



IMAGINE
THE YARRA

DRAFT YARRA STRATEGIC PLAN

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

SUBMISSION COVER SHEET

Submission Number:	215048
Name (Individual/Organisation):	Eltham Community Action Group
Attachments:	Attachment 1 – Written submission

Draft Yarra River Strategy submission from Eltham Community Action Group (ECAG)

The Eltham Community Action Group

The Eltham Gateway Action Group Inc, now Eltham Community Action Group Inc, was set up in 1996 to preserve the Eltham Gateway. Our group's main area of interest since that time has been the former Eltham Gateway Zone which stretches along Main Rd from Fitzsimons Lane to the Eltham Town Centre. We concentrate on planning issues that impact this area.

As our name change suggests we also take an active interest in other planning issues that affect Eltham. In particular, we support the preservation of the unique Eltham character of which the Yarra River and its tributary, the Diamond Creek play an important role.

We are active in various ways, including participating in discussions with developers and Council officers, offering advice to affected residents, making appeals at VCAT and publicly disseminating information.

ECAG's interest in the Yarra River Strategy

The Eltham Lower Park, at the southern end of The Eltham Gateway, and bounded by Main Road, the Yarra River and the Diamond Creek sets the scene for the treed canopy typical of Eltham and Nillumbik, the Green Wedge Shire.

The low key, natural treatment of well used foot tracks along the river and access points to the river at various locations are a feature of Nillumbik and what makes the unique character of the area.

ECAG's concerns

The Yarra Strategic Plan has been prepared by the Yarra Collaboration Committee and not, as required under the legislation, by the lead agency. The committee has an inherent conflict of interest and the plan reflects what is currently being done rather than what is intended to be delivered under the Yarra River Protection (Willip-gin Birrarung murrong) Act.

Nillumbik Shire Council was one of the councils involved in the committee. Nillumbik Council's following statements are of concern and ECAG would not like to see them included in the final Yarra River Strategy.

“Increased River Environs access to Yarra”

*2) Further actions should be introduced into the draft Plan, to ensure that the Yarra River environs are made **more accessible**. This may include **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. To that end the draft Yarra Strategic Plan should be modified to ensure that new opportunities identified in other agency and local government strategies can be considered and implemented, should actions within those strategies align to the objectives of the draft Plan once finalised.

The health of the river is of paramount importance and should be given the utmost priority. The catchment areas along the river obviously play a large part in this.

Throughout Eltham and Nillumbik the relatively few access points to the river and the bushy treed nature of the banks and areas alongside the river aid in maintaining its health. The Lenister Wetlands in the Eltham Lower Park play an important role in filtering the runoff before it enters the river.

Litter in the form of plastic bottles and bags and other picnic style rubbish is found in larger quantities at areas where public access is available.

The potential for the dumping of for example, tyres and supermarket trolleys that one sees in the Diamond Creek where there is ready access close to roads is of concern if there was to be greater and easier access. When clean up Australia day started local Scout groups vied to have the most trolleys, 60+ were pulled out the first time!

Part 2 B page 106 of the Strategy includes:

‘implementing initiatives identified in Nillumbik Shire Council’s Eltham Lower Park Masterplan Review.’

The Nillumbik community has not seen this review.

What we do know of Nillumbik’s intentions for Eltham Lower Park are taken from the Draft Economic Development Strategy January 2020.

*‘Create and promote visitor attractions The Shire’s close proximity to Melbourne, and tourism strengths in nature-based assets, food and wine, equine and arts and culture makes it well-placed to attract an increase in visitors who are seeking a unique semi-rural, nature-based experience. The Diamond Valley Miniature Railway is Nillumbik’s most-visited paid attraction . **Council will explore how this attraction can be enhanced and maximise visitor dispersal.** ‘*

The Diamond Valley Miniature Railway is indeed a popular Sunday activity for families. The organisation has a long held desire to extend the railway along the Diamond Creek to its confluence with the Yarra River and back around the park, through the passive and active areas of the park to its existing site.

Apart from the intrusion into the peace and semi-rural nature of that area of the park, the introduction of fences, tracks, tunnels, tree removal, earth leveling and all the infrastructure necessary for such an endeavour would have a negative impact on the steep banks of the creek and river.

The noise of children yelling and train whistles would not be appreciated by the local wildlife including the platypus that are now found in the river.

Eltham Community Action Group applauds the development of a comprehensive strategy to preserve and maintain the health of the Yarra River and its environs. We are concerned that the emphasis of this Draft Document is on increasing access and use of the Yarra River for people needs rather than having an emphasis on the environmental needs.

We ask that the health of the river is given paramount importance and that the strategy is so tightly worded that the various caretakers along its course have no opportunity to introduce activities and infrastructure that may lead to a decrease in this health and, in the case of Nillumbik, its bushy semi rural nature.

Contact : 