will be complementary to the broader regional framework set out in the Yarra Strategic Plan. The framework plan will identify where future active sporting facilities can be located. It will also include consideration of development on private land adjacent to the river.

Bolin Bolin, meaning ‘place of many lagoons’ in Woi-wurrung language, is part of a highly significant cultural and ecological landscape of wetlands and floodplains. Under natural conditions these billabongs would fill with water when the Yarra, Birrarung, periodically overflowed its banks and reconnected with the surrounding country. Eels (iuk) and other fish would come into the billabongs with the flowing water, providing plentiful supply for the Woi-wurrung people when the flood waters receded. However, water extraction, channel erosion and modifications, as well as drought and climate change, have prevented many of these billabongs from filling each year as they would have in the past.

Credit: *Inge King*

Rings of Saturn by Inge King,
Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne
Commissioned through the Heide Foundation with significant
assistance from Lindsay and Paula Fox 2005
© Estate of Inge King

Opportunities for future projects and alignment:

- Deliver the North East Link, including an interchange at Manningham Road and a range of improvements to pedestrian and cycling paths and active sporting facilities, such as the Templestowe Road Soccer Facilities.
- Explore upgrade of Templestowe Road to cater for the current and future needs of all road users.
- Explore options to improve community facilities such as those identified in Manningham Council's Yarra River Concept Plan 2019.
- Progress a new pedestrian and cycling bridge across the Yarra River at Yarra Street, Heidelberg and further downstream improve connections and infrastructure for the Main Yarra Trail and Darebin Creek Trail.
- Expand public parklands for recreational and conservation purposes, including protecting the environmental and cultural values of Yarra Flats and creating improved visitor facilities for the Heidelberg Artists' Trail.
- Protect the environmental and cultural values of Banyule Flats.
- Protect the environmental and cultural values of the Bolin Bolin Billabong, including continued program of restoring natural water flow regimes into the billabong.
- Investigate opportunities to improve wetland watering regimes for Annulus, Banyule Flats and Bolin Bolin billabongs to meet ecological watering objectives, and to improve ecosystem services, as well as cultural and social values (as per *Healthy Waterways Strategy 2018*).

To inform the final framework plan for this precinct, the Minister for Planning has appointed the Yarra River – Bulleen Precinct Advisory Committee, requesting that the committee conduct public hearings and provide recommendations on a final land use framework.



Credit: Melbourne Water,
Banyule wetlands, Bulleen



Credit: Melbourne Water,
Bolin Bolin Billabong, Bulleen

Yarra Bend Park

As the largest area of natural bushland near the city, Yarra Bend Park is important to both the river and Melbourne's community. It is a key location for land and water-based recreation and includes the historic Fairfield and Studley Park boathouses as well as active recreational and sports facilities. This area is also home to a colony of nationally-threatened grey-headed flying-foxes.

Yarra Bend Park is an important Kulin meeting place and has been nominated as a site of significance by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation. The park includes the site of the former Aboriginal

School and Aboriginal Police Station and the Merri Creek confluence, which is designated as a priority area for protection by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.

Opportunities for future projects and alignment:

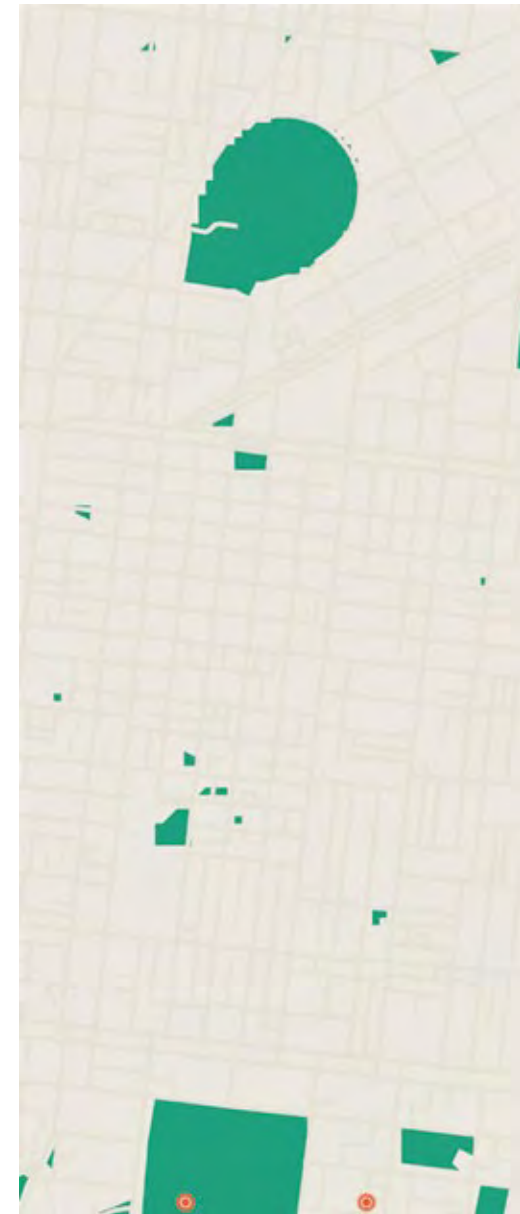
- Improve visitor facilities and educational information at the grey-headed flying-fox colony.
- Improve sporting facilities in the Fairlea precinct of the park.
- Improve infrastructure and facilities at key visitor locations.
- Enhance and protect existing vegetation and habitat links, particularly along the banks of the Yarra River and Merri Creek.
- Develop nature play areas to encourage families to connect with the environmental and cultural heritage values of the park.
- Partner with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to investigate ways to protect the cultural values associated with Yarra Bend Park.

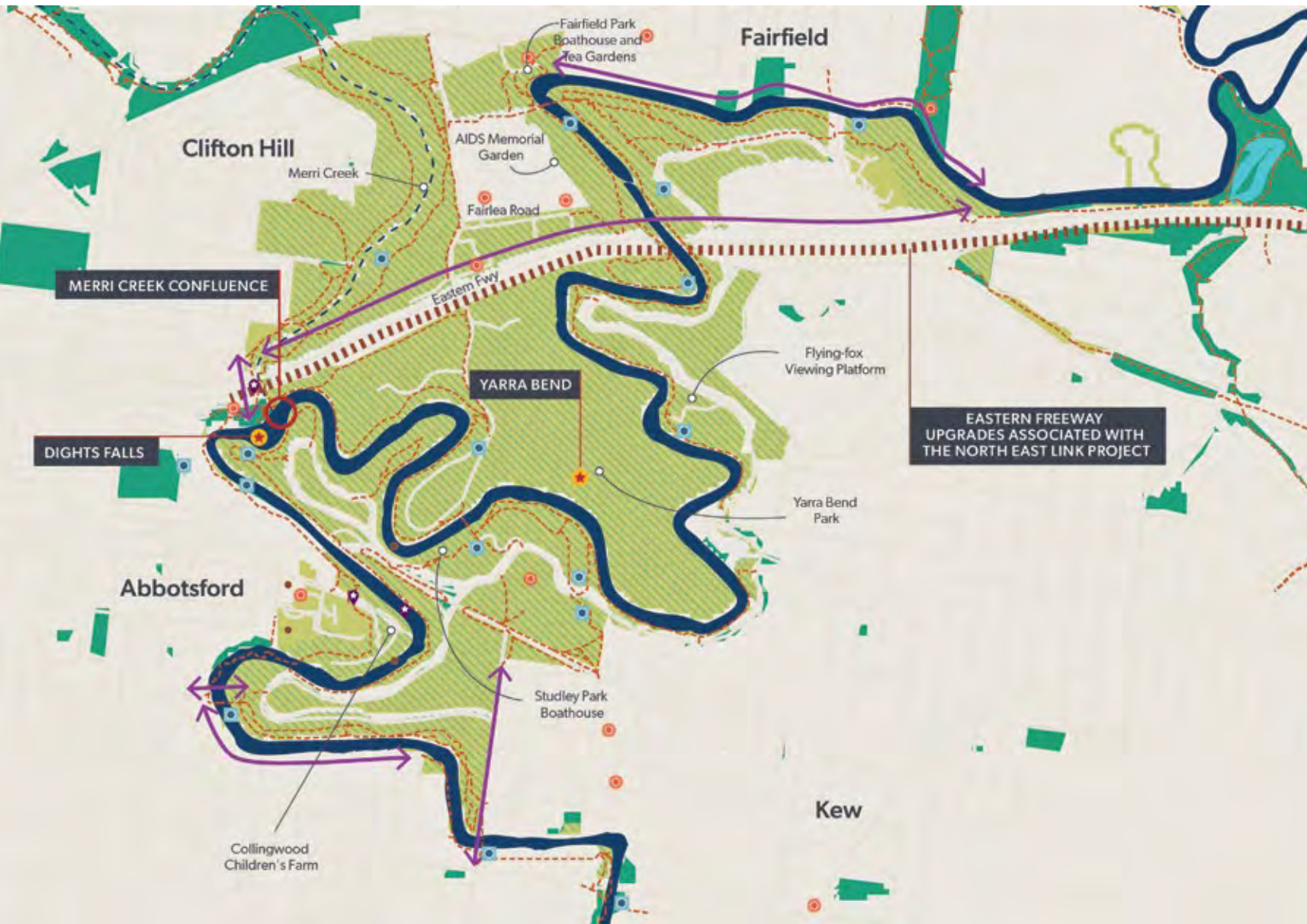


Credit: Melbourne Water,
Flying foxes at Yarra Bend Park



Credit: Melbourne Water,
Flying fox viewing platform, Yarra Bend Park





- Legend**
- Key tourist destinations
 - Cultural heritage sites
 - Community activities
 - Key views
 - Wurundjeri site of significance
 - Wurundjeri area of protection
 - Yarra River
 - Billabong
 - Yarra River land
 - Municipal parkland
 - Greater Yarra urban parkland
 - Priority tributary
 - Recreational trail
 - Transport projects (indicative alignment)
 - Improved access

SUBURBAN REACH – SIGNIFICANT PLACES

Inner city reach

INNER CITY REACH 50-YEAR COMMUNITY VISION

Our Yarra River, Birrarung, is a thriving river for our thriving city.

It provides a unique place of transition, both spiritually and physically. Here, the river and its treasured banks and backdrops are Melbourne's meeting place – an inclusive and iconic place for connection, celebration, recreation and learning.

Our love for its vast and expanding green spaces and clean waters provide a healthy habitat for all.

Land use analysis

The Yarra River is an iconic part of central Melbourne. It is a place where people of all backgrounds – locals and visitors – have come together for generations. For thousands of years the Yarra, Birrarung has been home to important cultural places for Traditional Owners, including Yarra Falls, confluences with the Maribyrnong River and Merri Creek, Dights Falls, and the sites where Federation Square and Yarra Park (including the Melbourne Cricket Ground [MCG]) are now located).

Colonial settlers arriving in the 1800s depended on the river, particularly as a harbour. There are many visible reminders of the Yarra's rich maritime history including goods sheds, cranes, dry docks, warehouses, wharves and vaults dotted along the lower part of the river.

Today a modern and growing cityscape weaves along and around these important sites. Surrounding the river, the booming city of Melbourne has emerged, now supporting diverse communities and the livelihoods of a 5 million-strong population. Parklands line much of the river today, providing a highly valued landscape setting within the dense urban environment. With population growth expected to put high demand on housing, infrastructure and development in the inner-city reach over the next 10 years, it is vital that the Yarra's parklands continue to provide respite from the city while protecting and strengthening urban biodiversity.

The Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, which is adjacent to the river, is one of the world's leading botanic gardens and a centre of excellence for horticulture, science and education. The gardens are admired as a living work of art with picturesque vistas

extending over 38 hectares – across lakes, sweeping lawns and arrays of garden beds – providing a haven for local and overseas visitors. For over 170 years the gardens have contributed to Melbourne's liveability and witnessed the city's changing history, society and character while providing a home for major events and daily experiences.

The river in this reach supports a helipad that offers tours and charter flights and other air services. The river is also the focus for on-water events including the Moomba festival, rowing regattas, dragon boat racing and the Melbourne Festival.

There is a mix of land uses in this reach, including extensive areas designated for commercial activity. *Plan Melbourne* identifies a number of activity centres near the river that support a range of commercial, residential and community land uses and are focal points for future development.

Parts of the inner city reach are experiencing significant change. New land uses and development are changing the built form and character of the Yarra River's edge. Change is intensified at the Docklands and Fishermans Bend urban renewal precincts, and is also occurring in other renewal areas in central Melbourne, Southbank, Northbank, South Yarra, Cremorne, Richmond and Abbotsford.

Existing projects in this reach include:

- Melbourne's Docklands is an urban renewal project reconnecting central Melbourne with its historic waterfront. Now two-thirds complete, it spans 200 hectares of land and water on the north side of the river and comprises residential, commercial, entertainment, sporting and events spaces. Designed to celebrate the waterfront, Docklands provides continual public access with 20–30 metre wide promenades for north-facing waterfronts and 6–20 metre wide promenades for south-facing waterfronts. Development plans are in place for the various precincts that front the river.
- *The Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne Gardens Master Plan 2020–2040* will guide changes at the gardens over the next 20 years. The master plan addresses the challenges of climate change, increased recognition of Aboriginal cultural values and protection of the State Botanical Collection.
- *Land Use Framework Plans* for two regions that overlap with the inner city reach – Inner Metro and Inner South East – are being prepared under Action 1 of the implementation plan for *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050*. These plans will inform the review and update of local planning schemes.
- Fishermans Bend urban renewal area is Australia's largest urban renewal project covering approximately 480 hectares on the south side of the Yarra River. By 2050, it will be home to approximately 80,000 residents and provide employment for up to 80,000 people.
- The Metro Tunnel is nine kilometres of twin rail tunnels passing under the Yarra River. Five new underground stations will be constructed, with a completion date of 2025. The top of the twin tunnels is around 12 metres below the riverbed where it crosses under the river on the east side of the Princes Bridge.
- The West Gate Tunnel Project will deliver a vital alternative to the West Gate Bridge, providing a second river crossing, quicker and safer journeys, removing thousands of trucks off residential streets, improving pedestrian and cycling paths and creating new parklands.

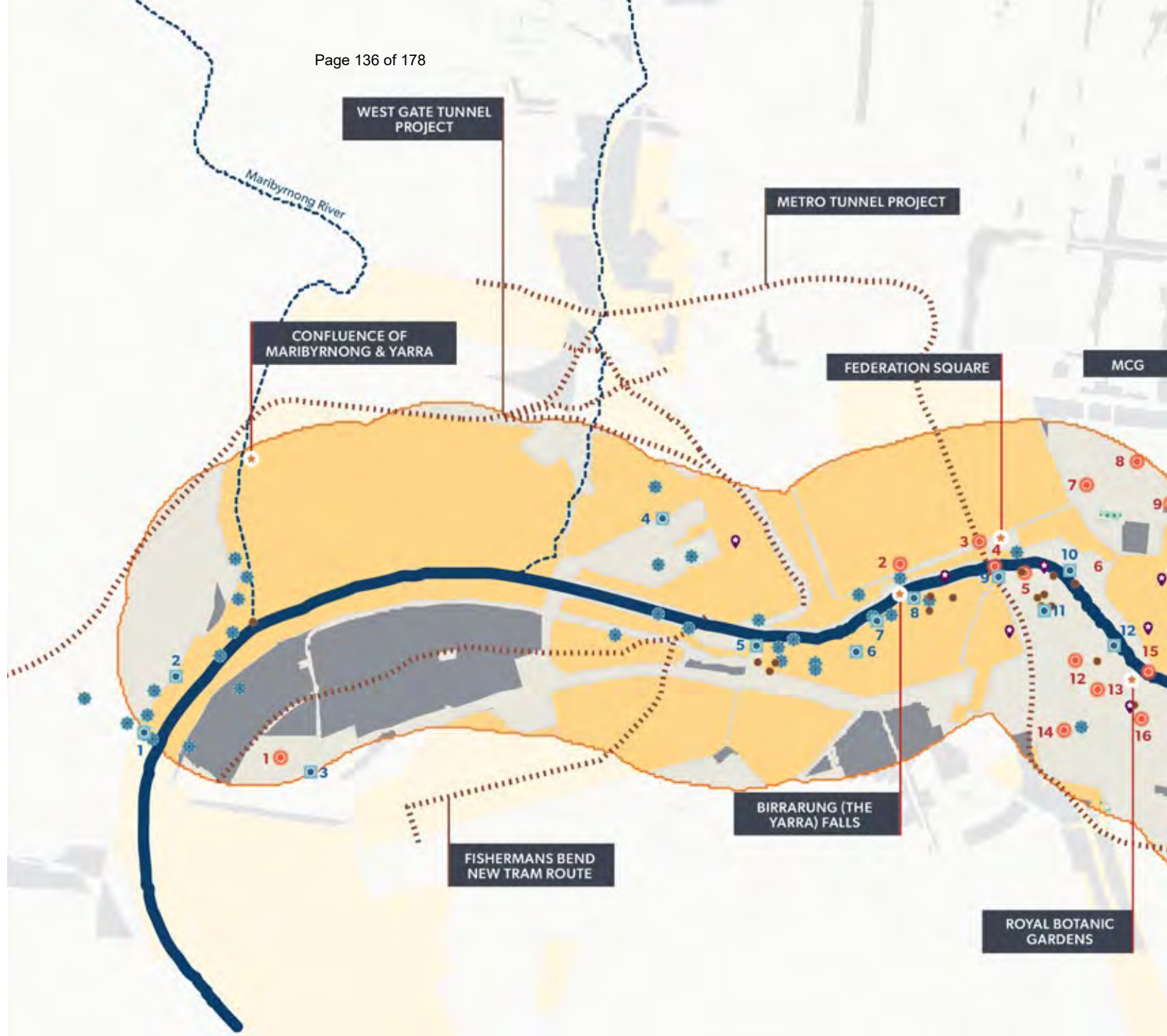


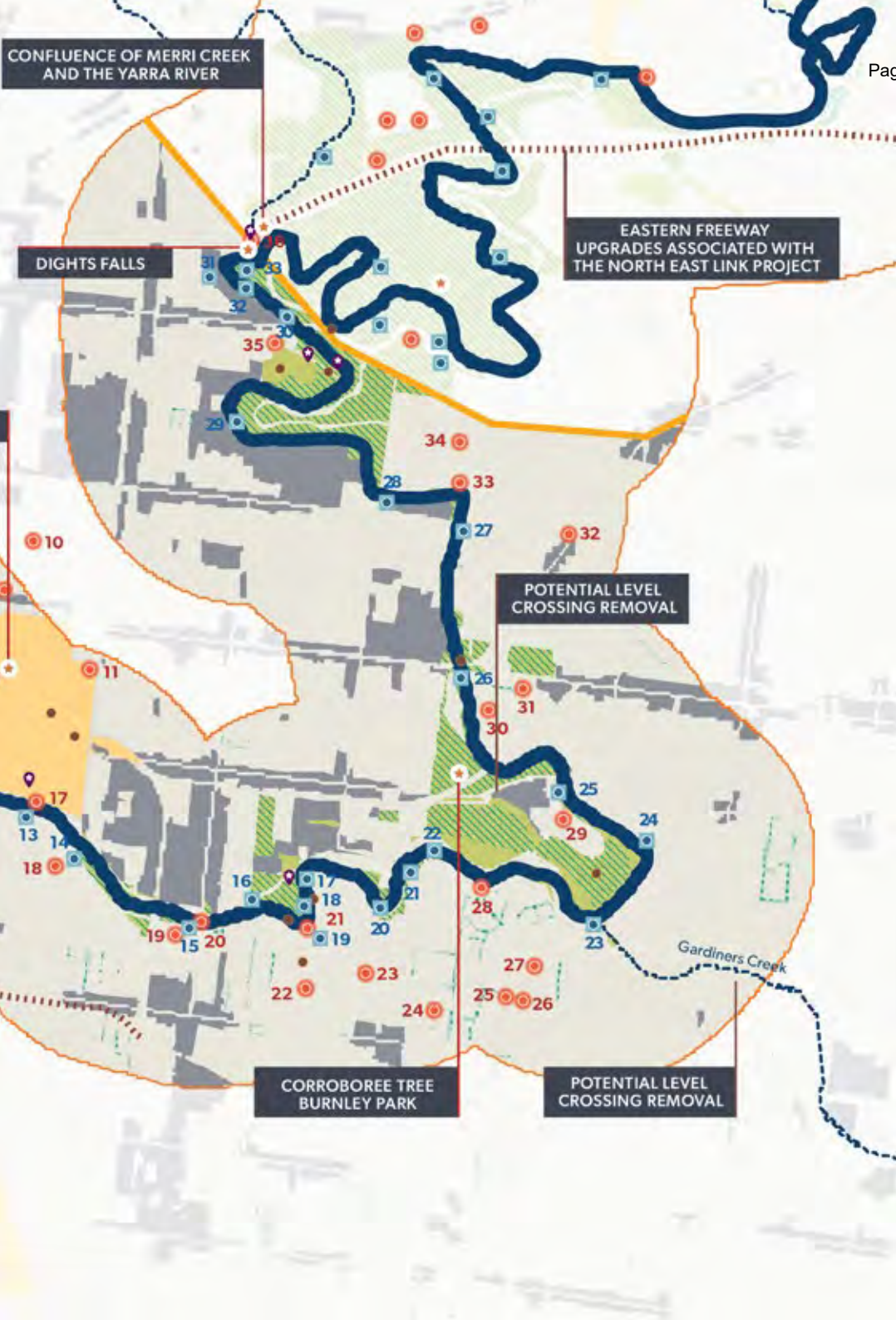
Credit: Melbourne Water,
Main Yarra Trail, inner city reach

MAP 11. INNER CITY REACH CONTEXT

Legend

- Key tourist destinations
- Cultural heritage sites
- Community activities
- Key views
- Maritime heritage site
- Site of Aboriginal cultural significance
- Recreational trail
- Reach boundary
- Yarra Strategic Plan area
- Yarra River
- Priority tributary
- Other tributary
- Industrial & commercial zone
- Urban forest
- Municipal parkland
- Yarra River land
- Key area experiencing development
- Transport project (indicative alignment)
- High-quality riparian vegetation





Sites of Aboriginal cultural significance

- Confluence of Merri Creek and the Yarra**
 Important camp site and meeting place for the Kulin.
- Dights Falls**
 Birrarung crossing place where a canoe was not required.
- Confluence of Gardiners Creek and Yarra River**
 These waterways provided food including plants, eels, fish, mussels and waterfowl as well as being traditional camping places.
- Corroboree Tree Burnley Park**
 This huge, ancient, River Red Gum once served as a marker of clan territories, and also a place for gatherings and celebrations (corroborees).
- Royal Botanic Gardens**
 The Tromgin lagoon, at what is now the Royal Botanic Gardens, was an important source of eels.
- MCG and Yarra Park**
 Significant ceremonial ground used until the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people were displaced from Melbourne city.
- Federation Square**
 Traditional meeting place of the Kulin.
- Birrarung (the Yarra) Falls**
 Natural rock barrier formed a waterfall separating salty tidal water from the fresh water and provided a crossing point. The falls were blasted away in the 1880s to make way for Queens Bridge.

Confluence of the Maribyrnong and Yarra rivers

High-resource area in the swampy salt flats, with higher ground for meeting and trade with other Kulin groups.

Key Views

- River views, Spotswood
- River views, Port Melbourne
- Viewing Platform - section of old Westgate Bridge, Westgate Park Picnic Ground
- River views from restaurants, Docklands
- Charles Grimes Bridge, Wurundjeri Way
- Spencer Street Bridge, Melbourne
- King Street Bridge, Southbank
- Queens Bridge, Melbourne
- River view, Princes Bridge
- Birrarung Marr, Melbourne
- River view, Queen Victoria Memorial Building
- Swan Street Bridge, Alexandra Avenue
- Morell Bridge, South Yarra
- Hoddle Bridge, Punt Road
- Church Street Bridge, South Yarra
- Richmond Park, Richmond
- Yarra River Reserve, South Yarra
- Herring Island viewing platform, Herring Island
- Como Park North, South Yarra
- Loys Paddock Reserve, Burnley
- Yarra River frontage, Alexandra Avenue
- MacRobertson Bridge, St George's Road

- Gardiners Creek Bridge, Monash Freeway
- Fairview Park, Hawthorn
- Wallen Road Bridge, Burnley
- Hawthorn Bridge, Bridge Road and Burwood Road
- Victoria Bridge, Victoria Street and Barkers Road
- Dickinsons Reserve-Walmer Street wetland foot bridge, Andrews Reserve Trail
- Collins Bridge, Gipps Street
- Johnston Street Bridge, Abbotsford
- Yarra Bend Park - Upper Loop Area - Dights Falls
- 'Wominjeka wall', Abbotsford
- Dights Falls, Abbotsford

Cultural Heritage sites

1. West Gate Park, Port Melbourne
2. Customs House, Melbourne
3. Flinders Street Station, Melbourne
4. Princes Bridge, Melbourne
5. Boat sheds, Yarra Bank
6. Speakers' Corner, Yarra Bank
7. Treasury Gardens, East Melbourne
8. Fitzroy Gardens, East Melbourne
9. Mosslenoch, East Melbourne
10. Little Parndon, East Melbourne
11. Yarra Park, East Melbourne
12. Domain Parklands, Melbourne
13. Government House, Kings Domain, Melbourne
14. Shrine of Remembrance, Kings Domain, Melbourne
15. Alexandra Avenue, South Yarra
16. Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne
17. Morrell Bridge, South Yarra
18. Robin Boyd House, South Yarra
19. Melbourne High School, South Yarra
20. Church Street Bridge, South Yarra
21. Como Park, South Yarra
22. Como House, South Yarra
23. 42 Wallace Ave, Toorak
24. Trawalla, Toorak
25. Toorak House, Toorak
26. 22 St Georges Road, Toorak
27. Illawarra, Williamstown
28. Edzell, Toorak
29. Burnley College of Horticulture, Richmond
30. Invergowrie, Malvern
31. 1 Shakespeare Grove, Hawthorn
32. Kew Tram Depot, Kew
33. McIntyre House, Kew

34. Studley Park residential estate, Kew
35. Convent of the Good Shepherd, Abbotsford
36. Dights Falls, Abbotsford
37. Studley Park, Kew

Maritime heritage sites

- Fishermans Bend timber wharves, Fishermans Bend
- Melbourne Steamship Building, Melbourne
- Dudley Street Victoria Dock, Docklands
- Flagstaff Gardens, Melbourne
- Port of Melbourne, West Melbourne
- Turning basin, Yarra River
- Yarra South Wharf
- Yarra Swinging Basin
- Queens Wharf, Melbourne
- The Island Diversion Cutting, Yarra River
- Australian Wharf, Docklands
- Duke & Orrs Dry Dock, South Wharf
- Sandridge Railway Line Bridge, Melbourne
- Former Port of Melbourne Authority Building, Melbourne
- Queens Warehouse, Docklands
- Mission to Seamen, Docklands
- Cargo sheds and wharves, Docklands
- Princes Walk Vaults, Melbourne
- Victoria Dock, Docklands
- Berth No 5. North Wharf, Docklands
- Coode Canal, Melbourne
- Polly Woodside, South Wharf
- Central Pier, Docklands

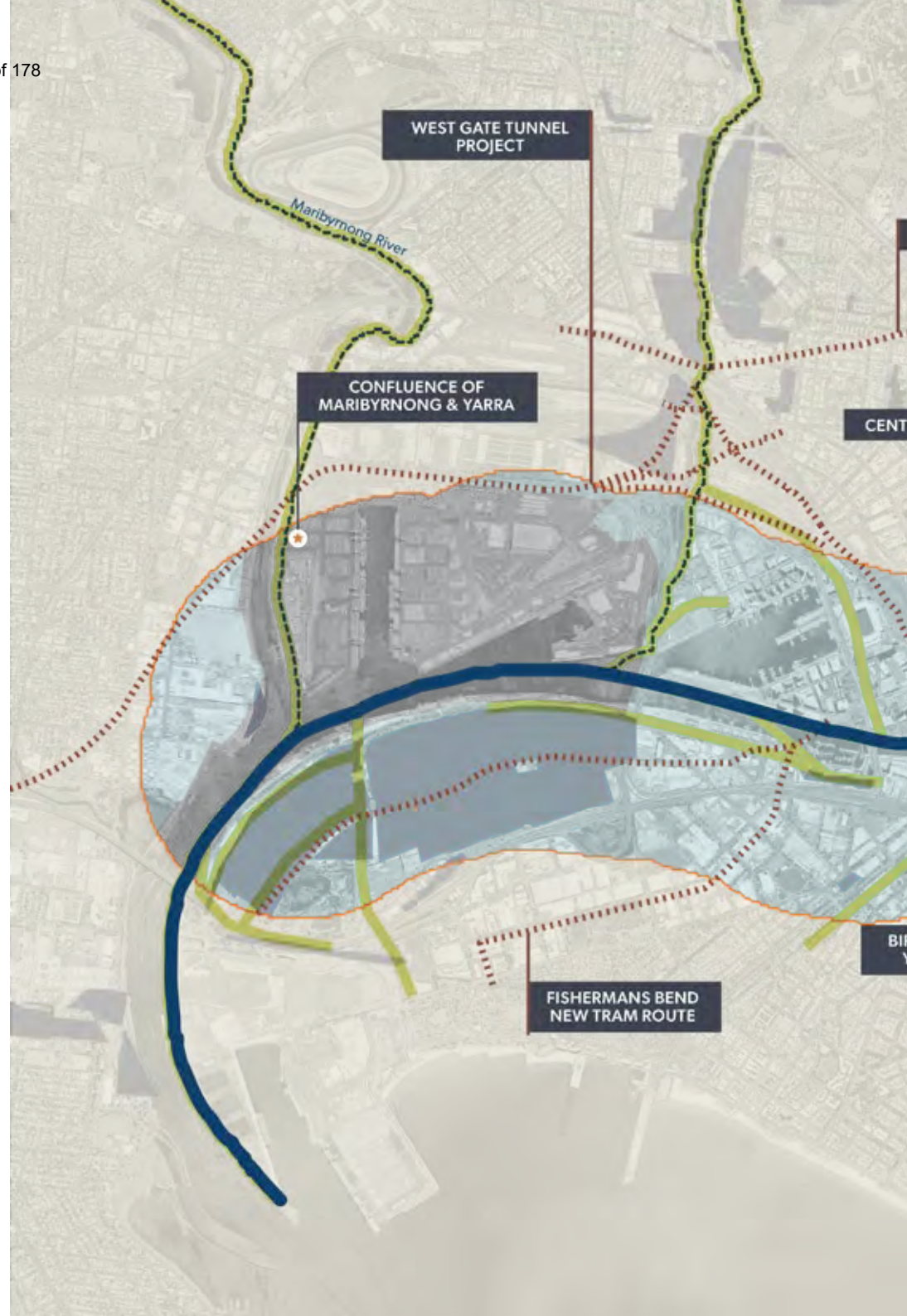
Tourist destinations include:

- Dights Falls, Abbotsford
- Abbotsford Convent
- Collingwood Children's Farm, Abbotsford
- Herring Island, South Yarra
- Royal Botanic Gardens
- Melbourne Cricket Ground, East Melbourne

- Melbourne Sports Precinct, East Melbourne
- Alexandra Gardens
- Southbank
- Arts Precinct, Melbourne
- Docklands

Key community activities include:

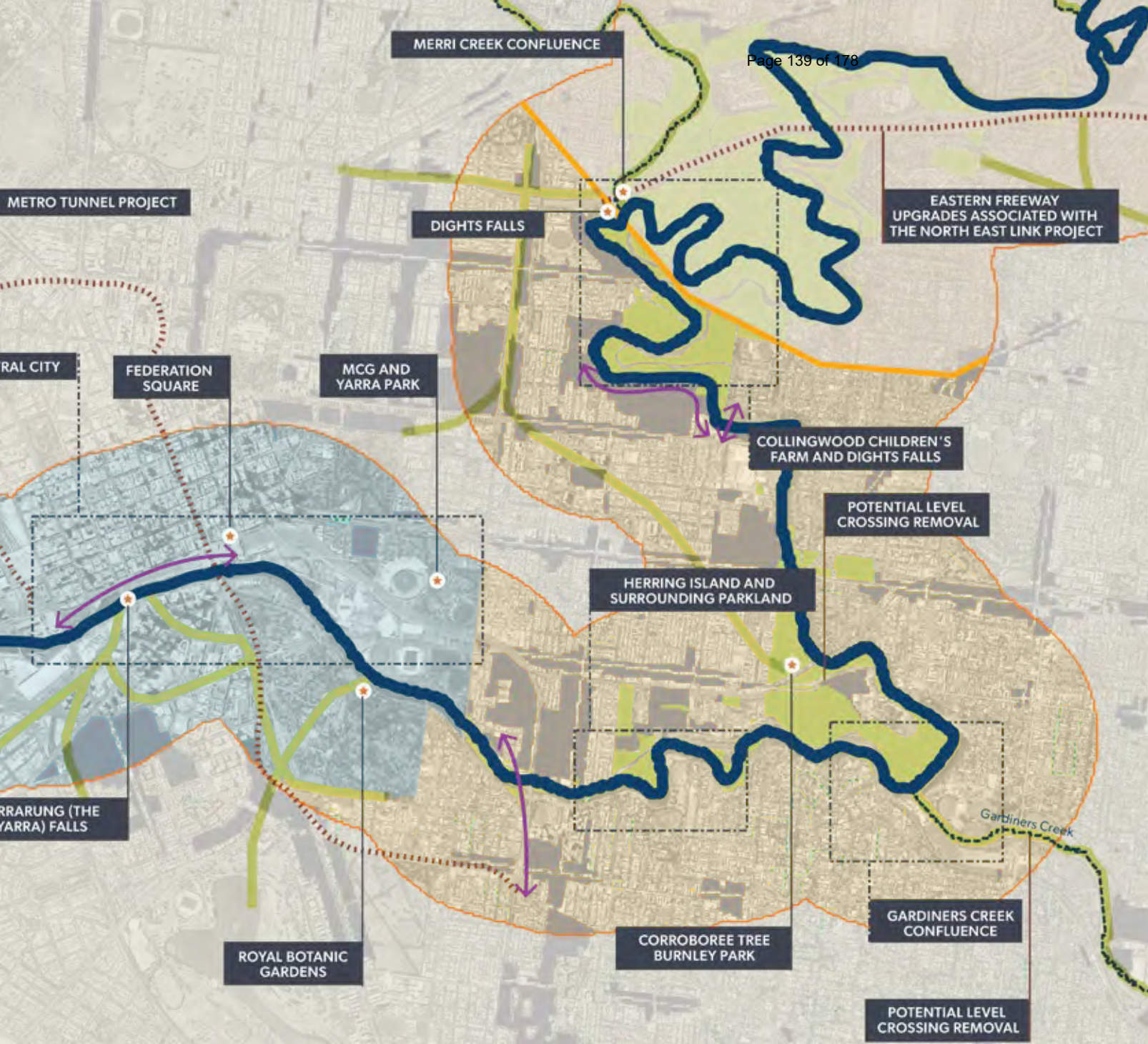
- Australian Open Festival
- Melbourne marathon
- Run to the G
- Australian Rules Football Grand Final
- Midsumma Festival, South Melbourne
- Mothers Day Classic Fun Run
- Australia Day Weekend, Melbourne
- Outdoor Cinema, Melbourne
- Herring Island Art Festival
- Sustainable Living Festival
- White Night, Melbourne
- New Years Eve Celebrations
- Richmond Football Club Family Fun Day, Richmond
- Carols at Como Park
- Inflatable Regatta, Yarra River
- St Patrick's Day at South Wharf
- Oktoberfest Street Party, Melbourne
- Night Noodle Market, Birrarung Marr
- Suitcase Rummage, South Melbourne
- River Graze Melbourne Food and Wine Festival
- Moomba Festival, Melbourne
- We Can Walk It Out annual walk/run for Women, the Tan Track
- Run for the Kids, Melbourne
- Yarra River Community Welcome Dinner, Melbourne
- Ice Slide on Southbank
- Burnley Half Marathon, Burnley
- Chinese New Year Regatta
- Australian Henley Regatta
- Head of the Yarra Regatta
- Vegan Mini Market, Abbotsford Convent
- Collingwood Children's Farm Farmers Market



MAP 12. INNER CITY REACH FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Legend

- Site of Aboriginal cultural significance
- Recreational trail
- Reach boundary
- Significant place
- Yarra Strategic Plan area
- Yarra River
- Priority tributary
- Industrial & commercial zone
- Yarra River land
- Transport project (indicative alignment)
- Biodiversity corridor
- Improved access
- Urban
- Port of Melbourne (excluded)
- Central city



Community priorities and values	Resulting land use directions for the inner city [IC] reach:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celebrate the river as the centrepiece of Melbourne, acknowledging its role in our history and how it drives the city's continued success. 	IC 5, IC 6, IC 7, IC 13 and IC 20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Position the river as a symbol of learning and respect for Aboriginal culture, deepening community understanding of the sacred role it plays for Traditional Owners. 	IC 6 and IC 21
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster innovative urban waterway and open space planning to ensure the needs of our growing city are balanced with the future environmental health of the river. 	IC 3 to IC 11, IC 17, IC 19 and IC 20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand our connected network of treasured Yarra parklands, creating better access and more spaces for relaxation and recreation. 	IC 2, IC 3, IC 9, IC 11 and IC 20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Showcase the river as a place for sustainable and creative events, with a focus on culture, sport, ecology and education. 	IC 2, IC 5, IC 6 and IC 20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Position the river as an environmental educator, helping communities better understand its role in keeping Victoria healthy in the past, present and into the future. 	IC 5, IC 6 and IC 20

Directions for future land use and development in the next 10 years

The land use framework in the inner city reach sets out the future directions for private and public land over the next 10 years. This will assist in achieving the Yarra Strategic Plan performance objectives and ultimately the aspirations of the 50 Year Community Vision and the Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung (Ancient Spirit & Lore of the Yarra).

These are the inner city (IC) land use directions.

Yarra River land		PO (Part 1)*
IC 1	Ensure decision making for land use, development and land management is guided by the Yarra Protection Principles set out in the <i>Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017</i> .**	PO1, PO2, PO3, PO4
IC 2	Manage Yarra River land to support a range of recreational opportunities that meet the needs of the community, improve access to the river and foster a sense of refuge from urban surrounds.	PO3, PO4
IC 3	Protect and enhance native vegetation to provide habitat connections between conservation areas, and along the Yarra River and its tributaries.	PO1
IC 4	Investigate new or strengthened protection measures for high-priority tributaries.	PO1
IC 5	Coordinate approaches to landscaping, wayfinding and the provision of visitor facilities to encourage people to view the Yarra River as one living and integrated natural entity.	PO3
IC 6	Partner with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation on their respective Country to investigate ways to reflect and celebrate the story of the ancient Yarra River and its people in the design and landscaping of public spaces and parklands.	PO2, PO3

*Alignment with performance objectives in Part 1 ** Decision making can be supported by applying the decision-making framework outlined in Appendix E.

Urban		
IC 7	Protect and enhance native vegetation – along biodiversity corridors, through parklands, private gardens and local street networks – to provide habitat connections between conservation areas, and to enhance the community's sense of connection to the riverside environment.	PO1, PO3
IC 8	Select appropriate plant species to help restore ecological values, improve biodiversity and habitat, and contribute to urban cooling and greening.	PO1, PO4
IC 9	Investigate new or strengthened protection measures for high-priority tributaries.	PO1
IC 10	Apply integrated water management principles to optimise water supply, improve water quality and enhance flood protection.	PO1
IC 11	Provide additional open space and expand pedestrian and cycling trails to improve recreational opportunities and strengthen community connection to the river.	PO3
IC 12	Ensure development is set back from the river's edge and strengthen the vegetation buffer along the waterway to ensure tree canopies retain their dominance within the landscape. Ensure development is also set back from adjoining parklands and conservation areas to maintain views.	PO1, PO3, PO4
IC 13	Protect heritage buildings as important features of the Yarra River landscape.	PO2, PO4
IC 14	Ensure development in flood affected areas is informed by the <i>Guidelines for Development in Flood Affected Areas</i> .	PO4

Central City		
IC 15	Protect and enhance native vegetation – along biodiversity corridors, through parklands, private gardens and local street networks – to provide habitat connections between conservation areas, and to enhance the community's sense of connection to the riverside environment.	PO1, PO4
IC 16	Investigate new or strengthened protection measures for high-priority tributaries.	PO1
IC 17	Ensure new buildings are designed to complement the Yarra River's landscape and maintain views along the Yarra River.	PO4
IC 18	Minimise additional overshadowing of the Yarra River, its banks and adjacent public open space to maintain amenity year-round.	PO3, PO4
IC 19	Apply integrated water management principles to optimise water supply, improve water quality and enhance flood protection.	PO1
IC 20	Deliver parkland and promenade connections along riverbanks in the city centre, activating the Yarra while providing opportunities for relaxation and recreation.	PO3
IC 21	Partner with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation on their respective Country to investigate ways to reflect and celebrate the story of the ancient Yarra River and its people in the design and landscaping of public spaces and parklands.	PO2, PO3
IC 22	Ensure development in flood affected areas is informed by the <i>Guidelines for Development in Flood Affected Areas</i> and the <i>Good Design Guide for Buildings in Flood Affected Areas of Fishermans Bend, Arden and Macaulay</i> (as relevant).	PO4

Inner city reach – Significant places

Credit: Collingwood Children's Farm, Collingwood Children's Farm and Abbotsford Convent on the bend of the Yarra River.



Abbotsford Convent, Collingwood Children's Farm and Dights Falls

Abbotsford Convent (a nationally significant heritage site), Collingwood Children's Farm and Dights Falls are key sites of cultural, environmental and historical significance within the inner city reach. Together they form a major community and cultural hub, with significant opportunity for improvement.

Dights Falls was constructed in the 1840s to provide water to the adjacent flour mill, one of the first in Victoria. The falls and the adjacent area around the confluence of Merri Creek is a site of significance and an area identified for protection by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.

Dights Falls is highly significant to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people for its association with past ways of life and for its spiritual significance. For centuries the area has been used for meetings and ceremonies and continues to be the site of cultural gatherings today. Significantly, Dights Falls was also the first meeting point between colonists and the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung in 1803.

Dights Falls is also a site of state biological significance. This part of the river has high native fish richness and diversity, with 12 species of freshwater fish being recorded, including rare species such as spotted galaxias and pouched lamprey. Effective operation of the fishway, which is installed at the weir, is critical to the lifecycles of fish such as the Australian grayling and short-finned eel.

The former Convent of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Abbotsford was founded in 1863. The site, now known as the Abbotsford Convent, is a thriving arts, cultural and educational precinct. Together with the adjacent Collingwood Children's Farm (originally farmed by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd but now separately

managed), the convent is protected by a Heritage Overlay in the Yarra Planning Scheme.

The Collingwood Children's Farm was established in 1979 on eight hectares of land between the convent and the Yarra River. The farm's mission is to provide positive opportunities and experiences through gardening and farming for people experiencing adversity. The farm is popular with families and young children who particularly enjoy the opportunity to encounter farm animals.

There is also a well-established community garden and monthly farmers' market. Recent proposals to improve the farm include a focus on regenerative agriculture and establishment of native food gardens that will support programs to raise community awareness of traditional agricultural knowledge systems and Aboriginal history.

Opportunities for future projects and alignment:

- Prepare an Abbotsford River Precinct Structure Plan for the river between Dights Falls and Victoria Street (Action 20 of the *Yarra River Action Plan*) to improve the Main Yarra Trail and provide safer access to the river for a wider range of users (and include all-abilities access). Partner with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to identify and promote cultural and heritage values in the precinct.
- Expand and update visitor and education facilities for the Abbotsford Convent, Collingwood Children's Farm and Dights Falls and provide improved site interpretative information about the significance of these sites and their relationship to the Yarra River.
- Improve interpretation opportunities at Collingwood Children's Farm and support the ongoing partnership with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to deliver this important caring for Country project.

- Enable Collingwood Children’s Farm and the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to continue caring for the wellbeing of Country through the delivery of programs and projects to revegetate the Yarra River riparian zones and improve habitat connectivity.
- Explore opportunities to minimise impacts to the threatened grey-headed flying-foxes and birds that come into contact with the hanging slalom markers for white water kayaking.
- Improve connections between key sites, the river and the Main Yarra Trail, including providing all-abilities access at the Gipps Street and Walmer Street bridges and connecting the recreational trail between Gipps Street and Flockhart Street.
- Implement programs and projects to revegetate and maintain riparian zones and improve habitat connectivity. (See those outlined in the Yarra City Council’s *Native Vegetation Action Plan 2020–2024* and the Collingwood Children’s Farm landscape and vegetation management plan.)



Legend

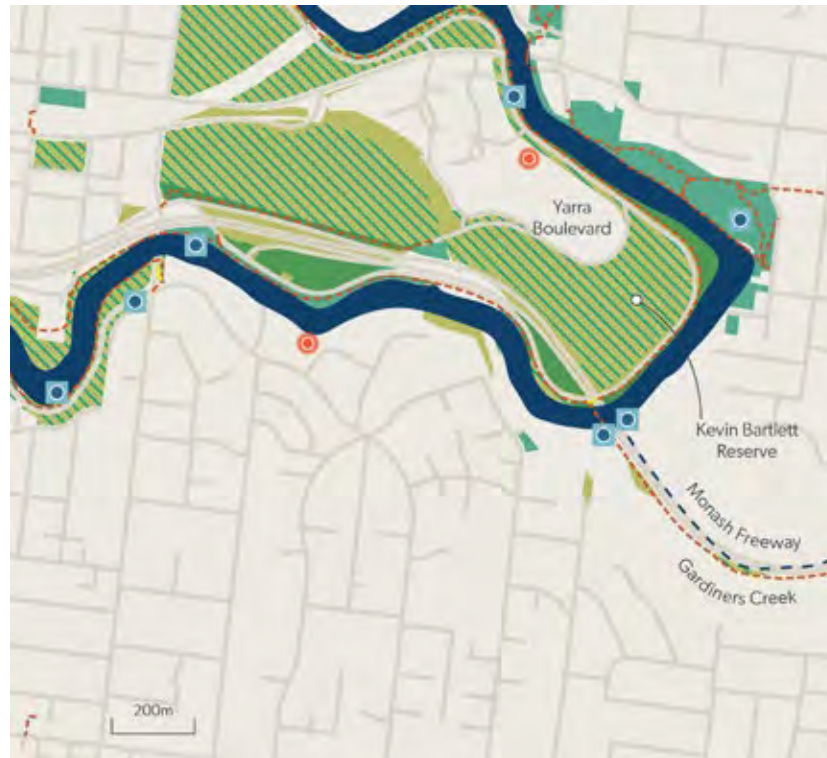
- ★ Key tourist destinations
- Cultural heritage sites
- Community activities
- Key views
- ★ Wurundjeri site of significance
- Wurundjeri area of protection
- Yarra River
- Yarra River land
- Municipal parkland
- Greater Yarra urban parkland
- Priority tributary
- Recreational trail
- Transport projects (indicative alignment)
- ↔ Improved access

Gardiners Creek confluence

The confluence of Gardiners Creek with the Yarra River has been identified as a significant place in the inner city reach. The creek has been substantially modified by drainage works and construction of support structures for the Monash Freeway, with the resulting concrete channel and shading impacting significantly on the ecological values of the creek. While this impact will be long-lasting, it is possible that elements of the area's environmental and cultural heritage could be reintroduced as a way of reinterpreting this important area.

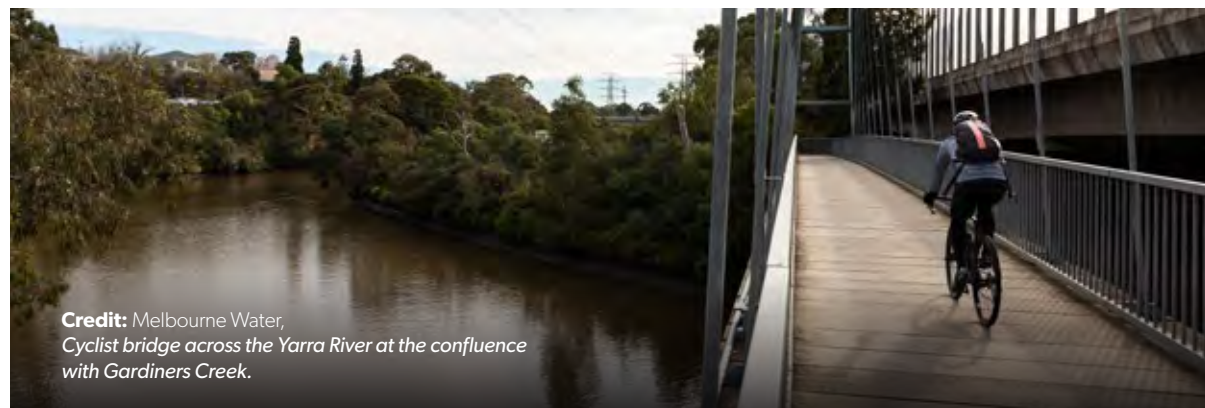
Opportunities for future projects and alignment:

- Investigate options for improved environmental outcomes around the Gardiners Creek confluence. This includes implementing initiatives outlined in:
 - Stonnington City Council's *Gardiners Creek Masterplan 2020*, which includes a revegetation strategy for the creek
 - Boroondara City Council's *Urban Biodiversity Strategy 2013–2023*, which nominates this area as a potential biodiversity hotspot.
- Work with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to provide interpretive information and artwork communicating the cultural heritage and historic significance of this area, both contemporary and pre-colonisation.
- Maintain and strengthen indigenous planting along the Yarra Boulevard and around the edge of Kevin Bartlett Reserve to improve habitat links.



Legend

- Cultural heritage sites
- Key views
- Yarra River
- Yarra River land
- Municipal parkland
- ▨ Greater Yarra urban parkland
- - - Recreational trail
- ↔ Improved access



Credit: Melbourne Water,
Cyclist bridge across the Yarra River at the confluence with Gardiners Creek.

Herring Island and surrounding parkland

Herring Island was created in 1928 by cutting a new river channel through the former Burnley quarry to help control flooding. With revegetation and other rehabilitation works, the island has become significant as a wildlife haven. Together with Burnley Harbour and its wetlands, McConchie Reserve and Loys Paddock further upstream, these parks and reserves provide important habitat in this stretch of the river. Herring Island, which also includes picnic grounds, a sculpture trail and art gallery, has the potential to be improved as a tourist attraction and to provide an opportunity for people to experience the Yarra in a relatively natural state, close to the city.

The Stonnington City Council's Yarra River Biodiversity Linkages project has seen extensive replanting along this section of the river, as well as stormwater management, viewing platforms and interpretive information.

Opportunities for future projects and alignment:

- Investigate options to improve access to Herring Island and upgrade visitor facilities, including the sculpture park, and promote Herring Island as a place where visitors can connect with nature, heritage and culture for gatherings or events.
- Provide a greater sense of connection from Herring Island to Como House and north to Burnley Harbour, including interpretive information about the history of these sites and their connection to the Yarra River.
- Improve access to Burnley Harbour and wetlands, and Loys Paddock, and improve biodiversity values in these areas.



Central city

In the central city, between Punt Road and Docklands, the river passes numerous places of significance to Melbourne and the State of Victoria. This includes sports stadiums, the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain, Birrarung Marr and the arts precinct of Southbank.

Key sites of Aboriginal Cultural significance within the central city include: Federation Square, a traditional meeting place of the Kulin; the MCG in Yarra Park, a significant ceremonial ground that was used up until displacement of Aboriginal people from the city; and the Birrarung (Yarra) Falls near Queen Street, where a waterfall and natural rock barrier separated the river's fresh water from salt water, also providing a crossing place until it was blasted away in the 1880s. Significant sites on the southern side of the river include the Tromgin lagoon, at what is now the Royal Botanic Gardens, and the former Yarra Aboriginal Village Mission that was just east of the lagoon.¹⁶

The river plays a central role in Melbourne's daily life and provides an iconic backdrop for Melbourne's international profile. A significant number of projects, which are currently in the planning or implementation phases, will transform the river's landscape within central Melbourne.



Credit: Melbourne Water, *Dolphins in the Yarra River, central city.*

These are some of the projects that will transform the river.

- Melbourne City Council's *Yarra River – Birrarung Strategy* (2019) is an overarching planning framework for the river between Punt Road Bridge and the Bolte Bridge. Organised around four themes of ecology, culture, place and movement, the strategy will guide collaborative actions and development. Strategic directions include: transforming the hard edges of the river banks with vegetation; collaborating with Traditional Owners to help tell the living culture story of their connection to the Birrarung; prioritising Northbank renewal to create an inviting destination adjacent to the city; and sustaining the civic focus by encouraging activation that supports an inclusive public waterfront.
- *Domain Parklands Master Plan 2019–2039* will guide sustainable management of the parklands located between the south bank of the river and one of the city's major thoroughfares, St Kilda Road.
- *Birrarung Marr Master Plan* (in preparation) will guide development, management and use of this important open space on the northern banks of the river.
- Southbank Promenade upgrades are improving this area as a key cultural and arts destination with new and expanded public spaces, extension of urban forest planting, management of commuter cycle traffic, new public art and protection of heritage elements.
- A review of Federation Square is considering ways to deliver a vibrant and attractive precinct with more public and commercial space, encouraging gatherings and providing better access to the river, transport links and sporting and cultural precincts.
- Victorian Planning Authority has prepared a planning framework for the Richmond to Docklands urban renewal precinct, covering the Southbank Arts Precinct and public spaces along the river.

- Melbourne Park, one of the premier sports venues in Melbourne and home of the Australian Open tennis championship, has recently completed its near \$1 billion redevelopment funded by the Victorian Government. The project includes better connections to public transport and the city, and easier movement into and within the precinct.
- The Royal Botanic Gardens *Melbourne Gardens Master Plan 2020–2040* will guide development of the gardens over the next 20 years. The master plan responds to a warming climate, increased recognition of Aboriginal cultural values, continued care for the State Botanical Collection, new public transport options (Anzac train station), and the evolving role the gardens play in the broader life and health of the city. New projects include enhancements at the gardens' entrances, with a new Birrarung Gate celebrating the Aboriginal landscape and increased recognition of the former connection to the Yarra River.

Opportunities for future projects and alignment:

- Improve the connections between precincts for pedestrians and cyclists to ensure a continuous link from Richmond and South Yarra to the city, and similarly from the Docklands and Fishermans Bend precincts.
- Establish a series of well-connected public spaces along the river's edge between Birrarung Marr and Docklands, which are designed to celebrate its heritage and natural environment and foster a sense of reconnection of the river to the city.
- Set out a coordinated approach to design of the public realm across all precincts to create a sense of continuity along the river's frontage and to reduce visual clutter and support key views.
- Strengthen planting along the river's edge, along key catchment links and the surrounding street network, to enhance greening and biodiversity.

- Reintroduce a natural, riverside landscape character, where possible.
- Express the river's rich history and many stories through interpretive information, public realm design, art and planting.
- Work with Traditional Owners to protect significant places and increase the visual presence of their cultural heritage.
- Express elements of the river's ancient landscape that are no longer visible in the city, such as Williams Creek (which flows under Elizabeth Street), the wetlands that existed within the Docklands area and the Birrarung (Yarra River) Falls.
- Improve the use and navigation of the Yarra River as a transport corridor and place for water-based recreation:
 - Establish appropriate landings and facilities for commercial and recreational vessels.
 - Investigate the feasibility of a seasonal or peak period commuter service between Victoria Harbour and the Hoddle Street Bridge.
 - Improve rowing infrastructure through new landing stages.
 - Support a civic focus by encouraging activation that offers broader inclusion and supports a public waterfront.
- Investigate ways to activate and reinvigorate public areas where roadways, trainlines and existing buildings severely impact amenity and access along the river corridor.








Legend

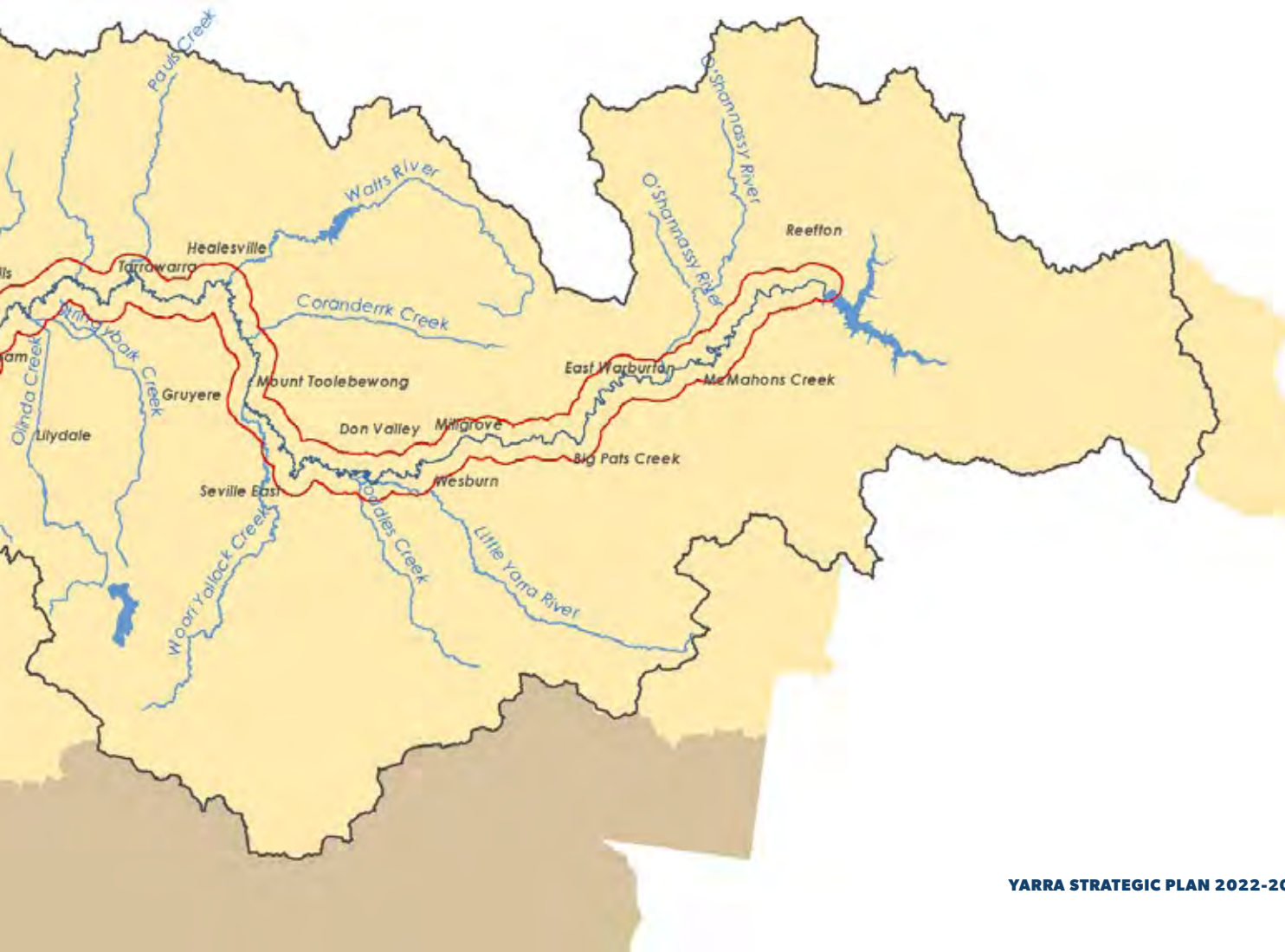
- ★ Key tourist destinations
- Cultural heritage sites
- Community activities
- Key views
- ★ Site of Aboriginal cultural significance
- Yarra River
- Municipal parkland
- ⋯ Priority tributary
- Main Yarra trail
- ↔ Improved access

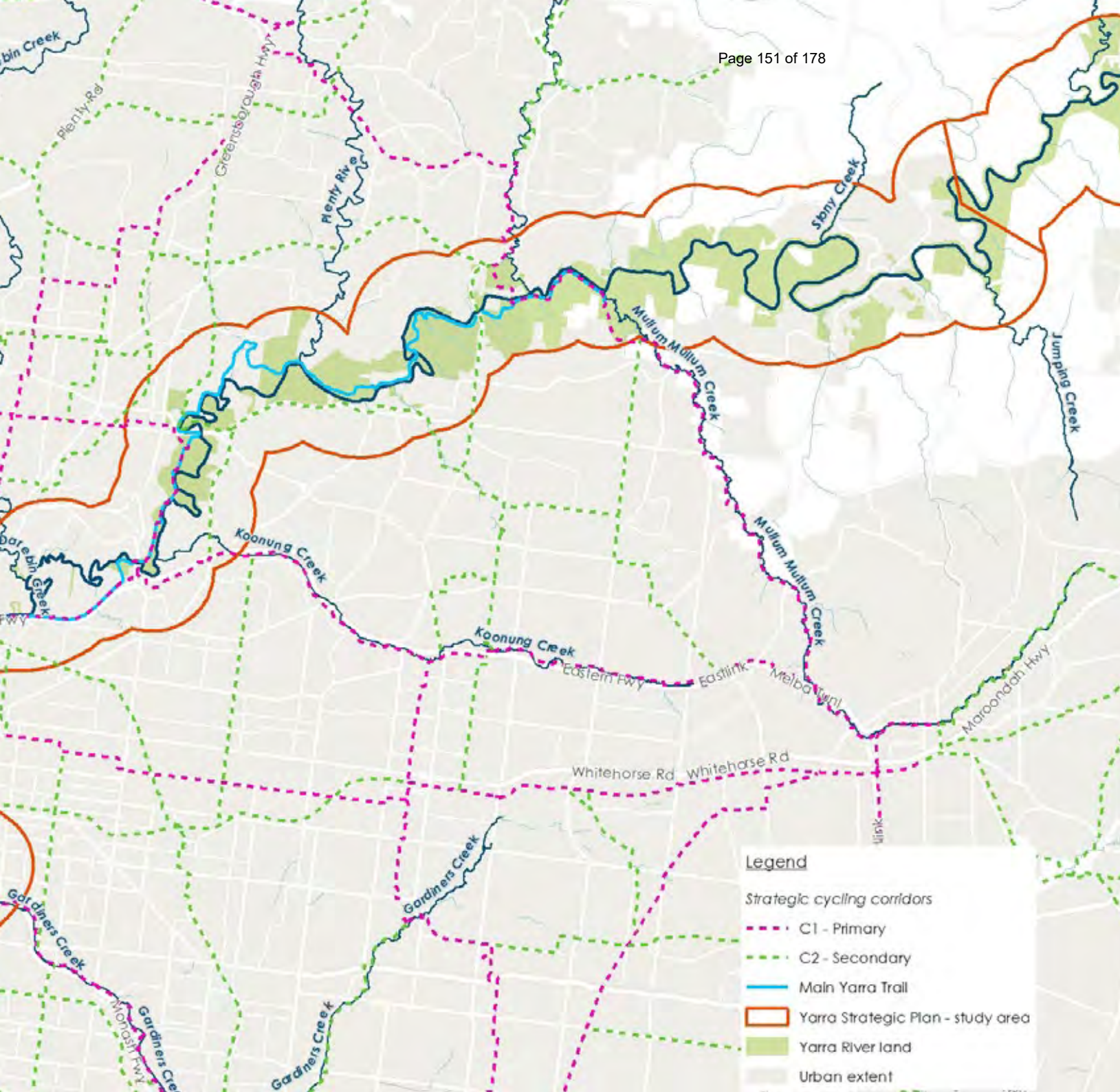
APPENDIX A — Map showing Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) boundaries for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation



Legend

-  Yarra River
-  Yarra Strategic Plan area
-  Yarra catchment
-  RAP area for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (as at 1 July 2021)
-  RAP area for Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (as at 1 July 2021). The RAP boundary extends into Port Phillip Bay.





APPENDIX C — Community and partner input

In 2017, Melbourne Water was appointed to lead the development of the Yarra Strategic Plan and the Yarra River 50 Year Community Vision. An initial step in developing the project was forming the Yarra Collaboration Committee, which included representatives from the 15 state and local government authorities with responsibilities to care for the river, and representatives of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.

Melbourne Water, in collaboration with the Yarra Collaboration Committee, designed and implemented a detailed four-phase engagement strategy (see **Figure 5**). Further information about the engagement strategy is available on the 'Imagine the Yarra' website (<http://www.imaginetheyarra.com.au>).

Development of the plan has been informed by community feedback, background studies, and complementary strategies and policies already in operation for the Yarra River.

During phase 1 of the engagement strategy, the Yarra River Community Assembly was formed to write the vision for the Yarra. The assembly was made up of 24 people, drawn from communities along the length of the river. The assembly took the findings from the broad community engagement and drafted the vision that sits at the heart of this plan. Members of the assembly came together again in phase 3 and phase 4 to test whether the directions of the draft plan aligned with their vision for the Yarra. At each step, and each iteration of the plan, the assembly's feedback has been incorporated.

The draft Yarra Strategic Plan was released for comment in January 2020. Feedback was gathered using a range of methods, including face-to-face meetings, pop-up events, focus groups and online engagement reaching more than 120,000 community members. Over 300 conversations, together with discussions from focus groups, online survey responses, and 138 written submissions, have contributed to finalising the plan.

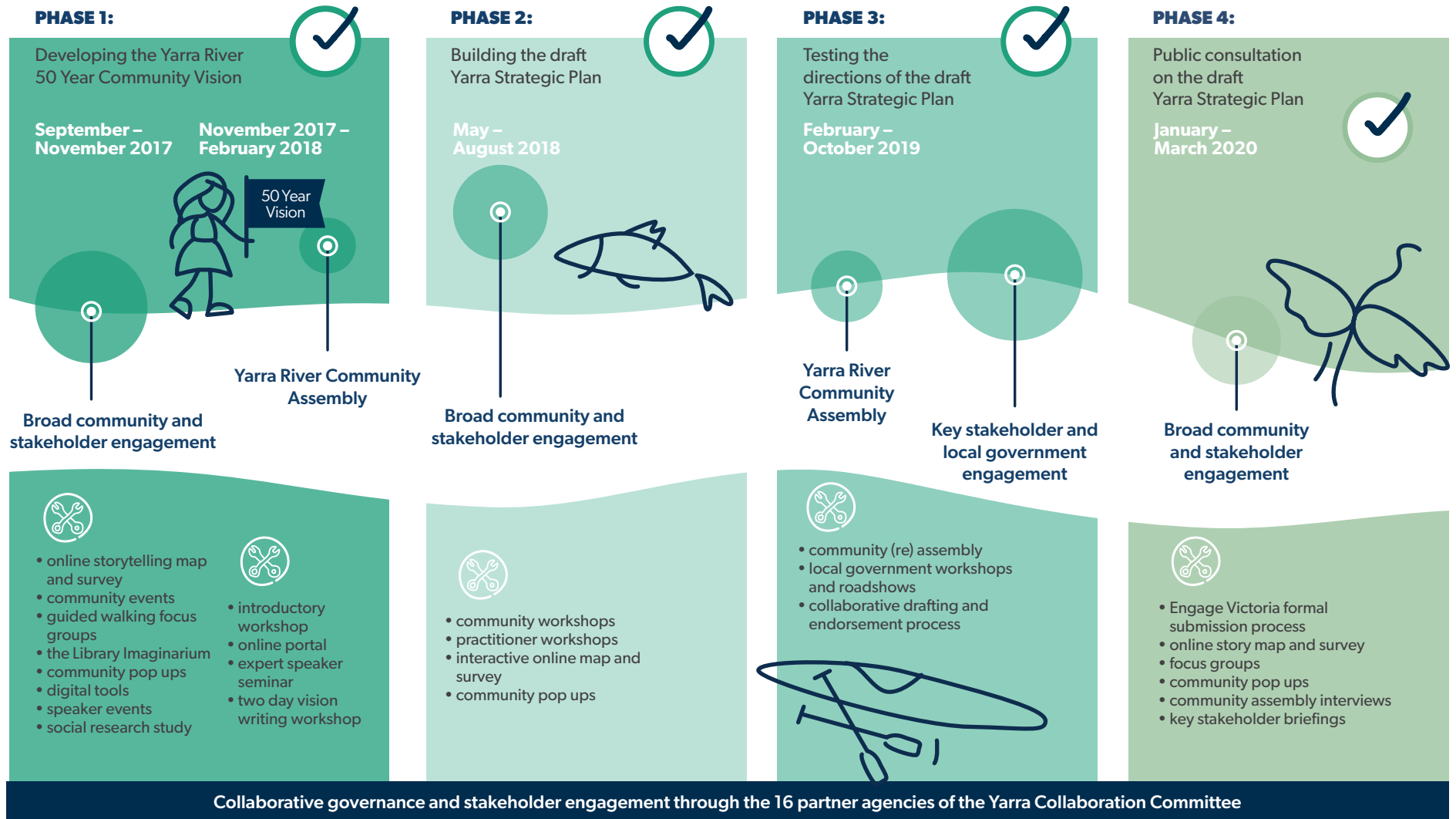


FIGURE 5. Yarra Strategic Plan four-phase engagement strategy

APPENDIX D — Implementation and monitoring of the plan

Implementation of the plan

The Yarra Strategic Plan will come into operation after its approval by the Minister for Water. The state and local government authorities involved in co-designing the plan, in partnership with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, will continue to collaborate and work together, with the community, to implement the plan.

An initial 12-month implementation plan has been developed to accompany the Yarra Strategic Plan. The implementation plan:

- incorporates planned and funded projects nominated by responsible public entities that align with the four performance objectives. These projects include capital works, investigations, management plans and strategies, as well as on-ground works and maintenance
- includes funded **priority projects** to quickly begin implementing changes for the river
- draws upon the **decision-making framework** to guide the development and investment in priority and transformative projects
- takes into account existing and relevant strategies and policies (see list available in the documents library on the Imagine the Yarra website).

This 12-month implementation plan will be followed by a rolling three-year implementation plan. The three-year implementation plan will align with the *Healthy Waterways Strategy*, the *Melbourne Open Space Strategy* and the State of the Yarra Parklands Report framework and preparation of local government Council Plans (see **Figure 6**).

The Act specifies that the responsible public entities, which includes organisations represented on the Yarra Collaboration Committee, must report to the lead agency on the implementation of the Yarra Strategic Plan (section 43.1). Based on the information provided, the lead agency

will prepare an annual report for the Birrarung Council, after which it will be provided to the Minister for Water and tabled before each house of parliament.

Responsible public entities will report to the lead agency on activities outlined in the implementation plan. The annual report will represent the individual and collective contributions to the outcomes of the Yarra Strategic Plan. This reporting framework will ensure that projects affecting Yarra River land are examined by the Birrarung Council, and decision-making is balanced with an appropriate accountability mechanism through annual reporting to the Victorian Parliament.

Lead implementing agency

The Minister for Water will nominate one responsible public entity as the lead agency for implementing the plan. The lead agency will:

- enable the Yarra Collaboration Committee to implement the decision-making framework and deliver actions to achieve the 10-year performance objectives
- prepare the three-year rolling implementation plan in partnership with the Yarra Collaboration Committee
- coordinate the preparation of a consolidated annual report, which will outline progress towards delivering the community vision. The report will be developed using information provided by each responsible public entity. They will then submit the report to the Birrarung Council.

The Birrarung Council – the independent voice of the river

In 2018, the Victorian Government established the Birrarung Council as the independent voice of the river. The council is made up of experts in environmental, legal, planning, landscape and public administration, and

includes Elders of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation. Together the council ensure the ongoing protection of the river and deliver on key priorities under the *Water for Victoria plan* and the *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrong) Act 2017*.

The Birrarung Council will review and respond to the annual report, which will outline progress in implementing the plan and the community vision. To ensure appropriate accountability, the Birrarung Council's report will be delivered to the Minister for Water, to be tabled in parliament.

Partnering with recognised Traditional Owners

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation have their own governance structures and ways of making decisions. They must be respected, and timelines must incorporate these governance structures and ways of making decisions. Any recognised Traditional Owners with an interest in a Yarra River land related project, program and/or initiative on their Country must be included and engaged with, and only that recognised Traditional Owner group has the right to speak for their Country that has been formally recognised (*Right people for Country*).

It is also important that responsible public entities have in place a Reconciliation Action Plan or mutually agreed alternative agreement that builds a collaborative relationship with the recognised Traditional Owners in planning, decision-making, programs and services across all areas of their organisation. This includes in respect to management of Yarra River lands and projects that may impact Yarra River lands on their Country.

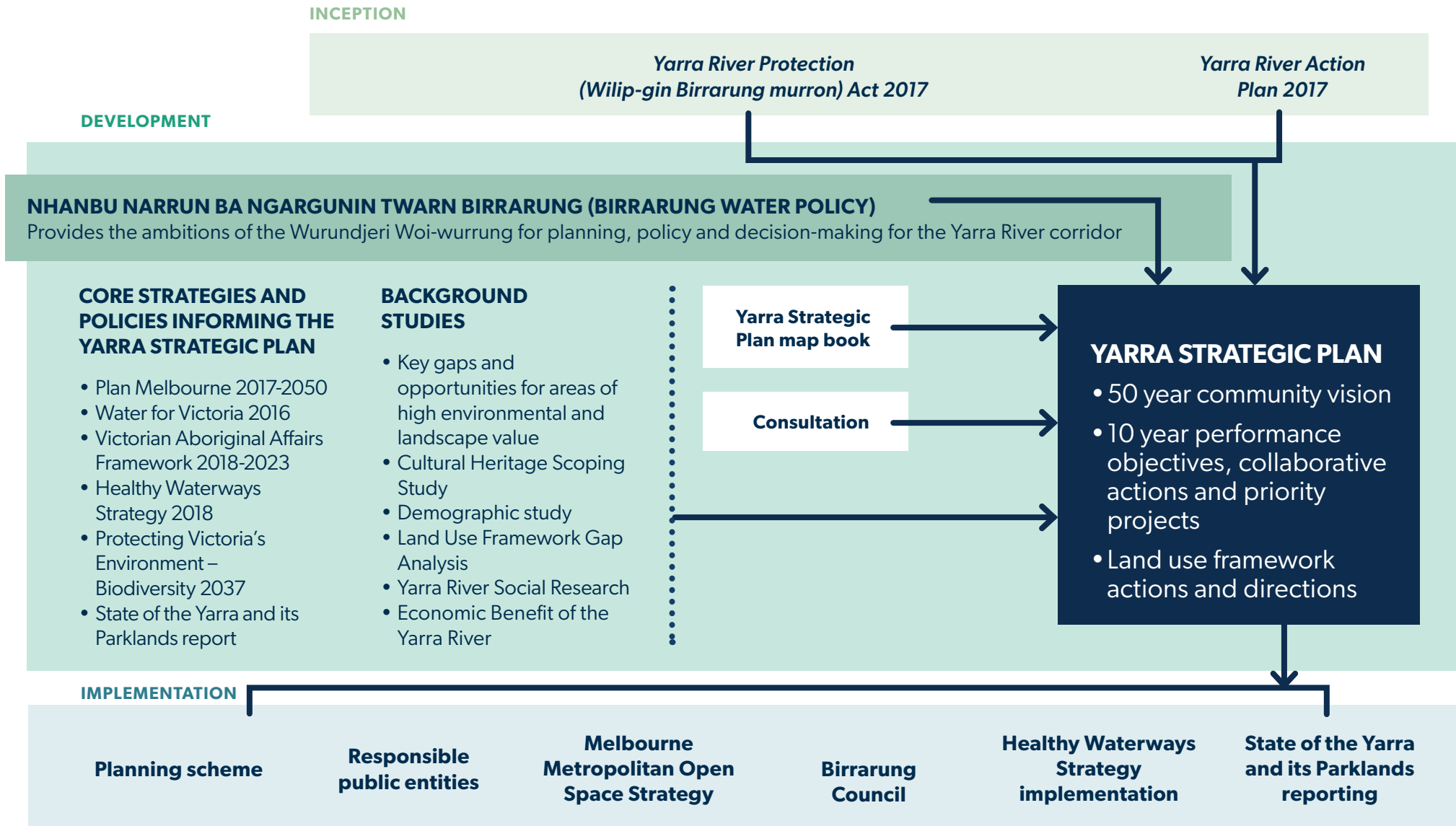


FIGURE 6. Policies and plans that inform development and implementation of the Yarra Strategic Plan

Monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI) plan

To be consistent with the approach and principles of the international standard ISO 14001 for environmental management systems, regular evaluation of the Yarra Strategic Plan will be required to refine and improve its implementation. This will be achieved through preparation of a monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI) plan to assess the impact, appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency and legacy of the Yarra Strategic Plan.

The MERI will build on the success measures outlined for the performance objectives in Part 1 of the plan. It will detail key performance indicators (KPIs) and key evaluation questions (KEQs) to monitor progress towards meeting the intentions of the 50 Year Community Vision, the *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murron) Act 2017* and the four performance objectives in the plan. The MERI also allows for reporting progress against actions set out in the implementation plan.

The lead agency will address KPIs and KEQs by collecting and analysing project-level data (reported by funding recipients) as well as collecting information through fit-for-purpose monitoring and evaluation activities.

The MERI will provide:

- a simple program logic that provides a succinct description of the program and elements that will be monitored, evaluated and reported on
- long and short-term targets that are specific, time-bound and measurable to improve knowledge and measure progress
- detailed KPIs and KEQs for each performance objective within the plan
- a set of standard output measures, which reflect the activities to be delivered and reported on
- alignment with the State of the Yarra and Parklands reporting framework and the MERI plans for the Healthy Waterways Strategy and the Port Phillip Bay Environmental Management Plan.

The targets contained in the MERI will provide an accurate ongoing measure and record of efforts to coordinate investment in the Yarra River corridor and will provide clear information to the Birrarung Council and the community about how well the Yarra is being managed.

The MERI, which is to be developed in the first year of implementing the plan will be updated on a rolling three-year basis to align with the rolling three-year implementation plans.



Credit: Melbourne Water,
Abbotsford



APPENDIX E — Decision-making framework

The Yarra Strategic Plan includes a decision-making framework that may be used by responsible public entities to facilitate transparent and coordinated decision-making, including with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong Traditional Owners, for activities that affect Yarra River land or when performing a function or duty or exercising power that may affect Yarra River land on their Country.

The decision-making framework ensures activities and decision-making are consistent with the Act and aligned with delivery of the plan. It embeds the role of Traditional Owners as custodians of the Yarra River through partnership, representation and involvement in planning and decision-making. The framework also enables the development and prioritisation of projects that lead to positive and transformational change and the delivery of the Yarra River 50 year Community Vision, emphasising environmental net gain and aligning with *Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung (Ancient Spirit and Lore of the Yarra)*.

As shown in **Figure 7**, there are three levels of activities and projects for decision-making – routine business activities, local projects and transformative projects.

Note: On Yarra River land on which Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation is the recognised Traditional Owner, no projects or activities may take place without their involvement in the decision-making process. All agreements and proposals will be discussed with the Wurundjeri Water Unit in the first instance. This includes agreements and proposals relating to funding, intellectual property and research, planning scheme amendments, cultural heritage management plans (CHMPs) and on-ground works.

Transformative projects are those larger integrated projects with higher aspirations of delivering transformational change in the river corridor. It was recognised through the consultation process that continuing to deliver routine business activities and local projects is unlikely to be sufficient for protection of the Yarra, given the pressures of population growth, urban development and climate change.

By their nature these transformative projects will require higher levels of collaboration and resourcing to achieve the desired outcomes. Transformative projects will involve multiple partners working across the corridor collectively aiming to address gaps identified by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation on their Country, Yarra Collaboration Committee, Birrarung Council, key stakeholders and the community.

Local projects are projects identified in various strategies and plans that align with the Yarra Strategic Plan. Some will be contingent upon additional funding through government programs or collaborative arrangements with other authorities and groups. Local projects will aim for innovation or incremental improvement in delivering (extent, quality or quantity) outcomes and will have local importance, as opposed to providing whole of corridor benefit. It is envisaged that these projects will be more effective with a collaborative approach, for example, involving both public and private landholders in planning and implementing a pest control program.

Routine business activities are those activities authorities undertake as part of their normal business that impact Yarra River land, for example, maintenance works for parklands and reserves. Authorities will adopt a continuous improvement cycle in planning and delivering these routine business activities to allow incremental improvement and alignment with the Yarra Strategic Plan.

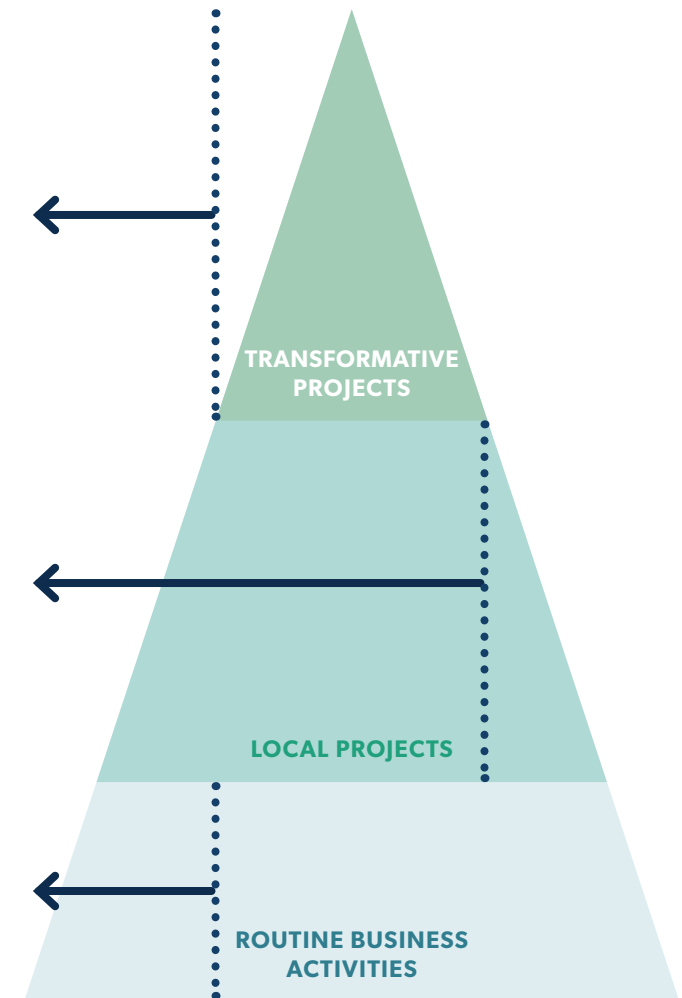


FIGURE 7. Multi-levelled approach to decision making for activities and projects on Yarra River land

There will be occasions when projects with the potential to affect Yarra River lands are put forward by organisations that are not part of the Yarra Collaboration Committee. Assessment of these '**external projects**' against the protection principles will provide a basis for discussion and negotiation with proponents and a process for ensuring alignment with the Yarra Strategic Plan.

Decision-making will be guided through an assessment process that evaluates projects, programs and activities against criteria based on the protection principles of the Act, aspirations of Traditional Owners, the Yarra River 50 year Community Vision and the performance objectives driving the plan. The rigour and effort involved in decision-making will be proportionate to the nature of the activities, scope of potential outcomes and environmental risks involved. The assessment process and decisions arising from it will be auditable to ensure transparency and consistency in the process.

Local projects will be nominated by responsible public entities to be included in the implementation plan. Having been checked against the protection principles of the Act, the entity will provide details of the project to the Yarra Collaboration Committee to identify opportunities to work together, increase net gain and confirm Traditional Owner partnerships.

Transformative projects will also be prioritised through the implementation planning process, which will be done in collaboration with committee members. Again, the committee will identify opportunities to increase net gain and confirm Traditional Owner partnerships, as well as required funding and potential leads for these projects.

A flowchart summarising the process for decision-making is set out in **Figure 8**.

Note that the decision-making framework will not be used for declared projects within the meaning of the *Major Transport Projects Facilitation Act 2009*. However, these major transport projects will follow statutory planning procedures and undertake appropriate assessments as determined by the Planning Minister.

Given the Act and the strategic plan are relatively new pieces of legislation the decision-making framework will be trialled over the first year of implementation to test and adapt the assessment process. After this, it will be evaluated and adjusted to match the needs of the responsible public entities, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation on their Country. This period of testing will ensure that alignment in decision-making can be managed with available resources, and that the benefits outweigh the costs.

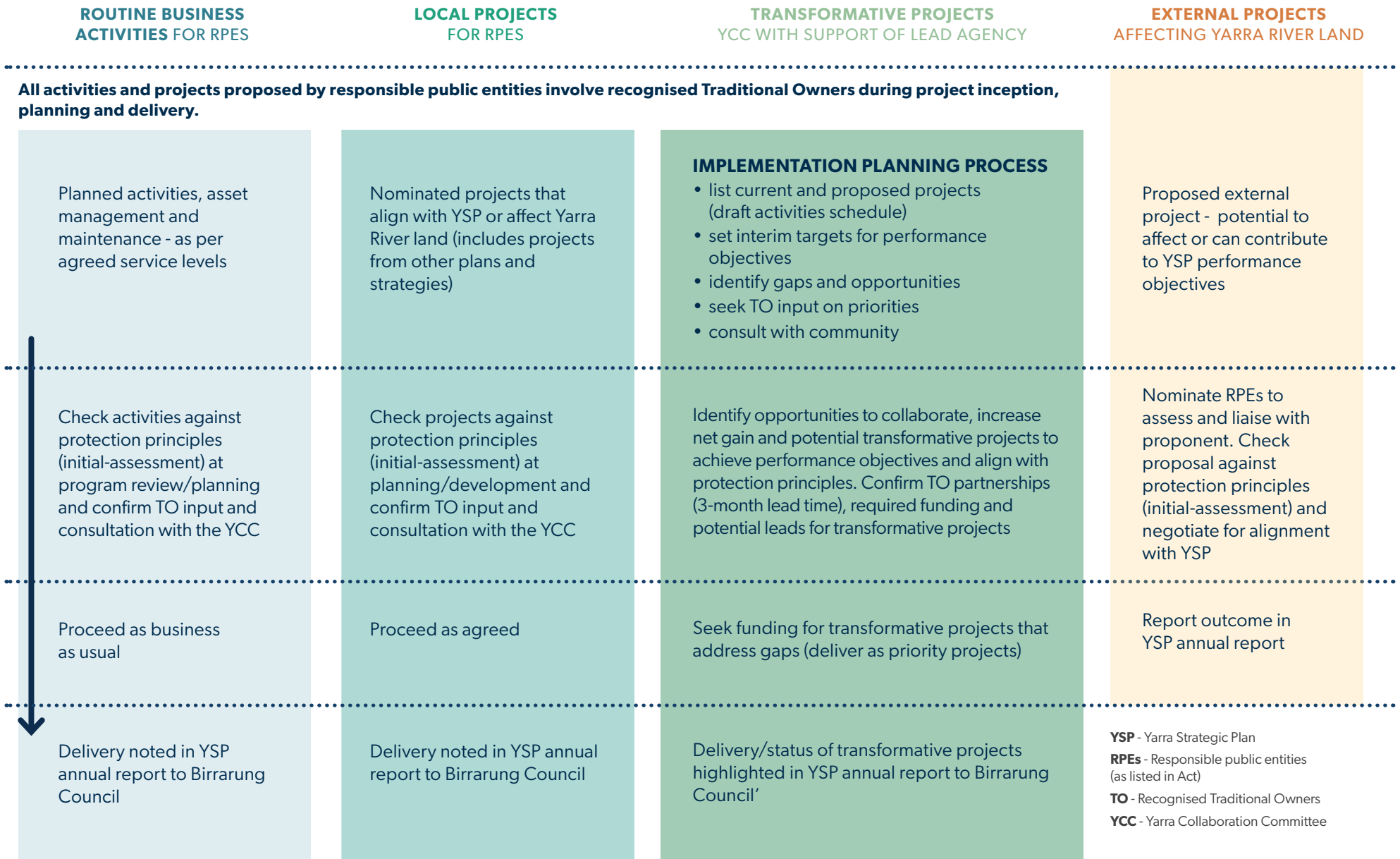


FIGURE 8. Work flow for implementing decision-making for activities and projects on Yarra River land

APPENDIX F — Environmental net gain

The Act’s protection principles state that there should be a net gain for the environment in the area of Yarra River land arising out of any individual action or policy that has an environmental impact on Yarra River land.

Under the state’s *Biodiversity 2037* policy, the government is committed to achieving an overall ‘net gain’, expressed as an improvement in the overall extent and condition of native habitats across terrestrial, waterway and marine environments.

Not all habitats or vegetation types will need to be improved or increased to achieve this goal, but overall gains will need to outweigh losses. The most important places to achieve gains and to avoid losses are locations with higher relative contribution to biodiversity benefit.

As part of this plan’s decision-making framework, changes in native vegetation will be used as an indicator to assess environmental net gain. Native vegetation as an indicator of environmental condition is relatively easy to conceptualise and standard methods for its assessment and use in net gain accounting have been well tested. However, more comprehensive assessment methods tailored to specific landscapes and activities are being developed as part of the implementation of *Biodiversity 2037*. Ideally, these will resolve some of the complexities of applying environmental net gain in aquatic environments and in urban settings, and can be adopted during the implementation of this Plan.

The Birrarung Council is supporting research for an approach to assess environmental net gain for the Yarra that goes beyond native vegetation indicators. It is expected that outcomes from this research will inform future policy and management decision-making.

This new approach to net gain will look at using restoration ecology principles to generate future ecosystem health that is feasible and realistic. However, this will apply to the cultural landscape, as understood by the Traditional Owners as well as to the physical landscape. This broader understanding of net gain will focus on the health of Country plus the health of connection to Country. The work will investigate measuring net gain through ecological, cultural and social indicators.

Environmental net gain under current state policy is estimated by predicting the difference in native vegetation extent and quality due to actions (improvement and maintenance) against a ‘do nothing’ scenario (<https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/native-vegetation>). Trained assessors predict gain scores for habitat using models that link management actions to either an improvement or maintenance gain score. The value of each improvement and maintenance gain score is conditional on the current condition of a site and rate of degradation.

Figure 9 illustrates concepts of maintenance and improvement gains for habitat condition over time. Without maintenance, habitat condition deteriorates over time.

The *Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation* (DELWP 2017) included in all local planning

schemes in Victoria are collectively referred to as the native vegetation removal regulations. These guidelines set out how native vegetation removal is assessed and describes how offsets are secured. When native vegetation removal is approved, an offset must be secured in accordance with the guidelines. The conditions of approval will specify the offset requirements and that the offset must be secured before native vegetation is removed.

The objective for the regulation of native vegetation clearing is to ensure that there is no ‘net loss’ to biodiversity as a result of the permitted clearing. This is achieved by applying the three-step approach: avoid, minimise and offset.

The process for assessing environmental net gain will be adjusted and outlined in the implementation plan as state policy evolves.

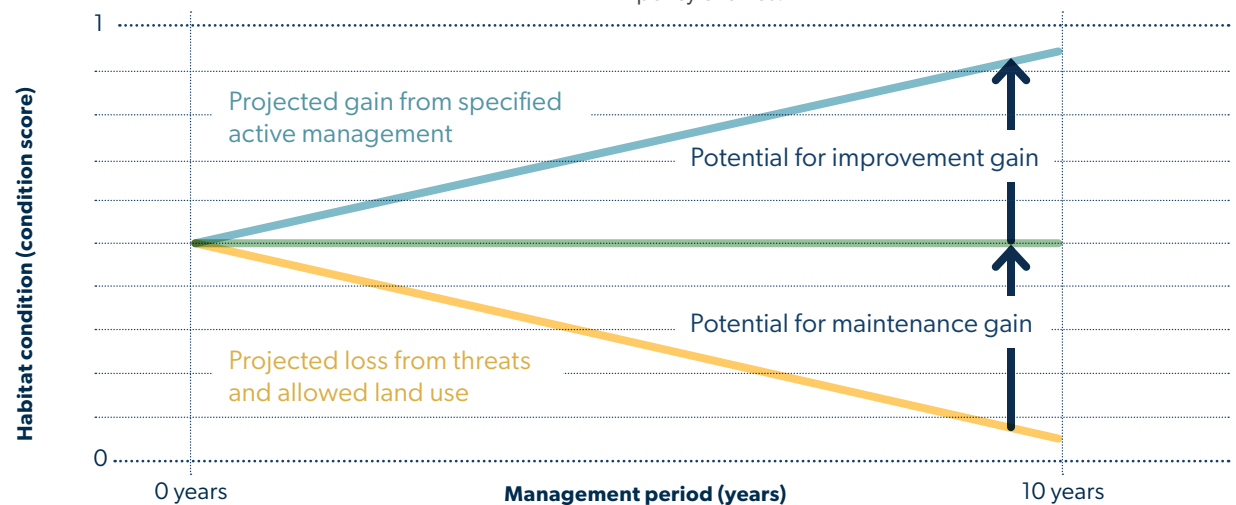


FIGURE 9. Conceptual model of habitat condition with maintenance and improvement gains over time

APPENDIX G —

List of actions

	Action	Responsibilities and timeframes
Performance Objective 1 - A healthy river and lands		
Stormwater and litter		
1.	Develop a place-based pilot project (in an area where stormwater is threatening Yarra health and amenity) to explore innovative re-use of stormwater <ul style="list-style-type: none"> use stormwater for urban greening, protecting and enhancing the environment identify opportunities where potable water is being used for watering purposes, and can be substituted with suitably treated stormwater. 	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, DELWP, Melbourne Water and local government medium term (4-7 years)
2.	Implement a Yarra-specific stormwater awareness and behaviour change campaign targeted at reducing litter and contamination entering the Yarra River.	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, DELWP, Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water and local government short term (1-3 years)
3.	Increase education, awareness and regulatory compliance to reduce pesticides and chemicals entering the river (including the impacts of agricultural runoff on water quality in the upper and lower rural reaches).	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, DELWP, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria short term (1-3 years)
4.	Develop the integrated water management plan (including bicultural approaches) for the Yarra Catchment to optimise water cycle planning and reduce stormwater pollution into the river.	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, DELWP, Melbourne Water, local government, Parks Victoria, Transport Victoria short term (1-3 years)

For each action, roles and responsibilities for RPE participation will be agreed through the Yarra Collaboration Committee, including appointment of a lead organisation. The current order of listing does not reflect the level of involvement.

Detailed decisions about the implementation and timing of actions and projects will be made in line with the normal government policy and budget processes. The government will continue its commitment to rigorous decision-making about initiatives that require funding, statutory amendments or new regulations in line with its economic and fiscal strategy, including the government's long-term financial management objectives. In particular, projects requiring budget funding will be assessed against budget capacity, with business cases and cost-benefit analyses being applied in accordance with government policy.

Funding proposals for actions to be implemented on areas with a recognised Traditional Owner group will include resourcing for that Traditional Owner group to participate.

DELWP is working with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to develop a business case outlining options for partnerships and resourcing the Water Unit to enable implementation of the actions in the plan.

	Action	Responsibilities and timeframes
Septic tanks		
5.	<p>Develop an integrated program to improve management of domestic wastewater in non-sewered areas (includes places serviced by septic tanks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> investigate the extent and location of wastewater pollution in the Yarra River and its tributaries to guide future projects and actions develop and implement programs (education, compliance and infrastructure improvements) to target areas where domestic wastewater has the greatest impact on water quality. 	<p>Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, DELWP, Melbourne Water, Yarra Ranges Council, Nillumbik Shire Council, Manningham City Council</p> <p>medium term (4-7 years)</p>
Billabongs and wetlands		
6.	<p>Investigate options to restore billabongs and wetlands on private and public land by using water for the environment to mimic natural water cycles and undertaking complementary land and water management works.</p>	<p>Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, local government, DELWP and Melbourne Water</p> <p>medium term (4-7 years)</p>
7.	<p>Work with partners, primarily Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung, the Victorian Environmental Water Holder and Parks Victoria, to implement a landscape scale approach to improving the condition of wetlands and billabongs for the Lower Yarra billabongs. This must include the prioritisation of wetlands for water regime management and delivery of environmental water and cultural flows.</p>	<p>Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, local government, Parks Victoria, DELWP and Melbourne Water</p> <p>short term (1-3 years)</p>
8.	<p>Support the aspirations of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people to pursue water justice for their people and Country</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> deliver water justice through water rights, participation in water management, and broader water and policy reform (as per the definition of water justice identified in the National Cultural Flows Research Project 2020) deliver options to support water rights for the Birrarung such as the possibility of the reallocation of the former Amcor entitlement. 	<p>Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, local government, DELWP and Melbourne Water</p> <p>short term (1-3 years)</p>
9.	<p>Work with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung to enhance knowledge, monitor and understand ecological change in prioritised Lower Yarra billabongs which have received environmental water.</p> <p>Includes working with partners, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, North East Link and Transport for Victoria to protect the water levels in the Bolin Bolin billabongs from the impacts of potential groundwater drawdown. The North East Link Project, in accordance with its environmental performance requirements, is required to design the project to mitigate the changes to groundwater levels in the billabongs including undertaking pre-construction, construction and post construction groundwater monitoring.</p>	<p>Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, local government, DELWP and Melbourne Water</p> <p>short term (1-3 years)</p>

	Action	Responsibilities and timeframes
Habitat connectivity		
10.	<p>Undertake vegetation works to strengthen terrestrial and aquatic habitat corridors to improve biodiversity. Revegetation should include species identified as culturally important to the Traditional Owners and where feasible works should be delivered by Traditional Owners groups. Priority areas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yarra Junction to Healesville billabongs and wetlands • Healesville to Yering billabongs and wetlands • Yering to Warrandyte landscape protection • Kinglake to Yarra biodiversity corridor 	<p>Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, DELWP, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria and local government.</p> <p>medium term (4-7 years)</p>
11.	<p>Increase and enhance the extent and quality of urban greening in the inner city reach on public and private land downstream of Gardiners Creek to combat air and noise pollution, create habitat for local wildlife and reinvigorate local communities appreciation of nature and the environment.</p>	<p>Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, local government, DELWP and Melbourne Water</p> <p>short term (1-3 years)</p>
12.	<p>Follow the goals and principles as set out in <i>Protecting Victoria's Environmental Biodiversity 2037</i> for habitat and species conservation planning. This includes using associated decision support tools, <i>Nature Print</i> and <i>Strategic Management Prospects</i> as an addendum to the plan's decision-making framework, and incorporating environmental net gain when planning for whole of river biodiversity outcomes.</p> <p>DELWP and Wurundjeri Water Unit will work together to develop a bicultural approach to assessing net gain on their Country, considering cultural values and practices. They will explore ways to integrate this approach to support the Birrarung as a single living entity. Resourcing to be provided for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung participation.</p>	<p>Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, DELWP, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria and local government</p> <p>(ongoing)</p>
13.	<p>Explore and support the use of incentive mechanisms to build skills, knowledge and capacity in restoring landscape function, protecting biodiversity, increasing nutrient and water cycling and building soil carbon for resilient enterprises that can mitigate climate-related pressures.</p>	<p>Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, DELWP, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria and local government</p> <p>medium term (4-7 years)</p>
14.	<p>Promote the use of conservation covenants to protect priority conservation values on private land as well as enhancing habitat connectivity and, where possible, incorporating Traditional Owner aspirations and involvement.</p>	<p>Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, DELWP and Trust for Nature</p> <p>medium term (4-7 years)</p>
15.	<p>Plan and undertake terrestrial and aquatic flora and fauna assessments to ascertain where opportunities exist to reintroduce and restore native plants and animals, including species that are important to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung as totems, seasonal indicators and resources required for ceremony and other uses. Selection of plants and planting methods will also consider impacts of climate change and opportunity to increase resilience.</p>	<p>Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation</p> <p>medium term (4-7 years)</p>
16.	<p>Provide resourcing to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to develop and pilot flora and fauna assessments as critical planning tools for future management of the catchment. This will require external agencies providing access to relevant data.</p>	<p>Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation</p> <p>short term, (1-3 years)</p>

	Action	Responsibilities and timeframes
Native fish		
17.	Invest in habitat restoration and environmental watering to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase native fish in the Yarra River, its tributaries and billabongs • support a healthy ecosystem • improve opportunities for recreational fishing and cultural practices. 	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, local government, DELWP and Melbourne Water short term (1-3 years)
18.	Work in partnership with angling groups to develop and implement a community education program on protection of native fish (especially for Macquarie perch and other threatened species). This will include promoting bag limits and areas where the taking of native fish is prohibited and increasing participation in monitoring and assessment programs.	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, DELWP, Melbourne Water long term (8-10 years)
19.	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to lead and explore the feasibility of research projects identifying current extents, habitat needs, and best practice recovery programs for culturally valued freshwater aquatic species, which are in decline in the greater Melbourne region. This includes species such as river blackfish, freshwater crayfish, and short-finned eel.	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Arthur Rylah Institute, DELWP, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria and local government long term (8-10 years)
Pest plants and animals		
20.	Adopt a multi-agency collaboration and investment approach to management of invasive animals and plants in the Yarra corridor including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quantify and measure numbers and impact of invasive animals and plants • evaluate the effectiveness of existing control programs • coordinate the delivery of new programs and projects to control and eradicate where possible invasive animals and plants in the Yarra corridor • set targets for control programs over the next 10 years and monitor progress towards their achievement. 	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, DELWP, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria and local government medium term (4-7 years)
21 .	Build capacity of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Narrap ('Country') team to manage and eradicate deer in the Yarra catchment.	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, DELWP, Melbourne Water, local government and Parks Victoria short term (1-3 years)

	Action	Responsibilities and timeframes
Climate change		
22.	Deliver an interactive education program along the river corridor to enhance awareness and understanding around climate change and adaptive capacity of the river.	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, local government and Parks Victoria short term (1-3 years)
23.	Map key risks to the Yarra for climate change and develop a climate change adaptation and resilience action plan. The plan will inform responses to extreme weather events including, heat waves, drought, flood and fire, and promote land management approaches such as cultural burning to mitigate risks and assist recovery.	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, DELWP, local government and Parks Victoria short term (1-3 years)
Performance Objective 2 - A culturally diverse corridor		
Aboriginal cultural heritage		
24.	Develop, or where existing, enhance interpretive and educational programs for sites that have Aboriginal cultural heritage values and historic heritage values. Potential sites are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collingwood Children's Farm • Dights Falls and Merri Creek confluence • Bolin Bolin Billabong • Brushy Creek confluence 	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Collingwood Children's Farm, local government and Parks Victoria medium term (4-7 years)
25.	Deliver interactive educational programs (e.g. signage, and smart device application) that include storytelling about the rich culture and heritage of the Yarra River. Indigenous cultural intellectual property agreements must be in place for use of Traditional Owner intellectual property and programs.	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, local government and Parks Victoria medium term (4-7 years)
26.	Support a program of cultural value studies by the Traditional Owners for the Yarra – Birrarung and its lands.	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, DELWP, local government and Parks Victoria short term (1-3 years)
27.	Explore with the Traditional Owners, the possibility of registering the Yarra as a cultural landscape.	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, local government and Parks Victoria medium term (4-7 years)
Historic cultural heritage		
28.	Develop a holistic heritage assessment to understand historic heritage values using the Yarra River (Birrarung) Cultural Heritage Scoping Study thematic framework.	DELWP, local government, Museum Victoria, National Trust of Australia (Victoria) and Parks Victoria medium term (4-7 years)

	Action	Responsibilities and timeframes
Performance objective 3: Quality parklands for a growing population		
Caring for Country and co-governance of the Parklands with Traditional Owners		
29.	Plan, design, and manage the river parklands as one living and integrated natural entity, ensuring that all parklands are managed to a consistently high standard and celebrate the relationship between the river and its parklands.	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, DELWP, local government, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria and relevant Committees of Management short term (1-3 years)
30.	Develop, with Traditional Owners, a consistent conservation, cultural and visitation brand identity for the Yarra and its parklands to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • embed in the community, recognition of the parklands and river as one living and integrated natural entity • celebrate the nurturing relationship between the Yarra's parklands and the community • encourage proactive behaviour to protect and nourish the Yarra and its parklands • support national and international recognition of, and investment in, the Yarra's parklands. 	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, local government and Parks Victoria short term (1-3 years)
31.	Establish formalised partnership agreements (including resourcing) with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation to manage parklands on their Country, respectively.	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, DELWP, Department of Transport, local government and Parks Victoria short term (1-3 years)
Balancing access and conservation		
32.	Investigate locations and options for improved access to the Yarra and its parklands that enable outstanding nature and culture based experiences while conserving the high biodiversity, cultural and landscape values that the community wish to protect. This includes identifying and mapping locations and options for improved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on-water experience for kayak/canoe and boating access points at key locations (giving consideration to health and safety and being fit-for-purpose) • signage and information for on-water journeys • bicycle and pedestrian trail experiences • experience and connection to nature for recreational and leisure pursuits. <p>Assist Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to undertake cultural heritage assessments on any Crown land river frontages with grazing licences that are identified for camping. The <i>Land (Regulated Watercourse Land) Regulations 2021</i> only allow camping in designated sites on licensed Crown land river frontages following assessments by DELWP and recognised Traditional Owners.</p>	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, DELWP, local government and Parks Victoria medium term (4 -8 years)

	Action	Responsibilities and timeframes
Expanding the parkland network		
33.	Over the next 10 years, the state government to investigate opportunities to improve and extend the area of parklands and deliver on priorities for acquisition.	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and DELWP long term (8-10 years)
Infrastructure and services		
34.	Conduct a strategic assessment of infrastructure and services in the Yarra's parklands to ensure they are contemporary, inclusive and provide multiple benefits, while respecting and protecting the conservation and cultural values of the parklands and the river.	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and Parks Victoria short term (1-3 years)
35.	Consider green infrastructure investment and solutions at the local and landscape scale within parklands. Examples include constructed wetlands for stormwater treatment and creating habitat, placement of trees to improve visual aesthetics and amenity, permeable surfaces to increase groundwater recharge, and rain gardens to manage run-off from hard surfaces.	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, local government and Parks Victoria short term (1-3 years)
36.	Develop a 10-year berthing strategy for the lower Yarra River.	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, local government and Parks Victoria short term (1-3 years)
37.	Ensure access and egress for vessels to priority berthing sites along the inner city reach of the Yarra River through investment in a comprehensive dredging operation and ongoing maintenance dredging of the river to ensure boats and vessels can move safely along the river to maintain its status as a tourism precinct.	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and Parks Victoria medium term (4 – 7 years)
38.	<p>Establish a Lower Yarra River management committee to guide commercial berthing, events and activation, and river infrastructure development and improvement. The committee's main objectives would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • driving the development of a 10-year berthing strategy for the lower Yarra River (from Dights Falls to the Port of Melbourne) including options for commercial berthing, events and activation, and infrastructure investment • ensure activities and safe waterway usage is reflected in Yarra River waterway rules • driving the alignment of Parks Victoria and Melbourne City Council annual works programs • overseeing the implementation of the outcomes of the Yarra Strategic Plan for the lower Yarra River. 	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Parks Victoria and local government short term (1-3 years)





	Action	Responsibilities and timeframes
Performance objective 4 - Protecting the natural beauty of the Yarra River corridor		
Protect landscapes and views		
39.	Protect the river's landscapes and views through improved planning and management of the river corridor and incorporation of the Yarra Strategic Plan land use framework into local and state planning policy.	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, DELWP and local government short term (1– 3 years)
Monitor changes in land use		
40.	Set land use planning goals and monitor changes in land use using satellite imagery, geospatial and remote sensing techniques and cultural practices and knowledge.	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, DELWP, Victorian Planning Authority and local government long term (8-10 years)

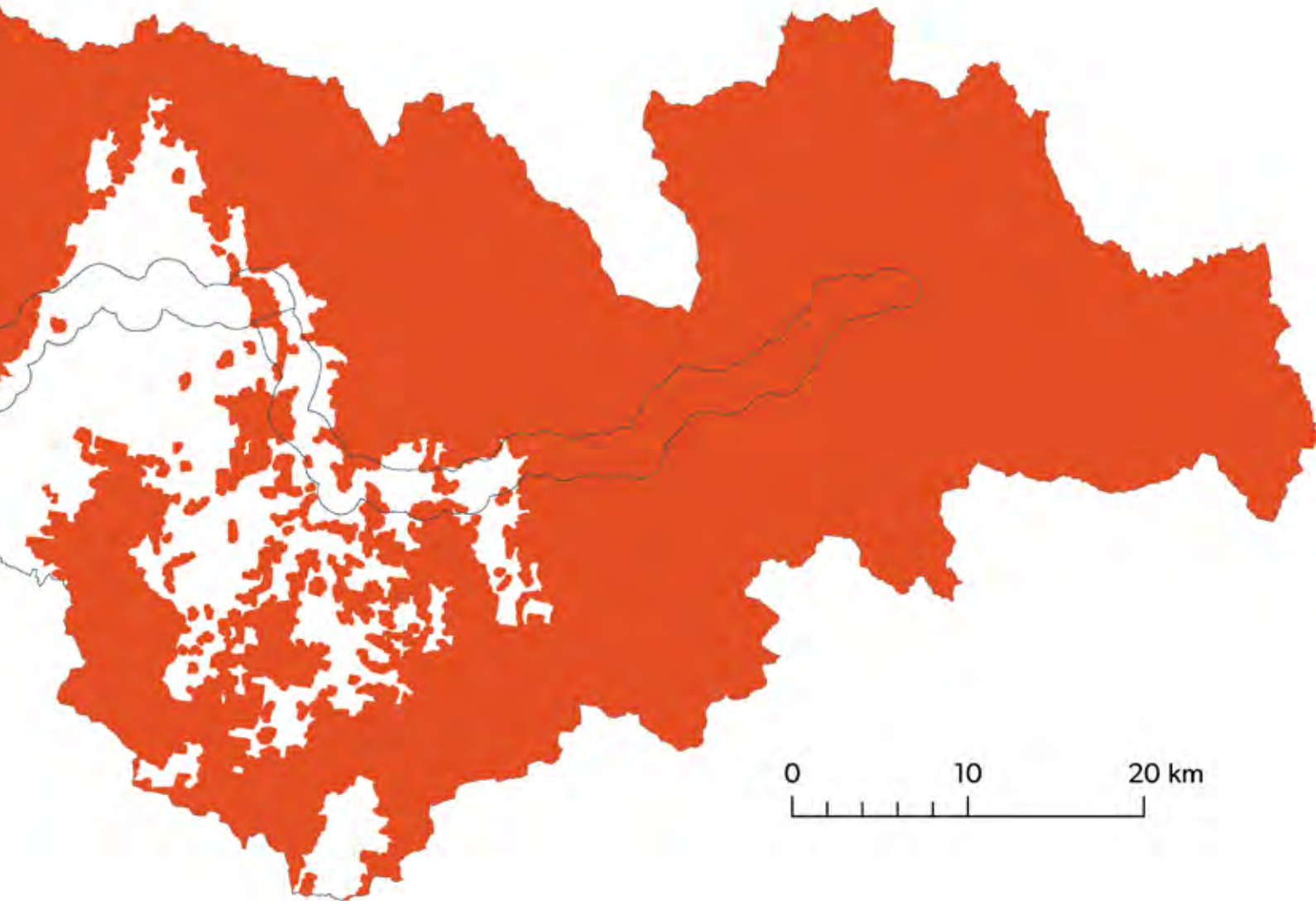
APPENDIX H — Map of Yarra Catchment showing Bushfire Management Overlay

Bushfire Management Overlay: Planning scheme overlay applied to areas where there is potential for extreme bushfire behaviour including crown fire, extreme ember attack and radiant heat. Sourced from the Victorian Government, in partnership with the CFA and CSIRO



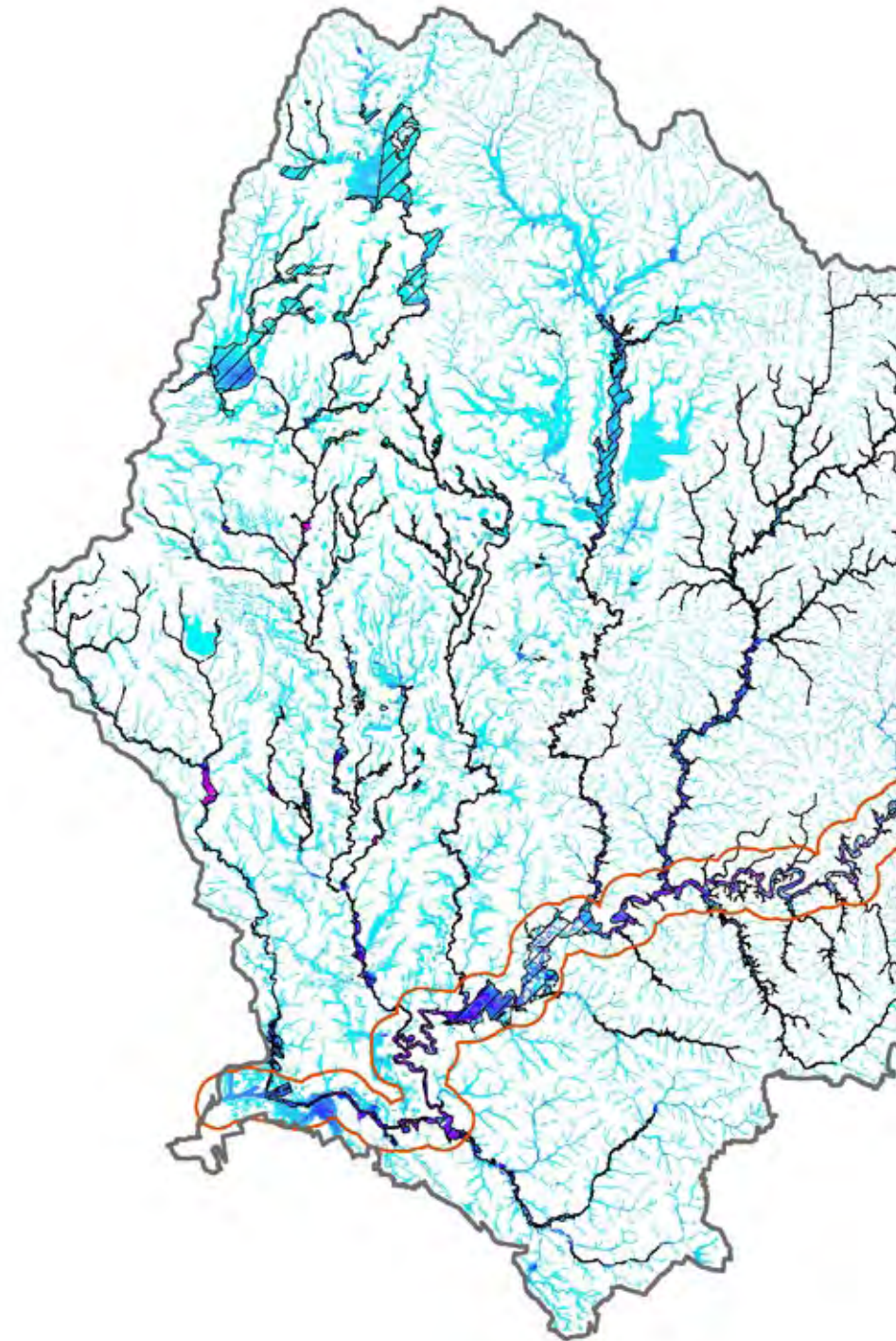
Legend

-  Bushfire management overlay
-  Yarra catchment
-  Yarra River
-  Yarra Strategic Plan area

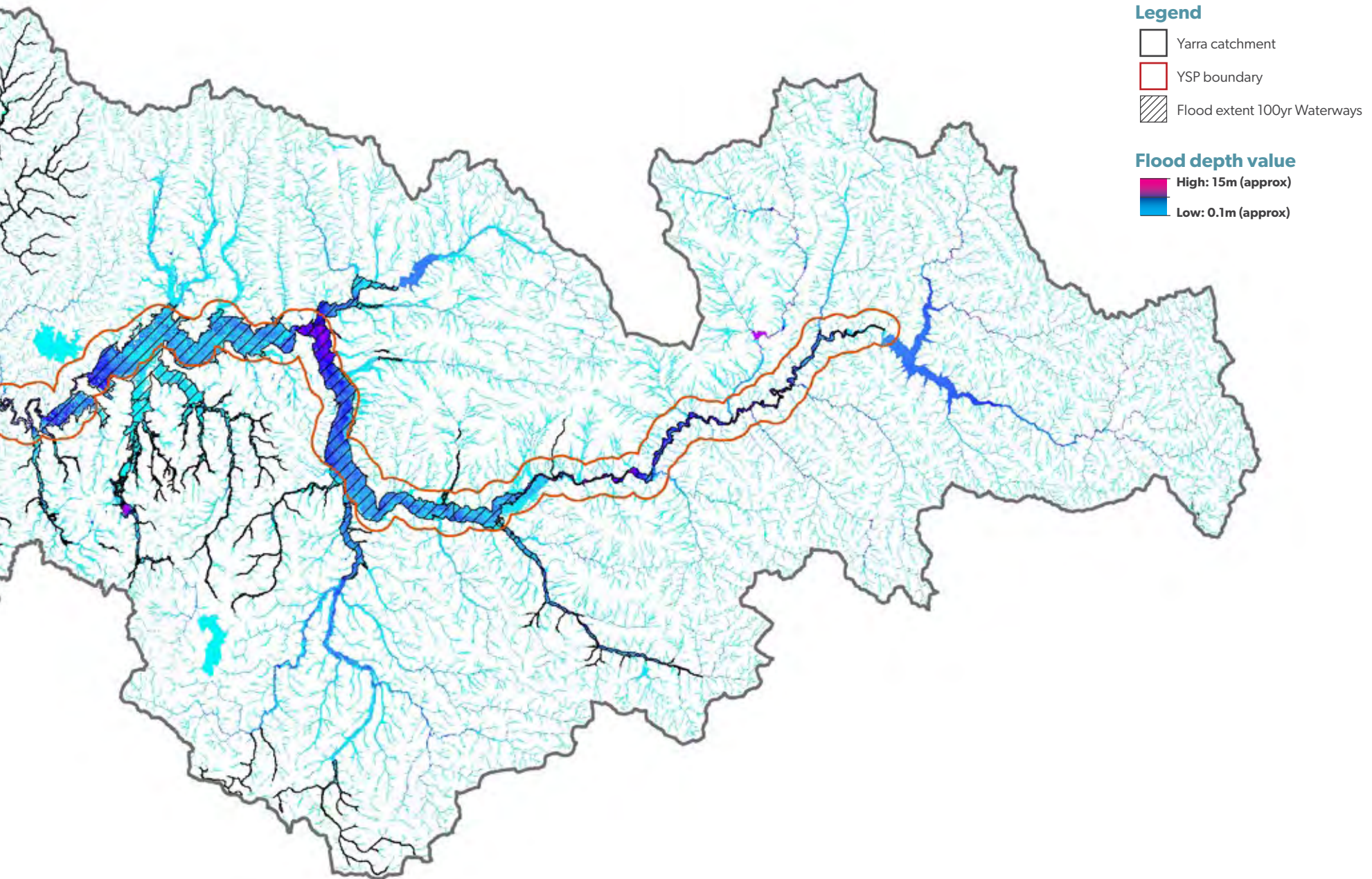


APPENDIX I — Map of Yarra Catchment showing land prone to flooding

Flood Risk Overlay: Areas prone to flooding under a climate change scenario with a projected increase in rainfall intensity of 18.5% by 2100. This is one form of flood risk modelling and should not be used for detailed mapping and planning purposes.



Note: This map is based on outputs from catchment modelling of potential flooding under climate change scenarios, undertaken for Melbourne Water.



GLOSSARY

Aboriginal cultural heritage	Knowledge and lore, practices and people, objects and places that are valued, culturally meaningful and connected to identity and Country.
Amenity	Aspects of rivers or landscapes that enhance community wellbeing. Depends on factors such as the cleanliness of the waterway and surrounds, the ability to access the waterway, and the quality and extent of open space.
Best practice	Combination of techniques, processes or technologies used in an industry or activity that have been shown by research and experience to produce optimal results and that is established or proposed as a standard suitable for widespread adoption.
Billabong	A 'billabong' is a waterbody left behind following a change in river course; it is a type of wetland usually still connected to the river and periodically flooded. They can be wet for 3-4 months of the year, followed by a drying period, which is just as important for their ecological health.
Birrarung	Woi-wurrung language word for the Yarra River, meaning 'river of mists and shadows'.

Bushfire Management Overlay	Applies to land that may be significantly affected by a bushfire. Triggers the need for a planning permit for certain developments and requires new developments to include appropriate bushfire protection measures.
Confluence	The point where a tributary joins a larger river (called the main stem) or where two streams meet to become the source of a river of a new name.
Coordinated decision-making	Refers to decisions being made through a committee process, such as that used for the Yarra Collaboration Committee. This reduces duplication, allows consensus between organisations, supports setting of priorities, and facilitates decision-making for the whole of the river, rather than for a single entity or location.
Country	Aboriginal culture revolves around relationships to the land and water. Country is both a place of belonging and a way of believing.
Covenant	Statutory agreement that is included on a land title to stipulate a behaviour which the landowner must perform, such as protecting native vegetation.

Cultural flows	Water entitlements owned by Traditional Owner groups that can be released to improve the spiritual, cultural, environmental, social and economic conditions of those groups.
Cultural heritage	Legacy of physical artefacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations (refers to both Indigenous and postcolonial heritage).
Elder	Someone who has gained recognition as a custodian of knowledge and lore, and who has permission to disclose knowledge and beliefs on behalf of Aboriginal people.
Environmental flows / environmental water / water for the environment	Water managed and allocated to improve or maintain the health of rivers and wetlands – including the plants and animals that depend on them.

Environmental net gain	Environmental net gain is an outcome where overall gains for the environment are greater than overall losses and where individual losses are avoided. Environmental net gain aims to improve extent and quality of native vegetation and create habitat for increased biodiversity.
Environmental Significance Overlay	A planning control ensures that the development of land does not affect identified environmental values and qualities of an area.
Interpretive signage	Helps to create a narrative for a place. Aims to generate a positive user experience by educating its audience on aspects of historical, heritage or environmental importance.
Invasive species	Species occurring as a result of human activities, beyond its normal distribution, which threatens environmental, agricultural or other social resources by the damage it causes. Includes diseases, fungi, parasites, feral animals, insects and weeds.
Key views	Views and viewsheds that provide a sense of place and connection with Yarra River land from and to surrounding areas.
Kulin	The Kulin Nation is made up of five language groups: Boonwurrung (Boon-wur-rung), Dja Dja Wurrung (Jar-Jar-Wur-rung), Taungurung (Tung-ger-rung), Wathaurung (Wath-er-rung), Woi-wurrung (Woy-wur-rung), commonly known as Wurundjeri.

Liveability	Reflects the wellbeing of a community, and the many characteristics that make a place somewhere people want to live. A liveable city or region meets the basic social, environmental and economic needs of its people. It also addresses community values and preferences for amenity, wellbeing and a sense of place.
New area for protection	Area not covered by existing statutory protections. Identified to realise Traditional Owners' aspirations, the community's vision and deliver on the requirements of the Act. Safeguards against future pressures and to ensure the Yarra River is respected as a sacred natural entity.
Open space	Publicly owned land that is set aside primarily for recreation, nature conservation, passive outdoor enjoyment and public gatherings. This includes public parks, gardens, reserves, waterways, publicly owned forecourts and squares.
Planning controls	Standards and restrictions for new development. They may apply to a location (suburb, street or single lot), particular types of development (dwellings, villas) or a component of the development (provision of car parking, control of stormwater).
Planning Policy Framework	The State Planning Policy Framework is a key part of the planning system and the Victoria Planning Provisions. It sets the key policy direction for state planning issues.

Planning scheme	Sets out policies and provisions for the use and development of land. Covers each local council area in Victoria and some special planning areas.
Recognised Traditional Owner group	Refers to groups that have been recognised through a legal process as the right group to speak with about land and waters within a specific area. Traditional Owners can be formally recognised under various Acts (<i>Native Title Act 1993</i> , the <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i> and/or the <i>Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010</i>) which is typically accompanied by the appointment of a corporate entity to perform the functions under the relevant Act.
Responsible public entities	An organisation or body providing services to the public on behalf of the government or another public entity. As defined in section 3 of the Act, this includes Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority ⁹ , Victorian Planning Authority, Head, Transport for Victoria and VicTrack, any committees of management for declared Yarra River land, any Traditional Owner Management Boards and the following local councils: Banyule, Boroondara, Manningham, Melbourne, Nillumbik, Stonnington, Yarra and Yarra Ranges.
Riparian	Land or vegetation that adjoins a river, creek, estuary, wetland or lake.

Septic tank	Underground chamber through which domestic wastewater flows for basic treatment. Homes that are not connected to a reticulated sewage system rely on a septic system to treat sewage on-site.
Setback	Minimum distance that a building or structure must be set back from a street, river or other stream, shore or floodplain, or any other place which is deemed to need protection.
Significant place	Identified to celebrate its regional significance. Contributes to biodiversity, improves the parklands network and access to the Yarra River, protects cultural heritage and expands activation options that embrace and respect the Yarra.
Stormwater	Rainwater that runs off land and moves away from the area where it originally falls.
Transport infrastructure	The plan includes 'agreed strategic transport infrastructure'. This refers to (current, future, planned or potential) transport related (rail, road, boat, bike and pedestrian) projects nominated by the Department of Transport, and referenced in the text and shown on maps in the plan. This infrastructure is to be considered in planning any future activities on Yarra River land. The department may also nominate additional projects through the implementation planning process.

Tributary	A stream or river that flows into a larger waterway.
Urban forest	Comprises all of the trees and other vegetation within urban areas – including vegetation in parks, waterways, streets, private gardens, green walls, balconies and roofs. In addition to providing critical ecosystem services such as air and water filtration, cooling and habitat, urban forests provide a connection to nature often perceived to be missing in urban areas.
Urban growth boundary (UGB)	Applies around the urban areas of Metropolitan Melbourne. Directs urban growth to areas best able to be supplied with appropriate infrastructure and services and protect other valuable peri-urban land (and environmental features) from urban development pressures.
Wastewater	Water that has had its quality affected by human influence, deriving from industrial, domestic, agricultural or commercial activities.
Waterway condition / waterway health	Overall state of key features and processes that underpin functioning waterway ecosystems; such as, species and communities, habitat, connectivity, water quality, riparian vegetation, physical form, nutrient cycling and carbon storage.

Waterways	Rivers, creeks and streams, their associated estuaries and floodplains (including floodplain wetlands) and non-riverine wetlands.
Wetlands	Inland, standing, shallow bodies of water, which may be permanent or temporary, fresh or saline. Wetlands' are areas of permanent or temporary inundation supporting plants and animals that require wet conditions to complete their life cycle: they do not need to be inundated by river flooding but can receive water from drains, tributaries, local rainfall runoff and groundwater.
Yarra protection principles	Outlined in the <i>Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017</i> .
Yarra River land	As defined in section 3 of the Act, this includes the Yarra River's bed, soil and banks as well as publicly managed land within 500 metres of a bank of the river.
Yarra Strategic Plan area	Yarra River land and land of any kind that is located within one kilometre of a bank of the Yarra River.

ENDNOTES

1. Bowler, JM 1966, *Port Philip Survey, 1957–1963: The Geology and Geomorphology*, Memoirs of the National Museum of Victoria, NO 27 – 1966, Melbourne.
2. There are two registered Aboriginal parties recognised under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* that cover Country that the Yarra River flows through. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation cover the majority of the Yarra, Birrarung, from the city to the mountains. Downstream of the city, the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation have been recently recognised as the registered Aboriginal party for this Country. Bunurong Country covers the lower reaches of the Yarra estuary out to Narrm (Port Phillip Bay).
3. Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability 2018, *State of the Yarra and its Parklands*, State of Victoria, Melbourne, accessed 15 July 2020: <https://www.ces.vic.gov.au/reports/state-yarra-and-its-parklands-2018>
4. The area covered by the plan includes Crown land along the Yarra River that is mostly reserved under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*, including several metropolitan parks, as well as parts of the Yarra Ranges National Park and Warrandyte State Park under the *National Parks Act 1975*. The area also includes land owned and managed by various municipalities. The river between Warburton and Warrandyte is recognised as a heritage river under the Heritage Rivers Act 1992. Various entities are responsible for managing the land, including DELWP, Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, Yarra Ranges Council, Nillumbik Shire Council, Manningham City Council, Boroondara City Council, Banyule City Council, Stonnington City Council, Yarra City Council and Melbourne City Council.
5. The Yarra Strategic Plan complies with the requirements outlined in Section 45 of the *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017*, which dictate that the plan must not be inconsistent with the other Acts, purposes of reservation, management plans and accepted recommendations that apply to the land covered by the plan.
6. Excluded land includes the Port of Melbourne (as defined in the *Port Management Act 1995*), and any land within a special water supply catchment area listed in Schedule 5 of the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*.
7. Where Crown land parcels abutting the river extend beyond the 500 metres covered by the declaration, the entire parcel has been declared as Yarra River land.
8. Land excluded from the Yarra River land declaration is defined as i) the Port of Melbourne (as defined in the *Port Management Act 1995*), ii) any land within a special water supply catchment area listed in Schedule 5 of the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*, iii) land that is owned by a municipal council. Yarra River land can be added to or removed on the recommendation of the Minister, by order published in the *Government Gazette*. The associated maps lodged in the Central Plan Office provide the most up to date and correct record of Yarra River land.
9. The 15 state and local government authorities with management responsibilities along the river corridor are referred to in the *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017* as responsible public entities. As of 1 January 2022 Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority has been integrated into Melbourne Water. Any action or responsibility allocated to them as a responsible public entity is now the responsibility of Melbourne Water.
10. Melbourne Water 2018, *Co-Designed Catchment Program for the Yarra Catchment*, for implementing the Healthy Waterways Strategy, Victorian State Government, Melbourne.
11. Otto K 2009, *Yarra, A Diverting History of Melbourne's Murky River*, Text Publishing, Melbourne.
12. Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, 2019, *Victoria's Climate Science Report 2019*, Melbourne, Victoria.
13. Hull W 1859, *Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines, 1858-9 (Victoria)*, Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines, Government of Australia, Melbourne.
14. Ganesharajah, Cynthia 2009, *Indigenous Health and Wellbeing: The Importance of Country*, Native Title Research Unit, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra, accessed 25 March 2020: https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/products/report_research_outputs/ganesharajah-2009-indigenous-health-wellbeing-importance-country.pdf
15. Melbourne Water 2018, 'Yarra Strategic Plan Map Book (September 2018), which informed drafting of the Yarra Strategic Plan.
16. Clark ID and Kostanski LM 2006, *An Indigenous History of Stonnington*, A Report to the City of Stonnington, School of Business, University of Ballarat.

ISBN: 978-1-921603-09-9 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-921603-10-5 (Web)

© Copyright February 2022

Melbourne Water Corporation

All rights reserved.

No part of this document may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, photocopied or otherwise dealt with without prior written permission of Melbourne Water Corporation.

Disclaimer: This publication may be of assistance to you, but Melbourne Water and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability or any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

