Protecting the Waterways of the West
Discussion Paper Summary

Prepared by Waterways of the West Ministerial Advisory Committee
Acknowledgement

The Waterways of the West Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung and Wadawurrung people as the Traditional Owners of the Waterways of the West region.

We pay our respects to their ancestors and Elders, past and present. We recognise and respect their unique cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship to their traditional lands, which continue to be important to them today.

We recognise the intrinsic connection of Wurundjeri Woi wurrung and Wadawurrung people to their traditional lands and value the contribution their Caring for Country makes to the management of the waterways and their lands.

We support the need for genuine and lasting partnerships with the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung and Wadawurrung people to understand their culture and connections to Country in the way we plan for, and manage, the Waterways of the West. By integrating traditional knowledge with contemporary western ecological and community knowledge, we can deliver better environmental outcomes and make communities more liveable, sustainable, and inclusive.

We embrace the spirit of reconciliation, working towards equity of outcomes and ensuring an equal voice for Australia’s First Peoples.

About the artist

Stephanie Skinner is a Wadawurrung digital artist and illustrator. These artworks reflect the culture, the serene landscapes, and the value of our native wildlife and plants throughout the Waterways of the West region.

Contents

1 Introduction 1
2 The Waterways of the West 3
3 The case for change 4
4 Stewardship over time 6
5 Management of the waterways of the west today 7
6 What we heard 8
7 Key directions 9
   Direction 1 — Embedding traditional owners, their values and culture in waterway planning and management 10
   Direction 2 — Protecting and enhancing water quality and waterway health 11
   Direction 3 — Providing water for the environment and country 12
   Direction 4 — Enhancing and activating waterways and their lands as open space 12
   Direction 5 — Connecting, celebrating and valuing the landscape 13
   Direction 6 — Improving the resilience of coastal wetlands and estuaries 14
   Direction 7 — Integrating land and water planning and management 15
8 Next steps 16
1 Introduction

The Victorian Government has committed to working with the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung and Wadawurrung Traditional Owners and the wider community to protect the Waterways of the West and their lands for future generations. The government has appointed the independent Waterways of the West Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) to make recommendations about how best to recognise, protect and improve the waterway health, amenity, access and community values of the region’s waterways and their lands.

This Discussion Paper Summary was developed by the MAC, with significant input from its Traditional Owner members, to promote community discussion about opportunities to improve the oversight and management of the Waterways of the West.

We have identified a number of issues and opportunities through consultation with a Reference Group, Traditional Owners, key stakeholders and community.

Have your say

We would like to hear what you think about the ideas in this summary paper, your feedback on the four questions below and any other ideas you have about protecting the Waterways of the West and their lands.

The project’s web page — at https://engage.vic.gov.au/waterways-west — has a link to this summary paper, a comprehensive discussion paper and other information to inform your feedback.

You can provide feedback online, in–person and/or by making a written submission.

Community consultation questions

1. What is the strength of your support for the directions identified by the MAC?
2. When considering the opportunities identified under each of the directions, which ones would you prioritise?
3. What other opportunities would support each direction?
4. Is there anything else you would like the MAC to consider?

Online

You can make a written submission by completing the submission form on the project’s webpage.

In–person

Community workshops and drop in sessions will be held across the Waterways of the West region including at Melton, Werribee, Sunbury and Footscray: dates, times and details are on the Engage Victoria website.

Written submission

You can make a written submission by:

- completing the online submission form on the project’s webpage
- emailing a submission to westernrivers.inbox@delwp.vic.gov.au
- mailing the submission to Waterways of the West, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, PO Box 500, East Melbourne VIC 3002.

Submissions will be made public unless you ask for yours to be confidential.

Please make your submission by 17 November 2019.
More than **280 bird** species recorded at the Western Treatment Plant.

Population growth from **925,000** (2018) to **1,900,000** (2040), an additional 975,000 people.

Sea level rise by at least **0.8 m** by 2100 in western Port Philip Bay.

Temperature rise by between **1.2°C** and **2.3°C** by 2050, with higher summer temperatures and more heat waves.

**38%** of people in inner-west Melbourne speak a language other than English at home.

Almost **5,000 ha** of public open space.

**13** native freshwater fish species.

Coastal wetlands and estuaries with internationally recognised migratory bird habitat.

$100 million of annual farm gate value from the Werribee Irrigation District.
2 The Waterways of the West

The term ‘Waterways of the West’ refers to all waterways and their surrounding lands within the Werribee (Wirribi Yaluk) and Maribyrnong (Mirrangbamurn) River catchments and the Moonee Ponds (Moonee Moonee) Creek sub-catchment. This includes the Maribyrnong (Mirrangbamurn) River, Werribee (Wirribi Yaluk) River, Little River (Worrin-yaloke), Moonee Ponds (Moonee Moonee) Creek, Laverton Creek, Skeleton Creek and Kororoit Creek, their tributaries and headwaters, as well as wetlands and estuaries found within these catchments.

The Waterways of the West are part of a unique landscape made up of gorges, volcanic plains and river flats that support biologically diverse, and nationally significant, grasslands and woodlands along with internationally recognised coastal wetlands and estuarine ecosystems. The generally flat plains form extensive native grasslands with the waterways providing richly varied natural features.

Rainfall in the west ranges from approximately 1000 mm per year in the headwaters to 450 mm per year in the rain-shadowed southern plains near Melton and Werribee. Many of the waterways are ephemeral – they dry periodically – and the wetlands naturally experience dry periods. This cycle of wetting and drying has shaped the type of plants and animals supported by the waterways.

The Wurundjeri Woi wurrung and the Wadawurrung people are the Traditional Owners of much of the region's waterways and lands. They continue to have spiritual, cultural, social, economic and environmental connection to the land and waterways through their associations and relationships with Country.
3 The case for change

Now is a time of great change for the Waterways of the West region, and it is important to guide this change.

The population of the Waterways of the West region is growing rapidly and is predicted to double to over 1.9 million by 2040. The region is a major urban growth corridor and has some of the fastest growing municipalities in Australia, including the City of Wyndham and the City of Melton. Significant urban development will transform farmland over the next 20 to 30 years. This means there will be more people living, working and playing in the area, and there will be an increased need for the waterways and their lands to provide areas for rest, recreation and enjoyment.

The scale of urban development in the region will dramatically increase the area of roads, roofs and footpaths which will generate significantly more stormwater runoff, affecting the health of the region’s waterways and landscapes.

Waterways and their lands provide opportunities for communities to develop a sense of place related to unique local landscapes. Awareness of, and access to, these local places and larger-scale parklands supports health and wellbeing for individuals and communities, by encouraging physical activity and connection to nature.

In addition to population growth, a warming and drying climate will result in changes to vegetation communities and species within the Waterways of the West region.

Sea-level rise and storm surges are likely to affect the landscape of the coast and how coastal communities use this land. These changes will also influence coastal ecosystems, including internationally significant estuarine environments and coastal wetlands. The Healthy Waterways Strategy (2018) predicts decline in their environmental values unless significant work is undertaken to plan for, and mitigate, climate change impacts.

The rate and scale of change occurring in the Waterways of the West region provides a once in a generation opportunity to protect and improve these waterway and coastal blue-green corridors for communities now, and into the future.
Many agencies, groups and individuals have a role in managing and protecting the Waterways of the West and their lands, and further work is necessary to get the most from these efforts.

Across the Waterways of the West region there are two Registered Aboriginal Parties, eleven local government authorities, four water corporations, three planning authorities, several state government departments, and many community groups. Community expectations for the values and services provided by waterways and their lands have evolved through time, and governance arrangements need to evolve in line with them. While there is alignment in many areas, there is also opportunity to clarify and strengthen roles, responsibilities and accountabilities.

There is strong community advocacy and support for protecting the iconic western waterways.

Community groups such as Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek, Friends of Kororoit Creek and Friends of Cruickshank Park, to name just a few, have a significant history of working on waterways to protect and improve the values of the surrounding lands.

A Landcare Group Health Survey, by Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (2019), identified 15 Landcare, Friends of, and other environmental groups who primarily work within the Maribyrnong (Mirrangbamurn) and Werribee (Wirribi Yaluk) Catchments.

Community interest in, and advocacy for, the protection of the Waterways of the West has helped drive the appointment of the Waterways of the West MAC. Environmental Justice Australia, (EJA), in collaboration with the Werribee River Association and the Friends of Steele Creek, undertook extensive community engagement to develop A Rivers of the West Act – Draft proposals to protect and restore Melbourne’s western rivers and waterways and to defend the liveability of the West.

The Victorian Government’s strong policy base guides the protection of the Waterways of the West.

The MAC process builds on current Victorian Government policy and regional initiatives aimed at protecting these waterways. In particular Water for Victoria and Plan Melbourne emphasise the importance of liveable cities and towns for Victoria and provide strong guidance for protecting and improving the Waterways of the West. They also provide an increased focus on ensuring that Traditional Owners and their values, knowledge and culture are considered in planning and management.
4 Stewardship over time

The Wurundjeri Woi wurrung and Wadawurrung people continue to have cultural, spiritual, and economic connections to land and water through their associations and relationship with Country.

The Wurundjeri Woi wurrung and the Wadawurrung peoples are the Traditional Owners of much the region’s waterways and lands. The sacred sites and resources, values and stories associated with places – as well as language and ceremonial practices – have been handed down by their ancestors and Elders. The Wurundjeri Woi wurrung and the Wadawurrung are the custodians of the region’s creation stories and spiritual connections.

For thousands of years, Wurundjeri Woi wurrung and Wadawurrung used traditional ecological knowledge, including fire and seasonal farming, to identify, harvest and utilise natural resources sustainably.

European settlement had an appalling effect on the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung and Wadawurrung Ancestors. Diseases and massacres devastated the Aboriginal population, and far more people lost their lives than are recorded in official documents. As a result much Traditional Owner knowledge of the Waterways of the West region was lost and therefore Traditional Owners’ knowledge and management practices have not been used to benefit waterway management.

European settlement transformed the landscape

The landscape of the Waterways of the West region underwent dramatic and rapid transformation following European settlement. While farming produced essential food and fibre for a growing population, it also transformed the landscape. Land was cleared, wetlands drained, timber harvested from waterways and their lands, native grasslands ploughed for cropping and soils compacted by sheep and cattle grazing. Grazing animals also destroyed the Traditional Owners’ Murnong agricultural practice.

Agriculture continues to be an important land use, with the rich productive soils of the Werribee and Bacchus Marsh irrigation districts supporting an important food producing region.

By the early 20th century, a series of chimney stacks and factories lined the Maribyrnong (Mirrangbamurn) River and by the early 1880s pollution forced the abandonment of rowing regattas.

Industries in the West, and the jobs they created, have heavily influenced the demographic and social fabric of the region. The area has a rich history and a large multicultural influence from successive waves of immigration following European Settlement. Residential development and rising land values characterised the Waterways of the West region’s development into the early 21st century with extensive residential growth in places like Werribee, Caroline Springs, Melton and Sunbury.

Urban planning approaches have changed through time

The pace of urban growth in the Waterways of the West region has escalated since the 1990s. Improvements in urban planning conventions have resulted in the creation of significant open space along waterways and their lands. The Seabrook Estate on Skeleton Creek in Altona was an early example of residential development centred around the waterway with boulevard roads following the waterway and its land, and properties facing onto adjoining open space.

Many new residential subdivisions highlight their waterway-related amenity with names such as Caroline Springs, Sanctuary Lakes, Manor Lakes and feature landscaped wetlands prominently. Inner urban redevelopment sites are also celebrating waterways such as those along the Maribyrnong (Mirrangbamurn) River.

6 Protecting the Waterways of the West
Community advocacy and collaboration and increased regulation have driven positive management outcomes for the Waterways of the West.

In recent times, collaboration has been central to managing the Waterways of the West. Agencies and community increasingly come together to develop plans to protect and improve waterways. A good example is the Chain of Ponds Collaboration where government agencies, local councils, community groups, water authorities and research organisations have committed to work together to transform Moonee Ponds (Moonee Moonee) Creek into an iconic waterway for Melbourne.

Waterway management approaches continue to evolve. Increasingly, the emphasis is on protecting waterways and their lands for the social value they provide to communities. This includes increasing public access to, and facilities along, waterways as part of the essential public open space network. This involves improving and protecting environmental values, such as riparian and instream habitats. It also involves regulation and infrastructure to better manage urban stormwater, among other things.

5 Management of the Waterways of the West today

Management of the Waterways of the West and their lands has entered an era of strong collaboration. Many of these collaborations are voluntary, and others are policy driven, and there is still room for improvement. There is a need to ‘hard-wire’ some of this collaborative approach and embed a voice for the community and Wurundjeri Woi wurrung and Wadawurrung Traditional Owners and their values and culture in future management.

While a common perception of the Waterways of the West is one of degradation and pollution, there are also some stunning areas of relatively untouched natural beauty, and other examples of well used and cared for waterway lands. Even in areas that were once badly degraded, communities have actively championed care for these waterways, which has led to adjustments in government policy, infrastructure, practice and institutions. This history provides a strong foundation for further improvements.

Today, an era of strong collaboration between government, community and Traditional Owners has the potential to achieve exciting outcomes for both waterway health and community wellbeing.
6 What we heard

The Waterways of the West MAC acknowledges the significant work, knowledge, insights and input from the community and stakeholders through decades of previous work and engagement activity. The MAC has attempted to build on this through further public and targeted engagement.

The MAC, through engagement with diverse stakeholders, identified common issues across the Waterways of the West region:

- the lack of awareness of Traditional Owner cultural values and the need to involve Traditional Owners and embed their values and culture in management arrangements for the Waterways
- responsibilities for land use and waterway planning and management are complex and fragmented
- there is no lead public agency responsible for providing for the amenity and recreation values of the waterways
- there is a lack of strategic landscape planning and integration of land and waterway management at an appropriate scale to protect the waterways
- there is a lack of connected open space and trails along the waterways including between significant parklands.

A vision for the Waterways of the West

The MAC is facilitating the development of a Community Vision for the Waterways of the West. A Community Assembly, formed in June 2019 with representatives of the diverse vibrant community of the region, is developing a community vision for the region’s waterways for the next 50 years. This vision will express the community’s aspirations about what they value and how they want to interact with the Waterways of the West.
7 Key directions

Over the last ten months the Waterways of the West MAC has examined the current management and planning frameworks for protecting the Waterways of the West. They have heard from agencies and communities about the work underway, what is planned and what the key challenges are in protecting what the community values.

The MAC has identified seven key directions for the future. Under each of these directions it has listed a series of potential opportunities for improvement. Several of the identified opportunities contribute to more than one key direction.

Consultation on the proposed directions presented in this summary paper will enable the MAC to consider what is important to all and what should be prioritised in their recommendations to the Victorian Government. The seven key directions are:

1. Embedding Traditional Owners, their values and culture in waterway management
2. Protecting and enhancing water quality and waterway health
3. Providing water for the environment and Country
4. Enhancing and activating waterways and their lands as open space
5. Connecting, celebrating and valuing the landscape
6. Improving the resilience of coastal wetlands and estuaries
7. Integrating land and water planning and management

Each of these proposed directions is discussed in more detail on the following pages.
DIRECTION 1 – EMBEDDING TRADITIONAL OWNERS, THEIR VALUES AND CULTURE IN WATERWAY PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

Wurundjeri Woi wurrung and Wadawurrung people and their values, culture and voice are not consistently nor constructively involved in the planning and management of the Waterways of the West and their lands.

Where we need to get to

Wurundjeri Woi wurrung and Wadawurrung Traditional Owners and their values, culture and voices are embedded in waterway planning and management, with Registered Aboriginal Parties able to determine their level of involvement in waterway management and planning decisions. Traditional Owner objectives to manage Country are recognised and access to Country is supported.

Opportunities

The Wurundjeri Woi wurrung and Wadawurrung Traditional Owner members of the Waterways of the West MAC have led the MAC’s work to identify opportunities to embed Traditional Owner values and culture in the planning and management of the region’s waterways and their lands. With this leadership, the MAC identified the following opportunities:

A. Long-term funding arrangements for Registered Aboriginal Parties to build their capacity and improve their participation at all levels of waterway planning and management.

B. Continued support for increased cultural awareness and education programs to connect the diverse community of the Waterways of the West region with the Traditional Owners.

C. Establish permanent, formalised requirements to invite Traditional Owner organisations to contribute to the planning and management of waterways and their lands. This would enable Traditional Owners to determine the extent of their involvement, taking account of improved funding and greater capacity to be involved.

D. Support Traditional Owners of Country to proactively map cultural values of waterways and their lands and use the mapping information for waterway planning and management.

E. Support Traditional Owners of Country to undertake cultural flows assessments of the Werribee (Wirribi) and Maribyrnong (Mirrangbamurn) systems and consider this information in decision-making about the allocation of water to support cultural values and water for the environment.

F. Work with Traditional Owners to determine an appropriate process to embed cultural connections to Country in formal land planning mechanisms (such as embedding Healthy Country Plans in the planning system).
DIRECTION 2 – PROTECTING AND ENHANCING WATER QUALITY AND WATERWAY HEALTH

Water quality and waterway health are on a declining trajectory. This decline is driven by legacy issues from historic land and waterway use, regular pollution events and chronic pressures such as increased urban development, stormwater discharge and climate change.

Where we need to get to

The water quality and waterway health of the Waterways of the West are improving, with this driven by:

- improved stormwater management practices, including the delivery of large-scale integrated water management (IWM) projects and uptake of alternative water sources where feasible.
- clear accountabilities for and resourcing of remediation works to address contemporary pollution events and legacy contamination
- the active participation of Traditional Owner Registered Aboriginal Parties in waterway health policy, planning and management
- a changed business and industry culture that supports the prevention of waste and pollution, in line with the introduction of general environmental duty obligations under the Environment Protection Amendment Act 2018.

Opportunities

The MAC has identified the following opportunities to protect water quality and waterway health.

A. Address barriers to using alternative water sources and promote them for safe and suitable uses where feasible. In particular, there is a need to consider funding mechanisms to implement larger-scale projects including stormwater harvesting that support IWM and alternative water sources, where these can significantly reduce harmful discharges to waterways.

B. Support increased enforcement and regulation to reduce the frequency of pollution events.

C. Clarify responsibilities and investigate alternative funding mechanisms for the clean-up and remediation of legacy contamination and contemporary pollution events where the polluter-pays principle cannot be implemented.

D. Establish a significant program of education and enforcement to embed a culture and practice of waste and pollution prevention in business and industry in the Waterways of the West region.

E. Long-term funding arrangements for Traditional Owner Registered Aboriginal Parties to build their capacity and improve their participation at all levels of waterway planning and management.

F. Support the delivery of the Healthy Waterways Strategy.
**DIRECTION 3 – PROVIDING WATER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND COUNTRY**

Increasing demand for water as a result of population growth, combined with continued climate change and less rainfall, is resulting in shortfalls in surface water availability for the environment in the Werribee River (*Wirribi Yaluk*) and mid-to-upper Maribyrnong River (*Mirrangbamurn*) catchments. This is reducing the ability of these waterways to meet environmental needs and could potentially impact cultural values.

Where we need to get to

Ecological and cultural waterway objectives are met in the Werribee River (*Wirribi Yaluk*) and mid-to-upper Maribyrnong River (*Mirrangbamurn*). This will require an increase in the environmental water reserve and potentially a rebalance of water use between consumptive, environmental and cultural water uses.

Opportunities

The MAC has identified the following opportunities to provide water for the environment and Country.

A. Support urgent action to achieve the water for the environment shortfalls for the Werribee River (*Wirribi Yaluk*) and Maribyrnong River (*Mirrangbamurn*).

B. Work with the water and other relevant sectors to ensure there is sufficient water to meet ecological and cultural objectives in the Werribee River (*Wirribi Yaluk*) and mid to upper Maribyrnong River (*Mirrangbamurn*). There is a great opportunity to reduce pressure on the health of waterways by making better use of stormwater and recycled water for consumptive purposes, acknowledging seasonality, storage and quality remains issues.

C. Support Traditional Owners of Country to undertake cultural flows assessments of the Werribee (*Wirribi*) and Maribyrnong (*Mirrangbamurn*) systems and consider this information in decision-making about the allocation of water to support cultural values and water for the environment.

**DIRECTION 4 – ENHANCING AND ACTIVATING WATERWAYS AND THEIR LANDS AS OPEN SPACE**

There is no lead agency or advocate to coordinate the whole-of-region planning, management and promotion of waterways and their lands as important components of Melbourne’s public open space network. This results in missed opportunities to protect and activate waterways and their lands and to celebrate their ecological, cultural and social values.

Where we need to get to

The realisation, and community awareness, of a connected network of blue-green corridors across the Waterways of the West region, which celebrate the multiple environmental, landscape, social and cultural values of the region’s waterways and their lands. The delivery of these open space assets is facilitated by a coordinated governance, planning and management framework that includes a voice for the community and the active participation of Traditional Owners as a mechanism to improve cultural connection and cultural-ecological values.

Opportunities

The MAC has identified the following opportunities to enhance and activate waterways and their lands as open space.

A. The Waterways of the West and their lands provide a unique regional opportunity to create a network of blue-green corridors that support multiple benefits including high amenity, wellbeing, connection with nature, transport linkages and cultural and environmental values. The undertaking of whole-of-region planning and resourcing to protect and activate these corridors should be a priority.

B. Designate a caretaker of waterway open space and amenity, with this function recognised as a statutory obligation.

C. Include Traditional Owners and their values, culture and voice in the planning and management of the region’s open space.
D. Develop strategic Blue-green corridor plans for the major Waterways of the West and investigate priority opportunities for localised masterplanning to guide land use and protect waterways from inappropriate development (see also directions 5, 6 and 7).

E. Support the urgent delivery of the Metropolitan Open Space Strategy and the creation of a network parks in the region.

F. Review existing planning controls to identify gaps and inconsistencies, and then develop consistent planning controls across local government boundaries, where appropriate, to protect landscape character and amenity along waterways from the effects of inappropriate development (see also direction 7).

G. Give effect to the community vision for the Waterways of the West through the planning policy framework, local planning schemes and other appropriate mechanisms (see also directions 5 and 6).

**DIReCTIOn 5 – CONNECTING, CELEBRATING ANd VALEUING The LANDSCApE**

With the exception of Traditional Owners and long running ‘Friends of’ groups, communities in the Waterways of the West region have varying perceptions of, and connection to the Waterways of the West. The recognition and celebration of the unique qualities and beauty of this landscape is not well understood, valued or protected.

**Opportunities**

The MAC has identified the following opportunities to connect, celebrate and value the landscape.

A. Recognise the Waterways of the West as living entities.

B. Establish a community and Traditional Owner voice for the waterways.

C. Support opportunities to link the community, Traditional Owners and the local waterway landscape through local activities and communication.

D. Give effect to the community vision for the Waterways of the West through the planning policy framework, local planning schemes and other appropriate mechanisms (see also directions 4 and 7).

E. Develop strategic Blue-green corridor plans for the major Waterways of the West and investigate priority opportunities for localised masterplanning to guide land use and protect waterways from inappropriate development (see also direction 4, 6 and 7).

F. Include Traditional Owners and their values, culture and voice in the planning and management of the Waterways of the West and their lands

G. Identify the Werribee River (Wirribi Yaluk) as a Significant River in the State Planning Policy Framework.

H. Legislate to recognise the Waterways of the West and their lands as an interconnected system of environmental, cultural and open space assets, and include a requirement to protect them.

I. Support Traditional Owners to proactively map cultural values of waterways and their lands, and use this information for waterway planning and management. Incorporate Traditional Owners’ tangible and intangible cultural values in planning for waterways and their lands.

**Where we need to get to**

Increased recognition, celebration and access to the Waterways of the West and their cultural, amenity, wellbeing and environmental values, with this supporting increased community connection to this unique and beautiful landscape. This value of and sensitivity to waterway environments is reflected in urban strategic planning, development and management.
**DIReCTIOn 6 – IMPROVING THE RESILIENCE OF COASTAl WETLaNdS ANd ESTuARIES**

The coastal wetlands and estuaries of the Waterways of the West region presents an enormous unrealised opportunity to create a world-class, nature-based destination that celebrates the coastal cultural landscape. The region’s coastal wetlands and estuaries and the environmental, cultural and amenity values they provide are at high risk from the increasing pressures of climate change, consequent rising sea levels and advancing urbanisation. While the western coastline of Port Philip Bay has numerous coastal reserves, they are not continuous or managed in an integrated way, resulting in gaps to the connection and protection of this region.

**Where we need to get to**

There is a continuous, connected, blue-green corridor along the coastal areas of the western shoreline of Port Philip Bay. This reserve is a multi-use corridor celebrating the cultural, environmental, amenity and recreational values of the coast, and it supports climate resilience planning for the coastal wetlands and estuaries along the shoreline. Traditional Owners, their values, culture and voice are embedded in the planning for and management of the coastal reserve, with the relevant Traditional Owners able to determine their level of involvement.

**Opportunities**

The MAC has identified the following opportunities to improve the resilience of coastal wetlands and estuaries.

A. Establish a continuous, connected coastal wetlands park across western Port Philip Bay reaching from Williamstown to Werribee. There is a unique regional opportunity to strengthen the coastal blue-green corridor through the coastal areas of the western shoreline of Port Philip Bay by addressing the current gaps in the reserve network. The corridor would be a major, valued, environmental, cultural and social public open space asset, contributing to a wider appreciation of the landscape and serving as a tourism asset, supporting the economy of the region. It would make the coastal wetlands and estuaries more resilient to climate change and support the reconnection of Traditional Owners with sea and coastal Country. This would build on the current pilot project and strategic partnership approach to planning for the region’s coasts.

B. Develop strategic Blue-green corridor plans for the coastal areas of western Port Philip Bay and investigate priority opportunities for localised masterplanning to guide land use and protect the shoreline from inappropriate development. This would guide land use and development planning decisions by local governments (see also direction 4, 5 and 7).

C. Include Traditional Owners and their values, culture and voice in the planning and management of the coastal reserve network.

D. Strengthen climate change planning to protect the vulnerable coastal environmental of Port Philip Bay, in line with the *Victorian Coastal Strategy 2014*.

E. Identify and fill gaps in the mapping of coastal values and hazards and use the mapping information for strategic planning work being undertaken in collaboration with councils.
DIRECTION 7 – INTEGRATING LAND AND WATER PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

The region’s waterways and their lands are impacted by the frequently incremental and piecemeal approach to planning that results from limited coordination across development and municipal boundaries. Lack of regional-scale planning, and not seeing the Waterways of the West as an interconnected system, is resulting in inconsistent outcomes and missed opportunities to protect and activate waterways and their lands and to maximise and celebrate their ecological, cultural and recreational values.

Where we need to get to

Regional-scale strategic planning for the Waterways of the West and their lands in a manner that protects the landscape character and the values it provides. This strategic planning also informs and guides Local Government land use and development planning decisions.

Opportunities

The MAC has identified the following opportunities to integrate land and waterway planning and management.

A. Develop an overarching strategy to integrate the management of the Waterways of the West and their lands as a network of social and environmental assets. The strategy should cover regional planning of existing and future precincts and urban renewal projects.

B. Develop strategic Blue–green corridor plans for the major Waterways of the West and investigate priority opportunities for localised masterplanning to guide land use and protect waterways from inappropriate development (see also direction 4, 5 and 6).

C. Include Traditional Owners and their values, culture and voice in the planning and management of the Waterways of the West and their lands.

D. Review existing planning controls to identify gaps and inconsistencies, and then develop consistent planning controls across Local Government boundaries, where appropriate, to protect landscape character and amenity along waterways from the effects of inappropriate development (see also direction 4).

E. Give effect to the community vision for the Waterways of the West through the planning policy framework, local planning schemes and other appropriate mechanisms (see also directions 4 and 5).
8 Next steps

The Waterways of the West MAC will continue to test opportunities with community, agency stakeholders and Traditional Owners as they develop their recommendations. The MAC will prepare a recommendations report for Government by the end of December 2019.

Principles for testing of opportunities

The Waterways of the West MAC considers that the opportunities need to be explored in more detail, informed by the public consultation, and assessed against the following principles:

- Strong public benefit and/or user pays model
- Extent to which the opportunity delivers on the community vision
- Reduce duplication and complexity and streamline accountabilities
- Complement or build on existing priorities for the protection of the Waterways of the West
- High feasibility of contributing to aspirations

- Achieve multiple benefits
- Provide a legacy for ongoing protection of the waterways and their lands
- Apply leading practice change
- Improve governance arrangements, practices or mechanisms
- Able to implement/apply to other waterways across Melbourne or Victoria
- Maximise opportunities for better resource use
- Apply at the right scale
Protecting the Waterways of the West