

# PLACE: ACTIVITY AND CHARACTER



Melbourne's river is a defining feature of the city's identity, consistently presented in promotional imagery. However historically, the City has not fully embraced its waterways, despite the cultural significance and proximity. The river and its banks should be an attractive complement to the central area, offering a diversity of uses and new economies that are welcoming to all.

The City River is identifiable by its distinctive features of the parks, bridges, vaults, railway viaduct structures, sweeping city views and numerous historical sites. It is important to respond and celebrate these features alongside other undiscovered features of significance. It is vital for our economy that the City River continues to emerge as a vibrant, creative destination, unique to Melbourne. A riverfront with a distinctive character that promotes its past and present will build a genuine and memorable city identity.

The character of Docklands and the area west of Spencer Street is continuing to undergo rapid transformation with numerous significant developments introducing further commercial and residential uses, as well as additional public spaces and river front promenades. Complementing this, Batman Park features passive recreational activities and informal uses with direct river views. The rail viaduct is a defining characteristic of this area, however the studios along Rebecca's walk and at-grade parking underneath the rail structures, detract from the amenity and activity potential of the park. The general presentation of the park is also in need of improvement to encourage increased usage as a safe neighbourhood space for the surrounding community.

## Background

The character of the City River has evolved over time through the layering of decisions and incremental changes. There remains some historical elements embedded within this urban fabric despite the conditions being modified significantly over 200 years. The river was extensively widened during the gold rush era to create the expansive watercourse, of 120 metres in width, known today. Historically the river west of the old falls near Queens Bridge, was where boats would dock, while to the east soft, landscape edges with access to fresh water were a feature. These conditions of parkland edges to the east and docks to the west are still evident today, though the central city waterfront has transformed to be home to a range of major recreational, cultural and hospitality destinations.

Enterprise Park was the site of the first European settlements and also historically known as the Turning Basin, as this was the furthest point that ships could navigate up the Yarra River. The Aquarium and Immigration Museum are the main public attractors to this area, yet these have limited relationship with the waterside setting, due to access and orientation issues. This is also an area with high potential for improvement due to its significance. The central Northbank zone comprises the Flinders Street Rail Station, refurbished Sandridge Bridge and Banana Alley vaults. There is an inconsistent quality of riverfront experience across this stretch compared to the active promenade of Southbank.

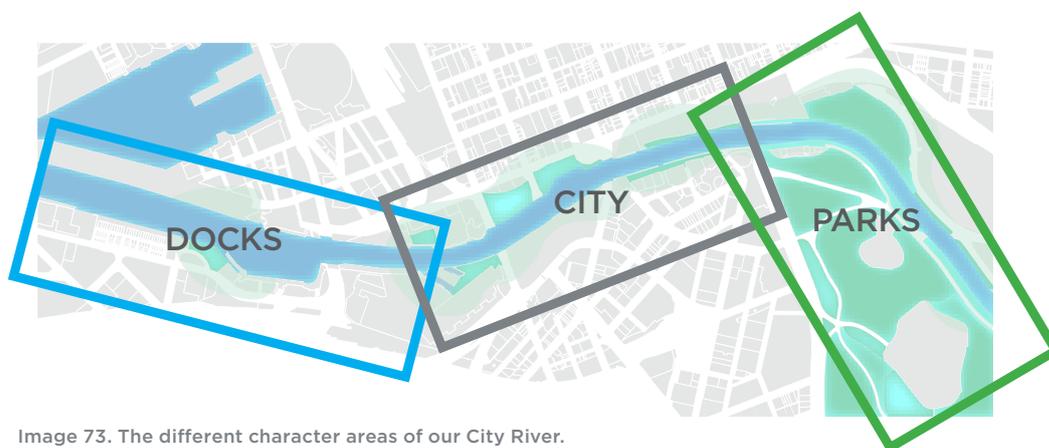


Image 73. The different character areas of our City River.

Image 72. View of Banana Alley looking towards the Sandridge Bridge.

Existing conditions

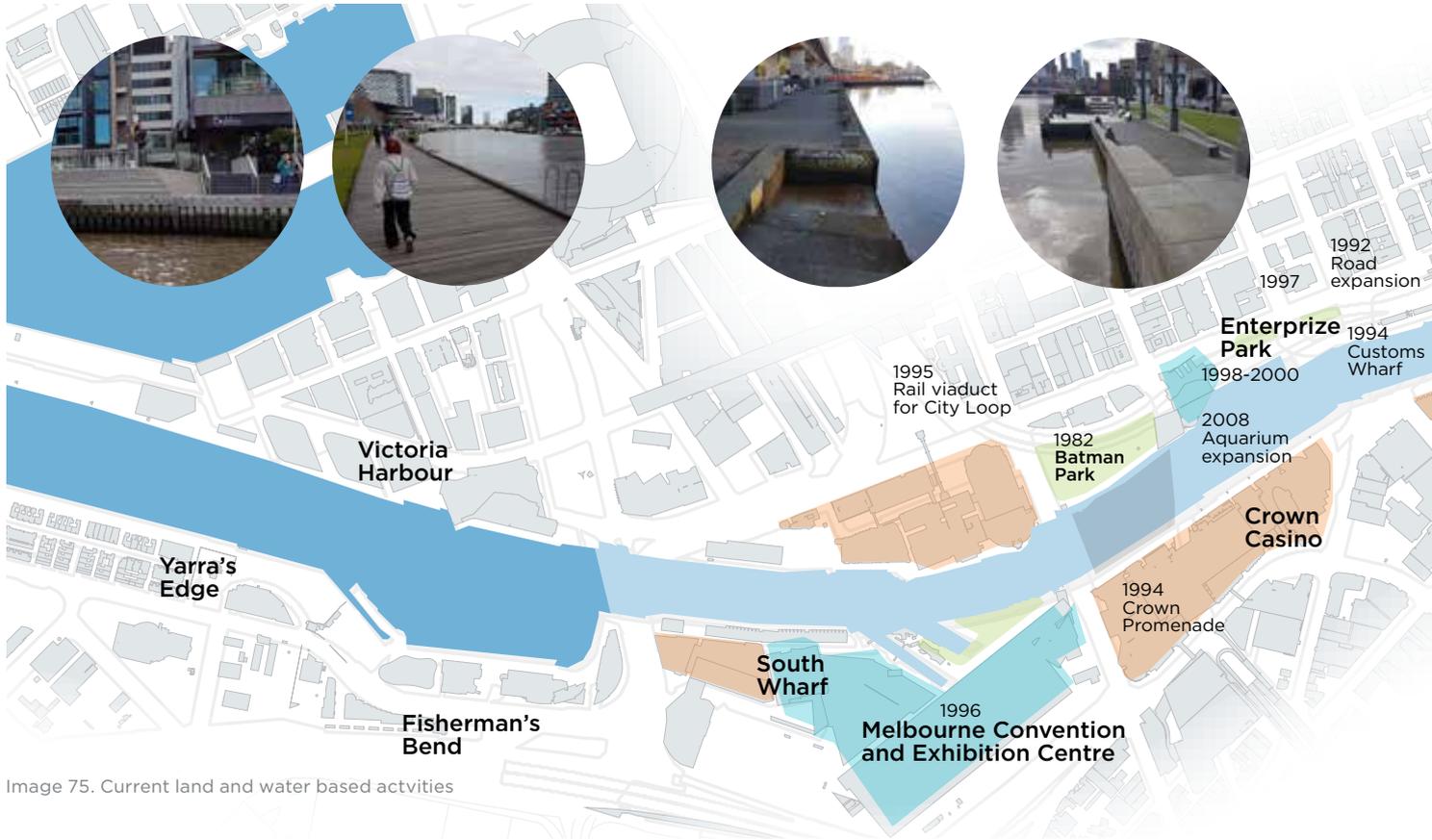


Image 75. Current land and water based activities

Broad edge character types:

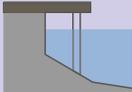
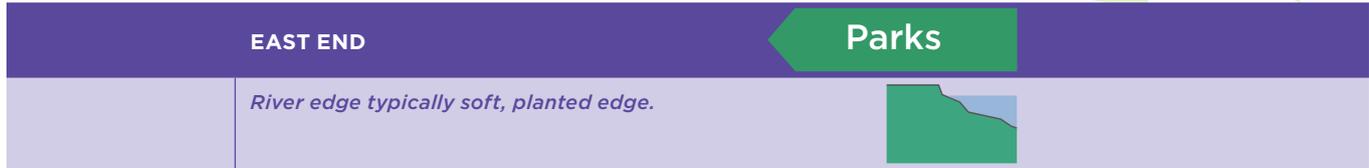
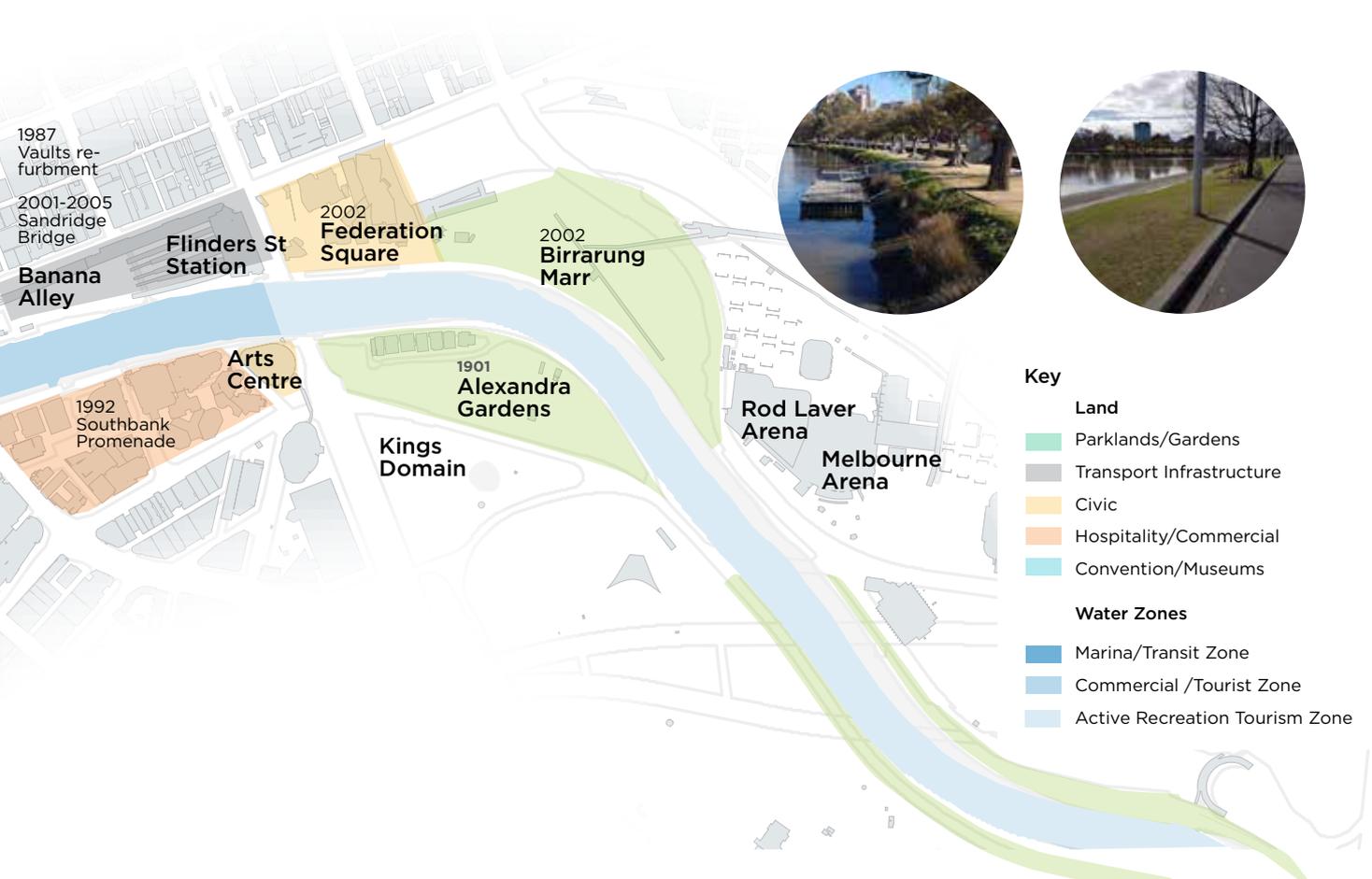
WEST END	Docks	CENTRAL	City
<p>River edge typically wharf structures over the River.</p> 		<p>"River edge typical hard, urban condition."</p> 	



Image 76. Existing conditions along Northbank Promenade.



Image 77. Existing conditions at Enterprize Park



## Key challenges

Key activity and character challenges are defined below:

- Northbank stands out as a broad area of poor definition and inconsistent quality that weakens a strong, attractive identity for the City.
- Limited day to day activation of the central waterfront.
- Some privatisation of public areas and potential risk of over commercialisation of waterways and adjoining parklands.
- Riverfront features range of treatments, furniture, signage types, contributing to a lack of consistency and clarity.
- The diversity of landowners impacts the character and conditioning of waterfront areas.

## Strategic Directions

The following key strategic directions guide appropriate actions for improving the activation and diversity of experience for a range of City River users.

### PLACE STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1

## Inviting

Prioritise Northbank renewal  
to create an inviting destination immediate to the City.

Northbank is located on the doorstep of the City, yet has been long perceived as the unattractive counterpart to the southern bank. Southbank Promenade and Crown Casino feature sunny, active highly pedestrianised and populated public spaces. These contrast markedly with areas along Northbank, where public spaces and pathways are generally of a lower quality, removed from active frontages and more prone to safety and security issues.

In recent decades, Melbourne has certainly sought to re-embrace the Yarra River and the completion of Birrarung Marr and Federation Square, has raised the profile of the northern bank of the River. More recently, the 2013 Flinders Street Station competition also generated ideas to improve the riverfront area, including Banana Alley. However, the central city expanse of Northbank, particularly from Spencer Street to St Kilda Road, covering Banana Alley, Enterprize Park and Batman Park continues to remain a key portion of the City River lacking an inviting and direct relationship with the water, along with longstanding safety and security concerns.

The poor and inconsistent quality of the public realm in these areas, lack of active frontages and connectivity issues create a highly underwhelming experience, which is out of step with this coveted location so close to the central city. Notable issues include the physical environment of Banana Alley, the isolated and unsafe experience at Enterprize Park, numerous riverfront spaces interfaced by at-grade car parking and the studios along Rebecca's Walk in Batman Park, formerly the fish market location, are largely vacant and left vandalised.

### **P1A: Create an attractive backdrop to the Central City through major upgrade works to Northbank.**

Northbank provides a critical, linear pathway and, as a featured backdrop to the city, plays a prominent role in contributing to Melbourne's identity. As further development occurs and the central city population increases, there is growing demand to lift the northern side of the river to better standards of safety, security and amenity. There are modest improvements currently planned for Enterprize and Batman Parks and works to key station entrances also being undertaken by the State Government as part of the Flinders Street Station upgrade.

However, we recommend making Northbank a priority of major investment, enabling much needed public realm improvements of this highly visible asset to the central city. Interventions could include widening the Flinders walk pathway so that they are broad, well-lit and have visible destinations; and major design modifications to Enterprize Park and Banana Alley. A concerted focus on this particular area of the City River would reinforce the central, urban waterfront as an inviting, attractive asset of Melbourne.

### **P1B: Activate deserted zones through a program of events and activities.**

Along Northbank, public spaces and pathways are removed from active frontages and more prone to be unsafe and deserted. For instance Les Erdi Plaza features a high fenced edge with views to a line of car parking. Alternately this surplus railway land could be used to enhance adjoining urban spaces. The spaces under the railway viaduct also hold great potential to be transformed into a vibrant place through temporary and permanent uses, artwork and events. A relevant precedent is Im Viaduct in Zurich (Refer Image #) where new life has been injected into the arches of the railway viaduct in the form of a new -550 metre long urban meeting place.



Image 78. The railways viaduct areas hold much potential to be converted into more thriving, safe places along the riverfront.



Illustrative for discussion purposes only.

Image 79. Artist's impression of possible improvements to Enterprize Park (existing photograph above in black and white).

## Multi-functional

Celebrate character areas and encourage new economies:  
a range of civic, educational, cultural, hospitality and water dependant uses.

Successful urban environments are defined by well used, high quality, plentiful and diverse spaces and activities. Places and spaces along the central city river have a distinct identity and offer a mix of sensory experiences, ranging from the openness of the eastern parklands to the more intimate setting along Flinders Walk, where cafes and bars echo the character of the city's laneways. Downstream of Queens Bridge is dominated by larger-scale uses including the Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centres, large businesses and residential complexes that transition into the Docklands precinct.

### **P2A: Encourage a range of civic, educational, cultural, hospitality and water dependant uses.**

Looking to the future, the City River should offer an even greater diversity of uses that offer extended occupation and are appealing to broad sections of the community including locals, visitors, old and young. Currently the inner-city river reaches are largely populated by drinking and eating venues and so there lies the potential for new economies that offer broader areas of interest, inclusion and make the most of the river location, such as creative and water dependant industries. Enterprise Park has much potential as an education opportunity, whereby the history and role of the river could be enhanced and better understood. There is also a need for a children's outdoor play area in the western portion of the river, offering a water and nature learning opportunity.



Image 80. Include more opportunities for childplay.

### **P2B: Build on diverse character districts to create a series of unique experiences.**

As opposed to a homogenous corridor, the City River should build on the series of unique districts that feature their own character, spatial definition and function to increase activation and utilisation of the Yarra River and its edges. Currently there are at least 12 different areas with their own distinctiveness and character that punctuate the journey along the river, offering many layers of experience. These areas could be programmed, branded and marketed as distinct areas in order to attract patronage to support the functions therein and could be broadly grouped into five main urban settings or districts, suggestions are as follows:

#### **Riverside Park**

##### **For fitness and connection to nature.**

Princes Bridge to Birrarung Marr, including the following areas:

- Birrarung Marr
- Alexandra Gardens (Rowing Precinct)

Characterised by openness with the expansive landscape area of Birrarung Marr and the Domain parklands.

#### **City River alleys and arcades**

##### **For intimate cafes and hidden bars.**

Northbank: Queensbridge to Princes vaults, including the following areas:

- Princes Vaults
- Flinders Walk
- Banana Alley

This area is immediate to the central city area, a major transport interchange point and the retail core. It is characterised by a more intimate, urban character, featuring key heritage landmarks. The direct link between the city, Northbank and Southbank generates significant pedestrian activity that offers great potential for additional social activity and hospitality uses in this area.

- 1 Riverside Park district
- 2 City River alleys and arcades district
- 3 Southbank Promenade district
- 4 Neighbourhood market /recreation district
- 5 Urban docks district

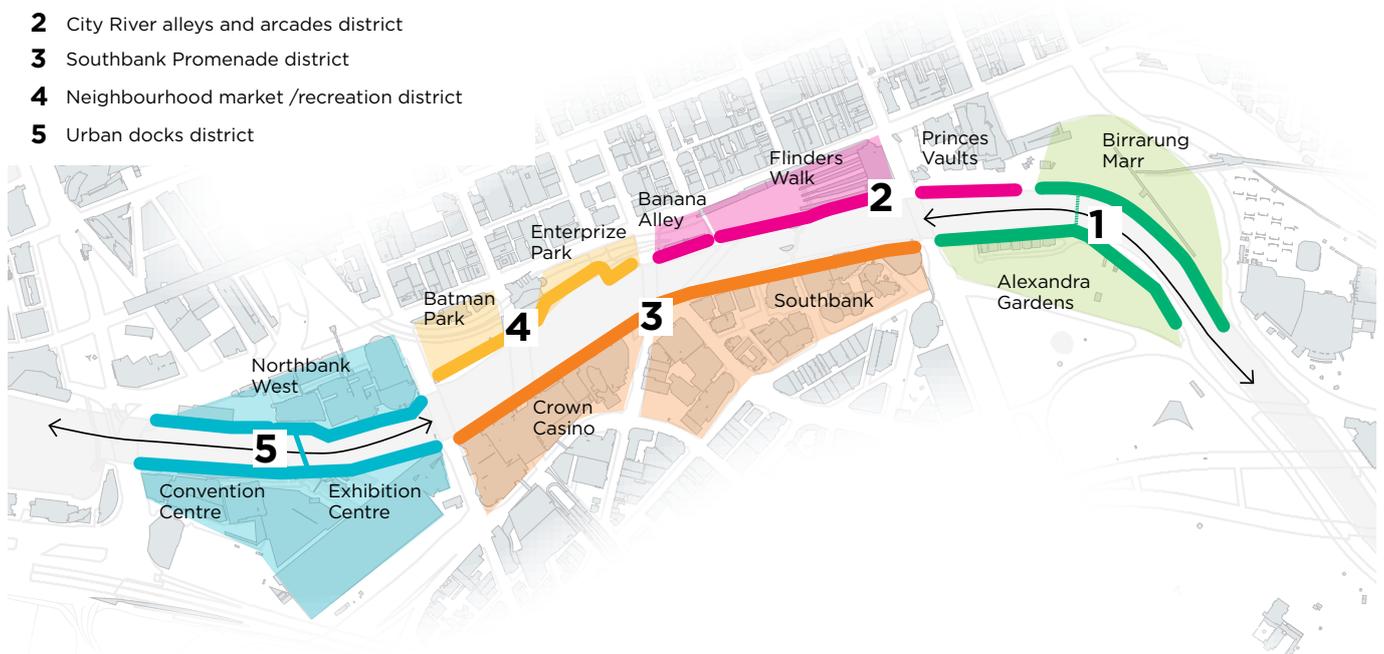


Image 81. The river as a source of inspiration and series of unique experiences.

### Southbank Promenade

#### For feasting and festivities.

Southbank: Queensbridge to Princes Bridge, including the following areas:

- Southbank
- Crown Casino

This area features a notable concentration of arts, cultural, creative and hospitality venues. It is characterised by key landmarks of the Arts Centre, Southgate complex and Crown Casino.

### Neighbourhood market / recreation

#### For play and reflection

Queens Bridge to Spencer Street, including the following areas:

- Batman Park
- Enterprize Park

This area is characterised by its urban, open space areas, directly connected to the river's edge and includes Batman Park, the Aquarium, the Turning basin and Enterprize Wharf and Park. It holds great potential as an excellent neighbourhood recreation, education and event area. The arcade spaces could potentially be activated with seasonal produce markets, recalling the original fish market use, or passively with public art. Activities should support the high residential population of over 10,000 households immediate to this zone.

### Urban docks

#### For maritime, docks experience

Docklands to Spencer Street, including the following areas:

- Exhibition Centre
- Convention Centre
- Northbank West

This precinct is characterised by its hard urban edges, contained landscape features and substantial wharf structures and boardwalks. Major public and private sector projects include the Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre, Seafarers Bridge, South Wharf and DFO.

## Public

Sustain the civic focus of the river by encouraging activation that offers broader inclusion and supports a public waterfront.

The City River is a venue for many of the activities that contribute to the life of the City. However, some events or uses are privatising portions of the riverfront. We promote the importance of the Birrarung being first and foremost a public place for people and recommend generous public access and pathways along the banks. This is currently compromised in some locations along the river with pedestrian passage constrained by adjoining private spaces. Numerous private developments along the city riverfront are also guilty of turning their back to the waterway. The northbank is particularly vulnerable to the incidence of this given the southern aspect.

We advocate for a balanced approach between activation and commercialisation along the banks. We recommend the river's legibility as a public place be elevated, so that it can be enjoyed without expense. We place a significant economic value on the river as an entity in its own right, so advocate for a strong curatorial and creative approach to be adopted for commercial opportunities, ensuring every intervention responds to the inherent qualities of the river, and is of the highest quality and design to deliver memorable and delightful experiences to tourists and citizens.

### **P3A: Ensure unrestricted public waterfront access.**

The city riverfront must uphold the civic focus by ensuring generous public access along the water's edge. This could be achieved by administrating a continuous, clear width for pedestrian access along the water's edge, for instance a minimum width of 2.5 to 3m (Refer Image 82).

Application of permanent structures over riverbank spaces that impede visual and physical permeability should also be dissuaded. This pertains particularly to key landmark or heritage structures such as the Federation Wharf and Banana Alley historic vaults. Any structures on the riverbank or on water should be materially lightweight, of a single storey height only (no higher than 3m) and feature a slim, horizontal profile, that still allows for clear appreciation of landmark areas of the riverfront.

### **P3B: Encourage waterfront buildings to address the water.**

The relationship of surrounding developments immediate to the water environs has a significant impact on the use of these spaces and the behaviour of users within them. On water and water edge activities, events and uses should be orientated and designed for public use. The Aquarium extension is an inward oriented development that takes little advantage of the prime location adjacent to the water's edge. Future waterfront developments should be required to feature active frontages that welcome the public and embrace the waterfront. All landscapes in waterfront developments should also be publicly accessible.

### **P3C: Promote activities that support a public waterfront.**

While the commercial function and economy generated by the river is important, these should not compromise the public benefit of the river asset. A balanced approach, that distributes commercial operations, allowing room for other activities to diversify the riverfront experience is encouraged.

In February, the Victorian Government released the Yarra River Action Plan, which includes the establishment of an advisory council made up of local stakeholders, to be named the Birrarung Council after the Wurundjeri name for the Yarra, to assist with striking this delicate balance between business development and environmental concerns.

A programme for 'civic' activation that focused on both day to day local activities to complement larger, regional events could be established. There is much scope to particularly increase activation of Queensbridge Square on the Southbank and the areas beneath the rail viaduct on Northbank. The City of Melbourne's 'Love your laneways' project focused on improving streetscape safety and amenity in the Hoddle Grid and considered a number of issues such as waste management and public lighting, alongside artistic and cultural uses. Perhaps there could be a 'Love your River' project undertaken following similar motivations.



Zone to be kept clear of obstacles including furniture, balustrading, trees, signage, light poles and other structures.

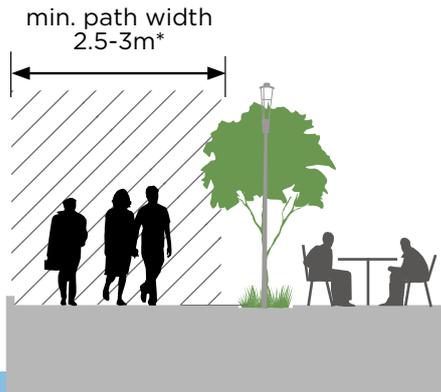


Image 82. Recommended minimum standards for unfettered public access at all times.



Image 83. The public pathway of Princes Walk is often challenging to move through when the adjoining venue is busy.



Image 84. Vast area of Queensbridge Square that would benefit from an activation program.

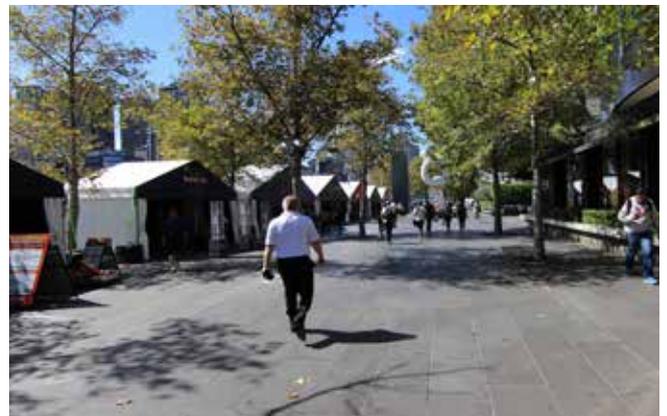


Image 85. View along Crown Promenade with the waterside portion of the walkway occupied by a private event.

## Legible

Rationalise clutter and on-water infrastructure  
to ensure unobstructed vistas and views.

The role of rivers in a city context could be likened to urban parks in terms of providing essential elements of fresh and clean air, trees and green space, openness and relief from the intensity of central city life. Waterfront clutter and on-water infrastructure should not detract from the elemental qualities of this unique, natural setting, nor undermine the peaceful amenity of the area. It is important that we preserve our riverfront, acknowledging its significance and are accordingly discerning about what structures and objects are placed within the confines of this natural asset.

There is a myriad of signage and ad hoc placement of outdoor seating, bins and light poles, adversely impacting pedestrian flow, which collectively weaken the legibility and overall attraction of the waterfront asset. Floating, on-water infrastructure such as bars, boats under repair, pontoons and expansive berthing areas also compete with uses on the banks and most importantly obstruct clear views of the waterfront. There are also numerous at-grade parking areas immediate to waterfront areas, particularly along the Northbank.

### **P4A: Rationalise clutter to ensure unobstructed appreciation to identified views and landmarks.**

The placement of objects (signage, bins, light poles) or structures (floating bars) should be well integrated with the environs, have a clear, beneficial purpose and key views, as identified in Image #, must be protected. This concerns selectively rationalising electrical service cabinets and bins, consolidating light poles and introducing better placement of street furniture to de-clutter the riverfront.

In addition, the location of floating bars and other on-water infrastructure should be effectively dispersed so as not to dominate an area or obstruct public access to the water's edge for long distances. Encouraging a reduction to the numerous instances of visible, at-grade carparking from this key people zone is also critical. There, however, still lies a place for on-water infrastructure within the City River, as is the case of art installations or water related forms which are specifically designed and located to enhance the riverside experience, both on a temporary and permanent basis.

### **P4B: Develop a technical guide for waterfront treatments to establish a consistent palette.**

To improve the legibility of the corridor, co-ordinate treatments and evoke an authentic, local character, the development of a specialised technical guide for the riverfront is recommended. This would offer clear direction on a base palette of preferred materials, landscaping and details that recognise the unique location, scale and detailing required when building on or near the water and are visually cohesive and recessive. For application along the waterfront and extending to a block either side, this could include treatments which accord with each character area and may involve adoption of current City of Melbourne Design and Engineering standards, where contextually appropriate.

### **P4C: Provide additional bridges only where cross river connectivity is critical.**

Cross-river links play a key role in stitching together destinations, integrating with local neighbourhoods and for an appreciation of panoramic river views. There are currently nine cross-river links within the central city area. The location of bridges and their alignment to minimise expanse and maximise the environmental and visual experience of users is key to the riverfront experience. Height is a further consideration, noting the Spencer Street Bridge (2.05m in height) heavily constrains vessel movement during high tide.

Currently, there is potentially a need for one to two additional bike and pedestrian crossings over the City River area to support enhanced connectivity and use. The proposal for a bridge across to Fisherman's Bend on the Collins Street axis will offer critical connectivity between the City, Docklands and this new community. The design and location however must be sensitively resolved to respect the local context and environment.

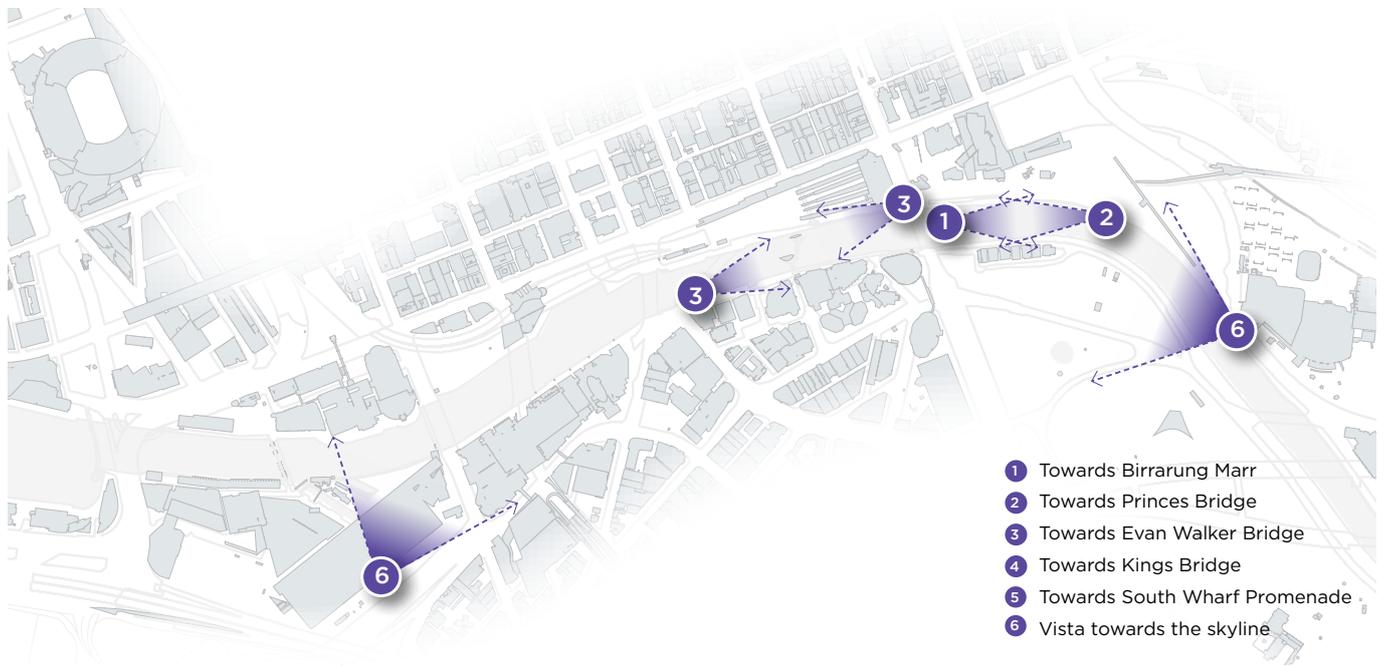


Image 86. A draft suggestion of key City River views that should remain unobstructed.



Image 87. Vista back to the City from the south bank stretch of the City River.

# MOVEMENT: JOURNEY AND CONNECTION



**Rather than just a corridor to swiftly move through, the river becomes an important destination and place to enjoy the journey away from the intensity and rush of the urban centre. Through improved access to and along the waterfront, the river will provide the natural complement to the fast pace of the City and Southbank.**

## Background

The City River offers a unique setting and being lineal in nature is a key drawcard for many users wishing to both connect with other destinations and enjoy the river environs. Consequently, the waterfront currently accommodates significant volumes of both pedestrians and cyclists. These two broad categories of users, have very different needs and expectations. Pedestrians using the river include those walking for leisure, transport, running, jogging and walking dogs. Cyclists cover people riding bicycles for recreation and commuting, in groups or individually. The intensity and movement patterns vary greatly across and within these groups. As such, conflict between users sometimes occurs and consequently the overall experience of the waterfront is negatively impacted.

The fundamental issue is that the riverfront is currently pressured to accommodate both 'place' and high speed, commuter functions within a constrained environment. Some spaces currently have greater focus on movement (e.g. Southbank East and Northbank East) whilst others are primarily destinations (e.g. Southbank Promenade and Batman Park). The primary or priority purpose of these areas is unclear, and sometimes the place and movement functions appear to conflict, as is the case of Southbank Promenade where the destination value is diminished by its role as one of Melbourne's busiest bicycle commuter routes. This issue has been a concern of Southbank residents and retailers for many years, and some minor solutions have been incorporated in an attempt to slow cyclists but have not yet successfully resolved this issue.

Despite the number of assets within the river environs, there also exist challenges relating to surrounding rail and road infrastructure that hinder easy access to and enjoyable movement along the river. The section from Northbank West to Banana Alley features a particularly poor level of connectivity due to numerous, major traffic barriers that avert creation of a continuous link. The physical conditioning of pathways, extent of universal accessibility and the lack of a coherent wayfinding and signage is a further compounding issue. A particularly challenged setting for easy movement is the physical environment of Banana Alley that features steep level changes, uneven paving, a range of signage and on-grade car parking.

In terms of on-water movement, there is unrealised potential for non-motorised crafts along the river with only one landing site. There lies much opportunity to include better facilities for non-motorised watercrafts such as kayaks and canoes with additional public launch and mooring sites. There are also numerous private, exclusive berths with extended overnight berthing arrangements that could perhaps be consolidated and better located to maximise public benefit in this central city location.



Image 89. Commuter cyclists along Southbank



Image 90.

Image 88. View from Sandridge Bridge across to Queensbridge square including the red steps.

## Existing conditions

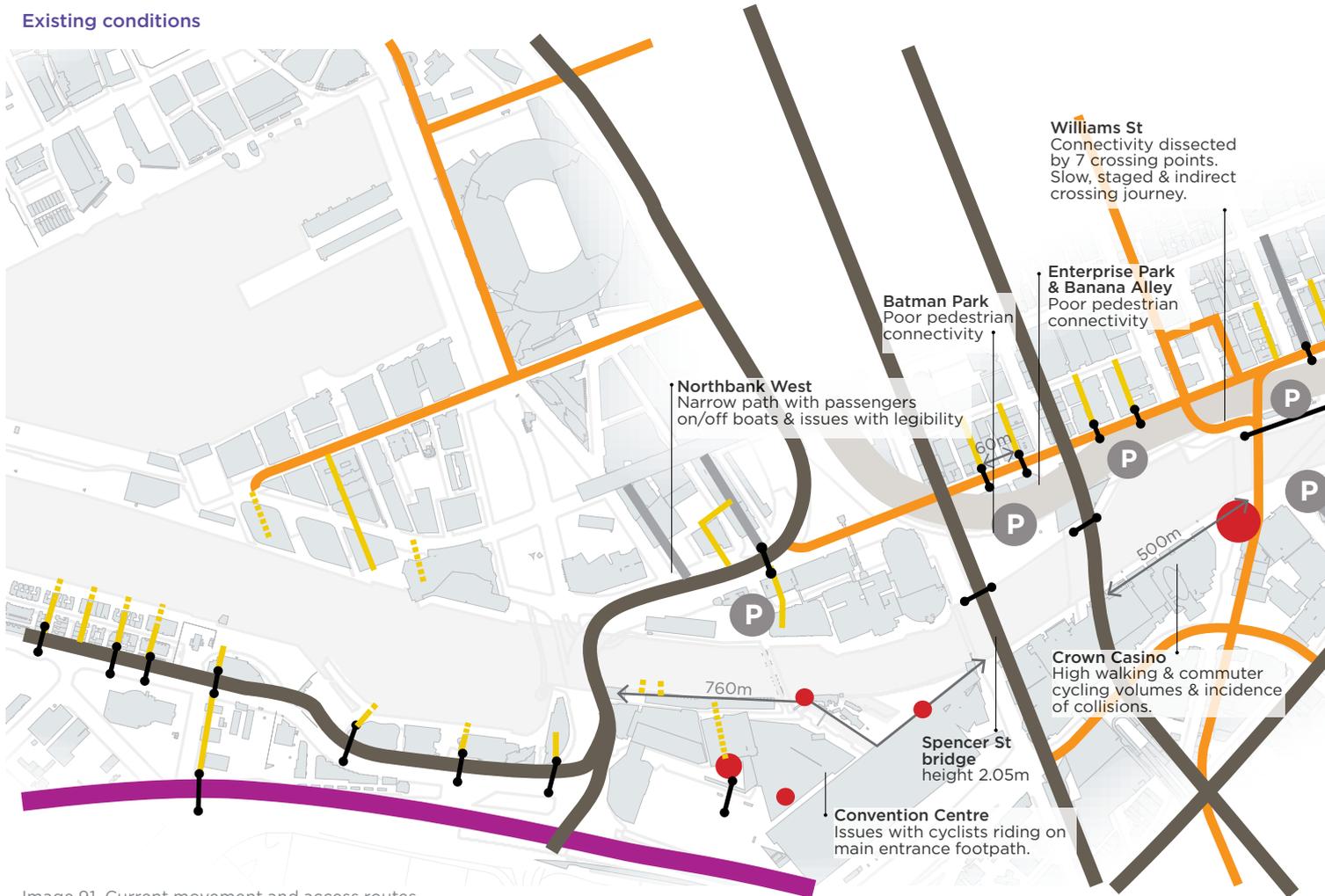


Image 91. Current movement and access routes.

**Existing conditions**

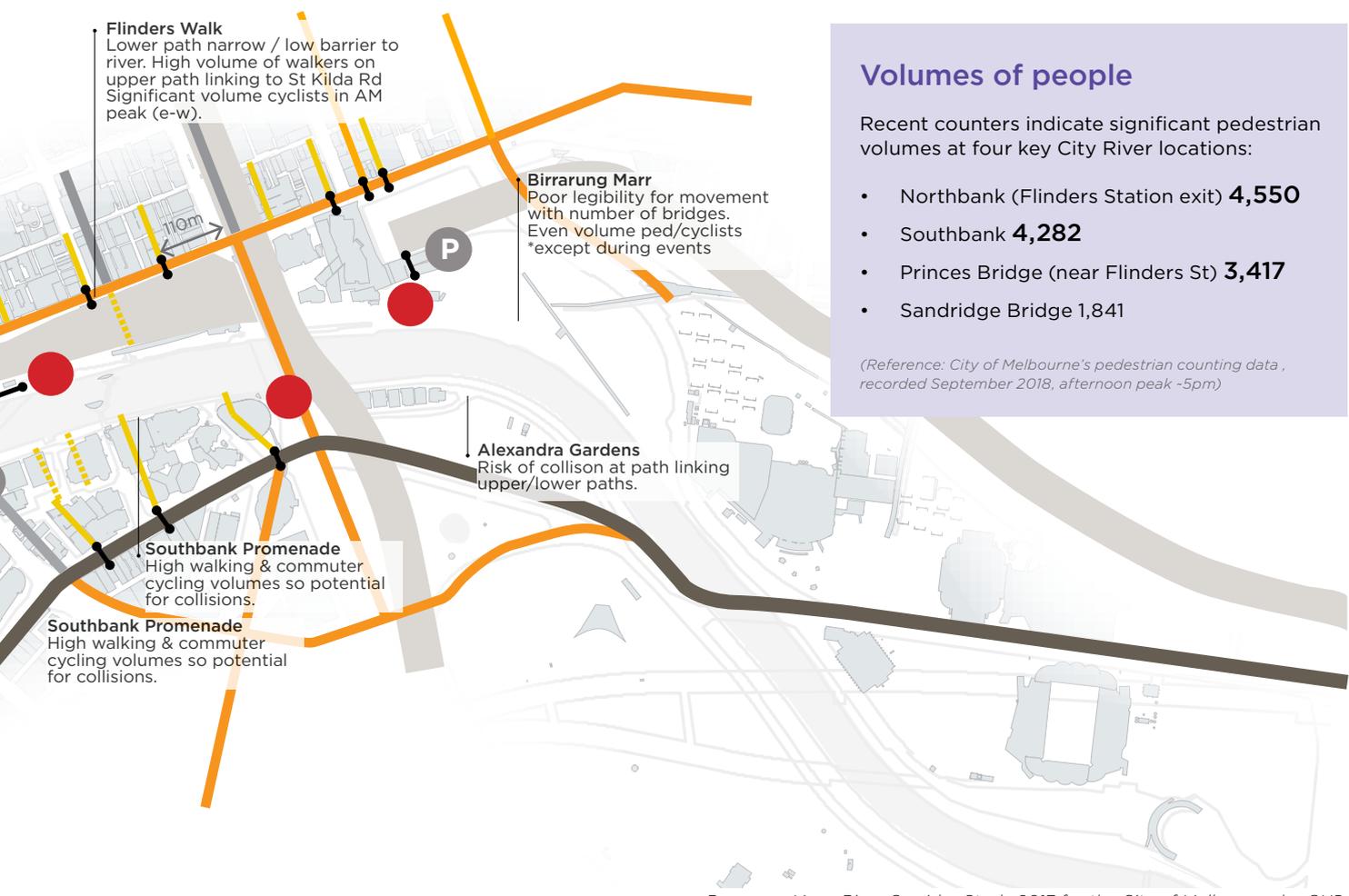
**5** knot/hr  
Speed

**23**  
Fishing & berthing facilities

**1** Landing  
Passive crafts

### Key

- Freeway
- Arterial roads
- Council Major roads
- Council roads
- North-south Local Roads / laneways
- N/S Pedestrian access
- Rail infrastructure
- P Carparking in waterfront zone
- High modal conflict areas
- Pedestrian route gaps (barriers)



### Volumes of people

Recent counters indicate significant pedestrian volumes at four key City River locations:

- Northbank (Flinders Station exit) **4,550**
- Southbank **4,282**
- Princes Bridge (near Flinders St) **3,417**
- Sandridge Bridge 1,841

*(Reference: City of Melbourne's pedestrian counting data, recorded September 2018, afternoon peak -5pm)*

Resource: Yarra River Corridor Study 2013 for the City of Melbourne by GHD.

## Key challenges

Key access and movement challenges are defined below:

- Many cyclists travel at speed, despite speed limits signage, yellow strips, with numerous sites where modal conflict occurs, particularly along Southbank Promenade and Crown Casino.
- Lack of awareness and compliance of shared paths and spaces and lack of clarity of who has priority.
- Poor level of pedestrian connectivity due to major traffic barriers along the section from Northbank West to Banana Alley.
- Numerous pathways with a gradient steeper than 1:14 averting access for all.
- Numerous instances of visible, at-grade carparking immediate to the riverfront. compromising amenity and character.
- Constrained access to the riverfront from the Central City, especially to Northbank west.
- Narrow paths where often widening would risk loss of trees or lighting and insufficient sightlines for both cyclists and walkers.
- Poor physical pathway conditions and lack of a coherent wayfinding and signage approach.
- Numerous private berths and extended overnight berthing arrangements.
- Unsafe lighting and poor levels of illumination along waterfront pathways.

## Strategic Directions

The following key strategic directions guide appropriate actions for improving safe, continuous movement and access for all City River users.

### MOVEMENT STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1

## Slow

Distinguish the river as a slower paced environment by creating safe, alternative north and south bicycle routes.

The riverfront is an important recreational asset of natural beauty, a place to wander, rest and observe. It is important that these values are protected by adopting an enduring approach to remedying movement issues along the riverfront. The main cause of modal conflict along the riverfront is the mixing of commuting and recreational users. There is a strong differentiation between the needs and behaviour of walkers and commuting cyclists with the principal issue being one of speed. Shared paths are designed to support slow speeds, whereas commuter cycling is focused on high speeds.

The spatial constraints of our city riverfront further exacerbate this issue. The Northbank is well serviced by public transport, however, the location of Flinders Street and surrounding road infrastructure to the west, has created a particularly narrow river corridor for movement and access. Current pathways, which are as narrow as 2m along Flinders Walk, are too restrictive for the passage of multiple modes. Furthermore the corridor width doesn't allow for separate cycle pathways, away from key pedestrian areas.

As a key destination that primarily functions as a 'place' rather than a movement corridor, we recommend promoting travelling along the river and its edges at a slower pace, enabling time to appreciate the key views and diverse spaces. This would be consistent with the 5 knot zone (fast walking speed) defined for the waterways.

While it is recognised that the current conditions are not ideal for commuter cyclists, it is important to acknowledge that the Yarra River corridor has long been seen as a commuter cycling route in strategic documents, and significant improvements have been made to riverfront cycle paths leading to the city. The fact that the bicycle

network does not currently provide a suitable alternative commuter cycle route at present is also critical. However, investigating opportunities within the wider bicycle network, including new commuting connections with the river corridor could offer a solution.

### **M1A: Reduce modal conflicts through development of a safe, alternative Northbank bicycle route.**

We propose interrogation into a safe, comfortable, and connected alternative bicycle route on the northern, central city side of the river to provide a viable, preferable alternative to the river promenade for fast cyclists. The alternate route must perform well against three key objectives of: connectivity (easy access to other routes); speediness (offers a quick journey with minimal delays); and safety (separation between vehicles and pedestrians).

A potential future route for cyclists, particularly commuter cyclists, could be Flinders Street via Batman Avenue. This would address the poor level of connectivity along the section from Northbank West through to Banana Alley. Flinders Street holds great potential to be an optimal alternate route because it is not a local route; there is a current lack of east-west connections in the southern portion CBD; it features a flatter, topographical alignment; and Flinders Street holds the opportunity for complete separation from vehicles, alongside better connectivity with key cycling routes in the south-west such as Harbour Esplanade. While entailing significant changes to the existing streetscape, including the potential removal of mature trees and redesign of tram stops, Flinders Street holds the potential for a long term solution of the issue, rather than ongoing management of conflict between modes.

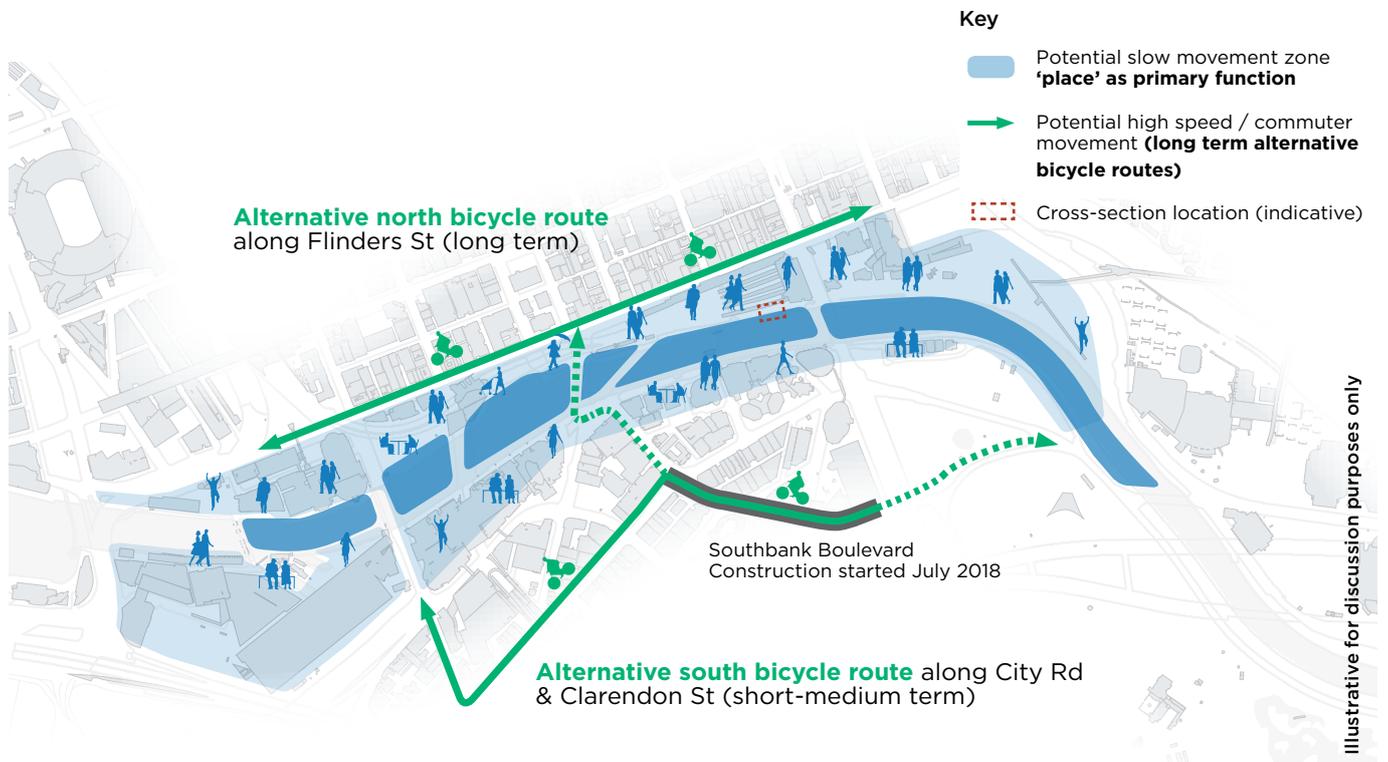


Image 92. Potential locations for alternative north and south bicycle routes (Illustrative for discussion purposes only).

**M1B: Continue delivery of the alternative Southbank bicycle route.**

The investigation into an alternative Southbank Promenade route diverting from along the waterfront to alternately follow Alexandra Avenue, City Road to Clarendon Street has been proposed by numerous policy documents. These include the Southbank Structure Plan 2010 and the Bicycle Plan 2016-2020 which introduces the action of a long term preferred alternative bike route, noting the current development of Southbank Boulevard as an interim route, with City Road a more appropriate long term solution. Major upgrade works to Southbank Boulevard are currently underway however, to complete the route requires delivery of the Alexandra Avenue, City Road, Linlithgow Avenue and Clarendon Street segments. The redevelopment of City Road is also a key recommendation of the Southbank Structure Plan 2010, including the provision of separated bicycle lanes running the length of City Road and Clarendon Street that should be delivered.



Image 93. Typical cross-section of Flinders walk, lower river path, highlighting the spatial constraints

## Integrated

Transform the condition of key 'barriers' to address the gaps to the north-west and integrate access with the City.

Easy and direct access from the central city to the river and continuous movement along the waterfront is impeded by the condition of key surrounding routes. The positioning of major road connections, substantial developments, and car parks has compromised access along and to the waterfront area.

The Docklands area has long been perceived as separate, rather than an extension to the central city and the connectivity issues impose further isolation. Northbank west (Docklands to Spencer St) is bound by arterial roads and the public environment is essentially a vehicular corridor carrying high volumes of traffic between Docklands and the West Gate Freeway. Wurundjeri Way is a major hindrance to access between Docklands and the Yarra River with the complex road arrangement and speed of traffic detracting from the amenity of the area. Pedestrian crossings are also far apart and the alignments provide extended crossing distances. Siddeley Street is currently not a safe alternative due to the vehicular traffic and bluestone paving making this a hazardous option.

Batman and Enterprize Park are particularly disconnected with notable gaps to continuous east west movement along the waterfront. Bound on all sides by the major barriers of two major arterial roads and two overhead rail viaducts, this physical and visual disconnection from the city discourages park use. A quality walking environment is impeded by "dog-leg" crossings and multiple crossing stages. Lack of wayfinding and the poor quality public realm further compound the accessibility issue.

### **M2A: Better integrate pathways along and leading to the waterfront by creating direct crossing arrangements and amenity improvements.**

Flinders Street, Williams Street, King Street, Spencer Street, Wurundjeri Way and the railway corridor currently act as visual and physical barriers to integrated access. Converting, where possible, the conditions of these mini motorways into more pedestrian friendly environments that feature improved visual and physical qualities would vastly improve access to and along the waterfront. This aligns with City of Melbourne's current work being completed to transform Southbank Boulevard and Dodds Street into a pedestrian friendly place and improve connectivity between the Domain Parklands and Yarra River.

Some minor interventions, offering immediate resolution, could be made at Queensbridge Street, Kings Way, Spencer Street and Russell Street such as planting trees, widening kerbs and realigning paths to create more direct crossings. More long-term, major transformations could include changing the free flow arrangement at Queen's Bridge and Williams Street to remove the multiple western lanes leading to Williams Street, enabling extension of the Park and creating a better connectivity to and along the waterfront. Investigation into the possibility of lowering Wurundjeri Way to create a safer, higher amenity and more direct pedestrian link across to Docklands is also worth encouraging. A key factor to consider is that Wurundjeri Way is an important heavy vehicle route and popular alternative to the CityLink Tunnel and Bolte Bridge. Also any proposed changes would need to be assessed and approved by VicRoads.

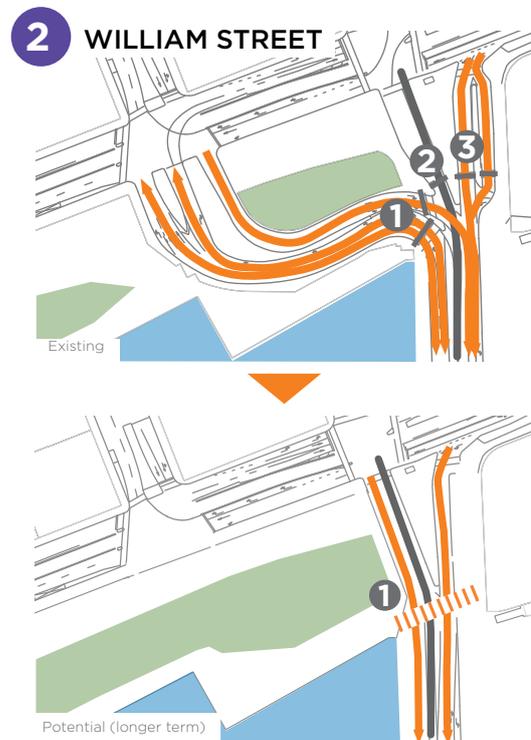


Image 94. Williams Street existing conditions with multiple crossing stages and potential major transformation to simplify the arrangement.

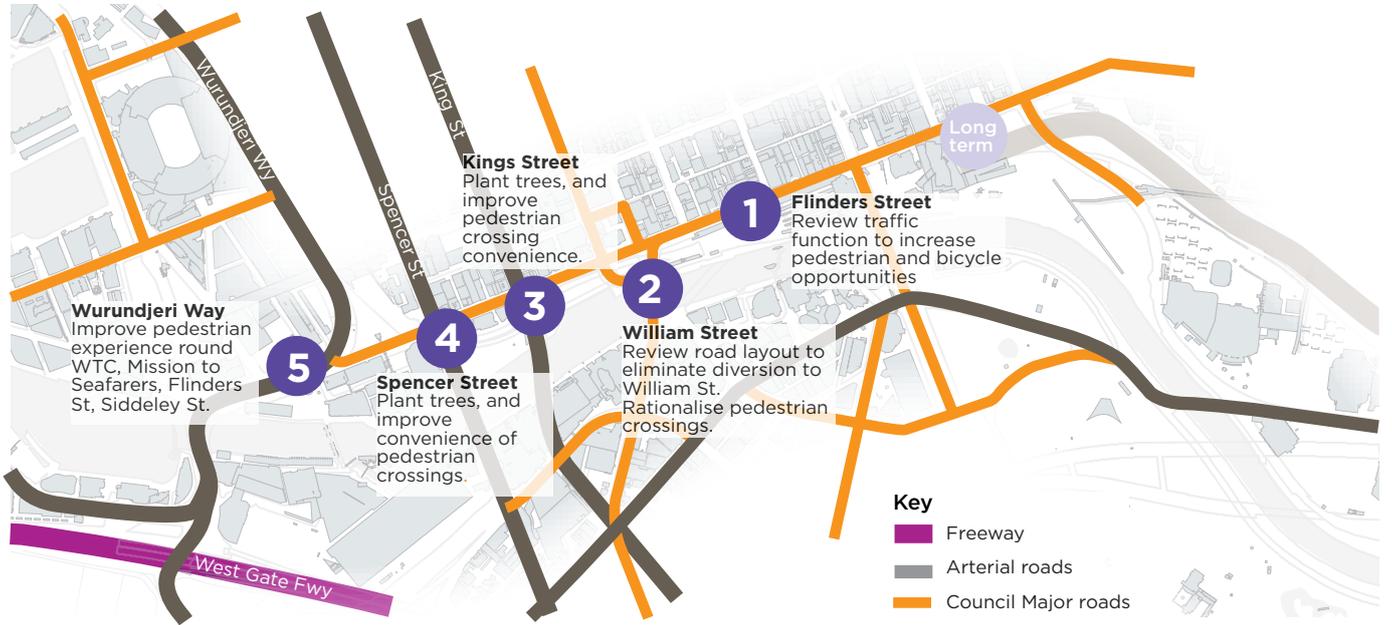


Image 95. Improve conditions of these key barriers to improve access to the waterfront.



Image 96. Kings Street improved path and crossing alignment, kerb outstands and additional street trees (Illustrative for discussion purposes only).



Image 97. Spencer Street improved crossing alignment, kerb outstands and additional street trees (Illustrative for discussion purposes only).

## Accessible

Raise the quality and universal accessibility  
of riverfront pathways.

The maintenance, conditioning and safety of pathways varies considerably along the City River corridor. The materials and detailed design of the pedestrian environment in some areas is of a high quality, however the linking areas adjoining these spaces is generally poor. There are also some materials not fit for purpose. For instance the precast pavers are not sufficient for events loading and others offer limited environmental benefit.

Numerous pathways and bridges along the river feature challenging level changes, both limiting access for all and creating safety hazards. Examples include disappearing edges, excessive crossfalls which do not meet accessibility standards and vertical access issues. Access between the western footpath of St Kilda Road and the river's edge is currently limited to a series of staircases. Once along Flinders Walk there are also several areas within the steep gradient category, that are steeper than 1:14. The journey down to Banana Alley from the eastern approach involves a particularly steep grade on an uneven surface (Refer Figure 100).

### **M3A: Deliver universal accessibility at key waterfront access points.**

Universal accessibility to and along the water's edge, including access for people with physical limitations, needs to be provided. All walkways must meet accessibility standards. A series of access improvements, including universally accessible ramps, walkways and elevators needed in numerous areas to ensure easy access for everyone, and to improve the function and commercial viability of the riverfront. Key waterfront access points that should be prioritised for better accessibility include addressing the steep transition from Banana Alley to Les Erdi Plaza and access from the north-western side of Princes Bridge down to Flinders Walk.

### **M3B: Develop a wayfinding and signage strategy to ensure easy waterfront navigation.**

Wayfinding is the way we navigate our environment using sensory cues, spatial arrangements, built form, landmarks and where necessary, signage. Currently a wide spectrum of behavioural and directional type signs are provided across the river corridor with considerable variation in the style of the behavioural signage. In specific locations existing signage creates confusion rather than providing clarity for behavioural expectation.

The Yarra River corridor has the potential to feature a coherent and legible wayfinding and signage approach. Development of a strategy would address the distinctiveness and personality of the different spaces. Better pedestrian connections and signage to the river will help all to enjoy the river more. A wayfinding and signage strategy could potentially cover and co-ordinate three signage types: Destination signs; Directional and orientation signs; and Behavioural signs.

### **M3C: Ensure pathway widths, physical conditioning and maintenance safely caters for everyone.**

After decades of wear and tear there are numerous pathways along the riverfront due for renewal. Existing tree placement, bins, bollards, light poles, stairs, bridge landings often reduce useable circulation space and visibility in key areas and the worn condition negatively impacts the riverfront experience. Intense pedestrian flows in peak periods and the impact buskers have on movement of all users of the corridor, particularly along Southbank Promenade and Crown Casino, which generate crowds and impede the flow of users are particular areas where pathways capacity is critical.

A detailed audit of existing conditioning and capacity issues is recommended and then staged renewal of all paving, lighting and street furniture with material selection and furniture placement coordinated by a technical guide for waterfront treatment (refer discussion in PLACE Strategic Direction 5: P5B)

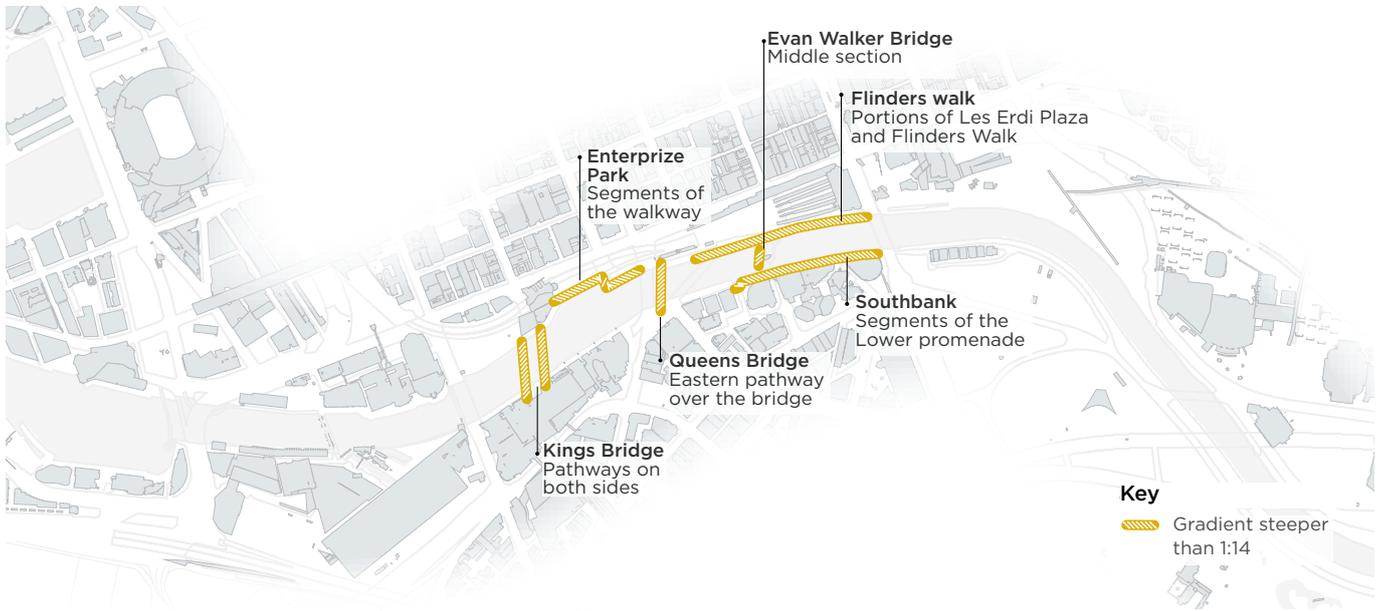


Image 98. Public realm areas of the waterfront with gradients steeper than 1:14.



Image 99. Access to northbank west from Princes Bridge is not universally accessible.



Image 100. The ground surface and level changes create challenging access arrangements from Les Erdi plaza down to Banana Alley.

## Diverse water activity

Encourage more water related activity and greater diversity of vessels, particularly more non-motorised crafts.

Activities provided by the water environment should supplement the city centre so that the waterfront becomes a valuable extension of the city. The physical water provides an excellent opportunity for introducing more recreational and water related activities to enrich the experiences of an active waterfront.

There are currently 17 berths within the central city area, including eight private, exclusive berths. There is only one landing site for non-motorised watercrafts located on the eastern southbank and one fishing platform, which is located even further east along the southbank. These existing activities provide water activation but need to be carefully managed and balanced against other uses of the river.

The commercial berthing arrangements have a strong visual presence around Banana Alley, particularly with extended overnight berthing arrangements. It appears that the capacity for these commercial vessels is frequently underutilised and they are often just sitting dormant in prime city waterfront sites.

### **M4A: Seek diversification of vessels, operators and encourage more non-motorised water transport use.**

It is recommended that water-related activities, which generate life over longer periods are encouraged. The introduction of more programs and activities to the water is a further necessity. Activities could include boat rentals, fishing station and opportunities to experience the water. The Yarra is currently host to an established rowing community and is world renowned as a rowing circuit. This reputation is one that we wish to support and build upon. There also lies much opportunity to include better facilities for other non-motorised watercrafts such as kayaks and canoes with additional public launch and mooring sites, particularly from the Northbank so people would have immediate access to the central city.

### **M4B: Consolidate central city berths and reduce exclusive berths in the longer term**

The overnighting of vessels, or long term berthing of vessels which are decommissioned or under repair, should ideally take place at less prominent and valuable locations other than the central city, such as down the river at Yarra's Edge, as tides permit. The provision of a shared infrastructure 'maritime precinct' for vessel fuelling, maintenance or longer term repair outside of public areas would encourage this outcome.

Consolidating existing exclusive central city berths and changing these, where appropriate, to quick stop berths is a further suggestion for consideration. The *Lower Yarra River Management Advisory Committee* has been tasked with working on improvements to governing arrangements and management of the Lower Yarra River and strategic direction on the allocation of the commercial berths.

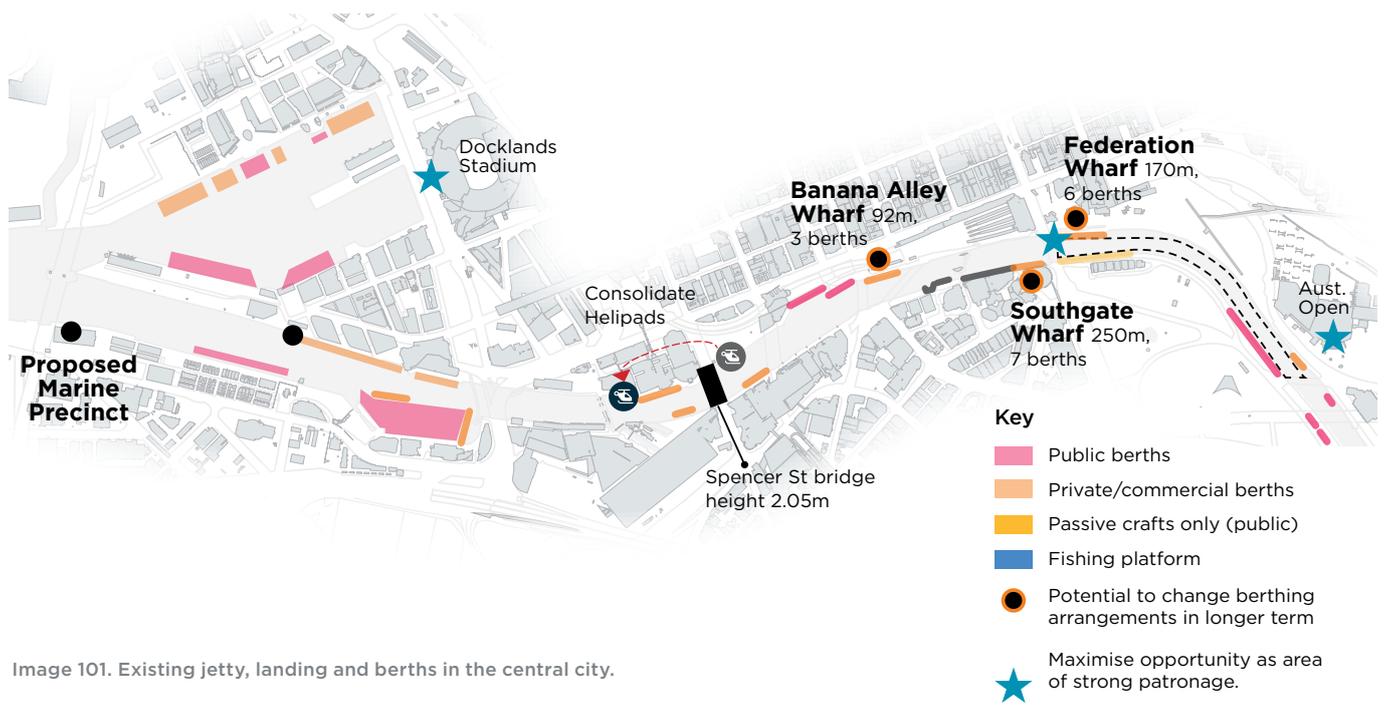


Image 101. Existing jetty, landing and berths in the central city.



Image 102. Encourage more passive water crafts such as kayaks.



Image 103. Banana Alley Wharf,

# STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS IN SUMMARY

## SUMMARY OF DRAFT KEY STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

### CULTURE

#### Heritage and Narrative

#### Collaborative

Establish a protocol for on-going collaboration with Traditional Owner groups to help tell the story of the Aboriginal connection to the Birrarung.

**C1A** Establish a protocol for on-going collaboration with the Traditional Owner groups to establish an Aboriginal cultural narrative of the Birrarung.

**C1B** Commission further research of historical data with a focus on the botanical aspects of Indigenous vegetation

#### Visible

Increase the public visibility of Aboriginal intangible heritage and the history of the Birrarung through interpretation and information.

**C2A** Increase the public visibility of the Aboriginal history of the Birrarung through information and interpretation.

**C2B** Recognise the historical and Aboriginal cultural importance of the Yarro Yarro Falls.

#### Maritime

Recognise the historical and contemporary importance of the maritime uses of the Birrarung.

**C3A** Recognise the historical and contemporary importance of the maritime history of the Birrarung.

### ECOLOGY

#### Habitat and Water

#### Riparian greening

Re-introduce a riparian zone to improve water habitat, biodiversity and create a healthy river ecosystem.

**E1A** Introduce riparian vegetation to shallow sections of the river.

**E1B** Create floating habitat in the urbanised river sections.

#### Ecologically connected

Optimise the urban vegetation along the river banks prioritising an Indigenous palette to improve local biodiversity and ecological networks.

**E2A** Prioritise a diverse landscape palette with a native focus on the river banks.

**E2B** Encourage a wildlife corridor along the river that connects city users with nature.

**E2C** Create saltmarsh habitat conditions to attract a selection of wetland birds.

#### Resilient

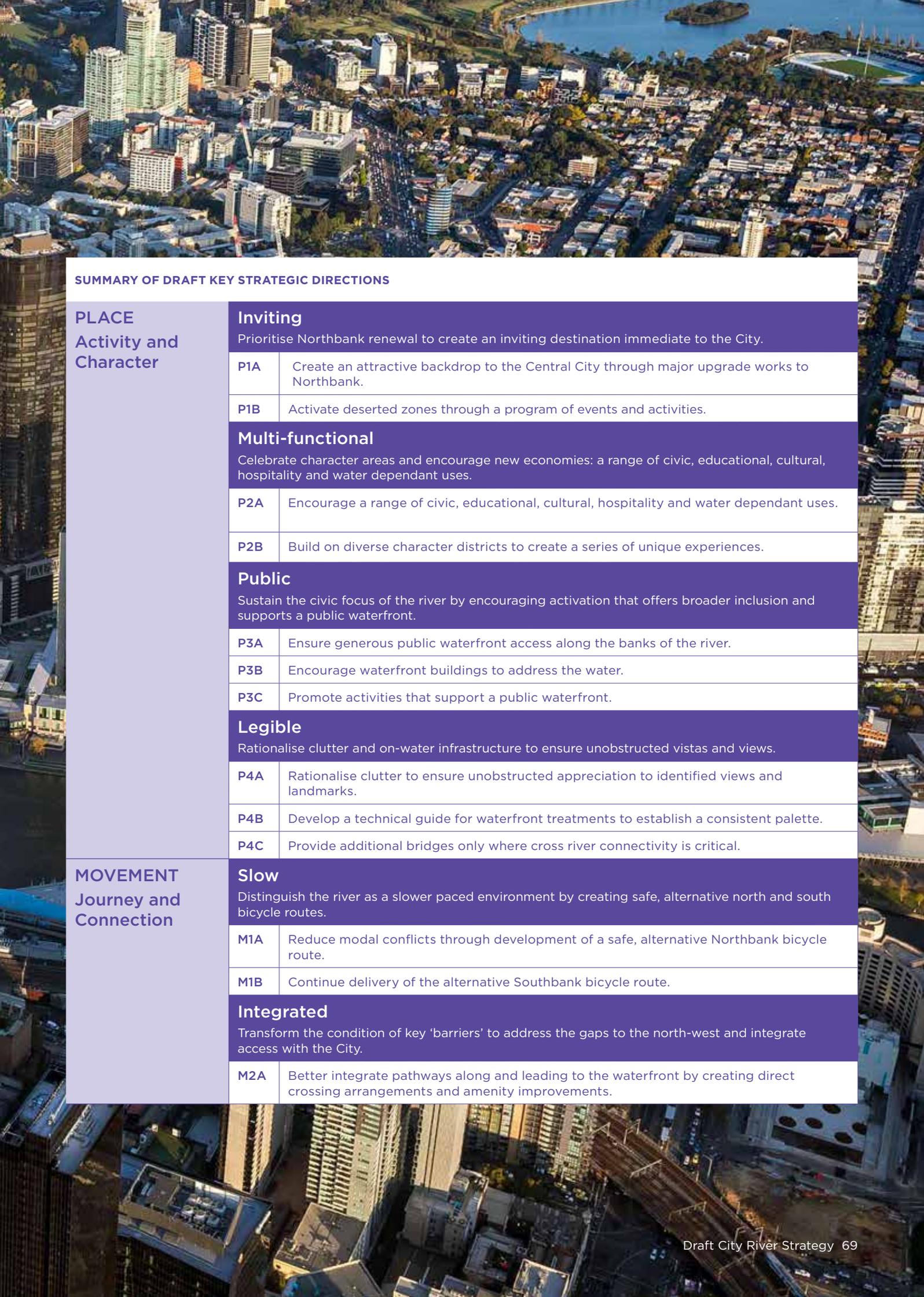
Address flood risk and improve water quality

**E3A** Investigate the reinstatement of the Falls to provide fresh water closer to the central city.

**E3B** Explore potential water retention measures in public spaces on the river edge.

**E3C** Include water sensitive urban design (WSUD) and other initiatives in the river precinct to improve water quality.

Image 104. Aerial view of the Birrarung looking south from the City.



**SUMMARY OF DRAFT KEY STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS**

**PLACE  
Activity and  
Character**

**Inviting**

Prioritise Northbank renewal to create an inviting destination immediate to the City.

**P1A** Create an attractive backdrop to the Central City through major upgrade works to Northbank.

**P1B** Activate deserted zones through a program of events and activities.

**Multi-functional**

Celebrate character areas and encourage new economies: a range of civic, educational, cultural, hospitality and water dependant uses.

**P2A** Encourage a range of civic, educational, cultural, hospitality and water dependant uses.

**P2B** Build on diverse character districts to create a series of unique experiences.

**Public**

Sustain the civic focus of the river by encouraging activation that offers broader inclusion and supports a public waterfront.

**P3A** Ensure generous public waterfront access along the banks of the river.

**P3B** Encourage waterfront buildings to address the water.

**P3C** Promote activities that support a public waterfront.

**Legible**

Rationalise clutter and on-water infrastructure to ensure unobstructed vistas and views.

**P4A** Rationalise clutter to ensure unobstructed appreciation to identified views and landmarks.

**P4B** Develop a technical guide for waterfront treatments to establish a consistent palette.

**P4C** Provide additional bridges only where cross river connectivity is critical.

**MOVEMENT  
Journey and  
Connection**

**Slow**

Distinguish the river as a slower paced environment by creating safe, alternative north and south bicycle routes.

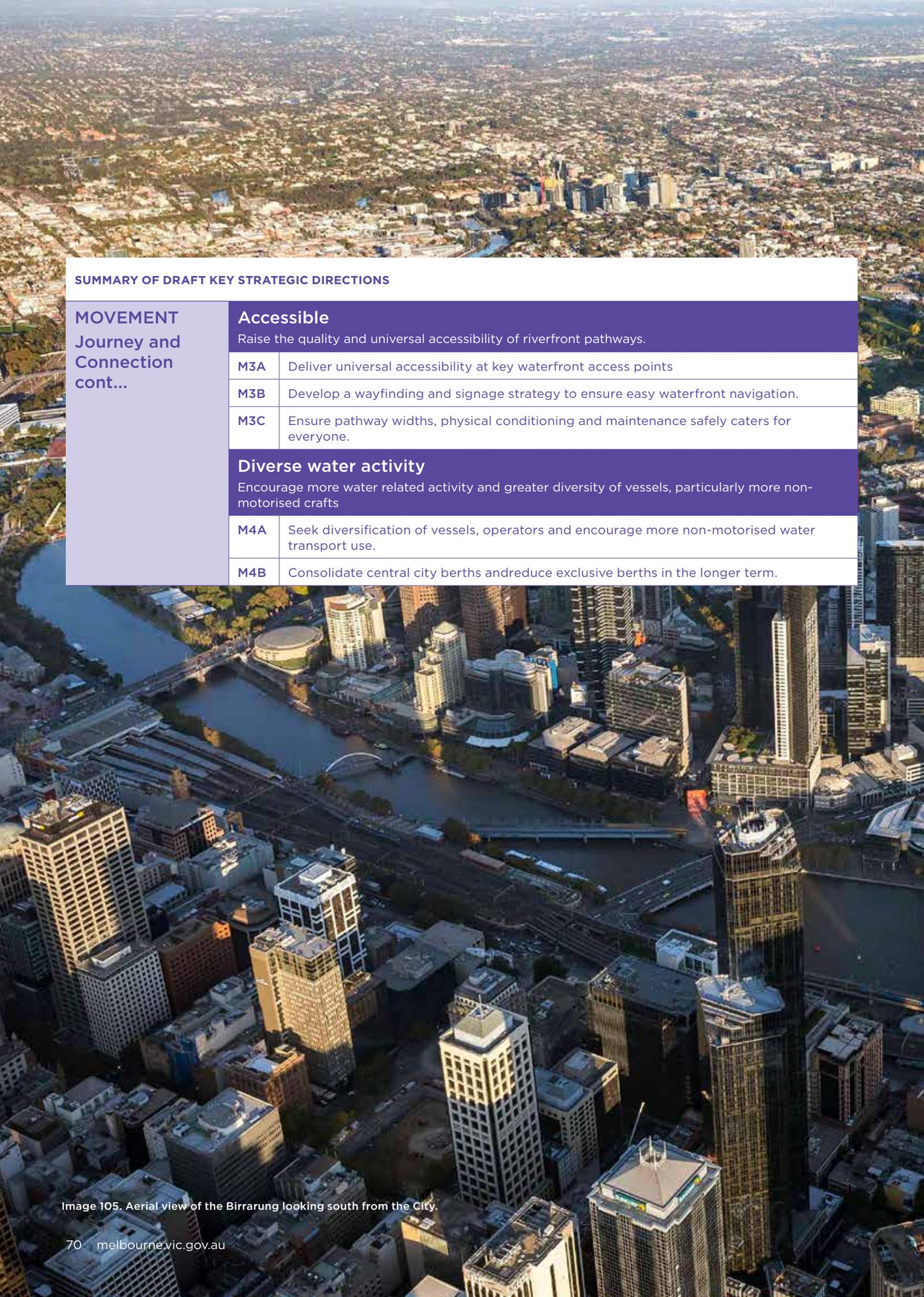
**M1A** Reduce modal conflicts through development of a safe, alternative Northbank bicycle route.

**M1B** Continue delivery of the alternative Southbank bicycle route.

**Integrated**

Transform the condition of key 'barriers' to address the gaps to the north-west and integrate access with the City.

**M2A** Better integrate pathways along and leading to the waterfront by creating direct crossing arrangements and amenity improvements.



## SUMMARY OF DRAFT KEY STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

### MOVEMENT Journey and Connection cont...

#### Accessible

Raise the quality and universal accessibility of riverfront pathways.

M3A	Deliver universal accessibility at key waterfront access points
M3B	Develop a wayfinding and signage strategy to ensure easy waterfront navigation.
M3C	Ensure pathway widths, physical conditioning and maintenance safely caters for everyone.

#### Diverse water activity

Encourage more water related activity and greater diversity of vessels, particularly more non-motorised crafts

M4A	Seek diversification of vessels, operators and encourage more non-motorised water transport use.
M4B	Consolidate central city berths and reduce exclusive berths in the longer term.

Image 105. Aerial view of the Birrarung looking south from the City.



# NEXT STEPS

The successful delivery of a renewed central city waterfront, an expression of the values covered within this Strategy, will require coordination and funding across a number of different stakeholders. The first step in creating a platform for cooperation will be gaining support for the Strategic Directions proposed in this Draft Strategy. Bringing the ideas of all external stakeholders together will work towards gaining the necessary encouragement for ongoing research, discussion and engagement to identify further issues and opportunities as this project evolves.

## How to contact us

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