

Newsletter Vision for Werribee Plains

Issue No 9 June 2011

Eucalyptus arboretum for the Melton Botanic Garden

Work on the construction of the Melton Botanic Garden will accelerate, thanks to a \$132,780 grant to the Friends of the Melton Botanic Garden from DSE through the Vision for Werribee Plains - and the continuing commitment of local volunteers.

An arboretum featuring low-rainfall Eucalypts species will be established within the garden. It is hoped the arboretum will inspire the use of indigenous species in urban landscapes throughout the region, and further reduce dependence on drinking water for gardens and open spaces.



Above: Volunteers from the Friends of the Melton Botanic Garden weeding and planting native and indigenous plants along Ryans Creek near the site of the planned Eucalyptus arboretum (photo courtesy John Bentley)

Melton is an ideal location for a botanic garden of this nature. Around 50,000 new houses will be built across the Melton and Wyndham areas over coming years and the botanic garden will enhance local biodiversity and offer landscaping inspiration for new home owners and developers.

The garden will also attract visitors from across the region. Enquiries should be forwarded to: http://fmbg.org.au/contact_us.htm

Werribee River Strategy underway

Development of a plan to integrate land use and biodiversity in the Werribee River corridor is about to begin, with support from councils, water authorities and CMAs.

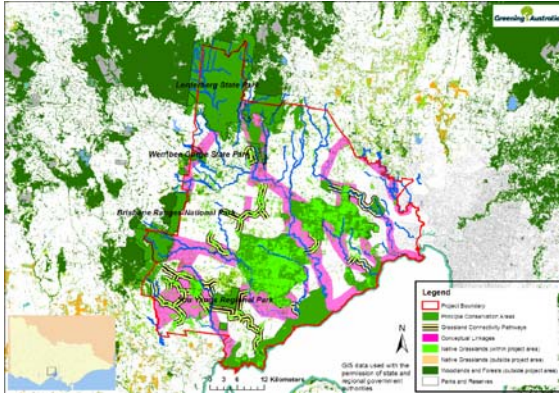
Leadwest Ltd will head up a project to develop a land-use strategy and biodiversity action plan for the Werribee River corridor between the river mouth at Werribee South and upstream at the Werribee Gorge and the Lerderderg Gorge.

This is the first integrated plan for the river corridor, the largest river system in the Werribee Plains region, and the first plan involving the broad range of stakeholders in the corridor. Several reports that cover particular sections and works along the river corridor will inform the overall plan.

The project provides the framework for future planning in the corridor and especially guides the sustainable development of the corridor for the many functions it must of necessity provide. By providing a biodiversity corridor from the coast to the ranges, the project will also deliver on the regional sustainability framework developed over the past five years.

Wyndham, Moorabool and Melton councils support the plan, along with water authorities, the catchment management authority, and other parties with an interest in the Werribee River. The project is expected to take around 18 months to complete and the Vision for Werribee Plains initiative has provided funding of \$90,000.

Below: map of the Werribee River corridor showing the project area



The plan will mean that the corridors covering the Maribyrnong River, Kororoit Creek and Werribee and Lerderderg rivers will all have strategies to cover their long term development.

For further information contact Craig Rowley
Craig.Rowley@leadwest.com.au or phone 9317 5794.

Popular spot in park to get makeover

The increasingly popular Kurrajong picnic spot in the You Yangs Regional Park is about to get a makeover. The changes will protect some rare orchids and reduce wear and tear on the landscape.

The Vision for Werribee Plains is contributing \$55,000 to provide better protection for the rare Brittle Greenhood Orchids that grow near the picnic area - with a rabbit-proof fence and screening plants.



Below: The Kurrajong picnic area in the You Yangs national park is home to the rare Brittle Greenhood Orchid. Visitor numbers have increased fourfold.

The wood-fuelled barbecues will be replaced by gas-fired barbecues and overhead shelters for comfortable use in all weather. As visitor numbers have risen by 400% since 2003, the change from wood to gas-fuelled barbecues will protect the nearby wood reserves which were at risk of depletion.

Bicycle washdown facilities will also be installed to reduce the spread of soil-borne fungal disease. The Geelong Mountain Bike Club is working with Parks Victoria managers to oversee the installation and use.

As part of the overall development of the Kurrajong visitation site, Parks Victoria is planning further works to increase visitor comfort. For more information on the project contact Mark Whyte, Ranger/Team Leader, Parks Victoria, e-mail: mwhyte@parks.vic.gov.au or Phone 0427 568 622

Stormwater harvesting in Keilor region

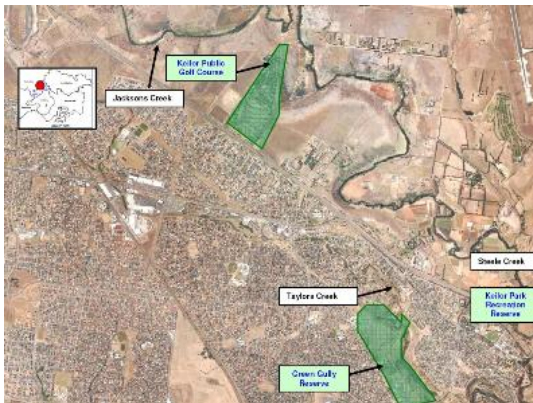
Three new stormwater projects in the Keilor Region were funded in the Round 9 grants of the Vision for Werribee Plains to benefit sports fields in the area and reduce potable reliance at Council's highest water consuming sites.

Stormwater will be harvested to supply an alternative water source for sports fields at the Green Gully Reserve; it will be captured and stored underground to supply an alternative water source for sports grounds at the Keilor Park Recreation Reserve; and will be used for the irrigation of the Keilor Public Golf Course .

The package of projects will cost a total of \$8.98 million and received \$1million from the State Government through the Vision for Werribee Plains and \$8.98 million from the Federal Government.

Brimbank City Council will be leading the project in partnership with City West Water. When completed the projects will deliver an average 127 ML of fit-for-purpose alternative water supply each year and reduce council's current potable water consumption by 53%. It will also provide a more reliable source of water during periods of water restrictions - an important aspect as each of the facilities are regarded by the Council as high-usage areas for recreation.

These projects join another stormwater project at Point Cook which will eventually supply 30ML each year of fit-for-purpose water to several ovals.



Above: Reserves in the Keilor region will get a reliable source of water from new stormwater harvesting projects.

Under the new government there has been more interest in stormwater harvesting projects to help make catchments more self-sufficient for their water needs.

- Contributes to Melbourne's progress in becoming a Water Sensitive City and establishing Victoria as a world leader in liveable cities and integrated water cycle management;
- Helps drive generational change in the use of alternative water sources.

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For more information on the projects contact Tom Razmovski, Manager – Environment, Brimbank City Council e-mail: tomr@brimbank.vic.gov.au or phone 9249 4720.

Mt Rothwell Sanctuary to receive support for conservation

Funding for education facilities and additional feral-proof fencing at Mount Rothwell Sanctuary. There are now three Eastern Barred Bandicoot recovery centres in the Werribee Plains region – an important risk management practice in the event of a security breach.

Each centre has a different role but together they should see a rapid improvement in the survival of the species.

The **Werribee Open Range Zoo** will accommodate the main captive breeding program, and good progress is being made to shift the breeding program to the zoo.

The **Serendip Sanctuary** project, conducted by Australian Conservation Volunteers and Parks Victoria, will initially act as an education centre and soft-release facility for juveniles (especially young males).

Mount Rothwell Sanctuary has the largest population of free-range animals. The sanctuary is also leading private investment in the conservation of endangered marsupials and is seeking other landholders to turn non-agricultural land over to the breeding of endangered marsupials to ensure the Victorian Volcanic Plains (of which the Werribee Plains is a component) do not suffer further loss of species.



Eastern Barred Bandicoots (top) and Eastern Quolls (above left) and Brush-tailed Rock Wallabies (above right) can rest easy at Mt Rothwell Sanctuary, You Yangs, knowing they are protected by a feral-proof fence.

An important side benefit of the targeted recovery program is that other endangered plant and animal species requiring protection from feral animals can also be bred.

It appears that the Eastern Barred Bandicoot may become a symbol of hope for the endangered wildlife in the region.

For more information on this project contact Cheryl Hill, Executive Director, FAME Ph (08) 8131 0066 or e-mail: cheryl.hill@fame.org.au

Woody weed removal in Werribee river volcanic Gorge

Woody weeds on Werribee Gorge watch out – your days are numbered.

Pinkerton Landcare and Environment Group (PLEG) has received a grant of \$32,000 for Stage 4 of a weed removal program along the gorge.

The weed removal program is situated on the edge of land owned by Western Water Corporation who are partners in the project, along with Melbourne Water.

PLEG has won a number of environmental awards for its recovery of native grasslands, grey box forests and native vegetation on the escarpments and river flats.

The group has been removing a range of weeds progressively in difficult terrain and the current project includes some of the steepest escarpments along the Werribee River.



Above: William Rajendram, Western Water, inspects previous woody weed removal work along the Werribee River Volcanic Gorge

After removing, burning or spot spraying the noxious weeds, the group is encouraging natural regrowth where possible.

The group is also using strategic grazing to reduce the biomass in early spring and other times as appropriate.

Stage 4 of the weed removal program will see most of the gorge recover from woody weeds. The challenge for Western Water, the landowner, will be to manage any regrowth of weeds using a range of methods including spot spraying.

Further information on the project can be obtained by contacting Daryl Akers, Secretary, PLEG on daryljakers@gmail.com or 0438 277 252

NCOS Guidelines for new water infrastructure

Initial funding from DSE was matched by Western Water and contributed to by five other water corporations. Seven corporations are now involved in the project.

Max Coster, Project Manager for the Vision for the Werribee Plains, DSE, said the decision to assess the co-generation plant for carbon-neutrality after installation was taken because the NCOS framework was still in development when the plant was being built.

“Doing the assessment after the installation meant we had better quality data to work with. It also means that the guidelines (to be developed as a spreadsheet) will be grounded against assessment of a practical example,” he said.

“We are delighted with the input from other water corporations and the project has attracted the interest of the NCOS office and Low Carbon Australia.”



Above: The cogeneration plant at Western Water's wastewater treatment plant, Melton South, takes excess heat from the burning of methane and uses it to heat water which circulates in a sleeve round the sewage sludge. Digestion is accelerated and more methane is produced.

The guidelines are due to be released around June of this year. Enquiries about the project should be sent to Anna May phone 5421 9470 or e-mail: anna.may@westernwater.com.au

From the Project Manager

One year of funding to go!

Stage 2 of the Vision for Werribee Plains fund has

one year to go. Applications will be assessed at the following times: August (closing date is 1 August 2011); November (closing date November 7); February (closing date 6 February 2012) and May (closing date 7 May, 2012).

DSE is calling for practical projects that deliver:

- New sources of alternative water and/or sustainable savings in potable water usage
- Protection and enhancement of biodiversity – especially links between existing habitats
- Greater access to public open space
- New sources of alternative energy and/or sustainable energy savings
- Sustainable higher value agricultural industries

Secondary outcomes being sought include:

- Community capacity building
- Innovation
- Higher levels of co-investment from other stakeholders.

If you have a project that you think meets one or more of the above criteria then contact the project office to discuss. Phone 9742 0452 or 9742 0476, or e-mail an Expression of Interest to max.coster@dse.vic.gov.au

Few applications were received for the most recent round of funding with only one application being funded (historically around 55% of applications receive funding).

How many projects have been funded?

Fifty-three projects have received funding since Stage 2 of the Vision for Werribee Plains commenced in late 2008. Stage One funded 13 projects. The current rate of grants being awarded suggests that the target of sixty projects funded by the end of Stage 2 is likely to be met.

So far \$7.5 million has been invested through the Vision for Werribee Plains for projects, totalling \$25 million.

What has been the mix between projects (%) in the number funded?

- Water (21%)
- Biodiversity (34%)
- Energy (12%)
- Open Space (23%)
- Sustainable higher value agricultural industries (10%)

What is the mix (%) between sectors in the number of projects funded?

- Farming/industry (9%)
- Local government (25%)
- Water corporations and Catchment Management Authority (20%)
- State government agencies (including DPI, Werribee Open Range Zoo, Parks Vic) (16%)
- Community groups (30%)

How long do grants take to process?

Over 10 rounds of funding, the normal time taken to process grants has been as follows:

- One month from closing date to applicant **receiving notification** if project is recommended
- Two months from closing date to **signed funding agreement**
- Three months from closing date to **first payment**

Want more information?

Contact: Max Coster
Manager, Vision for Werribee Plains
Department of Sustainability and Environment
600 Sneydes Road, Werribee, Vic 3030
Phone: (03) 9742 0452
Fax: (03) 9742 0400
e-mail: max.coster@dse.vic.gov.au
www.water.vic.gov.au/programs/recycling/v4wp