



MERRI CREEK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

2020-2024 Strategic Plan

Merri Creek Management Committee recognises the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung People of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the lands of the Merri Merri and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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THE MYER
FOUNDATION

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The project steering committee, made up of council officers and community volunteers from MCMC's Committee of Management.

Graphic Design by MCMC's Pip Jones.

Maps by Karen McGregor.

Cover image of Merri Creek from Rushwood Drive, Craigieburn.

ABOUT OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

The Strategic Plan is a guiding document for all Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) activities and decisions.

The Plan identifies our purpose, mission and vision, and how we work.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The Strategic Context summarises how we see our operating environment, the underlying drivers and trends and the opportunities and challenges that these presents us. This is based on our engagement with and learning from our members and stakeholders.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Strategic Framework identifies the high-level long-term objectives, directions and priorities that we will work towards for the next 5 years within a dynamic and changing social and political environment. As such, the Strategic Plan is a living document that will be revised when necessary.

We will develop a supporting Implementation Plan with shorter-term priorities and actions consistent with the Strategic Plan. We will report on progress on the Implementation Plan annually. We will review the entire Strategic Plan in 2024 or earlier if our strategic circumstances alter significantly.



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SUMMARY

MCMC'S PURPOSE

Merri Creek Management Committee Incorporated (MCMC) is an environmental stewardship agency formed in 1989 to achieve a shared vision for the waterway corridors of the Merri Creek catchment. Its members are the Darebin, Hume, Moreland, Whittlesea and Yarra City Councils, Mitchell Shire Council, Friends of Merri Creek and Wallan Environment Group.

MCMC'S VISION

Merri Creek, its tributaries and its environs will be of high environmental quality and deeply treasured by the community.

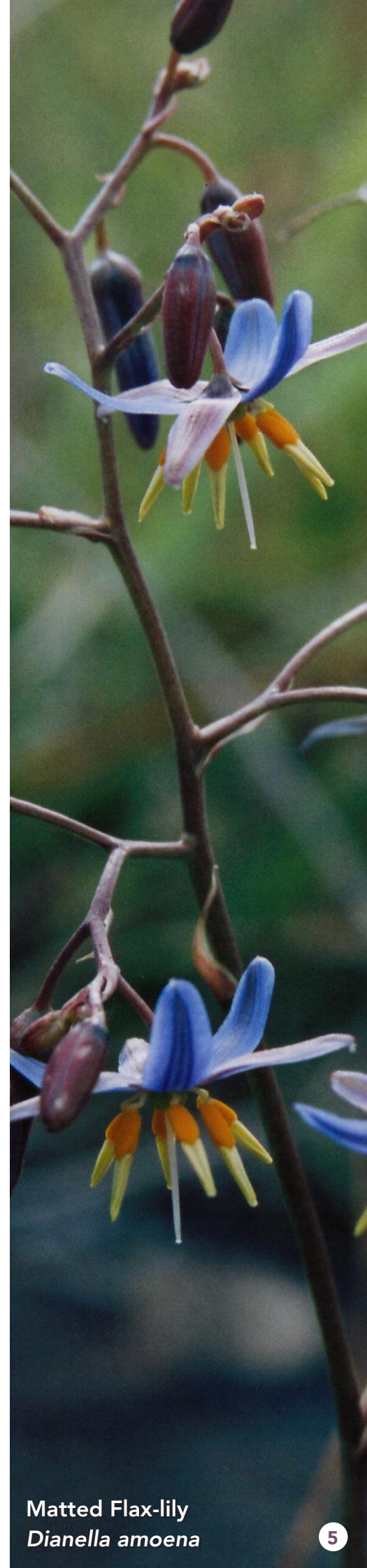
MCMC'S MISSION

To act as a unifying voice to champion and advance the protection, restoration and stewardship of the Merri Creek, its tributaries and environs.

Our way of operating is through engagement, partnership and collaboration. MCMC has emerged as a key organisation capable of connecting multiple stakeholders and interests, providing a whole-of-catchment perspective that integrates scientific, historic, technical, community knowledge and passion, Indigenous values and knowledge, and practical on-ground know-how. The way MCMC works, and the stewardship regime we have established, bring a broad range of environmental, social, cultural, economic benefits.

The framework for Merri Creek catchment stewardship is complex and dynamic. Trends and issues that will impact on the ability of MCMC to successfully fulfil its role include rapid urbanisation of the upper catchment and urban consolidation in the lower catchment; advancing information technology; climate and ecological change; increasing demands for natural open spaces for urban residents; and changing business models.

Merri Creek flows for more than 60 km from the Great Dividing Range south to the Yarra River/Birrarung in inner Melbourne, draining an area of nearly 400 square kilometres. The Creek and its tributaries have substantial ecological values, with associated sites of State and national conservation significance. The open space along the Creek in Melbourne's northern suburbs provides highly-valued recreation, amenity and health benefits to resident and visitors.



Matted Flax-lily
Dianella amoena



Nest box monitoring at Merri Park, Northcote

Measuring Our Impact

While achievement of our vision is the shared responsibility of many agencies, organisations and the broader community, our role is to deliver on-ground projects, engage with the community and influence the Merri Creek stewardship regime. Merri Creek Management Committee will monitor and report on the following types of impact:

Waterway Corridor Health	Changes in the health of the creek corridor as a whole and in part
Relationships	Changes in relationships, collaboration and ways of working with our partners, friends' groups, communities and others
Insights	New understandings, knowledge and learning by community, stakeholders, partners and ourselves
Capacities	New skills, methodologies, tools
Commitments	New commitments, investments, partnerships
Initiatives	Initiatives and innovations as a result of our efforts
System	Changes in policies, laws, regulations, or institutions that demonstrate improvements in the 'system'

This Strategic Plan identifies priorities and actions under five strategic focus areas:

STRATEGIC FOCUS	PRIORITIES
Leadership & Advocacy	- Establish Merri Creek Regional Parkland - Update Merri Creek & Environs Strategy - Achieve more effective planning controls - Improve instream health
Partnerships & Collaboration	Build and strengthen partnerships with: - Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung - Local Government - Community groups - State Government - Philanthropic & corporate organisations
Waterway Corridor Restoration	Expand and sustain a best practice waterway corridor restoration program
Education & Engagement	Strategically develop education and engagement
Organisational Strengthening	- Improve marketing & communications - Ensure staff skills to implement Strategy - Achieve stable and diverse funding - Review governance

1. About Merri Creek Management Committee

Who We Are

Merri Creek Management Committee Incorporated (MCMC) is an environmental stewardship agency formed in 1989 to achieve a shared vision for the waterway corridors of the Merri Creek Catchment. Its members include all the municipalities in the catchment: the Darebin, Hume, Moreland, Whittlesea and Yarra City Councils, and Mitchell Shire Council, and the Friends of Merri Creek and Wallan Environment Group. Representatives of these member groups form a Committee of Management which develops policy and guides MCMC's activities.

Our Purpose

Our primary purpose is to ensure the preservation of natural and cultural heritage, and the ecologically sensitive restoration, development and maintenance of the Merri Creek and tributaries, their corridors and associated ecological communities.

Our Vision

Merri Creek, its tributaries and its environs will be of high environmental quality and deeply treasured by the community.

Our Mission

To act as a unifying voice to champion and advance the protection, restoration and stewardship of the Merri Creek, its tributaries and environs.

Our Operating Principles

- We acknowledge, respect and engage with the traditional owners of the land, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation.
- Our work is based on sound research and understanding of the ecology and social, cultural and environmental values of the Creek, its tributaries and environs.
- We are ethical, inclusive and fair.
- We keep learning and sharing our learning.
- We are collaborative and optimistic.
- We are willing to take risks where necessary to achieve our aims and to tackle hard social and environmental issues.





What we do and how

Our way of operating is through engagement, partnership and collaboration. We provide stewardship of the Merri Creek through engagement of people's hearts, hands and minds. We integrate scientific, technical, cultural and community understandings, know-how and perspectives.

We provide leadership and advocacy for a "one creek, one plan" (a whole of catchment) approach. We bring together the diverse perspectives of land managers and stakeholders to develop a holistic and integrated approach to catchment management, development and community engagement in urban, peri-urban and rural settings.

We work in partnership with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Traditional Owners to ensure that catchment management and development plans affecting Merri Creek are respectful and inclusive of their needs and aspirations.

We work in partnership with members of the community to build their knowledge and understanding of the ecology, history and importance of Merri Creek, its tributaries and its environs.

We also work with and support them to participate in the stewardship of waterways and surrounding parklands, by involving community members in our work and encouraging them to advocate for better environmental protection.

We work in partnership with 'Friends' groups in the Merri Creek catchment to help them plan, engage, organise, and mobilise volunteers. We also provide advice to environment groups in other catchments. Friends of Merri Creek and Wallan Environment Group help oversee and guide the work of Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) along with other member groups.

We work in strong partnership with member Councils that share responsibility for the Merri Creek and its tributaries, and with their elected representatives, staff and communities. Councils oversee much of the work of MCMC, while MCMC provides expert advice, comments on relevant planning applications, undertakes on-ground works, and co-designs and delivers community engagement and education initiatives.



We work with State government agencies and their business entities to advocate, inform and strengthen policy and planning frameworks including land use, vegetation and waterway management plans and strategies. We engage in processes like the Melbourne Strategic Assessment for Melbourne's growth corridors to help government agencies understand the impact of urban development and infrastructure proposals (road and rail etc.).

We conduct research and provide on-ground restoration and catchment management works on their behalf, as well as engaging with the community and other stakeholders. We also seek to develop the skills and knowledge of the staff at all levels of their organisations, including operational managers, field officers, policy developers and executive decision-makers. We also engage with State politicians to help them better understand Merri Creek ecology, history and community aspirations, and opportunities and threats.

We work with Federal government agencies to protect threatened species and communities.

We work with developers to provide planning, design and management advice and ecological information on waterway protection and restoration.

We work with tertiary, secondary and primary students, researchers and others in educating them and helping them undertake ecological and other research activities.

We work with all key stakeholders - municipal councils, State Government agencies, community groups and landholders - to develop a more integrated and regional approach. This includes our work to promote and conduct programs and activities to achieve integrated catchment and parkland management, community education, resource sharing and information exchange on a regional basis. We assist other organisations to achieve sustainable environmental development of the Merri Creek, its adjacent catchments, and the wider metropolitan area.



BENEFITS

There are a broad range of benefits from the work of MCMC and the way we work. These include:

Environmental

The overall ecological health and resilience of the Merri Creek catchment environment has directly benefited from our decades of effort. Biodiversity has improved in the lower parts of the catchment through MCMC's efforts. The community is better connected to the local environment thanks to our efforts.

We have been a major contributor to the Merri Creek becoming one of Melbourne's most treasured natural assets.

We are a pioneer and leader in ecological restoration practice and continue to build our expertise in this field.

State and local government agencies and businesses are unlikely to achieve their targets for biodiversity protection, revegetation or weed control along the Merri Creek and its tributaries without us. Our holistic way of working makes it easier, cheaper and more efficient to deliver Creek research, survey work, on-ground restoration monitoring, remnant ecosystem protection, fire management, flood protection, control of pest plants and other management works, which relate to the Merri Creek and its tributaries. These benefits also extend to building the capacity within government organisations to develop and deliver better, more integrated laws, policies and decision-making frameworks.

Social & Cultural

There are many tangible and intangible social and cultural benefits associated with the work we do and as a consequence of our work.

Our initiatives build greater understanding, care and responsibility for nature in the urban community. This engagement and participation also brings a greater understanding and respect for Aboriginal heritage and traditional custodianship.

Our work also creates a legacy in the landscape that is more inspiring for activity, contemplation, learning and education and offers an environment that improves community physical, emotional and social health and well-being.

Economic

Our holistic approach to stewardship provides a cost-effective model to government and other investors.

The overall cost of using our services is lowered by bringing together professional and voluntary expertise, capacity and donations of time and/or funds to each task. Our model of social enterprise combines deep, broad and historic scientific, technical, community, Indigenous, and other understandings of creek ecology, policy, planning and decision-making that cannot be replicated by any other agency or by piecemeal approaches.

Our work increases the immediate and long-term economic value of the Merri Creek environs for amenity, recreation, business and human habitation. Our work has and will continue to increase property values of benefit to property owners and local government (i.e. through higher rates).

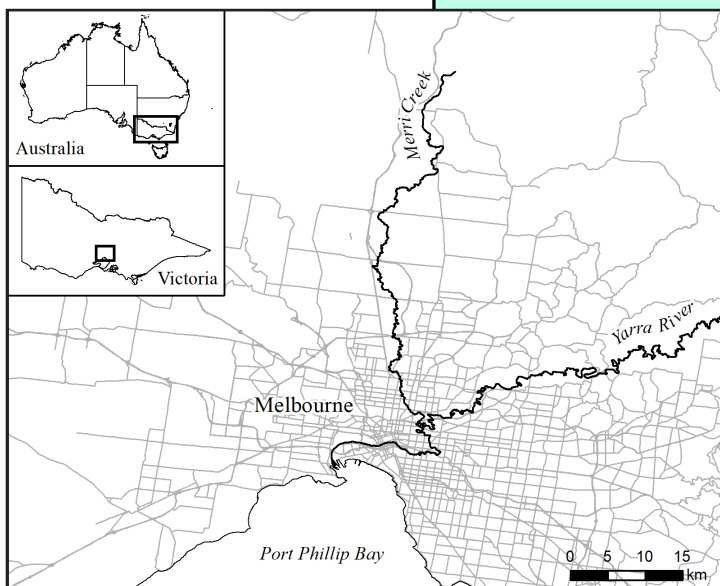
We have established a Merri Creek Environment Fund that accepts tax-deductible donations to invest in meaningful environmental projects on the Merri Creek.

Stewardship Regime

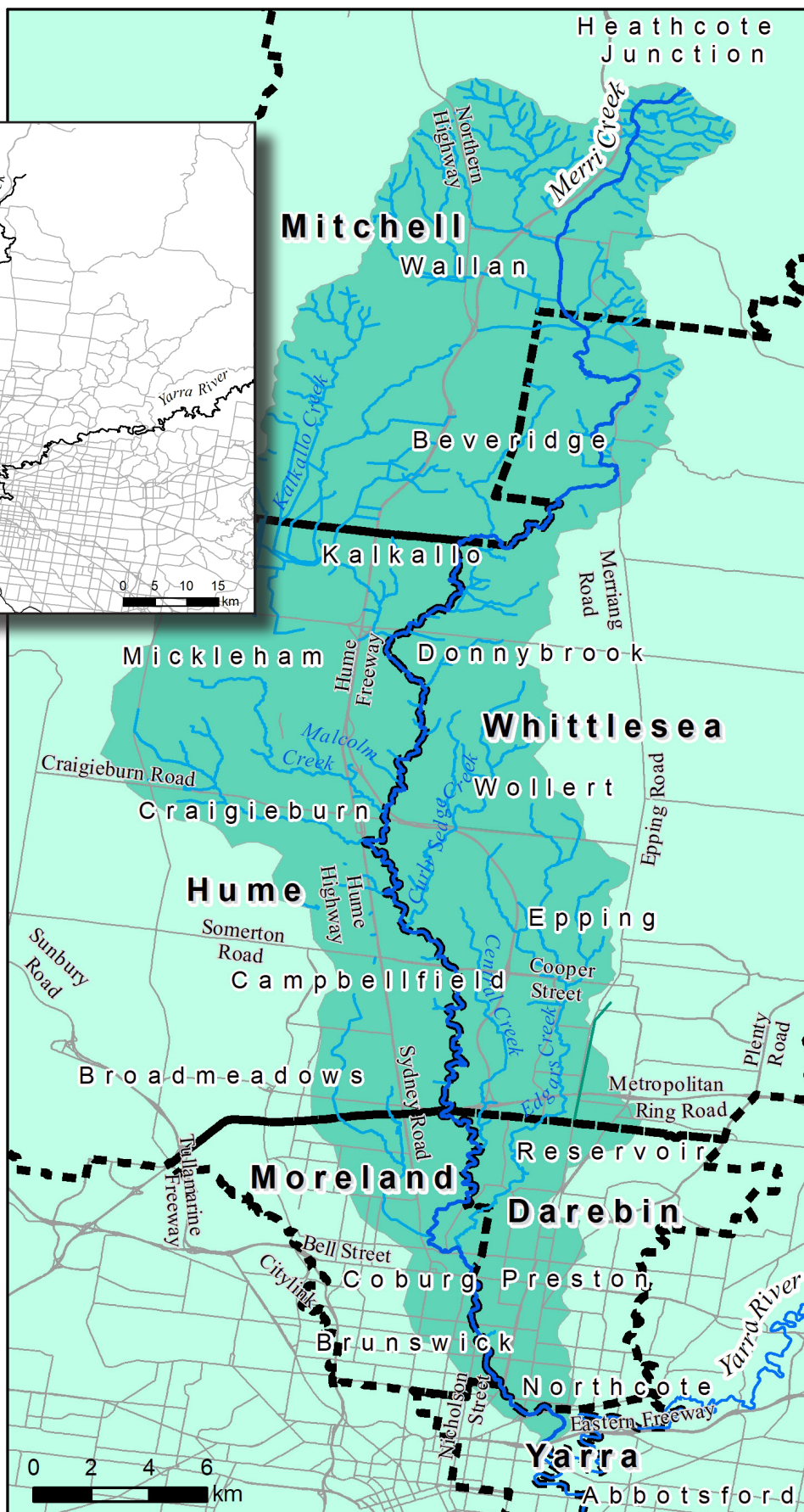
We provide a collaborative and holistic approach to stewardship of Merri Creek and its tributaries that delivers an effective 'system' of integrated waterway corridor management and biodiversity protection. These system benefits include:

- Stable, trusted and longer-term relationships for doing business.
- Greater transparency and consistency in planning and decision-making.
- Stronger, more robust and enduring policy frameworks and commitments.
- Deeper understandings and insights into how best to steward the Merri Creek and its tributaries.
- New capacities in government, water businesses, other agencies and community.
- More innovative and cost-effective initiatives and delivery.
- Broader, deeper and stronger engagement and learning by the community, researchers, government, business and other stakeholders.





Merri Creek Catchment



2. Strategic Context

Merri Creek is an important natural asset in the heart of Melbourne. It flows for more than 60 km from the Great Dividing Range south to the Yarra River/Birrarung, draining an area of nearly 400 square kilometres. It has a number of major tributary systems including: Wallan, Strathaird, Taylors and Mittagong Creeks in the upper catchment; Aitken, Kalkallo, Malcolm, and Curly Sedge Creeks in the middle catchment; and Campbellfield, Merlynston, Central and Edgars Creeks in the lower catchment.

Most of the catchment is currently rural in the upper reaches, though it is rapidly urbanising, while in the middle and lower reaches, the catchment is predominantly industrial and residential. There are within this, and particularly close to the Merri Creek and its tributaries, large areas still in a relatively natural state, with a number of sites being of State and national conservation significance. The conservation value of Merri Creek and its tributaries has also been increased by restoration work undertaken by the Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC), Friends of Merri Creek and other Friends of groups working along the creek and its tributaries, as well as by and local and State government agencies over the past 30 years.

The Merri Creek and surrounding region has always been important to the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, the Traditional Owners of the area. Where the Merri Creek and the Yarra River/Birrarung join was once an important meeting place and continues to be of high cultural significance to present-day Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung. The Merri Creek and surrounding lands were also important for food, shelter and travel and are still of substantial cultural importance to contemporary Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people.

The Merri Creek corridor provides a range of important ecological services to the local and broader community. It also provides for amenity, recreation, and the promotion of health and well-being to a growing urban population.

MCMC has more than 30 years of experience in waterway corridor restoration and protection in an urban setting. It has achieved a reputation of leadership and excellence in direct on-ground work, education and advocacy through a unique model of co-governance/management and collaboration between the community and local government. MCMC is a pioneer of urban creek protection and continues to innovate and deliver high quality creek restoration projects combined with community education and specialist technical advice to land managers and decision-makers.

The framework for Merri Creek catchment stewardship is complex, dynamic and continually changing.

MCMC provides a catchment-wide and strategic perspective specifically for the Merri Creek and its tributaries. It has deep knowledge of the catchment, a rich palette of technical expertise in on-ground delivery, policy and planning, has been stable for a long period and is of high value to the community, researchers, and local and state government organisations.

MCMC has strong relationships with Traditional Owners, local communities and local government, and provides a ready-made structure and source for State government to link with and learn from local community knowledge and experience.

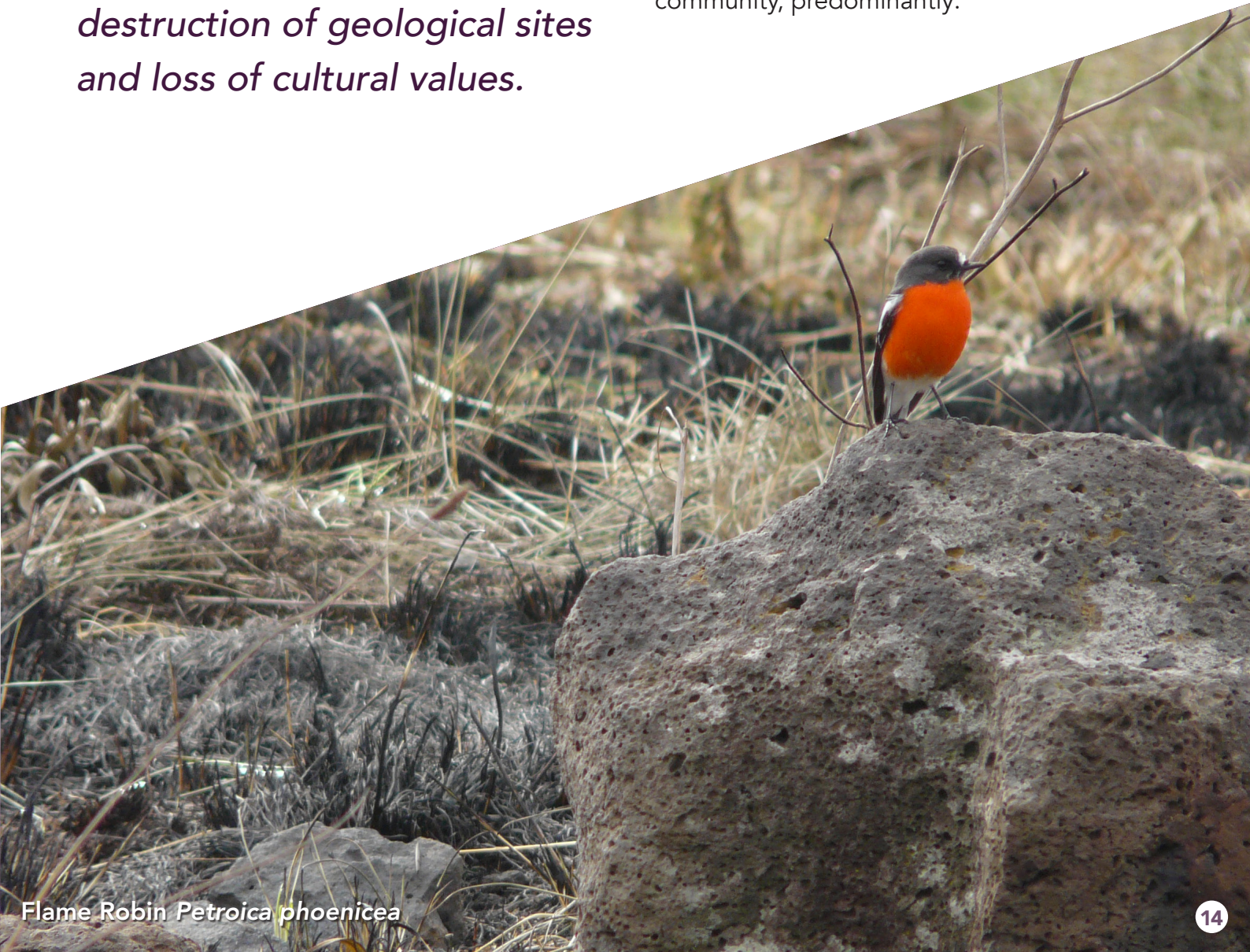
Key Trends and Issues

As the Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) looks to the future of Merri Creek and its own stewardship role, the strategic context continues to appear complex and uncertain.

Population growth, particularly rapid urban expansion in the upper catchment is the dominant driver of change. It leads to a broad range of impacts, including fragmentation and loss of habitat, local extinctions, soil erosion, waterway degradation, destruction of geological sites and loss of cultural values.

Drivers also include increasing demand for open space, climate change, fragmented approaches to catchment stewardship, the impact of local government rate capping, competitive tendering, rapidly improving information technologies, changing community attitudes and shifting government policy and investment priorities. A multiplicity of State and local government agencies and State government (water) businesses with overlapping responsibilities for Merri Creek policy, planning and decision-making are responding to these same drivers, usually within a broader context and framework than the Merri Creek catchment.

In summary, there are a broad range of trends and issues that will impact on the ability of MCMC to successfully fulfil its role in the community, predominantly:



Flame Robin *Petroica phoenicea*

THEME	TREND / ISSUE
Urbanisation & Population Dynamics	• The rapid urbanisation of the northern (upper) parts of the Creek corridor which will lead to habitat loss and degradation unless managed • Major opportunities for ecological restoration in newly developed areas • The increasing demand for open space and competition between recreational/amenity and biodiversity values • The impacts of urban consolidation of in-fill/re-development in the lower reaches of the Creek corridor
Technology	• Rapidly advancing information technology bringing faster computing and greater information storage capacity that is also being opened up to the public (e.g. providing opportunities for greater community involvement in waterways research and monitoring). • Trends in the development of applications and data usage related to the concept of 'quantified self' (the use of personal data to improve one's health and well-being) • The role, opportunities and challenges of social media
Climate & Ecological Change	• Increased clearing of native vegetation for urban housing • Increased risk of invasive weeds and disease • Changed fire regimes and frequency • Climate change impacts on creek ecology and amenity from more frequent and intense droughts, floods and bushfires • Incremental damage and impacts from illegal clearing, vandalism, rubbish dumping, fires, weeds, littering, etc.
Healthy & Meaningful Lifestyles	• Increasing demand for urban open space and opportunities to connect with nature • Limited availability of suitable natural environments in the north of Melbourne for urban dwellers to connect with nature • Trends in obesity; need for attractive exercise opportunities to counter sedentary lifestyles
Community Education & Engagement	• Growing need for people to connect with nature (e.g. bush kindergartens) • Opportunities Merri Creek and its tributaries provide for nature education and engagement
Business Models	• Increasing interest and experimentation in collaborative models of service delivery • Trends in business model development (e.g. impact investing) • Trends in philanthropy



Stakeholder Needs and Perspectives

There are strong similarities between the perspectives of staff, volunteers and stakeholders on the strengths and future directions for Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC).

Key strengths of MCMC have been and are:

- Catchment wide and strategic perspective
- Co-governance by local government and community
- Consistency of message
- Technical expertise – on ground, policy, planning
- Mix of skills, expertise, networks, relationships
- Community engagement
- Passion
- Longevity
- Continuity
- Innovation
- Ready-made structure governments can link with
- Relationship with Traditional Owners
- Relationships with strategic stakeholders
- Advocacy (e.g. VCAT hearings, submissions to government processes)
- Education of government personnel

There is also common acknowledgement that without MCMC there would be:

- Greater fragmentation of natural and cultural assets
- More piecemeal approaches to protection and management
- Loss of biodiversity values along the creek
- Need to build community capacity from the bottom up again
- Loss of community involvement/education or the quality of that involvement, less volunteerism
- Loss of advocacy – poorer planning decisions
- Loss of coordinated community policy input
- Loss of innovation and experimentation.

All stakeholders see a strong leadership and advocacy role for MCMC, and for its continuing creek restoration and community engagement work. Differences were mainly in how these roles would be configured. The further development of the MCMC model of collaboration and partnership for creek stewardship is seen as a priority, particularly with State government agencies and water businesses. This may have implications for future MCMC governance.

Implications for the Future Role and Direction of MCMC

No one organisation has full responsibility for 'managing' Merri Creek and its tributaries. While Melbourne Water has primary responsibility from a Victorian government perspective, a plethora of agencies, organisations and businesses, as well as individual households, all play a role in ensuring the Merri Creek and its tributaries is managed effectively for ecological outcomes as well as other values.

From an ecological perspective, Merri Creek, its tributaries and surrounds are all intricately connected to broader ecological processes that have existed and evolved over millions of years.

For Traditional Owners, this view of the Merri Creek and its tributaries as one entity is shared, and deeply and intimately respected as the basis for their own ongoing existence, and 'managed', or 'cared for', accordingly. Since Europeans came to this land, Traditional Owners have been unable to fully enact their sacred responsibilities as required by their laws and customs.

From a Western cultural perspective, Merri Creek and its surrounds is not one entity. The catchment is divided into parcels of land with control and responsibility for management delegated to separate public or private entities. By virtue of their existence, each entity, whether private and public, has its own individual needs, objectives, expectations, priorities, cultural norms, policies and strategies and approaches to caring for and managing 'their part' of the Creek.

In the public sphere, each of the local councils, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, DELWP and Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority has a different set of statutory requirements and associated responsibilities for managing parts of the Merri Creek and the Merri Creek catchment. Management of Merri Creek and its catchment area is just one of many competing objectives. Agencies seek to coordinate and integrate their efforts to provide better outcomes for the environment and the community. They also need to consider commercial interests, particularly those of the development community, through the planning and decision-making frameworks that support urban expansion and growth.

The time horizons for government planning and decision-making frameworks are always relatively short-term. Even if they were to extend to 100 years, this is short-term from ecological and Traditional Owner perspectives and considering that much of the Creek's ecosystem has been destroyed in about 150 years. Added to this, there are plans for urban expansion that will destroy significantly more of the ecosystem.

In all this, MCMC has emerged as a key organisation capable of connecting these competing interests and providing a whole-of-catchment perspective that integrates scientific, historic, technical, community knowledge and passion, Indigenous values and knowledge, and practical on-ground know-how.

Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) attempts to bring to the fore a higher order of stewardship of Merri Creek and its tributaries based on a shared responsibility, commitment and collaboration of Councils, State government agencies, Indigenous Traditional Owners and the community,

There is strong agreement about the importance and value of a whole-of-catchment perspective. Everyone wants the benefit, but as individual contributors to the whole, each with different needs in both time and space (depending on their location and role in the catchment), it is difficult to quantify that value. This is especially the case when whole-of-catchment responsibility is not part of any individual organisation's mandate.

Equally, each agency has significantly different needs, requirements and expectations of MCMC. They see the value of MCMC in being able to do things that they can't do themselves. Where there is a perceived or real sense that others can do what MCMC does, then this creates tension (e.g. via competitive tendering or through questions about value for money).

A key strategic question is the extent to which MCMC is seen as a true partner of government, versus as a service deliverer. MCMC provides a unique integrated bundle of scientific, technical and community services to government that cannot be replicated by siloed approaches to community engagement, revegetation, policy and planning advice, and so on. The trend towards competitive tendering is a major risk to integrated catchment management.





The additional value of long-term stability, experience, community connection and innovation, is being lost in the current tender model, to the detriment of all those with a stake in the future of the Merri Creek and its tributaries and the immense community value it brings.

The scale and speed of change in the catchment, driven by urban expansion, climate change and technological disruption, are MCMC's biggest challenge, and also demonstrate why MCMC is more needed than ever. The challenge for MCMC is for us to convince key funders and decision-makers of this value and develop better, stronger, stable and more lasting collaborative and partnership arrangements.

There is a need for MCMC to be bolder in its leadership and to take a stronger strategic role, particularly in advocacy for the regional park, waterway planning controls and moderating the impact of urban expansion in the north. Our relationship with and support of Friends Groups and our ability to influence key government policy planners and decision-makers will be important parts of the way forward. In turn this will drive the organisational development of new skills and capacities.

There are also opportunities for greater Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung involvement in governance and on-ground catchment stewardship activities such as cultural burning practices. There are also many opportunities for more holistic and catchment-wide approaches to rehabilitation, community education, advocacy and citizen science.

3. Strategic Framework

Setting Objectives and Measuring Impact

We take a holistic and systemic view of the Merri Creek corridor and in our approach to setting strategic objectives, priorities and to measuring and reporting on impact.

Achievement of our vision for the Merri Creek, its tributaries and its environs to be of high environmental quality and deeply treasured by the community is the shared responsibility of multiple government agencies and organisations, private businesses, institutions, residents and the broader community.

Our role is to deliver on-ground projects, engage with the community and influence the Merri Creek stewardship regime, so that our vision for Merri Creek is achieved.

We deliver and report against objectives for specific funded projects and grants that contribute to improvements in parts of the Creek corridor. We also seek to understand and report on changes in waterway corridor health and stewardship regime impacts.

3.1 Waterway Corridor Health Impacts

Waterway corridor health objectives and impacts are addressed and described in the Merri Creek and Environs Strategy (MCES). These include:

- Retention of remnant ecosystems
- Protection of corridor connectivity
- Improved amenity for communities
- Protection of water quality and instream health

The MCES is the responsibility of multiple agencies. It is closely related to and complements the MCMC (organisation) Strategic Plan.

3.2 Stewardship Regime Impacts

Merri Creek Management Committee's role in stewardship of Merri Creek is based on a shared responsibility, commitment and collaboration of Councils, State government agencies, Indigenous Traditional Owners and the community. A way of describing objectives and reporting on stewardship impacts is set out on the following page.



IMPACT OBJECTIVE	RATIONALE	REPORTING
Relationships <i>To improve relationships, collaboration and ways of working with our partners, friends' groups, communities and others</i>	The strength of our relationships, teamwork and the effectiveness of our collaborative effort with Traditional Owners, our partners, Friends' groups, communities and other stakeholders underpins our collective ability to influence change and care for the Merri Creek and its tributaries. Improved relationships leads to improved co-ordination, improved practices, fewer disputes, faster decision-making, more sustainable decision-making and greater innovation.	We monitor, evaluate and report on changes in relationships and ways of working with our partners, stakeholders, communities and others that influence or impact on our goals. This includes descriptions of the diversity of relationships and their role in the system, and how these relationships are contributing to the overall achievement of our vision.
Insights <i>To develop new understandings, knowledge and learning by community, stakeholders, partners and ourselves.</i>	Our work brings new understanding, knowledge and learning by community, stakeholders, partners and ourselves that influence or impact on our goals. These insights help bring innovation, better practices, new initiatives, policies and behaviours by our partners, and by the community. In a holistic model of waterway health, important insights reveal the effectiveness of the stewardship regime and its system linkages (ecological, social, political, technological, legal, economic), integration practices, value for effort/cost, social as well as individual organisational learning, and new opportunities and risk.	We collect and tell stories of insight and learning, and how they impact on the direction of Creek health and community engagement and the effectiveness of the stewardship regime to deliver our vision.
Capacities <i>To develop new skills, methodologies, tools focused on our goals for the Merri Creek corridor.</i>	Our work requires the development of stronger, more effective, more efficient and new skills, knowledge, methodologies and tools for ourselves and our partners/ community to achieve success.	We seek to understand and report on the development, impact and usefulness of various capacities and capabilities in improving ecological objectives, community engagement and in solving stewardship problems.
Commitments <i>To grow new commitments, investments, formal partnerships, alliances, etc. focused on our goals for the Merri Creek corridor.</i>	New, extended and renewed commitments, pledges, investments and partnerships linked to our work are a clear demonstration of confidence in our approach and the gains being made to community-wide leadership and collective action to restore and maintain waterway corridor health, build community engagement and influence stewardship of Merri Creek and its environs.	We report on the number and nature of those commitments (e.g. pledges, signatories), the leadership provided, the level of investment, time, resources and the changes that these commitments are focused on (e.g. changed practices, behaviours, environments, policies, etc.)
Initiatives <i>To foster new initiatives and innovations as a result of our efforts.</i>	New and improved initiatives will result from our collective efforts. We will continue to build on the success of initiatives currently underway, and replicate, standardise and better align existing effort across the catchment and with efforts elsewhere. We will continue to innovate and develop new and better models of practice, and undertake new or further research.	We collect and tell stories on the results and impact of initiatives on waterway corridor health, community engagement and the stewardship of Merri Creek and its environs.
System <i>To improve policies, laws, regulations, institutions and narratives, that demonstrate improvements in the overall stewardship of Merri Creek and its environs.</i>	In a holistic model of waterway corridor health, changes to underlying system drivers such as planning laws, land tenure, government policy, institutional arrangements etc. deliver the greatest and most lasting impact.	We seek to understand and report on these changes and the impact they are having on the current and future health and amenity of the Merri Creek corridor.

4. Strategic Priorities

4.1 Leadership and Advocacy

Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) is a leader and pioneer of community and government collaboration and partnership in urban waterway habitat restoration, biodiversity protection and integrated waterway management. We provide scientific, technical and community engagement expertise in waterways science and management and urban planning.

We are a leading organisation for stewardship of the Merri Creek as a whole. Our authority, experience and expertise is sought broadly by decision-makers, policy makers, planners, managers, researchers, and developers across a broad range of disciplines including urban and statutory planning, environmental protection, biodiversity, water quality, catchment management, open space, citizen science, ecological restoration, community engagement and catchment governance.

We have a central role in our community to champion and facilitate a shared vision for Merri Creek, to bring community and government together, and advocate for better environmental and community outcomes.



OBJECTIVE	RATIONALE	ACTION
A. Merri Creek Regional Parkland		
<i>To secure continuous public parkland along Merri Creek and key tributaries from headwaters to the confluence with the Yarra/Birrarung.</i>	A long-held aim of the Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) has been the securing of continuous public parkland and a connected trail along the entire length of Merri Creek (Merri Creek Parklands). The need is for a protected, collaboratively stewarded and managed corridor that is a consolidation and expansion of public open space, flora and fauna reserves and public ownership of natural assets. It is also important to limit inappropriate intrusions into, and uses of, the Merri Creek parklands. The north of the catchment is particularly vulnerable. The pace and scale of urban expansion is placing remnant and vulnerable ecosystems at risk. The State Government has committed to implement an Upper Merri Parklands and to undertake a feasibility study for the Wallan Regional Park. These form a key part of the vision for continuous parkland. There are important opportunities for the new Merri parklands to incorporate tributaries, volcanic cones and east-west biolinks. There is also a need to consolidate the corridor south of the Ring Rd into public ownership. There are still portions of the creek corridor that are privately owned to the creek banks, impeding consolidated management, ecological restoration and public access.	- Encourage DELWP to establish an integrated working group for both the Upper Merri Park and Wallan Regional Park proposals that includes Merri Creek Management Committee, to guide implementation of the Merri Park projects including: - Lead engagement with key stakeholders and the community - Develop an overarching vision, plan and process to establish the park - Regularly review progress on the Upper Merri Park and Wallan Regional Park projects and where necessary, strongly advocate for appropriate actions to ensure these projects are implemented in a timely manner and that the most effective pathways to secure the park/s are in place. - Advocate for timely acquisition processes for remaining parcels of privately owned Merri Creek frontage south of the Ring Rd
B. Merri Creek and Environs Strategy		
<i>To develop an updated Merri Creek and Environs Strategy as a key guidance document for MCMC and MCMC member organisations.</i>	A vision, objectives, targets and actions for waterway corridor protection, improvement and management are detailed in the Merri Creek and Environs Strategy (MCES). The MCES has long been a key strategic document for Merri Creek Management Committee and its member groups. Although much of the information in the current version of the Merri Creek and Environs Strategy 2009-2014, including its Urban Growth Addendum, is still highly relevant, overall it is outdated and needs revision to maintain its role as a contemporary guidance document. A standing sub-committee of the MCMC is charged with revising the MCES and has identified the process and steps for the update. Lack of resources has stalled the project. Implementation of the Merri Creek and Environs Strategy is overseen by the same standing sub-committee.	- Continue to monitor the implementation of Merri Creek and Environs Strategy actions from all responsible organisations. - Seek funding for the development of a revised and updated Merri Creek and Environs Strategy.

OBJECTIVE	RATIONALE	ACTION
C. Waterway Development Proposals		
<i>To bring about more effective planning controls to protect environmental and amenity values of waterways of the Merri Catchment.</i>	Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) played a central role more than two decades ago in establishing waterway planning controls along the Merri. These take the form of an Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO) in municipal planning schemes and the Development Guidelines for the Merri Creek (1999 and revised 2004) which are referenced in the decision guidelines to the ESO. These statutory planning controls have been invaluable in moderating development impacts, but are less than optimum in protecting the Merri Creek corridor from negative impacts on environmental and amenity values of Merri Creek, its tributaries and environs. In the light of new planning controls for the Yarra River/Birrarung that include height and setback controls, it is timely to develop more effective and efficient waterway planning controls for the Merri. MCMC needs more resources to advocate for improved planning controls. It also needs resources to continue its role in advising on development applications, contesting poor proposals and poor planning, and inappropriate decisions.	1. Seek a review of waterway planning controls along the Merri to ensure effective mechanisms are in place to protect Merri waterway corridors 2. Seek funding to support MCMC's planning advocacy work.
D. Waterway Health		
<i>To achieve improved instream health of waterways of the Merri Catchment.</i>	Historically Merri Creek has suffered from poor water quality and to a large extent this poor condition has continued. The projected urbanisation of most of the catchment over the next few decades threatens to degrade the condition of what are now rural waterways. The risk comes firstly from erosion/sediment impacts from all of the phases of urban development. Second is the ongoing impact of urban stormwater after an area is fully developed. Impacts will also be felt downstream and will severely constrain the ability for improvements in instream health of downstream reaches. The very poor quality of stormwater runoff from industrial areas continues to be the most serious factor degrading Merri Creek in already urbanised areas. A new threat has emerged in recent years in the form of fire-water runoff from industrial fires which has also more generally highlighted the high risk that directly connected drainage systems pose to Merri Creek. MCMC has the ability to strongly advocate for improvements in instream health and to advocate for and participate in forums that seek such improvements, for example by participating in Melbourne Water's Yarra Catchment Collaboration for the implementation of actions in the Healthy Waterways Strategy. There may also be scope for MCMC to directly advocate with the development industry for improvements.	1. Advocate at all levels of government for improvements to Merri Creek instream health.

4.2 Partnerships and Collaboration

Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) has always worked through a partnership and collaboration model.

Friends of Merri Creek, Wallan Environment Group and local government have been long-term partners. State government agencies were initial partners, then shifted to a provider-supplier relationship. Given the change of thinking within State government and water businesses on the benefits of co-governance, co-management and community partnerships, it is timely to renew a focus on strong, long-term strategic partnerships and collaboration with State government agencies and water businesses.

The benefits to Merri Creek and MCMC of working in partnership with State agencies include greater transparency, consistency and efficiency in planning, decision-making and implementation, and delivering better

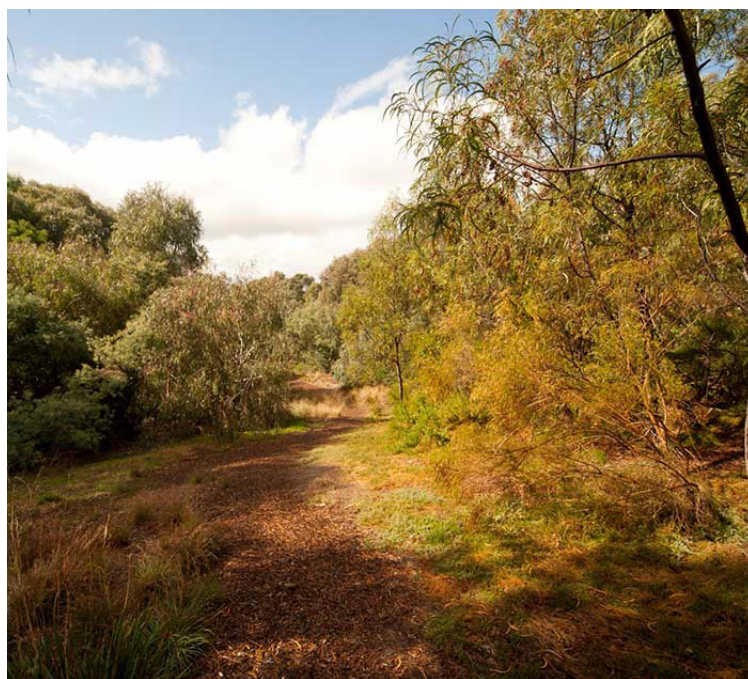
targeting of and cost-effectiveness of investment. State government partnerships will also increase the potential for other philanthropic and corporate participation and investment.

These relationships are required by government for better land-use, statutory and strategic planning and policy making as well as for catchment and biodiversity protection and community engagement. With a multiplicity of agencies responsible for management of the Creek, and a regular turnover of leaders within government organisations and politicians, MCMC's stability in personnel and depth of corporate knowledge and memory is a strategic asset of high value to government and water businesses.

Additionally, partnerships can be strengthened with local government, Friends groups and the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Traditional Owners.



Retarding Basin in Merri Park, Northcote, 1990



The same site, now Merri Park Wetland, in 2015



OBJECTIVE	RATIONALE	ACTION
A. Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Partnership		
• <i>To work closely, collaboratively and respectfully with Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Traditional Owners via the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC).</i> • <i>To ensure that MCMC is an active contributor to reconciliation with Traditional Owners.</i>	Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) recognises that we work on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country and that we have a strong history over the last 15 years of working closely and collaboratively with Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung via the WWCHAC (Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation) on Merri Creek land management and engagement projects. It is time to formalise and strengthen this partnership commitment with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation. There is a need for MCMC to take responsibility to explore opportunities to further strengthen and deepen the relationship, to actively seek resources to do this and to actively support the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung in seeking resources to further their role in caring for the land of the Merri Merri.	1. MCMC to acknowledge Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country and Elders in all our events. 2. Ensure Traditional Ownership is recognised in MCMC policies and practices. 3. Develop a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) or a Partnership Agreement, as appropriate, with Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation.

OBJECTIVE	RATIONALE	ACTION
B. Local Government Member Partnerships		
- To ensure local government support for MCMC as the best model to deliver environmental and community objectives in the Merri Creek corridor. - To ensure a stable long-term funding model with local government members partners.	Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) has enjoyed the long-standing membership and support of local government. While these arrangements are strong, they are tested from time to time by changes in personnel, policy (e.g. competitive tendering), impacts of externally imposed forces (e.g. rate capping) and competing community priorities. It can be difficult at times for those not familiar with MCMC's work to see the strategic advantages or long-term benefits of being part of a larger collaborative structure. There is a need therefore to periodically refresh and strengthen these arrangements through increased engagement, particularly with councillors, Executive and relevant council officers. Stable, multi-year funding arrangements are established with some Councils and need to be extended to all member Councils. Including local government leaders in strategic discussions with State government agencies will increase the value of the relationship.	- Strengthen the understanding of the value of local government's role in MCMC through: - Provision of strategic briefings about MCMC and opportunities to participate in strategic forums of interest to Councillors and senior Council leaders. - Provision of material and support to enable Council leaders to take a stronger advocacy and influencing role. - Expanded opportunities for joint projects that are of strategic importance - Identifying opportunities for MCMC and Council staff skills development through placements, joint training exercises, etc. - Ensuring shared vision and strategies for Merri Creek are reflected in key Council strategies and planning documents. - Develop a joint MCMC/Council partnership framework that articulates the benefits of being part of MCMC, and a set of underlying principles consistent across all municipalities that enables MCMC to navigate competing interests. - Develop or renew a Memorandum of Understanding and 3-5 year rolling funding model with each member Council.
C. Community Group Member Partnerships		
- To build and maintain an active and viable network of 'Friends' and like Groups across the entire catchment. - To empower and support 'Friends' Groups to take action to help achieve shared vision for Merri Creek.	Friends of Merri Creek and Wallan Environment Group are long-standing members of MCMC, and provide a strong involvement of volunteers essential to MCMC's work at every level, and work to improve the environmental and amenity values of the Merri Creek and its tributaries. MCMC also plays an important role in providing support to its member 'friends' groups to function effectively but funding for this role is not comprehensive across all member municipalities and is entirely lacking for two of the growth municipalities. Conversely, some Councils have active programs and dedicated officers to support 'friends' type groups and there is potential to usefully coordinate efforts. A number of other 'friends' groups have been spawned along tributaries of Merri Creek, inspired by the success of the Friends of Merri Creek and in many instances these groups are formal sub-groups of the Friends of Merri Creek. The Friends of Merri Creek and Wallan Environment Group recognise there is a need to actively encourage the formation of 'friends of' groups in newly forming suburbs, but have very limited capacity to undertake this work unless provided with specific resources. There is interest by local government and water businesses in how to initiate and support 'friends' groups and recognition of the potential role for MCMC in undertaking this work.	- Continue to consolidate and periodically review membership and partnership arrangements with Friends Groups, potentially through agreed MOUs that clarify respective roles and mutual expectations - Seek funding to develop a strategy to grow, develop, empower and maintain Friends Groups within the Merri Creek catchment with either MCMC undertaking this role or supporting FoMC/WEG in undertaking this role.

OBJECTIVE	RATIONALE	ACTION
D. State Government Partnerships		
<i>To position MCMC as a long term, reliable and valued source of information and expertise to State Government agencies</i> <i>To secure an ongoing funding stream from State Government agencies.</i> <i>To effectively communicate, plan, collaborate and co-ordinate with State Government agencies and water businesses.</i>	In recent times most of the interaction between Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) and State agencies and businesses has been at the managerial and operational level or in relation to specific tied grants. While these are still important, there is a need for at least an annual engagement with State agencies including DELWP, Melbourne Water, Yarra Valley Water, Victorian Planning Authority and ParksVic in discussions on the strategic challenges and opportunities and directions for the Merri Creek catchment. There is also the need for State agencies to be more heavily invested in the success of MCMC. In consultation for this Strategic Plan agencies reported the benefit and reliance on MCMC in helping them achieve their objectives. There is a need for State agencies to demonstrate more tangible commitment.	- Continue to participate in State agency sponsored or led strategic forums and planning processes to contribute to and influence positive outcomes for Merri Creek (see also Strategic Priority 1. Leadership & Advocacy) - Explore with senior representatives of DELWP, Melbourne Water and Yarra Valley Water the possibilities/options for formal, long-term partnerships and collaborative arrangements, including the option of formal membership of MCMC. - Develop regular MCMC hosted or co-hosted strategic forums of interest to senior State and local government influencers and decision-makers. - Expand opportunities for joint projects (working groups) that are of strategic importance (e.g. Upper Merri Park).
E. Philanthropic and Corporate Partnerships		
<i>To increase recognition of MCMC leadership and achievements among philanthropic organisations and business.</i> <i>To create long term co-benefits through corporate partnerships.</i> <i>To create secure, diversified and long-term funding streams.</i>	Funding from philanthropic investors has historically been for specific purpose grants. Corporate sponsorship has historically been minimal and currently is non-existent. There is an opportunity to explore other forms of innovative investments that are now available such as social impact investments and community bonds. These forms of investment are also of interest to corporate bodies. This opportunity will take time to develop and requires good financial/investment advice and support. An initial step may be first to focus on a distinct area of work, such as creek restoration which allows for tangible and measurable impact, or link to the larger goal of a regional park which will have large scale beneficial impact across the metropolitan region. Opportunities may also include partnering with other sectors (e.g. urban planning, landscape industry) that are beyond an environmental focus. Initial funding or voluntary assistance will be required to help MCMC understand the market and how to best pitch to investors through a prospectus.	Establish a small working group (with co-opted expertise) to source funding or voluntary assistance to develop a prospectus to attract new partners and investors. See also Strategic Priority 5 -- Organisational Strengthening, Objective 5C Funding p.33.

4.3 Waterway Corridor Restoration

Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) has been delivering the highest standards of ecological restoration in the waterway corridors of the Merri for more than 30 years.

In that time we have accumulated a vast repository of organisational knowledge on best practice that we apply directly and use to provide advice and assistance to others. We specialise in ecological restoration methods that combine knowledge and understandings of restoration from the most up-to-date scientific, technical, Indigenous and community perspectives. We are able to link and integrate this work to other activities such as community engagement and education, building greater care and responsibility to maintain this work, and making our work more cost effective over the longer-term.

Over the decades the capacity and skills of council and agency staff, and industry contractors, has grown. MCMC acknowledges it is now one of a number of organisations delivering ecological restoration across the Merri catchment.

More recently, National Standards for Ecological Restoration have been developed. MCMC is well-placed to collaborate with

agencies to encourage all work on restoration in the catchment to reach the national standards.

The approach to ecological restoration has to date been supply driven, i.e. work is done as resources (voluntary and funded) become available. A vision and plan for comprehensive and sustainable waterway corridor restoration and maintenance will enable a demand driven approach to MCMC's work in this area. It will help explain to funding bodies and investors the need and benefits of comprehensive restoration, the scale, scope and nature of the work required and priorities for investment, and how it is linked to community engagement and citizen science.

It will also help the community better understand the importance of waterway corridor restoration to the revitalisation and health of the catchment as a whole, including re-introduction of important native plants.

It will help State agencies, water businesses and local government better understand MCMC's unique role in restoration of the waterway corridors of the Merri and improve planning and co-ordination of effort, providing savings over the long-term. It also will open up opportunities to engage with developers and other potential investors.



Growling Grass Frog *Litoria raniformis*

OBJECTIVE	RATIONALE	ACTION
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A. Waterway Corridor Restoration Program		
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- To plan and deliver long-term, comprehensive and sustained approaches to waterway corridor ecological restoration and maintenance. - To implement best practice in ecological restoration and maintenance activities. - To advocate and support a common approach to waterway corridor ecological restoration and maintenance by partners and key stakeholders. - To ensure waterway corridor restoration and maintenance works are based on long-term, sustainable funding arrangements. - To integrate waterway corridor restoration and maintenance objectives with community engagement objectives. - To be recognised as a national leader in ecological restoration.	For Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) to maintain its leadership role, a larger, longer-term, and bundled (comprehensive and integrated) approach and associated funding model to waterway corridor restoration and maintenance efforts will help deliver lower cost, sustainable and better results. Coupled with this approach is the need to: - Continue to invest in staff skills and conditions to maintain best practice and sustain the benefits of restoration. - Continue to link community engagement with participation in restoration works and maintenance and better promote how we do this - Formally adopt the National Standards for Ecological Restoration or similar MCMC's Vegetation Protection & Restoration Advisory Sub-Committee that was established to coordinate vegetation protection and restoration works along the Merri Creek and tributaries has been inactive due to other priorities and lack of resources. Re-activation of this Sub-Committee (and ensuring broad membership) to develop a longer-term approach (among its other technical and co-ordination roles) would lead to better waterway corridor restoration outcomes. There are substantial stretches of the Merri and tributaries that need restoration, both in existing suburbs and in future urban areas. These represent a significant opportunity to expand the ecological restoration work of MCMC or at least the coordinating, collaborative role that MCMC can play.	- Reactivate MCMC's Vegetation Protection & Restoration Advisory Sub-Committee or similar to provide a multi-stakeholder collaborative forum for planning and coordinating waterway corridor restoration in the Merri. - Formally adopt the National Standards for Ecological Restoration or equivalent. - Explore new opportunities for MCMC to be engaged in ecological restoration and management across the Merri Creek catchment, with a particular focus on urbanising parts of the catchment. - Develop a business case/model for long-term investment and explore investor funding options as outlined in Action 1, Strategic Priority 4.2 Partnerships and Collaboration, Objective 2E Philanthropic and Corporate Partnerships, p.28.
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4.4 Education and Engagement

Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) has been delivering high quality, innovative, diverse and responsive community engagement and education in the Merri catchment for more than 30 years. Being in nature, and supporting citizen science and community stewardship of indigenous biodiversity and waterway health, is at the heart of our work.

In that time we have accumulated a vast repository of organisational knowledge on effective approaches. We directly deliver our own projects. We also use our experience to deliver collaboratively with stakeholders, to provide advice and training.

We acknowledge that our member bodies and stakeholders have also developed considerable expertise in this field. MCMC is now one of a number of organisations connecting communities to indigenous biodiversity and waterways.

We operate in non-formal, informal and formal settings that utilise scientific, ecological, cultural, geographic and creative approaches. We work with Traditional Owners, linguistically and ethnically diverse communities, children and adults, educational organisations at all levels, community groups and businesses.

MCMC's community engagement and education has largely been supply driven, i.e. work is done as resources (funding) become available. Over the years this has acted as a driver for innovation, in spite of fluctuations in resources. However it has also been a constraint on the geographic scope and continuity of our projects.

A strategic approach to education and engagement will help define MCMC's particular role within the bigger engagement story and enable us to explain to funding bodies and potential investors the benefits of our approach, how it is linked to our vision for Merri Creek and the value of our partnerships and collaborations.

OBJECTIVE	RATIONALE	ACTION
A. Education and Engagement Strategy		
- To develop a long-term approach to MCMC's education and engagement work. - To further MCMC's education and engagement profile with stakeholders, communities and new partners. - To drive collaboration with stakeholders. - To create opportunities for new investment.	A strategic approach to education and engagement will deliver better and more cost-effective outcomes for the community and funders. Development of a strategic approach will require significant resources, and collaboration and co-ordination between all MCMC member organisations and other stakeholders. MCMC will continue to ensure its education and engagement approaches are integrated with other MCMC activities for waterway corridor restoration and its advocacy for better creek protection and parklands. Coupled with this approach is the need to: - Continue to invest in staff skills and conditions to maintain best practice - Continue to link community engagement and education with ecological restoration works and maintenance	- Establish a working group to produce a 'strategy' or 'roadmap' for MCMC's education and engagement. - Develop appropriate materials that communicate MCMC's profile and capacity in education and engagement. - Convene a biennial forum of stakeholders to focus on education and engagement innovations.

4.5 Organisational Strengthening

Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) has a proud record of valuing the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff and volunteers. Our culture fosters strong performance, on-the-job learning, innovation, team work, excellence, accountability and adaptability. The nature of our work enables us to keep abreast of strategic trends and issues.

OBJECTIVE	RATIONALE	ACTION
A. Marketing and Communications		
To position MCMC with key stakeholders and the community as a lead organisation for Merri Creek stewardship.	MCMC is understood by those who know its work to be a leader and 'go-to' organisation for 'anything to do with Merri Creek'. However, the role and strength of MCMC is understood by only a small group of influencers and decision-makers. With a relatively high turn-over of these people, there is a need for MCMC to continually build brand awareness, and position and promote MCMC as a lead catalyst/enabler for the Merri Creek and beyond, not only to influencers and decision-makers, but all key stakeholders and the community. MCMC does not have a Communications/Marketing Strategy and now is a timely opportunity to consider improvements to such things as: • Organisational and project branding • Strategy and scheduling for communication with partners and influencing key stakeholders (funders, developers, press, etc.) • Digital tools and applications (web, social media, etc.) • Communications templates for external and internal audiences • Communication products; leaflets, pamphlets, etc.	1. Develop a strategic approach to Marketing and Communications starting with an overview of existing approaches and identification of gaps and opportunities for improvement. The services of a specialist advisor will be needed for this.
B. Staff Skills		
To ensure MCMC has the staff to implement the priorities in this Strategic Plan.	Many of the priorities in this Strategic Plan require investment in professional development of staff and/or additional staff with new skills. There is also a need to consider the ongoing transfer of organisational memory and succession planning. A broad range of skills is required to implement this Strategic Plan including: • Leadership, advocacy and influencing skills • Communications and engagement skills • Fundraising and corporate partnerships skills Funding can be a barrier to investment in learning and development and is definitely a barrier to acquiring additional staff with new skill areas. Voluntary mentoring and in-kind training opportunities are options that could be explored.	1. Identify the staff skills needed to implement the Strategic Plan, current gaps, and means of addressing these gaps.



Golden Sun Moth
Synemon plana

OBJECTIVE	RATIONALE	ACTION
C. Funding		
<i>To develop a stable and diverse long-term funding model for Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC).</i>	Development of a long-term and sustainable funding model for MCMC will help identify where to focus relationship-building efforts with member organisations, partners, clients and potential clients, sponsors, donors, and philanthropic organisations including the role of the Merri Creek Environment Fund (MCMC's own tax-deductible gift fund).	1. Establish a small working group (including co-option of suitably qualified advice and contribution from the Merri Creek Environment Fund sub-committee) to oversee development and implementation of a funding strategy, including: • Seeking resources to employ a suitable qualified funding strategist. • Supervising and supporting the strategist. • Developing a prospectus to attract new partners and investors (see also Strategic Priority 4.2 Partnerships and Collaboration, Objective 2E Philanthropic and Corporate Partnerships, p.28).

D. Governance		
• <i>To ensure a collaborative and strategic approach to whole of catchment stewardship</i> • <i>To provide effective oversight of Merri Creek Management Committee operations</i>	Effective stewardship of Merri Creek requires a shared responsibility, commitment and collaboration of local Councils, State government agencies, 'Friends' Groups, Indigenous Traditional Owners and the community. MCMC has had a stable and effective collaborative governance structure for some time but includes as members only Councils and 'Friends' Groups (State Government and Melbourne Water were previously members). A review of governance will enable MCMC to strengthen its collaborative stewardship model and provide an opportunity to explore the potential for other member bodies such as State government agencies, Traditional Owners and other community groups. Membership of MCMC's governance body – the Committee of Management – consists of nominated representatives from each member organisation. A review could consider whether there is a need for specialist skills on the Committee of Management and/or its sub-committees, or the potential to access specialist governance skills in other ways.	1. Conduct a review of governance arrangements.



Volunteers monitoring Plains Yam Daisy, Galada Tamboore, Thomastown

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Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Elder Uncle Dave Wandin
Merri - Birrarung Confluence