



IMAGINE THE YARRA

Yarra Strategic Plan community engagement Summary of Upper Rural Workshop (Upper Yarra Dam to Healesville)

Between May and August 2018 Melbourne Water undertook community engagement to build the content of the draft Yarra Strategic Plan.

This engagement included a series of community workshops along the Yarra, an online survey, an interactive online map, and social media.

The information collected from the community will be used to write the draft Yarra Strategic Plan, to be released in 2019.

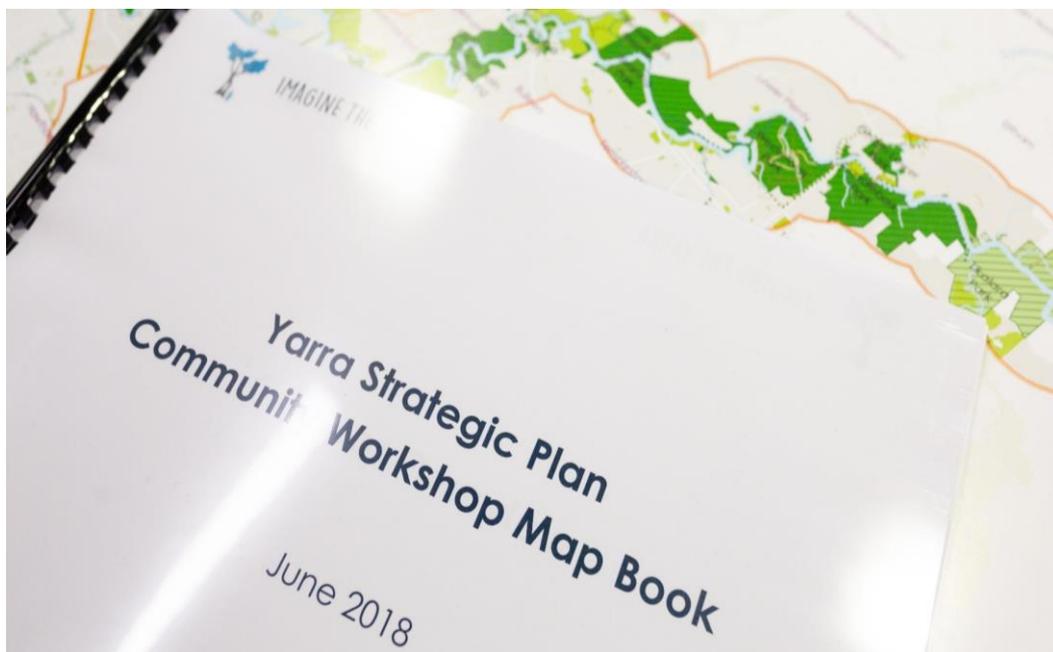
This report provides an overview of the responses received at the Upper Rural Community Workshop which took place in Healesville on Saturday 16 June 2018, with 44 community members attending.





The purpose of the workshop was to ensure the draft Yarra Strategic Plan reflects the community's vision for the river and explore how the plan can protect the Yarra and its parklands into the future.

Workshop participants were asked to reflect on five key themes, discuss what success would look like for the Yarra Strategic Plan, and identify areas for protection. Melbourne Water will consider all feedback in the development of the Yarra Strategic Plan.



Themed discussion

Workshop participants 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 from each of the themed discussions.



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

Discussions focused on improving access to the Yarra for recreational activity, including walking, swimming and canoeing.

Suggestions to improve accessibility included removing fallen trees and creating more access points for canoes.

Millgrove and Warburton were identified as specific areas that require improved access to the river.



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

Participants emphasised their preference for preserving areas of natural environment, as opposed to creating structured recreational areas.

Millgrove was identified as an area where trails need to be expanded.

Participants mentioned that there were inconsistencies in the management of parklands and trails across different landowners and responsible authorities.



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

Areas identified as being of heritage and/or cultural value included Coranderrk, billabongs, camp sites near Badger Creek, Dee Road Bridge, Millgrove Miner's Cottage and Warburton Holiday Park.

The need to improve knowledge and understanding of the heritage and cultural significance of the river and important sites was discussed by participants, with particular reference to Aboriginal heritage and sharing stories.

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

Important landscapes and views identified by participants included places that provide access for recreation such as walking, cycling and children's play.

Undisturbed landscapes, for example between Woori Bridge and Badger Creek, were identified as being valued and requiring protection as they help people feel connected with nature.

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

Participants discussed a preference for experiencing native vegetation which would be enhanced by removing weeds and exotic species.

Discussions also focused on recreational experiences such as swimming, walking, canoeing, rafting, fishing, picnics and camping along the river.



What success looks like...

Participants were asked to describe what the success of the Yarra Strategic Plan would look like in five, ten and fifty years.

The following highlights some of the participants' aspirations.

... in 5 years

- There is increased awareness, responsibility and custodianship of the Yarra River, its health and how we impact it across the community, landowners and responsible authorities.
- There is a two-way relationship between landowners and responsible authorities.
- There is evidence of environmental improvements such as water quality, water flows and weed management.

... in 10 years

- Implementation and funding of plan and actions is occurring.
- Landowners and community continue to be engaged and participate in the implementation of the plan.
- Landowners and responsible authorities work together to manage the river environment.
- Environmental improvements are evident, there are no more chemicals in the river.

... in 50 years

- The water is healthy and clean.
- Native vegetation and wildlife is thriving.
- The Yarra River is valued by the community; the river continues to be cared for and protected.
- Landowners and responsible authorities continue to work together to manage and care for the river.



Priority areas for protection

Participants were asked to identify areas along the river to be considered for protection. The following outlines these areas as well as participants' motivations for protecting particular areas.

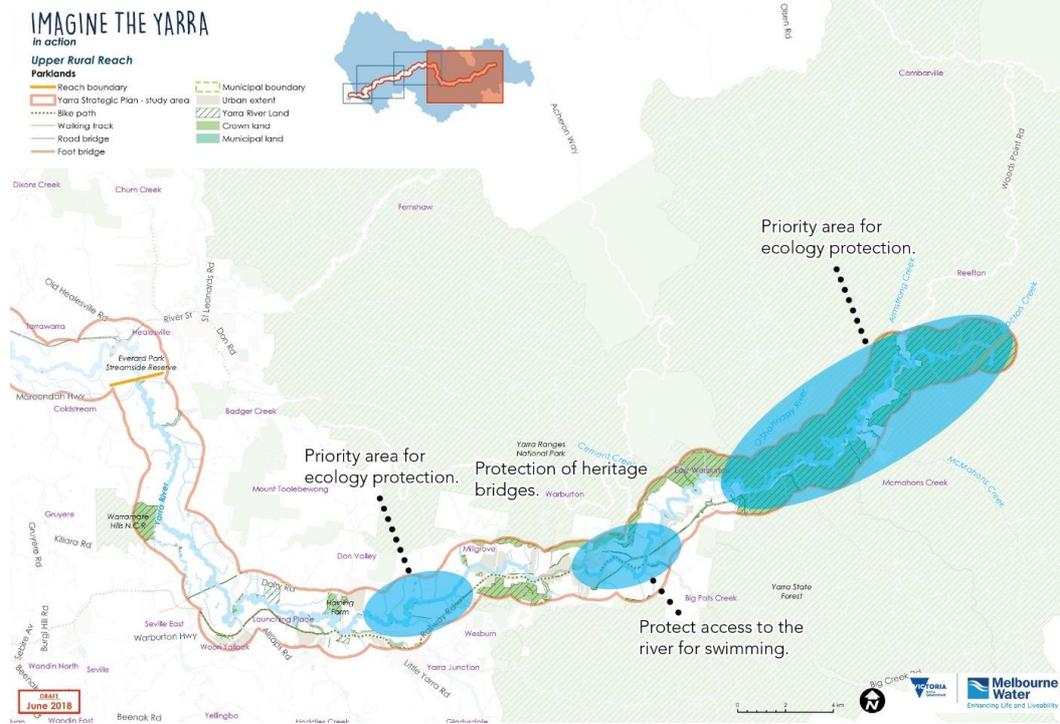
Upper rural reach

The key reasons people cited for identifying areas for protection in the upper rural reach were:

- Need to consider the whole reach as a priority for ecological protection.
- Focus on ecological protection rather than access for recreation.
- Need a consistent approach to protection founded on ecological evidence.
- Need to protect the environment from invasive weeds.
- Protection of the water quality from stormwater and land use run off.
- Protection of the river from the use of chemicals such as phosphate.
- Protection should include working with individual river custodians to develop plans (with appropriate funding and support) to maintain river health.
- Focus on improving existing public access rather than creating new access points.
- Value the knowledge of the landowners who care for the river.
- Protect clear access routes in high fire areas.
- Consider how communities can be protected in the event of a bush fire.



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Next steps

The feedback collected during this phase of engagement will be used to write the draft Yarra Strategic Plan, which will be released for comment in 2019.