



**Yarra Ranges Environment Advisory Committee**  
**Minutes**  
**Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2020**  
**Online Zoom Meeting**  
**5.30pm – 7.00 pm**

<b>Meeting Open</b>	<b>5.31pm</b>	Chairperson: Cr Mike Clarke
<b>Members Present</b>		Graeme George (member), Lauren Dwyer (member), Ron Sawyer (member), Benjamin Viola (member), Steve Hosking (Melbourne Water), Joanne Antrobus (Parks Victoria), Corinne Mays (Port Phillip and Westernport CMA), Cr. Mike Clarke, David Harper (YRC), Simon Woodland (YRC), Sarah Bond (YRC), Amanda Smith (YRC), Mark Varmalis (YRC), Jess Rae (YRC)
<b>Apologies</b>		Darcy Duggan (member), Melanie Birtchnell (member), Michelle Masterson (member), Laurence Gaffney (member), Leah Wheatley (DELWP) Absent: Luke Boontjes (member), Jeff Barlow (member), Julian Hill (member)
<b>Welcome</b>	<b>5.31</b>	<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <p><i>Meeting etiquettes:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Remain on mute and 'raise your hand' using the zoom functions if you want to speak. The Chair will invite you to speak in turn.</i></li> <li>2. <i>Raise questions, where possible, using the 'Chat function'</i></li> <li>3. <i>Try to limit distractions, either in the physical background or notifications from other applications.</i></li> </ol> <p><b>Acknowledgement of Country</b></p> <p><i>We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri People as the Custodians of this land. We also pay respects to all Aboriginal Community Elders, past, present and emerging, who have resided in the area and have been an integral part of the history of this region.</i></p> <p>Confirmation of minutes of meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2020 (published on YRC website)</p> <p><b>No quorum so minutes remain unconfirmed from meeting.</b></p>
	<b>5.35</b>	<p><b>Declaration of Interest</b></p> <p>Any members with interest in matters to be discussed to declare.</p>
	<b>5.35 – 5.45</b>	<p><b>Matters Arising/ Actions</b></p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Darcy to provide Jo the information sent to Victoria Purdue about WSUD needed to reduce erosion in parks. <b>Withdrawn</b></p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Laurence requires the burn plan before he can present on the planned burns at Launching Place. David to follow up with David Carr about the burn plan. <b>Completed</b></p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Sarah to send documents from Jeff before next meeting on the Great Forest National Park. <b>Withdrawn</b></p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Motion for biodiversity emergency to be drafted by Cr Mike Clarke and circulated to YREAC members for comment. Outcome to be reported at the next YREAC meeting. <b>Completed</b></p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Table noted presentations into the 'deferred topics' section until space becomes available on the agenda. <b>Completed</b></p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Organise a Biodiversity Subcommittee Meeting to occur before the next YREAC meeting. <b>Completed</b></p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Include detailed information on the Biodiversity Offset Program in the next Biodiversity Update. <b>Completed</b></p>

		<p><b>Discussion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WSUD Action Item from Darcy has not been completed and the item will be withdrawn until Darcy is in better health.</li> <li>• Laurence still intends to present on the Launching Place burn plan. It was acknowledged that there would be value in a community consultation period for planned burns on Council land.</li> <li>• Action on GFNP has been withdrawn by Jeff under the current COVID-19 conditions.</li> <li>• Cr Mike detailed that the motion for a biodiversity emergency was discussed with Council and that it has been deferred to be considered out of forum. A briefing is being prepared within the context of Yarra Ranges Council and the bigger conversation of a biodiversity emergency. With this, the Councillors can then decide at a future meeting whether there should be a public position on the matter.</li> </ul>
	5.45 – 5.55	<p><b>Committee Discussions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great Forest National Park (also referenced as Central highlands National Park)</li> <li>• Biodiversity Subcommittee</li> </ul>
		<p><b>Discussion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GFNP discussion has been withdrawn as detailed above.</li> <li>• Biodiversity Subcommittee met and discussed the biodiversity strategy. There was a review of 2019 biodiversity deterioration based on a scorecard analysis (available through the ANU website <a href="#">here</a>). Most of the decreases are likely due to the large scale bushfires and the end of the drought, rather than mismanagement.</li> <li>• Working for Victoria Program will be supporting the data collection for the strategy. There has been successful recruitment of a coordinator to oversee this part of the project and a number of high quality candidates are coming through for the other positions.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Amanda to send through information on Will Sowersby, Coordinator Biodiversity Investigations, to the committee.</p>
Item 1	5.55– 6.10	<p><b>Council Plan</b></p> <p>Cliff Overton will present on the 2021-2025 Council Plan and engagement opportunities.</p>
		<p><b>Presentation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning how we will engage on the next Council Plan, which will commence in July 2021.</li> <li>• Want to know about 'great' community engagement that people have been involved in and why was it 'great'.</li> <li>• What will make you feel like your participation was worthwhile.</li> </ul> <p><b>Discussion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was agreement from a number of members that Melbourne Water engaged really well for the Yarra Strategic Plan. Significant effort was made to engage with a broad cross-section of the community, including those who don't often get involved.</li> <li>• Need to engage through a number of different forums, including on-the-ground engagement. There are a number of people who won't engage online.</li> <li>• Bringing people into the process early so input is meaningful.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liveable Climate Plan engagement was highlighted as a great effort considering the challenge presented by COVID-19. Key elements of this engagement include open platforms, FAQ sections and polling.</li> <li>• It's useful to have specific topic areas or questions for people to 'buy into', not just open forums which can be overwhelming. This could include short surveys to gauge what people value.</li> <li>• Use existing events to tap into. E.g. the Powerful Owl webinar which had ~350 attendees. Having a short segment at the end of this would be an easy audience to capture.</li> </ul>
Item 2	6.10 – 6.40	<p><b>Tree Strategy</b></p> <p>The tree team (Paul Mechelen, Lachlan Hughes and Nick Magree) will present an update on the Tree Strategy.</p>
		<p><b>Presentation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This intends to fill the gap of a long term 'vision' missing from the Tree Management Plan (2009) and Tree Policy (2016).</li> <li>• The new strategy is future focussed and largely covers significant roadsides, urban areas and rural townships.</li> <li>• There's huge variation in tree cover across the municipality, from low in the winery region to high in the Dandenong's.</li> <li>• There has been analysis undertaken of canopy cover in the urban parts of the municipality to understand the balance of needs between public and private land and tree cover.</li> </ul> <p><b>Discussion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Given the focus is on built up areas, perhaps 'chapters' on roadside trees and trees on private land could be added.</li> <li>• A concern was raised about the fire risks posed by roadside vegetation and the shift in the State Government view in this space. Suggestions were made that revegetating drainage lines and creeks instead would be a better long term goal.</li> <li>• The Tree Team emphasised that the focus of the strategy is on Council land and not the private realm given influence in this space can be problematic. The strategy concentrates on increasing the number of trees in the urban environment, an area where Council can have an impact.</li> <li>• David detailed that the Biodiversity strategy will take a wider view, with particular reference to private land management, also tying into DELWP's Biodiversity 2037 strategy.</li> <li>• A suggestion was made to amend the title to 'Urban Tree Strategy' given this more closely aligns with what it will target.</li> <li>• The Tree Team detailed that a number of the maps presented were created using data from DELWP but that they had clipped areas not within scope so as not to confuse people (for example, crown land has been clipped).</li> <li>• A query was raised about the percentage of tree cover presented (77% for the whole municipality), being misleading given the strategy focuses on urban areas and roadsides. It was suggested to include a more accurate figure representing tree cover for the areas in the strategy.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was interest in whether the strategy would take into account the types of trees being planted specific to location, with the possibility of improving biodiversity, e.g. urban areas that back onto areas of significant biodiversity.</li> <li>• The Tree Team detailed that a 'right tree, right place' methodology is going to be used with tree selection. This will take biodiversity values on board as well as additional values such as shade and amenity. Consultant will generate a species list to include indigenous, native and exotic species that are adapted for a changing climate. Selections will then be based on what is required for a specific space with this process detailed through the associated Action Plan.</li> <li>• The Trees Team noted that although an external consultant would be compiling the trees list, there would be consultation within Council including the Biodiversity and Bushland teams. This is also reflected in the alignment between the Tree Strategy and the draft Liveable Climate Plan which have both been developed with strong cross-links.</li> <li>• A number of members highlighted that the tree list would be a valuable resource for people on private land. This is particularly relevant for selecting 'fire wise' trees with low flammability (CFA have a flammability guide). If the list could include how flammable trees are, it could guide people on trees to use near their homes. The Tree Team acknowledged that this was out of scope but that work could be done with the Emergency Management team to put such a list together.</li> <li>• Cr Mike suggested that a categorisation and prioritisation system could be used for the target areas. Categorising tree types would take the emphasis off needing specific tree species which goes into the biodiversity realm.</li> <li>• Suggestions were made to reference the protection of mature trees in the strategy. The Trees Team identified that this is already covered in the Tree Policy (2016) which balances tree retention with safety. Members acknowledged this but emphasised the value in reiterating it in the Tree Strategy given the value that mature trees have as habitat.</li> </ul>
Item 3	6.40 – 7.05	<p><b>Agency Reports</b> Follow up for Agency Representatives.</p>
		<p><b>Discussion</b></p> <p>Melbourne Water:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steve detailed that Melbourne Water are looking to target litter hotspots along waterways (Olinda Creek and Warburton have already been identified) but would welcome additional locations as identified by the community.</li> <li>• Corrine provided further background on the Yering Gorge to Woori Yallock Catchment project detailed in the Melbourne Water update. She shared that the project scoping has been extended until the end of August because of COVID-19.</li> </ul> <p>Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The wrap-up of the Great He-Ho Escape project culminated in a video as the final event had to be cancelled. The video features Dr Melanie Birtchnell (YREAC member), Gaye Gadsden (FoHH) and</li> </ul>

		<p>Dr Dan Harley (Zoos Victoria). Its purpose is to inform local landholders of the value of habitat restoration and what good quality habitat looks like.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Farms2Schools Program will have a coordinator responsible for the Yarra Ranges area. Their positions are for 6 months. David suggested the coordinator connect in with the Sustainability team given the project's relevance to the Climate Plan.</li> </ul> <p>Parks Victoria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jo reminded everyone that the 1000 steps and Redwood Forest have remained closed to the public. She updated that there have now been closures at Mt Donna Buang with the road closed at the forest gallery and snow play closed. There were issues with snow play as social distancing requirements weren't being followed.</li> <li>The deer culls around Yellingbo have changed with volunteer shooters discontinued and professional shooters brought in. 109 deer have been taken out since March. PV have entered into an arrangement with Melbourne Zoo where the meat can be used to feed the top predators.</li> <li>Lauren was interested if the damage within parks has increased over the lockdown period (with reference to the illegal mountain bike trail made). Jo indicated that illegal trail making is fairly frequent in the Dandenong's. She did share that there has been an exponential increase in park use over the lockdown and that the number of visitors is unprecedented for this time of year.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Jo to follow up information on PV response to information on the state deer strategy and include in next report.</p>
Item 4	7.05 – 7.45	<p><b>Sustainability and Environment Team Updates</b></p> <p>Follow up for Sustainability and Biodiversity Coordinators.</p>
		<p><b>Discussion</b></p> <p>Biodiversity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amanda gave a detailed update on the Biodiversity Offsets Program and that there has been improvement in the market. Council's program has a few advantages in that it has a fast turn-around time and high service offered.</li> </ul> <p>Sustainability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jess gave an update on the consultation for the Liveable Climate Plan, reminding everyone that the closing date is Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> July for community submissions.</li> </ul>
Next Meeting		Thursday 10 <sup>th</sup> September
Meeting Close	7:50	Next meeting to focus on water
Deferred Topics		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planned Burns at Launching Place by Laurence Gaffney</li> <li>Warburton Mountain Bike Strategy</li> <li>Yarra Strategic Plan 15 – 20 mins</li> <li>Environmental Flow Program (Melbourne Water) 20 – 30 mins</li> <li>Coranderrk Restoration (PPWCMA) – 15-20 minutes</li> </ul>