

# Sustainable Environment Advisory Committee MINUTES



Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> August 2022

## Chairperson

Cr Andrew Fullagar

## Members present

Mark Varmalis (YRC), Jess Rae (YRC), Kym Saunders (YRC), Amanda Smith (YRC), Suzanne Burville (YRC), David Johnson (YRC), Jeff Barlow (member), Graeme George (member), Ron Sawyer (member), Laurence Gaffney (member), Jonathan Gay (member), Bec Brannigan (member), Peter Martin (member), Lucy Southwell-Hambly (member), Darren Wandin (member), Sarah Gregor (Melbourne Water), Priya Van Ryn (Melbourne Water)

## Apologies

Cr Johanna Skelton, Julia Kelley (YRC), Tom Meek (YRC), Graham Brew (YRC), Lauren Dwyer (member), Lucy Gilchrist (member), Melanie Birtchnel (member), Clinton Muller (member), Merryn Kelly (DELWP), Joanne Antrobus (Parks Vic)

## Confirmation of minutes of meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2022

Moved: All members

Seconded: All members

## Declaration of interest

Cr Andrew Fullagar - member of Macclesfield Landcare and Friends of Glenfern Valley Bushlands

Outstanding Actions		
ACTION	Provide 2021 Monash University Feasibility Study to committee <i>Completed.</i>	Kym Saunders
ACTION	Cr Johanna Skelton to provide an update on the outcome at forum regarding the motion on planned burns. <i>Ongoing</i>	Johanna Skelton
ACTION	Biodiversity Sub-committee recommendations to the Yarra Ranges Council to be considered for inclusion in the Biodiversity Plan <i>Ongoing</i>	Amanda Smith
ACTION	Nature plan to be shared with SEAC prior to release for community consultation. <i>Pending</i>	Amanda Smith
ACTION	Targeted vegetation plan request for information. Amanda is in discussions with Laurence. <i>Ongoing</i>	Amanda Smith
ACTION	Request for Council advocacy on cultural burns/cool burns to replace the large-scale fuel reduction programs. <i>Completed</i>	Amanda Smith Jessica Rae
ACTION	Melbourne Water to provide Laurence with information on Silvan Reservoir work with Annette Muir <i>Pending</i>	Sarah Gregor/Mel Carmody
ACTION	Laurence's Dixon's Creek presentation to be scheduled when we can return to the office. <i>Pending</i>	Suzanne Burville
ACTION	Dixon's Creek site ecology discussion - Graeme George, Darren Wandin and Brett Ellis.	Darren Wandin

## 1. Ageing Septic Systems

Presenter: David Johnson (YRC)

- Overview of wastewater
- Ageing and legacy septic tank systems
- Digitising records
- System types
- Impact on public health and environment
- Responsibilities of owners/operators
- Role of council

### Feedback/questions

- Q. What happens when a system is found to be releasing effluent into drains/catchments?  
A. An Environmental Health Officer looks at history, investigates and assesses public health risk. If it is found to be an issue council will take appropriate action.
- Q. Is there regular pathogen monitoring in the waterways to indicate problems?  
A. Monash Uni did water testing around the shire to take samples over period of 18 months to determine changes to bacteria levels in waterways. The study was around one particular bacterium only so didn't give an overall picture of septic tank charge into waterways.
- Q. Does soil type play a part in assessment?  
A. Soil type plays a big role. An element of clay in the soil is ideal.
- Q. Are legacy tanks those that are no longer in use?  
A. Legacy systems are tanks that are still active. 'Decommissioned' tanks are treated but often left in place once actions are taken to make them safe then they are backfilled with sand, soil or rock.
- Q. Septic systems aren't cheap to put in, 15 years doesn't seem long enough given cost. Biomass systems vs general systems.  
The best type of system is where you can remove mechanical parts. Treatment plants run 20k and are high maintenance and will most likely last longer than 15 years however parts may need replacing. Sand filters are low maintenance.

ACTION

N/A

## 2. e-flows and Integrated Water Management

Presenter: Priya Van Ryn (Melbourne Water)

### Environmental water delivery update

- January – June events
- Outlook for remainder of 2022
- Upper Yarra monitoring update
  - Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve
  - Upper Yarra high flow release
  - Eel monitoring

Feedback/questions

Q. How do you attach a tag to an eel?

A. A cut is made in the side of the eel and a tracker is inserted under the skin. The skin is then glued back together. The process needs to be quick as they become more slippery the longer you handle them.

ACTION

N/A

**3. Agency Reports**

Melbourne Water written report was supplied. No verbal updates given.

Comment: Would like to hear more about the work Annette Muir (DELWP) is doing in monitoring forest recovery post-storm at Silvan Reservoir.

ACTION

Melbourne Water to provide Laurence with information on Silvan Reservoir work with Annette Muir

Sarah Gregor/Mel Carmody

**4. Dixons Creek Visit**

Peter Martin

- challenge of scaling up
- challenge of knowledge transfer
- Important message is never burn the canopy – how do we share that message?

Cr Andrew Fullagar

- It's not a fantastic bullet, it's another tool in the armoury, something to be used when it's warranted.

Laurence

- Powerpoint presentation wasn't able to be presented due to poor internet connection.
- Councillor Fullagar suggested Laurence's presentation could be presented at a special meeting in the office.

Graeme George

- Would like to discuss site ecology further with Brett (landowner) and Darren Wandin

ACTION

Laurence's Dixon's Creek presentation to be scheduled when we can return to the office.

Suzanne Burville

ACTION

Dixon's Creek site ecology discussion - Graeme George, Darren Wandin and Brett Ellis.

Darren Wandin

**5. Committee Open Floor**

Q. Graeme asked Amanda when the committee will see the Nature Plan

A. Plan will be provided to SEAC ahead of Council meeting on August 23. Once the plan is approved by Council public feedback will be sought.

Q. Jonathan asked for the Sustainable Transport Strategy to be presented at next meeting.

A. Cr Fullagar asked for it to be action for next meeting. Amanda agreed. Kym asked which particular aspects were of interest.

Jeff Barlow gave a Yarra Valley Power Hub update:

- No new funding has been forthcoming; therefore, programs are closing down.

- New 80k grant - capacity building support for volunteers

Q. Re: Sustainability team update 'Streetlight Upgrades' - Why aren't the lights changing to solar instead of getting bulb upgrades?

A. We have to work with Ausnet providers, over time smarter solutions will be available. We are purchasing all our power through VECO which helps us with carbon neutrality.

Cr Andrew Fullagar announced after 38 years with Yarra Ranges Mark Varmalis is leaving to take a position at the City of Bayside as Director Environment, Recreation & Infrastructure. His last day will be August 26.

There is likely to be a change in SEAC committee Councillor Delegates later this year with Tim Heenan stepping down.

ACTION	Nature Plan to be provided to SEAC before public release	Amanda Smith
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### Meeting closed

7.32

### Deferred topics

Draft Community Waste and Recovery Plan

Urban Tree Canopy Strategy update

Integrated Sustainable Transport

Amendment C148 – Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme

Revised Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act