

10<sup>th</sup> March 2020

**Melbourne Water (Yarra Strategic Plan)**

*Through the Engage Website Portal*

<https://engage.vic.gov.au/help-us-shape-final-10-year-strategic-plan-yarra-river>

**RE: Nillumbik Shire Council Submission to the Draft Yarra Strategic Plan**

Nillumbik Shire Council values this opportunity to give comment on the draft Yarra Strategic Plan (draft Plan). Council has appreciated being active as part of the Yarra Collaboration Committee (YCC) in overseeing development of the draft Plan, including identifying work being undertaken at the local level in managing and protecting the Yarra River and acknowledging the importance of the river as part of the unique and significant character of Nillumbik Shire.

The *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrong) Act 2017*, as a model for how multiple authorities can manage and invest in an integrated, living, multi-value entity, if successfully realised through the Yarra Strategic Plan, could provide a benchmark for a decision making framework that many other regional projects could benefit from. The complexity given the different types of ownership and management in place along the Yarra River, including the relevant legislation that governs management of these places, requires a high level of coordinated governance and decision-making.

The draft Plan is generally compliant with Council's relevant adopted strategies and policies. A strength of this draft is its focus on improving water quality and protecting landscapes within the Yarra River Corridor whilst still optimising community accessibility.

Council although supportive of the broad objectives that the draft Plan identifies, notes some concerns which are related particularly to the 'unknowns' given the very high level strategic nature of the draft Plan. It is acknowledged the draft Plan identifies implementation that will require further work, however it is not clear how some of the objectives will impact existing and future private land owners along the Yarra River Corridor, and Councils operational budget in implementing and complying with directions in the draft Plan.

*Design & Siting Guidelines*

1. Considerable commentary is made in the draft Plan in regard to ensuring new buildings, including those located on private parcels, will need to adhere to siting and design guidelines which are yet to be prepared.

2. Similarly a key objective is to avoid building on floodplains and to set buildings back from the river and adjoining conservation/parklands.
3. Given the draft Plan, once finalised, would become policy at clause 12.03-1R of the Victoria Planning Provisions, there is concern as to what impacts this objective would have in regard to decision making in regard to existing dwellings and buildings located within the Yarra River corridor, particularly with regard to construction of new dwellings, and re-construction of existing dwellings.
4. Further information is needed in regard to implications for existing private property owners located within the Yarra River Corridor to inform potential impacts on them should they build or re-build. For example the right to rebuild on the land in the location of the existing dwelling in the instance of a bushfire. Further clarification of implementation of the draft Plan in regard to proposed amendments to Planning Schemes and what planning controls may be sought is required.

#### Future ongoing maintenance costs to Council

1. As a small Council, and with significant public open space areas to manage, Nillumbik funds basic service standards, for things such as maintenance, mowing/slashing, re-vegetation, weed/pest management, etc. These service standards are compliant with the various Acts Council are already subject to. The draft Plan sets very broad, but very high standards, and it is unclear what the measure for compliance with these standards will be given the lack of detail and the associated costs to Council in meeting and reporting on those standards. Council has identified its own priority actions in regard to activating public spaces along the Yarra River as part of its Council Plan 2017 – 2021, but the scope of work identified in the draft Plan is not yet defined and could represent significant additional costs to Council, in addition to already committed funding.
2. Further information is needed in regard to compliance, and how this will differ from that already required under relevant Acts, and any funding options to assist Councils in delivering these services.

#### Increased access to Yarra River Environs

1. Identified projects in the draft Plan as they relate to Nillumbik Shire Council include filling in gaps in the parklands and recreational trail network to provide a continuous open space corridor and to investigate opportunities for cross-river connections that will facilitate improved links to the Yarra River from local recreational trail networks.

2. Further actions should be introduced into the draft Plan, to ensure that the Yarra River environs are made more accessible. This may include new connections to access the Yarra River (and Corridor), above and beyond those identified in existing recreational trail networks and strategies (used to inform the preparation of the draft Plan). Opportunities could and should be sought in development of new strategic work to identify new recreational and leisure pursuits aligned to new, improved or expanded connections to provide greater accessibility to open space areas for the community to enjoy. To that end the draft Yarra Strategic Plan should be modified to ensure that new opportunities identified in other agency and local government strategies can be considered and implemented, should actions within those strategies align to the objectives of the draft Plan once finalised.

#### *Suburban Reach future project opportunities*

1. Page 104 of the draft Yarra Strategic Plan identifies (among other future projects) at point 2, outlines 'identify and manage all mine shafts'. While Council support the intent of this project, concern is raised with the ability to firstly identify all mine shafts within the Yarra Corridor, but also to effectively 'manage' 'all' mine shafts.
2. Clarification is required in regard to the rigour of the work that is necessary to comply with such an ambitious undertaking. Consideration should be given to the scope of this project to ensure that it can be effectively delivered.
3. Council supports the identified future project at point 3 – protecting an upgrading significant buildings and sites, and would like this point reinforced within the balance of the document to reflect the significance of key sites more specifically within each of the reaches.

**Councillor Karen Egan**  
***Nillumbik Shire Council Mayor***