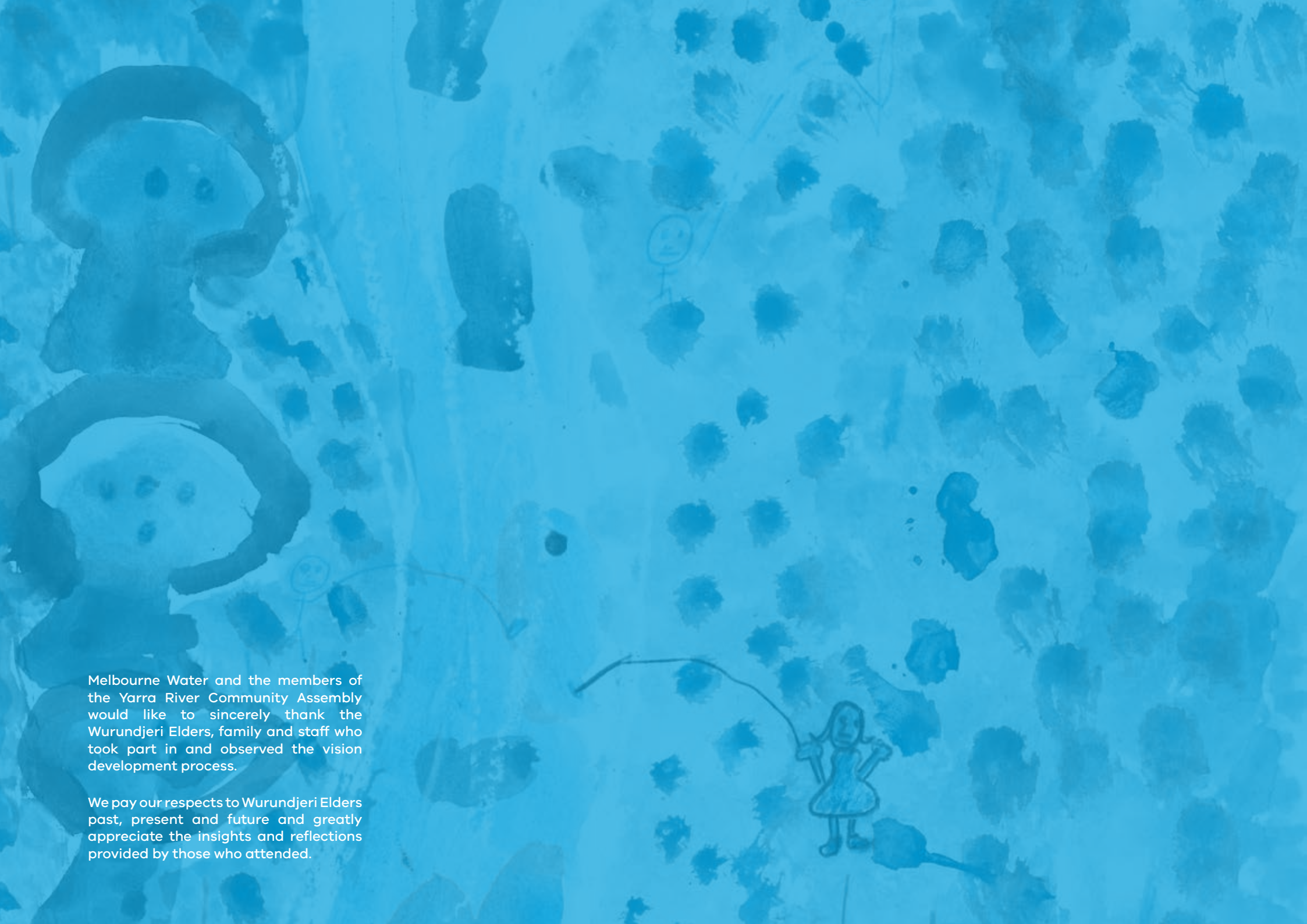




Yarra River 50-year COMMUNITY VISION

Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn



Melbourne Water and the members of the Yarra River Community Assembly would like to sincerely thank the Wurundjeri Elders, family and staff who took part in and observed the vision development process.

We pay our respects to Wurundjeri Elders past, present and future and greatly appreciate the insights and reflections provided by those who attended.



WURUNDJERI FOREWORD FOR THE YARRA RIVER COMMUNITY VISION



Ganbu gulinj Narm, Wurundjeri Gulinj nuringianith biik baambuth

**The First People of Melbourne, the Wurundjeri People, have
been caring for Country since the beginning of time**

The Birrarung is a river of mists and shadows – the river and its environs are a living, breathing entity that follows Wurundjeri songlines and forms a central part of the Dreaming of the Wurundjeri. A Dreaming that links the billabongs, wetlands and swamps in the upstream forests, across the meandering plains and out to the salt water. We the Wurundjeri are connected to the Birrarung through spirit, culture and nature. The river follows the paths that our ancestors have travelled for thousands of years – providing for them as now it provides for all Victorians.

We honour the land and water of the Birrarung. Wurundjeri people have a deep cultural obligation and a birthright to look after the river – to make sure the Birrarung is healthy and continues to support the plants and animals, our community and all people, both those currently alive and the generations yet to come.

The Wurundjeri have lived with and known the Birrarung since the beginning. The Birrarung is now shared by many Victorians, who value the river and its surrounds for what they bring to the beauty of our city. In sharing in the benefits that the river provides, we must also share responsibility for preserving and restoring the wellbeing of the Birrarung.

The city of Melbourne grew out 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 expense to the Wurundjeri.

Our songlines have been sustained even though many of the creeks have dried up and billabongs been destroyed. Rubbish, sediment and pollutants have built up and are choking the river, stopping the Birrarung from breathing clearly. The health of the Birrarung underpins the health of Wurundjeri People, and the damage that has been done over the past two centuries is felt by all Wurundjeri people. We, along with many other Victorians, are worried that without a process of restoration and healing the pressures on the wellbeing of the river will become insurmountable.

The Wurundjeri believe that we need to change how all Victorians think about and actively respect the Birrarung. We believe we need to see not a resource to be exploited but rather to recognise the complex, living system that is sensitive to its surrounds and a uniquely Victorian treasure. By engaging with those partners with whom we now share the river we, together, are capable of turning around the damage of the past and acting to restore the river and its environment for the future use and enjoyment of all.

Wurundjeri invites all people to see the Birrarung through our eyes, to talk with us to understand our values, and to partner with us to re-energise the river as we fulfil our cultural duty in bringing the Birrarung back to environmental, cultural, ceremonial and spiritual health.

Joint Ministers' Foreword

The Yarra River, Birrarung, is central to life in Melbourne. It is embedded in the cultural heritage of the Traditional Owners and is integral to our thriving sense of community. The river supports prosperous industries and the economy, sustains outstanding local produce, provides a home for many native species and enhances the liveability of our city.

With an increasing population, climate change and environmental impacts, now is the time to take action to ensure the river is protected into the future.

For the past three years, the Victorian Government has been working with the community on the development of a united vision for the Yarra; one that will address the many challenges the river faces, and one that will see it flourish into the future.

This Community Vision is part of that action, and is a critical step in developing the Yarra Strategic Plan, which will define and shape what we as Victorians want for our river, now and into the future.

In 2017 the Government introduced stronger planning controls to protect against inappropriate private development along the Yarra River, setting tougher rules to prevent overshadowing, and introducing mandatory height limits and minimum setbacks from the river's edge.

The landmark *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017* has now passed into law, after being introduced into Parliament by the Wurundjeri Elders. In recognising the river as one single living entity, the Act is the first of its kind in the world, and clearly demonstrates the Victorian Government's commitment to protect our treasured Yarra River waterway and its parklands for decades to come.

In another first for Victoria, the Act is co-titled and part of its preamble is written in Woi-wurrung, a formal recognition of the voice of the Traditional Owners in the governance and protection of the Yarra River.

The Act enshrines a new statutory body, the *Birrarung Council*, to act as an independent voice for the river and enables the declaration of parklands and open space along the river as the Greater Yarra Urban Parklands.

The Yarra Community Vision set out in this document is the culmination of extensive community consultation and engagements. Victorians have been asked about their vision for the Yarra, what is important to them and how they would imagine the river in the future. A Community Assembly was held, with 24 Victorians drawn from all parts of the Yarra's 242 kilometre length coming together to consider the input and define this Community Vision.

As you read this document, we ask you to reflect on your vision for the Yarra, and to get involved with the development of the Yarra Strategic Plan to ensure that it delivers on the Community Vision and is truly reflective of our whole community.

We thank all Victorians who have contributed to the development of the Yarra Vision, and to the Traditional Owners for the collaborative spirit and years of heritage and knowledge that they have shared as we plan for the future.

We look forward to continuing to work together to protect and enhance this wonderful natural resource.



The Hon. Lisa Neville MP
Minister for Water



The Hon. Richard Wynne MP
Minister for Planning



The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP
Minister for Energy,
Environment and Climate Change



A watercolor illustration of a river flowing through green hills. A dotted line, resembling a path or a fence, winds through the landscape. The text 'Clear Visions' is written in a stylized, bubbly font in the upper right.

Clear
Visions

Yarra River 50-year
COMMUNITY VISION

Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn

INNER-CITY REACH

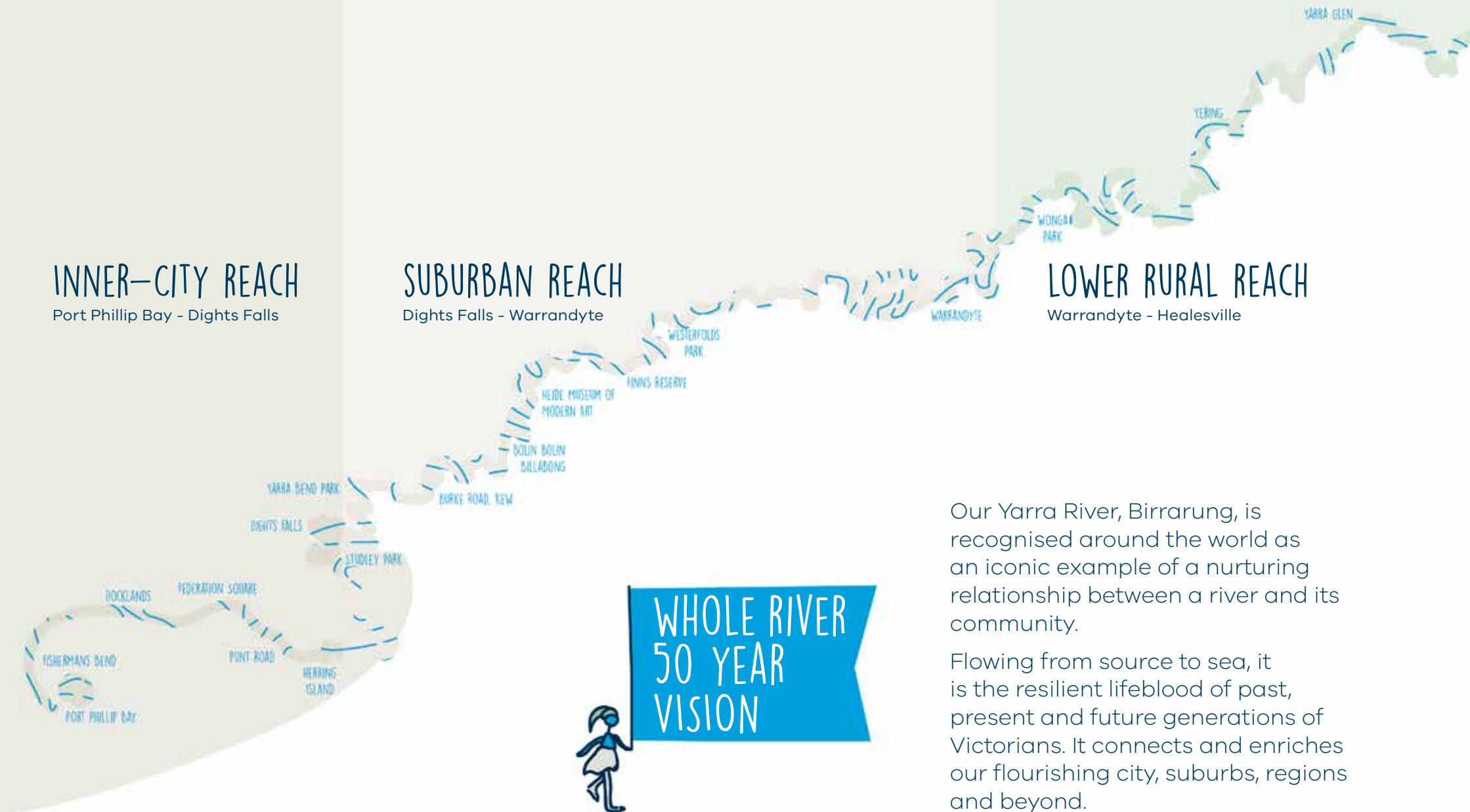
Port Phillip Bay - Dights Falls

SUBURBAN REACH

Dights Falls - Warrandyte

LOWER RURAL REACH

Warrandyte - Healesville



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.

UPPER RURAL REACH 50-YEAR VISION

Upper Yarra Dam - Healesville

Goodness flows from the top down.

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

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

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



Unique character:

- The river is surrounded by a majestic natural landscape that embraces mountains, thriving forests and an abundance of wildlife.
- The area is supported by townships with strong generational family connections to the river and its surrounding lands.
- Farming and tourism industries, which rely on the river and its surrounding landscape, support employment and are major contributors to the local and regional economy.
- The natural beauty of the river is managed through a heightened focus on flood and fire risk for local communities.
- Numerous places along the river are of high cultural significance for the Wurundjeri people, such as the Coranderrk Station.



Priorities and values:

- Promote and celebrate local cultural heritage through collaboration and community education.
- Develop new opportunities around local tourism, including river-based learning.
- Celebrate and promote opportunities for people to immerse themselves in the unique landscape, local wildlife and incredible biodiversity.
- Provide an expanded river access network for recreation and social connection.
- Foster healthy local ecosystems for the river, its wetlands and billabongs, which are recharged through environmental flows.
- Work with local farming communities to ensure sustainable water use.
- Celebrate personal connections to the river.

LOWER RURAL REACH 50-YEAR VISION

Healesville - Warrandyte

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

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

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

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

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





Unique character:

- Open, expansive pastoral land along the river is framed by surrounding mountain ranges.
- The Yarra flats (upstream of Yering), cleared of native vegetation, are used for farming and agri-tourism which contribute significantly to the Victorian economy.
- Around Yering Gorge there is an enclosed corridor of indigenous vegetation replenishing the river, alongside many billabongs and wetlands with high biodiversity values.
- Many parts of the river lack direct public access, which has led to the preservation of an extensive natural habitat corridor.
- Numerous places of high cultural significance for the Wurundjeri people run alongside the river, such as Mount Lofty and the Brushy Creek confluence.

Priorities and values:

- Improve community access at sensitive locations to enrich local connections, whilst protecting the region's natural environment.
- Bring improved biodiversity to our local area, enhancing indigenous vegetation, animal, insects and fish in our habitat corridor and surrounding billabongs.
- Foster and support sustainable agricultural practices which exist in harmony with the river and its lands.
- Work with the Wurundjeri people to protect and enhance knowledge of local cultural values and sites.
- Explore innovative tourism opportunities around activities such as education, cultural heritage and fishing to showcase rural river experiences.
- Preserve the rural and bush character of the river and its landscape through collaboration and careful management of future development.

SUBURBAN REACH 50-YEAR VISION

Warrandyte - Dights Falls

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

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

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



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





Unique character:

- The river runs through a landscape which comprises bushland, farms, urban environments and more formal open spaces.
- The river's character is varied and includes steep gorges, expansive floodplains and networks of billabongs.
- A near-continuous network of accessible parklands, public and private golf courses and conservation areas support the natural character of the river corridor, while protecting local populations from flood.
- The river is a vital refuge from the city with recreation trails providing links to inner-city Melbourne.
- Bolin Bolin Billabong and the confluence of the Merri Creek and Yarra River are amongst numerous sites of cultural significance for the Wurundjeri people.

Priorities and values:

- Expand the river's local parklands and trails to improve continuous access, increase biodiversity and enhance river health.
- Celebrate our spiritual connection to the river and its surrounds.
- Establish new habitat for endangered birds, fish and wildlife.
- Employ collaborative planning processes for development to ensure changes are for the benefit of the river and the advantage of all in the community, not just the few.
- Collaborate to provide innovative immersive experiences with nature by expanding natural river tracks and creating environmental playgrounds along the corridor.
- Explore opportunities for community education and connection to Wurundjeri knowledge and cultural practice and significant sites.

INNER-CITY REACH 50-YEAR VISION

Dights Falls - Port Phillip Bay



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

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

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





Unique character:

- The river is seen as an iconic symbol of central Melbourne for locals and visitors – a place where people of all backgrounds have come together for generations.
- It is the site of the first location of European settlement in Melbourne, its course and surrounding landscape significantly changed and modified since.
- A modern and growing cityscape surrounds sites of Aboriginal significance and examples of our more recent industrial history on the edges of the river.
- It is surrounded by essential spaces for relaxation, recreation and events for our busy and growing city population.
- Its banks are lined with buildings, promenades and other social infrastructure.

Priorities and values:

- Celebrate the river as the centerpiece of Melbourne, acknowledging its role in our history and how it drives the city's continued success.
- Position the river as a symbol of learning and respect for Aboriginal culture, deepening community understanding of the sacred role it plays for Traditional Owners.
- Foster innovative urban waterway and open space planning to ensure the needs of our growing city are balanced with the future environmental health of the river.
- Expand our connected network of treasured Yarra parklands, creating better access and more spaces for relaxation and recreation.
- Showcase the river as a place for sustainable and creative events, with a focus on culture, sport, ecology and education.
- Position the river as an environmental educator, helping communities better understand its role in keeping Victoria healthy in the past, present and into the future.

In fifty years when I will be 62 years old I imagine you will be so fresh that 100% of all drinkable water will come from the Yarra River. What I love about you the most is that you look absolutely amazing and you're a great attraction in Melbourne. If I could change one thing about the you today, it would be to make you a fresh clean river.

Julian





Emily



Joe



Jasmine



Amelia



Seth



Emerson



Rose



Alyssa

Many thanks to all the children who participated in the Yarra River Library Imaginarium Program in 2017

Background

70%

of Melbourne's drinking water is drawn from the upper reaches of the Yarra River

2,450

Hectares of urban parklands and green open space surround the Yarra River

The Yarra River, Birrarung and its lands are the lifeblood of Greater Melbourne, a magnificent natural asset rich in environmental, economic and cultural value flowing through more than 200km of valleys, agricultural land, suburbs and into the heart of the Melbourne CBD. Known as Birrarung to the Wurundjeri, the river is central to the history and culture of Traditional Owners. The Yarra is an iconic symbol of Victoria, providing 70% of Melbourne's drinking water and boasting 2,450 hectares of urban parklands and green open spaces.

From farmers to fishermen, boaters to cyclists, the Yarra and its lands are a community treasure – and we are now at a turning point in the river's history.

As Melbourne deals with the challenges of climate change and population growth, it is crucial the health and amenity of the Yarra is improved and protected for generations to come.

The Victorian Government is committed to ensuring the long-term health of our iconic river – and to ensuring that community is at the heart of the process.

The Yarra Strategic Plan will set the direction for coordinated future protection and management of the Yarra River, for implementation collaboratively across a range of stakeholders; and include the visions, frameworks for future land use and decision making and a list of priority projects for the Yarra River.

The community visions contained in this document form the cornerstone of the Yarra Strategic Plan, providing overarching direction for the river, focusing on issues relating to its long-term health and amenity, and outlining guidelines for land use and development.

Timeline



December 2015

Yarra Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) established

Formed to provide independent advice to government on key issues and opportunities for the river.



June 2016

Protecting the Yarra River (Birrarung) Discussion Paper released

Developed to promote community discussion about opportunities to improve oversight and management of the Yarra River.



July 2016

Public engagement on the discussion paper

Feedback collected on the key opportunities for the Yarra River.



December 2016

Yarra MAC recommendations presented to State Government

Outlined recommendations for supporting projects, early start actions, expanding the model across Melbourne, and governance reforms - including the development of a long term community vision.



February 2017

Yarra River Action Plan released

Outlined the government's response to the Yarra MAC recommendations.

The Process

From August to November 2017 Melbourne Water ran an extensive program of engagement to find out what people love about the Yarra River. This included drop-in events, a library school holiday program, social research, walking focus groups and an interactive online map.

This engagement was undertaken to inform the development of a long-term community vision for the Yarra River.

In November 2017 Melbourne Water sought expressions of interest for a group of citizens to form the Yarra River Community Assembly. From over 300 applications, 24 people were selected using a randomised process, with six drawn from each of the four reaches of the river.

The Yarra River Community Assembly met on the first weekend of February 2018, tasked with the development of a 50-year vision for the whole of the Yarra River, Birrarung.

The community assembly fulfilled a key obligation of the Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017, which required the development of a long-term community vision for the Yarra.

Over two days, community members heard from experts and Traditional Owners, learning about the history of the Yarra and its cultural significance, how it is used and managed, the biggest threats to its future and opportunities for the river. They also explored the outcomes of the engagement undertaken in 2017 to understand the values and desires of the broader community.

The Community Assembly has written these 50-year visions to provide the building blocks for how the river and its land are developed, used and managed in future, to ensure it remains a proud part of Victoria's identity.

THANK YOU

MELBOURNE WATER AND MEMBERS
OF THE YARRA COLLABORATION
COMMITTEE WOULD LIKE TO THANK
THE YARRA RIVER COMMUNITY
ASSEMBLY FOR THEIR HARD WORK
AND COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING THE
HEALTH AND MANAGEMENT OF THE
YARRA RIVER, BIRRARUNG





Community Assembly Members



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#IMAGINETHEYARRA

