

DRAFT
YARRA STRATEGIC PLAN

AN OVERVIEW

Help us shape the final
Yarra Strategic Plan



IMAGINE THE YARRA
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OVERVIEW OF THE DRAFT YARRA STRATEGIC PLAN

The Yarra River, Birrarung: our lifeblood, our shared history, our river

Over tens of thousands of years the Yarra River, Birrarung, has shaped the lives of those around it.

The river is our lifeblood, providing water to drink, places to socialise, parks for play, nature to experience and landscapes to explore.

As our city grows and the climate warms there will be more demands placed on our iconic waterway and its parklands. For the Yarra to thrive under these pressures, our river needs more from us.

With changing practices, and the efforts of stakeholders and the community, the condition of the river has improved considerably over recent decades.

However, in its lower reaches the Yarra remains a polluted river facing impacts from unprecedented population growth, climate change – and an uncertain future without significant intervention.

We must act now to protect the river and ensure it continues to support our healthy city and environment.

What is the Yarra Strategic Plan?

The draft Yarra Strategic Plan is the first integrated corridor plan developed collaboratively by the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and all 15 state and local government agencies involved in managing the river.

In the next 10 years the draft plan works toward achieving the Yarra River 50 Year Community Vision and the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation's Birrarung Water Policy, *Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung (Ancient spirit and lore of the Yarra)*, May 2018.

It identifies immediate actions for the river, enables long-term collaborative management between agencies and Traditional Owners and guides local planning.

The final Yarra Strategic Plan will be an overarching policy and planning framework to guide collaborative management of the river and bring the vision to life with local and state government agencies, Traditional Owners and the community.

Did you know?

- The Yarra River translates to 'Birrarung' in the language of the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung, meaning 'River of mists and shadows'
- The river has flowed for 100 million years and shaped the Greater Melbourne landscape
- It provides Melbournians with 70% of their drinking water
- Volunteers spend an incredible 50,000 hours per year working in parks along the Yarra.

This summary highlights key elements of the Draft Yarra Strategic Plan.

We want as many Victorians as possible to help shape the final Yarra Strategic Plan and invite stakeholders, community interest groups and anyone passionate about the Yarra River to provide feedback on the draft plan.

Visit imaginetheyarra.com.au or engage.vic.gov.au to learn more about how to offer your feedback either at our face-to-face events or online.

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

In an Australian first, the Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrong) Act 2017 (the Act) recognises Traditional Owners' custodianship of the Yarra River, Birrarung, and identifies the river and its lands as one living, integrated natural entity for protection and improvement.

The Act calls for the development of a long-term community vision which identifies the community's 'values, priorities and preferences' in relation to the management of the Yarra River corridor.

After engaging with over 2500 Victorians in 2017 to find out what they value about the Yarra River, an independent consultant selected 24 community members to write the Yarra River 50 Year Community Vision. The vision sets out the community's long-term aspirations for the Yarra River corridor.



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.

WHY WE NEED A WHOLE-OF-YARRA RIVER PLAN

Tackling climate change and population growth

We're facing a number of challenges over the next 100 years, which include:

- A dramatic and long-term decline in rainfall
- More frequent extreme weather events in Victoria, including droughts, floods and heatwaves
- Less water entering the Greater Melbourne waterways

These challenges expected in our future are already being felt, with the amount of rainfall entering the Yarra River halving since 2012.

More intense storm events will result in poorer water quality, increased sediment and nutrient loads, reduced dissolved oxygen, rapid alteration of habitats, and reduced amenity and access for communities.

Over the longer term, warming and drying trends will affect the plants and animals that can survive in and along the river. All of these changes will have a significant impact on the ability of the Yarra River corridor to adapt and thrive.

The State of the Yarra and Its Parklands¹ report was published in 2018 by the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Victoria, and indicates that the river is already experiencing the impacts of climate change and population growth.

The report suggests the river is in poor condition and that the key threats to its health are litter, sewage, pollution, urban development and invasive species. Litter is of particular concern, with nearly 180 tonnes of rubbish pulled from the Yarra River over a four-year period. These threats will be exacerbated by population growth and climate change.

Did you know?

A decline in the health of the river corridor will not only affect wildlife habitats, community access and recreational use. It will also likely affect the Yarra's ability to support the many economic activities that take place along the corridor, including farming, tourism and hospitality.



WORKING TOGETHER TO DELIVER THE COMMUNITY'S VISION

The draft plan was prepared with the guidance of a governance group called the Yarra Collaboration Committee. The group is made up of representatives from the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation as well as the 15 state and local agencies who manage the Yarra River corridor.

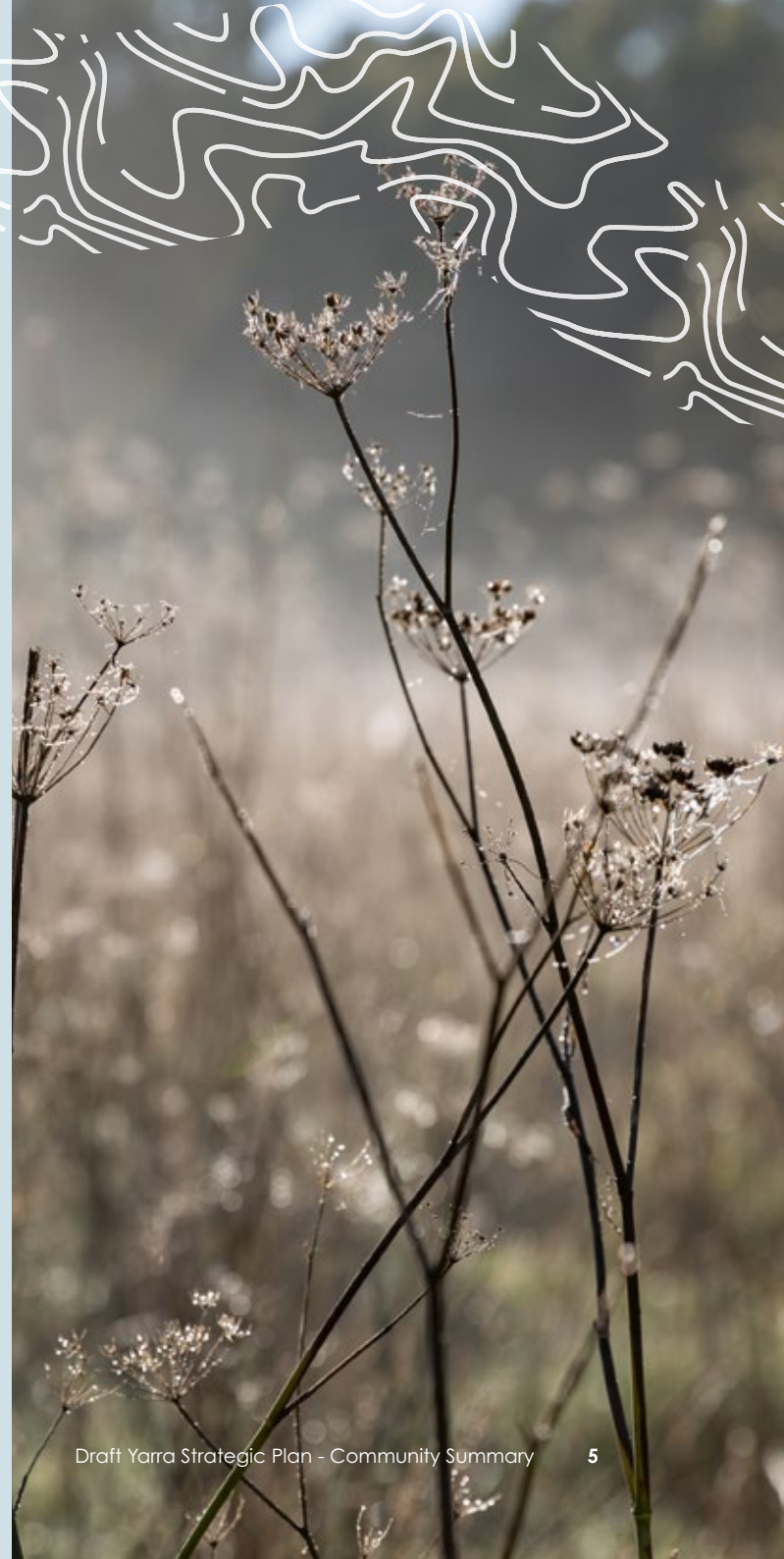
The Yarra Collaboration Committee

The Yarra Collaboration Committee includes representatives from Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation; Banyule City Council; Boroondara City Council; the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning; Department of Transport (including VicRoads), and VicTrack; Manningham Council; Melbourne City Council; Melbourne Water; Nillumbik Shire Council; Parks Victoria; Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority; Stonnington City Council; Victorian Planning Authority; Yarra City Council and Yarra Ranges Council.

The Yarra Collaboration Committee enables Traditional Owners and agencies to work together collaboratively, to manage the Yarra as one living entity to deliver better outcomes for the river and the wider community.

Collectively, the members of the committee invest millions of dollars in the Yarra River annually.

Through the Yarra Strategic Plan, we can now work cohesively, working across organisational boundaries to leverage our efforts and get the greatest benefit for the river and the community.



Investment highlights

Collectively, we have committed over \$80 million of investment in the Yarra River corridor for 2019/20.

Melbourne City Council has committed **over \$25 million** towards the renewal of Southbank Boulevard, Promenade and Queensbridge Square.



Melbourne City Council has committed **over \$8 million** to connect the community to the Yarra River through New Year's Eve fireworks and Moomba festival celebrations.

Yarra City Council, Stonnington City Council and Melbourne City Council collectively committed **over \$2.5 million** to improve their urban forest network.



Banyule City Council has committed **\$1.9 million** to upgrade the Banyule Flats Reserve Pavilion.



Yarra City Council has committed **over \$450,000** to restore bushland along the Yarra River corridor.



Melbourne Water and Manningham City Council have collectively committed over **\$600,000** to improve the health of billabongs in the Yarra River corridor. This includes integrated water management, watering for Bolin Bolin and Banyule billabongs and investigations at Annulus Billabong.

Boroondara City Council has committed **over \$1 million** to improve stormwater management through works at Chandler Park wetland and Macleay Park raingarden.

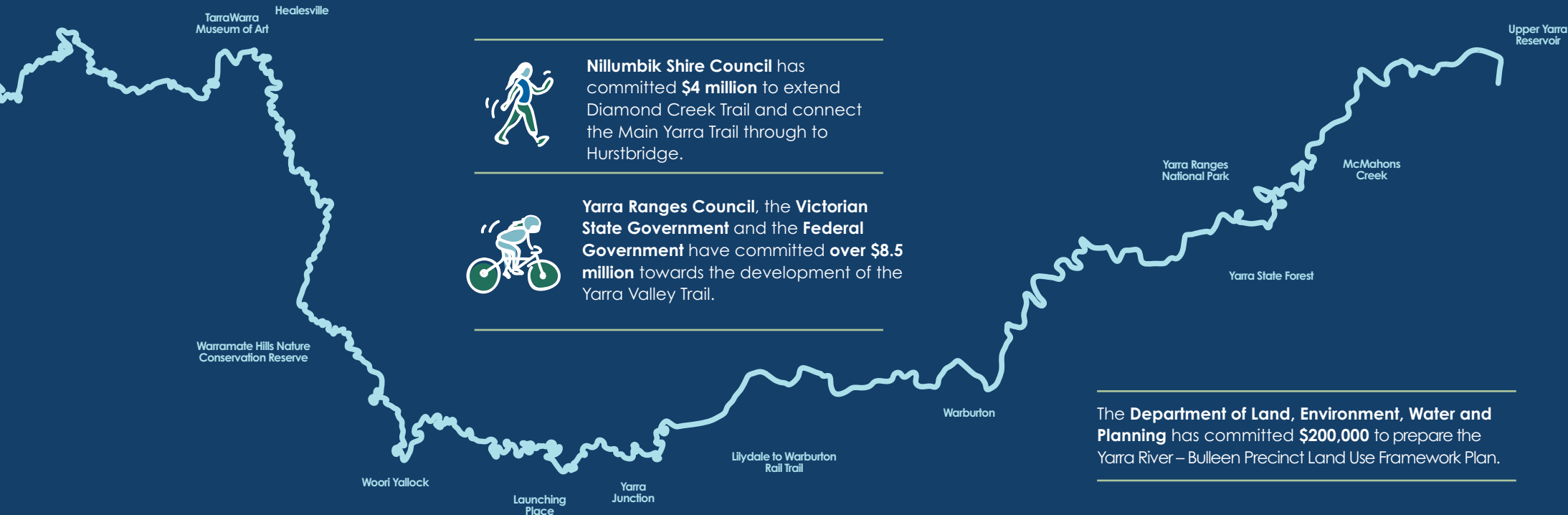


Manningham City Council has committed **\$2 million** to improve safety, access and connectivity to Warrandyte State Park and the Yarra River through the Jumping Creek Road Stage 1B upgrade.



Manningham City Council and Boroondara City Council have collectively committed **\$500,000** for biodiversity programs and works in the Yarra River corridor.

Manningham City Council and Stonnington City Council have collectively committed **\$800,000** to improve and extend the Main Yarra Trail.



Nillumbik Shire Council has committed **\$4 million** to extend Diamond Creek Trail and connect the Main Yarra Trail through to Hurstbridge.



Yarra Ranges Council, the Victorian State Government and the Federal Government have committed **over \$8.5 million** towards the development of the Yarra Valley Trail.

The **Department of Land, Environment, Water and Planning** has committed **\$200,000** to prepare the Yarra River – Bulleen Precinct Land Use Framework Plan.



The **Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning** has committed **over \$2 million** to support a healthy river and lands throughout the Yarra River corridor.



The **Department of Land, Environment, Water and Planning** has committed **over \$4 million** towards the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination.



Parks Victoria, Yarra City Council and Manningham City Council have committed **over \$9.1 million** to parkland management and improvements throughout the Yarra River corridor.



Collectively, we have committed **over \$10 million** for drainage and capital works throughout the Yarra River corridor.

Melbourne Water has committed **over \$3.7 million** towards maintenance programs in the Yarra River corridor.



Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority has committed **\$300,000** to help threatened Helmeted Honeyeater and Leadbeater's Possum populations.



Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Elders introducing the Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017 on the floor of the Victorian Parliament

Wurundjeri Woi wurrung people and custodianship of the Birrarung

An introduction from Wurundjeri Woi wurrung people, in their own words

'We, the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung people, are the Traditional Owners of Country that extends from the mouth of the Werribee River, north to the Great Dividing Range, east to Mount Baw Baw, and south to the mouth of the Mordialloc Creek*'

The Birrarung is central to the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung people and our Dreaming. The city of Melbourne grew from the banks of the Birrarung – the river has allowed it to become the vibrant city it is today – but this has come at great cost to the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung people and the Birrarung itself.

When Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Elders introduced the Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017 (the Act) on the floor of the Victorian Parliament in the Woi wurrung language, it was an Australian first. The symbolism of the Act is incredibly significant for the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung and for all Aboriginal Victorians, marking a major step towards acknowledging the rights of Traditional Owners as well as the importance of Traditional Owner language and culture.

As Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung people have the cultural, legislated, and moral authority to speak for our Country. We have an unbroken relationship with our Country. Wurundjeri Woi wurrung people do not separate the Birrarung from Port Phillip Bay ('Narm'), or regard the Birrarung as segmented according to reaches. Nor do we separate the river corridor from the rest of the Yarra catchment. For us, the landscape through which the Birrarung flows, from its source to the sea, is one integrated, living, cultural landscape.

* Acknowledging the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung people's consideration of Country, no Traditional Owner Group/s have yet been formally recognised by the State of Victoria for parts of this area.

'The Yarra River is an icon of Melbourne. The history is rich. The river is respected. The river has been looked after by us for thousands of years. Make it clean and let the species live.'

– Aunty Alice Kolasa

WILIP-GIN BIRRARUNG MURRON

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.

The Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Birrarung water policy, Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung (Ancient Spirit & Lore of the Yarra), is a policy document that outlines Wurundjeri Woi wurrung aspirations for community and Country, and the fundamental connection of both to the Birrarung.

FOUR 10 YEAR PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES TO DELIVER THE COMMUNITY VISION

What the plan will achieve



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.



PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE 2

A culturally diverse river corridor

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



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.



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.



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.

We'll achieve this by:

1. Restoring billabongs and wetlands by increasing water for the environment and undertaking complementary land and water management.
2. Strengthening terrestrial and aquatic habitat corridors between the Yarra River and the catchment to support biodiversity. Priorities include:
 - Healesville to Warrandyte
 - Healesville to Millgrove
 - Watsons Creek (an area for protection)
 - Gardiners Creek (a significant place).
3. Deliver foundational actions to achieve Traditional Owners' aspirations and the community's vision for 'clean waters'. This includes:
 - reducing the volume of litter impacting the Yarra River
 - strengthening stormwater management controls and strategies
 - increasing education, awareness and regulation to reduce pesticides and chemicals entering the waterway
 - improving septic tank and wastewater management*.

* All actions are subject to funding.

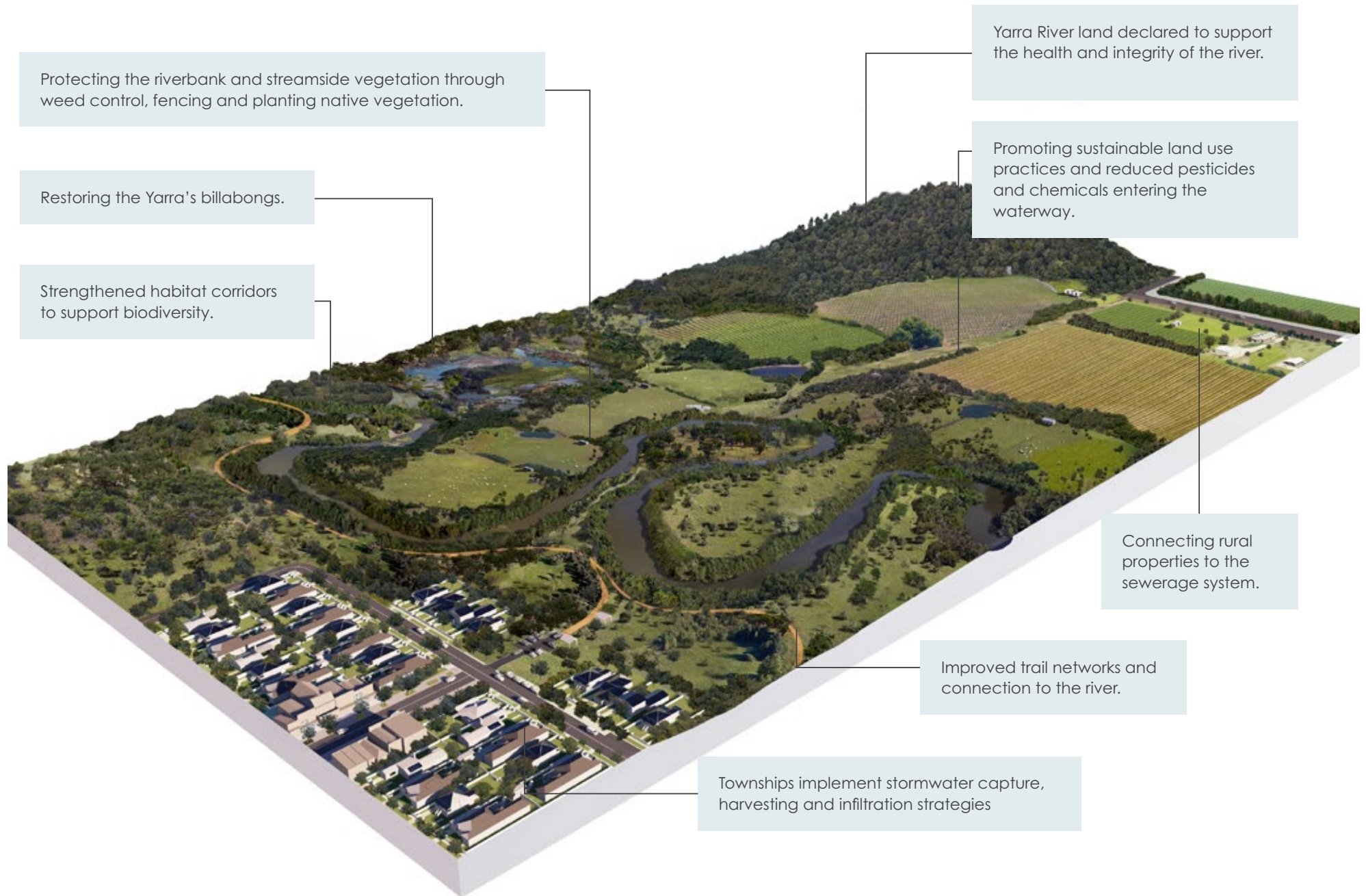


Figure 1. Representation of a healthy river and lands in the future.



PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE 2: A CULTURALLY DIVERSE RIVER CORRIDOR

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

We'll achieve this by:

1. Supporting Traditional Owners to record the river's cultural values on Yarra River land.
2. Piloting interpretive and educational programs for five sites that have shared values for Traditional Owners and post-settlement cultures.
3. Delivering an interactive education program (e.g. signage, and smart device application) that includes storytelling about the rich culture and heritage of the Yarra River, Birrarung*.

The sites are:

- Abbotsford Convent, Abbotsford
- Dights Falls, Abbotsford
- Bolin Bolin Billabong, Bulleen
- Domain Parklands, Melbourne
- Brushy Creek, Wonga Park.

* All actions are subject to funding.



Figure 2. Representation of a culturally diverse river corridor.



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.

We'll achieve this by:

1. Establish a sub-committee of the Yarra Collaboration Committee to support planning, design and management of the river parklands as one living entity.
2. Support Traditional Owners to carry out cultural land and water management practices.
3. Improve community access to the river by connecting recreational trail networks.
4. Establish partnerships to manage sites with Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and Traditional Owners.
5. Extend the parkland network to cater for a growing community.
6. Ensure park infrastructure and services are contemporary, inclusive, and provide multiple benefits.
7. Improve on-water access by constructing all abilities kayak/canoe access points at key locations. Improve signage and information for on-water journeys.
8. Develop a 10 year berthing strategy for the lower Yarra River.
9. Ensure access and egress to priority sites along the Yarra River through investment in a comprehensive dredging operation and ongoing maintenance dredging for the Yarra River.
10. Form a Yarra River Management Committee to oversee commercial berthing, events and activation, and infrastructure activities in the lower Yarra River*.

* All actions are subject to funding.

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

– Yarra River 50 Year Community Vision

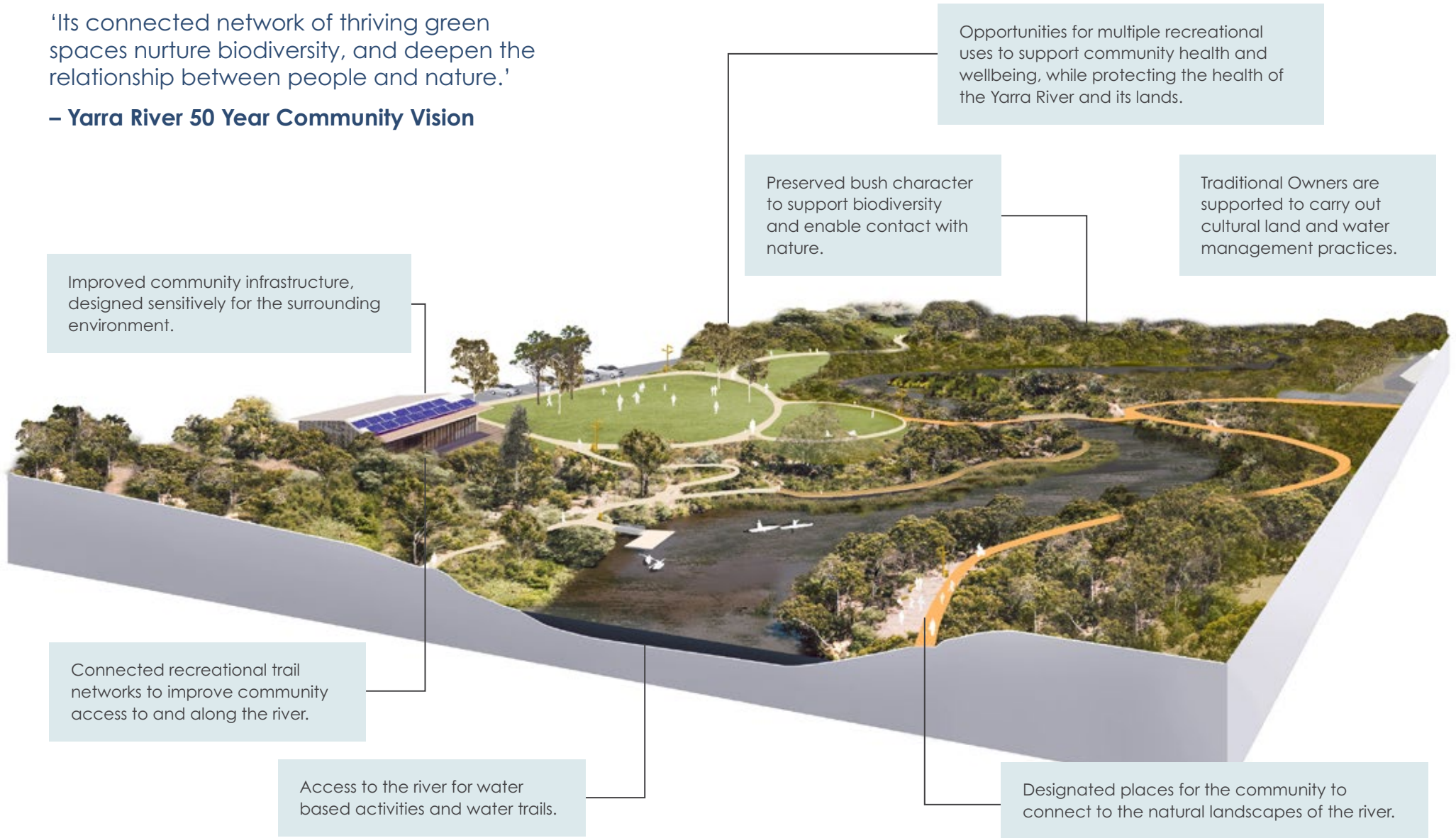


Figure 3. Representation of quality parklands for a growing population in the future.



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.



Figure 4. Representation of protecting the natural beauty of the Yarra River corridor in the future.

The Yarra Strategic Plan will:

1. Enhance the river's landscapes and views by improving public access, viewing locations and user experiences
2. Monitor changes in land use in order to prioritise the integration of new open space, access to the river and habitat corridors*.

* All actions are subject to funding.

YARRA STRATEGIC PLAN LAND USE FRAMEWORK

How will we put the Yarra at the centre of land use planning?

The Yarra Strategic Plan provides a regional framework for land use planning and decision-making on both public and freehold private land at a local level. The framework will ensure all activities within the corridor align with the 4 *performance objectives* in the next 10 years.

How the land use framework will be applied

Once the Yarra Strategic Plan is finalised, Clause 12.03-1R 'Yarra River Protection' of the Planning Policy Framework found in the Victoria Planning Provisions will be updated, and the final Yarra Strategic Plan will be referenced in planning schemes.

The Land Use Framework's maps and directions for future land use and development will work with other statutory controls, including interim Yarra River Protection planning controls introduced in 2017, to ensure that the Yarra River is at the centre of planning and decision-making in the corridor. Implementation of the Land Use Framework in this way means that planning permit and amendment proposals within the Yarra Strategic Plan area must be consistent with the Yarra Strategic Plan.



The Yarra River contains 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 Westgate Bridge.

Each reach is guided by its own 50 year community vision. The land use framework acknowledges the unique characteristics of each reach.

Directions for future land use and development

The 242km 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 settings².**

Have your say and help us to shape the final Yarra Strategic Plan

This summary of the plan highlights key elements of the Draft Yarra Strategic Plan.

To shape the final Yarra Strategic Plan, we want to hear from as many Victorians as possible and are providing a number of ways to offer your feedback.

Visit [imaginetheyarra.com.au](https://www.imaginetheyarra.com.au) to see our interactive snapshot of the plan and learn about our face-to-face community events.

For all written submissions, and detail on the Land Use Framework, go to engage.vic.gov.au.

It's important to note that public consultation on the draft plan is open for eight weeks. Check the website to confirm key dates and be sure to have your say on the plan before our engagement period closes.

ENDNOTES

- 1 2019, 'State of the Yarra and Its Parklands', Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Victoria website, accessed March 2019: https://www.ces.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/SoY_Front_Working_Document_20_03_19_F.pdf
- 2 The Yarra Strategic Plan does not apply in relation to a declared project within the meaning of the *Major Transport Project Facilitation Act 2009*.

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