



Melbourne Water

# Enhancing Life and Liveability

June 2021

# Melbourne's treasured liveability



Enjoying a BBQ on the banks of the Yarra River, Melbourne

## **Melbourne is consistently regarded as one of the world's most liveable cities. But what does liveability mean and how does Melbourne Water contribute to Melbourne's treasured liveability?**

Liveability is a broad and familiar concept, yet it can be difficult to define and describe. Liveability 'emerges' from the many factors that combine to make a city a great place to live, work and play. In this sense, liveability is more than the sum of its parts; it's the way these parts interact and work together to create the lifestyles cherished by Melburnians and our entire catchment community.

It's the clean water and reliable sanitation we depend on to keep our city healthy. It's the iconic network of parklands, waterways and open space that provide opportunities for recreation, adventure, relaxation and a chance to gather with friends and family in a natural, peaceful setting. It's the shady tree-lined walkway that gives relief from the summer sun. It's the pipeline track that allows us to cycle to work, avoiding the stress of peak-hour traffic. It's the sense of wonder and adventure as your canoe glides along the iconic Yarra River. And it's the sense of place and connection we feel when we work together with our communities to improve the shared spaces in our neighbourhoods.

Liveability means different things to different people and communities. At Melbourne Water, we believe enhancing liveability is about making life better, healthier, safer, more enjoyable and enriching for everyone.

## Enhancing life and liveability

At Melbourne Water, we're driven by a powerful strategic vision that informs everything we do: **Enhancing Life and Liveability**.

Guided by our corporate values of **care, integrity and courage**, we work on behalf of the community to provide the services that underpin life and liveability in the greater Melbourne region.

### An outstanding legacy of foresight and ambition

Since the first sewerage trenches were dug by pick and shovel over 130 years ago, we've established a reputation for reliable delivery of the services that ensure public health and safety. Clean water, dependable sewage treatment, reliable floodwater management and protected waterways provide the foundation for our healthy city, allowing diverse communities, businesses and industries to flourish.

### Listening, learning and evolving

Over the years, our service delivery has adapted and changed to meet the needs and expectations of a growing population. A quest for multiple benefits has characterised this long history of innovation as we've embraced emerging technologies to ensure efficient delivery of services and sought new opportunities to enhance liveability for all people living in our region.

Our contribution to the enhancement of life and liveability in Melbourne is served through our three pillars: healthy people, healthy places, healthy environment. We recognise that access to open space, natural bushland settings and waterways is a critical element of a city's liveability and underpins the physical and mental health and wellbeing of its people. These create a sense of place and space, provide essential shade and cooling, enable passive and active recreation, offer space for gatherings and connection, and an opportunity to relax and unwind in nature.

### A profound imperative

Our city and its treasured liveability face an unprecedented convergence of challenges through climate change, population growth and changes in the urban form. Rates of obesity, anxiety, depression, loneliness and physical inactivity are increasing in our population with concerning impacts at the personal and societal level. People need access to open space and nature for recreation, exercise and play yet many suburbs do not have enough publicly accessible space to meet community needs, a situation exacerbated by densification and a shift towards smaller backyards.



Reflecting on nature at K Road Cliffs on the banks of the Werribee River

### Natural places allow 'escapism' during Covid-19 lockdown

Visitation to all publicly accessible Melbourne Water spaces tripled, and in some cases quadrupled, during the 2020 Covid-19 lockdown. More people visited parks and waterways for their emotional and mental health, including 'escapism', during 2020 than previously. Community satisfaction with local waterways in 2020 was also the highest ever recorded, confirming their essential contribution to liveability values in Melbourne and their role in shaping a sense of place and space in suburbia.

## A unique opportunity

As custodian of significant land and water assets, Melbourne Water is uniquely placed to pursue catalytic transformations and a reimagining in how we activate under-utilised sites for multiple community benefits.

## Creating the future we want

To safeguard Melbourne's liveability in the face of rapid change, we need to be resilient and adaptable to the challenges ahead and proactive in our pursuit of strategies and initiatives that deliver multiple benefits and improved liveability outcomes.

## Increasing liveability outcomes through asset activation

Melbourne Water's Land & Waterways Activation Program aims to activate 30% of land and water assets for community benefit. Activation involves opening up land and waterways previously inaccessible or unavailable to the public. It also involves making space more usable, such as through the provision of a shared path. Activation is a key enabler of enhanced community wellbeing allowing more people in more locations to access open space and waterways for passive and active recreation.

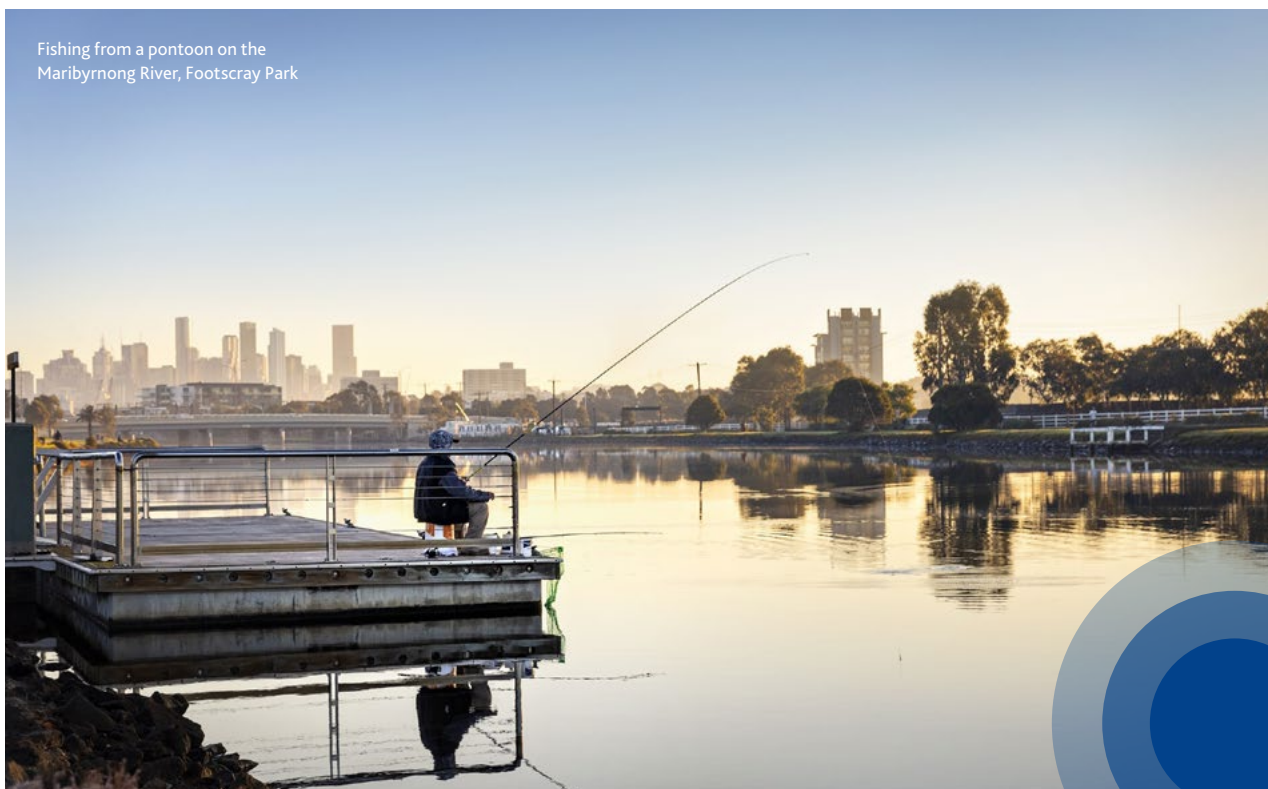
Further, the Activation Program will improve and enrich community enjoyment of nature and recreation facilities on our land and waterways, with dedicated funding allocated for this purpose across our service portfolio. This investment in liveability is designed and delivered in partnership with our communities, collaborators and stakeholders so we can make the most of our land and waterway assets.



Cycling along the Maribyrnong River

Melbourne Water is custodian of significant land and water assets. It owns 33,000 hectares and manages 25,000 kilometres of waterway corridors within the Greater Melbourne Region.

Fishing from a pontoon on the Maribyrnong River, Footscray Park



**The provision of safe drinking water, sewerage, flood and drainage services are fundamental components of our contribution to Melbourne’s treasured liveability.**

**In addition, we’re currently focused on enhancing five key liveability attributes and we’re actively planning, testing, piloting and learning to ensure our program and service delivery maximises these liveability benefits for all Melburnians.**

### Liveability Attributes

Our focus has been on delivering liveability outcomes for the community in the following fundamental areas:

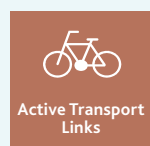


Provision of water and waste water services

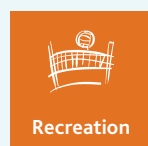


Provision of flood and drainage services

More recently, we have expanded our focus beyond these fundamental areas to enhance liveability outcomes for the community in the following five areas:



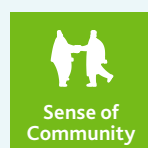
Developing and connecting active transport links through shared user paths to improve connectivity as well as access to our land and waterways



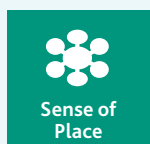
Expanding passive and active recreation opportunities on our land and waterways



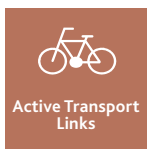
Increasing urban cooling of buildings and public places through the provision of shade and water features



Facilitating a sense of community and cultural connection



Building a sense of place by providing improved access to our land and waterways



## Developing and connecting active transport links

We're creating active transport links that transform our network of pipeline tracks and waterway corridors into safe, shared pathways so you can walk, run or ride while getting from A to B. Activating these links expands Melbourne's connectivity network and contributes to the city's liveability by encouraging exercise, sustainable transport alternatives and a reduction in traffic congestion.

### Case study

#### Greening the Pipeline

We're working with numerous partners and collaborators including Wyndham City Council, VicRoads and City West Water, to transform the decommissioned Main Outfall Sewer reserve into a vibrant open space in the booming western suburbs. Inspired by the High Line Project in New York City, in which a disused trainline was transformed into a revitalised linear park, the 27km linear corridor will provide walking and cycling paths and amenable spaces for people to meet, commute, play and relax.

As part of the transformation, we worked with project partners to co-create a 100m section of the decommissioned reserve into an exemplar community park at Williams Landing complete with exercise equipment, seats, space to play sports and games, and walking and cycling connections to the Federation Trail. Visitor numbers at the park have increased by 105% since it opened in 2017 with hundreds of people enjoying the park each week. We're now focusing on delivering a new park along a 3.7km section and master planning is underway to improve liveability outcomes along two other sections of the pipeline in Hoppers Crossing and industrial Brooklyn.

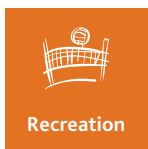


Aerial view of the Greening the Pipeline Pilot Park, Williams Landing (Image courtesy of GHD)



"I live in the inner West and we don't have a lot of green open space, so I would support anything they could do to provide more."  
– Resident

Cycling past the Greening the Pipeline Pilot Park, Williams Landing



## Expanding passive and active recreation opportunities

Melburnians love the network of open space, parklands and waterways that characterise our city. Social research tells us exercise is the main drawcard for the many people who visit these reserves, but we know passive recreation options are also valued, such as the chance to relax and unwind in nature or gather with friends.

Melbourne Water is working with communities, partners and stakeholders to co-design passive and active recreation opportunities and facilities including canoe ramps, BBQ and picnic facilities. In doing so, we will provide more opportunities for Melburnians to connect with each other and with nature in their local landscape.

### Case study



#### Improving river access for recreational paddlers

Is there a more peaceful experience than quietly canoeing along a tree-lined river, listening to the birdsong and enjoying the beauty of the riparian environment? People are drawn to Melbourne's waterways for exercise, recreation and to connect with nature. We're working with councils, stakeholders and the community to build canoe ramps at multiple sites to make access easier, so that more people can experience the water from a kayak, canoe or rowboat.

Canoe ramps, such as this installation at Finn's Reserve, provide safe access to Melbourne's waterways, allowing more people to engage in a different experience of our beautiful riparian environments





## Increasing urban cooling

As our climate becomes hotter and drier, the need for creative urban cooling strategies becomes essential to offset the urban heat island effect where hard surfaces absorb, store and radiate heat creating hotspots in the urban landscape. This is particularly so in the hotter parts of Melbourne's West where urban expansion is set to increase.

Melbourne Water will continue to innovate and implement integrated water management strategies to alleviate the impacts of heat stress and create cool spaces for people. This includes tree planting and vegetation management, as well as using alternative water sources such as storm water to irrigate open space and revitalise wetland environments.

### Case study

#### Keep your cool

Being in the shade of a tree can feel 10 degrees cooler on a hot day. We're planting trees to create cooler, greener places across Melbourne through our Urban Cooling Pilot Program. These plantings will reduce the severity of future heatwaves by moderating the urban heat island effect, improve local amenity and provide habitat for local wildlife. We've planted 350 eucalypts and 4000 native shrubs alongside the Edithvale-Seafood Wetland to create a shaded path for the community. At Jacana Wetlands, 170 planted river red gums will provide shade along the shared path and an intensive planting effort of some 12,500 native shrubs will improve amenity and environmental values at the site.



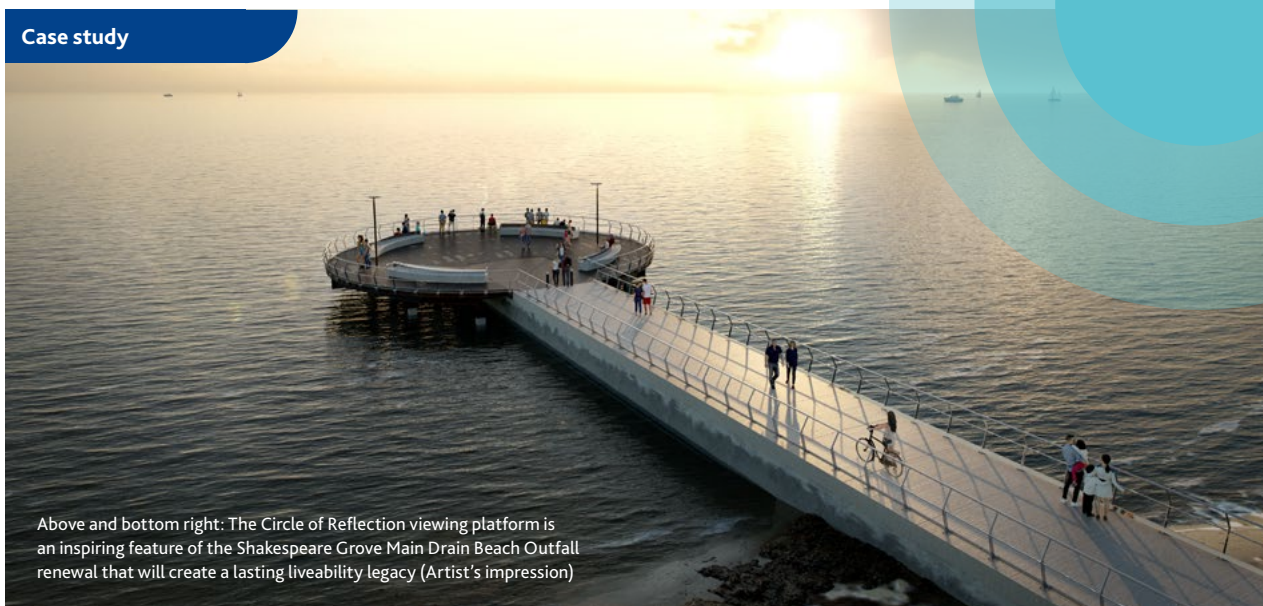
Picnicking on the banks of the Maribyrnong River



## Facilitating a sense of community and connection

Melbourne Water is working with communities and traditional owners to enrich the cultural amenity and functionality of existing and newly activated community spaces. This includes provision and attention to the location of resources like seating and designated spaces that encourage gathering and connection, as well as public artwork and interpretative signage to foster participation, learning and interaction with others in a shared local space.

### Case study



Above and bottom right: The Circle of Reflection viewing platform is an inspiring feature of the Shakespeare Grove Main Drain Beach Outfall renewal that will create a lasting liveability legacy (Artist's impression)

### Creation of a Melbourne icon

St Kilda beach is a popular drawcard for Melburnians and tourists alike. The renewal of the Shakespeare Grove Main Drain Beach Outfall provided an exceptional opportunity to deliver an innovative project with lasting liveability outcomes at this iconic destination.

Following community and stakeholder consultation, the spectacular 'Circle of Reflection' viewing platform, suspended above the end of the renewed outlet, emerged as the preferred option and construction will begin in 2021. The platform will allow people to access, experience and learn about the marine environment in a novel manner in an example of an innovative capital improvement program that will leave a lasting liveability legacy.



Case study

### Reimagining your creek

In previous decades, engineered concrete channels and pipes replaced natural rivers and creeks with the sole benefit of providing efficient drainage and stormwater management. Now, we understand that multiple benefits can be realised by restoring these concrete channels back into natural riverine and creek environments in a re-imagining of what is possible in urban waterway management.

Reimagining Your Creek is a multi-partner, multi-site program that transforms heavily engineered concrete channels and pipes into natural places the community can enjoy, with significant improvements in liveability and environmental outcomes. This is especially important in suburbs with limited natural or open space available for exercise, recreation and relaxation.

**“When a drain becomes a living stream it doesn’t just provide a new kind of open space but adds a new dimension to enjoying, and moving through, your suburb.”**  
 – Resident

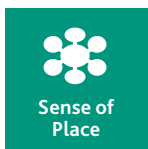


### Can you imagine? An urban drain to become an enlivened community space

Arnold's Creek, a tributary of the Werribee River in Melbourne's west, was an uninspiring concrete channel that ran through a grassy reserve in Melton, one of Melbourne's fastest growing and densely populated suburbs. This site has undergone a total rejuvenation through the Reimagining Your Creek project. The concrete drain is now a living breathing urban waterway. Shared paths and recreation facilities encourage exercise and play in a natural setting and extensive revegetation provides much needed shade for the community on hot days.

The reimagining and restoration of Arnold's Creek has significantly improved liveability in the immediate neighbourhood of Melton West, where the amount of open space per person is one-third that of surrounding localities.





## Building a sense of place

Placemaking, or developing a deep sense of place, is an important element of enhanced liveability for local communities and neighbourhoods. It requires planners and service providers to listen and understand the needs and ideas of local communities to collectively imagine and create local spaces.

Melbourne Water will foster and nurture a sense of place by providing better access to its land and water assets and incorporating co-designed attributes that improve local liveability outcomes.

### Case study



The critically endangered Orange-bellied parrot migrates from Tasmania to the Victorian coast, including the Western Treatment Plant, for winter foraging

### A most unlikely hidden treasure

There can't be too many major cities in the world where a main sewerage treatment plant is also listed as a Wetland of International Significance under the Ramsar Convention for its global importance as habitat for migratory bird species.

We're working to improve physical and virtual access to the Western Treatment Plant so more people can experience this incredible 10,300ha site, rich in heritage and environmental values, through eco-tourism, educational tours and recreation activities such as birdwatching.

Over the next five years, we'll continue to enhance the physical and virtual visitor experience at the Western Treatment Plant. Bird watchers will delight in new boardwalks, pathways and bird hides and licensed ecotourism operators will welcome more people to this incredible site. Virtual educational tours will continue to engage school students in the Plant's operation and the site's significant cultural, heritage and environmental values.



Bird watching at Western Treatment Plant, Werribee

Case study

### Enhancing our Dandenong Creek

Dandenong Creek in Melbourne's south east flows through much loved parks and reserves including Jell's Park and Shephard's Bush. In an extensive partnership effort, we are progressing a significant restoration of parts of the highly modified creekline environment.

So far, we've planted nearly 70,000 plants in an effort to restore natural habitats for fish and other native species. We've removed 830m of drainage pipes to 'daylight' the creek and bring the riparian system back to life. Ongoing pollution monitoring and management will further improve ecological health and amenity along the course of this key Melbourne waterway.



Working with the community to plant seedlings along the Dandenong Creek

Melbourne Water values working with community groups to ensure the best local liveability outcomes are achieved through our programs and initiatives.

Working with communities gives us a deeper insight into local needs and considerations. We welcome the multiple perspectives and ideas offered and enjoy working together on a range of issues, from whole-of-catchment planning to local litter reduction strategies, and the ideal placement of pathways and amenity plantings.



The Dandenong Creek pedestrian bridge creates new opportunities for walkers

Case study

### A shared vision unites an exceptional collaboration

The Chain of Ponds Collaboration is challenging business-as-usual approaches and empowering communities to become involved in local decision-making processes. The Collaboration, which includes 15 collaborators, 14 supporting partners and much community interest, is working together on a shared vision to transform the Moonee Ponds Creek into an iconic waterway.

Together, the Collaboration is implementing on-ground solutions to transform the creek corridor into a thriving urban waterway in a densely populated setting. Provision of pathways, stairs, picnic tables, seating and wayfinding signage has encouraged passive and active recreation on site. The Collaboration is also exploring further ways to transform the waterway, including innovative green infrastructure solutions, such as stormwater wetlands, which hold water, settle nutrients and provide habitat.

Melbourne Water was the first organisation to host the Collaboration and, in true collaborative form, has now passed the hosting role over to City West Water who will lead the next phase of the program.

The Collaboration has gained industry attention in recent years, claiming the 2019 Stormwater Victoria Award for "Excellence in Strategic and Master Planning" and being highly commended in the same category at the 2021 Stormwater Australia Awards.

**"It was really inspiring to see how many people wanted to work together."**

– Chain of Ponds Collaborator



Family enjoying the Yarra River  
at Warburton

## Where we're headed

Guided by a clear corporate vision and strategic direction, Melbourne Water is excited and optimistic about our plans and ambitions to enhance life and liveability in Melbourne.

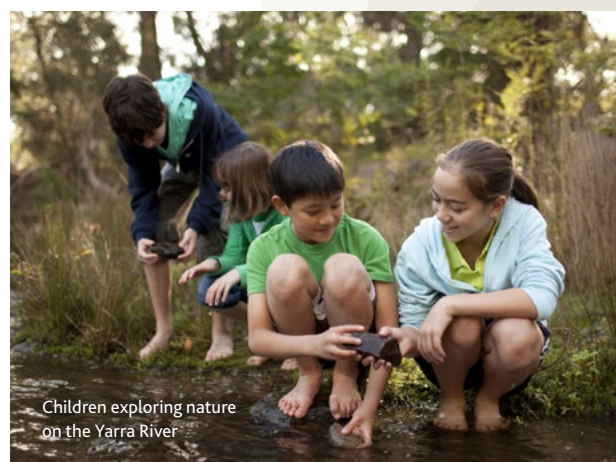
We recognise we have an irreplaceable legacy of courageous and informed decision-making to protect and build upon; a legacy that has enabled the life and liveability we cherish in Melbourne today.

We understand the scale and complexity of the challenges ahead and will continue to work in partnership with the community and stakeholders to proactively create and take opportunities to nurture, protect and enhance Melbourne's treasured liveability.

Melbourne Water will deliver a suite of liveability programs in 2021 across our five focus liveability attributes. These reflect customer and community priorities and align with state government support for increased use of public assets for community benefit and enjoyment.

**Interested in pursuing a partnership opportunity with us? Please get in touch via email at [liveability@melbournewater.com.au](mailto:liveability@melbournewater.com.au)**

**Do you have an idea to share? Please upload these to Our Space Your Place at <https://yoursay.melbournewater.com.au/our-space-your-place>**



Children exploring nature on the Yarra River

## We're all in this together

Melbourne Water values and fosters its multiple collaborations and partnerships in identifying and delivering enhanced liveability outcomes for the community. We are committed to maximising community benefits in the delivery of our services and in working with the community to co-design liveability outcomes.

The scale and complexity of the social and environmental challenges ahead, coupled with the practicalities and costs of delivery, mean that Melbourne Water cannot achieve these liveability outcomes alone. We will continue to drive and develop our partnerships and collaborations with stakeholders and the community, to catalyse multiple benefits and enhanced liveability outcomes in everything we do.

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