



Merri-bek
City Council

Integrated Water Management Action Plan

Engagement Report April 2025

Merri-bek Draft Integrated Water Management Action Plan



Contents

Stakeholder Engagement Summary	3
Introduction	3
Partnership with Traditional Owners	3
Broader Community Stakeholder Engagement	3
Community Engagement Activities.....	5
What we heard.....	6
Targeted feedback from catchment stakeholders and community partners.....	6
Next steps.....	9

Stakeholder Engagement Summary

Draft Integrated Water Management (IWM) Action Plan 2025–2030

Introduction

The purpose of this engagement was to share with stakeholders, including the community, our progress on the previous 5-year IWM Action Plan, outline proposed actions for 2025 – 2030 Action Plan, and to present the next steps towards our vision of becoming a water sensitive city by 2040.

Feedback from partner organisations, key stakeholders and the broader community has been collected to inform refinement of the action plan and to ensure alignment with relevant strategies, policy and community values.

Partnership with Traditional Owners

Merri-bek is walking alongside the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC) in caring for Country. Together we are shaping a range of current and planned IWM projects, including the 2025-2030 IWM Action Plan.

We acknowledge that Traditional Owners have managed land and water sustainably for thousands of generations and that Caring for Country, including its waterways, is the custodial obligation of Traditional Owners.

We will continue to build our relationship with Traditional Owners and work together with WWCHAC on:

- aligning the scope and implementation of IWM actions with cultural values and knowledge from WWCHAC
- further supporting relationship building between WWCHAC and Merri-bek, including opportunities to strengthen and include Traditional Owner values in Merri-bek's IWM Strategy which is currently missing this input
- ensuring that the goals and philosophies of Wurundjeri peoples are influencing the process of delivering the actions, including the engagement of WWCHAC through planning, design, construction, operations and maintenance

Council confirms consultation with WWCHAC has occurred. This partnership will continue throughout implementation to ensure Traditional Owner values and knowledge actively shape the way we work—informing design, construction, and long-term care for water systems.

Broader Community Stakeholder Engagement

We engaged the broader community on the draft IWM action plan 2025-2030 across 4 weeks, from 14 April – 12 May 2025.

During the engagement officers used a combination of online and in person engagement tools to promote opportunities for stakeholders and the community to ask questions about the IWM Strategy and Action Plan and contribute ideas to refine actions for the next 5 years.

We reached our community through:

- Social media (Facebook); and
- Conversations Merri-bek
 - 283 visitors
 - 96 document downloads (73 of the draft action plan)

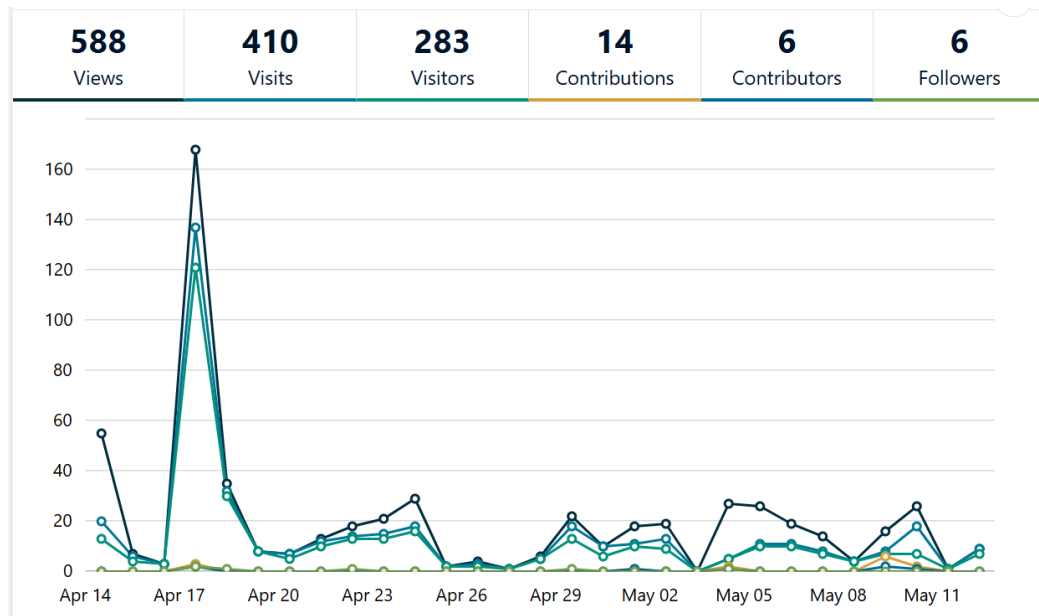


Figure 1 – Engagement Data April 14th – May 12th 2025 Integrated Water Management Draft Action Plan (2025 -2030)

File Title ▾	File Type ▾	Downloads ▾
UPDATED: Draft IWM Action Plan 2025-2030 for Community Engagement - April 2025	PDF	73
Achievements Summary IWM Action Plan 2020 - 2025.pdf	PDF	23

Figure 2 – Conversations Merri-bek (IWM Project Page) Top downloads

Top Visited Pages

There were three parts to the Conversations Merri-bek page. An introduction page and three separate themed pages with options for feedback.

- Introduction Page - Integrated Water Management Strategy:
 - This page had the highest visitation with 278 visitors (between 14th April and 12th May)
 - The draft IWM Action Plan 2025 – 2030 and the Achievement Summary (2020-2025) were accessed and downloaded from this page
- Themed Pages - The themed pages had lower visitation, ranging from 20 – 25 visitors per page

Page Name 	Page Views 	Visits 	Visitors 
Integrated Water Management Strategy	465	396	278
Water use, flow, and quality	36	30	25
Cooling, canopy, and biodiversity	33	27	21
Collaborate, enable, and empower	35	24	20
About the Integrated Water Management Strategy	19	14	13

Figure 3 – Conversations Merri-bek (IWM Project Page) Overview of number of page views and visits

14 contributions were received across the 3 themed pages. A summary of the feedback received from these contributions is provided below under ‘What we heard’.

Top Activities 		
	Page Name	Contributions
	Cooling, canopy, and biodiversity	7
	Water use, flow, and quality	6
	Collaborate, enable, and empower	1

Figure 4 – Conversations Merri-bek (IWM Project Page) – Summary of contributions online survey and ideas tools

Community Engagement Activities

In person Pop-up sessions:

- Glenroy Festival (4 May 2025); 40-50 people engaged
- Coburg Farmers Market (10 May 2025); 20-30 people engaged

Team members from the Sustainable Built Environment team attended these events to promote the consultation activities and encourage community members to visit the conversations Merri-bek website to access and provide feedback on the Draft IWM Action Plan.

Who we heard from:

- 284 unique visitors
- 51% returning visitors
- Mix of residents and regular visitors to Merri-bek

Our community engaged by:

Method	Participation
Online surveys	13 responses
Online ideas tool (Gather)	1 submission
Comments	5 comments
Emails	4 emails

Table 1 – Number and format of written submissions

Other engagement outcomes

- 14 followers subscribed to project updates

What we heard

Feedback received from the online survey and ideas tools has been summarised below under the relevant themes.

- Stormwater harvesting and reuse
 - Strong support for proposed projects like Oak Park and CB Smith Reserve Stormwater Harvesting, to capture and treat stormwater and reuse for irrigation of sports fields.
 - Interest in expanding alternative water sources
- Urban cooling and tree health
 - Requests for more passive irrigation systems in Merri-bek
 - Support for technical guidance to support tree canopy
- Biodiversity and natural systems
 - Strong support for creek naturalisation and native habitat restoration
- Flood mitigation and resilience
 - Support for nature-based solutions and using open space for stormwater detention
- Education and engagement
 - Requests for improved public educational signage, school engagement, and visibility of wetlands

Concerns Raised

- Capacity and upkeep of stormwater infrastructure and maintenance needs
- Impact of urban development on waterways and site permeability
- Need for better stormwater management enforcement in private development

Targeted feedback from catchment stakeholders and community partners

The IWM team shared the draft IWM Action Plan with these key stakeholder groups for their review and feedback and hosted online listening and discussion sessions to inform refinement of the actions.

Targeted feedback sessions with community groups:

- Merri Creek Management Committee
- Friends of Merri Creek

- Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek
- Chain of Ponds Collaboration

The draft report was also shared with the following organisations for feedback:

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Melbourne Water, Yarra Valley Water, EPA Victoria, Moonee Valley City Council, Hume City Council, Greater Western Water, Yarra City Council, and Darebin City Council.

The feedback provided from these stakeholders detailed insights, particularly on cultural engagement, biodiversity, technical planning, and compliance. Key themes and Council responses are summarised below in table 2.

Theme / Action Area	Feedback from Stakeholders	Council Response
1.1.1 / 1.1.2 – Embedding cultural values and Traditional Owner knowledge	Emphasised the need for genuine partnership and respectful engagement with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC), and for cultural values and Traditional Owner knowledge to actively shape how Council works, not just through engagement, but also through listening, implementation, and decision-making.	Council confirms that consultation with WWHAC has occurred and a partnership approach will continue throughout implementation. Council is committed to embedding cultural values and Traditional Owner knowledge into planning, design, delivery, and long-term care for water systems. We ensure cultural values and Traditional Owner knowledge influences the way we work.
1.1.5 / 2.2.1 – Permeability	Strong support to retain permeability as a catchment-scale indicator.	Permeability indicator will remain part of monitoring frameworks. We acknowledge the challenge in data collection and will align with Melbourne Water’s DCI monitoring under the Healthy Waterways Strategy. Opportunities to better integrate our approaches will be explored. Council is also exploring mechanisms to protect and improve site permeability as part of action 2.2.1 Revision to action 2.2.1

3.2.1 / 4.1.1 – Wetland Location and Biodiversity	Feasibility studies must assess ecological suitability, especially when wetlands are proposed near sensitive waterways.	Council agrees. Sensitive sites will be subject to rigorous ecological assessments and aligned with planning strategies such as the Fawkner Merri Parklands Plan. Council will also work closely with WWCHAC to ensure cultural values are incorporated into wetland planning, particularly in areas of past or current cultural significance.
5.1.1 / 5.1.2 – Compliance and Enforcement	Greater enforcement of permit conditions and builder responsibilities required.	Council supports this and will review internal compliance processes to strengthen oversight. Revision to action 2.2.2
2.3.1 – Flood Communications	Questions whether flood education directly reduces flood impacts.	Action to be repositioned under community embracing water sensitive cities, rather than flood mitigation outcomes.
4.2.1 – Bababi Djinarang Reserve	Flagged the ecological sensitivity of the area and potential pressure from additional land uses.	Acknowledged. Any interventions will be carefully assessed with ecological and cultural impact studies and will be consulted with community.
New Action Suggested	Proposed: Deliver outcome-focused IWM planning for the Coburg and Brunswick activity centres to enhance liveability, manage stormwater and flood, support water efficiency, and build climate resiliency	Council supports all suggestions and will incorporate them into future planning and review cycles.
4.1.2	Revised action for 3 rd party commitments	Embed WSUD and IWM principles across projects in Merri-bek: in Council projects (road renewals, streetscape upgrades, private developments, Coburg Library, Piazza) and in externally delivered works within the municipality—such as Big Build Victoria initiatives and level-crossing removals—so every capital investment aligns with the IWM Strategy and delivers measurable water-sensitive outcomes.

General – Action Wording	Some stakeholders noted that action wording could be too prescriptive or lacked flexibility for evolving contexts.	Some action wordings have been revised to allow greater flexibility in delivery while ensuring alignment with strategic outcomes and intent of the IWM Plan.
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Table 2 Key Stakeholder Feedback and Council Response Summary

Next steps

Community and partner feedback will directly inform the finalisation of the Integrated Water Management Action Plan 2025–2030.

Revisions to actions will include:

- Clarifying the role of flood education within the broader IWM approach
- Incorporating ecological safeguards for wetland planning
- Reflect new priorities such as IWM planning for activity centres.
- Rewording select actions to allow greater flexibility of scope for actions occurring later in the five-year action plan, while maintaining alignment with desired outcomes.

The final plan is anticipated to be endorsed later in 2025.