



IMAGINE
THE YARRA

DRAFT YARRA STRATEGIC PLAN

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

SUBMISSION COVER SHEET

Submission Number:	214645
Name (Individual/Organisation):	Healesville Environment Watch Inc.
Attachments:	Attachment 1 – Written submission



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Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

RE: Yarra Strategic Plan

Background:

Our members have been actively involved with practical waterway projects, including revegetation corridors, within Ryrie Ward, Yarra Ranges Council for almost 30 years, with a Melbourne Water and Council partnership since 1997. All our waterways flow into the Yarra River so protective measures have always been of the highest concern for our group. We have actively advocated for the highest protection of the Yarra River floodplains over many years from development proposals including VCAT presentations. HEWI has attended community consultations and made submissions for Melbourne Water's Healthy Rivers/River Health since 2005. HEWI has been a member of the Yarra Keepers Association for 20 years and made an extensive submission to the Yarra River Protection Plan. Our members also assist rehabilitation work of the Friends of Coranderrk at Wandoon, Healesville.

HEWI Response to Yarra River Strategic Plan

Positive Aspects of the YSP

1. The main priorities are protection of the environment, funding opportunities to restore the health of the river corridor, more inclusion of cultural values and improved recreational opportunities.
2. It is an integrated approach and one that tries to prevent inconsistent ad hoc planning approaches along the river. Consistent planning controls have been developed from Richmond to Warrandyte and these should be implemented from Warrandyte to the Upper Reaches as proposed in the plan.
3. The YSP will be one of the key planning tools for making decisions about the river corridor. The impact of any proposal regarding the river will have to be evaluated with respect to the YSP.
4. We support the performance objectives and see the list of projects to achieve these objectives, their timeframe to achieve these outcomes and agencies responsible, as progress.
5. There is allocated funding for projects along the river although the \$80 million is not new funding necessarily but funding allocated to planned projects.
6. The YSP has been developed with extensive community involvement.
7. The YSP has been developed in partnership with the aboriginal communities along the river.
8. The YSP can be a tool for identifying key biodiversity areas, potential for connectivity of habitats and restoration sites.
9. Agencies are required to do an annual report on work for which they are responsible.

CONCERNS:

Of the funding that has been allocated, some of the money is being well spent such as the work by the Manningham Council in the Banyule wetlands area. However, the proposed funding allocation by Melbourne City Council on fireworks and Moomba does not enhance the river environment but does contribute to its degradation.

An important principle anywhere along the river is that there should be no new development requiring river access. Old sites that were established not needing river access should be phased out.

In the meantime, the state government has decided to build the north-east link. This will have profound impacts on the river and wetlands in the Manningham shire. How will the YSP deal with projects of this scale?

UPPER REACHES:

1. There are few specific actions or projects described for the Upper Reaches section. The Yarra Valley Trail which is the responsibility of Yarra Ranges Council does have some potential negative impacts on the river.
2. In the upper reaches of the river in the Warburton-Woori Yallock area the YSP advocates restoration of riparian habitat and conversion of grazing leases to riparian leases on bush residential properties. We support this proposal but the realities in this area are that a number of property owners have consistently resisted this move and have successfully lobbied the government to reduce riparian areas. The YSP needs legal powers to overturn the special provisions for this area.
3. While the YSP is for a corridor one km wide along the river there needs to be some provision for tributary management. This is something that could be worked on over the next years. While much of the land in the Upper Reaches is in National Parks or state forest, the reality is that state forest areas where logging is taking place can only have damaging impacts on tributaries. As well poor agricultural practices and irresponsible dirt bike users can also cause increased sediment in tributaries.
4. Improving recreational opportunities and river access is commendable but not always without negative impacts. There are sections of the river that should not have intrusive structures like viewing platforms and continuous trails. These can result in increased rubbish along the river and annoyance of wildlife. The proposed mountain bike trails in the Warburton area would contribute to habitat destruction and disturbance in the upper parts of the catchment.
5. While improving access for canoes and kayaks particularly in the Warburton area, there should be areas designated for paddling and areas free from them where riparian features such as large trees and logs in the river can continue. Reaches suitable for paddling should be planned in discussion with the paddlers.

UPPER REACHES PROPOSALS by HEWI

The current performance objectives and proposals for targets are practically non-existent for this vital section of the Yarra River. We support these actions:

1. Apply the consistent planning controls that have been developed from Richmond to Warrandyte to the Warrandyte to the Upper Reaches sections as proposed in the plan.
2. Establish legal powers to enable restoration of riparian habitat and conversion of grazing leases to riparian leases on bush residential properties as advocated in the YSP.
3. Train Aboriginal "Water Rangers" to manage a bushland corridor along both sides of the Yarra River.
4. Actively recruit local property owners to revegetate crown land along property boundaries, utilising Melbourne Water's Stream Frontage Management Program.
5. As affiliates, HEWI strongly supports the submissions from Riverkeepers, Environment Vic, VNPA and Environmental Justice Australia.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit our proposals and we look forward to further protective measures for within a revised Yarra Strategic Plan.

Sincerely

