



IMAGINE  
THE YARRA

# DRAFT YARRA STRATEGIC PLAN PUBLIC CONSULTATION

## SUBMISSION COVER SHEET

<b>Submission Number:</b>	YSP28
<b>Name (Individual/Organisation):</b>	Individual
<b>Attachments:</b>	Attachment 1 – Written submission



## SUBMISSION ON THE YARRA STRATEGIC PLAN FROM [REDACTED] – 29 March 2020

Twelve years ago I retired to Eltham, attracted to the area by its parks and the Yarra River environs. I am a very frequent local user of Eltham Lower Park as a walker and nature lover, and ride my bike along the river and up the Diamond Creek Trail. I love my river experiences, and believe that just as the Yarra river and its corridors inspire, delight, calm, and nourish us, respect and care must be their due.

So it is pleasing that the Yarra River Protection Act of 2017 states in the Preamble:

***It is the intention of the Parliament that the Yarra River is kept alive and healthy for the benefit of future generations. This Act recognises the intrinsic connection of the traditional owners to the Yarra River and its Country and further recognises them as the custodians of the land and waterway which they call Birrarung.***

I would like to thank the Collaborative Panel and the authors of the Yarra Strategic Plan, who have begun the process of implementing the Act's intention. The consultative work between panel members has produced a far reaching, historic document providing a great deal of information and wonderful pictures!

"10 Year Objectives" (For the whole of the river)

Pleasingly, "A healthy river" is set first in YSP's list of 10 year performance objectives, since the other objectives depend on the river's health.

- 1] ***A healthy river and lands***
- 2] ***A culturally diverse river corridor***
- 3] ***Quality parklands for a growing population***
- 4] ***Protecting the natural beauty of the Yarra River corridor***

The history of the River Yarra shows that man has always viewed it as a resource to be used: the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung people trapped eels sustainably, but then the settler farmers cropped and grazed its floodplains, industrialists utilised its waters and developers changed its course, and so it is heartening to read these 4 objectives in the draft YSP which promise to redress the balance and offer real change and commitment to the ongoing protection and care of the river

My neighbourhood of Eltham falls within the “Suburban Reach” section of the plan, and I refer to this area specifically as it is the one I know best.

#### Suburban Reach 50 Year Community Vision

I find the first clause in the Suburban Reach 50 year community vision (Part 2B page 98) is confusing and contradictory:

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

While a continuous network of parklands *should* potentially increase biodiversity and river health, surely this would not be the case if there were ***“inclusive access to all”***, which I would interpret to mean a continuous asphalted track? I do not believe that impermeable surfaces (and their construction and maintenance) can

enhance vegetation, water quality, fauna or the river. Asphalted paths certainly encourage cyclists to speed! If we want to support biodiversity in the river corridors we need to ensure that access is carefully and strategically designed with the river's health as the primary concern. Consideration of the topography of the area, its existing vegetation and fauna, the extent of nearby development and local character should also be part of that process. So my vision would be that any new paths to access scenic lookouts or to expand "***natural river tracks***" along the river would be evaluated using those criteria. Access to the river is not our right or entitlement.

### Access

I have a particular interest in Eltham Lower Park, with its beautiful river views from the pedestrian bridge and the Lenister Farm area. Friends of Eltham Lower Park have been campaigning to keep the bush character of the park since 2016, and also to prevent the Diamond Valley Miniature Railway's (DVR's) proposed "Yarra Landing Extension". The threat of railway tracks running down to the Yarra, and along the top of the wetlands is a real one given Nillumbik Council's focus on the development of tourism in the Shire. DVR's kind of "access for all" would interrupt wildlife corridors, drive railway tracks and fences across landscape views, require removal of trees (for public health and safety reasons), disturb catchment flow, and compact soil.

The Yarra River/Diamond Creek confluence is in the Lenister Farm area, and there is also a connection to Thomas Bungaleen\*, which amply justifies investigation of this area by the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation as a potential "significant place" or Wurundjeri Woi wurrung area for protection within the YSP. A cultural trail, with a revegetation programme, designed in collaboration with the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and facilitated by the Birrarung

Rangers would deepen community understanding and respect for the river, its history and its future, and strengthen the vegetation and biodiversity of the Diamond Creek and Yarra River catchment. Such an initiative ties in with the following clause of the “50 Year Vision”:

• ***Explore opportunities for community education and connection to Wurundjeri knowledge and cultural practice and significant sites.***

It would also be a sustainable and river sustaining “access” alternative to the intrusion of railways tracks (or BOAT RAMPS as mooted by one Councillor at the Future Nillumbik Council Meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2020!) and fits with all four “10 Year Performance Objectives”.

#### Nillumbik Shire Council’s Submission to the YSP

Even though Nillumbik is a member of the Collaborative Committee which crafted the YSP, Nillumbik has put in a submission requiring change to the plan:

***Further actions should be introduced into the draft Plan, to ensure that the Yarra River environs are made more accessible...new connections to access the Yarra River (and Corridor), above and beyond those identified in existing recreational trail networks and strategies (used to inform the preparation of the draft Plan). Opportunities could and should be sought in 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.***

As mentioned above, the possibility of “boat ramps” on the river were mentioned in relation to Nillumbik’s submission to the YSP. This implies the need for vehicle access - yet in the Eltham area the touchpoints to the river: at Eltham Lower Park, Griffiths Park, Sweeney’s Flats (a misnomer!) and Reynolds Road, vehicle

access would be very steep, the surroundings are well vegetated and there are established trees: good catchment/corridor lands. This Council is extremely cautious about allowing large trees near to trails and areas of high usage, and in fact a number were removed from Eltham Lower Park in December 2018. Boat ramps, additional trails and new recreational and leisure pursuits in Nillumbik would very likely all mean tree removal and yes, open spaces.

### Opportunities for Future Projects and Alignments

***‘The Yarra River is an icon of Melbourne. The history is rich. The river is respected. The river has been looked after by us for thousands of years. Make it clean and let the species live.’ – Aunty Alice Kolasa***

In the Land Use Framework Part 2B page 106 under “Opportunities for Future Projects and Alignments” there are some very general items listed and at item 7:

***Implement initiatives identified in Nillumbik Shire Council’s Eltham Lower Park Masterplan Review.***

The plan does not reference the date of this review, and since Nillumbik Council does not appear to have a copy, it is unlikely that the Collaborative Panel saw one either, and yet they agreed to list this! How can they be sure that the initiatives will “keep the river clean and let the species live”? It should be removed.

### Implementation of the Plan

In order to be sure that the river’s health, and species in the corridors are supported, the YSP needs a panel to evaluate future projects and also to monitor those that are ongoing. Melbourne Water, with expertise, familiarity with all reaches, knowledge of the river’s history, and ongoing commitment to water quality and delivery, must lead the panel, ensuring a more rigorous process, and government must fund it.

Thank you for the opportunity to “make my voice heard”,

Regards,

[REDACTED]

\*Thomas Bungaleen’s mother, the wife of Chief Bunjil -ee-nee died at the confluence of the Diamond Creek and the Yarra River (The Argus, 15 October 1861). Thomas Bungaleen was taken into the settler community and given some education and training. Tragically he died very young and was buried at Melbourne Cemetery.

***Quotations from the YSP shown as text in bold italics***