



IMAGINE  
THE YARRA

# DRAFT YARRA STRATEGIC PLAN

## PUBLIC CONSULTATION

### SUBMISSION COVER SHEET

<b>Submission Number:</b>	215070
<b>Name (Individual/Organisation):</b>	Individual
<b>Attachments:</b>	Attachment 1 – Written submission

# Draft Yarra Strategic Plan Submission

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I live in North Warrandyte where I have raised a family these past 35 years. I myself was raised in North Balwyn overlooking the Yarra floodplains, Ivanhoe and the Kooyong Creek. I worked in education most of my career including text and resource publication, consulting and teacher education.

I have followed the development of the suite of Yarra Protection Initiatives since its inception several years ago. Until now I have been impressed with the objectives, purpose and content of milestone documents, and have often used sections of the Yarra Protection Act in planning submissions to both Nillumbik and Manningham.

As a young man I witnessed the trashing of the Yarra Flood Plains as first a tip, then a golf course and finally a freeway from my family home in North Balwyn. More recently I have watched as the North East Link Authority justified planned tunnelling works in the face of dire warnings from hydrologists. Hence I have been apprehensive knowing that the high ideals and inspiring principles of early discussions and of the Act must eventually manifest as enforceable planning regulations and single voice commitment to protections. This I had hoped to find encapsulated in the Yarra Strategic Plan

While I appreciate the sentiment of the draft YSP, I am disappointed with the width, depth and likely effect of the proposed regulatory framework. Those of us who are faced on a regular basis with nuanced relaxation of local government protections and private development proposals threatening both the health and aesthetics of the river and its floodplain have been hoping for a framework with real teeth. In general terms I feel that the draft strategy does not do enough to motivate Councils to make enforceable and meaningful amendments that would satisfy the vision of this strategy and the principles of the Act.

I make note the following points with respect to the parts of the Suburban Reach that I know quite well . Insofar as other reaches and general matters are concerned, I support the submission of the Yarra River Keeper Association/Environmental Justice.

## **COMMUNITY VISION**

I support the expansion of parklands but note that existing parks are under strain, not just from the recent drought but also the increased presence of invasive species, especially deer. The strategy should have a sub policy on species control, since it requires the cooperation of parties not integral to the process to date. Notably the CSIRO hunter and Land Care groups.

I support the establishment of new habitat and note that it is an onerous task, supported by volunteers who need to be celebrated and resourced to a greater extent than at present. It would also be helpful if the vision addressed the concept of remnant vegetation and the opportunity to protect and expend these as a priority. Another key concept absent from the vision is the need to manage complementary sites – for example where fish fry are safe as well as where they need to food and mature.

The need for collaborative efforts is a high order priority in the suburban reach. The lack of effective cross river cooperation between Nillumbik and Manningham is noticeable and needs control mechanisms to counter the dominance of self interest – for example competition for the tourist dollar.

There needs to be more collaboration efforts around risk management and environmental protections. An effective strategy would build incentives into the process.

Education initiatives often appear in Council strategies, and may even get funded and implemented but can fall into disrepair and neglect. For example significant state resources were invested in the reclamation of wetlands and riparian woodlands on the Glynn's farm site with a view to developing educational programs which were never designed or implemented. It's not easy to see how the proposed strategy would avoid this occurring again.

### ***MISSING PERSPECTIVES***

The vision so too narrow, and does not extend into the economic or political domains. I understand that economics can be seen as the enemy of environmental strategy, but a well developed economic plan would not only help with the key issues of resource allocation, but also provide a framework for measuring success and attracting benefactors.

A political strategy would establish an order of authority that would provide for settling conflicts between responsible authorities in favour of the Yarra River principles and drag reluctant Councils to cooperate with land use planning. This would be especially effective in an area like Nillumbik and Manningham where pro development and pro environment Councils seem to alternate via some mysterious cycle, with promising strategies (eg Eltham Park Lower 2008) not reaching their potential.

There is insufficient attention to the protection of the tributaries outside of their immediate confluence. In the same way there must be more focus on the eroding wildlife corridors that connect patches of preserved and remnant vegetation with the river.

### ***DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE LAND USE***

Yarra River Land: It's hard to disagree with the five listed points. However I note that Nillumbik's submission is largely concerned with protecting the rights of landowners, whereas there is a strong need to promote and protect the public interest. For example, faced with alleged misbehaviours on the Blue Tongue Bend, Council closed the access road to the public for more than a year. Councils should not have the authority to close off access to suit the interests of landowners arbitrarily like that.

There is also a need to ensure that river access planning takes in 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. I note in this context the Warrandyte riverside walkway where public access next to a bakery has led to native ducks being fed bread which can kill them, with inadequate management of the issue, or the decline of riverside vegetation.

Bush Residential: We have examples upstream of the Warrandyte bridge where landowners have loped trees to improve their view of the water, or built ramps and barbecue facilities on the river bank. There also needs to be reference to the need to compulsorily acquire riverside land in the interests of Yarra Land protection.

Warrandyte Township: The purpose of the first dot point is unclear. The fourth point is also unclear. Is there an intention to develop interpretive material along the walk, in addition to the artist trail on the township walk and Wurundjeri story at Pound Bend? No mention of the heritage values of the Warrandyte township and the threats posed by, for example, recent relaxation of parking space requirements for new and established businesses.

The township definitely needs stronger protections as landowners seek to intensify land use and business operators seek to expand in ways that do not always respect the cultural, historic and aesthetic values of the river, noticeably views from the opposite bank which are controlled by a separate Council.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit. I have raised many of these issues in local meetings and workshops over the years. Sorry to see they are not built into the strategy. I remain concerned that Councils can propose controls that not persuasive when it comes to contests in VCAT and the Courts.

