



IMAGINE  
THE YARRA

# DRAFT YARRA STRATEGIC PLAN

## PUBLIC CONSULTATION

### SUBMISSION COVER SHEET

<b>Submission Number:</b>	215101
<b>Name (Individual/Organisation):</b>	Parks Victoria
<b>Attachments:</b>	Attachment 1 – Written submission

29 March 2020

Dear Yarra Strategic Project team

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Draft *Yarra Strategic Plan* (YSP).

I would like to congratulate Melbourne Water and all agencies involved in developing the Draft YSP. Parks Victoria has been pleased to be a key contributor to the plan, and we submit the following comments for consideration in developing the final YSP.

**Introducing the Yarra Strategic Plan** (Page 10)

The YSP should include a stronger narrative about the significant contribution that the Yarra River and its parklands continue to make to the health and wellbeing of people and communities.

From before the time of the reservation of Yarra Bend Park in 1877, Victorians have understood the value of setting aside land and waterways for recreation and respite. This is in some ways allied to how the Traditional Owners are part of Country, the intrinsic link between the health of people and the health of the land.

One of the most significant public health challenges is the increased prevalence of non-communicable diseases and conditions including diabetes, cardio-vascular diseases, depression and anxiety, which are placing an ever increasing social and financial burden on society. It is well known that the extent and impact of many of these diseases can be mitigated through healthy lifestyles, and parks have a key role to play.

There are diverse benefits for all from being in the outdoors including physical, psychological, cultural and social health and wellbeing. Parks Victoria is committed to encouraging communities to interact more with nature, because being in nature is good for our health and is a highly cost effective health improvement strategy.

For more information on this topic, please refer to the Victorian Memorandum for Health and Nature (2017) at <https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/biodiversity/victorian-memorandum-for-health-and-nature>.

## Community Vision

The Community Vision sets clear and highly aspirational expectations for the river and its parklands (page 13).

The Community Vision builds on the important work of generations of community groups in undertaking significant conservation and revegetation programs along the river, and in advocating for the river and its parklands.

There will need to be a major and sustained financial investment in the river and its parklands for this vision to be realised. Some of the Community Vision can be achieved through new ways of working collaboratively.

Parks Victoria is strongly committed to playing a key role in realisation of the vision.

## The future of the river: climate change and population growth

Multiculturalism is an integral part of Melbourne's history and current identity which should be recognised in the YSP.

As Melbourne's population becomes increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse, park managers must recognise and respond to differing needs, including recreation and sporting preferences, attitudes to different types of park landscapes, the need for programs to encourage first time visitors into parks, and the provision of appropriate visitor facilities such as signage and cooking facilities which cater for a range of communities.

## Greater Yarra Urban Parklands

There is no doubt that the network of parklands along the Yarra River is one of Melbourne's greatest open space assets (page 16).

As the manager of most of the Greater Yarra Urban Parklands declared to date, Parks Victoria would like to be involved in developing the definition of what this designation means and in determining how these parks are to be managed.

## **Working Together to Deliver the Community Vision**

### Managing the Yarra River Corridor

Parks Victoria's responsibilities identified on page 23 should state that Parks Victoria manages most of the Greater Yarra Urban Parklands.

### Existing mechanisms for managing the Yarra

The list of major plans and strategies in place should also include the *Victorian Health and Wellbeing Plan 2018-2023* to which all LGA's must have a regard for in meeting their legislative requirement for in the consultation, development and implementation of their own Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans. Most councils plan around the social, physical, economic and natural environments planning framework and many now incorporate their MPHWP's into their Council Plans. This current plan contains a new priority area, *Climate change and health*, calling for Victoria's state and local governments to have Whole of government approach to deliver across the broad direct and indirect influences, risks, mitigation, prevention, remediation for community health & wellbeing benefits.

## **Wurundjeri Woi wurrung people and custodianship of the Birrarung**

Parks Victoria actively supports facilitating a greater role in First Nation people managing Country.

Parks Victoria recognises the strong connections that the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung people have with the river, and we look forward to working with them to further understand and progress their priorities for the Yarra River, Birrarung, and its parklands (page 33).

#### The Yarra and its parklands contribution to regional economies

Given the plan's focus on recreational and health/wellbeing benefits, the draft YSP should include Wellbeing or Wellness Tourism as a key economic contributor. Connected shared use trails, walking trails, and visitor destinations all contribute significantly to each of the towns, cities and regional parts of Victoria through which the Yarra travels.

#### **Collaborative Actions for the next 10 Years**

Parks Victoria welcomes a more coordinated approach to investment and decision-making to realise Traditional Owner's aspirations and the Community Vision.

Establishing mechanisms to enable longer term implementation planning for all parties is highly welcomed. Under current funding arrangements, Parks Victoria is limited in establishing a definitive 3 year rolling implementation plan (page 43).

Parks Victoria is keen to see the detailed design of the wetlands and construction of key visitor infrastructure such as boardwalks and signage as described in the *Yarra Flats Masterplan* become a Priority Project in the YSP (Page 45).

#### **Performance Objectives**

Parks Victoria has a key role to play in each of the four performance objectives; and is supportive of all actions described, subject to the provision of adequate funding.

#### Performance Objective 2: A culturally diverse river corridor

Parks Victoria is particularly committed to supporting Traditional Owners to use parklands to support the strengthening of communities and initiatives which tell the story of the rich culture and heritage of the Yarra River, Birrarung.

*A culturally diverse river corridor* could be interpreted as referring to culturally diverse communities in a broad sense, rather than being solely about the Traditional Owners. There may be opportunities to re-cast how this this Performance Objective applies (Page 52).

#### Performance Objective 3: Quality parklands for a growing population

As the main manager of the diverse parklands along the river, Parks Victoria is supportive of all actions, subject to the provision of adequate funding.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), through the Land Management Policy Division, has long managed the prioritisation and dealings of where the Victorian Government seeks to acquire land for strategically significant areas or linkages of parklands. Parks Victoria remains connected and active with DELWP in the relative priorities for land acquisition and the creation and administration of public acquisition overlay (PAO) details. The YSP will only be strengthened in working within the existing DELWP PAO system, and seeking guidance and direction from DELWP in how to set priorities for acquisition collaboratively with the community. This is a significant component to the realisation of on-ground change and setting relative priorities for government investment.

As a high priority, much of the visitor infrastructure in the parklands is past its useful life and in urgent need of replacement.

Access to the river and the parklands should adhere to universal design principles to the highest extent possible, so that all Victorians can obtain the health and other benefits from visiting the river. Universal design encompasses the requirements of older people, families with young children in strollers, people with other disabilities, children, and people from culturally diverse backgrounds. Accessible canoe launches, fishing platforms, walking trails, viewing and picnic areas, toilets and Changing Places facilities, accompanied by accessible signage are some examples of facilities that should be provided.

The development of a 10 year berthing strategy for the lower Yarra River and the establishment of a Yarra River Management Committee are key priorities of Parks Victoria and Melbourne City Council.

### **Land Use Framework**

Parks Victoria supports the further review and refinement of planning controls (overlays) which will assist in achieving the aspirational goals of the YSP. As a key stakeholder, it is critical that Parks Victoria is engaged when future planning scheme amendments associated with the YSP area are developed.

Parks Victoria is keen to ensure that the zoning of the Yarra River land under its management will enable the activations and activities sought throughout the corridor, noting that amendments to planning schemes that relate to rezoning land within the Greater Yarra Urban Parklands must be ratified by both houses of Parliament.

### **Upper Rural Reach**

The realisation of the actions at Yarra Bridge Streamside Reserve will require additional resources for implementation and for on going maintenance.

Warramate Hills NCR, also in the Upper Rural Reach and managed by Parks Victoria, would benefit from low key improvements to visitor infrastructure, such as carparking and track works.

### **Lower Rural Reach**

Parks Victoria is supportive of the directions described for this reach.

Parks Victoria has been a key contributor to the restoration of degraded land in the Watsons Creek Corridor (page 93). This collaboration with Melbourne Water, Councils and community groups shows how much effort and funding is required over a long period of time to achieve a measurable change in biodiversity and landscape values.

### **Suburban Reach**

'Implement proposals for the Westerfolds recreational and paddle sports club' should be reworded to 'seek to improve opportunities for paddle sports at Westerfolds Park' (Page 106)

Parks Victoria would like to reiterate the importance of maintaining a diversity of landscape types through the suburban reach – to reflect previous land uses, to support a range of recreational activities, and to appeal to a broad spectrum of the community.

Dog walking along the river is a popular activity, predominantly in the Suburban and Inner reaches which could be highlighted in the narrative, and actions included in the plan to provide dog access to the river for swimming.

## Inner City Reach

The Current State Land Use Analysis of this reach should include the importance of on-water recreation and events to the people of Melbourne and visitors – the long heritage of rowing, dragon boating, Moomba water skiing, tour boats, and New Years' Eve Fireworks as examples (Page 112)

The plan should provide a summary of maritime and industrial use and heritage and recognise the ongoing contribution they make to Melbourne.

It is important to note that capacity to extend the vegetation buffer / corridor is limited in many areas in this reach, particularly where there are hard river edges and beached/constructed environments.

It would be useful if the plan could provide some guidance on how to manage/improve 'dead' areas/zones in this reach caused by limits to light and access by Citylink, roadways, trainlines, industry, and utility providers.

Parks Victoria is pleased to be a key partner in the implementation of the draft YSP and we look forward to our continued involvement in the Yarra Collaboration Committee.

Should you require further advice on this matter please contact me on [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

