

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.

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



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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 murron (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.

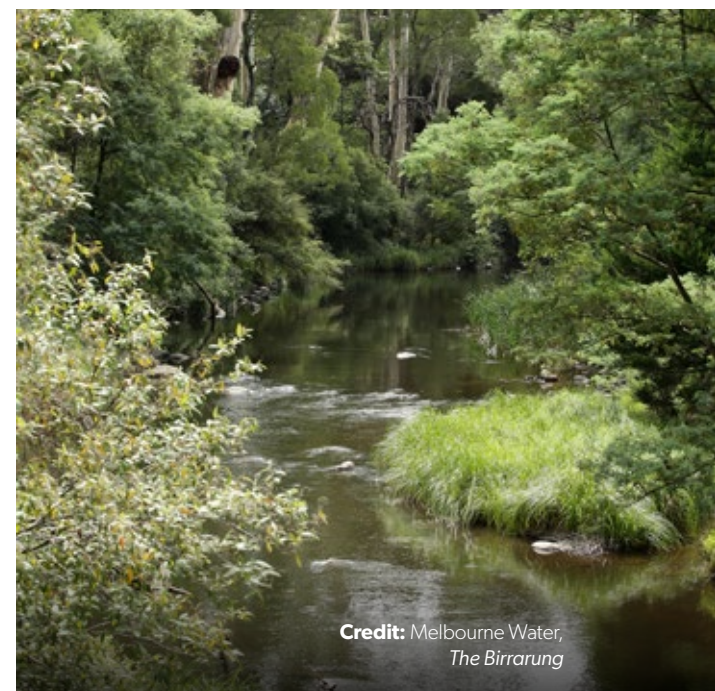
Through supporting our aspirations for water justice, the granting of unencumbered water rights and embedding our active participation in management of the Birrarung and its lands, we believe that the Yarra Strategic Plan will deliver the necessary changes needed to realise broader reforms.

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.

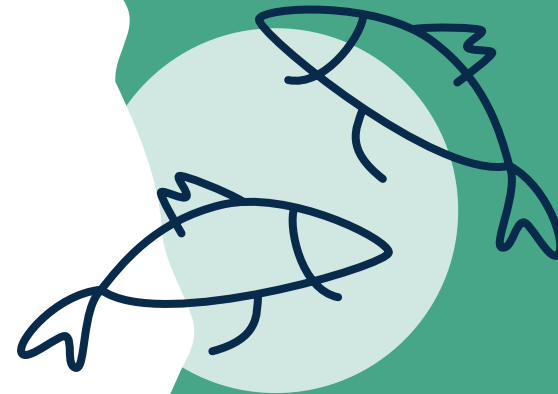
Over the last 35,000 years Bunurong people have adapted to a range of significant changes within their Country. Our stories of the Bay flooding with water, asteroid impacts near Cranbourne, Arthurs Seat once being an Island, volcanic activity in the western suburbs, the great floods, fires and earthquakes 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 murron) 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 ngarginin 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

Yarra River Action
Plan 2017

YARRA STRATEGIC PLAN

- 50 year community vision
- 10 year performance objectives, collaborative actions and priority projects
- Land use framework with whole-of-river actions and directions for future use and development

Yarra Strategic Plan map book

Consultation



Credit: Melbourne Water,
Dights Falls, Abbotsford

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.

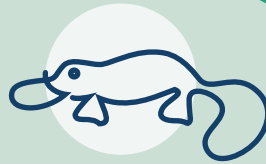
Also in Part 1, are four performance objectives, which represent the change the community is seeking for the Yarra over the next 10 years. These objectives set the foundation for achieving the 50 Year Community Vision and alignment with the Birrarung Water Policy. They also align with the protection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

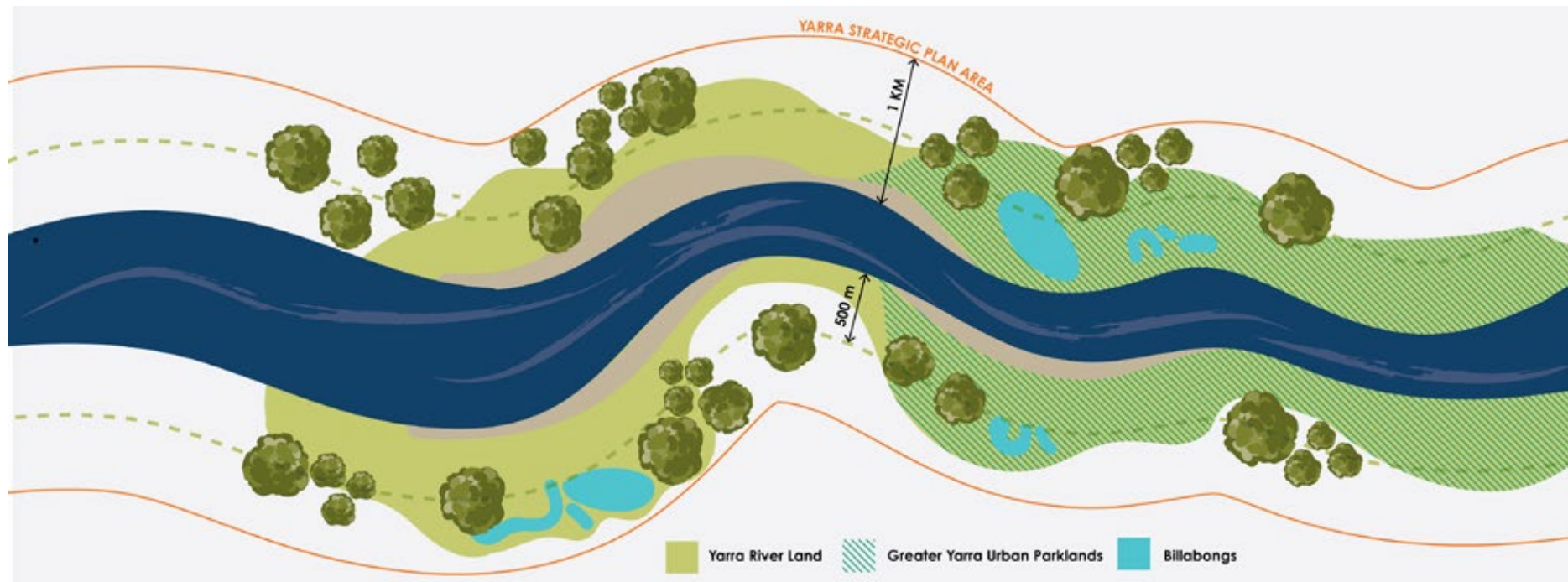
A series of collaborative actions and priority projects to achieve the four 10-year performance objectives.

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