



**Yarra Strategic Plan
Consultation & Engagement
Summary
June 2020**

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Introduction

Established in 2015, the Yarra River Protection Ministerial Advisory Committee (Yarra MAC) undertook extensive engagement with community and industry stakeholders to provide recommendations to improve the management, promotion and protection of the Yarra River. 195 written submissions were received in response to the discussion paper *Protecting the Yarra River (Birrarung)* outlining the key issues and proposing a new management model for the river with the Yarra MAC's report and recommendations presented to government in late 2016. The government considered the advice and in response, released The Yarra River Action Plan, outlining 30 actions for delivery, including the establishment of legislation to protect the Yarra River, Birrarung.

In 2017, the landmark *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murron) Act* (the Act) passed through the Victorian Parliament, enshrining in law the protection of the Yarra River. The Act identifies the Yarra River and its corridor as 'one living, integrated natural entity for protection and improvement' and recognises Traditional Owners' custodianship and intrinsic connection to the river, Birrarung. The Act requires the development of the Yarra Strategic Plan, which must contain a long-term vision developed in collaboration with the community.

In 2017, Melbourne Water was appointed by the Minister for Water to lead the development of the *Yarra Strategic Plan* and the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision*. The *Yarra Strategic Plan* will be the first strategy to treat the Yarra River corridor as a single living entity for management and protection. Guided by the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision*, the plan will ensure the river remains an important part of Greater Melbourne's identity for years to come.

The Yarra River is the lifeblood of Melbourne stretching 242 kilometres from Melbourne's CBD up into the Yarra Ranges. The river plays an essential role in the lives of all Melburnians and is important for a thriving environment, community wellbeing, supporting local economies and promoting cultural values. The river faces a number of challenges over the next 100 years as Melbourne embraces a burgeoning population as well as the impacts of climate change, resulting in reduced annual rainfall, more extreme weather events and less water entering Melbourne's catchments and waterways. The Victorian Government recognises that the impacts of these challenges on waterways are best resolved through a coordinated and collective response from government, traditional owners, landowners and the community. With this in mind, Melbourne Water actively involved stakeholders and the public in key decisions to support the development of the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision* and *Yarra Strategic Plan*.

Partnership with Traditional Owners

Melbourne Water respectfully acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung people as formally recognised Traditional Owners and custodians of the Birrarung. The Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation were recognised as partners in the visioning and

development of the *Yarra Strategic Plan*. The Corporation and Wurundjeri Woi wurrung elders were invited and supported to collaborate in the strategy at multiple levels including:

- As members of the Birrarung Council, voice of the Yarra, our Birrarung.
- Representation on the Yarra Collaboration Committee
- In working groups for specific development of parts of the plan.

To support this partnership, Melbourne Water has participated in a number of workshops with Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Elders and held regular one-on-one meetings with representatives from Wurundjeri Woi wurrung to understand their evolving aspirations for managing the corridor and to provide additional detail on the plans development.

In parallel to the development of the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision*, 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. It is important to note that this is seen as a dynamic document, that will change as Wurundjeri Woi wurrungs aspirations evolve. The *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision* and *Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung* (Birrarung Water Policy) were launched by the Minister for Water Lisa Neville, Minister for Planning Richard Wynne and Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Lily D' Ambrosio in May 2018. Together, they form the cornerstones of the *Yarra Strategic Plan*.

Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation continue to provide their input and express their aspirations for the Yarra Strategic Plan, along with the responsible public entities outlined in the Act.

At present, no Traditional Owner Group has been formally recognised as the Registered Aboriginal Party for the area downstream of Dights Falls. Melbourne Water, in partnership with the Department of Environment, Land, Water, and Planning has invited both Boon Wurrung Land and Sea Corporation and Bunurong Land Council to input into the draft Yarra Strategic Plan, as these two parties also describe the area below Dights Falls as Country. At present, no dedicated content has been provided. Through the development of the final plan, the offer to engage and to resource the development of content relevant to the contested area of land will continue to be made.

The Yarra Collaboration Committee

In line with community feedback, the Act calls for modern governance and management arrangements that recognise the importance of the Yarra River and its parklands to the prosperity and vitality of Melbourne. To ensure a holistic approach to the management of the river and its environs, all agencies responsible for management of the river will work together, across boundaries, to manage the river as one living entity. The Act sets out new obligations for responsible public entities listed in The Act and requires these agencies to endorse both the draft and final *Yarra Strategic Plan*.

To achieve this transformative shift in governance, Melbourne Water, as lead agency, formed the Yarra Collaboration Committee. Membership includes Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation representatives, Jane Doolan as independent Chair, and senior representatives from each of the 15 state and local agencies responsible for the management of the Yarra River and its surrounding parklands. The purpose of the Yarra Collaboration Committee has been to guide the development of the *Yarra Strategic Plan* and ensure that it i)

responds to the needs and expectations of the community and ii) enables the nominated organisations to work together to manage the river as a single living and integrated natural entity.

Collaborative decision-making is at the forefront of the development of the Plan through the Yarra Collaboration Committee. The committee works together to balance the competing interests of the diverse community and ensure the plan prioritised the best outcomes for the Yarra River.

Although led by Melbourne Water, the *Yarra Strategic Plan* is a whole of government initiative and has been informed by over 20 meetings with the committee since November 2017. The ongoing commitment by the committee to the development and implementation of the *Yarra Strategic Plan* demonstrates the serious and sustained commitment, by all levels of government, to protect the Yarra River corridor for future generations.

The Birrarung Council

The Birrarung Council was appointed by the Government in August 2018 as prescribed by the *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murron) Act 2017* (the Act) to be the independent voice of the Yarra River as a living entity and to provide independent advice to the Government on the implementation of the Act.

Traditional Owners have a permanent voice through the Act's requirement that at least two members of the Birrarung Council must be nominated from the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.

An interim Council, known as the Interim Yarra River Lands Advisory Committee, operated until the Minister finalised the appointment of the Birrarung Council in September 2018.

The role of the council is to provide independent advice to the Minister for Water on the protection and improvement of the Yarra River landscape, including the development, implementation, operation and effectiveness of the Yarra Strategic Plan. This includes reporting to the Minister on the development and implementation of the *Yarra Strategic Plan* and also reporting on the scope and adequacy of public participation processes.

Membership of the Birrarung Council is comprised of three Wurundjeri Woi wurrung representatives, environmental and agricultural industry groups, Yarra River land local community groups and other members selected for their specific skills. The current members are:

- Allan Wandin (Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Elder)
- Margaret Gardiner (Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Elder)
- Ronald Jones (Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Elder)
- Alexandra Lee
- Andrew Kelly
- Bronwyn South
- Erin O'Donnell
- Kirsten Bauer
- Prue Digby
- Warwick Leeson OAM

Throughout the development of the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan*, Melbourne Water, in partnership with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and members of the Yarra Collaboration Committee, have engaged with the Birrarung Council to seek its input and to enable its role to champion the interests of the Yarra River as one living and integrated natural entity, as reflected in the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision* and *Nhanbu narun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung (Birrarung Water Policy)*.

The following table details the engagement that has been undertaken with the Interim Yarra River Lands Advisory Committee/Birrarung Council to date:

Council/IYRLAC briefings on YSP development	Briefing purpose
IYRLAC Meeting 4 - 11 April 2018	Overview of process to develop a draft <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i>
IYRLAC Meeting 5 - 28 May 2018	Overview of the Community engagement plan, and Land Use Framework
IYRLAC Meeting 7 - 30 July 2018	Update on progress
Council Induction - 3 October 2018	Summary of Community Engagement, development of the Community Vision and next steps for the draft
Council 2 - 10 December 2018	Responding to Inquiry Questions from the Birrarung Council
Council 4 - 6 March 2019	Yarra Collaboration Committee deliberations, including on implementation governance and Community (re)Assembly
Council 5 - 3 April 2019	Endorsement process and Community (re)Assembly feedback summary
Council 6 - 5 June 2019	Role of Birrarung Council in the Endorsement process
Council 7 - 3 July 2019	<i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i> working draft
Council 8 - 7 August 2019	<i>Healthy Waterways Strategy</i> and <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i>
Council 9 - 4 September 2019	Draft <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i> – highlighting changes in made in response to Birrarung Council
Out of Session – 20 September 2019	Draft <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i> – changes made in response to Yarra Collaboration Committee feedback

This report outlines the public consultation and engagement approach and program undertaken by Melbourne Water, in partnership with the Yarra Collaboration Committee and the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, between September 2017 and March 2020 to develop the *Yarra River 50-Year Community Vision*, the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* and the final *Yarra Strategic Plan*.

Engagement overview

Legislative requirements

The Victorian Government's *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murron) Act 2017* (the Act) requires the lead agency to develop a long-term community vision for the Yarra River which forms the cornerstone of the *Yarra Strategic Plan*. The Act outlines that:

- the long term community vision document must set a vision for a period of at least 50 years that identifies the a) the unique characteristics of the Yarra River land and b) community values, priorities and preferences in relation to that land or specific areas or segments of that land, including preferences for future land uses, protection and development of that land.
- the process for developing the long-term community vision document must include active community participation and co-design.

Under the Act, the lead agency must also prepare a draft *Yarra Strategic Plan*:

- through an open and collaborative process involving responsible public entities, local community reference forums and the Birrarung Council.
- in accordance with best practice regarding public participation, by seeking to collaborate with the community and ensure that community concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.

After endorsement by the responsible public entities, the lead agency must give a copy of the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* to the responsible Minister for review and approval for public consultation.

1. The lead agency must then make a copy of the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* available for public inspection at the agency's office.
2. The lead agency must advertise;
 - 4.1) the availability of the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan*;
 - 4.2) the opportunity for public submissions, indicating that all submissions will be available for inspection by the public;
 - 4.3) the time period for public submissions to be made (minimum of 2 months).
5. The lead agency must make a copy of all the public submissions available for inspection at the agency's office (in this case, online).
6. The lead agency must consider all submissions made and refer any submissions in relation to the land use framework that are not fully adopted to a panel for consideration.
7. The lead agency must consider a report of the panel on those submissions and revise a draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* to take account of the public submission process and panel recommendations.

Beyond these requirements, best practice community and stakeholder engagement practices were considered vital to the success of the development and subsequent implementation of the *Yarra Strategic Plan*.

Applying best practice consultation and engagement

Melbourne Water has a long history of working alongside community and stakeholders to understand their priorities, gather information and feedback to best design and deliver its services.

In 2016, Melbourne Water embarked on a bold journey, known as NextGen, to transform engagement practices across the organisation from good practice engagement to manage risks, to a position of leadership and innovation where customers and the community are at the core of all decision making. NextGen is Melbourne Water’s organisational commitment to put community at the core of decision-making through best practice engagement as guided by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) core values.

Next Gen principles (see below) drive Melbourne Water in delivering best practice engagement with customers and community.



In addition to the IAP2 core values, IAP2 developed the Spectrum of Public Participation to help clarify the role of the public (or community) in planning and decision-making, and how much influence the community has over planning or decision-making processes. It identifies five levels of public participation (or community engagement). See Appendix A for explanation of these five levels.

By aligning decision making that involves the public to an internationally recognised set of standards (IAP2), Melbourne Water works with community to create authentic, fair and transparent outcomes. It is these principles that informed the best practice design of the consultation and engagement approach for the *Yarra Strategic Plan* and allowed for versatility along the way.

Melbourne Water also engaged specialists in stakeholder and community engagement and consultation to inform the design and execute the delivery of the *Yarra Strategic Plan*'s consultation and engagement program.

In line with Melbourne Water's community and stakeholder engagement principles, a range of methods across the IAP2 spectrum were used to capture the community's feedback including a Community Assembly, workshops, guided walking focus groups, surveys, digital engagement, pop-up events and more. Details of the tools used at each phase will be provided later in the report. The different levels of the IAP2 spectrum that applied to each phase of consultation can be summarised as follows:

- Phase 1a – Broad community engagement - *Inform/Involve/Collaborate*
- Phase 1b – Targeted engagement through the Community Assembly - *Empower*
- Phase 2 – Broad community and stakeholder engagement - *Inform/Involve/Collaborate*
- Phase 3 – Targeted engagement with the Community Assembly, key stakeholders and local government – *Collaborate/Empower*
- Phase 4 - Broad community engagement - *Inform/Consult/Collaborate*

Yarra Strategic Plan Consultation and Engagement Strategy

To ensure the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision* and *Yarra Strategic Plan* met the needs of all Melburnians, a considered and well thought out consultation and engagement strategy was implemented. Melbourne Water designed an innovative four-phase engagement strategy which focused on a consultative and collaborative approach.

The overarching objective of the engagement approach was to inform the development of a *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision* and the development of the *Yarra Strategic Plan*.

More specifically, the objectives of the engagement approach were:

- To achieve a transformative shift in collaborative governance through the establishment and ongoing partnership of the Yarra Collaboration Committee.
- To celebrate the role, knowledge and cultural practices of the Yarra River Traditional Owners
- To give the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation a self-determined voice in the process
- To celebrate the social value and the community's connection to the Yarra River.
- To deliver inclusive, accessible and genuine community engagement.
- To collaborate with local governments and agencies to engage the community.
- To understand the community's relationship with the Yarra River now and into the future.
- To build on past Yarra River engagement, and coordinate with current and future engagement.
- To understand the community's aspirations for the future of the Yarra River.
- To educate the community on the complexities of the planning and management of the Yarra River, including the role of government, communities and individuals.
- To ensure the community understand the scope of the *Yarra Strategic Plan*, including negotiable and non-negotiables.

The intended outcomes of the engagement approach were:

- To co-design a Community Vision for the Yarra River and each of its reaches.
- To engage Traditional Owner groups and community to inform the development of the *Yarra Strategic Plan*
- To collaborate with the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and each of the 15 responsible public entities for the management and protection of the Yarra River in the design of the *Yarra Strategic Plan*.
- To explore opportunities for an ongoing dialogue about the Yarra River and its environs.
- To improve community understanding and a sense of ownership of the Yarra River and its environs.

An end-to-end collaborative design (co-design) community engagement process was not employed for the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan*. This was largely due to the resource and time constraints this would have brought to an already complex project, involving a vast number of stakeholders and technical input to develop aspects of the plan. Instead co-design principles were adopted at key stages throughout the project, particularly through the use of the Community Assembly in developing the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision* and providing direction for the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan*.

Prior to implementation, the draft Consultation and Engagement Strategy was presented to the Yarra Collaboration Committee to gather feedback on the approach. It was also acknowledged that the committee would contribute to the success of the Consultation and Engagement Strategy by promoting and assisting to implement the program of consultation and engagement. This ensured that community members were being reached through the relationships they held with their local authorities.

Stakeholders and partners

The development of the *Yarra Strategic Plan* involved a broad cross-section of not only the Victorian community, but interstate and international visitors who use and value the Yarra River.

Engagement also targeted specific groups from all levels of government, regulatory agencies and bodies, and organisations with cultural, environmental, social or economic relationships with the Yarra River.

The groups targeted in the *Yarra Strategic Plan* are outlined, at the highest level, in the table to the right. Further detail on the *Yarra Strategic Plan*'s stakeholder groups can be found in Appendix B.

Although the wider community is considered a key 'stakeholder' for the *Yarra Strategic Plan*, for the purpose of this report, there are instances where community and stakeholders are treated separately in terms of reporting outcomes.

Decision makers	State, local Government	Industry and peak bodies	Agencies and regulators	Traditional Owners, inc Wurundjeri
Farmers, agricultural groups	Landowners and residents	Heritage stakeholders	Cultural groups	Tourists and visitors
Community groups	Environmental groups	Media	Schools and universities	Emergency authorities
Wider community	CALD communities	Disadvantaged groups	Developers	Social service providers

Community Engagement (public participation)

The innovative four-phase consultation and engagement strategy was focussed on casting the public net far and wide to ensure the broadest range of community voices were heard and reflected. This was supported by more targeted engagement using social research, a Community Assembly, focus groups and workshops to collect a representation of views from the different communities who use and interact with the Yarra River.

Members of the public were provided with multiple opportunities to influence decisions to ensure the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision* and *Yarra Strategic Plan* were reflective of the values and aspirations of the whole community. The key decisions for each engagement phase are outlined below.

Phase 1: this phase of engagement focused on understanding what communities value about the river, with an emphasis on targeting hard-to-reach groups. The feedback collected from the broad engagement was used by the Yarra River Community Assembly to develop a vision for the whole river and one for each of its four reaches, providing the building blocks for the *Yarra Strategic Plan*.

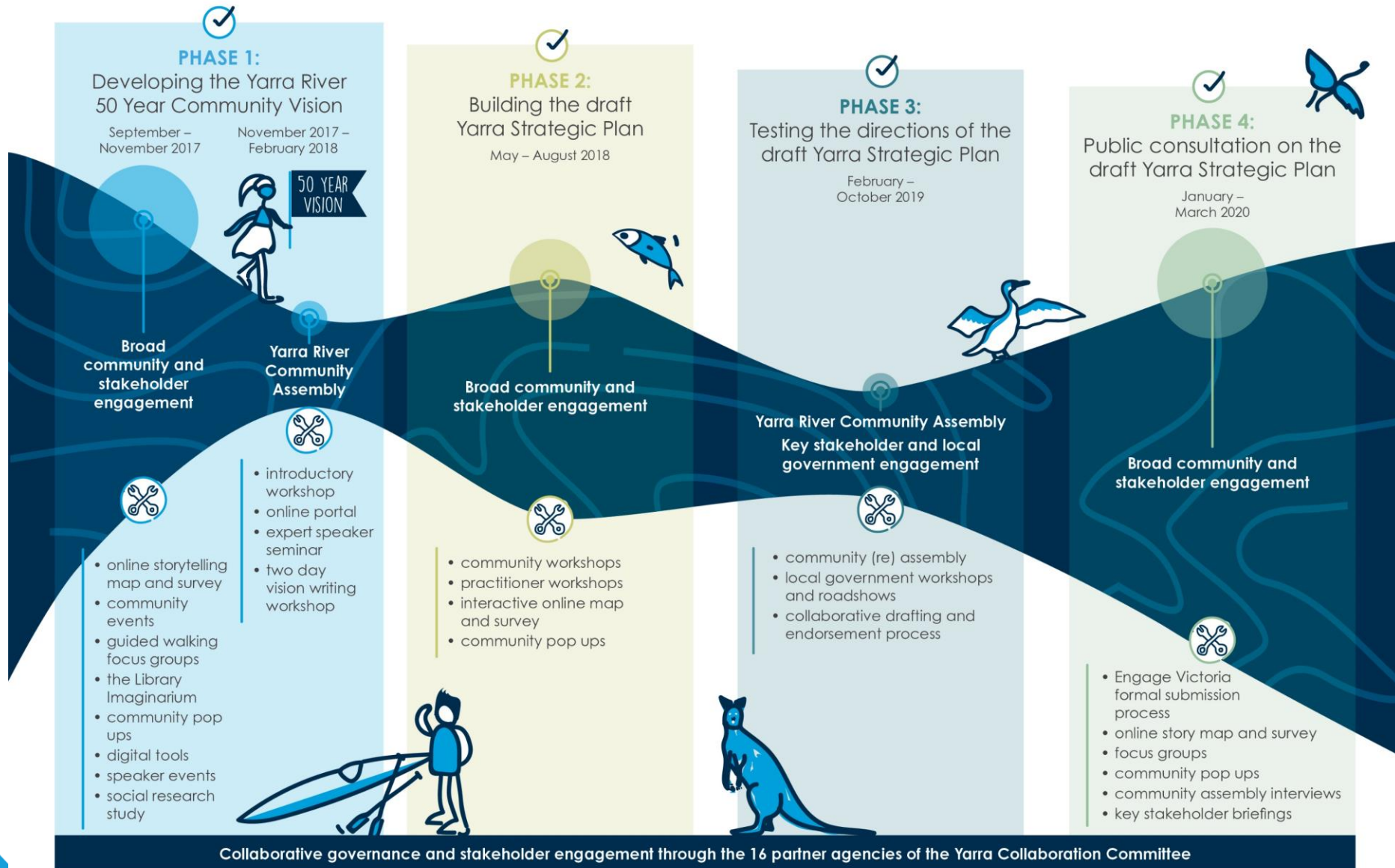
Phase 2: this phase involved consulting with the broader community to develop a blueprint for the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* and capture feedback on places of importance to inform the Land Use Framework.

Phase 3: during this phase the Yarra River Community Assembly re-convened as an important reference group to validate the direction of the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* in line with the 50-year vision they developed in Phase 1. Their feedback was used to refine the performance objectives and the directions for future land use for each reach in the Yarra River corridor

Phase 4: this final phase focussed on consulting with the public to validate that the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* met the needs of the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision* and to check if there were any gaps in the plan. This feedback will be used to finalise the plan.



YARRA STRATEGIC PLAN CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM



Structure of the plan

The draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* was split into two parts as follows:

Part 1

- celebrates the current commitments planned for the river, acknowledge the history of the Traditional Owners and recognise their intrinsic relationship to the Yarra River, Birrarung, and outline a modern governance approach for our collaborative action on Yarra River land in the next 10 years.
- includes collaborative actions for the next 10 years under each of the four performance objectives.

Part 2

- outlines a regional framework for land use planning and decision making on both public and freehold land
- provides a spatial structure to ensure that activities throughout the corridor align with the 10-year performance objectives, the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision* and *Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung* (Birrarung Water Policy).
- complements the collaborative actions on Yarra River land and ensures that the Yarra River is at the centre of planning and decision-making.

Most of the collaboration and consultation that took place in Phases 3 and 4 sought feedback on both parts of the plan. Given, however, the prior knowledge required for Part 2, the broader community engagement tools such as the online story map survey and community pop up events had more of a focus on getting feedback on Part 1 of the plan. Others, such as the focus groups and conversations with the Community Assembly honed in on Part 2.

Healthy Waterways Strategy

In parallel with the engagement for the *Yarra Strategic Plan*, there was extensive engagement undertaken with the community through the refresh of the [Healthy Waterways Strategy](#). A collaborative design (or co-design) process enabled stakeholders, each with their own areas of interest, skills and resources, to participate in the development of the region-wide strategy and the catchment programs for each nominated catchment.

Co-design occurred at two levels:

- Through co-design of the process itself, enabling participants to have input in designing how they were involved.
- Through collaboratively developing the vision, goals, targets and performance objectives within the strategy.

The strategy development aimed to collaboratively, transparently and in a technically rigorous manner identify:

- What the community and government want regional waterways to be like in 10-50 years.
- The current status of the region's waterways.

- The current and projected threats and risks to the region's waterways.
- An agreed future state for these waterways.
- Cost effective and feasible outcomes that can be collaboratively achieved within the 10-year implementation period of the strategy that will contribute to the agreed long-term vision and goals.

More than 630 people representing over 220 organisations partnered to shape the strategy, from project inception in September 2016 to Ministerial approval in October 2018.

The Healthy Waterways Strategy has a 'whole of catchment' view of waterways (including wetlands, estuaries, rivers and creeks). Five catchments are considered, the Yarra catchment being one of them. However the *Yarra Strategic Plan* focuses on a more specific geographical area to the *Healthy Waterways Strategy*, concentrating on the Yarra River Corridor (rather than the whole of the Yarra catchment) and considers public open space along the river, statutory planning, and the management of public land and infrastructure.

In developing the vision for the Yarra catchment, a working group considered the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision* to ensure alignment but considered different visions were appropriate given the different contexts and frameworks for which they are written.

One of the key outputs of the Healthy Waterways Strategy was the development of the *Co-designed catchment program for the Yarra Catchment*. Due to the considerable input from community through this process, outcomes and findings also informed the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* where relevant to avoid engaging with the community and stakeholders repeatedly on the same topic.

Overview of Phase 1 - Developing the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision*

In August 2017, Melbourne Water and Capire Consulting Group designed a two-stage approach to develop the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision*.

Broad community engagement ran from September to November 2017, with an extensive program of engagement to find out what people love about the Yarra River. This engagement included pop-ups; a library program; community events; focus groups; social research; and an online storytelling tool and survey.

In November 2017, Melbourne Water sought expressions of interest for a group of citizens to form the Yarra River Community Assembly to write a vision for the Yarra. From over 300 applications, an independent company selected 24 people, drawing six 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 community vision for the Yarra River.

Overview of Phase 2 - Building the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan*

The next phase of engagement took place between May and September 2018, aiming to inform the development of the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan*.

In June 2018, Melbourne Water and Capire Consulting Group held three community workshops along the length of the river. Around 100 community members participated in these workshops.

Other engagement activities used during this phase of engagement included an interactive online map and survey, and pop-ups at Collingwood Children's Farm and Princes Bridge in the CBD.

The findings from this phase of engagement fed into the development of the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan*.

Overview of Phase 3 - Testing the directions of the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan*

In February 2019, Melbourne Water brought together the Yarra River Community Assembly, one year on from the development of the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision*.

The Community Assembly tested the directions of the draft plan to ensure they aligned with their vision for the Yarra River corridor. The assembly's feedback was then incorporated into the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan*.

Following these workshops, the Yarra Strategic Plan team then began the detailed drafting process which led to extensive collaborative endorsement by responsible entities, their responsible Ministers and the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.

Overview of Phase 4 - Feedback on the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan*

After the release of the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* on 23 January 2020, a two month public consultation period followed where a diverse range of feedback on the draft plan was sought.

The Phase 4 consultation program focus on:

- targeted engagement and awareness raising with key stakeholders who had either helped shape or have a special interest in the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* or Yarra River. Stakeholder cohorts engaged through this process were:
 - Tier One – those who have helped shape and/or will be implementing the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* – for example Committees of Management, Yarra Riverkeeper, Yarra River Community Assembly.

- Tier Two – those who have an interest in the draft Yarra Strategic Plan or Yarra River – for example businesses along the Yarra River corridor, and community groups, Yarra Strategic Plan mailing list and other stakeholders with a general interest.
- broader and intensive consultation with the Victorian community using a variety of engagement tools and communication channels. Consultation with the community went broad again similar to Phases One and Two so that the public thoughts could be re-visited and help to shape the final plan.

Engagement findings

Phase 1 - Developing the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision*

Melbourne Water and Capire Consulting Group designed a two-stage engagement approach to develop a 50-year vision for each of the Yarra River's four reaches (upper rural, lower rural, suburban and inner city) and an overarching vision for the whole river.

This phase of engagement was split into two stages:

- **Broad community engagement** (September to November 2017)
- **Yarra River Community Assembly** writing the vision (November 2017 to February 2018)

Stage 1 - Broad community engagement (September-November 2017)

From September to early November 2017, Melbourne Water undertook engagement to inform the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision* by inviting the community to *Imagine the Yarra*. This was undertaken through an extensive engagement program using multiple tools, including:

- online storytelling map tool and survey
- Yarra Stories Community Events (one in each of the project's four geographical reaches)
- guided walking focus groups
- the Library Imaginarium program (delivered in partnership with State Library Victoria)
- pop-ups at local community events and spaces along the Yarra.

Several tools were used to build people's understanding of the Yarra River and promote engagement, including:

- Yarra Conversations Panel Event
- project website

- walking map (developed in partnership with Victoria Walks)
- fact sheets
- Imagine the Yarra 'storytellers' videos
- e-newsletter
- 'Call to action' postcards.

Tools

This stage of engagement was designed to capture the breadth of the community's views as well as targeting hard-to-reach groups and included:

Tool	Description	Details
<p>Online map and survey</p>	<p>The online storytelling map allowed people to tell their Yarra River story and pin it to a location on the map. Photos could also be uploaded.</p> <p>As with the Yarra Stories Community Events and pop-up activities, the purpose of the map was to understand what people value about the Yarra and to celebrate the community's connection to the river.</p> <p>The online survey focused on the priorities for improvement and protection for four river elements: environmental health; landscape and land use; culture and heritage; and community use and access. The survey questions mirrored the questions asked in activities at the Yarra Stories Community Events.</p>	<p>In total 149 stories were contributed through the online mapping tool.</p> <p>18 people completed the online survey.</p>
<p>Yarra Stories Community Events</p>	<p>Melbourne Water and Capire held one large-scale drop-in event in each of the four Yarra River reaches (upper rural, lower rural, suburban and inner city).</p> <p>These events targeted the broad community, providing an opportunity to celebrate the Yarra and contribute to the 50-year vision.</p> <p>Participants were invited to contribute to six activities in total.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inner city reach: Abbotsford Convent, 22 October 2017 – 80 participants • suburban reach: Warrandyte Mechanics Institute, 21 October 2017 – 20 participants

Tool	Description	Details
	<p>Four of the activities focused on priorities for improvement and protection of four river elements: environmental health; landscape and land use; culture and heritage; and community use and access.</p> <p>The two activities focused on participants sharing their stories of the Yarra River (past, present and future). Participants could share their stories as a written submission or an illustration. The purpose of the storytelling activities was to understand what people value about the river and to celebrate their connection to the Yarra.</p> <p>The community events also provided an opportunity for the community to learn more about the project and meet the project team.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lower rural reach: Healesville Scout Hall, 15 October 2017 – 10 participants • upper rural reach: Warburton Arts Centre, 14 October 2017 – 75 participants.
<p>Walking focus groups</p>	<p>Capire delivered three focus groups along the river, each targeting a hard-to-reach community. These small group sessions captured input from groups who may be traditionally underrepresented.</p> <p>The groups were conducted using the walking map designed by Victoria Walks https://walkingmaps.com.au/walk/3749</p> <p>The focus groups allowed small groups of people to learn more about the Yarra, and interactively share their stories and observations.</p> <p>The focus group featured four main stops, each focusing on a different river element. The facilitator provided the group with information about the river. Participants answered questions in a workbook and discussed their observations as a group. At the end of the focus groups, participants shared their Yarra River stories and discussed what they had learnt.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with a disability (Brite Industries): 21 participants • Youth (Frontyard Services): 7 participants • Socio-economically disadvantaged (Collingwood Neighbourhood house): 7 participants.
<p>The Library Imaginarium</p>	<p>In partnership with the State Library of Victoria, Melbourne Water and Capire delivered a series of family friendly activities at public libraries along the river. Given the vision has a 50-year focus, it was important to involve children and allow them to have their say about what they want for the future of the Yarra.</p> <p>The activities included:</p>	<p>The participating libraries were Healesville Library, Kew Library, Toorak Library, Eltham Library, Watsonia Library, Library at The Dock, and Bargoonga Nganjin</p>

Tool	Description	Details
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writing a letter to the Yarra River • drawing a picture of the Yarra River • writing a letter to the users of the Yarra River • writing a short story about your past, present and future Yarra River experience. 	<p>North Fitzroy Library. Around 200 paintings and letters were received.</p>
<p>'Imagine the Yarra' pop-ups</p>	<p>Melbourne Water and Capire delivered three place-based pop-ups along the Yarra.</p> <p>Leveraging off community events, the pop-ups provided an opportunity for those who may not typically participate in engagement.</p> <p>The 'Imagine the Yarra' pop-ups were designed to collect Yarra River stories; however, they also became an important tool for promoting the website and Yarra Stories Community Events. The pop-ups aimed to engage people in a creative, informal way.</p> <p>Stories were collected via StoryPod (collecting stories in a video format), mapping exercises, and postcards linked to a location on the map.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upper rural reach: Silvan-Wandin Field Day (community event) – 6 participants shared their Yarra River stories, around 30 people stopped to find out more. • Lower rural reach: Yarra Ranges Football Final – around 50 postcards were handed out. • Inner-city reach: Art Play (community facility) – 8 participants shared their Yarra River stories, around 25 people stopped to find out more.
<p>Social research</p>	<p>Melbourne Water commissioned an independent research company to conduct a survey to find out what Melburnians value about the Yarra River. The company surveyed people about their impressions of the Yarra River, focusing on how people use and access it, as well as what they value. This research prioritised gathering feedback from people living in each of the four</p>	<p>1546 Melburnians were surveyed.</p>

Tool	Description	Details
	reaches of the Yarra to ensure good representation of the different communities who use and interact with the river.	

Promotion

Several tools were developed to promote engagement and act as conversation starters for the community. These included:

- Yarra Conversations Panel Event: Melbourne Water hosted a panel discussion at the Arts Centre in partnership with Yarra Events. The event included presentations from Yarra River experts and a panel discussion on protecting the Yarra. Around 125 people attended and 30 stories were collected.
- Walking Map: Melbourne Water commissioned Victoria Walks to design a map highlighting the river’s complexities and celebrating its contribution to Melbourne’s landscape.
- Online project portal: The Imagine the Yarra website, as well as hosting engagement activities, was a central source for project related information, educational material and promotion of engagement opportunities.
- Imagine the Yarra ‘storytellers’ video: featuring diverse river users sharing their Yarra River stories, the video was used as a conversation starter and to highlight the diversity of what the river means to different people. The video was viewed over 800 times.
- Fact sheets: prepared to build people’s understanding of the Yarra. These were available online and at face-to-face engagement activities.
- Imagine the Yarra Postcards: designed to promote the project page and storytelling. They were handed out at face-to-face engagement activities.

Summary of feedback

Summary of feedback by theme

By the end of the engagement period, Melbourne Water and Capire had collected over 1200 individual contributions (excluding the 1546 responses to the social research). These ranged from multi-page stories, poems and drawings, to comments of a few words. Contributions were collected from a broad range of Melburnians, from young children to 90-year-olds, and people from a variety of cultural backgrounds and geographic locations.

These submissions were analysed by an independent research company that formulated a report to feed into engagement to write the vision for the river.

Many of the comments were coded into multiple themes. This resulted in over 2,500 ideas being captured to inform the vision.

The following is a summary of the feedback received by theme:

Recreation

- Contributors across all reaches enjoy a diverse range of recreational experiences: walking, cycling, running, swimming, kayaking, canoeing, floating, fishing, picnics, barbeques, and many more. People expressed both fond memories of past activities and enjoyment of current experiences.
- Whether it be family, friends or colleagues, stories of the Yarra River included descriptions of relationships with people. Some expressed concern that future generations would not enjoy the same experiences if the river is not carefully managed.
- Personal physical and mental wellbeing outcomes, as a result of active and passive Yarra River recreational activities, were also highlighted. Many people use the river for running and exercise, improving physical wellbeing and fitness, as well as visiting the river to improve their mental wellbeing. This was often related to overcoming the effects of living in a large city.

Environment and landscape

- Contributors want to keep the Yarra River clean and unpolluted. Many comments supported efforts to protect native animals and habitat.
- The drinking water the Yarra provides to Melbourne was greatly appreciated, particularly by children.
- Participants wished to see measures taken to improve water quality, remove debris and improve vegetation on banks.

River qualities

- Contributors discussed the Yarra as having a living presence, in the city and their lives. It gives vitality to people and is a place to escape from busy city life. For some, it has been a constant companion over many years and inspiring, relaxing, soothing, and connecting them to nature.
- For some, the river is considered a lifeblood, supporting the environment and Melburnians, and inspiring a love for the river as a provider of culture and heritage.
- The Yarra offers opportunities to learn important life skills, fostering a love for the environment.

Memories

- Contributors discussed the history of the Yarra in personal accounts and general observations. Stories were often associated with the participant's family. Some accounts dated back hundreds of years and many included pivotal personal experiences relating to the river.
- Observations made by participants were associated with stories about what could be learnt from previous generations. These included the different ways that the river was used in the past, for instance safe swimming.
- Many stories discussed 'coming of age' through river adventures.

Management

- Contributors acknowledged that population growth was inevitable, but emphasised that managing development is crucial to protect the Yarra River.
- Some contributors urged planners to include multiple stakeholders in decision-making and encouraged all groups to work collaboratively.



Yarra Stories Community Event, Abbotsford

Culture and heritage

- Contributors in this section highlighted a desire for more Aboriginal culture, language, stories and customs to be included in how the story of the Yarra is communicated to the public.
- Aboriginal land management was flagged as a potential consideration for future planning around the management of the Yarra River corridor.

Economic

- A small number of contributors stated that the river supports many small businesses and tourism activities in the city.

- The Yarra offers a picturesque setting for social life, as the heart of the cityscape, encouraging a thriving hospitality industry in the areas near the river.
- A small group were opposed to the encroachment of farming along the river, but most commenters were supportive of agriculture in general.

Summary of feedback by reach

Information was tagged to particular reaches. The greatest amount of comments came from the inner city reach, with the least coming from the lower rural reach. When it wasn't possible to tag a contribution to a particular reach, it was classified as 'whole of river'.

The following is a summary of feedback by Yarra River reach:

Whole of river overview (323 comments)

All along the Yarra, contributors described experiencing physical, mental, emotional and personal benefits from close contact with the river. The Yarra has a living presence, enabling escape from daily life and fostering the community's imagination. People want an improvement in the natural environment and a greater balance between development and conservation, with Traditional Owner perspectives, included to provide valuable management insights.

Upper rural overview (188 comments)

Clean and safe access to the water, for activities with family and friends, is of the highest importance in the upper rural reach. The sense of place among communities along the river is strong, and participants want to ensure that the health of the Yarra is prioritised so that it can be enjoyed by future generations. Farmers and local landholders agree, asking for more collaborative management of the river.

Lower rural overview (43 comments)

The river is a place of special memories in the lower rural reach. Most participants recall the joys of sharing childhood swimming holes, fishing spots or paddling areas with their children. Others take great pleasure in picnicking, walking or biking along the numerous tracks and spotting the unique native wildlife around the river's wetlands and billabongs.

Suburban overview (107 comments)

In the suburban reach, people feel a strong attachment to place. People feel connected through a history of people and families enjoying recreation on the river. As a vital green corridor connecting the outer suburbs to the city, the river also offers a place to reflect, relax and educate others on important ecologies, cultural stories and life skills, amidst a backdrop of precious and unique wildlife.

Inner city overview (572 comments)

The recreational opportunities afforded by the Yarra are a valued aspect of life near the river. Whether alone, with family and friends, or as part of a daily commute, inner city reach users enjoy grounding themselves in the natural landscape. Keeping the river clean and allowing native wildlife to thrive was also of high importance – more strategic management was desired. A strong focus on cultural heritage and diversity was identified in this reach.

Summary of social research

TKP Market Research Consultants surveyed 1546 Melburnians to understand what people value about the river. The following is a summary of the survey results:

- 58% of respondents said the Yarra is important in making Melbourne a great place to live.
- 36% of respondents rated the Yarra as important to them personally.
- the main reasons cited for visiting the Yarra were: recreation (46%) and entertainment/sightseeing (32%).
- the most common activities undertaken were walking/jogging (51%), nature appreciation (34%), visiting cafes/restaurants (33%) and picnic/BBQ (29%).
- On average visitors spend ~90 minutes on each visit to the Yarra, with the common time for visiting during the day on the weekend (71%).
- With regards to improvements:
 - 82% believe the Yarra is a perfect spot for recreational activities
 - 76% believe untouched healthy landscapes are what makes the river a good place to visit
 - 76% would like to see more native plants and animals in and around the river
 - 62% believe the historical and cultural features of the river are very important
 - 61% would like to see more landscaped parks and gardens here
 - 58% would like more people to visit the river
 - 53% believe residential development is spoiling the river
 - 41% believe there is too much traffic near this part of the river
 - 41% believe there are too many commercial activities and buildings encroaching on the river.
- Pollution and litter management and managing environmental flows were identified as important (81% and 82%) as well as protecting the Yarra from development (76%) and protecting and improving green spaces (75%).
- Visitors to the Yarra were most satisfied with community access and use aspects.

Evaluation

As the activities undertaken during this engagement phase were of a drop-in nature, participants were not asked to complete any evaluation.

How the results were used

Feedback received during this stage of engagement was analysed by an independent research company and collated into a summary report. The report, which represented the views of over 2500 Victorians (including the social research undertaken), was distributed to the Yarra River Community Assembly to inform the development of the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision* during the next stage of engagement. The assembly explored the themes contained in the report to ensure their vision represented the desires of the whole community.

The reach summaries from the report informed the development of the priorities and values which accompany each of the four reach visions developed by the assembly.

Stage 2 - Yarra River Community Assembly writing the vision (November 2017-February 2018)

In November 2017 Melbourne Water kicked off stage two engagement to develop the community vision by seeking expressions of interest for a Yarra River Community Assembly.

The process of selecting community members was undertaken by an independent consultant to ensure transparency and avoid bias. Assembly members were randomly selected to achieve a balanced mix of gender, age and location.

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 selected assembly members represented a variety of relationships to the river, including:

- previously or currently live near the river
- connected to a business on the river
- participate in an environmental activity on the river
- visit the river for recreation
- take part in education or research on the river
- rarely visit the river, but interested in its future.

The primary objective of the assembly was to take the findings from stage one engagement and write a community vision that represented the views of the broader community.

A significant effort was made to improve the capacity of the assembly members in understanding the complexity of the Yarra River, its management and its uses. The Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, played a key role in this as educators and mentors to the Community Assembly in the development of the Community Visions.

As well as hearing from subject matter experts and from members of the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, the group reviewed and reflected on the findings of stage one engagement to ensure they acted as agents for the broader community.

Tools

Assembly members were supported by the following activities:

Tool	Description	Details
An introductory workshop	The workshop was designed to introduce members to the project, each other and the project team. Participants received educational resources and took part in cultural training with a Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Elder.	Held in November 2017, all 24 Community Assembly members attended the workshop.
Imagine the Yarra community engagement summary	A 122-page report summarising the feedback received through stage one engagement from the broader community.	Each community member received a copy of the engagement summary report.
Online portal	The portal provided assembly members the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the outcomes from stage one engagement.	Participants were able to pose questions to the project team, request more information and have discussions with other assembly members using the portal.
Expert speaker session	The session included several speakers sharing their knowledge and expertise with the assembly focusing on heritage, resilience, urban planning, economic benefit, environmental health, transport and climate change.	Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Louise Honman, Principle Consultant at Context • Andrew Mellor, Team Leader Lower Yarra at Melbourne Water • James Lamour-Reid, Regional Director at Ethos Urban • Clive Larkman, President of the Yarra Valley Agribusiness Forum • Vincent Pettigrove, CEO at Centre for Aquatic Pollution Identification and Management, School of Biosciences, University of Melbourne

Tool	Description	Details
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evelyn Légaré, Director Integrated Place Transport Planning, Transport for Victoria, Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources • Dr. Pandora Hope, Senior Research Scientist at the Bureau of Meteorology.
<p>Two day vision writing weekend</p>	<p>The Community Assembly met on the first weekend in February 2018 to develop a 50-year vision for the whole river and one for each of its four reaches.</p> <p>The objective of day one was to continue to build the participant's understanding of the Yarra River. The day began with a cultural talk and Smoking Ceremony conducted by a Wurundjeri Woi wurung Elder. The assembly was then taken through the broader community's views and aspirations and heard from inspirational Yarra River speakers, including Traditional Owners. Participants were able to share their connections to the Yarra River. The day concluded with assembly members forming groups (based around the four river reaches) and agreeing on how they would work together.</p> <p>The objective of day two was to write the four reach visions and the overarching vision for the Yarra. Participants developed the reach visions in small groups. The overarching vision was written as a whole group, drawing on key themes from the reach visions with a focus on enhancing and protecting the Yarra River as one living entity.</p>	<p>The visions developed by the Community Assembly provide the building blocks for how the river and its land are used and managed in the future, to ensure the Yarra remains a proud part of Victoria's identity.</p>

Evaluation

The significant program of capacity building undertaken during engagement with the Community Assembly provided an excellent opportunity to gather evaluation data, both prior to and post participation in creating the community vision. The evaluation focused on three key areas: trust and confidence in decision-makers, civic participation, and content knowledge. This evaluation was undertaken by Capire Consulting Group.

The results of the evaluation showed marked improvement across most areas:

- Trust and confidence in decision-makers – participants' trust and confidence in decision-makers achieved the most significant growth across all key performance areas, particularly trust that the outcomes would be honoured and that Melbourne Water and the State Government supported community involvement in decision-making. This is an important outcome for the process and a strength of the collaborative style of engagement.
- Civic participation – baseline data illustrated the relatively high skill and confidence levels of participants when it came to engaging in civic decision-making. The growth in skills and confidence was relatively low as a result; however, assembly members did note an increase in their confidence in other participants. This was reinforced by comments that they were impressed when the group reached a consensus. Participants also commented that they had learnt new skills for working as part of a group.
- Content knowledge – participants reported their knowledge had relatively consistent growth, however qualitative data suggests a greater growth than indicated, particularly in terms of appreciating the cultural significance of the river. It is likely participants would have benefited from time to reflect and amend their original answer to better illustrate their growth in knowledge.
- Additional outcomes - overall, participants said the Yarra River Community Assembly met their expectations because:
 - consensus was achieved
 - the process was well organised and facilitated
 - the process was genuine
 - a diverse range of people were included and able to provide input.

Participants expressed that they had gained a lot through their participation including greater knowledge and appreciation of other people's perspectives of the river, with a focus on the insights into Wurundjeri Woi wurrung culture.

When asked whether they would encourage others to take part in a similar collaborative decision-making process, participants overwhelmingly said they would recommend people take the opportunity.



Members of the Yarra River Community Assembly

How the results were used

The Yarra River Community Assembly developed the [Yarra River 50-year Community Vision](#) and a vision for each of the four reaches of the Yarra River (upper rural, lower rural, suburban and inner city). They also developed priorities and values for each reach of the river.

The 10 year outcomes and actions developed for the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* were based on the priorities and values that accompanied the reach visions. In parallel to the development of the vision, 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. The aspirations set out in the document will continue to evolve.

The *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision* and *Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung* (Birrarung Water Policy) were launched by the Minister for Water Lisa Neville, Minister for Planning Richard Wynne and Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Lily D' Ambrosio in May 2018. Together, they form the cornerstones of the *Yarra Strategic Plan*.

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.

Phase 2 - Building the draft Yarra Strategic Plan (May-August 2018)

Between May and August 2018, Melbourne Water and Capire Consulting Group undertook community engagement to build the content of the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* and ensure the plan brings the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision* to life.

The engagement was more targeted than previous engagement and focused on filling knowledge gaps around five key themes:

- access
- parklands
- culture and heritage
- views and landscapes
- experiences.

This engagement included three community workshops held along the Yarra with over 100 people taking part. The workshops aimed to ensure the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* reflected the community's vision for the river and explored how the plan can protect the Yarra and its parklands into the future.

Online over 300 comments were received via an interactive map, with comments spread across the four reaches of the river.

At this stage in engagement, any knowledge gaps around environmental themes, for example, river health, biodiversity, riparian regeneration and habitat corridors were taken from the extensive engagement recently undertaken as part of Melbourne Water's [Healthy Waterways Strategy – Co-designed Catchment Program for the Yarra Catchment](#). Detail on which is detailed above in the Introduction of this report.

Tools

Tool	Description	Details
Community workshops	Workshop participants were asked to reflect on five key themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access: Where should we expand and improve access to the Yarra River? What for? • Parklands: How would you like to see the river parklands and trails improved and expanded? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • upper rural workshop: Healesville, 16 June 2018 – 44 participants. • lower rural and suburban workshop: Warrandyte, 16 June 2018 – 25 participants • suburban and inner city workshop: Alphington, Sunday 17 June 2018 – 32 participants.

Tool	Description	Details
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture and heritage: Where are the places of heritage and cultural value? How would you like them protected? • Views and landscapes: Where are the important views and landscapes along the river? What makes them valuable? • Experiences: What types of experiences do you want along the Yarra River? Why? <p>Workshop participants were also asked to identify areas for protection and outline what success would look like for the <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i> in 5, 10 and 50 years.</p>	
Online map	<p>Mirroring the community workshops, online participants were asked to place a pin on our interactive map at imaginetheyarra.com.au and answer one or more of five questions related to access, parklands, culture and heritage, views and landscapes, and experiences.</p>	<p>A total of 312 comments were received, spread across the four reaches of the river:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • upper rural reach: 38 • lower rural reach: 85 • suburban reach: 77 • inner city: 112
Online survey	<p>The broad objectives defined by the Yarra River Action Plan will shape the context of the <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i>.</p> <p>The community was asked to complete a short online survey to tell us if any elements missing from the objectives.</p>	<p>A total of 14 people completed the online survey.</p>
Pop-ups	<p>Two community pop-ups aimed to raise awareness of engagement and offer people the opportunity to participate on the spot.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collingwood Children's Farm, Abbotsford: around 25 stories were collected • Princes Bridge, Melbourne: around 10 people stopped to find out more information.

Tool	Description	Details
<p>Heritage practitioner workshop</p>	<p>A workshop for heritage practitioners from partner organisations and representatives from community heritage groups was held on 6 August, 2018, at the Royal Historical Society of Victoria.</p> <p>The purpose of the workshop was to provide information on the cultural heritage component of the <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i> undertaken to date, and to gather information about the cultural heritage of the Yarra.</p>	<p>Invitations were sent to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural heritage officers from the 8 municipalities: Banyule, Boroondara, Manningham, Melbourne, Nillumbik, Stonnington, Yarra, Yarra Ranges, • National Trust of Australia (Victoria) • Heritage Victoria • Parks Victoria • Other Yarra Strategic Plan partner agencies: VicRoads, Victorian Planning Authority, DEDJTR, Port Phillip & Westernport CMA • Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation • Melbourne Water heritage & regional services teams • Selected historical societies (Heidelberg, Kew & Geoff Lacy, author) <p>There was a total of 20 attendees with good representation from organisations across the length of the study area.</p>
<p>Parklands practitioner workshop</p>	<p>A workshop for parklands practitioners from partner organisations and land managers was held on 11 September, 2018, at the Veneto Club, Bulleen.</p> <p>The aim of this workshop was to gain critical input from land managers and other key experts into the development of the parklands and open space components of the <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i>.</p>	<p>Invitations were sent to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land management officers from the 8 municipalities: Banyule, Boroondara, Manningham, Melbourne, Nillumbik, Stonnington, Yarra, Yarra Ranges, • Yarra River Committees of Management. • Parks Victoria

Tool	Description	Details
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other Yarra Strategic Plan partner agencies • Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation • Melbourne Water land management teams <p>There was a total of 40 attendees.</p>

Promotion

Several tools were developed as conversation starters and to promote engagement. These included:

- Online project portal: The Imagine the Yarra website, along with hosting several engagement activities, was a central source of all project-related information, as well as educational materials and promotion of engagement opportunities. For the Phase 1 engagement period the website had 326 Contributions (total number of contributions recorded via the project's online engagement activities.)
- Vision videos: Melbourne Water commissioned the production of five videos featuring the visions being read aloud accompanied by footage of the Yarra River. The videos have been viewed over 1900 times in total.
- Vision document: The vision document outlined the process of developing the document and featured the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision* and the four reach visions. The document was available for download on the project webpage.

Summary of feedback: workshops and online

Workshop participants and online contributors were asked to explore the five key themes of access, parklands, culture and heritage, views and landscapes, and experiences using maps to illustrate issues and opportunities. The following provides a summary of each of the themed discussions.

Access: Where should we expand and improve access to the Yarra River? What for?

- improve access for recreational activities, including walking, swimming, cycling, fishing and paddling
- extend the main Yarra Trail and connect its missing links
- improve and connect shared paths, including new/updated river crossings

- manage litter, erosion and damage to the environment for new and existing access points (this may mean restricting access in some areas), with particular reference made to Warrandyte, Bend of Islands and Wonga Park
- prioritise low impact methods of accessing the river
- remove fallen trees and create more access points for canoes
- improve river access at Millgrove and Warburton
- consider the safety of all shared path users
- ensure access points consider the needs of people of all abilities.

Parklands: How would you like to see the river parklands and trails improved and expanded?

- protect natural parklands – manage weeds, revegetate and protect from development
- improve parkland and trail management between landowners and responsible authorities
- expand trails along the river and connect gaps in existing trails
- develop new parklands for recreation and as habitat corridors
- ensure ongoing maintenance of shared pathways and safety of pathway users
- improve facilities such as picnic tables, walking tracks and toilets
- improve management and connection of billabongs and wetlands
- consider opening up golf courses to allow public access to the river.

Culture and heritage: Where are the places of heritage and cultural value? How would you like them protected?

- protect areas identified as having high heritage value and/or Aboriginal cultural significance such as Tikalara Park through to Laughing Waters, Brushy Creek, Wonga Park and Bolin Bolin, Coranderrk, billabongs, camp sites near Badger Creek, Dee Road Bridge, Millgrove Miner's Cottage, Warburton Holiday Park, Dights Falls, Herring Island, Bolin Bolin Billabong, Banyule House and Heide Museum.
- improve the community's understanding of the heritage and cultural significance of the river, with particular reference to Aboriginal heritage
- acknowledge and preserve Aboriginal cultural heritage along the river. Use Traditional Owner place names, signage, art and education to improve the visibility of Aboriginal culture along the Yarra
- preserve existing art and heritage architecture and commission new art to commemorate heritage sites
- preserve environmental heritage by protecting remnant vegetation.

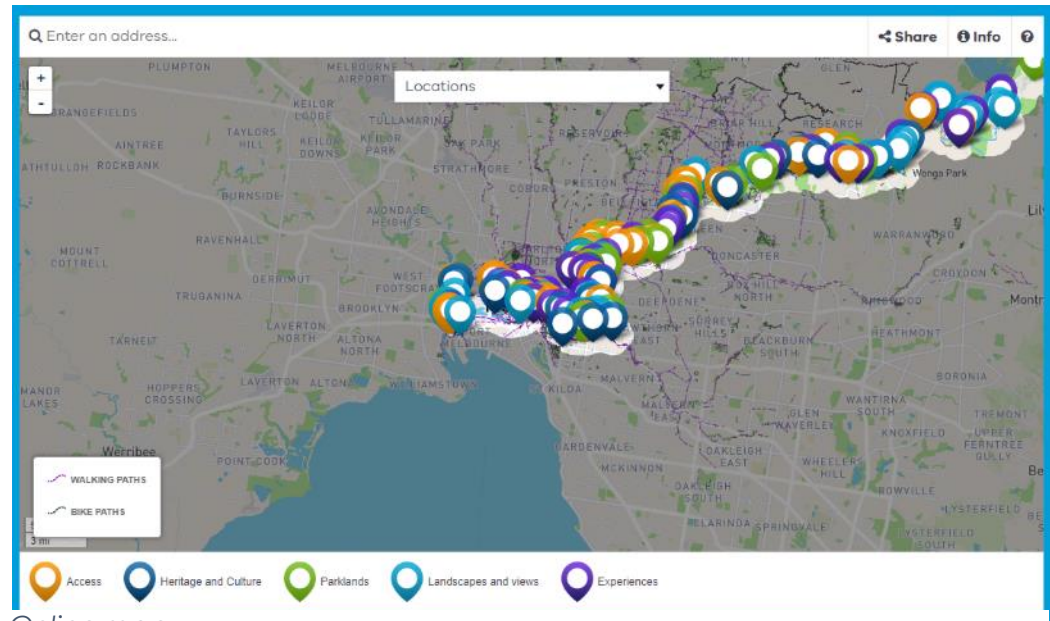
Views and landscapes: Where are the important views and landscapes along the river? What makes them valuable?

- protect important landscapes and views, including places that provide access for recreation such as walking, cycling and children's play
- undisturbed landscapes, for example between Woori Bridge and Badger Creek, require protection as they help people feel connected with nature

- the Yarra is of significant landscape value, especially the beautiful landscapes, swimming spots, native flora and fauna
- protect views from development to ensure the 'natural feeling' of the area remains
- acknowledge the importance of seeing nature in the city, from views both from beside and on the river.

Experiences: What types of experiences do you want along the Yarra River? Why?

- prioritise immersion in nature
- protect native vegetation and improve water quality to support river experiences
- introduce more educational experiences
- experiences that contributors enjoy along the Yarra River are:
 - connecting with nature and the quiet of the river
 - swimming, walking, canoeing, rafting, fishing, picnics, cycling, fishing, bird watching and camping along the river
 - opportunities for cultural learning experiences, particularly around sites of Aboriginal heritage
 - BBQs, picnic spots, major events, restaurants and public art which encourage social connection
- possible new experiences people would like along the Yarra included floating in tyres, snorkelling, twilight walks, meditation and bush tucker tours.



Online map

What success looks like...

Those who participated in the community workshops were asked to describe what the success of the *Yarra Strategic Plan* would look like in 5, 10 and 50 years.

The following highlights some of the participants' aspirations.

... in 5 years:

- there is increased awareness of how we impact the river across the community, landowners and responsible authorities
- installation of signage and revegetation has commenced
- there is strong community support for the protection of the Yarra River corridor

- there is a coordinated effort to implement the plan amongst responsible authorities
- the health of the Yarra River and surrounding parklands has improved.

... in 10 years

- the plan is being implemented and progress has been made against a variety of targets
- there is continued management of habitat, weeds and vegetation
- landowners and community continue to be engaged and participate in the implementation of the plan
- environmental improvements are evident
- there is a greater understanding and awareness of environmental protection
- there are greater protections for sites of cultural significance.

... in 50 years

- the river is healthy and clean
- there is a high level of biodiversity along the river and degraded areas have been significantly improved
- the Yarra River is valued and accessible to the community; the river continues to be cared for and protected
- landowners and responsible authorities continue to work together to manage the river
- the plan has been fully implemented
- Traditional Owners are involved in the management of the river.

Increased protection

Participants who attended the community workshops were asked to identify areas along the river to be considered for protection. The following outlines these areas as well as participants' comments on protection.

Upper rural reach

Some of the areas mentioned included: upstream of Warburton, around Big Pats Creek, between Millgrove and Launching Place.

Comments about areas for protection:

- need to consider the whole reach as a priority for ecological protection
- focus on ecological protection and improving existing public access rather than creating new access points
- need to protect the environment from invasive weeds
- need to protect water quality from stormwater and land use runoff

- value the knowledge of the landowners and work with them to develop plans (with appropriate funding and support) to maintain river health
- protect clear access routes in high fire areas.

Lower rural reach

Some of the areas mentioned included: Yering Gorge and Yarra Glen, Tarrowarra and Paul Creek, Warrandyte State Park, Warrandyte Kinglake Nature Conservation Reserve.

Comments about areas for protection:

- provide informed advice about how the environment is protected
- ensure consistency in protection across responsible authorities
- protect areas of high biodiversity areas from non-native fauna.

Suburban reach

Some of the areas mentioned included: Bolin Bolin Billabong and Banyule Flats, Tikalara park, Yarra Bend Park, Westerfolds Park.

Comments about areas for protection:

- protect the river from erosion impacts caused by development
- have consistency in protection across responsible authorities
- protect against non-native flora and fauna
- opportunities for more community engagement in river management
- there is a need for consistent revegetation to support biodiversity.

Inner city reach

Some of the areas mentioned included: Birrarung Marr, Southbank and Northbank, between Cremorne and Hawthorn, and around Abbotsford.

Comments about areas for protection:

- there is a need for more stormwater management and water sensitive urban design
- need to protect against encroaching development
- need to protect sightlines along the Yarra
- opportunities to improve public access through private land.

Feedback on the broad objectives

Online contributors were able to complete a short survey to provide feedback on the broad objectives taken from the *Yarra River Action Plan*.

Commenters believe the broad objectives for the *Yarra Strategic Plan* should:

- reflect the importance of tourism, economic development and farming along the Yarra
- consider recreation that does not damage the environment or heritage sites
- balance protection of the environment with increasing public access and tourism
- have a strong focus on wildlife and cultural heritage
- consider the issue of septic tanks in the upper Yarra
- include the need for safe walking paths along the river
- highlight opportunities for educational and artistic experiences on the river
- highlight the need for more facilities such as toilets, parking and rubbish bins
- include a strong emphasis on celebration and protection of the Yarra's environmental values and improvement of water quality.

Perceptions of Waterways 2018 survey

Every two years, Melbourne Water conducts a significant research project to understand the community's perceptions of Melbourne's waterways and their surrounding land.

Among other things, the study tracks:

- the community's satisfaction with waterways
- the community's perception of threats to waterways
- perceptions of the work undertaken in maintaining waterways
- people's understanding of waterways' contribution to liveability.

In 2018, 85% of participants said they were highly or very satisfied with the Yarra River. This represents a slight decline from 90% in 2016.

According to respondents, the main threats facing Melbourne's waterways are:

- dumping of rubbish or littering 26%
- pollution/spills/sewage 26%
- population growth/new housing developments/urban sprawl 16%

- industrial/chemical/toxic waste 14%.

When asked whether or not the health of the Yarra River had improved over the last five years opinions were mixed:

- 9% of participants said the health of the Yarra was a lot better
- 34% of participants said the health of the Yarra was somewhat better
- 36% of participants said the health of the Yarra had remained the same
- 19% of participants said the health of the Yarra had become somewhat worse.

When asked whether maintenance conducted along the Yarra River had improved over the last five year opinions were also spread:

- 8% of participants said the maintenance was a lot better
- 36% of participants said the maintenance was somewhat better
- 43% of participants said the maintenance had remained the same
- 10% of participants said the maintenance was somewhat worse.

The main characteristics of waterways that people want to be maintained or enhanced into the future are:

- amenities and recreations (paths, toilets, etc.) 28%
- improve/maintain waterway health 16%
- keep it clean/clean it up 14%
- flora/parkland landscape 13%
- preserve the natural environment 11%
- control rubbish and litter 8%
- accessibility 5%
- improve wildlife 5%

Evaluation

Participants in the three community workshops were asked to complete an evaluation survey rating their satisfaction with the content, facilitation and organisation of the workshop. Participants were also able to add comments to their evaluation.

Overall 42 surveys were completed, with 88% of participants rating the quality of the workshop as good or excellent. Written comments were overwhelmingly positive with participants expressing gratitude at being involved in the development of the plan. Some participants suggested Melbourne Water test the directions of the plan using pop-ups to engage the general public.

How the results were used

Melbourne Water completed a spatial analysis to understand threats and pressures, gaps in protection and areas for improvement along the river corridor. This gap analysis incorporated the extensive feedback received during community engagement and also included data from the Perceptions of Waterways 2018 survey (conducted by Melbourne Water biennially).

The feedback from this phase of engagement was also used to understand the community's desire for change and inform the significant places and new areas for protection included in the land use framework of the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan*. Those sites identified for protection by the community that were not included were deemed to be sufficiently managed and protected under existing mechanisms.

The feedback from the online map and the community workshops informed the development of the four performance objectives contained in the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan*.

This feedback also filled gaps in our understanding of the community's aspirations for the river, helping to shape the broader content of the plan.

The community's feedback on 'what success looks like' for the plan will inform the collaborative governance and delivery of the *Yarra Strategic Plan*.

Progress Report for the Yarra Strategic Plan – October 2018

Extensive consultation and collaboration occurred through Phases One and Two of consultation and engagement to the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* in January 2019. With the time taken, to undertake successive phases of consultation and to lead the collaborative development of the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* with all agencies responsible for its implementation, the Progress Report for the *Yarra Strategic Plan* was released in October 2018 to share an update with the community. Importantly, this document presented key feedback from Phase 2 of the community engagement on what success looks like for the community in 10 years' time within each reach.

The *Yarra Strategic Plan* Progress Report can be found at imaginetheyarra.com.au/documentlibrary

Phase 3 - Testing the directions of the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan*

The extensive feedback gathered in phases 1 and 2 provided the evidence base for the development of the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* and allowed Melbourne Water to refocus its engagement with agencies responsible for managing the river and work collaboratively to shape the draft *plan*. The continuation of the Yarra Collaboration Committee, enabled concepts and directions to be workshopped regularly with partners. Two primary stages are outlined below.

Stage 1 - Testing the directions of the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan*: Yarra River Community (Re)Assembly (February 2019)

Having developed preliminary directions for the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan*, Melbourne Water sought to test these directions with the Yarra River Community Assembly.

Melbourne Water sought input from 15 assembly members during a full-day workshop held on the 16 February 2019, one year on from the development of the vision.

Feedback was sought on performance objectives and the directions for future land use for each reach in the Yarra River corridor.

The objective of this workshop was to understand whether the directions of the draft plan aligned with the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision*. The workshop also provided an opportunity to thank the assembly for their work on the vision.

Bringing this group back together to test the directions was a significant milestone. Rarely does an agency invite a group back 12 months later to act as a reference group and test early directions, exemplifying best practice in Melbourne Water's consultation to inform the draft. The feedback gained, informed the development of the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan*, and enabled confidence that the community's voice informed the following stage.



Tools

The workshop began with a Smoking Ceremony conducted by a Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Elder and a series of presentations from key stakeholders responsible for overseeing the development of the *Yarra Strategic Plan*.

The workshop included two activities which aimed to explore two elements of the draft plan:

- performance objectives
- policy statements for the land use framework.

The first activity involved the assembly breaking into four small groups to discuss the performance objectives which cover four themes:

- environmental
- cultural heritage
- parklands
- landscapes.

Each group was able to comment on two themes. The discussion on the performance objectives was led by a subject matter expert from Melbourne Water.

The second activity involved assembly members dividing into two groups to discuss the draft policy statements for the land use framework. In this activity participants were divided according to which reach they identified with:

- upper and lower rural
- suburban and inner city.

Led by Melbourne Water facilitators, participants discussed whether or not the policy statements aligned to their vision for the river.

Summary of feedback on Part 1 - Performance Objectives

Overall the assembly believed the performance objectives needed to be more bold and transformative. The assembly also desired consistency across councils for any whole of river actions.

The following is a summary of the feedback on the performance objectives:

Environment

- preference for protecting the physical form and geomorphology of the river
- reflect biodiversity in outcomes
- stronger controls around stormwater
- need for regional water quality targets to be considered in the final plan
- the need for stronger regulations around septic tanks to protect water quality.

Cultural heritage

- continue to ensure that Traditional Owners are being considered
- protect both Aboriginal and post-settlement heritage
- include information on cultural heritage values in the education system
- provide funding for Traditional Owners to support education and awareness programs on culture and heritage.

Parklands

- encourage the acquisition of public land/golf courses as public open space
- ensure consistency of park design/presentation across councils
- encourage community custodianship in parklands and on trails to protect the health of these sites.

Landscapes

- emphasise planting of indigenous species that are climate resilient and mitigate bushfire risk
- make planning controls mandatory
- improve visitor experience and accessibility, but not at the cost of the river or environmental health outcomes.

Summary of feedback on policy statements for Part 2 - the Land Use Framework

Upper rural

- ensure consistency in planning across councils.
- manage inappropriate development.

Lower rural

- expand critical habitat links in the reach to protect biodiversity
- implement better controls around chemical use in agriculture and development in the Yarra River corridor.

Suburban

- ensure clarity around water sensitive urban design in parklands for water quality improvement and to provide places of refuge from increasing temperatures
- ensure tree and vegetation planting along streets and river edge is conducted to establish wildlife corridors
- manage the impacts of golf courses and other infrastructure on water quality.

Inner city

- ensure trails and paths are both pedestrian and cyclists friendly
- use the river (including trails and key sites) to facilitate education on Aboriginal heritage
- implement stronger stormwater controls.

Evaluation

An evaluation survey was distributed to assembly members to gather feedback on the clarity of the workshop's purpose, use of time, inclusion of all members of the assembly, contributions being heard and organisation of the workshop.

A total of 14 assembly members completed the survey for the workshop.

Overall participants had a positive impression of the workshop, saying it was 'well-facilitated' and that they 'felt listened to'. Participants were keen to see the next stages of the draft plan and to see action taken to protect the river.

All participants rated the use of time, the inclusion of all attendees, contributions being heard and organisation as 'good' or 'excellent', with 86% saying the clarity of the workshop was 'good' or 'excellent'.

How the results were used

The assembly's feedback on the performance objectives helped shape the objectives included in the draft plan. Their feedback also shaped several actions including:

- strengthening stormwater management controls
- expanding critical habitat links to protect biodiversity
- strengthening terrestrial and aquatic habitat corridors between the Yarra River and the catchment
- increasing education, awareness and regulation to reduce pesticides
- improving septic tank and wastewater management
- piloting interpretative and educational programs, including storytelling about the rich culture and heritage of the Yarra River, Birrarung
- enhancing the river's landscapes and views by improving public access, viewing locations and user experience
- monitoring changes in land use in order to prioritise the integration of new open space, access to the river and habitat corridors.

The assembly's feedback on the policy statements informed the land use framework policy statements which have been included in the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan*. This feedback was also considered in preparing recommendations for the significant places included in the draft plan.

More broadly the Community Assembly signalled that the directions of the draft plan aligned with their vision for the Yarra River corridor.

Stage 2 – Collaborative design and endorsement of the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan*

In March 2019, the first, early draft plan was provided to Yarra Collaboration Committee agencies for review. In the six months that followed, Melbourne Water led the collaborative development of the draft over six iterations. This was completed through a range of processes:

- Intensive Yarra Collaboration committee workshops to shape and inform concepts and content
- Yarra Collaboration Committee members gathered significant information on existing activities already in place to manage the Yarra River
- Yarra Collaboration Committee members coordinated several rounds of feedback from across their respective organisations
- Melbourne Water conducted two dedicated workshops with each of the eight local governments to test directions and inform the selection of Significant Places within the Land Use Framework.

To facilitate formal endorsement of the draft plan, Melbourne Water and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning undertook extensive engagement and consultation to support the endorsement process, including:

- Executive engagement with Yarra Collaboration Committee organisations to inform final updates.
- Formal written request for endorsement to all Yarra Collaboration Committee organisations
- Briefings to Ministers responsible for the responsible public entities.
- Provision of supporting material for agencies to seek approval from decision makers (Council Forums, Board etc.)
- Attendance at Council Meetings to brief Councillors and seek their endorsement.

Phase 4 - Feedback on the Draft Yarra Strategic Plan

The draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* was endorsed by the Minister for Water, the Hon Lisa Neville, on 23 January 2020 and released to the public for consultation for a two month period from 23 January to 29 March 2020.

During this time, a diverse range of feedback on the draft plan was sought and stakeholders and community were consulted in a variety of ways on what they would like to see incorporated into the final plan.

The participation in Phase 4 consultation was wide-reaching and can be summarised below:

- Broad metro media coverage including the Herald Sun, Channel 9 news and ABC Melbourne.
- Email blasts to over 3,000 recipients as well as localised mail-outs
- More than 300 conversations at 'pop up' events in each of the four main river reaches
- Postcards provided to 2,000 participants at the Maribyrnong Inflatable Regatta
- Dedicated engagement with Committees of Management along the river
- 58 participants at three day-long focus groups (a fourth, due to be held in Docklands for the inner city reach, had to be cancelled due to Covid-19 and was replaced with a detailed online survey)
- Interviews with members of the Community Assembly who helped steer the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision* which shaped the strategy's development
- At least 120,000 people reached on social media through targeted and paid posts seeking input
- Two digital ports to provide a pathway to submission through an interactive story map survey at ImaginetheYarra.com and the Engage Victoria website.
- All face to face activities were conducted in partnership with Uncle Dave Wandin, Wurundjeri Woi wurrung elder.
- Members of the Birrarung Council , notably Warwick Leeson and Alexandra Lee, also attended pop up events and focus groups.

Tools

Tool	Description	Details
Engage Victoria	Key interested and impacted organisations, stakeholders, community groups and members and are invited to read the plan in full and	138 submissions were received in total.

Tool	Description	Details
	<p>provide a written submission via https://engage.vic.gov.au/help-us-shape-final-10-year-strategic-plan-yarra-river</p> <p>Written submissions could be made via an online survey and/or developing a submission offline and uploading it to the page.</p> <p>Detailed Q&As were available on this site.</p>	<p>36 of these were received directly to Melbourne Water's <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i> inbox.</p>
Interactive story map and survey	<p>Community members were invited to explore the highlights of the plan through an interactive online story map tool and provide feedback via a short 5-10 minute survey at imaginetheyarra.com.au</p>	<p>A total of 74 people completed the online survey.</p>
Focus groups	<p>Three day-long focus groups were held, one each in the Upper Rural, Suburban and Lower Rural reaches of the river.</p> <p>The focus groups were invite only and targeted stakeholder /community groups in each reach as well as community members chosen at random using an external engagement consultancy.</p> <p>Focus group participants were asked to consider the draft plan in detail and provide feedback on the direction, objectives and proposed actions.</p> <p>The focus groups also provided a key opportunity for stakeholders and the community to help strengthen key aspects of the Plan including recommendations around stormwater, septic tanks, water quality, parklands, recreation and improved planning to strengthen the vegetation corridor, protect views and increase access to the river. Participants were also given the chance to give feedback on the significant places and new areas for protection identified within the plan.</p>	<p>Upper rural focus group: Warburton, 16 February 2020 – 16 participants.</p> <p>Suburban focus group: Warrandyte, 23 February 2020 – 27 participants.</p> <p>Lower rural focus group: Yarra Glen, 29 February 2020 – 15 participants</p> <p>A fourth focus group, due to be held in Docklands for the inner city reach, had to be cancelled due to Covid-19 and was replaced with a detailed online survey.</p>

Tool	Description	Details
Pop-ups	Four community pop-up events were held along the river aimed to raise awareness of the draft plan, direct community members to complete the online story map survey and to give their feedback on the spot.	<p>Lower rural: Yarra Glen Racecourse market, 2 February 2020 – 130 conversations, 190 postcards handed out.</p> <p>Suburban: Heide Market, 8 February 2020 - 85 conversations, 140 postcards handed out.</p> <p>Upper Rural: Warburton Up and Running event, 23 Feb 2020 - 55 conversations, 70 postcards handed out.</p> <p>Inner City: Arts Centre Melbourne Sunday Market, 1 Mar 2020 - 35 conversations, 50 postcards handed out.</p>
Community Assembly interviews	The 24 members of the Community Assembly were invited to take part in one-on-one phone interviews to ask their individual feedback on whether the draft plan delivers the foundations of the <i>Yarra River 50-year Community Vision</i> .	9 Community Assembly members completed a phone interview questionnaire.
Key stakeholder engagement	Key stakeholders particularly member agencies of the Yarra Collaboration Committee were consulted and updated regularly through the consultation period with most members making written submissions through Engage Victoria.	
Yarra River – Committees of Management engagement	There are a number of Committees of Management throughout the Yarra River corridor that play a vital role in its management. The team reached out to these committees to discuss how the plan related to their management area.	All relevant Committees of Management for Yarra River land were sent a copy of the plan and followed up with one-on-one briefings, in person or over the phone.

Promotion

Communication of public consultation opportunities and awareness raising of the draft plan to the broader community was achieved via a detailed communications plan including mainstream media channels, an extensive social media campaign and various digital and traditional collateral detailed below.

DATE	CHANNEL	OUTCOME
WEB		
23 Jan 2020	Engage Victoria website Launch of the public consultation and opportunity to make a written submission	Web stats as of 29 Mar 2020 Unique visits to the website – 2462 Survey – 138 written submissions received. Document (Executive Summary) views – 755 Approx. 27.47% referred from Imagine the Yarra website traffic.
30 Jan 2020	Imagine the Yarra website Updated on 30 Jan 2020 with content and story map survey seeking feedback on the draft plan.	Web stats as of 29 Mar 2020 3980 unique visits 74 contributions (surveys completed) Document (Draft Plan overview) views – 560. 26.8% of visitors on site for longer than 1 minute. 21.4% of visitors completed more than 2 actions on the site.
EMAIL		
29 Jan 2020	Launch emails to Tier 1 stakeholders May have had direct engagement in shaping and/or responsible for implementing the plan.	Directing recipients to Engage Victoria website for detailed submission. 1. 15 recipients – 6 opened, 2 clicked through. 2. 13 recipients – 4 opened, 3 clicked through.
29 Jan 2020	Launch email to Tier 2 stakeholders - Knowledgeable - Have influenced draft <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i> - Care about the Yarra's future - On <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i> mailing list	Directing recipients to Imagine the Yarra/Engage Victoria websites. 3296 recipients - 926 opened, 171 clicked through.

DATE	CHANNEL	OUTCOME
14 Feb 2020	Follow up email to Tier 2 stakeholders Highlighting public consultation opportunities.	Directing recipients to Imagine the Yarra/Engage Victoria websites. 3210 recipients – 777 opened, 119 clicked through.
3 March 2020	Follow up email to Tier 2 stakeholders Announcing \$200 prize draw	Directing recipients to Imagine the Yarra/Engage Victoria websites. 3173 recipients – 643 opened, 104 clicked through.
27 March 2020	Follow up email to Tier 2 stakeholders Public consultation closing	Directing recipients to Imagine the Yarra/Engage Victoria websites. 3158 recipients – 682 opened, 83 clicked through.
MEDIA/SOCIAL MEDIA		
30 Jan 2020	Melbourne Water Media Release	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front page Herald Sun article • Channel 9 news 30 Jan 2020 • Docklands/CBD news online • Upper Yarra Mail newspaper • Discussed on ABC Melbourne breakfast.
10 Feb 2020	Social Media launch post with Imagine the Yarra animation Facebook (sponsored), Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn	1,649 landing page views (Imagine the Yarra) Reached 126,209 people Ads were seen a total of 283,843 times across Facebook and Instagram.
10 Feb 2020	Social Media launch post with Imagine the Yarra animation Facebook (sponsored), Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn	Ads related to Water quality and Protect cultural heritage performance objectives were the best performing for driving traffic to the website.
19 Feb 2020	Additional Facebook/Instagram sponsored post (similar to previous but including \$200 prize draw incentive)	All posts cross-posted across other social media channels but only sponsored on Facebook/Instagram. Men more likely to click through to the website (64%) and 60% of the people reached were men.
3 March 2020	4 additional Facebook/Instagram sponsored posts related to the draft plan Performance Objectives.	83 messages received about the draft plan via social media. Each message was assessed and comments/enquiries were addressed
23 March 2020	Updated animation video post with 'consultation closing' and removed 2 lowest performing	

DATE	CHANNEL	OUTCOME
	Performance Objective posts to consolidate Facebook/Instagram sponsorship spend.	while also encouraging people to click through and provide feedback via the website.
OTHER PROMOTION		
23 January to late February 2020	<p>Focus Groups An external agency was engaged to recruit participants for the focus groups - up to 40 people could attend each session, half selected from people previously involved (e.g. <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i> mailing list) and half selected through a mail out to the Vox Pop Lab's email database. Through these channels, over 7,000 people received an invitation to register for a workshop nearest to them. Those that registered were asked a series of questions that enabled a final selection of workshop participants to match the broad demographics of the communities along the river.</p> <p>In addition to this external recruitment, the Yarra Strategic Plan team directly invited relevant local and State Government representatives, community and Friends groups to each focus group.</p> <p>To incentivise participation, workshop attendees will receive an honorarium of \$100 in recognition of their time and contribution.</p>	<p>Directly inviting recipients to rsvp for the workshop that is in their reach.</p> <p>Upper rural focus group: Warburton, 16 February 2020 – 16 participants attended.</p> <p>Suburban focus group: Warrandyte, 23 February 2020 – 27 participants attended.</p> <p>Lower rural focus group: Yarra Glen, 29 February 2020 – 15 participants attended.</p> <p>50 participants were registered to attend a fourth Inner City focus group, due to be held in Docklands, however this had to be cancelled due to Covid-19 and this was replaced with a detailed online survey.</p>

Summary of feedback on Part 1 - Performance Objectives

Feedback from Engage Victoria written submissions

Key themes emerging from the written submissions relating to Part 1 of the draft plan included:

- **Detail of performance objectives, implementation plan and a monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement framework.** The Yarra Collaboration Committee intends to develop rolling three year plans with measurable objectives and actions, to deliver on the performance objectives outlined in the ten year plan. Targets will be developed to accompany the implementation plan which will be quantitative and measurable. A one year interim implementation plan will be released with the final strategy.
- **Lack of inclusion of a Decision Making Framework.** When the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* was released for consultation the Decision Making Framework for the *Yarra Strategic Plan* was still in development with the responsible public entities responsible for employing it. The framework is currently being finalised to align projects and programs on Yarra River Land directly to the principles of The Act and the performance objectives of the *Yarra Strategic Plan*. The Birrarung Council and other key external stakeholders will be consulted on the final framework.
- **The balance between river access and conservation.** The Act requires the *Yarra Strategic Plan*'s Land Use Framework to identify access networks that link people to the Yarra River landscape and its parklands and as part of the regional trails network. Submission feedback includes concerns that this might reduce the ecological and wilderness qualities of the Yarra corridor. Balance of conservation and access along the Yarra River corridor will be managed through a number of mechanisms: i) the recreation plan for the final will provide a high level overview of fit for purpose access and activity hubs versus conservation area, ii) those that relate specifically to a Significant places in the framework will have opportunity to reflect balance at a precinct scale where relevant, and iii) a new action will be integrated into Part 1 to develop a more detailed river accessibility plan for whole of river, with consideration to local population density, landscape and topography characteristics and biodiversity values.
- **A strengthened Parkland section.** The Birrarung council has proposed to the Yarra Collaboration Committee a series of changes to the *Yarra Strategic Plan* to give the Greater Yarra Urban Parklands more prominence. The council has recommended incorporating a dedicated Parklands section, emphasising why the Parklands matter, including the environmental and cultural connection provided. This section would convey that the significance of the Parklands is about more than just gazetted land, but a combined landscape of all land parcels that form the river corridor landscape. The Yarra Collaboration Committee met with the Birrarung council to discuss this and is now developing this section, with direction from Yarra Collaboration Committee member Parks Victoria.

- **Post-colonial heritage narrative.** Finally, a strong theme which has emerged is the need to broaden the cultural diversity narrative and actions in the plan to recognise post-settlement and maritime heritage. This will be addressed in the final plan and the Melbourne Maritime Heritage Network will be engaged in developing this work.

In addition to the written submissions, feedback was collated from all of the other consultation tools including the Imagine the Yarra survey, community focus groups, community pop ups and Community Assembly interviews.

The feedback received was extensive, in particular for Performance Objective One and Three. A high level summary is as follows:

Performance Objective One - A healthy river and lands

The draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* has a strong emphasis on the river and how humans should value, feel connected and have access to it for a variety of reasons. However there is a need for a far stronger emphasis throughout the document on preserving and enhancing the environment values of the Yarra River.

Climate change

- The final plan must include/address climate change
- Include narrative about expected climate change impacts in the corridor
- Include adaptation actions/measures
- The performance objectives and actions need to clearly and adequately address the impact of climate change and urbanisation.
- Responses to climate change proposed include continuous vegetated corridor along the Yarra and the need for protection from significant human access, or biodiversity sinks.

Habitat and corridors

- Increase biodiversity of the river within Melbourne CBD as a way of improving human health and wellbeing and providing increased and improved habitat for native flora and fauna.
- Improve environmental health of river in the lower rural reach. Revegetation and rehabilitation works required, particularly around the billabongs.
- Ensure species choice for re-vegetation are climate-resilient
- Spatial extent for habitat corridors should extend to Warburton
- Further investigation into areas which block habitat corridors.
- Further clarification regarding link Yellingbo Conservation area (YCA) needs to be addressed in the final plan.

Stormwater and integrated water management

- Include wider catchment threats and opportunities (litter, pollution, pests, development, sewerage).
- Stormwater is an important priority in the plan and needs to be emphasised in the narrative.
- Describe inflows to the river and point sources of pollution.
- Address integrated water management and include broader scale catchment activities impact on the river.
- Enhance citizen science opportunities
- Consider incentives for environmentally sensitive design to improve stormwater management
- Strengthen building codes to ensure development compliance
- Improve stormwater capture and re-use infrastructure
- Improve litter control through the use of container deposit schemes and litter traps in tributaries, in addition to main Yarra River.
- Include wastewater in Integrated Water Management narrative/actions

Billabongs and wetlands

- Widen scope of billabong health beyond just inundation
- Ensure billabongs of the Middle Yarra Valley are restored, namely Burke Road, Bolin Bolin, Banyule and Willsmere Billabongs.

Septic tanks

- Ensure maintenance of septic tanks through a documented control system.
- Include a structured education program around the operation and maintenance of onsite treatment systems.
- Acknowledge that it is difficult to identify point sources of pollution and areas in the catchment where septic tanks are impacting on water quality. More research needs to be done around this
- Advocate that the Government address the issue of old septic systems through the new environment protection legislation. Old systems issued with perpetual permit at time of construction are difficult for authorities to regulate.
- Yarra Valley Water plays a crucial role in improving septic tank and wastewater management.
- Cumulative effect of septic tanks should be referenced in the plan.

Native fish

- Include actions to reinstate suitable instream habitat for fish and other aquatic fauna throughout the catchment .
- Further mention of native fish required in the final plan. Incorporate protection of native fish and habitat including Macquarie perch and Australian grayling.

- Protection of native fish needs to be recognised in the context of recreational fishing.

Pest plant and animals

- Reference cat control and deer in the plan
- Recognise collaborative action required to address pest plants and animals
- Further inclusion of other organisations such as CSIRO and Land Care to assist with species control
- Emphasise integrated management and role of private landowners.
- Ensure weed control across the Yarra system is co-ordinated across state and local government bodies.

Performance Objective Two - A culturally diverse river corridor

- Further acknowledgement of Melbourne's maritime history. Polly Woodside and Missions to Seafarers heritage sites need more recognition as gateways to a Melbourne Maritime Precinct.
- Include action to support councils to undertake updated heritage (European and Aboriginal) studies using Birrarung Heritage scoping study thematic framework.
- Important sites for inclusion identified in feedback. Include action for an overarching heritage (European and Aboriginal) study for the river corridor based on the Birrarung Heritage scoping study thematic framework.
- Clarification needed about scope of this performance objective.

Performance Objective Three - Quality parklands for a growing population

General

- Better recognition of managing parklands in partnership with Traditional Owners.
- Stronger narrative needed about the significant contribution that the Yarra River and its parklands continue to make to the health and wellbeing of people and communities.
- Opportunity to establish a vision for the Greater Yarra Urban Parklands/Great Birrarung Parklands.

Managing the parklands together

- The final *Yarra Strategic Plan* should serve not just as an important reference, but also as an inspiration to local governments, community groups, water authorities, planning agencies and others involved in its implementation, as well as to anyone interested in the future of Melbourne's waterways and parklands.

- Ensure a coordinated response to landscaping across the Greater Yarra Urban Parklands/Great Birrarung Parklands to be identified and applied in every reach.
- More involvement of community and friends groups to manage and care for parklands
- Ensure Traditional Owner management is at the forefront of parkland management

Access and balancing access with conservation

- Where there is conflict between providing greater public access to the river or ensuring the health of the river and its wildlife, that priority be given to the health of the river.
- Access to the river needs to be well planned and controlled to manage any conflict between habitat disturbance/degradation and social uses. Planning tools to be incorporated into the *Yarra Strategic Plan* to clearly define what activities are appropriate and where.
- Further actions should be introduced, to ensure that the Yarra River environs are made more accessible. This may include new connections to access the Yarra River (and Corridor), above and beyond those identified in existing recreational trail networks and strategies.
- Development of new strategic work to identify new recreational and leisure pursuits aligned to new, improved or expanded connections to provide greater accessibility to open space areas for the community to enjoy.
- Trails need to be carefully considered, both new trails and the expansion of existing trails as they may lead to a deterioration of the natural beauty of the river.
- Support for additional launching sites for canoes. Safety needs to be considered in developing access points.
- Identify and then resolve potential conflicts between various recreational activities such as walking, cycling, sport and between human activities and wildlife and vegetation.
- Encourage a commitment to maintaining and increasing accessibility of the river corridor to facilitate ongoing cultural practices, as well as acknowledging the importance of the environmental health of the river to safely maintain practices such as swimming and fishing.
- Ensure there is a balance of land uses based on capability to withstand use pressure and/or to ensure a solid conservation ethic rather than a human centric utilisation.
- Ensure that river access planning takes into account a range of topographical, geological and ecological issues, especially in areas of steep sloping banks such as those around Eltham Lower Park where tourist attractions risk overrunning areas prone to erosion.

Extending the parkland network

- Extend the parkland network to cater for a growing population
- Wildlife corridors between the Yarra and other habitat nodes within the Yarra catchment should be added to the parkland network.
- Private land should be acquired, as opportunities arise, to be converted into publicly owned parkland and come under the provisions of the *Yarra River Act* and the *Yarra Strategic Plan*.
- Enhance parklands along the south bank of the river in the inner-city reach.
- Further inclusion of urban agriculture like market gardens and community gardens.
- Many recommendations relating to new parklands and extending the parkland network

Infrastructure and services

- Ensure park infrastructure and services are contemporary, inclusive and provide multiple benefits to make the river parklands multifunctional landscapes. Green infrastructure should be the default approach for service provision within the parklands.
- Upgrade ongoing maintenance of visitor infrastructure in crucial parkland areas.
- Access to the river and the parklands should adhere to universal design principles to the highest extent possible, so that all Victorians can obtain the health and other benefits from visiting the river. Universal design encompasses the requirements of older people, families with young children in strollers, people with other disabilities, children, and people from culturally diverse backgrounds.
- Accessible canoe launches, fishing platforms, walking trails, viewing and picnic areas, toilets and Changing Places facilities, accompanied by accessible signage are some examples of facilities that should be provided
- Further experiential/wellbeing tourism opportunities e.g. river walks and eco-tours.
- Consider dual naming of locations – English/First Nations

Performance Objective Four - Protecting the natural beauty of the Yarra River corridor

- Should not just refer to the aesthetics of the Yarra River but also include protecting the environmental values and qualities of the Yarra River.
- Ensure habitat protection and enhancement are supported to increase the biodiversity of the river corridor including opportunities for improved habitat links and connections.
- Consolidate land holdings along the Yarra River to strengthen habitat corridors.
- Viewpoints and landscapes need to be identified, celebrated and protected.

- Recognise the importance of less accessible parts of the Yarra River corridor that are havens for wildlife and meet the needs of more intrepid users.
- Ensure monitoring of changes in land use is achievable and meaningful.
- Ensure that future land use changes on both private and public land will protect and enhance the rivers environment and natural beauty.
- Enhance the rivers landscape and views by improving public access, viewing locations and user experiences. whilst retaining areas for their intrinsic, conservation and ecological values.

Summary of feedback on Part 2 - the Land Use Framework

The *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gjin Birrarung murrn)* Act 2017 requires a panel process be undertaken so that submissions relating to Part 2 – Land Use Framework can be independently considered.

Key themes emerging from the written submissions relating to the Land Use Framework included:

- **The Regional scale of the Land Use Framework.** A number of submissions have requested granular assessments and designations at a smaller scale, such as land use capability assessments to define activity nodes and corridors for biodiversity. The framework was designed to provide a regional framework for land use planning and decision making. It achieves this with direction at a whole-of-river scale and within each of the four reaches. Precinct scale land use assessment and direction will be completed through precinct plans such as the Bulleen Land Use Framework. Significant places within the framework provide localised opportunities and are considered to be regionally significant along the 242km corridor. More detailed assessments are expected to be undertaken over time through precinct plans as required.
- **The balance between river access and conservation.** The Act requires the *Yarra Strategic Plan*'s Land Use Framework to identify access networks that link people to the Yarra River landscape and its parklands and as part of the regional trails network. Submission feedback included concerns that this might reduce the ecological and wilderness qualities of the Yarra corridor. Submissions relating to this include, for example, a call for the final plan to contain a principle that there should be no new development that requires new access (a matter addressed in design guidelines contained in the Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO) titled 'Yarra River (Birrarung) Corridor' (GC48). Access issues relating to Significant Places in the framework will have opportunity to reflect balance at a precinct scale where relevant.
- **Interim planning controls along the whole of the Yarra.** A significant number of submissions support the interim planning controls and call for them to be expanded to ensure private development proposals don't impact on the health and aesthetics of the Yarra Corridor. The

interim planning controls (GC48) came into effect in February 2017. GC48 brings a consistent approach introducing mandatory height, setback and overshadowing controls along with consistent vegetation protection. The draft plan recommends that these controls be made permanent and extended upstream to the Yarra Ranges following the endorsement of the final plan.

- **Implications for existing buildings in the Yarra River Corridor.** Given the draft plan, once finalised, would become policy at clause 12.03-1R of the Victoria Planning Provisions, there is concern as to the impacts this might have in regard to existing dwellings and buildings located within the Yarra River corridor, including the re-construction of existing dwellings. While specifics related to the future planning scheme amendment is out of scope for the panel process, correspondence provided by DELWP on the staged implementation approach for the land use framework has been referred.
- **How the Land Use Framework will implement the directions given for each reach in the framework.** Many submitters sought further detail on the implementation of the framework. Once the *Yarra Strategic Plan* is finalised, Clause 12.03-1R 'Yarra River Protection' of the Planning Policy Framework will be updated, and the final *Yarra Strategic Plan* will be referenced or incorporated in planning schemes. The *Yarra Strategic Plan* will be: 1) used in the planning system to provide regional planning policy and strategic direction for all land within the *Yarra Strategic Plan* area; and 2) require that changes to a planning scheme (amendments) or a proposed development (permits) must consider the *Yarra Strategic Plan* and be consistent with its strategic objectives. This guidance will be updated for the final *Yarra Strategic Plan* to ensure it reflects the anticipated process for implementation. The accompanying implementation plan to the final plan will provide detail on this process.

Further detailed analysis of feedback from the focus groups and Community Assembly interviews that relate to Part 2 of the draft plan is still underway.

Feedback from each engagement tool

Phase 4 consultation captured feedback in multiple ways; face to face feedback at pop ups and focus groups, detailed written submissions and through the use of surveys where respondents were asked to answer a series of questions to obtain their input. The intent of the surveys was to capture feedback from a larger cohort, but also to enable participation where face to face engagement was not possible.

It is important to note that a very detailed systematic analysis of all feedback received, particularly written submissions, took place. Analysis was undertaken and cross-checked by multiple Yarra Strategic Plan team members and where appropriate a coding framework was applied to reduce any bias in summaries made.

In addition to the above themes that have been summarised for each part of the plan, the following additional high level findings were found for each engagement tool utilised in Phase 4 consultation.

Engage Victoria written submissions

The key themes emerging from written submissions have largely been summarised above however this section provides a bit more detail specific to this consultation tool.

To make a written submission on the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan*, submitters could either complete a survey and/or upload their own submission.

Of the 138 submissions, there were between 33 and 48 that completed the survey (depending on the questions answered).

- Of the 48 respondents who answered the question, most believed that the Performance Objectives adequately reflect the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision* to a degree (27% agreed and 52% agreed somewhat). 21% didn't or were unsure and commented that they felt that the performance objectives were too high level and need to have targets that are measurable.
- However of the 44 respondents that answered the question, only 59% agreed or somewhat agreed that the actions identified to deliver the 10-Year Performance Objectives were achievable, realistic and measurable. There was 18% that didn't and 16% that were unsure.
- Most of the 46 respondents felt that 'Performance Objective One – a healthy river and lands' (54%) presented the greatest opportunity for the plan, and there was even spread of opinion across the three other performance objectives in terms of the opportunity they presented.
- 64% of the 42 respondents either agreed or somewhat agreed that the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* put appropriate actions in place to ensure delivery on the aspirations of Traditional Owners. 26% were unsure and their reasoning was mostly around the fact that they didn't feel comfortable commenting on behalf of Traditional Owners.
- 29% of the 42 respondents believed that the Land Use directions in the Land Use Framework will support the *Yarra River 50-year Yarra River Community Vision* however 48% somewhat believed this would happen. 17% were unsure. This indicates some lack of understanding of this section of the plan. There was also some concern over the aspirational tone of the plan and the risk that change may be hard to achieve.
- Similarly 35% of 40 respondents agreed with the land use directions for the Yarra River however 48% only somewhat agreed. 15% were unsure. 83% of 40 respondents, agreed to some degree with the land use directions for the Yarra River but again 15% were unsure.
- In relation to the Significant places detailed in Part 2 of the plan, survey respondents overall agreed or agreed somewhat that the 13 significant places identified within the plan were the most regionally significant. There was a small number of respondents who didn't agree or were unsure. Some of the comments made were that the sites were not clearly laid out in the plan and that further sites should have been identified given the 240km length of the river.

One of the general themes that came through from submissions for the plan overall was **the specific role of the Yarra Strategic Plan among other relevant state and catchment level strategies**. The *Yarra Strategic Plan* provides an overarching mechanism to consolidate many detailed instruments, including *Biodiversity 2037*, *Improving our Waterways (The Victorian Waterway Management Strategy)*, and Melbourne's *Regional Healthy Waterway Strategy* incorporating the *Co-Designed Catchment Program for the Yarra Catchment 2018*. These instruments deliver measurable actions as outlined in the environmental, social, recreational, cultural and management principles of The Act. The *Regional Healthy Waterways Strategy*, for example, incorporates baseline measurements and targets for 41 values across 25 sub-catchments of the Yarra, incorporating 20 wetlands and one estuary.

A lack of clarity has led to confusion from submitters requesting that the *Yarra Strategic Plan* detail such actions and targets, comprehensively set in other strategies. Submissions have requested more detail of Yarra river actions to improve biodiversity, tackle stormwater challenges through integrated water management, address septic tank issues and climate change adaptation. It has been acknowledged that the final plan will be strengthened with respect to these themes, linking existing mechanisms and providing clarity on the role of the *Yarra Strategic Plan*.

Imagine the Yarra story map survey

Of the 74 respondents to the survey, there was strong overarching support for the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* with 77% of respondents being satisfied or very satisfied with the whole of river actions in the plan. 19% of respondents were somewhat dissatisfied or neutral and there were no respondent that were very dissatisfied. Comments from those that were dissatisfied included concerns about the environmental impact of increased human centric activities along the river including dredging as well as the need to take into account simple visual enjoyment of the river.

Most respondents also felt that 'Performance Objective One – a healthy river and lands' presented the greatest opportunity for the plan, and that 'Performance Objective Four – protecting the natural beauty of the Yarra River corridor' presented the least.

A high level summary of feedback that came from the 74 surveys submitted on the Imagine the Yarra website included:

- More involvement from Traditional Owner and other Aboriginal communities in the ongoing management of the *Yarra Strategic Plan*
- River health and water quality a high priority
- Tributaries/catchment links of the Yarra River need to be considered
- More focus needed on runoff from both urban and rural land
- The final plan needs measurable targets
- Balance between conservation and access.

Examples of comments and therefore sentiment that came through from respondents included:

- 'The report is diverse and inclusive in its objectives. They are very broad but point in the right direction'

- *'The measures of success have been clearly articulated, are measurable and achievable. Inclusion and participation are at the forefront, and this gives myself and fellow Australians a belonging and stake for success.'*
- *'Very well thought through plan, including both physical and cultural dimensions, and great job done in communicating it to the public.'*
- *'Whilst the plan is pushing new thinking and governance for the river, many objectives may be still open for interpretation and are vulnerable to be weakened'*
- *'I want to see wetlands and billabongs restored, and to see the river run with cleaner water'*
- *'I liked the performance objectives as these will enhance the quality of water, overall sustainability, improve recreational value, attract more residents and community wellbeing.'*
- *'No issue with the objectives. It will just be an issue of whether sufficient resources are provided by government to ensure its achievement'*
- *'There needs to be balance between access for humans and access for all other fauna. Open spaces makes me nervous, because it links to land clearing, we need native flora that is endemic to be expanded not contracted.'*
- *'Open easy to access banks that still support the ecosystem but these spaces can be used for cultural gathering, and learning about the environment'*
- *'We need to increase coverage of the plan to all the tributaries of the Yarra'*
- *'There needs to be more focus on reducing and preventing pollution and dealing with pests like carp.'*
- *'I think that there should be spaces established where indigenous peoples and other groups can hold gatherings, host picnics, have parties etc. so they can maintain cultural links with the river landscape. This should include more points for safe swimming.'*
- *'The Land Use Framework describes improvements, but there is no management structure specified to achieve these - the Coordination Committee is only interim. A single agency must drive the plan. No mention of Friends groups and their involvement.'*

Focus Groups

Three focus groups in the Upper Rural, Lower Rural and Suburban reaches of the Yarra river took place. These were externally facilitated and results collated by Max Hardy of Max Hardy Consulting. The last of the focus groups which for the Inner City reach was cancelled due to the safety risk posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and instead Max coordinated a survey to be sent to those that were registered to attend this focus group. Similar content was included in the survey that was presented at the focus groups to allow for feedback to be aligned.

Most of the focus group activities concentrated on getting feedback on any gaps in the plan related to their reach.

A high level summary of feedback that specifically came from the 57 participants that attended the three focus groups and the 30 respondents to the inner city survey includes:

- Overall large support for Performance Objective 1 including actions. In most cases received the highest number of votes for actions as well as being top priority objective.

- Private land versus public land – different needs and approaches required
- More dialogue/actions around biodiversity, climate change and population growth required.
- Treatment of stormwater through the use of litter control, billabong/wetlands, riparian re-vegetation, pollution regulation, agricultural runoff.
- North East Link impacts
- Balance between conservation and access
- Linking up both walking and cycling trails
- Traditional Owner involvement in management including employment and planning
- Celebrating Traditional Owner heritage
- Community involvement and education
- Widespread opposition to dredging
- Safe swimming areas
- Habitat connectivity – actions in the plan are weak
- Governance – questioning targets/measurement/monitoring/funding
- Strengthening planning regulations along the riparian zone
- Access for all abilities
- Pest plants and animals
- Dialogue and actions around climate change.

Examples of comments and therefore sentiment that came through from participants included:

- *'The Yarra is an important natural feature in Melbourne, and for a long time it wasn't treated as such. It is healthy for the community to be able to interact with the river for recreation and reflection, and for the river to become even more important in Melbourne's identity.'*
- *'Maximising stormwater capture and being able to reuse ensures sustainable practices is important for the future of our water management.'*
- *'Assist in the establishment of Cultural custodianship measures and mechanisms by Traditional owners which include traditional management practices'*
- *'A great deal of restraint should be used when increasing parklands along the Yarra. Mitigation will be needed to prevent "a growing population" from damaging what is still there.'*
- *'Opening up more open space should be balanced with maintaining traditional and existing habitat.'*
- *'We all have to play a part to keep the river healthy.'*
- *'A balance between sustainable river flows to ensure ecological maintenance and improvement'*
- *'The more parklands/ bush habitat we have lining the river the better.'*
- *'Growing populations will demand more parklands'*

- *'The Yarra open spaces are the left over scraps. Space is at a premium so any and every creative opportunity to liberate the river from the built infrastructure by adding to the public land bank or assisting private land development to creatively arrange built structures to give park users an expanded viewshed are to be encouraged.'*
- *'As housing density increases, people will need to look for parks and gardens and places to relax and unwind so it is very important that more parks are created to the growing population.'*
- *'Equity of access and use is critical to ensure the protection and enhancement messages are more widely understood and supported'*
- *'As they are the Traditional Owners, they have a right to continue with cultural land and water management.'*

Pop Ups

Pop up events were held in each reach of the Yarra River. The focus of these was to have as many conversations with community members to raise awareness and inform them of the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* and to encourage interested individuals to read the plan and associated documents and submit their feedback via the Imagine the Yarra story map survey.

In addition to the Yarra Strategic Plan team members and subject matter experts from across Melbourne Water that attended each pop up, Uncle Dave, an elder from the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation also attended and provided valuable insight and commentary about the role of Traditional Owners in managing the river.

At each pop up there was some feedback recorded by Melbourne Water staff where relevant. Community were also asked to identify the actions they preferred under each Performance Objective. This was done using large posters at each pop up event. There was an even spread of interest and preference for all the actions but a slight leaning towards the actions in Performance Objective One.

Comments that came from this engagement centred around water quality, recreation and connectivity/access as well as community's emotional connection to the river. Some comments were also made on economic and tourism opportunities along the corridor.

Community Assembly interviews

Community Assembly members were invited to take part in all aspects of Phase 4 consultation. Several of them attended one or more focus groups and some made written submissions. However it was decided that they should also be invited to take part in a one-on-one interview to get their individual feedback on whether the draft plan delivers the foundations of the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision*.

Overall 7 of the 9 Community Assembly respondents agreed that the draft plan delivered on the vision. Comments made included:

- *'The objectives broadly cover what the community expects; clean river water, acknowledgement of the first people, making the river accessible to the community and protecting this precious asset into the future.'*

- *'The passing of the 'Act', the development of the 50-year Community Vision, and now the Yarra Strategic Plan are a fantastic initiative to better protect and enhance the Yarra'*
- *'Looking at the Yarra as an entire entity clarifies appreciation of its huge value to Melbourne and its residents.'*
- *'The Yarra Strategic Plan is essential to reverse the mistakes of the past and to overcome the increasing degradation pressures of population growth and climate change.'*

Community Assembly were however keen to understand how the first 10 years of strategic actions fit on the 50-year timeline of the vision. One respondent said *'10 years is a very short timeframe in the life of river – so we need to have more of an idea of what will happen in the remaining 50 years. These need to be 10 year foundational actions. Then what will happen next'*.

Another respondent talked about connection to the Yarra river being two pronged; both spiritual and physical - *'one thing that I think is missing is the river being connected – connecting all the parkland because it so fragmented in terms of accessibility to walk the river'*.

Evaluation

An online evaluation survey, based on Melbourne Water's Next Gen framework, was distributed to focus group participants for the Upper Rural, Lower Rural and Suburban reaches to gather feedback on overall engagement satisfaction to date, trust and confidence in Melbourne Water, communication about the project and how their contribution will be heard.

A total of 18 participants completed the survey.

Overall participants were very satisfied with Melbourne Water's engagement on the *Yarra Strategic Plan* to date (overall score of 4.5 out of 5) and communication about the project (4.2 out of 5). There was also a high level of trust and confidence in Melbourne Water as an organisation (4 out of 5). Participants commented that they *'really appreciated the opportunity to provide input'*, that *'the focus group was useful'* and *'attending the forum has provided a fuller grasp of the issues'*. Participants did comment though that there could have been more diversity in the group attending and that a more targeted informed audience could have been valuable.

Overall most participants felt that they had been provided with sufficient opportunities to provide feedback and that Melbourne Water listens to their feedback and updates them on how their feedback influenced the project.

How the results were used

Part 1

The written submission process via the Engage Victoria website resulted in 138 submissions being made, including a cluster of mirror submissions from members and supporters of the Yarra Riverkeeper.

From the feedback received, a thorough review of each performance objective has been made and the actions that sit under these will be amended and revised to make them more timely and specific. Additional narrative will also be incorporated into the plan to accommodate the comments that have come through the feedback.

Part 2

Of the 138 submissions made, 81 referred to the Land Use Framework. As directed under The Act (24, 3), all submissions were considered and those that were related to Part 2 - the Land Use Framework were then referred to the Ministerial Panel for the *Yarra Strategic Plan* managed by Planning Panels Victoria.

Prior to referral to the panel, submissions made on Part 2 – Land Use Framework were thoroughly reviewed and where agreed, incorporated into the updated version of the plan. Submissions which were not fully adopted will be further considered by the panel.

The panel is appointed by the Minister for Water and administered by Planning Panels Victoria. Its operation will be similar to a planning panel under the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and like a planning panel, the panel process for the *Yarra Strategic Plan* will be independent.

While the panel will not be requested to consider specific amendments to any planning scheme in the Yarra Strategic Plan area, its recommendations will inform the final *Yarra Strategic Plan* and the preparation of subsequent planning scheme amendments.

The panel will hold public hearings, providing an opportunity for submitters, should they wish, to present their submissions and call any expert evidence. Following completion of the public hearings, the panel will prepare and submit a report and any recommendations it thinks fit to the Minister for Water.

Once the Panel hearing has concluded, the Panel will provide its advice and recommendations within six weeks to the Minister for Water, the Minister for Planning and Melbourne Water. Melbourne Water, as lead agency will then work with the Yarra Collaboration Committee to consider the recommendations based on the panels advice and recommendations.

Consistent with the *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murron) Act 2017*, the final decision on the content of the Land Use Framework will be made by the Minister for Water.

Overall evaluation

Meaningful and considered consultation and engagement with the community, stakeholders and partners has been fundamental to the development of the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision* and the *Yarra Strategic Plan*. Contribution to the plan was far reaching using a large variety of tools to ensure the views of a wide cross-section of community and stakeholders views were heard. See the diagram below for a snapshot of the *Yarra Strategic Plan* engagement and consultation program participation:



As outlined in the Introduction, the *Yarra Strategic Plan* consultation and engagement approach was guided by the IAP2 core values that should be at the heart of any public participation program.

This is how the consultation and engagement approach for the *Yarra Strategic Plan* has met these core values:

1. Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.

Deep, wide and complex public participation with thousands of stakeholders, customers and community members has been central to each stage of the *Yarra Strategic Plan*'s development since 2017. We have actively sought feedback from those connected to the Yarra and demonstrated through every stage how their feedback has influenced decisions. Through the formal consultation process on the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan*, we received more than 3,300 individual contributions, over 300 comments on the interactive map, over 1000 surveys and have taken into consideration feedback from three community workshops held along the river.

2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.

The complex and multi-faceted engagement approach undertaken by Melbourne Water ensured stakeholders and the community had multiple opportunities to influence the development of the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision* and *Yarra Strategic Plan*. We clearly communicated to stakeholders and the community how they could participate in the decision-making process and how their feedback had informed decisions. We published the draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* and engagement feedback reports on the Imagine the Yarra website so the community could clearly see how their feedback had been used.

3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.

The needs and interests of all parties, including decision makers, were recognised and communicated throughout our engagement approach. Collaborative decision-making was at the forefront of the development of the Plan through the Yarra Collaboration Committee. The Committee, led by Melbourne Water, was made up of representatives from 16 organisations responsible for the management of the Yarra River and its surrounding parklands. The committee worked together to balance the competing interests of the diverse community and ensure the plan prioritised the best outcomes for the Yarra River.

4. Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.

Throughout the project, Melbourne Water sought and facilitated the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in the decisions by delivering community engagement in partnership with other organisations. This was essential to the project generating a broad reach, particularly in regards to targeting hard-to-reach groups in the community who are not typically engaged in government decision making. These collaborations included working with:

- The State Library Victoria to provide family-friendly activities at local Yarra River libraries

- Victoria Walks to design an immersive self-guided walking map of the Yarra River
- FrontYard Youth Services to deliver a youth-focused walking tour
- Brite Industries to deliver a disability-focused walking tour
- Belgium Avenue Neighbourhood House to provide an opportunity for socio-economically disadvantaged and CALD community members to participate in a walking tour
- Committees of Management, responsible for Yarra River land. This ongoing engagement will help to inform the final plan.
- The Maribyrnong Inflatable Regatta to build awareness about the draft plan providing information to approximately 2,000 attendees.

This approach focused on using the strengths and connections of different organisations to engage with their communities, while generating positive social outcomes. This approach helped engage hard-to-reach groups and ensured an immersive engagement process that had an extended reach. These partnerships now form part of the project legacy that Melbourne Water will continue to build on.

5. Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.

Prior to implementation, Melbourne Water presented the draft Consultation and Engagement Strategy to the Yarra Collaboration Committee to gather feedback on the approach, with attention paid to the role of the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation in supporting the engagement process. The Committee's feedback was integrated into the draft plan and finally endorsed by them also.

6. Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.

Throughout the project, Melbourne Water provided participants with the information they needed to participate in a meaningful way. Ensuring that those with visual, hearing and other disabilities could access the plan and provide feedback. Accessible versions of all documents were created, and all video content was subtitled to ensure that people had what they needed to get informed and provide feedback.

7. Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

Melbourne Water was transparent with stakeholders and the community about how their input had affected decisions by updating the Imagine the Yarra website after each phase of engagement. Discussion papers, feedback reports and progress reports were published on the website to clearly communicate how feedback had influenced decisions. In addition to this, the collaborative governance structure was used to continually validate that the plan would achieve the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision*.

Challenges/Lessons Learnt

As with any project, there were a number of challenges faced over the two-year engagement period due to the sheer number of stakeholders involved, length of the engagement process and competing stakeholder interests. The agile engagement approach allowed the team to successfully pivot at each crossroad and look for innovative ways to keep the community interested and involved. The table below provides an overview of the engagement challenges faced across the four-phase engagement strategy and how the public participation process responded to these challenges and to inform future approach and practices.

Challenge	How the public participation process responded to these challenges
Phase 1: Development of the Yarra River 50-year Community Vision	
Risk of engagement fatigue among stakeholders and the community	<p>There was a risk of engagement fatigue among stakeholders and the community as a significant program of engagement had already taken place between 2015 and 2017 by the Yarra Ministerial Advisory Committee (Yarra MAC) to understand key issues and opportunities for the river. This feedback was used to inform the Yarra River Action Plan released by the Victorian Government in 2017.</p> <p>The Healthy Waterways Strategy was also being developed in parallel to the <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i> during Phases 1 and 2 which contributed to an overall community engagement fatigue because many of those passionate about waterways were the same audience that might have contributed to the <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i> engagement.</p> <p>The public participation process responded to this challenge through development of clear key messages and educational materials which referenced previous engagement undertaken during the Yarra MAC process. The engagement sought to build on existing information and acknowledge past contributions. A strong focus of all project communications was around how the information collected would be used to build the vision.</p>
Placing the decision in the community's hands given the complex project governance	<p>There were two governance groups with roles in accepting the vision and engagement process.</p> <p>The Yarra Collaboration Committee, made up of representatives from the 16 agencies with management responsibilities for the Yarra, endorsed the engagement approach prior to implementation.</p> <p>The Birrarung Council, made up of members from the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (Traditional Owner representatives) and representatives from industry and advocacy groups, was required to direct the Minister on whether to accept the <i>Yarra River 50-year Community Vision</i>. In the</p>

Challenge	How the public participation process responded to these challenges
	lead up to this, Community Assembly members presented the whole of river and visions for each reach to the council.
Phase 2: Building the Yarra Strategic Plan	
Balancing diverse views and interests	<p>The Yarra River is many things to many people which created a challenge in trying to balance the different opinions about how the river should be managed. We were able to manage this successfully through a collaborative governance model and by choosing engagement processes that celebrated the diversity of views.</p> <p>The Yarra Collaboration Committee, led by Melbourne Water, was made up of representatives from 16 organisations responsible for the management of the Yarra River and its surrounding parklands. The committee worked together to balance the competing interests of the community and ensure the plan prioritised the best outcomes for the Yarra River. Although some decisions were challenging, they were successfully navigated by reminding people of the diverse value set of the Yarra Collaboration Committee.</p>
Phase 3: Testing the direction of the Yarra Strategic Plan	
Attrition of Community Assembly	<p>One year on from the development of the <i>Yarra River 50-year Community Vision</i>, the Community Assembly reformed to test the direction of the <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i>. The group originally started with 24 participants but was reduced to just 16 due to lack of interest and the time that had lapsed. This created a challenge for Melbourne Water in being able to capture balanced views from the group in Phase 3.</p> <p>This was managed by celebrating the diversity of views through a series of short presentations at the workshop to remind the group they were representing the interests of the whole community, not just their backyard.</p>
Phase 4: Public consultation on the draft Yarra Strategic Plan	
The complexity and length of the Plan made it difficult for the public to provide informed feedback	<p>The <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i> is an overarching policy and planning framework that addresses complex waterway management and land-use concepts for the entire length of the Yarra River.</p> <p>Based on extensive engagement experience, it was understood that the length and complexity of the document might deter your average Melburnian from participating in the engagement process. To address this, 'snackable' content was created to communicate the plan through an interactive story map and 90 second animation to 'lift up' the plan and make it easier for people to understand the content.</p>

Challenge	How the public participation process responded to these challenges
	<p>These tools were successful in building the capacity of the broader public to participate in the engagement process and provide informed feedback.</p>
<p>Bushfire crisis impacting the engagement program</p>	<p>The devastating series of bushfires across Australia in early 2020 created uncertainty for the last phase of our engagement program. It raised several questions about whether it was safe to conduct face-to-face activities in high risk areas and if it was appropriate to even engage with the community at this time.</p> <p>This was proactively managed by developing a bushfire contingency plan which provided guidance on how to pivot the engagement approach to continue to effectively engage. As part of the plan, back-up dates and venues were booked for the pop-up information sessions and digital engagement alternatives were identified to collect feedback. Melbourne Water actively monitored the situation and successfully implemented the last phase of engagement.</p>
<p>COVID-19 restricting face-to-face engagement activities</p>	<p>In March 2020, the Victorian Government implemented restrictions on face-to-face gatherings in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This impacted the last phase of our engagement which involved carrying out a series of face-to-face focus groups. In the interests of safety and wellbeing, the difficult decision was made to cancel the last focus group for the Inner City reach which was scheduled to take place on 14 March.</p> <p>The team quickly regrouped and pivoted the engagement approach to ensure the views of this focus group were still considered in the development of the final <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i>. An online survey was created with a series of key questions to capture feedback in a structured way. This public participation process resulted in 30 people completing the online survey and enabled us to manage this challenge and achieve a positive outcome.</p>
<p>Resource and time intensive</p>	<p>Phase 4 consultation was resource and time intensive so in the future more resources/funding would be allocated to this phase.</p> <p>In light of this, Melbourne Water reached out to partner agencies and key experts within Melbourne Water to assist with staffing and promoting the engagement program within this phase.</p>
<p>Location of pop up events</p>	<p>The pop up events were very successful at the Yarra Glen market and the Heide market but lacked attendance at the Warburton Up and Running event and the Arts Centre Melbourne Sunday market.</p> <p>Although we linked in with local councils to ascertain the best pop up locations, in future we would better understand and physically attend the pop up locations prior to committing to them.</p>

Challenge	How the public participation process responded to these challenges
Attendance at focus groups	<p>Despite targeted promotion and selective recruitment for the focus groups to over 7000 individuals and over 30 relevant community groups/government departments, the attendance at the Lower Rural and Upper Rural focus groups could have been higher.</p> <p>The exact reason for this is unknown but most likely caused by unavoidable community engagement fatigue from being involved in other government strategies such as the Healthy Waterways Strategy and community pressures that came after the summer bushfires. The timing of the focus groups over weekends in Summer and early term 1 could have also contributed.</p>
Overall challenges	
Co-design engagement methods	<p>As detailed in the introduction, an end-to-end co-design process was not adopted for the <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i>.</p> <p>In the right situation, an end-to-end co-design process is seen as being best practice consultation and engagement as it empowers the community and stakeholders to not only provide feedback at each stage of consultation but also design the consultation process and have ownership over the outcomes.</p> <p>Melbourne Water has experience implementing such a process for the Healthy Waterways Strategy. It was through observing the time and budget required to implement such a process that the focus for the <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i> was instead on collaboration and co-design principles were adopted at key stages only.</p> <p>The legislative requirements for the <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i> state that the process for developing the long-term community vision document must include active community participation and co-design. The draft <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i> must also be developed through an open and collaborative process involving local community reference forums.</p> <p>This can be clearly demonstrated as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - through the use of broad community engagement and the Community Assembly in Phase 1 whom were entirely responsible for the development of the Yarra River 50-year Community Vision which then shaped the draft <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i>. - the thematic workshops that informed the drafting in Phase 2. - the community re-assembly that tested the early directions of the draft plan with the original Community Assembly in Phase 3.

Challenge	How the public participation process responded to these challenges
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - community focus groups to review and inform the final plan in Phase 4. Recruitment for these was through an independent process and Community Assembly members attended each of them. - one-on-one interviews with Community Assembly interviews to ask their individual feedback on whether the draft plan delivers the foundations of the Yarra River 50-year Community Vision.
Balancing the interests of multiple organisations	<p>Balancing the interests of multiple organisations was always going to be a key challenge for such a multi-stakeholder project.</p> <p>The formation of the Yarra Collaboration Committee provided a good foundation to ensure all partner agencies were being updated regularly and can contribute to the direction of the vision and plan. However in addition to this, the rigorous drafting and endorsement process which saw Melbourne Water meeting very regularly one-one with key stakeholders ensured that no stone was left unturned.</p>
Gaps in engaging the Community Assembly	<p>The use of the Community Assembly in Phase 1 and 3 was well regarded and if it was known that the timeline for developing the draft plan was going to lengthen there could have been ways to include and update them more regularly.</p> <p>This was recognised prior to Phase 4 consultation commencing and so Community Assembly members were invited to the focus groups and were welcome to attend the focus group in their preferred reach (or multiple if they wished). Community Assembly members were also invited to take part in an one-on-one phone interview with a specific set of questions related to whether the draft <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i> delivers the foundations of the <i>Yarra River 50-year Community Vision</i>? As an Assembly member they were selected through a rigorous process to represent their community and develop the Community Vision therefore they were in the best position to assess whether this goal had been reached.</p>
Ambitious timelines	<p>The necessary complexity of governance/approval mechanisms of such a multi stakeholder project meant that timelines of the project were extended so it has been recognised that in the future less ambitious timelines might be adopted.</p> <p>The Yarra Strategic Plan team has shown great versatility and adaptability in light of this challenge and consistently works with partner agencies to adjust timelines to ensure all voices are heard. An example of this will play out as the plan is finalised. Melbourne Water has already been required to adjust timelines for this to allow for a changed work environment due to the COVID-19 pandemic and also to take into account the local government caretaker period and elections later in 2020.</p>

Challenge	How the public participation process responded to these challenges
<p>Natural attrition of staff due to long term nature of project</p>	<p>Although unavoidable, due to it being a longer term project there was a natural attrition in staff both within the Melbourne Water <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i> team and partner agencies which can create challenges for continuity in partner and stakeholder relationships. It also presents challenges of maintaining corporate memory of engagement feedback and how it influenced each stage of development of the plan.</p> <p>This challenge was managed through clear documentation of feedback and numerous iterations of the draft plan, so that a trail of changes can be traced. The governance structure of the Yarra Collaboration Committee also provided continuity to the project, with the independent chair and several members who have been with the project from the beginning.</p> <p>Within the Melbourne Water team, efforts were made to regularly update and seek endorsement from Executive and Senior Management staff along with the wider organisation on partner and stakeholder relations and input. Despite the project being externally funded, the <i>Yarra Strategic Plan</i> was included in Melbourne Water business planning year on year, giving it the direction and oversight it required even if staff changes in the team occurred.</p>
<p>Multiple workshops in lower rural and suburban reaches.</p>	<p>Due to the diversity of land uses, access and issues facing the lower rural and suburban reaches of the Yarra River, in future, pending available resources, these reaches may benefit from at least two focus groups each.</p> <p>Multiple engagement opportunities were provided in each reach and across all reaches.</p>

Next steps

Although the last phase of consultation and engagement has closed, there is still consultation to be undertaken with stakeholders on the Yarra Collaboration Committee and other key Committees of Management responsible for managing land alongside the river.

As detailed above in the section on 'Phase 4 – how the results were used', the Ministerial Panel process of adopting feedback on Part 2 of the plan is currently underway and the outcomes of this will be known by the end of July 2020. The report from the Panel, held under the auspices of Planning Panels Victoria, will help advise revised content for the final plan.

Engagement will also be undertaken with responsible public entities and other key stakeholders as the Decision Making Framework is finalised, taking into account feedback from the Birrarung Council.

Following this there will be an extensive collaborative endorsement process undertaken, similar to the drafting process.

However the timeline for finalising the plan has to take into account the implications of a changed work environment for many organisations due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Melbourne Water is working with partner agencies to progress the finalisation of the *Yarra Strategic Plan* whilst making the necessary adaptations to both the endorsement process and timeline to allow for all organisations involved to have the adequate time and resources they require to review the final plan in detail.

After the Minister endorses the final *Yarra Strategic Plan*, implementation will commence led by a nominated agency. In order to implement the *Yarra Strategic Plan*, the Yarra Collaboration Committee has decided there is a need to embed long-term change in the way government agencies and councils work together in the Yarra River corridor. To embed collaborative management of the Yarra River corridor, the Yarra Collaboration Committee have agreed and committed to oversee rolling implementation plans and ensure the application of a decision-making framework for Yarra River lands.

Specifically:

- The Yarra Collaboration Committee has agreed to adopt a 12-month interim plan for 2020/21 to accompany the final plan followed by delivery of a rolling three-year implementation plan that will align with 4 year council planning cycle and longer term planning cycles of each of the responsible public entities.
- The 12 month implementation plan will:
 - incorporate planned and funded projects within the Yarra River corridor that align with the four performance objectives in the *Yarra Strategic Plan*. These projects include capital works, design, management plans and strategies and on ground works and maintenance.
 - incorporate projects and initiatives that are not currently funded but will contribute towards the Yarra River 50-year Community Vision and Performance Objectives and the change being sought for the river in the next 10 years.

Once the final plan is complete, a monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI) framework will be developed to assess the impact, appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency and legacy of the *Yarra Strategic Plan*. The MERI framework will also consider how the *Yarra Strategic Plan* is meeting the intentions and obligations of the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision* and the Act.

Collectively, the 10 year performance objectives, actions, implementation plan and the MERI framework will achieve the needs of a regional strategy and provide detail that the community seeks, while supporting annual reporting to the Birrarung Council.

In the long term, and no later than 10 years after commencement of the plan, the Act requires the lead agency to review the *Yarra River 50-year Community Vision* and prepare a new *Yarra Strategic Plan* for the following 10 years.

For more information on the development of the final *Yarra Strategic Plan*, visit: imaginetheyarra.com.au

Keep up to date with what's happening

For more information about this project, visit imaginetheyarra.com.au

For an interpreter, please call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on 13 14 50



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Appendices

Appendix A: IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

IAP2 SPECTRUM OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

	INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC IMPACT				
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
GOAL	To provide balanced and objective information in a timely manner.	To obtain feedback on analysis, issues, alternatives and decisions.	To work with the public to make sure that concerns and aspirations are considered and understood.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision-making.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE	"We will keep you informed"	"We will listen to and acknowledge your concerns."	"We will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the decisions made."	"We will look to you for advice and innovation and incorporate this in decisions as much as possible."	"We will implement what you decide."

Appendix B: Yarra Strategic Plan stakeholder list

<p>Key stakeholders</p> <p>Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning; Banyule City Council; Boroondara City Council; Baw Baw Council; Hobson’s Bay Council; Manningham City Council; Melbourne City Council; Melbourne Water; Nilumbik Shire Council; Parks Victoria; Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority; Stonnington City Council; Yarra City Council; Yarra Ranges Shire Council; VicRoads; Victorian Planning Authority; VicTrack; Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (as Traditional Owners representative).</p>
<p>Other government departments, agencies and regulators</p> <p>Department of Premier and Cabinet, Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, Metropolitan Planning Authority, VicRoads, Sustainability Victoria, Heritage Victoria</p>
<p>Responsible Ministers</p> <p>Minister for Planning Richard Wynne, Minister for Environment, Energy and Climate Change Lily D’Ambrosio, Minister for Water Lisa Neville.</p>
<p>Yarra River Ministerial Advisory Committee</p> <p>Mr Chris Chesterfield, Professor Jane Doolan, Mr Eamonn Moran, Dr Tamara Boyd, Ms Kirsten Bauer</p>
<p>Water retailers, catchment management authorities</p> <p>Yarra Valley Water, South East Water, City West Water, Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority, other CMAs</p>
<p>Traditional Owners</p> <p>Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs), Aboriginal Victoria</p>

Emergency authorities Victoria Police, State Emergency Service, Ambulance Victoria
Planning and developer groups Urban Development Institute of Australia, Planning Institute of Australia, Victorian Planning Environmental Law Association
Community and environmental groups Yarra RiverKeeper, Environmental Justice Victoria, Friends of the Yarra, Victorian Environment Friends Network, Friends of Wurundjeri – Hawthorn Historical Society, Friends of the Yarra Valley Parks, Protectors of Public Lands, North and East Melbourne Residents Associations, Save our Suburbs, Public Transport Users Association
Farming and agricultural groups Victorian Farmers' Federation, Landcare
Transport groups VicRoads, Public Transport Users Association, private toll road operators (i.e. Transurban)
Tourism and recreational groups Tourism Victoria, Bicycle Network Victoria
Educational groups Geography Teachers' Association, Victorian Department of Education, University of Melbourne, University of Monash, Deakin University, primary schools, secondary schools

<p>Media</p> <p><i>With an interest in the project development at key milestones, as well as where there are community and stakeholder views about the project and its impacts, benefits and opportunities for Melbourne.</i></p>
<p>CALD communities</p> <p><i>A number of CALD communities will reside within the suburbs affected by the Yarra River Strategy and that will be considered as stakeholders. These language groups include Vietnamese, Italian, Macedonian, Greek, Croatian, Arabic, Spanish, Turkish, Serbian, Bosnian, Chinese, Filipino, Indian and more.</i></p>
<p>Social service providers</p> <p><i>Includes schools, hospitals, retirement villages and neighbourhood houses that may be captured as part of the Yarra Strategic Plan's stakeholders and may have special needs that need to be considered.</i></p>
<p>Disadvantaged groups</p> <p><i>Some disadvantaged individuals and groups with special needs that need to be met in order to be involved in the engagement process and to maintain their access and movement requirements.</i></p>
<p>Landowners</p> <p><i>Many landowners, particularly those located in the upper reaches of the Yarra River, interested in short, medium and long-term impacts on their property</i></p>
<p>Business owners</p> <p><i>Business owners with an interest in relation to amenity and traffic conditions, planning implications and any anticipated construction impacts.</i></p>
<p>Community</p> <p><i>The wider community with a broad range of interests in the Yarra River, including but not limited to recreation, aesthetics, economics, cultural, etc.</i></p>