



IMAGINE
THE YARRA

DRAFT YARRA STRATEGIC PLAN

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

SUBMISSION COVER SHEET

Submission Number:	215085
Name (Individual/Organisation):	Friends of Leadbeater's Possum Inc.
Attachments:	Attachment 1 – Written submission



Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

RE: Yarra Strategic Plan

Background:

Friends of Leadbeater's Possum Incorporated (FLbP) is a not-for-profit environment organisation constituted to encourage people to participate in activities designed to:

- a. Increase public awareness of the Critically endangered status of Leadbeater's Possum (*Gymnobelideus leadbeateri*);
- b. Improve the conservation status of Leadbeater's Possum in the wild;
- c. Assist with the conservation of Leadbeater's Possum and their habitat

To attempt to improve the habitat for the highland Leadbeater's Possum, FLbP has taken VicForests to the Federal Court to prevent further logging in the Central Highlands. The Judge's determination is yet to be handed down.

FLbP has successfully received grants for revegetation in Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve, and has organised many planting days to enhance the habitat for the Lowland Leadbeater's Possum.

FLbP has had a representative attend all the Healthy Waterways Strategy forums for the Yarra River.

FLbP Response to Yarra River Strategic Plan (YSP)

The main priorities of the YSP that FLbP endorse are protection of the environment and to restore the health of the river corridor.

Unfortunately, the wording of the Performance Objectives of the YSP has a high level of generality and vagueness. These objectives need to be rewritten as SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely). Preferably there will be baseline data for these to be measured against. The objectives also need to clearly and adequately address the impact of climate change. To achieve best practice, the results of the actions performed to attain the objectives need to be regularly monitored so that there is continuous improvement.

The key principle in the Yarra/Birrarung Act of a net gain for the environment is not contained in the draft YSP.

Sufficient funding needs to be made available for all the projects to be completed and monitored.

To integrate the YSP with the Healthy Waterways Strategy it is necessary to include the health of the tributaries, including their riparian vegetation in the YSP, and not only the land for one kilometre on either side of the main Yarra channel. This is important as the health of the main Yarra channel is only as good as the health of its tributaries. The Minister is able to amend the YSP to include the complete catchment areas of the river's tributaries in the YSP rather than just a narrow channel.

To increase the flow and water quality of the river and its tributaries, and to enhance the riparian habitat, farmers need to be provided education on the importance and benefits of regenerative agriculture. This should help creation of connected wildlife corridors.

Grazing licences on river and stream frontages need to be terminated to protect the water from raised e-coli values and the stream banks revegetated with indigenous vegetation.

Revegetation of the riparian areas from Launching Place through Yarra Junction to Millgrove has been restricted to ten metres as a fire safety measure. Riparian vegetation by its nature is a wet forest and is less likely to be a fire hazard than grass. Limiting the riparian vegetation to a width of ten metres is contrary to the execution of the YSP. Therefore, the ten-metre rule should be re-examined, and the riparian vegetation should be able to be increased to a width of fifty metres or greater.

The proposed Warburton Mountain Bike trail should have its tracks in the sensitive wet forest on the south side of Mount Donna Buang realigned to the north side of the mountain where it will not be as damaging to the Yarra River.

The Yarra River/Birrarung is considered a living entity, however the YSP does not include its headwaters above the Upper Yarra Weir, or the tail in docklands. As already stated, the health of the tributaries is related to the health of the main river channel. The closed catchment forests in the Yarra Ranges National Park protects the water quality and quantity of the main Yarra channel, but a significant area of its tributaries is found in State Forests. These forests are subject to logging until 2030. Logging is destructive to the environment which is contrary to the objectives of the YSP. (The state government has announced that native forest logging will cease in 2030, in line with the expiration of the Forests (Wood Pulp Agreement) Act 1996, by which time the Maryvale Paper Mill is expected to end its dependence on pulp from native forests, supplying it instead from plantations. However, due to wild-fires and unsustainable historical logging there will be insufficient timber to fulfil this obligation for supply of pulp logs at current levels until 2024, then at reduced levels until 2030. Therefore, FLbP recommends that in line with the objectives of the YSP to protect the environment of the Yarra River, that the government terminates the Forests (Wood Pulp Agreement) Act 1996 immediately, rather than continuing extraction until the native timber supply is depleted and habitat is lost or irreparably damaged. Timber workers can be assisted in transitioning to

other work, including restorative forestry, and the Maryvale Paper Mill can be supplied with wood pulp from plantations that is currently exported).

Finally, the YSP should include the U.N. Sustainable Development Goal number fifteen “life on land”. All nations involved in the Sustainable Development Goals are supposed to meet these targets by 2030. Goal fifteen covers biodiversity and forest ecosystems. The aim of this goal is “to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss”. Forests are needed to mitigate climate change and protect watersheds. This is particularly important as with climate change the rainfall entering the Yarra River has halved since 2012. This will be of concern as the population of Melbourne is increasing and more water will be required, both for domestic use and agriculture.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our comments on the Yarra Strategic Plan. We will look forward to an improved and protected environment for the Yarra Catchment.

Sincerely

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██████████ Friends of Leadbeater’s Possum Inc.