

1a. Do the four, 10-Year Performance Objectives adequately reflect the 50 Year Community Vision?

Somewhat

1b. Please outline your reasoning for this opinion (optional)

The key discussions in this report are around ecology, heritage, parklands/recreation, and land use/development.

The first three Performance Objectives line up with these discussions. The fourth Performance Objective, 'Protecting the natural beauty of the Yarra River corridor', doesn't seem the logical outcome of discussion about climate change, the population boom and development. The impact of development is more than visual. This performance objective reduces criteria related to land use and urban development to visual outcomes only. Biodiversity values, landscape function and connectivity are also important and should be included.

2a. Are the actions identified to deliver the 10-Year Performance Objectives achievable, realistic and measurable?

Somewhat

2b. Please outline your reasoning for this opinion (optional)

Specific measures/approaches and/or more precise language are needed in actions relating to Performance Objectives 3 and 4. This is explained below.

Performance Objective 3: Quality parklands for a growing population:

Action 5(p. 60): Extend the parkland network to cater for a growing community.

This extension is not defined in the plan by site, location or quantity, and thus is not measurable.

Action 6. (p.60): Ensure park infrastructure and services are contemporary, inclusive and provide multiple benefits.

Essentially, the river parklands are to be multifunctional landscapes. Green infrastructure should be the default approach for service provision within the parklands. This should be explicit in the plan.

Performance Objective 4: Protecting the natural beauty of the Yarra River corridor

Action 1 (p. 60): Enhance the river's landscapes and views by improving public access, viewing locations and user experiences (as indicated within the significant places in the land use framework)

In fact, this wording should be changed to 'Enhance the experience of the river's landscapes by improving public access and viewing locations'. It is the experience of the landscapes that is to be enhanced in this way. Improving public access or viewing locations is unlikely to enhance the landscapes themselves. These actions will enhance the *experience* of those landscapes, though. It is equally important (perhaps more important) that the physical landscapes, however, are protected, not just the experience of the landscapes. Development within the Yarra corridor should be controlled to protect biodiversity and aesthetic values of the landscape.

Action 2 (p. 60): Monitor changes in land use in order to prioritise the integration of new open space, access to the river and habitat corridors.

How will this be enforced? How will it be made achievable and meaningful?

3a. Which specific actions do you think will be easiest or most challenging to deliver?

Action 5, Performance Objective 3, and Action 2, Performance Objective 4 will be most challenging to deliver. These capture the tension between the use of public and private land as the need for public open space grows significantly into the future.

We note that all actions are subject to funding. Thus, availability of funding might be a challenge to the delivery of any action. Is there a requirement to ensure a minimum amount of money is spent each year in implementing the plan? If not, this would seem desirable to ensure timely achievement of the performance objectives

Also, targets are to be established for each of the performance objectives. The plan gives no detail (p. 61) but does state areas to be covered. Most targets are simply numeric, such as proportions and numbers. Quantitative measures are important but so too qualitative measures, particularly in regard to parkland quality and protecting natural beauty of the Yarra River corridor. There are no targets for connectivity of the river corridor, which we regard as most important for all performance objectives. Targets for connectivity would differ, depending on user, e.g. length of continuous walking/cycling paths (human users), length of continuous riparian vegetation (non-human users/biodiversity).

3b. Why do you think this?

Population growth also drives development and increases the value of land and housing, especially adjacent to the Yarra.

4. What do you/ your organisation think is the greatest opportunity the Yarra Strategic Plan presents? Please rank the following statements in order of importance from 1 -4

Improving water quality of the Yarra River and protecting land, floodplains and billabongs

1.

Acknowledging, protecting and commemorating the rich heritage of the Birrarung

1.

Improving the river's parklands to support community wellbeing

1.

Protecting the significance of the Yarra River's landscapes and views

1.

5. Do you feel the draft Yarra Strategic Plan has put appropriate actions in place to ensure delivery on the aspirations of Traditional Owners?

Unsure

The plan states that representatives of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation are members of the Yarra Collaboration Committee, which developed the plan. It is unclear from the section 'Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung People and Custodianship of the Birrarung' (p. 43) whether the draft delivers the Traditional Owners' aspirations. We note that three elders of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung are on the Birrarung Council but the role of the Traditional Owners in the river's future governance is not clear. The decision-making framework is still being developed but must include Traditional Owners. We are pleased that a 3-year rolling implementation plan is to be drafted by the lead agency appointed by the Minister for Water in collaboration with the Yarra Collaboration Committee, and that the Birrarung Council must prepare an annual report for the Minister for Water on implementation of the Yarra Strategic Plan. This involvement by representatives of Traditional Owners gives us some assurance that their aspirations will be met.

6a. Are there key priority areas of land you think should be added to the parkland network along the Yarra River?

Yes

6b. If you answered Yes, where are these key priority areas of land and why do you think they should be added?

Yarra Valley Country Club site, area impacted by North East Link Tunnel, Bulleen Drive-in site, Bulleen Driving Range site

Part 2: Land Use framework

7. The Land Use framework aims to put the Yarra River at the heart of future planning and development decisions. What is your / your organisation's view about the Land Use framework?

AILA believes that the Yarra River is iconic and central to Melbourne's identity. As such, it must be at the heart of all future planning and development decisions. All Land Use frameworks should have the integrity and health of the Yarra River as both starting point and outcome.

8a. Do you believe the Land Use directions will support the 50 Year Community Vision?

Somewhat

8b. Why do you think this?

Recommended investments in public space, ecology and cultural projects are good for ten-year performance objectives.

Measurable limits/controls relating to proposed development are needed. For example, the plan could state that there should be continuous parkland along the river bank, that there should be no development within the footprint of the river corridor, that limits apply to all development within 500m and/or 200m of parkland edge, etc.

Language should be strengthened to be prescriptive. For example, the plan requires that "changes to a planning scheme (amendments) or a proposed development (permit) must consider the Yarra Strategic Plan and be consistent with its strategic objectives" (p. 64). We would prefer stronger wording. Another example is "should avoid encroachment"; 'must observe limits' is preferable.

9a. Do you agree with the Land Use directions for the Yarra River?

Somewhat

9b. Please outline your reasoning for this opinion (optional)

AILA supports the five whole-of-river directions for the Yarra (p. 65). However, we suggest that the fourth direction should broaden its focus to protect from disturbance the entire riparian zone of the Yarra. Management should aim to increase riparian and biodiversity value in those areas not currently of high value. The entire river is iconic and should be a single high-priority site. The Yarra Strategic Plan should reflect this.

Connectivity is critical in management of the Yarra. The riparian zone between the proposed 13 sites of significance provide context for those sites, and for others not regarded as significant. Viewlines might reveal sections of the river not assessed as significant in this plan but that impact negatively on views. Lengths of the river between significant sites should be considered in the plan, and managed to optimise biodiversity and aesthetic value.

10a. Do you believe that the 13 significant places identified for the river corridor reflect the most regionally significant locations?

Somewhat

10b. Why do you think this?

The document's strength and the key shift in its perspective from previous documents relating to management of the Yarra River and its environs is its focus on an holistic and integrated understanding of the river. While some sites are significant, understanding them as integrated within their contexts (and how the sites can be supported through key connections both within the corridor and beyond) is an alternative, and preferable, way to approach them. Breaking the river down into precincts that include some of the significant sites and form their key contexts is an alternative option for organising the corridor and focusing protection and investment. For example, Bolin Bolin Billabong is currently isolated and under development pressure in its immediate context. The area beyond the site needs to be considered to respond appropriately to this site's significance.

11. Do you agree with the opportunities identified for the significant places that you connect with?

Somewhat

In the absence of an option to comment, we note the following opportunities:

- Bulleen Precinct – strategic land acquisition as golf and drive-in phase out, improved urban design connections to Heide
- Yarra Bend Park – Safer cycling conditions given that this is the most popular urban cycling location in Melbourne's inner city/north/east, currently significant hostility towards cyclists

12. Do you have any further ideas about how the Plan may provide for the cultural/spiritual/environmental care and protection of the Yarra River over the next ten years, whilst also working toward achieving the 50 Year Community Vision?

Not at the moment

13. Finally, what are your overarching thoughts and feelings about the Yarra Strategic Plan?

The Yarra Strategic Plan represents an important paradigm shift towards an ecological understanding of the river and its status as Country, sovereignty of its Traditional Owners. This is to be commended. However, this must be backed up in concrete, measurable ways to make sure the reality lives up to the vision. What is the role of the Traditional Owners in the governance structure? How will development be controlled to prioritise long-term public good? How is the abstract vision translated into a concrete reality? For example, this could be achieved by stating the aim is a continuous urban parkland that links currently fragmented sites, including through strategic land acquisition, with initial priority given to specific named areas along the river's course.