



Merri-bek
City Council

Nature Plan

Enhancing biodiversity and celebrating nature in our city

Addendum and Action Plan 2025-2029





This document outlines the progress to date on the Merri-bek Nature Plan, adopted in 2020, and introduces a new action plan for 2025-2029. The Merri-bek Nature Plan Vision and Guiding Principles remain relevant and have guided the development of the Action Plan 2025-2029. Advocacy priorities and management objectives, strategic references and critical relationships continue in the new action plan. This document should be read in conjunction with the Merri-bek Nature Plan 2020.

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Part 1

Nature Plan 2020-2025 Implementation Summary

Implementation Themes

The Merri-bek Nature Plan has four key themes around which actions are grouped. These four implementation themes were developed under the Nature Plan 2020-2025 and continue to guide the development of the 2025-2029 Action Plan.

Theme 1: Protect and enhance biodiversity on Council managed land

Context

As the largest public land manager, Council will manage its land to not only protect, but enhance, its natural assets to build biodiversity value and to strengthen resilience to climate change.

Strategic Direction

To strategically plan and deliver natural resource management programs that protect and enhance significant vegetation and habitat, reduce the impact of threatening processes, expand indigenous revegetation and contribute to a stronger, more connected ecological landscape.

Theme 2: Seek opportunities for the private realm to contribute positively to biodiversity

Context

Land use change and urban development has the potential to impact biodiversity values in Merri-bek through loss of vegetation, changes to water regimes and domestic animal management to name just a few.

Council is responsible for ensuring development outcomes enhance natural values particularly adjacent to waterways and designated habitat corridors.

Strategic Direction

To implement planning and governance mechanisms that protect and enhance natural values on private land through incentives and other support programs that encourage the uptake of indigenous and wildlife gardening.

Theme 3: Connect people to nature

Context

The health and well-being of our community is influenced by our environment and the ways in which we interact with it. We also know that people care for things they know and understand. Delivering programs that support meaningful connection to nature for diverse audiences will have lasting benefits both within our community and in wider contexts.

Strategic Direction

Promote and deliver a range of nature engagement and education activities for residents, community groups, schools and pre-schools. Implement capital improvements that support public interaction and safety in natural areas such as improved access and path networks, wayfinding and interpretive signage.

Theme 4: Improving governance and collaboration in natural resource management

Context

Merri-bek has a long history of community activism in nature enhancement that stretches over four decades. We are also still learning about traditional land management techniques and how we can apply these in an urbanised setting. Working closely with Traditional Owners (Wurundjeri Tribe Council), community, other land managers and research experts will continue to assist us to refine our processes to improve efficiencies and likelihood of success.

Strategic Direction

Council will continue to collaborate with key stakeholders and community in decision making and stewardship in relation to nature enhancement in Merri-bek and the delivery of actions outlined in this Plan. We will research, review and adapt our processes accordingly to improve efficiencies and on-ground outcomes.

What we have achieved

Under Theme 1, protecting and enhancing biodiversity on council managed land has seen continued management and expansion of areas managed for conservation using a range of weed control techniques, enriched understorey planting and habitat values with rocks, logs and supplementary habitat in the form of nest boxes and bee hotels. Capital works projects to deliver new stormwater treatment wetlands at Gavin Park in Pascoe Vale and the Growling Grass Frog wetland at Moomba Park in Fawkner have been completed with the total amount of land managed for conservation increasing from 53.9 hectares to over 57 hectares. Council has contributed to the re-naturalisation of a concrete section of the Moonee Ponds Creek with partners Melbourne Water, the Victorian Government and Moonee Valley City Council as part of the Chain of Ponds Collaboration.



Figure 1 Gavin Park Wetland, Pascoe Vale

A research report into wildlife habitat connectivity was completed providing valuable information to guide the direction of new nature plan actions. We have also undertaken a Biodiversity mowing trial, understanding the ecological and social impacts of reduced mowing in parks to inform more sensitive management.

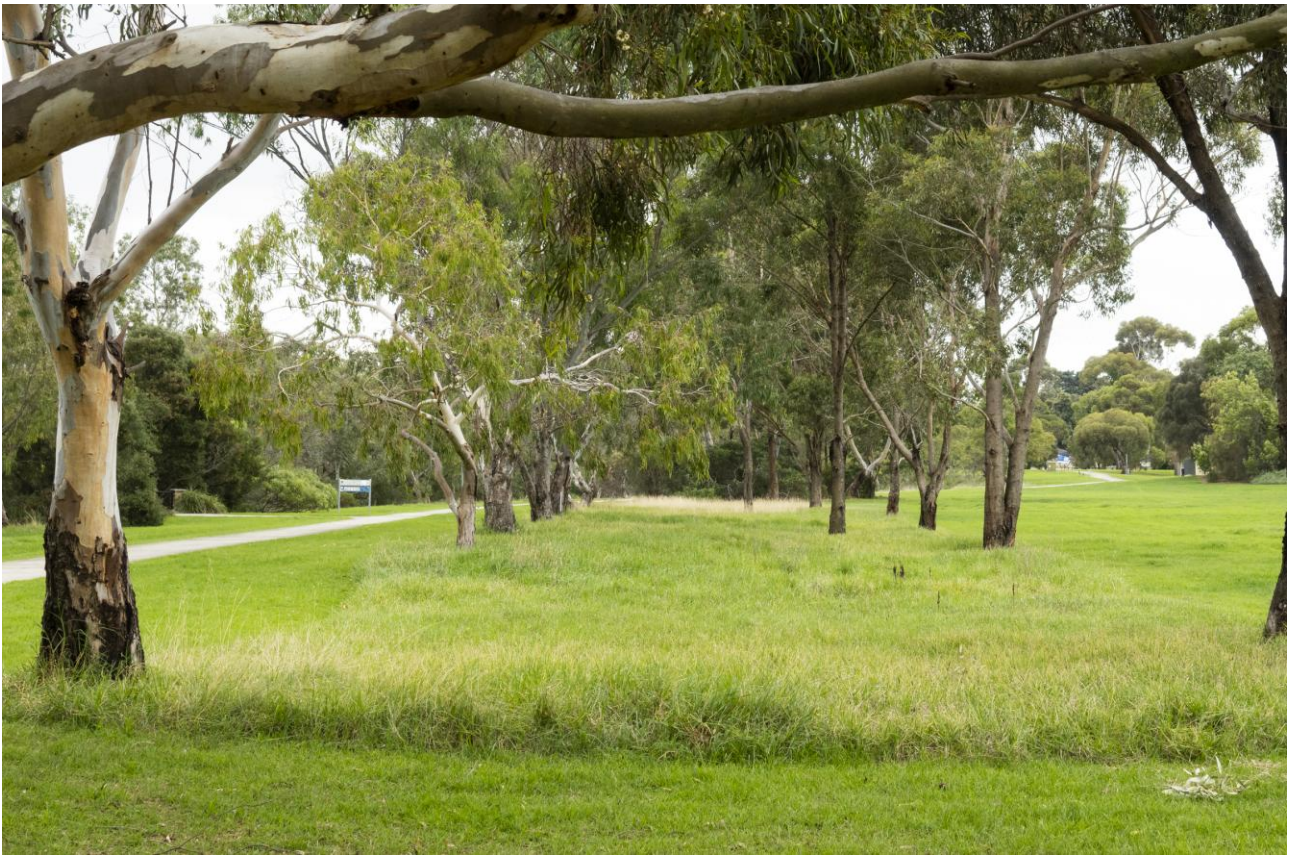


Figure 2 Biodiversity Mowing Trial area, Fran Street Reserve Glenroy

Theme 2 focusses on seeking opportunities for the private realm to contribute positively to biodiversity. Through this theme we have launched Gardens for Wildlife in Merri-bek, a program to support private landowners to garden in ways that support biodiversity and increase the uptake of nature strip gardening. Increased awareness of the tree protection local law and the Significant Tree Register in addition to education and enforcement of dog-on leash restrictions and responsible pet ownership has also been promoted. The effectiveness of a cat curfew was investigated. Private use of open space continues to be regulated through the Open Space Temporary Occupation Permit process.

A Conservation Programs Officer has been appointed to support the delivery of this action plan. Theme 3, connecting people to nature has been achieved through this role. Through an annual program of nature-based events, use of council media channels and the development of published resources, increased community participation in environmental activity has been developed. We have supported schools and kinders in environmental programs and greening activities, and community conservation activity through the provision of advice, mulch, plants and equipment to Friends groups and urban planting groups. Environmental stewardship capacity in our community has been further developed through the Nature Stewards program, offered to Merri-bek residents for 3 consecutive years.



Figure 4 Children participating in a planting day



Figure 3 Waterbugs activity session

In addition to minor path upgrades throughout creek reserves, major access upgrades at Spry Street in Coburg North, John Street in Oak Park, and Hopetoun Avenue in Brunswick have improved community access to nature recreation. A new online Merri-bek Nature Map has been developed to encourage residents to explore their nearby nature sites.

Through Theme 4, improving governance and collaboration in natural resource management Council has contributed to creek management bodies the Merri Creek Management Committee and the Chain of Ponds Collaboration (Moonee Ponds Creek) through shared delivery of projects, collaborative management, and provision of funding. We have continued to partner with Traditional Owners in Caring for Country, including contracting Narrap Team management of key sites in Merri-bek. We have worked to incorporate biodiversity objectives into other council plans including the Open Space Strategy and the Public Lighting Policy review and developed this new Action Plan for 2025-2029. We have partnered with universities for research into biodiverse, low maintenance amenity landscape treatments with conservation and biodiversity value (Woody Meadows and Grassy Meadows projects) as well as the social and ecological benefits of nature strip gardens. Work to establish baseline biodiversity data and develop a monitoring plan, and review of open space management along waterways is continuing.

Detail on completed actions and those that remain in progress is given in Appendix 1. Actions from the first Action Plan which are incomplete at time of writing have been carried over in the 2025-2029 Action Plan. Incomplete actions include the construction of trial dog beaches, the implementation of a biodiversity monitoring framework, and the development of a capital works program of access upgrades to creek trails. A review of land ownership along waterways to identify management efficiencies will also continue into the next plan.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Implementation Plan 2020 – 2025 Performance Indicators

The Merri-bek Nature Plan proposed annual performance indicators can be used as a source of reporting against the delivery of the action plan. The indicators included were a draft proposal, to be reviewed when the habitat connectivity plan and monitoring framework had been completed. Some of the draft indicators proposed have not been able to be reported against, owing to lack of available data. The table below provides our achievements against the draft indicators, where they have been able to be quantified.

Indicator	Annual target	20-21	21-22	22-23	23-24	Qualifications	
Area actively managed for conservation values (hectares)	Net increase	53.9	54.1	56.1	57.0	Net increase in conservation area managed has been achieved.	Continue
Annual operating budget for conservation site management (including staff, plant and equipment)	On trend with area	\$866,240	\$888,030	\$903,474	\$1,101,783	Annual increase to spending reflects increased area under NRM management and increased labour and maintenance costs. A comparison with other equivalent area land managers is not able to be obtained. This indicator will be reviewed.	Review
Expenditure on conservation area per hectare	TBD	\$16,070	\$16,400	\$15,950	\$19,290	Annual increase to spending reflects increased area under NRM management and increased labour and maintenance costs. This indicator will be reviewed.	Review
Number of indigenous plants planted (approx.)	20,000	36,573	35,000	20,000+	20,000+	Current total reflects the number of indigenous tube stock included in the NRM program activities by council staff, contractors and those supplied to community groups. Consideration to be given to inclusion of street and park tree plantings.	Review
Number of 'greening' activities supported (Friends, schools and other)	50+	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Support includes formal and informal means for diverse activities which are not consistently reported on to council. An accurate representation cannot be collated from available data.	Remove
Volunteer hours contributed to the environment (hours and \$\$)	2,000+	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Not able to be quantified. Environmental volunteering in Merri-bek is prolific and diverse. An accurate representation cannot be collated from available data.	Remove
Number of people attending nature engagement activities		N/A	Approx 180*	1,000+**	1,000+	*Covid restrictions impacted events in 2020 to early 2022. **Participation data is gathered over multiple events including large events where attendance is approximate. These are council hosted events only, not those supported but not supervised by council.	Continue

Number of students reached through educational programs.	1,500	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Not able to be accurately quantified as school reporting data is inconsistently provided.	Remove
Number of households registered for Merri-bek Gardens for Wildlife	30	nil	nil	nil	22	Program launched May 2024. Annual target to continue at 30 household visits per year.	Continue
Number of nature-strip plantings - Adopt a verge	20	N/A	25	28	10	2020-21 Not able to be accurately quantified. Nature strips where council has provided some assistance shown only. Numbers of properties independently converting their nature strip are not included. This indicator to be removed.	Remove
Compliance with OSTOP permits	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Not able to be accurately quantified. Further internal work required to establish improved process. Future indicator to be total number of OSTOPs per year, with an increasing target.	Review
Vegetation cover on private and public land (m2)	net increase	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Not able to be accurately quantified from available data.	Continue

As this was our first Nature Plan, the targets and indicators were an unknown and largely aspirational. As a result, a number of indicators we are either unable to report on or have not achieved the target outcome.

However, the Nature Plan 2020-2025 can be considered a success due to the delivery of significant habitat restoration projects, an increase in community nature activity, and the establishment of new or improved practices in conservation management.

We have achieved an increase in the total area managed for conservation values, and increased budget and expenditure on conservation area overall, though a comparison of Merri-bek's expenditure on conservation management with other councils has not been investigated.

We are fortunate in Merri-bek to have a very high level of engagement with conservation and a very active community who contribute to conservation efforts in diverse ways. Many activities are not directly overseen by council, such that we have not been able to accurately and consistently report on much of the conservation activity that we know occurs in Merri-bek.

New Monitoring Framework for 2025-2029

Given the difficulty in assembling comprehensive data detailed above, a new monitoring framework is currently in development at time of writing. The indicators above which are able to be consistently reported and provide valuable data will continue to be reported on, in conjunction with vegetation quality indicators and ecological survey information where deemed appropriate through the development of the new framework. The creation of this new framework will be a Year 1 action of Nature Plan Action Plan 2025-2029.

Part 2

Development of the new Action Plan 2025 – 2029

1. Background – What has changed

The Merri-bek Nature Plan was endorsed just as the Covid pandemic was emerging. The pandemic saw recreational use of open space increase as lock downs came into effect and working from home became prevalent. The demand on local access to open space and nature has given great opportunities to increase community engagement for environmental protection but has also seen pressure from increased use and new threats to conservation values from novel uses.

In the aftermath of the pandemic and economic uncertainty, mental health challenges have grown with many people seeking solace and escape in our natural landscapes. Time in nature benefits us in times of stress, and our bush landscapes continue to be important for this reason. Consultation for the Open Space Strategy in 2024 has also continued to show strong community advocacy for nature in city spaces. Natural bushland is highly valued as a place of escape and relaxation. Protection and enhancement of the natural environment for its inherent value, as well as providing ecosystem services remains important to our community. Concerns of diminishing biodiversity and access to nature, development pressure and activity of people and dogs in valuable habitat areas were shared. The importance strengthening of existing habitat corridors and creating East-West habitat connections was expressed. The community also values the opportunity to participate in biodiversity projects. Reflecting the community response, the new Open Space Strategy has a greater emphasis on nature and biodiversity, with the following key direction included “ensuring our open space network is adaptive, biodiverse, cooling, healthy and resilient”. Recognition of the need to manage open space for nature in conjunction with human centred use heightens the strategic importance of the Nature Plan to deliver aligned outcomes.

The Open Space Strategy recognises that the management of open space plays a role in upholding Merri-bek’s commitment to Traditional Owners; working towards self-determination and local, regional or national Treaty or Treaties that enshrine the rights of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. The Nature Plan will continue to support and celebrate Wurundjeri culture and land management in partnership with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.

The Urban Forest Strategy also recognises the need to protect urban ecology and enhance indigenous vegetation with a commitment to strengthen habitat corridors, understorey vegetation and community custodianship.

The Urban Forest Strategy, the Open Space Strategy and the Integrated Water Management Plan continue to be key strategic references for the Nature Plan.

The completion of the Wildlife Habitat Connectivity across the City of Merri-bek research report has provided valuable information to guide future restoration efforts. This has provided 12 focal animal species to target habitat interventions and community engagement activity towards and has recommendations have been incorporated into the proposed Action Plan 2025-2029, and are shown below.

The report emphasises the importance of habitat restoration through development of understorey vegetation. Understorey (the layers of vegetation below the tree canopy) is critical for ecosystem function but remains lacking in urban landscapes. Much of Merri-bek’s open space consists of large, grassed areas with trees, devoid of understorey vegetation. Increasing understorey planting, guided by the habitat needs of the animal focal species will be a continued focus for the Nature Plan.

This research also shows the need to strengthen cross-municipality connections for a range of species – streetscape, habitat corridors and private land will be integral to building these connections. The new action plan will also acknowledge the need to move biodiversity action beyond the established Natural Resource Management zones along creeks, and into urban parks and streetscapes. The Gardens for Wildlife program, established through the first implementation

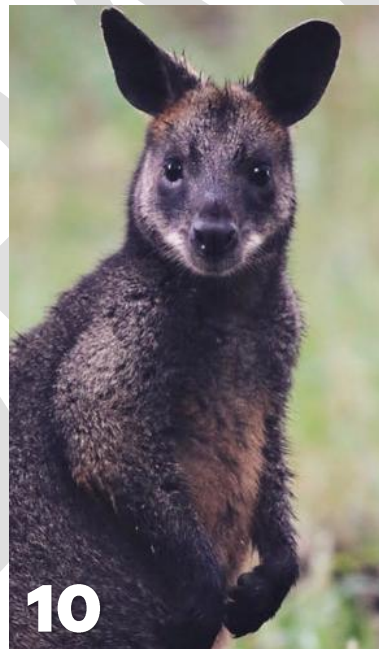
plan can continue to guide the development of biodiversity outcomes on private land through education, events and direct engagement with residents.

This new action plan for 2025-2029 reaffirms Council's commitment to meaningful environmental action in the face of unprecedented environmental crisis. The Vision and Guiding principles developed for the Nature Plan remain relevant and have been used to guide the development of the action Plan 2025-2029. Many of the implementation actions from 2020 remain critical and are included as continuing actions under Management Priorities, having become established practice through the first Implementation Plan. The majority of resourcing is committed to these Management Objectives. Opportunities for new projects are limited but will be progressed where funding and resources are available.

Advocacy priorities, strategic references and critical relationships will be retained and are described below. Management commitments and project-based actions are listed below with delivery timeframes and budget estimates.

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Merri-bek Focal Species



All images iNaturalist CC BY-NC 4.0 1. Tawny Frogmouth (c) Mononymous; 2. Australian Painted Lady (c) @biodivres; 3. Black Shouldered Kite (c) Dennis Hocking; 4. Superb Fairy Wren (c) andrewk; 5. Blue banded Bee (c) Josh; 6. Eastern Blue Tongue Lizard (c) eloisedowling; 7. Eastern Banjo Frog (c) nat_is_a_squid; 8. Lesser Long-eared Bat (c) Paul George; 9. Spotted Pardalote (c) jkmalkoha; 10. Swamp Wallaby (c) Brendan Fogarty; 11. Red-rumped Parrot; (c) Ethan Beaver; 12. Blue Skimmer Dragonfly (c) Torbjorn von Strokirch.

Strategic References

The Action Plan 2025-2029 will continue to:

- Incorporate objectives and strategies for conservation into other updates of Council strategies such as the Council Plan, Urban Forest Strategy, the Domestic Animal Management Plan and Civic Spaces Action plans - Brunswick, Glenroy, Coburg
- Work with reference to all relevant council strategies including the Integrated Water Management (IWM) 2040 Strategy and Action Plan 2025-30, Merri-bek Urban Forest Strategy, and the Merri-bek Open Space Strategy.

Advocacy Priorities

Key priorities for advocacy under the revised action plan are to continue to: As part of the development of the Merri-bek Open Space Strategy in 2024, a number of biodiversity and environmental advocacy priorities have been included into the Open Space Strategy. Below are the Nature Plan specific priorities.

- Advocate for naturalisation and habitat restoration works along Merri-bek's waterways, including the removal and / or modification of concrete linings on the Moonee Ponds and Edgars Creeks. (Theme 1)
- Advocate for naming of key sites to prioritise the use of Wurundjeri language (such as Merri-Edgars wetland and open space at Outlook Drive, Glenroy) (Theme 3).

Note, advocacy on changes to planning controls along waterways is now captured under the Open Space Strategy and not repeated in the Nature Plan.

Stakeholder Relationships

With creek corridors forming much of the municipality's boundaries, there is complex land ownership and management in relation to our natural assets. Merri-bek has a long history of community advocacy and activation in greening activities. Inclusion, empowerment and support for these groups and collaboration with all our stakeholders will continue to drive the success of this Plan.

- Partner with Traditional owners (e.g. Narrap Team) in Caring for Country in Merri-bek (Theme 4)
- Contribute both financially and in-kind to Merri Creek Management Committee in line with partner organisations (Theme 4).
- Contribute both financially and in-kind to the Chain of Ponds Collaboration in line with partner organisations (Theme 4).
- Work collaboratively with Melbourne Water and develop service agreements through new project deliveries (Theme 4).
- Work with Northern Golf Course and Northern Metropolitan Cemetery Trust to encourage sympathetic management and conservation programs at critical habitat sites identified through MIVA (2012) (Theme 2).
- Seek opportunities to develop innovative partnerships with other public and private stakeholders, such as Conservations Volunteers Australia and Landcare, to resource/implement natural resource management programs (Theme 4).

Action Plan 2025-2029

The Management Objectives and Projects forming the program of work for Action Plan 2025-2029 are listed below. Shading indicates the guiding theme.

Theme 1: Protect and enhance biodiversity on Council managed land
Theme 2: Seek opportunities for the private realm to contribute positively to biodiversity
Theme 3: Connect people to nature
Theme 4: Improving governance and collaboration in natural resource management

Management Objectives

Objectives listed below form the basis of Business-as-Usual approach to Natural Resource Management in Merri-bek, funded through existing budgets. These objectives will help us to strengthen internal processes to ensure we continue to deliver positive biodiversity outcomes.

No.	Objective
M1.01	Maintain key conservation sites and revegetation zones in accordance with site management plans. Maintain, regenerate and renew these areas through intensive weed management, ecological burning, fencing, pest animal control and enhancement planting. Develop seed lots and propagation programs for significant species as part of these programs. Reduce herbicide use where possible through trialling of new techniques.
M1.02	Consider future climate in plant selection and seek opportunities to trial climate adjusted provenance plant stock species used in council plantings. (New)
M1.03	Assess habitat value of trees during arboricultural activities, retaining stag trees and hollows where safe and appropriate to do so.
M1.04	Respond to emerging threats to natural values, such as pest and disease outbreaks, erosion hot spots and weed outbreaks.
M1.05	Monitor and maintain wildlife nest box installations and seek opportunities for new installations where appropriate. (New)
M1.06	Expand revegetation/ regeneration of additional zones to provide buffers and improve connectivity of conservation areas using a staged approach, including those specifically identified in the Gowanbrae, Edgars and Westbreen Creek Conservation and Development Plans.
M1.07	Increase habitat diversity through incorporation of enriched understorey planting (particularly flowering plants) rocks and logs in restoration programs and consider artificial habitat opportunities (e.g. nest boxes, bee hotels) where appropriate.
M2.01	Provide resources that support the uptake of indigenous gardening in Merri-bek such as the Gardens for Wildlife Guide booklet and free bush mulch.
M2.02	Improve tree protection outcomes on private land in Merri-bek through: - Continued promotion and enforcement of Council's tree protection Local Law; - Investigation of mechanisms for improved tree protection outcomes in review of the Local Law; - Investigation of the feasibility and impacts of a Vegetation Protection Overlay.
M2.03	Regulate private use of Council land using Open Space Temporary Occupation Permits (OSTOP) during construction activities and undertake review of current OSTOP procedure to improve compliance and ensure the impacts on waterway health, trees and other vegetation is emphasized to improve outcomes.

M2.04	Support residents in converting nature strips to biodiverse plantings in accordance with the Nature Strip Guidelines.
M2.05	Promote education of dog on-leash areas and dog poo collection, prioritised in high conservation areas.
M2.06	Expand the Merri-bek Significant Tree Register to include public trees and seek opportunities to celebrate significant public trees through community activities and signage.
M3.01	Support schools and early learning centres undertaking conservation-based learning activities
M3.02	Support Friends Groups and urban planting groups to undertake conservation activities on public land through the provision of site preparation, materials, plants, tools, planning and advice.
M3.03	Ensure councils website contains up to date and relevant biodiversity information
M4.01	Monitor and report on the biodiversity outcomes through the framework established in Year 1 of this Action Plan.
M4.02	Apply for available grants and alternative funding sources for revegetation and conservation works as opportunities arise.
M4.03	Influence the design of council capital works projects where appropriate such as park upgrades, road renewals and landscape designs to better incorporate vegetation and biodiversity considerations.
M4.04	Seek opportunities to provide training in ecology for arborist, open space, planning, designers and other relevant staff
M4.05	Seek opportunities for Council to increase capacity to increase volunteer participation through an evaluation of the contribution of environmental volunteers in Merri-bek (New).
M4.06	Seek opportunities to partner with research organisations to undertake field studies and investigation to better understand the impacts of greening activities on both social and environmental indicators and adjust programs accordingly.
M4.07	Seek opportunities for alternative funding sources for revegetation and conservation works, such as through carbon offsets.

Projects

Projects are denoted with the following Funding types:

BAU = Funded through Business-as-Usual funding allocation **NP Op Ex** = Nature Plan Operational Expenditure

FBC = Future Business Case. For projects where funding is not secured, and completion of the project is subject to obtaining funding.

Projects are also denoted with the following status:

N = New Project for Action Plan 2025-2029

C = Continuing project from Implementation Plan 2020-2025.

* Denotes projects which have a multi-year delivery timeframe, and are listed under each year of their anticipated delivery

Year 1 Projects

No.	New/ Cont	Project	Timeframe	Funding
P1.01*	N	Incorporating recommendations from the trial, expand the Biodiversity Mowing program into suitable parks and reserves.	2025-29	BAU
P1.02	N	Create and implement a management plan for the endangered Tussock Skink habitat at Newlands Hill	2025-26	External Grant
P1.03	N	Create targeted Focal Species Habitat Action plans for each of the 12 Merri-bek focal species based on connectivity report. Include recommendations for streetscapes and other open space prioritising alignment with other council projects. Incorporate private realm and community engagement opportunities.	2025-26	BAU
P1.04	N	Investigate the process for greater retention of logs of removed trees on site where appropriate, and the repurposing of logs for habitat provision in Open Space.	2025-26	BAU
P2.01*	C	Expand the Gardens for Wildlife program for 2025-2029, working with community volunteers and incorporating habitat connectivity priorities for the 12 Merri-bek Focal Species.	2025-29	NP OpEx
P2.02*	N	Create and deliver a Schoolyard Seedlings program to support schools with greening projects through provision of plants and advice.	2025-29	NP OpEx
P3.01*	C	Create and deliver an annual program of nature-based educational activities to engage residents in learning about and valuing the natural environment.	2025-29	NP OpEx
P3.02*	C	Support and celebrate Wurundjeri culture and land management in partnership with the Wurundjeri Tribe Council and community groups (example partnerships include Merri-Murnong Harvest Festival and Ballert Mooroop Cultural Site)	2025-29	BAU
P3.03	C	Complete the review of current access points along the creek corridors with consideration of DDA and provision of access every 400m (as per Merri Creek Environs Strategy and Chain of Ponds Plan) and associated infrastructure (signage, drinking fountains, fencing etc)	2025-26	BAU

P3.04	C	Create a program of capital investment for access and amenity improvements along waterway corridors based on the Creek Trails Access review (Action 3.12 of NP1).	2025-26	FBC
P4.01*	N	Create and deliver a Citizen Science program targeting the 12 Merri-bek focal species and aligning with annual events program.	2025-29	BAU
P4.02*	C	Recognise community groups and individual volunteer contributions to Merri-bek's natural environment through nominations to the Merri-bek Awards – Environment Category.	2025-29	BAU
P4.03	C	Complete the Creek Corridor Maintenance and Asset Management Review of maintenance services and asset management provided by Open Space Maintenance, Open Space Design and Development, Transport, Integrated Water Management and Melbourne Water in open space along waterways to improve efficiencies and identify gaps.	2025-26	BAU
P4.04	C	Implement findings of the Creek Corridor Maintenance and Asset Management Review including developing a business case for additional funding to accommodate gaps in management and which considers the future management of the continued expansion of conservation area.	2025-26	BAU
P4.05	C	Collate existing biodiversity data and undertake field assessments to develop baseline data for an ongoing monitoring program	2025-26	BAU
P4.06	C	Develop a process which recognises conservation assets (in conjunction with other green assets) in Councils Asset Management System to recognise their value and plan for their long-term management and renewal.	2025-26	BAU
P4.07*	C	Provide training in ecology for arborist, open space, planning, designers and other relevant staff	2025-29	NP OpEx
P4.08*	C	Partner with Research organisations to undertake field studies and investigation to better understand the impacts of greening activities on both social and environmental indicators and adjust programs accordingly.	2025-29	NP OpEx

Year 2 Projects

No.	New/ Cont	Project	Timeframe	Funding
P1.05	N	Implement grassland meadow style planting sites trialling direct seeding methods and creating seed lots for future projects.	2025-29	FBC
P1.06	C	Complete the construction of 2 erosion mitigation sites where unregulated activity (e.g. dogs in waterways) is negatively impacting waterway health. (Previous action 1.13).	2025-27	FBC
P1.07	N	Design a nature streetscape planting pilot to trial indigenous, biodiverse understorey plantings in suitable streets, prioritising habitat corridors and focal species	2026-27	FBC
P1.08*	N	Review and update the Edgars Creek Conservation and Development Plan	2026-28	FBC
P1.09	N	Investigate feasibility of seed production areas in Merri-bek to support restoration projects.	2026-27	BAU
P1.10*	N	Implement Focal Species Habitat Action plans for each of the 12 Merri-bek focal species	2026-29	BAU
P2.01*	C	Expand the Gardens for Wildlife program for 2025-2029, working with community volunteers and incorporating habitat connectivity priorities for the 12 Merri-bek Focal Species.	2025-29	NP OpEx
P2.02*	N	Create and deliver a Schoolyard Seedlings program to support schools with greening projects through provision of plants and advice.	2025-29	NP OpEx
P3.01*	C	Create and deliver an annual program of nature-based educational activities to engage residents in learning about and valuing the natural environment.	2025-29	NP OpEx
P3.02*	C	Support and celebrate Wurundjeri culture and land management in partnership with the Wurundjeri Tribe Council and community groups (example partnerships include Merri-Murnong Harvest Festival and Ballerri Mooroop Cultural Site)	2025-29	NP OpEx
P3.05*	C	Implement access and amenity capital investment program of upgrades along the creek corridors as prioritised through the Creek Trails Access program (Identified through Action 3.13 of NP1).	2027-29	FBC
P4.01*	N	Create and deliver a Citizen Science program targeting the 12 Merri-bek focal species and aligning with annual events program.	2025-29	BAU
P4.02*	C	Recognise community groups and individual volunteer contributions to Merri-bek's natural environment through nominations to the Merri-bek Awards – Environment Category.	2025-29	BAU
P4.07	N	Create guidelines and safety procedure for community led revegetation projects on public land, seeking input from Friends and other urban planting groups.	2026-27	BAU

Year 3 Projects

No.	New/ Cont	Project	Timeframe	Funding
P1.08*	N	Review and update the Edgars Creek Conservation and Development Plan	2026-28	Np OpEx
P1.10*	N	Implement Focal Species Habitat Action Plans for each of the 12 Merri-Bek Focal Species	2026-29	BAU
P1.11*	N	Implement the nature streetscape biodiversity planting trial project.	2026-28	FBC
P1.12	N	Create an Upper Moonee Ponds Creek Conservation and Development plan incorporating creek reserves between Oak Park and the Western Ring Road. Includes Gowanbrae Retarding Basin, Fran Street, Djirri Djirri and Kingsford Smith Ulm, Bryant Family, Devereaux Street and J P Fawcner Reserves.	2027-28	FBC
P2.01*	C	Expand the Gardens for Wildlife program for 2025-2029, working with community volunteers and incorporating habitat connectivity priorities for the 12 Merri-bek Focal Species.	2025-29	NP OpEx
P2.02*	N	Create and deliver a Schoolyard Seedlings program to support schools with greening projects through provision of plants and advice.	2025-29	NP OpEx
P3.01*	C	Create and deliver an annual program of nature-based educational activities to engage residents in learning about and valuing the natural environment.	2025-29	NP OpEx
P3.02*	C	Support and celebrate Wurundjeri culture and land management in partnership with the Wurundjeri Tribe Council and community groups (example partnerships include Merri-Murnong Harvest Festival and Ballerri Mooroop Cultural Site)	2025-29	NP OpEx
P3.05*	C	Implement access and amenity capital investment program of upgrades along the creek corridors as prioritised through the Creek Trails Access program (Identified through Action 3.13 of NP1).	2027-29	FBC
P4.01*	N	Create and deliver a Citizen Science program targeting the 12 Merri-bek focal species and aligning with annual events program.	2025-29	BAU
P4.02*	C	Recognise community groups and individual volunteer contributions to Merri-bek's natural environment through nominations to the Merri-bek Awards – Environment Category.	2025-29	BAU
P4.08*	C	Partner with Research organisations to undertake field studies and investigation to better understand the impacts of greening activities on both social and environmental indicators and adjust programs accordingly.	2025-29	NP OpEx

Year 4 Projects

No.	New/ Cont	Project	Timeframe	Funding
P1.10*	N	Implement Focal Species Habitat Action plans for each of the 12 Merri-bek focal species	2026-29	BAU
P1.13	N	Evaluate the success of the erosion mitigation sites trial and develop recommendations for continued management	2028-29	BAU
P2.01*	C	Expand the Gardens for Wildlife program for 2025-2029, working with community volunteers and incorporating habitat connectivity priorities for the 12 Merri-bek Focal Species.	2025-29	NP OpEx
P2.02*	N	Create and deliver a Schoolyard Seedlings program to support schools with greening projects through provision of plants and advice.	2025-29	NP OpEx
P2.04	N	Create and deliver a targeted education campaign on responsible pet ownership and impacts to wildlife with education resources at events, and via social media and the website.	2026-27	FBC
P3.01*	C	Create and deliver an annual program of nature-based educational activities to engage residents in learning about and valuing the natural environment.	2025-29	NP OpEx
P3.02*	C	Support and celebrate Wurundjeri culture and land management in partnership with the Wurundjeri Tribe Council and community groups (example partnerships include Merri-Murnong Harvest Festival and Ballerri Mooroop Cultural Site)	2025-29	NP OpEx
P3.05*	C	Implement access and amenity capital investment program of upgrades along the creek corridors as prioritised through the Creek Trails Access program (Identified through Action 3.13 of NP1). Subject to resourcing and budget capacity.	2027-29	FBC
P4.01*	N	Create and deliver a Citizen Science program targeting the 12 Merri-bek focal species and aligning with annual events program.	2025-29	BAU
P4.02*	C	Recognise community groups and individual volunteer contributions to Merri-bek's natural environment through nominations to the Merri-bek Awards – Environment Category.	2025-29	BAU
P4.07*	C	Provide training in ecology for arborist, open space, planning, designers and other relevant staff	2025-29	NP OpEx
P4.08*	C	Partner with Research organisations to undertake field studies and investigation to better understand the impacts of greening activities on both social and environmental indicators and adjust programs accordingly.	2025-29	NP OpEx
P4.09	C	Review and create a new 4-year action plan for continued delivery of the Merri-bek Nature Plan.	2028-29	BAU

Appendix 1 - Delivered and in progress actions – Nature Plan 2020-2025

Action No.	Action	Status as at June 2025
Theme 1 - Protect and enhance biodiversity on Council managed land		
1.01	Develop a habitat connectivity and revegetation plan for the municipality based on the habitat requirements of key representative species and including streetscapes, schools and other open space.	Delivered
1.02	Continue to implement site management plans for key conservation sites such as Bababi Djinanang, Lynch Road Remnant, Newlands Hill Remnant and Union Street escarpment.	Delivered
1.03	Develop and begin implementing a management plan for the newly acquired grassland areas at Leonard Street, Fawkner.	Delivered
1.04	Continue maintenance, regeneration and renewal of conservation areas through intensive weed management, ecological burning, fencing, pest animal control and enhancement planting. Develop seed lots and propagation programs for significant species as part of these programs.	Delivered
1.05	Expand revegetation/ regeneration of additional zones to provide buffers and improve connectivity of conservation areas using a staged approach, including those specifically identified in the Gowanbrae, Westbreen Creek and Edgars Creek Conservation and Development Plans.	Delivered
1.06	Increase habitat diversity through incorporation of enriched understorey planting (particularly flowering plants) rocks and logs in restoration programs and consider artificial habitat opportunities (e.g. nest boxes, bee hotels) where appropriate	Delivered
1.07	Continue to implement a range of weed control techniques and trial new technologies in conservation areas to reduce reliance on chemical use.	Delivered
1.08	Construct Gavin Park wetland as outlined in the Westbreen Creek Conservation and Development Plan.	Delivered
1.09	Continue to assess habitat value of trees during arboricultural activities, retaining stag trees and hollows where safe and appropriate to do so, particularly along habitat corridors.	Delivered
1.10	Naturalise the historic Melville Creek corridor in Brunswick West (Fraser Reserve) through delivery of the WSUD opportunity outlined in the Moonee Ponds Creek Improvement Plan - Brunswick West.	Designs complete. Subject to future funding availability.
1.11	Undertake design for a stormwater wetland within the Merri Creek parklands at Somerlayton Road, Fawkner.	Delivered
1.12	Contribute to the naturalisation of a concrete sections of the Moonee Ponds Creek in Oak Park as outlined in the Chain of Ponds Plan in partnership with the Victorian Government, Melbourne Water and Moonee Valley Council	Delivered
1.13	Trial the construction of designated dog 'beaches' at 3 locations to reduce erosion and water quality impacts from unregulated activity.	In progress. Continue in Action Plan 2025-2029
1.14	Advocacy for the naturalisation of the concrete section of the Edgars Creek in Coburg North	Continued as Advocacy Priority in Action Plan 2025-2029

1.15	Trial a differential mowing program in 3 parks across the municipality and monitor the effects on insect life and social values	Delivered
1.16	Readily respond to emerging threats to natural values, such as erosion hot spots and weed outbreaks, as they arise	Delivered
1.17	Undertake a review of land ownership and management along waterways and key habitat corridors to identify opportunities connectivity for both habitat and public access.	Incomplete. Incorporated into Open Space Strategy
1.18	Review the Creek Reserves Fire Management Plan 2014	Delivered
1.19	Implement recommendations from Merri-bek's Integrated Water Management Strategy (IWM) 2040, particularly Outcome area 4: Healthy Waterways, to reduce stormwater impacts on local waterways.	Delivered
1.20	Undertake a feasibility study and business case for creating an indigenous food garden at Edna Grove Coburg (alongside Joe's Community Garden as part of a wetland and integrated stormwater project	In progress.
1.21	Support the establishment of an indigenous food garden at Fawkner Food Bowls	Delivered
1.22	Consider, and make reference to, the National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife including Marine Turtles, Seabirds and Migratory Shorebirds in 2019 in the review of the Public Lighting Policy	Delivered
Theme 2 - Seek opportunities for the private realm to contribute positively to biodiversity		
2.01	Support the further establishment of a 'Gardens for Wildlife' program in Merri-bek in partnership with existing community programs.	Delivered
2.02	Continue to provide resources that support the uptake of indigenous gardening in Merri-bek such as the Sustainable Gardening in Merri-bek booklet and free bush mulch depots.	Delivered
2.03	Review and reprint the sustainable gardening in Merri-bek booklet (or similar) resource	Delivered
2.04	Reinvigorate the 'Adopt a tree' (verge program) to support the uptake of nature strip conversions, particularly along designated habitat corridors	In progress, continued as Management Objective in Action Plan 2025-2029
2.05	Undertake a review of planning control mechanisms for waterways, habitat corridors and key conservation sites in the municipality, engaging in the Waterways of the West process where appropriate (eg Environmental Significance Overlay)	In progress. Incorporated into Open Space Strategy
2.06	Continue to influence the design of new developments through Clause 28: Environmental Sustainable Development in the Merri-bek Planning Scheme, particularly in relation to impacts on stormwater and urban ecology	Delivered. Continues in Open Space Strategy
2.07	Continue to regulate private use of Council land using Open Space Temporary Occupancy Permits (OSTOP) during construction activities to ensure no biodiversity impacts/pressures	Delivered
2.08	Update Councils website and responsible pet ownership information to include more information about the impacts on wildlife and protection measures.	Delivered
2.09	Undertake an investigation into the cost implications and effectiveness of a cat curfew in Merri-bek as part of the review of the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP 2021/22	Delivered

2.10	Work with Northern Golf Course and Northern Metropolitan Cemetery Trust to encourage sympathetic management and conservation programs a critical habitat sites identified through MIVA (2012).	Continued as Stakeholder Relationship in Action Plan 2025-2029
2.11	Add any known significant/habitat trees onto Councils Significant Tree Register and increase community awareness of Councils Tree Protection Local Law	Delivered
2.12	Promote and enforce councils tree protection Local Law	Delivered
2.13	Education and enforcement of dog on-leash areas and dog poo collection, prioritised in high conservation areas.	Delivered
2.14	Strengthen Urban Ecology objectives as part of the wider review of Clause 22.08 Environmental Sustainable Development of the Merri-bek Planning Scheme	In progress. Incorporated into Open Space Strategy
2.15	Provide information on Councils website on measures for discouraging pest animals, such as Indian Mynas and foxes.	Delivered
Theme 3 - Connect People to Nature		
3.01	Engage a Conservation Programs Officer to undertake strategic projects, support community conservation activities and implement nature engagement programs	Delivered
3.02	Expand the level of support for schools in undertaking conservation-based learning activities such as Waterwatch and biodiversity modules in the Resource Smart Schools program or similar.	Delivered
3.03	Expand the level of support provided to Friends Groups and the like to undertake conservation activities on public land through the provision of site preparation, materials, plants, tools, planning and advice.	Delivered
3.04	Deliver an annual program of nature-based activities to engage residents in learning about and valuing the natural environment.	Delivered
3.05	Support the annual Merri-Murnong Harvest Festival to acknowledge and celebrate Wurundjeri culture and land management in partnership with the Wurundjeri Tribe Council and community groups.	Delivered
3.06	Compile a list of fauna to be encountered in Merri-bek and develop interpretive and educational material for residents, schools and community groups.	Delivered
3.07	Develop a set of 'nature play' resources to support Early Years Educators and care givers to undertake nature engagement activities.	Delivered
3.08	Develop a 'nature experiences' map to promote Merri-bek nature experience opportunities, including picnic, play and walking opportunities and key sites.	Delivered
3.09	Update Councils website and utilise social media to promote the unique biodiversity of Merri-bek.	Delivered
3.10	Naming of key sites and recently acquired open space, such as Merri-Edgars wetland and open space at Outlook Drive, Glenroy using Councils naming policy prioritising the use of Wurundjeri language.	In progress. Continued as Advocacy Priority in Action Plan 2025-2029
3.11	Develop and begin implementing an activation/master plan for open space areas along the Merri Creek in Fawkner, including recently purchased land at McBryde and Leonard Streets	Delivered

3.12	Undertake a review of current access points along the creek corridors with consideration of DDA and provision of access every 400m (as per Merri Creek Environs Strategy and Chain of Ponds Plan) and associated infrastructure (signage, drinking fountains, fencing etc).	In progress, continued in Action Plan 2025-2029
3.13	Develop a 10 year program of capital investment for access and amenity improvements along waterway corridors based on the above review (Action 3.12).	Incomplete, to be carried over to Action Plan 2025-2029
3.14	Implement access and amenity upgrades along the creek corridors as prioritised through the above program (Action 3.13).	Incomplete, to be carried over to Action Plan 2025-2029
3.15	Delivery of bridge crossing and eastern bank walking path network as part of the Moonee Ponds Creek Corridor Improvement Plan in West Brunswick	Delivered
3.16	Implement path network improvements along Westbreen Creek at KW Joyce Reserve to support an informal circular walking route and shared trail connection.	Delivered
3.17	Construct new DDA compliant path entrance at recently acquired open space at Spry Street, Coburg North	Delivered
3.18	Upgrade creek side pedestrian linkage between Egan Reserve and Beau Monde Reserve, East Coburg to address erosion concerns	Delivered
3.19	Develop and begin implementing an activation/master plan for open space areas along the Moonee Ponds Creek in Glenroy, including recently purchased land at Outlook Drive.	Incomplete. Carry over to Action Plan 2025-2029.
Theme 4 - Improving governance and collaboration in natural resource management		
4.01	Develop an up-to-date mapping database as an active inventory of NRM sites across the municipality, including planted streetscapes and clarifying current management responsibilities. Identify any proposed revegetation zones.	Delivered
4.02	Using the above database, undertake a review of services provided by Open Space Maintenance, Open Space Design and Development and Melbourne Water in open space along waterways to improve efficiencies and identify gaps.	Incomplete. Carry over to Action Plan 2025-2029.
4.03	Develop a business case for additional funding to accommodate gaps in management and which considers the future management of the continued expansion of conservation area.	Incomplete. Carry over to Action Plan 2025-2029.
4.04a	Collate existing biodiversity data and undertake field assessments to develop baseline data for an ongoing monitoring program	In progress. Carry over to Action Plan 2025-2029.
4.04b	Develop an ongoing monitoring program and establish baseline data to monitor the effectiveness of this Plan utilising citizen science where possible.	In progress. Carry over to Action Plan 2025-2029.
4.05	Finalise the Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities outlining a partnership approach	Delivered
4.06	Partner with Traditional owners (e.g. Narrap team) in Caring for Country in Merri-bek	Delivered
4.07	Continue to contribute both financially and in-kind to Merri Creek Management Committee in line with partner organisations	Delivered
4.08	Continue to contribute both financially and in-kind to the Chain of Ponds Collaboration (aka Moonee Ponds Creek Catchment Collaboration Group) in line with partner organisations.	Delivered

4.09	Develop an Integrated Service Plan with Melbourne Water	Not complete. Site based service agreements are completed through new project deliveries.
4.10	Incorporate objectives and strategies for conservation into other Council strategies such as the Council Plan and the review of the Open Space Strategy	Delivered
4.11	Continued training in ecology for arborist, open space, planning and other relevant staff	Delivered
4.12	Partner with Research organisations to undertake field studies and investigation to better understand the impacts of greening activities on both social and environmental indicators and adjust programs accordingly.	Delivered
4.13	Investigate the potential for alternative funding sources for revegetation and conservation works, such as through carbon offsets.	Incomplete. Continued as Management Objective in Action 2025-2029
4.14	Develop a process which recognises conservation assets (in conjunction with other green assets) in Councils Asset Management System to recognise their value and plan for their long-term management and renewal.	Incomplete. Carry over to Action Plan 2025-2029.
4.15	Develop a subsequent 4 year Action plan for delivery of this Nature Plan	Delivered
4.16	In consultation with local creek management bodies, review existing development and revegetation guidelines and develop best practice planting guidelines for bushland, habitat corridor and creek / waterways plantings undertaken by both Council and community groups	Delivered
4.17	Seek and develop innovative partnerships with other public and private stakeholders, such as Conservations Volunteers Australia and Landcare, to resource/implement natural resource management programs.	Continued as Stakeholder Relationship in 2025-2029 Plan
4.18	Recognise community groups and individual volunteer contributions to Merri-bek's natural environment through nominations to the Merri-bek Awards – Environment Category.	Delivered