



Merri Creek *Marran Baba* Parklands

Strategic Management Plan
May 2013

This Strategic Management Plan for Merri Creek *Marran Baba* Parklands is approved for implementation. Its purpose is to direct all aspects of management of the Parks Victoria reserve until the plan is reviewed.

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Copies

This plan may be downloaded from the Parks Victoria website.

Parks Victoria wishes to acknowledge the contribution made to this management plan by Parks Victoria planner David Simondson who sadly passed away in 2011.

Foreword

The Merri Creek *Marran Baba* Parklands Strategic Management Plan outlines the key directions for the future use and management of the parklands over the next 15 years. It will provide a broad strategic plan for managing and protecting this special area.

The Merri Creek *Marran Baba* Parklands are managed collaboratively by Parks Victoria, City of Hume, City of Whittlesea and Melbourne Water. These agencies work together with the community and other authorities to protect the parklands' values and provide recreation opportunities for the community.

Parks Victoria recognises the important contributions the community can make to park management and encourages people to become involved with the area by supporting management with their knowledge, skills and enthusiasm. Spending time in parks is good for people's wellbeing. Parks Victoria is committed to providing places for people to enjoy time in nature, to be active and to interact with others in their community.

This plan builds upon previous planning exercises for the parklands including the Merri Creek Draft Concept Plan and further investigations undertaken during the development of the Galada Tamboore Master Plan.

I commend this plan to you and extend thanks to all the organisations and individuals involved in the development of the plan for their valuable contribution.

I encourage the community to continue to be involved in the ongoing management of these parklands, and I look forward to a continuing high level of community interest and support for these parklands.



Bill Jackson
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
PARKS VICTORIA

Executive summary

Merri Creek *Marran Baba* Parklands
Strategic Management Plan
May 2013

Involving the diverse community, visitors and government agencies in the planning, development and operation of the park is a key component of park management to ensure successful implementation of

The Victorian Government, City of Whittlesea, Hume City Council and Melbourne Water are planning for the growing population of Melbourne by providing open space for a healthy community and liveable city.

Marran Baba means, 'Body of mother' in the Wurundjeri language. The Merri Creek *Marran Baba* Parklands will join together land along the Merri Creek managed by a variety of government bodies into a coordinated habitat and recreation corridor. The parklands will be managed to balance the protection of significant ecological values and the opportunity for the communities of the northern suburbs of Melbourne to recreate and have contact with nature in an urban setting.

Merri Creek *Marran Baba* Parklands are located along the Merri Creek corridor on the volcanic plain, beginning approximately 15 km north of Melbourne's Central Business District (CBD) covering an area of approximately 650 hectares extending a further 15 km north (Map 1).

Merri Creek was an important resource in the past for Indigenous groups of the Kulin nation, providing food, water and shelter, and continues to hold cultural significance for the Traditional Owners. Numerous artefacts and sites have been recorded within the park. Grazing and cropping were the major post-settlement uses. The protection and conservation of Indigenous and post-settlement cultural heritage is a key management objective of the park.

The Merri Creek corridor provides important habitat and connectivity for a range of flora and fauna species. Remnant vegetation types include Plains Grassland, Escarpment Shrubland and Stony Knoll Shrubland. Several threatened flora and fauna species have also been recorded throughout the parklands. Protection and enhancement of these species and communities are priorities for management.

Low impact recreational opportunities will be provided and activities managed to ensure they are safe, enjoyable and environmentally sustainable.

This 15 year strategic management plan is an integral step in the development of Merri Creek *Marran Baba* Parklands into the future.

This plan has been developed by Parks Victoria in consultation with Cities of Hume and Whittlesea, Melbourne Water and Department of Environment and Primary Industries. The plan is primarily a management plan for the state-owned areas of land within the parklands, and provides guidance and direction for integration and complementary management of land managed by local government and other agencies.

This plan:

- Outlines the vision for the parklands
- Outlines the process for ongoing establishment of the parklands
- Describes the management arrangements for the parklands
- Describes the values of the parklands and its regional role
- Provides a framework for decision making to guide management
- Determines the broad management zones of the parklands
- Provides strategic directions and priority actions to manage the values of the parklands and achieve the vision
- Describes the process of monitoring and reporting on the management of the parklands.

Implementation and monitoring

Implementation of the plan will be dependent on available resources, partnerships with other agencies, and changes in visitor demand. Actions in the plan will be progressively incorporated into Parks Victoria's annual works program for the areas of Merri Creek *Marran Baba* Parklands managed by Parks Victoria.

Regular monitoring will be undertaken to ensure that the plan is progressively implemented and continues to be used as the ongoing guide to management of the park.



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1 Overview

Merri Creek *Marran Baba* Parklands are a result of a partnership between Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, the City of Whittlesea and the City of Hume. For several decades the community has advocated for the protection of the natural and cultural values of the Merri Creek through the Merri Creek Management Committee and Friends of Merri Creek. Several years of planning have occurred, including investigations into the history and ecology of the site. This plan will guide management of the parklands for the next 15 years.

1.1 About the management plan

The Merri Creek *Marran Baba* Management Plan guides the management of the Merri Creek *Marran Baba* Parklands.

The management plan addresses the intent of future management of public open space. The plan acknowledges the broader context of adjacent public and private land. This approach is fundamental to achieving the vision for the parklands.

This plan proposes to rename several sites along the Merri Creek to names selected by the Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council. It is proposed that the parklands be named *Marran Baba* Parklands, Cooper Street Grassland Nature Conservation Reserve will be named *Bababi marning* and Craigieburn Grassland Nature Conservation Reserve named as *Galgi ngarkk*. The proposed names and meanings of the names are outlined in section 3.4 of this plan.

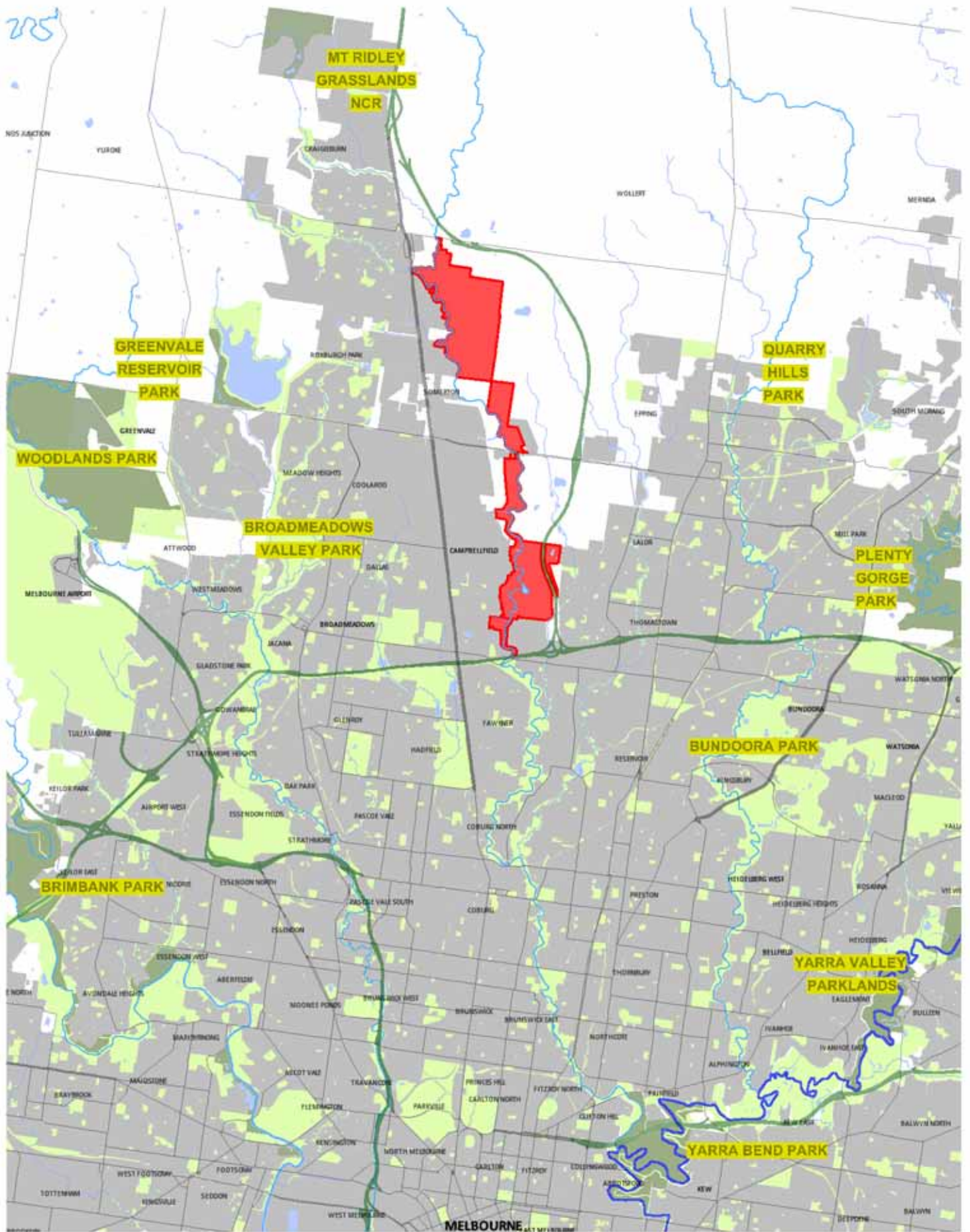
1.2 The parklands and regional context

Location

The 39 000 hectare Merri Creek catchment is located to the north of Melbourne. The creek begins in the foothills of the Great Dividing Range and flows for 60 kilometres to its confluence with the Yarra River at Dights Falls in Abbotsford.

Merri Creek *Marran Baba* Parklands extend along a 15 kilometre stretch of Merri Creek south from Craigieburn, approximately 30 kilometres north of Melbourne's CBD, through Campbellfield to Lalor (Map 1). The total area of the parklands is approximately 650 hectares of public land managed by various land managers. The parklands fall within two local government areas: City of Whittlesea and City of Hume.

The parklands will harmonise the management of existing public land along Merri Creek under the management of Melbourne Water, City of Whittlesea, Parks Victoria and Hume City Council (Map 2).



MAP 1 : LOCATION OF MERRI CREEK (MARRAN BABA) PARKLANDS

- | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|---|----------------|
|  | Merri Creek- Marran Baba Parklands |  | Freeways |
|  | Parks Victoria reserves |  | Arterial Roads |
|  | Urban area |  | Waterways |
|  | Surrounding Open Space |  | Waterbodies |

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The parklands consist of the following significant areas of land:

- Craigieburn Grassland Nature Conservation Reserve (Parks Victoria)
- Cooper Street Grassland Nature Conservation Reserve (Parks Victoria)
- Merri Creek Park (Barry Road Grasslands) (Parks Victoria)
- Galada Tamboore (Melbourne Water)
- Whittlesea Public Gardens (City of Whittlesea)
- Whittlesea landfill rehabilitation site (City of Whittlesea)
- Bolinda Road landfill rehabilitation area (City of Hume)
- Areas of Merri Creek frontage (City of Hume).

The boundary creates an extension of the linear parklands already in existence along the Merri Creek from Abbotsford to the Metropolitan Ring Road at Campbellfield and Thomastown. The parklands along the Merri Creek south of the Ring Road, have been transformed into valuable and popular community open space over many years, with significant community involvement, guided by the Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) and a range of agencies. Connecting the southern parklands with the Merri Creek *Marran Baba* Parklands to the north will extend the recreation opportunities and protection of conservation values north to Craigieburn.

The parklands and surrounding areas

Merri Creek *Marran Baba* Parklands are bordered in the south by the Metropolitan Ring Road at Campbellfield and Thomastown and extend north to Craigieburn. South of the Metropolitan Ring Road, land use adjacent to the Merri Creek open space corridor is primarily residential in character. Open space extends along the creek corridor with settings varying from natural to highly modified landscapes and sporting facilities.

A shared use trail along Merri Creek south of Mahoneys Road is almost continuous to the Main Yarra Trail at Yarra Bend Park. The Metropolitan Ring Road Trail connects with the Merri Creek Trail at Mahoneys Road.

Regional open space (Map 1) within the area includes:

- Brimbank Park (Parks Victoria)
- Broadmeadows Valley Park (City of Hume)
- Greenvale Reservoir Park (Parks Victoria)
- Plenty Gorge Parklands (Parks Victoria)
- Quarry Hills Park (City of Whittlesea).
- Woodlands Historic Park (Parks Victoria).

North of the Metropolitan Ring Road, the landscape changes significantly. The corridor is narrow and bordered by industrial development and highly degraded escarpments. It then widens into a natural amphitheatre known as Galada



Blue devil

Marran Baba means ‘Body of Mother’ in the Wurundjeri language. The parklands represent a cooperative approach to park management.

Tamboore, creating a sense of space. Galada Tamboore is derived from the Wurundjeri words meaning “creek waterhole” and is reserved for a future Melbourne Water retarding basin. The natural environment is less disturbed in this area, with remnant stony knolls and plains grasslands present and River Red Gums along the creek. Merri Creek is also deeply incised with significant escarpment areas. Looking south from higher points on the escarpments, views to the city across the site and through the far reaching industrial and residential landscape can be spectacular, while more intimate experiences of isolation are also possible within the valley.

Galada Tamboore, which means ‘creek waterhole’, is bordered to the west by some residential development and industrial development in Campbellfield and to the east by the Hume Freeway. A pedestrian bridge over the Hume Freeway provides connection to the Whittlesea Public Gardens managed by Whittlesea City Council in Lalor. A shared trail links the Whittlesea Public Gardens to Galada Tamboore and Campbellfield.

Heading north, public land continues along the west side of the creek to the Cooper Street Grassland Nature Conservation Reserve (NCR) (*Bababi marning*). Private land on the east side of the creek consists of former quarries and degraded landscapes. Cooper Street is a major east-west arterial road that presents a barrier to the movement of fauna along the Merri Creek corridor.

Upstream of Cooper Street, the majority of the eastern side of the creek is in public ownership. The City of Whittlesea manages land that incorporates areas of natural value and disturbed and rehabilitated land. The nationally significant Craigieburn Grassland NCR (*Galgi ngarrk*) is located on the eastern side of the creek from north of O’Herns Road to the boundary of the parklands at Craigieburn Road. The western side of the creek is bordered by industrial development, with many properties owning land to the creek.

The eastern side of Merri Creek between Barry Road and Cooper Street and the western side north of Cooper Street are the most suitable locations for a future Merri Creek shared use trail. The development of private properties along Merri Creek can create opportunities for additional public land in the park through public open space contributions or protection of environmental or cultural values. Hume City Council has negotiated the transfer of several areas of creek frontage for open space (Hume City Council 2010a).

Land immediately north of Craigieburn East Road along Merri Creek, opposite the Craigieburn Grassland NCR is proposed as a potential urban development area in the State Government’s Growth Corridor Plans (GAA 2011).

Regional community context

Over the next 20 years, the regional population is expected to increase substantially as growth continues in the northern corridor in the municipalities of Whittlesea and Hume and the urban growth extends north into the Shire of Mitchell. Whittlesea and Hume are amongst the fastest growing local government areas in Melbourne. Within Whittlesea, the Aurora Estate in Epping North, east of Craigieburn Grassland NCR, will alone house an estimated 25 000 new residents in the area. The 2011 Growth Corridor Plans propose significant residential development to the north-east and further north along Merri Creek (GAA 2011).

The ethnic diversity of the region is also one of the significant characteristics of this growth corridor. An analysis of population data in 2006 shows the municipalities adjacent to Merri Creek *Marran Baba* have high proportions of residents from non-English speaking backgrounds, these being the City of Whittlesea 29.6% and the City of Hume 25%. This contrasts with Melbourne's average of 22%. The predominant countries of origin for overseas born residents include Italy, Greece, Iraq, Turkey and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (.id 2012a, .id 2012b). This cultural richness emphasises the need for park planning and management to cater for a diverse community to ensure responsiveness to local and regional needs.

1.3 Planning approach and legislation

Melbourne's population is forecast to grow to 5 million by 2026. It is expected that another 284 000 dwellings will be constructed in Melbourne's urban growth corridors, including more than 80 000 in the Cities of Hume and Whittlesea. Open space is vital for liveable communities, and increasing populations will increase demand on existing and new open space. Existing open space will need to be maintained and enhanced, and new open space developed to meet the needs of the growing city.

Increased population will lead to changes in land use. As well as increased dwellings in growth corridors, infill development and higher densities will be encouraged in existing suburbs. Six Central Activities Districts (CADs) have been identified as areas for intensive residential and commercial development, including Broadmeadows which is four kilometres to the west of the park. Increased urban density is likely to intensify usage of existing open space throughout the greater Melbourne area.

Lifestyles and values of the community have changed over recent decades and will continue to change in the future. Technological changes leading to an increased sedentary lifestyle are linked to health issues such as obesity and depression. The link between a healthy environment and healthy people has been demonstrated, and open space provides opportunities to experience nature.

Healthy Parks Healthy People seeks to reinforce and encourage the connections between a healthy environment and a healthy society. Parks Victoria created the Healthy Parks Healthy People brand in 2000. Healthy Parks Healthy People is supported by international research from fields as diverse as ecology, biology, environmental psychology and psychiatry, which shows that access to nature plays a vital role in human health, wellbeing and development (Deakin University 2008).

The use of open space will also vary owing to the cultural diversity of the population and peoples' experiences of nature prior to migration. A greater understanding of Aboriginal culture is also influencing Parks Victoria's management of the land.

Climate predictions for Victoria include warmer and drier seasons, increased frequency and intensity of storms and rising sea levels. Climate change is likely to impact on open space such as Merri Creek *Marran Baba* through the declining health of landscapes, changing threats to biodiversity, floods, and associated aesthetic impacts.



Kangaroo Grass

1.3.1 Legislation and guidelines

The areas of land included in the parklands are guided by a range of legislation, strategies and guidelines.

Parks Victoria

Victoria's parks and reserves are managed within the context of State and Commonwealth legislation, international treaties, government policies, best-practice principles, strategies and guidelines.

To facilitate effective and efficient management of parks and reserves, Parks Victoria has developed a range of decision-making tools. These tools have been developed to be consistent with over-arching legislation and policy. These decision-making tools inform and guide park management and planning and resource allocation within the context of the broader statutory and policy framework.

Craigieburn Grassland and Cooper Street Grassland Nature Conservation Reserves (NCR) are reserved under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* (Vic.). The *Crown Land (Reserves) Nature Conservation Reserve Regulations 2004* apply to Craigieburn Grassland NCR and the *Crown Land (Reserves) (Metropolitan Parks) Regulations 2011* apply to part of Cooper Street Grassland NCR. Nature Conservation Reserves are set aside primarily to conserve and protect species, communities and habitats of indigenous plants and animals.

Merri Creek Park, adjacent to Galada Tamboore (also referred to as Barry Road Grasslands), is reserved under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act* for the purposes of conservation, recreation, leisure and tourism. The *Crown Land (Reserves) (Metropolitan Parks) Regulations 2011* apply to Merri Creek Park.

The Plains Grassland Ecological Vegetation Community (EVC) located throughout the parklands is protected under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (Vic.) as Western (Basalt) Plains Grassland and under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth) (the EPBC Act) as Natural Temperate Grassland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain. There are also several flora and fauna species present in the park protected by this legislation. This legislation must be applied in the future planning, management and development of the park.

The EPBC Act applies to the whole of the park with respect to actions that have, will have, or are likely to have, a significant impact on matters of national environmental or cultural significance, including listed threatened species and communities and listed migratory species in the park.

The Urban Growth Boundary was extended in August 2010, and now includes Craigieburn Grasslands NCR and other land along the Merri Creek. The State and Commonwealth Governments are now considering the final strategies which will have management and landowner EPBC Act implications for this section of the parklands.

The Commonwealth and State Government will implement the EPBC Act requirements in growth corridors through a Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (BCS) and specific species strategies. A draft Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and draft Growling Grass Frog sub-regional Species Strategy were released for comment in November 2011 (DSE 2011a, DSE 2011b).

The *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic.) applies to the park and protects all Aboriginal places, objects and Aboriginal human remains (section 5.4). The *Native Title Act 1993* (Cwlth) applies to the management of the parklands.

The remainder of land within the parklands is freehold title and managed by various agencies including Hume City Council, Whittlesea City Council and Melbourne Water. These areas are guided by a range of strategies and policies:

Hume City Council

Hume City Council's role in the planning and management of Hume's reserves in the parklands is guided and supported by the following documents:

- Municipal Strategic Statement
- Hume Open Space Strategy 2010-2015
- Hume Walking and Cycling Strategy 2010-2015
- Natural Heritage Strategy 2011 - 2015
- Sustainable Land Management Strategy 2010-2013
- Hume Pathways to Sustainability: An Environmental Framework 2009 - 2013
- Hume Native Vegetation Offset Policy 2010
- Municipal Public Health And Wellbeing Plan 2009 –2013.

Whittlesea City Council

Whittlesea City Council's role in the planning and management of Whittlesea's reserves in the parklands is guided and supported by the following documents:

- Local Conservation Strategy 2000
- Environmental Sustainability Strategy
- Emergency Management Plan
- Community Plan – Shaping Our Future Whittlesea 2025
- Fire Prevention Strategy
- Municipal Fire Prevention Risk Strategy 2011-2014
- River Red Gum Tree Protection Policy (Planning Scheme)
- Local Policy Framework
- Whittlesea Walking Strategy 2008
- Whittlesea Open Space Strategy
- City of Whittlesea Strategic Bicycle Plan and Bike and Network Path Plan
- Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2009-2013.



Melbourne Water

Melbourne Water is responsible for the bed, banks and drainage function of the Merri Creek as well as land owner responsibilities for Galada Tamboore. Melbourne Water's Operating Charter for waterway management in the Port Phillip and Westernport region 2008/09 to 2012/13, as caretaker of river health, is to strive to:

- Manage our rivers, creeks and drainage systems to improve waterway health and the wellbeing of the community
- Provide a safe level of flood protection for communities
- Show leadership and work collaboratively with stakeholders and the community
- Provide opportunities for community involvement to strengthen connections with waterways and encourage contribution to river and creek health
- Make long-term decisions based on the best available science by undertaking or supporting collaborative research and an extensive monitoring and investigations program
- Take an integrated and sustainable approach to our work by balancing social, economic and environmental outcomes
- Evaluate our performance in a transparent manner that promotes our achievements and identifies areas for improvement.

Melbourne Water's role as caretaker of river health will continue to change and evolve to reflect increased knowledge of waterways and drainage infrastructure, changing community expectations, the capacity of our stakeholders and environmental issues such as climate change and drought.

Key documents which guide waterway management include:

- Port Phillip and Westernport Regional River Health Strategy (Melbourne Water 2007)
- Draft Healthy Waterways Strategy May 2012 (Melbourne Water 2012).

1.4 History of the parklands and development of the plan

Melbourne's network of open space contributes significantly to the liveability of the city, bringing recreational, environmental, economic, and health benefits to our community.

The concept of formalising a new park along the Merri Creek north of Mahoneys Road in Thomastown was proposed in the 1929 Melbourne Metropolitan Town Planning Commission Report. At the time, the Commission recommended that a continuous parkland progressing north from the Merri Creek's confluence with the Yarra River be implemented, ending in a large reservation of approximately 850 acres north of Mahoneys Road. This is the site of the Melbourne Water proposed retarding basin, now known as Galada Tamboore.

Through the 1990s, the importance of the remnant grasslands within the Craigieburn Grasslands and Cooper Street Grasslands became known, and the Government took action to acquire these significant parcels of land. Community interest in, and stewardship of, the Merri Creek corridor is a significant feature of the area's recent history.

The proposed F2 Hume Freeway reservation was realigned further east away from Merri Creek for the Craigieburn Bypass in 2001. The Hume Freeway re-alignment created opportunities to further preserve remnant vegetation on VicRoads-owned land through the area. In combination with the Melbourne Water-owned Galada Tamboore, this meant that large areas of public land existed along the Merri Creek Corridor, from the Metropolitan Ring Road to Craigieburn Road East.

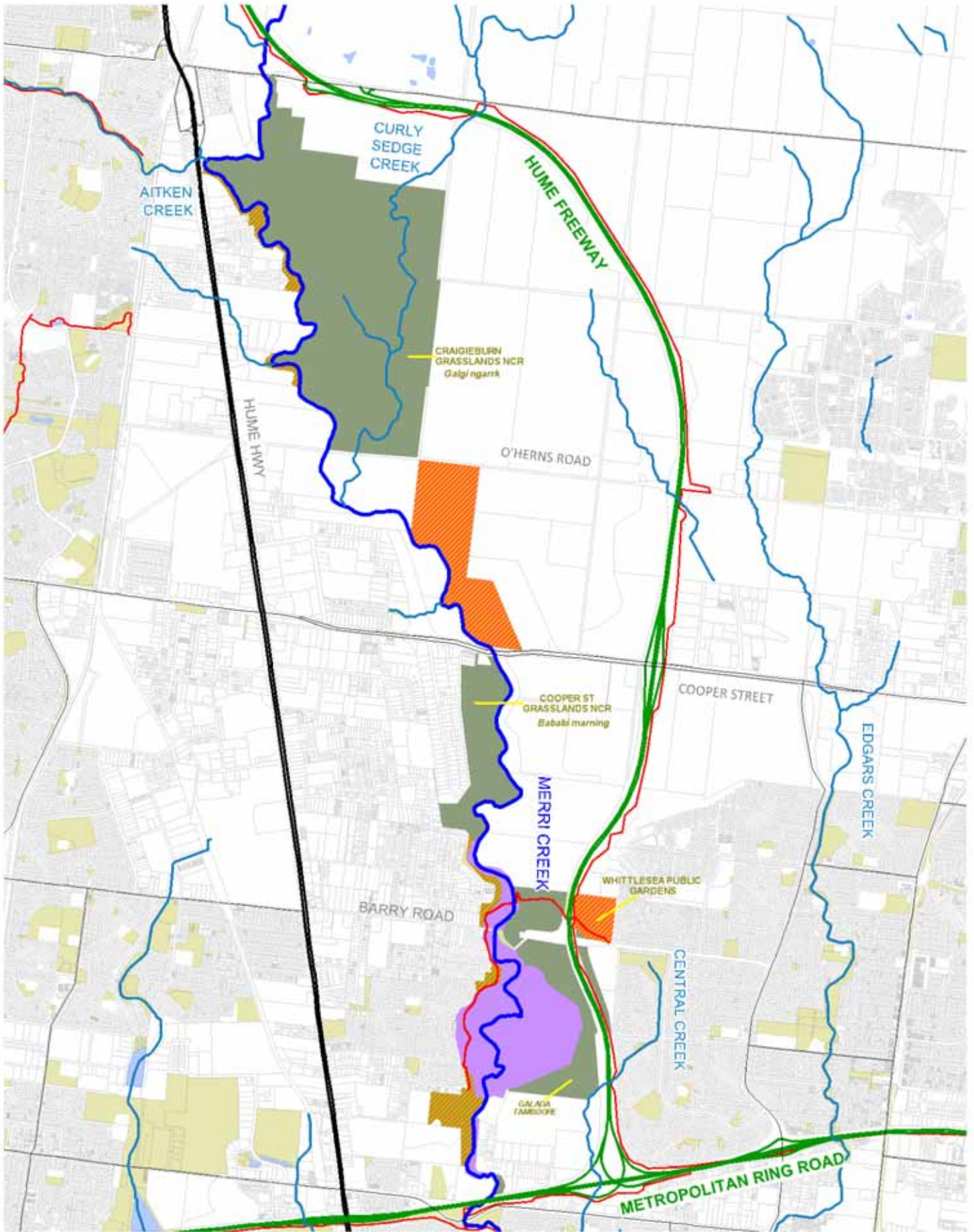
Linking People and Spaces (PV 2002) provided the vision for managing and extending the existing network of Melbourne's open space, with a central commitment to ensuring equitable access to open space across Melbourne. *Linking People and Spaces* identified the need for parklands in the growth corridor of the Cities of Hume and Whittlesea to the north of Melbourne.

1.4.1 Development of the plan

Investigations into the creation of parklands along the Merri Creek corridor began in 2002. In 2006, Parks Victoria released *'The proposed new Merri Creek Park Draft Concept Plan'* (PV 2006). The plan outlined the vision for the parklands and proposed a boundary incorporating the public land between the Western Ring Road and Craigieburn Road East. Over 100 submissions to the draft Concept Plan were received and were generally in favour of the parkland concept. Following release of the Draft Concept Plan, 79 hectares of surplus VicRoads land was transferred to the Department of Environment and Primary Industries for inclusion in the parkland.



Melbourne Metropolitan Town Planning Commission Report, 1929



MAP 2 - MERRI CREEK/MARRAN BABA PARKLANDS - LAND MANAGEMENT

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
|  Parks Victoria |  Merri Creek |  Freeways |
|  Melbourne Water |  Waterways |  Highways |
|  Hume City Council |  Waterbodies |  Arterial Roads |
|  City of Whittlesea |  Other open space |  Metropolitan Trail Network |

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Following release of the draft concept plan, a Strategic Directions Statement (PV 2008) was developed to provide a detailed summary of the key directions for Merri Creek Parklands over a period of three to five years. The Strategic Directions Statement built on previous planning work undertaken for the Merri Creek Parklands including the Draft Concept Plan, and was used to guide the development of a master plan for Galada Tamboore.

Due to the sensitivity of cultural and environmental values through much of the parklands, particularly Cooper Street Grasslands and Craigieburn Grasslands, and given the proximity to the Campbellfield and Thomastown communities, Galada Tamboore was selected as the main location for visitor facilities. A master plan was developed for this site and completed in 2009. The master plan is available on Park Web: www.parkweb.vic.gov.au.

The master plan was developed with significant community and land manager input. A steering committee of relevant agencies was created, community open days were held, information was distributed through the media, community bulletins were distributed, and there was feedback via the internet.

The master plan established a design and layout of park infrastructure to enable visitor access and use. It took into account the park landscape, environmental and cultural heritage values and opportunities for connecting people to the park and opportunities for connecting communities. The implementation of the master plan and development of facilities will be staged over time. Stage 1 of development was completed in 2011 and included constructing the first section of shared trail along Merri Creek from Somerset Road in Campbellfield to Whittlesea Public Gardens in Lalor (Map 2).

This Strategic Management Plan has been developed by Parks Victoria on the basis of existing information, reports and research findings that relate to the parklands. The plan is informed and supported by a range of best practice management systems.

This Strategic Management Plan describes how the parklands will be managed to achieve the co-ordinated management objectives in accordance with the vision and to implement the Galada Tamboore Master Plan. The Strategic Management Plan has a time frame of 15 years. Objectives, strategic directions and key actions (section 6) have been identified to outline what actions will occur over the life of the plan.

Once finalised, the Strategic Management Plan will replace the Merri Creek Parklands Strategic Directions Statement (PV 2008) and the Draft Concept Plan (PV 2006), and will complement the Merri Creek Parklands – *Marran Baba* Galada Tamboore Master Plan (PV 2009).

The development of Merri Creek *Marran Baba* Parklands, including implementation of further visitor infrastructure as outlined in the master plan will continue over the medium to long term as resources become available.

This Strategic Management Plan describes how the parklands will be managed to achieve the coordinated management objectives in accordance with the vision.



2 Vision, principles and zoning

Marran Baba is about connection. Connecting people with nature, connecting habitat, connecting diverse communities and connecting to Country.

2.1 Vision

Marran Baba is about connection: connecting people with nature, connecting habitat, connecting diverse communities and connecting to Country. Natural values, including Merri Creek and the nationally significant remnant grasslands, will be protected and enhanced to conserve biodiversity. The association of the Wurundjeri people with this landscape will be recognised and respected. Recreational experiences will be focussed on interaction with the natural environment. Merri Creek Marran Baba will be a leading example of cooperatively managed open space by government and agencies, in partnership with the community.

The vision for Merri Creek *Marran Baba* Parklands is a clearly articulated aspiration for the parklands and will guide their future development.

The vision was developed through consultation with the community and stakeholders throughout the planning phase of the parklands. This included engagement through the development of the Strategic Management Statement for the parklands and the master plan for Galada Tamboore, a key recreation node for the parklands.

2.2 Guiding principles for Merri Creek *Marran Baba* Parklands

The Vision will be achieved through the following guiding principles, developed by the agencies involved in the management of the parklands. The vision, guiding principles and strategic directions provide the framework for the management of the parklands.

Partnerships

Effective and sustainable partnerships are fundamental to the management of Merri Creek *Marran Baba*. Public land managers will work collaboratively with each other, the community, including Merri Creek Management Committee and Friends of Merri Creek, and adjoining land managers to achieve the vision of the parklands.

The guiding principles for the management of Merri Creek *Marran Baba* Parklands were determined by the agencies involved in - the management of the parklands.



Milkmaids, Galada Tamboore

Community

The community will be encouraged to actively participate in the planning, development and management of the parklands. Education will be focussed on enhancing the understanding of park values and the need for their protection.

Natural and cultural values

The parklands will be planned and managed to protect high conservation values including ecological, archaeological, geological, landscape and cultural values.

Recreational access and diversity

A diversity of opportunities for passive recreation and social activity will be provided in balance with other values. The planning and design of the parklands will provide accessible, high quality linked spaces for community use, social connectedness and wellbeing.



Effective management

The parklands will be planned and managed using innovation, creativity, flexibility and responsiveness. Management will be financially and environmentally sustainable with regular monitoring and review of performance.

2.3 Management zones

A key objective of the management plan is to define the management zones for the park and the key strategic management directions to guide the development and management of the park for the next 15 years.

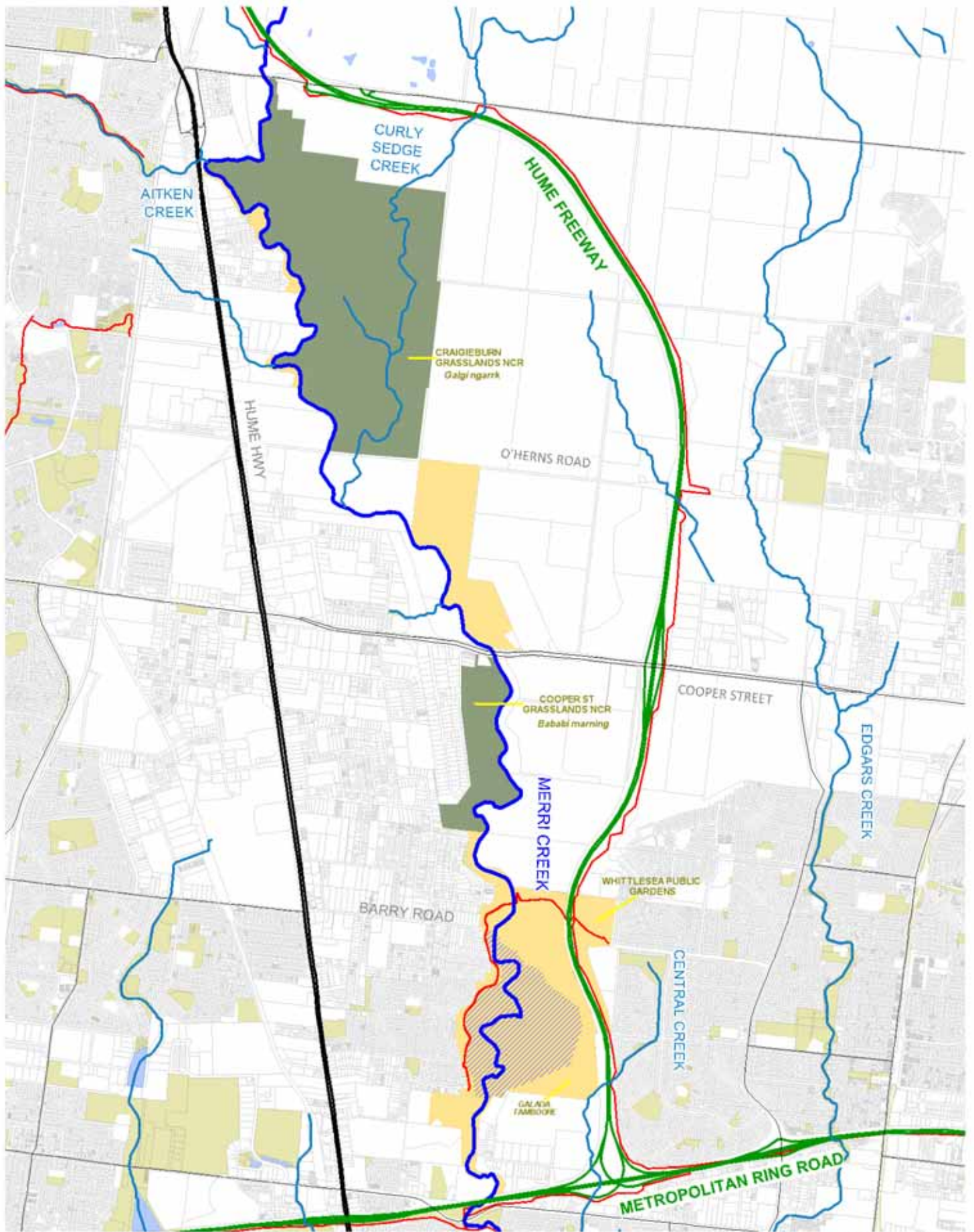
The planning area has been mapped into two zones where different management directions and priorities apply, the Conservation Zone and the Conservation and Recreation Zone. A Special Management Overlay has also been developed to provide additional management directions for the proposed Galada Tamboore retarding basin (Map 3).

Conservation Zone

- Areas of high natural value where the emphasis is on protection of the environment.

Management actions within this zone include protection and enhancement of environmental and cultural values through pest plant and animal management, management of biomass, minimising human activity and monitoring outcomes.





MAP 3 - MERRI CREEK/MARRAN BABA PARKLANDS - MANAGEMENT ZONES AND OVERLAY

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
|  Conservation Zone |  Merri Creek |  Freeways |
|  Conservation & Recreation Zone |  Waterways |  Highways |
|  Special management area overlay |  Waterbodies |  Arterial Roads |
|  Retarding Basin Overlay |  Other open space |  Metropolitan Trail Network |

Disclaimer: Parks Victoria does not guarantee that this data is without error or that it is accurate and therefore disclaims all liability which may arise from you relying on this information.

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Conservation and Recreation Zone

- Areas where the management emphasis is on protection of environmental and cultural values while allowing for recreation.

Dispersed recreational activities are encouraged. The level of activities and small-scale recreation activities are provided without significant impact on natural processes.

Passive recreation facilities will be located within a natural setting in this zone, including any future Merri Creek trail, and visitor entry points. Ongoing control of pest plants and animals and revegetation of selected areas will occur.

Special Management Overlay – proposed retarding basin

- Areas where specified activities or values require special management.

This overlay has been applied to Galada Tamboore Melbourne Water land which may be required for use as a retarding basin in the future.

3 Key values

Merri Creek *Marran Baba* Parklands contain some of the largest remaining examples of grasslands that once covered the plains to the north and west of Melbourne.

3.1 Landscape and waterway values

The Galada Tamboore Gorge is regarded as one of the most distinctive topographical features of the Merri Creek catchment and a major landscape feature within northern Melbourne. It is a site of State significance for its geology and geomorphology. It is an example of exposed unconformity between basalt and Silurian bedrock. Other geological features evident in the landscape are the stony rises (rugged surface outcrops impacted by weathering) and gilgai (soils with high clay content which swell when wet).

Human occupation and land use has dramatically impacted on the form of this ancient landscape through pastoral use, extractive industries, landfill, flood protection and drainage, agriculture and urban development. These uses have inevitably influenced water flow and quality, soil structure, flora and fauna, and vistas across the landscape. The parklands provide a significant opportunity to sensitively manage the landscape in a manner that shows an appreciation for the land and its history.

Protection and enhancement of stream water quality through the parklands is particularly important. The Merri Creek is a major tributary of the Yarra River, which flows into Port Phillip. Reducing sedimentation and contaminants from the creek is of benefit to the aquatic environment. While flows within the Merri Creek vary according to seasonal rainfall, flooding occurs periodically.

Galada Tamboore, managed by Melbourne Water, is reserved for future retarding basin purposes in order to manage major flood events. While its primary purpose is for future flood retardation functions, Melbourne Water has been actively managing the environmental values of the site and is also responsible for the management of the creek bed and banks along the entire Merri Creek.

The parklands are within the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment, the responsibility of the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority.

3.2 Flora values

Merri Creek *Marran Baba* Parklands contain some of the best and largest remaining examples of grasslands that once covered the plains to the north of Melbourne. This vegetation community is protected under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act (FFG Act) as Western (Basalt) Plains Grassland and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act) as Natural Temperate Grassland of the Victorian Volcanic Plains.



Craigieburn Grassland NCR (*Galgi ngarrk*), the Cooper Street Grassland NCR (*Bababi marning*) and the Merri Creek Park are the major areas of remnant vegetation in the parkland. Remnant vegetation also exists along the creek banks and escarpments. Ecological Vegetation Classes recorded in the parkland include Plains Grassland, Escarpment Shrubland, Stony Knoll Shrubland, Grassy Wetland and Riparian Woodland.

Several threatened species have been recorded within the parklands. Matted Flax-lily (*Dianella amoena*), Curly Sedge (*Carex tasmanica*) and River Swamp-wallaby Grass (*Amphibromus fluitans*) are all listed under the EPBC Act. These have been recorded on land managed by Parks Victoria.

Chilean Needle Grass (*Nassella neesiana*) and other *Nassella* spp. are major weed threats to flora values and are distributed throughout the parklands. Woody weeds including Sweet Briar (*Rosa rubiginosa*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*) and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) also degrade flora values and provide habitat for rabbits. Spiny Rush (*Juncus acutus*) and Toowoomba Canary Grass (*Phalaris aquatica*) are threats to riparian values.

Fire is an important grasslands management tool. Periodic fire reduces the cover of Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*) and creates inter-tussock spaces for other plant species. Fire will be incorporated into the management regime of remnant grasslands.

Illegal vehicle access into the parklands damages vegetation, adds to erosion, reduces water quality and impacts on park assets. A holistic approach needs to be taken with participation from all agencies to ensure this activity is reduced.



Blue Devil



Growling Grass Frog (*Litoria raniformis*).

3.3 Fauna values

The vegetation, geology and aquatic values of the parkland provide a diversity of habitats for numerous fauna species, ranging from common species to critically endangered species. The wide expanses of grassland support Eastern Grey Kangaroos. Currently they are free to roam throughout the length of the parklands; however, as the surrounding area is developed, they are likely to require management due to road safety, animal welfare and impacts to vegetation from grazing pressure.

The Merri Creek and nearby wetlands support an important population of the Growling Grass Frog (*Litoria raniformis*). The Growling Grass Frog is listed as vulnerable under the EPBC Act, and is considered endangered in Victoria where it is listed under the FFG Act. The species occurs in dense fringing vegetation and prefers rocks and logs for habitat, and still water for breeding. Providing habitat links between the creek and wetlands is important for the survival of this species. The draft Growling Grass Frog sub-regional Species Strategy (DSE 2011b) identifies specific protection required along Merri Creek. This strategy applies to some land within the parklands, east of Merri Creek, north of Cooper Street.

The Golden Sun Moth (*Synemon plana*) has been recorded within the parklands. The Golden Sun Moth is listed as critically endangered under the EPBC Act, is considered critically endangered in Victoria and is listed under the FFG Act. Its preferred habitat is grasslands dominated by the genus *Austrodanthonia*, although

it has also been recorded in grasslands dominated by the weed Chilean Needle-grass (*Nassella neesiana*).

It is important to manage the fire regime in areas where the Golden Sun Moth has been recorded to ensure the persistence of *Austrodanthonia* spp. Managing the spread and replacement of Chilean Needle Grass needs to be balanced with the preservation of the Golden Sun Moth. The draft Golden Sun Moth sub-regional Species Strategy (DSE 2011c) identifies specific protection required in the northern growth corridor. This strategy applies to some land within the parklands east of Merri Creek, north of Cooper Street, including Craigieburn Grassland NCR.

The grasslands of the Merri Creek corridor are also potential habitat for the Striped Legless Lizard (*Delma impar*). The Striped Legless Lizard is listed as vulnerable under the EPBC Act, considered endangered in Victoria and is listed under the FFG Act. The Striped Legless Lizard was recorded in the parklands in the 1990s; however, recent surveys have not recorded this species. The preferred habitat for the species is native grasslands with rocks and cracking clays that provide cover for the species. This habitat exists throughout the parklands and the species may persist in some areas. It is important that fire, when used to manage grasslands, is conducted at the appropriate time of the year.

Adjacent land use and fragmentation are a threat to the values of Craigieburn NCR as they are known to have a negative effect on the diversity of flora species in the reserve as well as on the threatened species. The reserve is surrounded by industrial areas, farms and the Hume Freeway and Hume Highway transport corridors.

Land opposite the park along Merri Creek immediately north of Craigieburn East Road is proposed as potential urban development in the Growth Corridor Plans (GAA 2011).

These adjacent land uses can impact negatively on the values of the reserve as they alter nutrient levels, hydrology, moisture content, soil disturbance and weed introduction. The habitat suitability for Striped Legless Lizard is dependent on lack of disturbance and good tussock cover (DCE 1992). Adjacent land use and fragmentation are major threats to this species (PV 2005).

Numerous other native fauna species have been recorded in the parklands due to the variety of habitats present. Management of all areas needs to take account of species using these habitats and factor their presence into decision making.

3.4 Cultural heritage

The area of the park is within the traditional 'Country' of the Wurundjeri willam clan, part of the Woiwurung language group. The Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council has been declared by the Victorian Aboriginal Council to be the Registered Aboriginal Party for the area.

This connection of place, spirit and history continues for the Wurundjeri community today even though aspects of language and culture have been lost. The parklands have been surveyed and a number of cultural heritage places have been registered with the Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (OAAV) including scar trees, stone artefacts and fragments or debris which are evidence of toolmaking processes. The sites are concentrated along the Merri Creek throughout the study



Milkmaids

area, and Curly Sedge Creek. The predominance of registered sites adjacent to the creek is likely to reflect areas of least disturbance from modern land use rather than the broader extent of use by, and significance to, the Aboriginal community.

Cultural Heritage Management Plans were produced to develop the Merri Creek trail at several sites including Galada Tamboore and will be used to guide management decisions in relation to park development and Aboriginal cultural heritage sites within this area.

There is community interest and support for acknowledging the Aboriginal heritage of the area through the renaming of sites within the parklands with Aboriginal names. The following names have been proposed by the Wurundjeri and have the support of key interest groups including the Merri Creek Management Committee.

Figure 3.1: Proposed Parkland Names

Existing Name	Proposed Name	Pronunciation	Meaning
Cooper Street Grasslands Nature Conservation Reserve	<i>Bababi marning</i>	Barb-a-bee mah-ning	Mothers hand
Craigieburn Grasslands	<i>Galgi ngarrk</i>	Gal-gi nyark	Backbone
Merri Creek Parklands	<i>Marran Baba</i>	Marran barb-a	Body of mother

In 1835 John Batman led an exploration party to acquire cheap grazing land in the Port Phillip region. In June of the same year, Batman met up with senior Woiwuring men on the banks of the lower reaches of the Merri Creek and according to his understanding ‘negotiated’ what he regarded as a formal treaty for approximately 243 000 hectares. However, the British Crown held that Batman and his associates had no authority to acquire land in the colony. Upon Batman’s return, Sir Richard Bourke, Governor of the colony of New South Wales, refused to recognise the treaty and issued a formal proclamation declaring it invalid.

In addition to Batman’s association with the broader Merri Creek corridor he had a connection with the parklands through his personal business activities as a pastoralist. While his permanent residence was in Melbourne, the scarcity of feed arising from the dry summer of 1836-37 prompted Batman to move many of his sheep, considered to be the largest flock during this early settlement period of Melbourne, to the Merri Creek area where two outstations were erected at Craigieburn (south of Craigieburn East Road) near the parklands and Kinlochewe (north of Summerhill Road).

Other sites of cultural significance include the ruins of the Barber & Son Flour Mill (c1849), located near Merri Creek just north of Mahoneys Road, and the remains of a cobbled road and pipe crossing at the termination of Barry Road on the creek. Dry stone walls occur within the parklands boundary at Barry Road and within the Craigieburn Grasslands.

3.5 Visitor experience and recreation opportunities

Parks Victoria’s Visitor Market Segmentation has been designed to improve understanding of who park visitors are and what influences their satisfaction.

‘Urban Socials’ are the dominant segment visiting Parks Victoria’s urban parks. This group is represented by people attending parks for social gatherings. To cater for this group, priority for park management is to provide facilities to enable group socialising (tables, shelter, barbecues, toilets, etc) and play spaces for children.

The Whittlesea Public Gardens, managed by City of Whittlesea, is a significant existing district park within the parklands providing visitor facilities including picnic shelters and play facilities in a landscaped setting. The shared use trail overpass on the Hume Freeway connects the Gardens to Galada Tamboore, providing an opportunity for promoting the Gardens as a vital entry point and recreation node within the parklands.

Visitor facilities developed as part of the Galada Tamboore Master Plan include 2.5 km of shared use trail from Somerset Road to Whittlesea Gardens, a new footbridge over Merri Creek, ramps, handrails, signage and bench seats.

The Galada Tamboore Master Plan identifies a recreation area to be developed adjacent to Somerset Road, which will include a carpark, toilets, barbecues, picnic shelters and tables, and a play space. An informal trail will be developed around Galada Tamboore to add to the visitor experience and incorporate interpretation of significant natural, cultural and geological features. These facilities will be provided as funds become available.

To provide recreation opportunities to the growing residential areas to the north of the parklands, a future visitor area will be investigated at Craigieburn East Road adjacent to the Merri Creek. Improved vehicle access from Craigieburn East Road would be required and the site linked to the shared trail along the Hume Freeway into Craigieburn.

‘Trail Users’ are the next dominant segment in urban parks with this group visiting the park to walk or cycle on trails. It is important to provide a network of quality recreational and commuting trails and to link them to existing trails.

The existing Galada Tamboore trail runs along the eastern side of the Hume Freeway from the Metropolitan Ring Road at Thomastown to Malcolm Creek in Craigieburn. It serves as a commuter and recreation trail and connects to the east-west Metropolitan Ring Road trail, with nearby links to the Merri Creek Trail south of the Ring Road (Map 2).

A new trail links Whittlesea Public Gardens to Merri Creek and Campbellfield at Barry Road and Somerset Road within the parklands. It is proposed that this trail will continue south from Somerset Road to the existing Merri Creek trail under the Metropolitan Ring Road in the short term and north along the Merri Creek to Craigieburn over the long term, extending the Metropolitan Trail Network (LPS 2002, GCP 2011) (Map 2).

Active recreation facilities adjacent to the parklands include the Broadmeadows Motorcycle Park and Motocross track, the Somerton Go Kart raceway, and basketball and tennis facilities in Campbellfield. In addition, surrounding suburbs



School visit



Whittlesea Public Gardens

include sporting reserves and informal open space serving local and district catchments.

Dumping of rubbish and contaminated materials are a threat to park visitor safety and adversely affect amenity of the parklands. Contaminated sites need to be identified and rehabilitated or securely fenced from visitors. A holistic approach needs to be taken with participation from all agencies to ensure rubbish dumping is reduced.

3.6 Social values

The importance of the link between people and land is evident in Aboriginal culture. The Wurundjeri have strong links to the Merri Creek corridor. Indigenous participation in the management of the park is important and provides an opportunity for the Wurundjeri to interpret their relationship with 'Country' to the wider community.

Encouraging the participation of the wider community in the management of the park through a friends group and other similar volunteer opportunities can strengthen community engagement. The diverse nature of local communities brings challenges in engagement and involvement. It will be essential to work with existing organisations and community networks such as schools, community centres and faith groups. The Friends of Merri Creek and their associated groups are strong advocates for the protection and enhancement of the Merri Creek catchment. There are opportunities for involving members of the community from a culturally diverse background in the parklands, for example through Parks Victoria's Bilingual Guides program.

The Merri Creek Management Committee is an incorporated association formed to protect and enhance the natural and cultural values of the Merri Creek and its tributaries. It is funded jointly by the local governments located adjacent to the Merri Creek and reserves. The MCMC has a long history in advocacy and on-ground works for the protection and enhancement of the Merri Creek catchment. Much of the revegetation works carried out along the creek over the last 25 years has been undertaken by the MCMC, and the MCMC is a major advocate for the creek's protection through a range of planning processes. The Merri Creek and Environs Strategy 2009-2014 (MCMC 2009) aims to provide strategic direction for managers of waterway corridors of the Merri catchment.

There are opportunities for involvement of educational institutions in research and monitoring activities in the parklands which help to improve knowledge and understanding of the area's values and threats to those values. Involvement may include studies of flora and fauna, estuarine systems and water quality to monitor management decisions. This will increase the value of the park to the community, communicate the diversity of values in the park and provide information to assist in decision making.



3.7 Risks and safety

Parks Victoria undertakes risk mitigation works throughout the parks estate, ensuring buildings and facilities are maintained at the required standards. Elements of risk, however, will always be present in the outdoors and with recreation activities and visitors need to be aware of risks and be responsible for their own actions.

Parks Victoria is a support agency for bushfire, search and rescue and road incidents and a control agency for waterway pollution. Parks Victoria is responsible for response to emergency flood, and rehabilitation, clearing and restoration of roads and other assets in parks. Parks Victoria prepares Emergency Management Plans for all parks across the State. Emergency Management Plans are prepared in consultation with local government agencies.

4 Parklands development and management

The development and management of the parklands will require ongoing dialogue between land managers, the community and developers of adjacent sites. This plan sets out a vision and park management principles to guide the future management of the parklands.

4.1 Management of the parklands

Each land manager manages its land in accordance with its own charter and relevant legislation, strategies and guidelines. However, all agree to work in partnership to achieve a common vision for the outcomes in the plan.

The parklands consist of the following significant areas of land, managed by various land managers:

- Craigieburn Grassland Nature Conservation Reserve (Parks Victoria)
- Cooper Street Grassland Nature Conservation Reserve (Parks Victoria)
- Merri Creek Park (Barry Road Grasslands) (Parks Victoria)
- Galada Tamboore (Melbourne Water)
- Whittlesea Public Gardens (City of Whittlesea)
- Whittlesea Landfill Rehabilitation Site (City of Whittlesea)
- Bolinda Road land (City of Hume)
- Areas of creek frontage (City of Hume).

The management responsibilities for each agency are aligned with the primary roles of the respective agencies. Parks Victoria will manage land assigned to it, including Craigieburn Grassland (*Galgi ngarrk*) and Cooper Street Grassland (*Bababi marning*) Nature Conservation Reserves and land parcels within Galada Tamboore. These areas will be primarily managed for conservation with opportunities for passive recreation.

The Councils will retain management of local and district parks, and the riparian corridors and recreation trails along the creek within their respective local council areas. The State Government's Cycling Strategy (in preparation) will clarify roles and processes for ongoing development of Melbourne's cycling network.

Melbourne Water will continue to manage Galada Tamboore as a future retarding basin while protecting the conservation and cultural values of the site. Where trails are proposed (or constructed), licence agreements will be pursued between Melbourne Water and Parks Victoria or the relevant council. Melbourne Water is responsible for waterway health of Merri Creek and the management of the bed and banks. It will continue to work in partnership with land management agencies to fund and implement programs along the creek.



Agencies will continue to work with MCMC throughout the parklands. Opportunities exist to support Friends group, provide community education and interpretation events, revegetation and vegetation management activities and advocacy on issues impacting upon the parklands.

4.2 Adjoining development

It is important to maintain the open landscapes and vistas of the parklands through appropriate development on private land adjacent to the park. The majority of the private land along the corridor is zoned for industrial use. The interface to the parklands should be designed to enhance the recreation experience, vistas and personal and property safety. In particular fire management and emergency vehicle access should be facilitated. Boulevard style treatments are recommended along interfaces, where parkland extends to the street edge on one side and houses face the parkland on the other side.

The width of the open space from the creek to the edge of development should enable the safe passage of fauna species, enable fire protection measures to occur and permit the construction of a shared trail and management vehicle access.

The open space requirements from adjoining development include:

- Maintain the habitat corridor along Merri Creek
- Avoid impacts to cultural heritage sites
- Avoid the removal of native vegetation
- Minimise the need for large engineered structures
- Provide a ten metre wide zone (where appropriate) to allow for the construction of a three metre wide shared trail or management track and buffers on either side of trail as required by the relevant AustRoads standards
- Locate the trail alignment above the 1 in 10 year ARI flood level
- Ensure all trail gradients are compliant with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cwlth).

Determining the width of open space may need to be negotiated by local government and Department of Environment and Primary Industries in some

instances. This will depend on the style and type of development fronting the park and topography of the area that may restrict trail construction or management and emergency vehicle access.

Water quality of the Merri Creek should be protected and enhanced when land is developed. Any Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) treatments should be located outside of the park boundary, unless negotiated and agreed with public land managers through the planning phase. Water quality treatments should achieve objectives set by Melbourne Water and EPA requirements. Stormwater outlets into the Merri Creek should be designed to minimise erosion, dissipate energy and include revegetation works.

5 Strategic directions and key actions

This Strategic Management Plan identifies the protection, enhancement and interpretation of the parklands' natural, cultural and recreational values. These are achieved through management zoning, strategic directions and key actions.

The strategic directions will guide the development of detailed action plans by each partner organisation. Implementation of the plan will be dependent on available resources, partnerships with other agencies, and changes in visitor demand.

Parks Victoria will be the lead agency on projects which are located on Parks Victoria-managed land. Other agencies and organisations will be involved in the actions as required.

DEPI Department of Environment and Primary Industries

HCC Hume City Council

MCMC Merri Creek Management Committee

MW Melbourne Water

PV Parks Victoria

WCC Whittlesea City Council

5.1 Protecting the natural environment

5.1.1 Natural values

Objective: Natural values will be maintained and enhanced to conserve biodiversity.

Strategic directions

- Protect and enhance nationally significant grasslands within the Conservation Zone.
- Protect and enhance all indigenous species and ecological communities within the parklands.

Key actions

- Develop a sustainable burning regime in the grasslands based upon a three year rotation and implement through the Fire Operations Plan. (PV)
- Control *Nassella spp.* weeds after the implementation of ecological burning. (PV)



Chocolate lily

Craigieburn Grassland NCR

- Maintain the good condition of the reserve while allowing natural processes of regeneration, disturbance and succession to occur and actively initiating these processes where required. (PV)
- Limit biomass accumulation by conducting mosaic burns of areas of grassland where accumulation is occurring, every 3-5 years in autumn while the soil is cracked and the young Striped Legless Lizards *Delma impar* are mobile (DCE 1992). Avoid cool season burns when soil moisture is high and cracks in the soil are closed making it difficult for Striped Legless Lizard *Delma impar* to find refuge from fire. Ensure that Small Milkwort *Comesperma polygaloides* (and other threatened flora species) sites are not burnt prior to, or during, flowering, seed set and dispersal (from spring to summer in most years). (PV)
- Implement weed control programs to reduce woody pest plants to less than 1% of cover and stop herbaceous weeds from increasing in cover and reduce over time with strategic burning and other weed control. (PV)

Cooper Street Grassland NCR

- Maintain the moderate condition of the reserve while allowing natural processes of regeneration, disturbance and succession to occur and actively initiating these processes where required. (PV)
- Limit biomass accumulation by conducting mosaic burns of grassland every 3-5 years (not during seed set - from late spring to summer in most years). (PV)
- Undertake weed control with the aim to reduce woody pest plants to less than 1% of cover and stop herbaceous weeds from increasing in cover and reduce over time with strategic burning and other weed control. (PV)

Strategic directions

- Investigate opportunities for linking the reserves with other appropriate habitat to reduce the risk of fragmentation of habitat.
- Minimise impacts of adjacent land use by reducing access points to the reserve, preserving natural drainage where possible. Minimise other impacts including soil disturbance, dumping of pest plants, non-native animals and domestic animals in the reserve.
- Protect and manage important landscape and riparian values along the Merri Creek.

Key actions

- Monitor the condition of significant vegetation and implement protection and enhancement programs in conjunction with managers of adjacent areas and the community. (PV, MW, HCC, WCC)
- Monitor impacts of grazing on grasslands and implement control programs as necessary. Grazing impacts may be caused by rabbits, kangaroos or other animals such as stock. (PV)

- In conjunction with research partners, develop ongoing monitoring for key indicator flora and fauna species at Craigieburn and Cooper St NCRs. (PV)
- Collaborate with Melbourne Water in environmental improvement works along Merri Creek including integrated water management, pest plant and animal control, revegetation and management of illegal vehicle access. (PV, MW)
- Enhance and extend remnant vegetation communities and fauna habitat along Merri Creek, providing a habitat link throughout the region. (PV, MW, HCC, WCC)
- Adopt adaptive management strategies for species and ecosystems in response to the impacts of climate change. (PV)
- Update Crown Land (Reserves) Act regulations for reserves in the parklands. (DEPI)
- Conduct post burn monitoring to ensure objectives of burn have been achieved. (PV)
- Develop and implement arrangements for monitoring environmental condition and the impacts of climate change and if necessary make changes in management practices to improve the environmental quality of the park. (PV, MW, HCC, WCC)



Wattle at Galada Tamboore

5.1.2 Landscape and geological features

Objective: Manage the landscape to retain vistas and features.

Strategic directions

- Maintain the semi rural and expansive grassland ecosystem character of the area, enabling visitors to experience panoramic views.
- Provide a landscape buffer between urban infrastructure and the parklands with larger buffers adjacent to areas of high environmental value.



Stony rise

Key actions

- Work with local government to incorporate this management plan into the relevant planning schemes. (PV, HCC, WCC)
- Coordinate the connection and integration of public land management and use along the Merri Creek corridor. (PV, HCC, WCC, MW)
- Negotiate with councils, the implementation of a buffer requirement in local Planning Schemes to ensure the integrity of the parklands is maintained. Buffer should be in the form of a boulevard approach where development will abut park boundary. (PV)
- Provide land for future retarding basin functions. (MW)
- Protect the integrity of geological features and landscape values from erosion caused by human and animal impacts. (PV, HCC, WCC, MW)
- Monitor impacts on geological features, and implement necessary erosion control measures, rehabilitation and exclusion fencing where necessary. (PV, HCC, WCC, MW)



School visit

- Advocate / negotiate for adequate open space provision along the Merri Creek to allow for recreation and conservation uses. (PV, HCC, WCC, MW)
- Advocate / negotiate for integrated pest plant animal management with adjacent private land owners. (PV, HCC, WCC, MW)
- Advocate / negotiate for appropriate land use and urban design along boundary of parklands. (PV, HCC, WCC, MW)

5.2 Community connections

5.2.1 Cultural heritage and living connections

Objective: Cultural heritage values are protected and interpreted.

Strategic directions

- Investigate and record cultural heritage values of the parklands.
- Recognise and protect archaeologically sensitive areas in accordance with relative legislation.
- Protect post-settlement heritage values and interpret as appropriate.

Key actions

- Implement a process to rename areas of the parklands to the names proposed by the Wurundjeri Tribe Land & Compensation Cultural Heritage Council. Ensure the process includes a comprehensive public consultation to seek community input into the proposed names. (PV, DEPI)
- Obtain detailed maps and information on known cultural heritage places to assist with strategic planning and where required, engage Traditional Owners to undertake survey work and be involved in CHMP preparation. (PV, HCC, WCC, MW)
- Investigate the extent of post-settlement heritage sites and values in the parkland area. (PV)

5.2.2 Working with the Traditional Owners

Objective: Traditional Owners culture and knowledge are reflected in park management.

Strategic direction

- Develop strong collaborative partnerships with the Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council to facilitate reflecting the Traditional Owner's knowledge and aspirations in the parklands' management.

Key actions

- Provide opportunities for Traditional Owners and park staff to share knowledge and build strong working relationships. (PV)

- Work collaboratively with the Traditional Owners in interpreting Indigenous cultural heritage values. (PV)

5.2.3 Working with the community

Objective: The local community is actively involved.

Strategic directions

- Encourage, support and guide community involvement for the benefit of the parklands and communities.
- Continue to work with the MCMC and the Friends of Merri Creek in the planning, development and management of the parklands.
- Advocate / negotiate for linked habitat, management track and trail connectivity along Merri Creek.

Key actions

- Liaise with local residents to improve awareness and appreciation of park values, health benefits of using parks, and management actions including weed management, management of areas adjoining residences, rubbish dumping and dog walking. (PV)
- Liaise with user groups to improve awareness and appreciation of park values and management actions. (PV)
- Provide information about locations of different visitor activities and amenities, to encourage exploration, enjoyment and appreciation of the parklands. (PV)



5.3 People in the park

5.3.1 Visitor experience and facilities

Objective: Sustainable nature-based recreation opportunities are provided.

Strategic directions

- Provide for sustainable nature-based recreation within a natural landscape setting.
- Identify and develop Galada Tamboore as the primary visitor node within the parklands.

Key actions

- Continue to implement the master plan for Galada Tamboore as funding becomes available, with the following priorities: (PV)
- Stage 2 works (medium-term):
- Seal the trail link between the new pedestrian/cycle bridge and the pedestrian/cycle bridge over the Hume Freeway to complete the connection between Campbellfield and Thomastown.



Community planting day

- Complete the shared trail link between Stage 1 works (Horne St) and the existing Merri Creek Trail (Western Ring Road), to complete the link to the city.
- Complete a shared trail connection from Somerset Road to Horne St.
- Construct the primary visitor node at Galada Tamboore including sealed access road and carpark, utilities, shelters, toilets, barbecues, picnic facilities and landscape works.
- Construct a new 'space for active play' (nature-based playspace) in proximity to the primary visitor node.
- Construct secondary gravel trails through the eastern bank conservation zone and new lower bridge crossing providing 6km loop circuit within the park.
- Stage 3 works (long-term):
 - Implement a broad scale revegetation and regeneration program in collaboration with MCMC and Melbourne Water to protect and enhance biodiversity and habitat for EPBC listed species, in 10+ years. (PV, MW, MCMC)
 - Promote the Whittlesea Public Gardens as a significant destination node and entry point for the broader parklands. (WCC, PV)
 - Investigate the development of a smaller recreation node immediately south of Craigieburn Road East on the east side of the creek.



Bridge over Merri Creek

5.3.2 Information, interpretation and education

Objective: Accurate information is provided to assist visitors to enjoy the parklands and learn about the parklands' values.

Key actions

- Provide information and education for the local community and visitors on the parklands' values and facilities. Provide web-based information, and on-site interpretation as necessary. (PV, HCC, WCC)
- Develop an integrated approach to trail signage and management with other agencies. (PV, HCC, WCC)

5.3.3 Trail access and use

Objective: Suitable public access to ensure protection of environmental and cultural values is provided.

Key actions

- Ensure the parklands are integrated into the future communities surrounding it through trail linkages and appropriate urban form. (PV, HCC, WCC)
- Advocate / negotiate for the provision of open space frontage to Merri Creek throughout the parklands. (PV, HCC, WCC)
- Undertake a trail feasibility study to determine appropriate trail location to assist with land use planning. (PV, HCC, WCC)

- Progressively implement a recreation focused shared-use trail system along Merri Creek with connections to neighbouring communities and trail networks. (PV, HCC, WCC)

5.3.4 Risks and safety

Objective: Safety incidents and impacts on visitors and staff are minimised.

Key actions

- Maintain facilities in a condition that allows for safe use.
- Increase visitor awareness of potential risks associated with key sites and activities.
- Maintain relevant Emergency Management Plans.

5.4 Management partnerships

Objective: Maintain strong partnerships with other land managers, agencies and authorities that enhance the parklands and promote surrounding features.

- Plan and develop the parklands in partnership with Melbourne Water, City of Whittlesea, Parks Victoria and Hume City Council.

Key actions

- Create a parklands coordination group consisting of Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, City of Hume, City of Whittlesea, and VicRoads to coordinate ongoing management. (PV, MW, HCC, WCC,)
- Develop cooperative arrangements between Parks Victoria and Hume City Council for further implementation of the Galada Tamboore Master Plan specifically developments on Hume City Council reserves. (PV, HCC)
- Develop an agreement between Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water to ensure that management and maintenance of the shared trail and visitor infrastructure at Galada Tamboore is compatible with park values and visitor experience objectives. (PV, MW)
- Continue management by Parks Victoria of the high conservation value sites such as Craigieburn, Cooper Street and the Merri Creek Park (Barry Road) Grasslands. (PV)
- Retain management by Councils of local and district parks, and the riparian corridors and recreation trails along the creek within their respective local council areas (HCC, WCC).
- Seek funding for implementation of the Merri Creek Trail, coordinating planning and bids with other land managers. (PV)
- Continue management of Galada Tamboore by Melbourne Water as a future retarding basin. Where trails and visitor facilities are proposed, management agreements will be formalised between Melbourne Water and Parks Victoria or the relevant council. (MW, PV)



Billy buttons

- Investigate links with educational and research institutions and community groups to assist in environmental monitoring and research within the park. (PV)

Implementation

This management plan provides the framework for the management of the parklands over the next 10 to 15 years. The implementation of the actions in this plan will depend on funding, visitor demand, and agreement with other agencies.

Priorities and staging

The park-wide and site specific actions included in this plan for areas managed by Parks Victoria will guide and be progressively incorporated into Parks Victoria's annual works program.

The implementation of the plan will be consistent with Parks Victoria's commitment to sustainable practices, which involves the delivery of operations, services, and facilities in an ecologically and socially responsible manner with minimal use of expendable resources and minimal generation of waste.

In implementing the plan, management will respond to monitoring and research information as it emerges. Over time, the success of actions will be reviewed against set objectives to ensure ongoing learning and refinement of management ('adaptive management'). The selection of actions and treatments of threats will be guided by the precautionary principle. Management options are evaluated based on least negative impact on the environment.

Parks Victoria will use a variety of means to report to the community about the progress and implementation of the plan. Future *State of the Parks* reports, which will be available on Parks Victoria's website, will include information on management performance in relation to the park.

The results of monitoring and research work will continue to be available to the community as technical reports, also available on Parks Victoria's website.

Management resources

The resourcing and implementation of actions in this plan require collaboration with other management agencies, adjoining landowners, and community and user groups.

A range of funding sources may be available to achieve the actions in this plan in addition to Parks Victoria's recurrent funding for park management.

Plan amendment

During the 10 to 15 year life of the plan, amendments may only be made by following an authorised process which includes community consultation as appropriate.

Circumstances that might lead to amendment of the plan include:

- The results of monitoring or research, management experience or new information (such as greater understanding of new threatening processes) which indicate the need for a change in management direction.
- Significant changes in visitation or use.
- New legislation or regulations, or changes in Parks Victoria policies.

Evaluation and review

An annual review will be undertaken in the park to assess and document progress on the implementation of actions in the plan.

Emerging issues will also be documented and considered if and when the plan is amended or revised.



Bugong Moths are a culturally significant species for Traditional Owners.

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