



WATERWAYS OF THE WEST

COMMUNITY
VISION



Werribee Treatment Plant

Acknowledgement

The Victorian Government proudly acknowledges the Bunurong, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Peoples as the traditional custodians of the Waterways of the West region. We pay our respects to their Ancestors and Elders, past and present.

We acknowledge Aboriginal people as Australia's first peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely. We recognise and respect the intrinsic, ongoing connection of Traditional Owners to Country and value their contribution to managing the land, water, natural and built landscapes.

We support the need for genuine and lasting partnerships with the Bunurong, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Peoples to understand their culture and connections to Country in the way we plan for, connect with and manage the Waterways of the West region.

We embrace the spirit of reconciliation, working towards self-determination, equity of outcomes and an equal voice for Australia's First Peoples.

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Werribee River

INTRODUCTION

Healthy and thriving waterways and their lands are at the heart of Melbourne's identity as a vibrant and liveable city. The Waterways of the West region encompasses landscapes of diverse natural beauty supporting abundant plants and animals, major urban growth areas and some of Victoria's most productive food growing regions. These waterways and landscapes have special significance for the Bunurong, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Traditional Owners, encompassing cultural, spiritual, social, economic and environmental values.

As the population grows and the climate becomes drier, these waterways and their surrounding lands face numerous pressures, including increased need for quality open space corridors. The changing climate is reducing stream flows and water availability for important irrigated agriculture in the west while more water is needed for keeping parks and gardens green. The open space and amenity of these waterways, their lands and the coastal area underpin the region's vibrancy and the liveability of local neighbourhoods. They offer a place for people to connect with nature and each other.

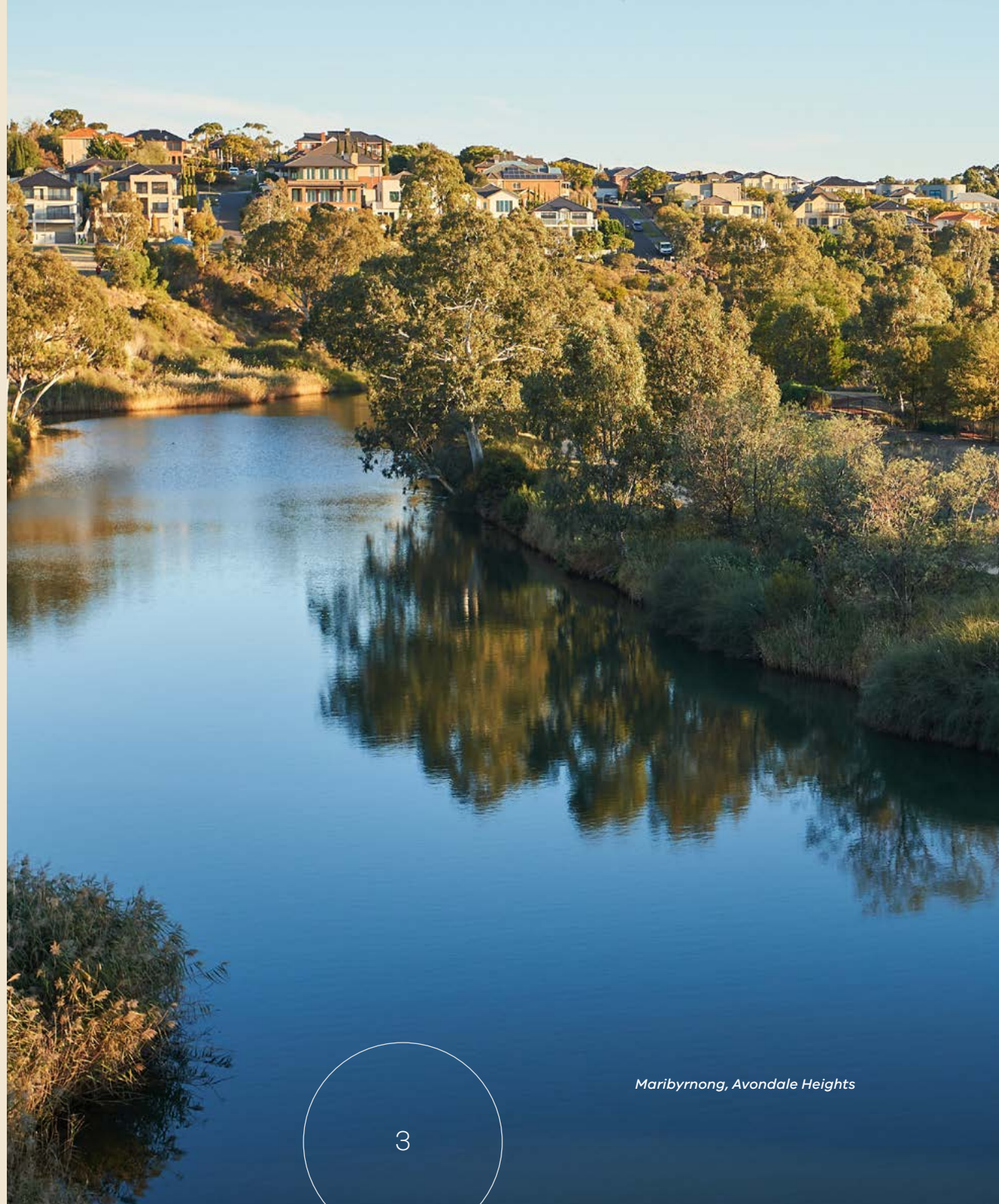
In August 2018, the Victorian Government appointed a Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) to make recommendations to government on how best to protect and enhance the health, amenity, access and community values of waterways in the west of Melbourne. The Waterways of the West include the Werribee (Wirribi Yaluk) and Maribyrnong (Mirrangbamurn) Rivers and Moonee Ponds (Moonee Moonee), Kororoit and Skeleton Creeks and their tributaries, and the region's other creeks, wetlands and estuaries.

As part of their work, the MAC oversaw the preparation of a Waterways of the West Community Vision. People from across the west came together to create a Community Vision for the Waterways of the West and their lands for the next 50 years. It represents their aspirations and expectations for the

protection of the waterways. To develop the vision, a Community Assembly of 45 residents representing the vibrant community of the region was convened. As part of the process, they heard from each other, waterway health experts, representatives of cultural and linguistically diverse communities and school students. They heard from Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Traditional Owners and participated in several cultural ceremonies, gaining an understanding of their unique spiritual and cultural connection to Country.

The Waterways of the West Community Vision is the first, overarching, long-term vision for this complex, connected, living system of waterways and parklands. The Vision contained within this document is intended to guide policy makers, waterway and land managers and community as we walk together with the Traditional Custodians of the Waterways of the West and their lands over the next 50 years.

The Waterways of the West Community Assembly are thanked for sharing their voices and aspirations, their hard work and commitment to improving the health, management and future of the Waterways of the West.



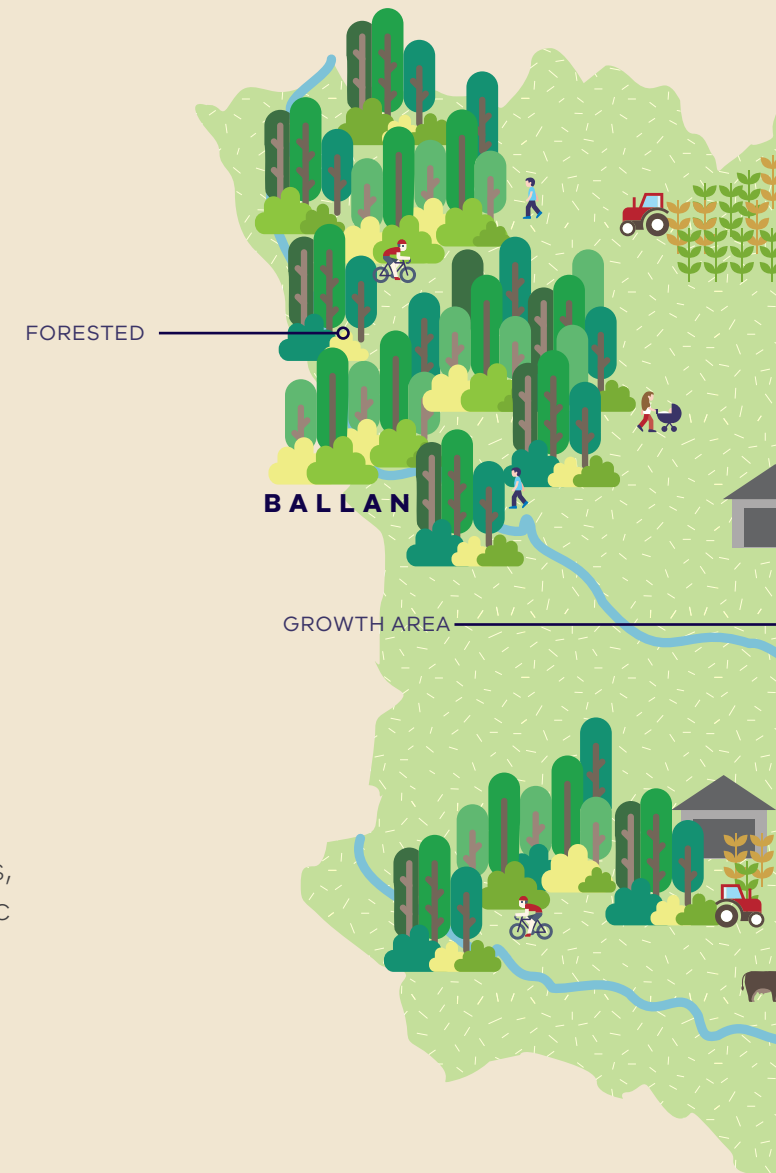
OVERALL VISION

Our vision is for healthy, diverse and sustainable waterways throughout our west. As a diverse community we care for its interconnected rivers, creeks and landscapes.

Respectfully acknowledging and embracing the cultural values of the Bunurong, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Peoples, we walk together to care for Country. The Bunurong, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Peoples cared for Country in many different ways and for all living things. Working collaboratively, the people of the west protect and celebrate these unique and interconnected waterways.

The Maribyrnong (Mirrangbamurn) and Werribee (Wirribi Yaluk) rivers, and their surrounding creeks and tributaries, run cleanly. They're filled with abundant life. Their banks teem with native plants and animals.

Crystal clear in the forested hills, the water flows through volcanic grassy-plains under big skies. It seeps into and sustains wetlands, travels down through farms, between homes and into internationally-recognised salt marshes, ending its journey in Port Phillip Bay.

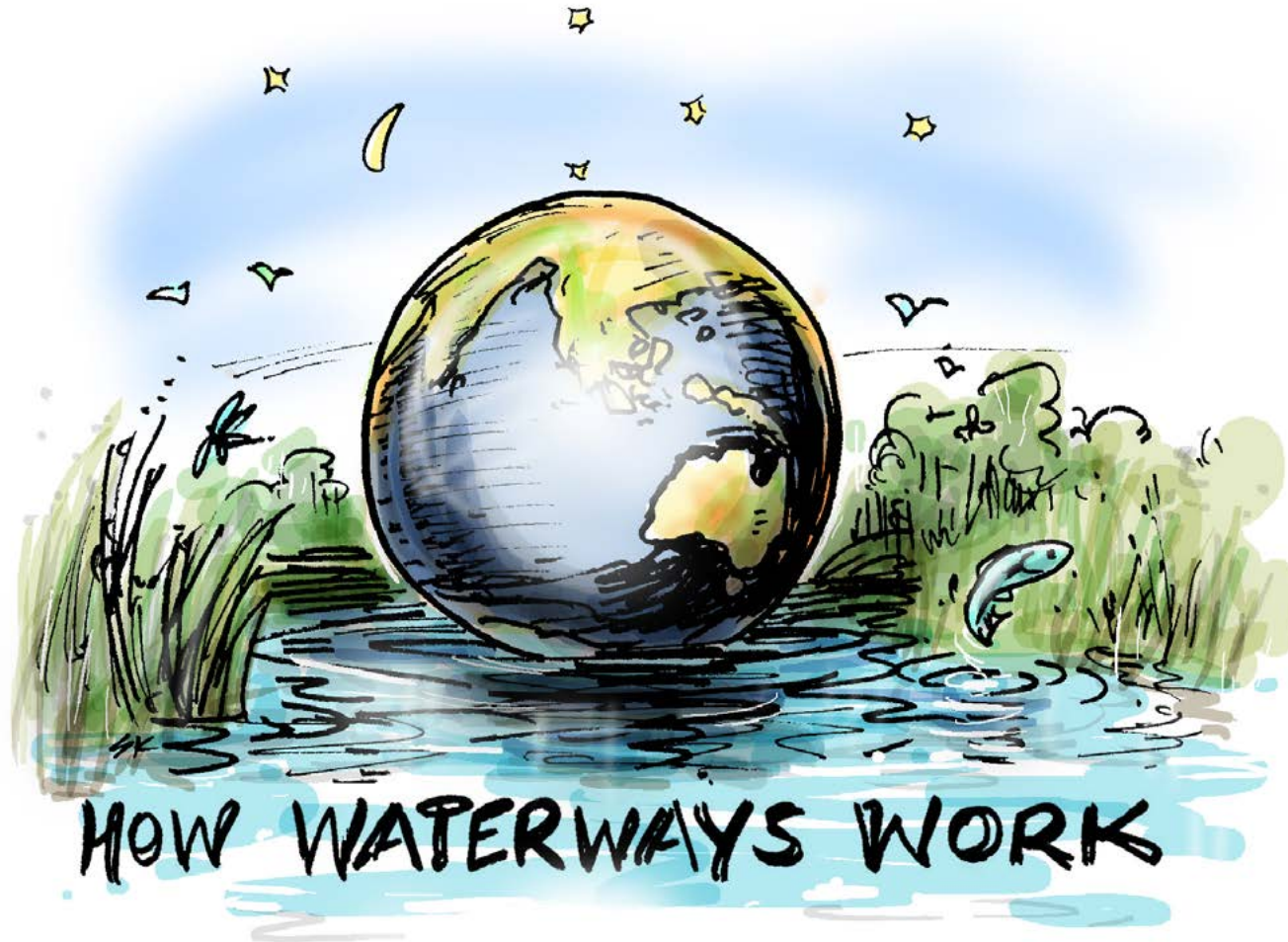




Along these waters we see birds – like Reed Warblers and Rainbow Bee-eaters – nesting along the creek banks, migratory birds from as far as Alaska and Siberia stop and rest in the salt marshes. Tawny frogmouth chicks are spotted by passers-by and the air is filled with the chorus of Growling grass frogs and Pobblebunks.

We respect and value what the waters provide us: the food they help us grow; and the places that nurture our wellbeing, whose beauty we enjoy. It's where we meet and gather, reflect, run, walk and play.

WoW - it's the emotion evoked by the Waterways of the West.





Deep Creek, Bulla

THE VISION FOR CITIES, SUBURBS & TOWNS

From Sunshine to Spotswood, Melton to Werribee South, Macedon to Footscray, communities connect and flow through our water corridors.





In Footscray Park, Point Cook Coastal Park, Birmingham Reserve and many other parks along our waterways, we see families from different cultures gathering and celebrating. Communities are interacting in harmony with the natural environment, joggers, cyclists commuting to and from work. We hear people laughing together with the sounds of children splashing in the water, frogs croaking, birds singing and the hum of urban life.

Along waterways in our cities and towns, like Moonee Ponds (Moonee Moonee) Creek, cyclists pass protected natural areas with native vegetation and wildlife. Urban development is designed to protect and improve the health of the creek. Communities are proud of their contribution to restoring and growing landscapes that enhance the wellbeing of people and the environment.

We wander through hidden natural refuges, pockets of greenery, a place to escape from the city and along the way we are reminded of the layers of history and different lessons of the waterways.

THE VISION FOR

AGRICULTURAL & RURAL LANDS

In the agricultural areas, sustainable farming is part of a thriving ecosystem of healthy waterways. Where Bunurong, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Peoples' knowledge and cultural practices have become a part of everyday sustainable farming. Where water is carefully managed, used and re-used rather than being taken out of the rivers and waterways.

The waterways in these rural areas, are full and flowing, feeding the vital connections between the urban ecosystems and natural and forested environments. Flourishing green corridors co-exist and connect communities with the neighbouring prosperous and sustainable agricultural land.



BALLAN



It's an immense region outside of the urban growth boundary from Macedon to Ballan, all the way to the Werribee River as it flows through the Bacchus Marsh and Werribee irrigation districts, and Deep Creek in the upper Maribyrnong catchment. Its waterways continue to vary widely in colour and shape, through grasslands and set against the rugged beauty of places like the Werribee Gorge.

Collaboration is central to how we get things done. With the Traditional Owners – the Bunurong, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Peoples, farmers, communities and all levels of government come together to protect and enhance our essential food bowl and so we all benefit from healthy, high quality food. It's an area that is both economically and ecologically sustainable.

THE VISION FOR NATURAL PLACES & FORESTED

From the wetlands to Macedon Ranges, the protected waterways of the west have natural headwaters and are pristine and healthy – supporting abundant, unique, flora and fauna from source to sea.

In the vast expanses of the Victorian volcanic grassland plains, people appreciate the wide horizons and gently undulating vistas. This environmentally significant landscape supports a wide variety of bird and insect life that is essential to maintaining a healthy ecology.

Cheetham Wetlands, other coastal wetlands and the thousands of inland wetlands are home to many indigenous and migratory birds – feeding and breeding – as well as spaces for people to walk and commune with nature.





In the forested areas, such as Wombat Forest and Macedon Ranges, visitors gather to enjoy the varied experiences offered by accessible natural areas with maintained facilities. They feel connected to nature through immersion in the smells, sights and sounds of rejuvenated bushland: a chorus of birdsong and buzzing insects, native wildlife foraging in eucalyptus forests, and healthy rivers sustaining life. It signals ecosystems in balance engendered through respect for Mother Earth.

Our communities respect the areas reserved as protected environments to preserve clean water catchments and native habitats for our wildlife. We have learnt from the experiences, cultural practices and the understanding of cultural values of the Traditional Owners of our land; the Bunurong, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Peoples.

As the lungs of the west, our shared places bring health and wellbeing to our communities through the restorative power of spending time on Country.



Illustration by Simon Kneebone



Illustration by Simon Kneebone



Turitable Creek, Mt Macedon

DEVELOPING THE WATERWAYS OF THE WEST COMMUNITY VISION

Community Assembly workshops



The Community Assembly

In May 2019, invitations to register an expression of interest to form the Waterways of the West Community Assembly were sent to 5,000 email addresses spread across the Waterways of the West region through an independent, randomised process. Respondents who expressed interest were then placed in a pool and stratified further based on demographic data and other key filters. The final selected group of 45 Community Assembly members broadly reflected the demographics of the Waterways of the West community. Parallel engagement programs were established with the region's culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community and students of the Waterways of the West to receive their input and ideas.





Illustration by Simon Kneebone



Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Elder, Uncle Dave, conducting a smoking ceremony for the Assembly

The Assembly worked together and responded to the question: *what should our Vision be for these waterways in 2070?* Over two days, the Assembly members heard from waterway experts, community champions and school students. They heard from the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung and Wadawurrung Traditional Owners, learning about their continued connection to Country and the cultural significance of the region as a unique, interconnected living system. At the end of the two days, the Assembly felt the need to come back one more time to finalise their Vision. This final workshop was attended by 21 Assembly members, who pulled together their previous learnings, explored the outcomes of the CALD engagement, and spent more time with the Traditional Owner MAC members to deliver moving, heart-felt visions for the Waterways of the West.

This drawing shows the journey of the Community Assembly - including the main events and some of the supporting processes and activities.



School's Vision

A targeted school engagement program was undertaken to give voice to students for the Waterways of the West, with students presenting their vision to the Community Assembly. This program was facilitated by the Werribee River Association with schools in both the Maribyrnong and Werribee catchments.



Illustration by Simon Kneebone



Students of the west would like the waterways to be places of natural beauty, with plenty of native wildlife, living in excellent habitat and clean, healthy waterways.

Students would like to play naturally or use shaded pathways to move through well-equipped public space, where people safely interact with nature and animals, relax and enjoy eating outdoors or in shelter, and do not have to worry about pollution or litter.

Students would like to see government of all levels collaborate to manage town planning in such a way to minimise harm to waterways, for people and nature, and educate the community to enjoy a healthier lifestyle.



School students learning on the banks of the Werribee River, students' visions for the Werribee River, courtesy Werribee Riverkeeper



Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) engagement

The Waterways of the West region has a rich, diverse multicultural population. Targeted engagement of CALD community members was important. Vietnamese and emerging migrant communities were invited to participate in focus groups to express how and why they interact with the Waterways of the West and their lands, and how agencies can continue to involve CALD communities in the future planning and management of these places.



CALD community workshops



Little River, Balliang



*Members of the Waterways of the West Community Assembly
and Ministerial Advisory Committee*

About the illustrator

Simon Kneebone is a cartoonist and illustrator with over 30 years' experience working with a wide range of organisations, his graphics appearing in many publications, websites and on conference walls.

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Werribee River

