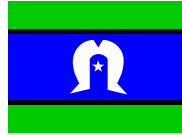


Yarra Ranges Council  
**Nature Plan**  
**2024–2034**  
Protecting Our Biodiversity Assets





## Acknowledgment of Country

Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands.

We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region. We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.

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# Indigenous Partnerships for Nature

As the story of Waa the crow frames our commitment to Reconciliation through local culture and Lore, it also reminds us of our responsibility and accountability to Country and to all who reside on this land. Connection to Country speaks of an immersion in the whole, a fully connected landscape, a universe with an awareness of self, together with every element in the natural world. A connection Indigenous peoples have experienced for tens of thousands of generations.

For at least 35,000 years, the Wurundjeri have inhabited, cared for, danced on, and sung to the lands that lie within the inner city of Melbourne, north to the Great Dividing Ranges, east to Mt Baw Baw, and south to Lysterfield and Belgrave South. Extending to a small area of Bunurong Country in the south, and including Taungurung Country in the north-east, Yarra Ranges is nestled within an area within which the Creator spirit Bunjil (the Wedge Tailed Eagle) watches over and guides us as a community. A community on the Ancestral lands of the Wurundjeri of which their ways of Knowing, Being, and Doing were and always have been unmatched as a model for environmental sustainability and meticulous care.

However, Country is sick and its biodiversity is under threat like no time in the past. Restoring its health is urgently needed for both the land itself and the health and wellbeing of those who reside here. Land management practices through colonisation have drastically altered the natural ecosystems to a point exceeding their capacity to respond to the pressure they are placed under.

Restoration of the systems that we rely on to survive can only be achieved through applying the cultural values of Respect, Caring, and Sharing to provide people, land, and culture connection that shows us with a pathway to transform the way we function.

This Nature Plan reframes our connection to nature, to Country, and provides a platform where we are all custodians with an accountability to respectfully integrate Indigenous ways of Knowing, Being and Doing so that we may all walk in harmony on this land, at one with all that exists.

## Yarra Ranges Council Indigenous Development Team



# Vision

“Yarra Ranges is a place of healthy, resilient and connected natural living landscapes. Our community actively care for and feel a deep connection to nature.”



# Mayors Message



The natural environment of Yarra Ranges is unique, highly valued by our community and pivotal to the character of the region. In all corners, there are passionate and dedicated groups, working tirelessly to care for, preserve and enhance our natural environment. Our community has a strong connection and commitment to place, with a long legacy of care and protection through Traditional Custodians, the Wurundjeri People and other Kulin Nations, continuing through to this day.

Now, more than ever, we know that protecting our environment — the people, flora and fauna that call it home — is crucial for our society. This plan is Council's commitment to protecting biodiversity, outlining the programs, targets and actions to achieve this outcome. It shows what we'll do as Council, how we'll work with our community to create a healthy, resilient and connected natural landscape and how we will advocate and partner with agencies and other levels of Government.

While we have direct responsibility for a small portion of our landscape, our role in sharing knowledge with others and supporting our community to do their part for biodiversity is equally important. In many ways, our community are leading the way on this – our environmental volunteers and community champions are exemplars of environmental stewardship and will be an integral part of this work.

We look forward to partnering with our community to make our natural environment the best it can be for now and for generations to come.

Cr Sophie Todorov,  
Mayor of Yarra Ranges

# Glossary of Terms

<b>Adaptive management</b>	Involves implementing a management strategy, closely monitoring its effects and then adapting future actions based on the observed results.
<b>Advocacy</b>	Activities and actions by an individual or group (i.e. council) that aims to influence decisions within political, economic, and social institutions.
<b>Biodiversity</b>	This is the variety of all life forms; the different plants, animals and microorganisms, the genes they contain and the ecosystems of which they form a part.
<b>Biolinks</b>	Biolinks, also known as 'wildlife corridors' aim to links separate habitat patches to support biodiversity. This is achieved by enhancing or restoring the biodiversity within habitat zones identified across the landscape (in this case Yarra Ranges Council municipality) to provide space for species (and ecological communities) to self adapt their distributions and abundances under changing climates through natural processes including: dispersal; re-colonisation; regeneration and restoration of ecological function.
<b>Bushland reserve</b>	Council-owned reserves which contain native or indigenous flora and fauna. Vegetation is usually remnant and has never been cleared, although some bushland reserves have arisen from revegetation using indigenous species. Bushland reserves form part of the broader natural resource area system of environmental assets that Council manages.
<b>Citizen science</b>	The collection and analysis of data relating to the natural world by members of the general public.
<b>Conservation status</b>	Refers to the value ascribed to Bushland sites that are monitored by Council. These are ranked by their attributes (i.e. presence of threatened species or communities), prevalence of invasive species and other metrics on a consistent scale.
<b>DEECA</b>	The Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action is the Victorian Government department responsible for environmental matters and legislation at the state level.
<b>Ecological communities</b>	A group or association of populations of two or more different species occupying the same geographical area at the same time, often reliant upon each other for survival in complex and interconnected relationships.
<b>Ecosystem</b>	All the organisms (including plants and animals) present in a particular area together with the physical environment with which they interact.
<b>Ecosystem collapse</b>	Refers to a situation where an ecosystem suffers a drastic, possibly permanent, reduction in carrying capacity for all organisms., This can result in mass extinction events and/or initiate novel ecosystems.

<b>Fragmentation</b>	When parts of a habitat are destroyed, leaving behind smaller unconnected areas.
<b>Habitat corridor</b>	Pathways of natural or created habitat within larger areas that have been developed by humans, either farmed or urban development. Habitat corridors attract wildlife and act as safe passages for wildlife between neighbouring natural areas. Corridors often occur along creek riparian zones that run through urban areas and across farmland however can also encompass road reserves, railway lines and other linear easements.
<b>Indigenous flora/fauna</b>	Plants (including trees, shrubs, herbs, and grasses) or animals (including mammals, birds and insects) that occur naturally in the local area, a local native plant/animal.
<b>Invasive species</b>	An introduced, non-local or over-abundant species in a given area that is causing damage to the natural environment and/or driving negative change to that ecosystem.
<b>Landcare</b>	Landcare Australia is the name for a community not-for-profit organisation which involves local groups of volunteers repairing the natural environment. Yarra Ranges Council has a number of registered Landcare networks and affiliated groups.
<b>Longitudinal monitoring</b>	Systematic collection of data from sites, gathered over regular time intervals in order to document change and long-term trends over time.
<b>MW</b>	Melbourne Water is the agency responsible for integrated water management, waterways and catchment management for the Melbourne region.
<b>Native vegetation</b>	Plants (including trees, shrubs, herbs, and grasses) that are indigenous to a particular site.
<b>Nature</b>	All components of the natural world that are not made by humans.
<b>Resilience</b>	The capacity of an ecosystem to respond to disturbance or impact by resisting damage and recovering quickly.
<b>Restoration</b>	The return of a community to its pre-disturbance or natural state in terms of abiotic (non-living) conditions, community structure and species composition.
<b>Revegetation</b>	Replanting indigenous vegetation in either restoration or rehabilitation programs (infill planting or greenfields).
<b>Ribbons of Green</b>	Council biodiversity incentive program where landowners can undertake Council supported revegetation projects on private land.
<b>Statutory Planning</b>	The assessment of planning permit applications for new development proposals and changes to land use activities under the Planning and Environment Act 1987.
<b>Stewardship</b>	Stewardship is an ethical value that embodies the responsible planning and management of resources as they relate to the natural environment.
<b>Strategic planning</b>	The process by which an organisation, such as a local government, determines its vision for the future and how it will deliver that for the community.





# Executive Summary

Nature is under threat, with declines in species diversity and abundance acknowledged at global, national and local levels. The urgency to act swiftly is vital, with predictions that intervention in the current decade is critical for the future of our natural world.

The Yarra Ranges natural environment supports a diverse suite of ecosystems, species and critical habitat for threatened species. The four themes of this plan, identified using evidence-based research and science, are outlined below:

1. Landscapes and Ecosystems: Understanding local biodiversity enhances resilience and connectivity, enabling ecosystems to flourish.
2. Land Use and Changing Climate: Best practice land management through integrated planning and stewardship.
3. Pest Plants and Animals: Managing pest plants and animals to reduce their impacts.
4. People and Nature: empowering community to connect with culture and nature.

These themes underpin our targets and objectives, and the actions we will take to meet them.

Much of our action plan focuses on mitigating threats - including habitat loss, pest animals and weed invasion, development pressure, stormwater impacts, bushfire and extreme weather events, many of which will increase in a changing climate.

Key steps towards this will include:

- A Biolinks Plan, the roadmap for re-connecting habitat through our landscape.
- Expanding our biodiversity extension programs and providing our community access to education, advice, support and incentives to get involved.
- Monitoring programs to ensure our environmental decisions are evidence based and adaptive.
- Embedding indigenous cultural practices into how we manage our natural environment.

Critical to the success of this plan is collaboration, as our community, agency partners and other land managers share responsibility for protection and enhancement of our natural environment.

Council is committed to regularly reviewing progress against our targets and reporting to our community.

All of this will progress us towards our vision of a healthy, resilient and connected natural living landscape.

# Defining Nature & Biodiversity

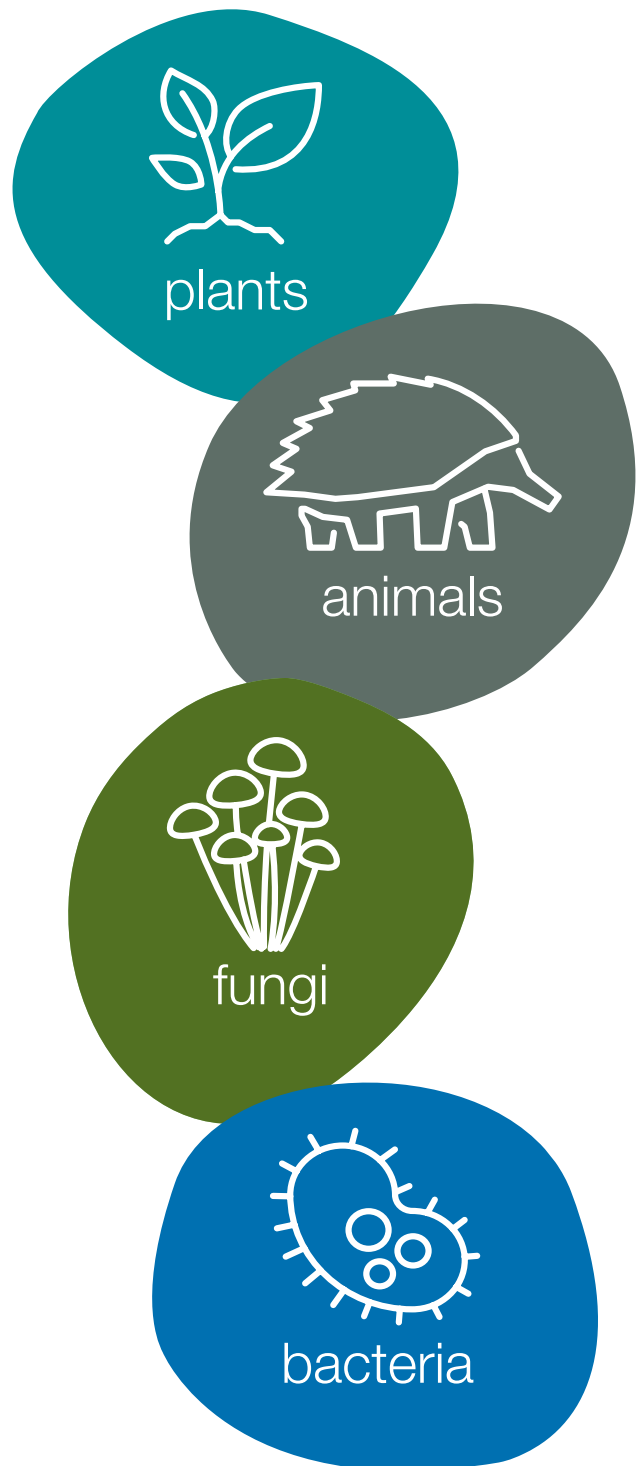
Nature defines our natural world of plants, animals, fungi, and bacteria along with the ecosystems they are part of, and the ecological processes they sustain.

The natural world is intrinsically valuable along with providing ecosystem services by regulating air quality, moderating the climate, cycling water, generating soils, recycling nutrients, controlling population densities of pests and diseases and supporting pollination, critical for our food systems.

Biodiversity ‘bio’ meaning life and ‘diversity’ meaning variability.

The variety of all living things, their genetic information and the ecosystems they form.

Biodiversity describes the genetic diversity within the organisms, populations and species and the diversity within and between the ecosystems that provide habitat for all life forms. Biodiversity has many attributes, which can be measured and conserving this in our ecosystems is essential to provide the resilience and adaption to the environmental crisis of climate change.



# What is Council's Role?

Council has a broad role to play in the management of the natural environment, along with supporting community to increase their environmental stewardship, it works to build resilience against a changing climate.

Significant investment currently occurs in natural resource management through weed control programs, incentive programs for private land, undertaking statutory functions as required by the planning scheme and education of, and partnership with, community volunteers focussed on environmental protection.

## CONTROL

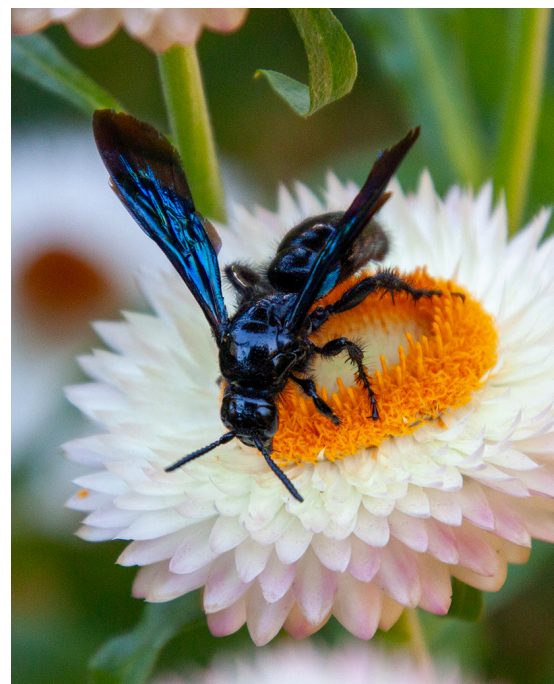
- 2% of municipality, bushland reserves and roadsides
- Council-managed works
- Communicating with community
- Data collection and maintenance
- Local Planning Scheme

## INFLUENCE

- Private land conservation, protection and enhancement
- Community education programs
- Cross tenure programs, projects and collaborations
- Citizen science

## ADVOCATE

- Advisory committee and working group representation
- Attract funding to our region
- Submissions and advocacy to State/Federal Government



# Legislative Context

## Federal



Environment Protection and Biodiversity  
Conservation Act 1999

Climate Change Act 2017

## State



Victorian Wildlife Act 1975

Environment and Protection Act 2017

Planning and Environment Act 1987

Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994

Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 and  
Fauna Guarantee Amendment Act 2019

## Local



State Environment Protection Policies  
(Waters of Victoria)

Yarra Ranges Council Plan  
2021–2025

Local Government Act 2020

Yarra Ranges Council Environment  
Strategy 2015–2025

Victorian Planning Provisions  
(Local Planning Policy Framework)

Yarra Ranges Council Nature Plan  
Protecting our Biodiversity Assets

# Strategic Links

Given the land over which Council has direct control, our role as advocate, educator, collaborator, and influencer in biodiversity conservation is critical for the delivery of this plan.

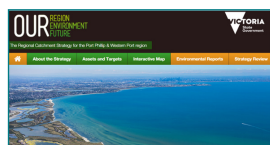
Through strong partnerships with government and agencies, this plan will link to other environment and biodiversity strategies, strengthening the delivery of mutual objectives.



Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019-30



Protecting Victoria's Environment: Biodiversity 2037



PPWCMA Regional Catchment Strategy 2021-27



Yarra Strategic Plan (Burndap Birrarung Burndap umarkoo) 2022-32



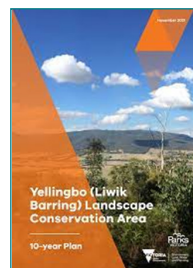
Victorian Deer Control Strategy 2020



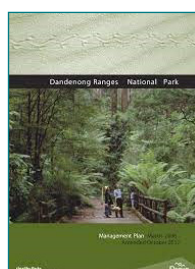
Eastern Region Pest Animal Network Pest Animal Strategy



Healthy Waterways Strategy 2018-28



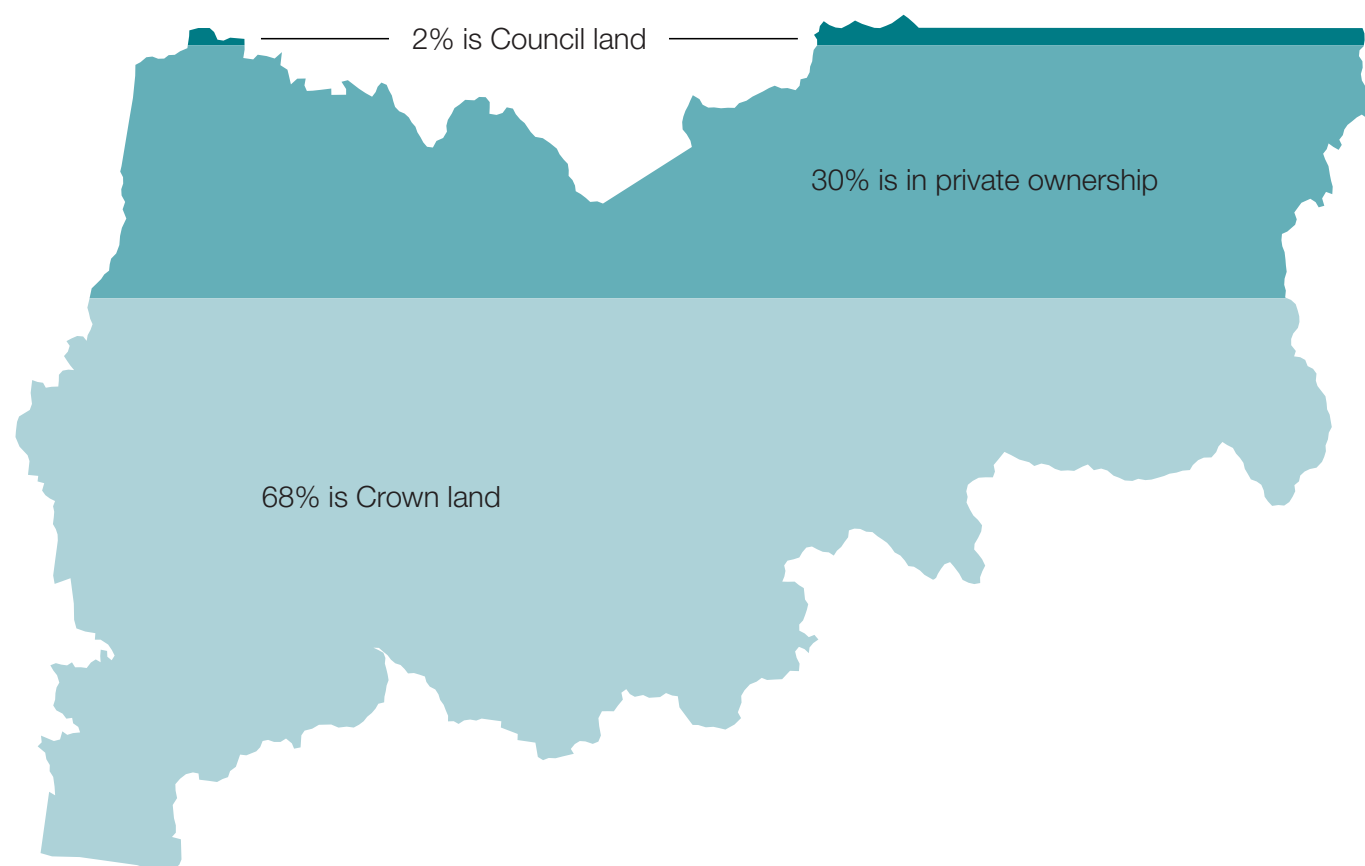
Yellingbo (Liwik Barring) Landscape Conservation Area Plan



Parks Victoria Land Management Plans

# What Makes Yarra Ranges Special?

Yarra Ranges is the largest municipality in Greater Melbourne by area, covering a total area of 244,700 ha. As managers of only two percent of the municipal area, Council has a significant role in advocacy and partnerships in biodiversity conservation.





63%  
parkland



5%  
residential  
land



31%  
primary  
production

**Primary production** encompasses agriculture, horticulture and viticulture with tourism being a crucially important industry to the area.

Programmed sites of bushland management:



550ha  
of reserves



403km  
of roadsides

Yarra Ranges is part of the lands under the custodianship of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation and supports some of the most significant environmental areas in Victoria. These include the iconic Mountain Ash forests of the Dandenong Ranges and Central Victorian Highlands.

Native vegetation is home to iconic species such as the Powerful Owl, the Helmeted Honeyeater and Leadbeater's Possum. Our municipality supports 188,000 hectares of native vegetation and is home to at least 1790 native flora and 968 native fauna species.

The upper half of the Yarra River and its tributaries support a diverse range of plants and animals including significant populations of platypus, frogs and fish. These waterways and key water reservoirs such as O'Shannassy, Upper Yarra, Maroondah and Silvan, provide about 70% of Melbourne's drinking water.

The natural environment, including scenic rural valleys and forested mountains are features which draw many people to live, work and play in the Yarra Ranges.

As managers of only 2% of the municipal area, Council has a large role in advocacy and partnerships in biodiversity conservation.







# Key Achievements to Date

## Birds 2 Butterfields

Biodiversity improvement program investing \$450,000 into deer and weed control over 600ha and 4 years in partnership with community and agency

## Ribbons of Green

Private property incentive program which has provided 786,572 plants and land management advice to 752 rural properties over 12 years

## Biodiversity Conservation Programs



enhance



empower



educate

## Environment

### Volunteer Support

90 registered groups, 3 Landcare networks, 100+ environmental education events in 3 years, \$2.5Million in economic contribution by volunteers to environmental protection activities

## Collaboration

Multi-agency working groups including Yarra 4 Life, Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Team & Working Group, Eastern Region Pest Animal Network, Deer Advisory Committee

## Conservation properties

Over a decade of supporting landowners with rate rebates for properties with conservation covenants

## Peri-urban Weed Management Partnership Initiative

Agency and community collaboration over 4 years, investing ~\$800,000 in pest plant management across the Dandenong Ranges

# How is Our Nature Faring?

Australia's natural environment and iconic places are in an overall state of decline and are under increasing threat. The environment is not sufficiently resilient to withstand current, emerging or future threats, including climate change (Independent Review of the EPBC Act; Samuel 2020).

Between one quarter and one third of Victoria's plants, birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals, along with numerous invertebrates and ecological communities, are considered threatened with extinction.

Victoria is the most intensively settled and cleared state in Australia. This has enabled Victoria to become a powerhouse of agricultural production, with huge benefits to the state economy. However, this has also conversely created a legacy of loss of localised ecosystems, along with fragmentation and degradation of remaining habitat patches. The introduction of exotic plants and animals has also had significant consequences for Victoria's native animal and plant species (Victorian Government Biodiversity Strategy, DELWP 2017).

Yarra Ranges has seen the devastating impacts of extreme weather events on biodiversity, from the Black Saturday Bushfires to the June 2021 storm. With the changing climate, these types of events are predicted to increase in frequency and intensity. These combined pressures on ecosystems highlight the need for swift action by government, agencies and community.



# Why Do We Need This Plan?

Human activities are broadly creating threats to our natural environment. Impacts from climate change to land clearing and development, humans as a species apply direct and indirect pressure on nature, often to the detriment of our natural environment.



## Climate change & extreme events

Current predictions on climate change point to increasing intensity and frequency of wildfire, wind storm, flooding and extreme temperature events. These increased temperatures, frequency of severe weather events and altered rainfall patterns can lead to localised species extinction and ecosystem collapse.



## Habitat loss & fragmentation

Housing development, agricultural activities and the construction of roads are altering landscapes and causing habitat fragmentation with populations corralled into disconnected pockets of habitat.

This change in landscape connectivity limits the ability for the less mobile species to disperse, preventing gene flow between adjoining populations which can lead to inbreeding and population collapse.



## Invasive species, disease & pathogens

A major threat to primary production, biodiversity, they can displace native species, contribute to land degradation and reduce food and habitat for wildlife. However, some non-indigenous weed species have very little environmental consequence.

The impact from pest animals varies with deer the highest prominence in recent years. Pathogens can cause disease and dieback of susceptible plants, impacting agricultural and biodiversity outcomes alike.

# What Will This Plan Deliver?

The Nature Plan will define the programs and projects of the highest priority for the next 10 years. It will set targets for Council and allow for prioritisation of conservation action on Council-managed land. The Plan will improve our support for private landowners to increase environmental stewardship, identify areas to seek external funding, highlight key advocacy priorities for our municipality and ensure rigorous monitoring and adaptive management are embedded into our programs.

The Nature Plan's targets, objectives and actions will result in a more connected landscape, featuring higher quality and more resilient ecosystems and habitat for native plants and animals. Council will support our community to care for nature in their own backyard and beyond, provide opportunities to engage with the natural environment and foster a deeper connection to the indigenous cultural heritage of Yarra Ranges.

Implementation of the actions within the Plan will be delivered through a combination of existing resources, grant funding and other funding subject to future Council business case submissions and advocacy efforts.







# Guiding Principles

Our natural environment is **deeply valued** and we foster a shared deep **connection** to nature.

We **collaborate** across tenures and **integrate** traditional owner knowledge and cultural practices.

We **protect** and enhance biodiversity assets through **evidence-based** decision making and monitoring, evaluating and reporting on our progress.

# Themes

The four themes relate to key areas where Council has the greatest impact and influence on biodiversity conservation. Our aim is to preserve unique and indigenous ecosystems, remnant vegetation, and threatened species and communities. By protecting our natural environment and promoting a range of self-sustaining ecosystems, we enhance the quality and long-term sustainability of Yarra Ranges' environment. The role of community cannot be understated, engaging with and actively caring for nature is critical to the successful delivery of biodiversity conservation in Yarra Ranges.

## Landscapes & Ecosystems



Habitats and the biodiversity within are holistically understood to enhance the resilience of native flora and fauna populations, enabling our ecosystems from land and water to flourish.

Rare and threatened species and ecosystems are protected and restored across the landscape, ensuring thriving species in connected habitats.

## Land Use & Changing Climate



Statutory and strategic planning processes enable best practice land management through integrated planning.

Partner with our community to build ecosystem resilience for a climate-change ready future.

## Pest Plants & Animals



Management of pest plants and animals minimises impacts to native flora, fauna and their ecosystems.

Collaboration and partnerships underpin successful landscape scale pest plant and animal programs across the municipality.

## People & Nature



Traditional owners are empowered to engage in cultural land management practices on Country within Yarra Ranges.

Our community has access to and a deep connection with nature; they are inspired to take action to actively care for the environment and create a legacy for our future.



# Targets



Yarra Ranges achieves an overall 'net gain' in native vegetation cover by 2034



Triple restoration and revegetation works on private and council managed land per annum



Increase the conservation value across our bushland reserve network over the next 10 years



Enable at least 200 land stewards to improve the biodiversity on their land each year



# Our Action Plan

The actions in this plan are a consolidation of the collective aspirations received throughout the community engagement process and set Council up for success in delivering the objectives of the Nature Plan. The vision, themes and targets will be achieved through key partnerships, collaborations and the collective effort of our environment groups, Council, government (State and Federal) and the broader community.

The implementation of the actions will be delivered through existing resources, grant funding and other funding subject to future budget bids, business cases and advocacy efforts.

Actions that support the delivery of the Nature Plan are categorised under each theme: Landscapes & Ecosystems, Land Use & Changing Climate, Pest Plants & Animals, and People & Nature.

Actions to create habitat corridors are a priority, with a Biolinks Plan to be developed collaboratively with our community. Improved monitoring will contribute to creation and enhancement of landscape scale links.

To aid the protection and restoration of biodiversity assets, a focus on partnership programs tackling pest plants and animals are a priority. Incorporating cultural burning and regenerative land management practices will support healthy and functional ecosystems.

We will support community to protect their local environment through education and opportunities to learn and care for nature.

The success of many of these actions relies on collaboration with land managers, agencies and importantly, our community to have meaningful outcomes. Implementation will be delivered through a combination of existing resources, grant funding and future budget bids, business cases and advocacy efforts.

The complete action plan detailing the full suite of activities under the Nature Plan can be found on the Council website.





## Landscapes & Ecosystems

Target: Yarra Ranges achieves an overall 'net gain' in native vegetation cover by 2034



Data indicates a decline in native vegetation extent and quality at a local and state level over the previous decade.

This target focuses on Council's goal to influence positive change in native vegetation across the municipality in the next decade.

To achieve this, Council will consider the municipality as a whole, irrespective of land tenure (private, Crown or Council) to monitor trends and change over time.

Achieving overall net gain in native vegetation will require collation of data from multiple sources and collaboration with land managers outside of council. Given the proportion of land within the municipality outside Council's direct control, our role as regulator, influencer, advocate and partner will be critical when reporting against this target.

Some of the data to be captured and/or utilised will include:

- Aerial imagery analyses of vegetation cover
- Permitted and unpermitted vegetation removal data
- Number of indigenous plants, or area (plants per unit area) planted through our suite of programs on both private and council-managed land. This will include, but not be limited to; bushlands planting, Ribbons of Green plantings, Trees team replacement and street tree planting, Council-supported community plantings in public spaces.

Collation of data on revegetation and restoration projects increasing native vegetation cover across the municipality as led by other land management agencies and community groups (such as Melbourne Water, DEECA, Parks Victoria, Trust for Nature, Landcare and others).

## Landscapes & Ecosystems

### Target: Yarra Ranges achieves an overall 'net gain' in native vegetation cover by 2034

#### Objective

Habitats and the biodiversity within are holistically understood to enhance the resilience of native flora and fauna populations, enabling our ecosystems from land and water to flourish. Rare and threatened species and ecosystems are protected and restored across the landscape, ensuring thriving species and in connected habitats.

Action Description	Timeframe	Investment	Funding source
1.1 Develop a Biolinks Plan to identify and restore important corridors for biodiversity protection and enhancement across the municipality in partnership with community and agencies.	By 2025	\$100,000	Seeking investment. Leverage opportunities (MW, DEECA)
1.2 Develop a prioritisation matrix to identify biodiversity hotspots and focal areas across the municipality.	Year 1	\$40,000	\$20,000 Council-funded \$20,000 seeking investment
1.3 Undertake vegetation surveys to measure change in native vegetation cover across Yarra Ranges to report on our target.	Year 1, 5 & 10	\$50,000 each survey (\$150,000 total)	Seeking investment
1.4 Establish an opt-in monitoring program of biodiversity assets on private land within Yarra Ranges, to better understand the ecological values and inform decision making for statutory and strategic planning.	Year 1–10	\$50,000 per annum	Seeking investment
1.5 Develop a research partnership program with educational institutions to focus on natural resource management and applied ecology to continuously improve evidence base for decision making.	Years 3–10	\$44,000 per annum	Seeking investment
1.6 Support restoration of waterway corridors, billabongs and floodplain habitat within the municipality through cross-promotion and facilitated engagement with landowners and action on Council-managed reserves.	Years 1–10	Not required	Within operational budget
1.7 Advocate, as part of the Upper Yarra Local Development Strategy of the Victorian Forestry Plan, consideration of nature-based tourism opportunities and biodiversity protection.	Years 1–3	Not required	Withing existing resources



## Land Use & Changing Climate

Target: Triple restoration and revegetation works across private and council-managed land per annum

This target will significantly increase environmental enhancement activities, with a tripling of restoration and revegetation based on 2022 levels. This target is closely related to the delivery of the Biolinks Plan and enhancement of the Ribbons of Green program.

Revegetation works are defined as the planting of indigenous flora species either into previously cleared land (i.e. paddocks) or supplementary planting into modified bushland areas (i.e. where structure or diversity is lacking). Restoration activities may include invasive plant and animal control, fencing of remnant vegetation patches and revegetation plots and habitat supplementation (i.e. installation of hollows, fauna crossing structures, logs).

Supporting the target is a proposed increase in investment of Council's extension programs including Ribbons of Green and Gardens 4 Wildlife, to enable the increase to both revegetation and restoration works on private land. Similarly, actions that increase investment in the Bushland Teams portfolio of works would support progress towards this target on Council-managed land.

Some of the data to be captured and/or utilised will include:

- number of plants planted per annum
- area of restoration activities and what was undertaken
- number of habitat supplement installations undertaken per annum.

## Land Use & Changing Climate

### Target: Triple restoration and revegetation works across private and council-managed land per annum

#### Objective

Partner with our community to build ecosystem resilience for a climate ready future. Statutory and strategic planning processes enable best practice land management through integrated planning.

Action Description	Timeframe	Investment	Funding source
2.1 Increase support to community through the Ribbons of Green program to deliver a revitalised incentive program and implement the Biolinks Plan. The program will include existing habitat protection, revegetation, pest plant and animal control and regenerative land management practices.	Years 3–10	\$250,000 per annum above existing funding	Seeking investment, grant leverage opportunities
2.2 Work with traditional owners, local growers, peak bodies, and land managers to promote and support implementation of resilient land management and regenerative agriculture practices, including traditional cultural practices and carbon drawdown.	Years 2–10	\$160,000 per annum	Seeking investment
2.3 Implement sustainable bushfire reduction works which achieve net biodiversity benefit in collaboration with relevant agencies. Incorporate cultural burning practices to support biodiversity improvements.	Years 1–10	\$85,000 per annum	Seeking investment to support existing Firestick Officer role
2.4 Increase restoration and revegetation activities across the existing bushland reserve network with a focus on improving conservation values, enhancing habitat corridors and supporting threatened species and their habitats through the municipality.	Years 1–10	\$375,000 average per annum above existing funding	Seeking investment
2.5 Foster strong collaboration with other land managers, conservation organisations, Landcare and community environment groups through representation on multi-agency collaborative committees.	Years 1–10	Not required	Within existing resources
2.6 Support private landowners with environmental regulation and complementary land management practices.	Years 2–10	\$110,000 per annum	Seeking investment



## Pest Plants & Animals

Target: Increase the conservation value across our bushland reserve network over the next 10 years

To achieve this target, further investment in the longitudinal monitoring study of Council's bushland reserve network is required. This will provide an enhanced understanding and assessment of the health and conservation value of reserves and roadsides. This data will assist with sound investment decisions.

Bushland areas are monitored on a regular cycle and data is compared over time, with each 'site' attributed a conservation status of either 'Low', 'Medium', 'High' or 'Very High'.

Some of the data to be captured and/or utilised will include:

- presence/abundance/cover of invasive plants (including high threat weeds)
- presence and impact of pest animals (including impacts from browsing, trampling and other damage).

- condition of the native vegetation within the reserve including, but not limited to, measures of threatened species populations (where applicable), habitat characteristics and recruitment of indigenous species.

This target is linked to the theme of Pest Plants & Animals due to its assessment of how effective those programs are at achieving positive change in the conservation values of the reserve network. Reporting on this target will involve providing analysis of the data obtained through this longitudinal monitoring program and may be further informed by updates to bushland reserve planning and prioritisation matrix development (Actions 1.2 and 3.3).

## Pest Plants & Animals

### Target: Increase the conservation value across our bushland reserve network over the next 10 years

#### Objective

Collaboration and partnerships underpin successful landscape-scale pest plant and animal programs across the municipality

Action Description	Timeframe	Investment	Funding source
3.1 Implement catchment-scale, targeted, cross-tenure pest plant and animal control programs at identified locations, working with community and other land managers to achieve broad biodiversity benefit.	Years 2–10	Leverage existing bushland budget with external funding circa \$300,000 per annum	External funding sought (DEECA, MW, Federal Government)
3.2 Collaborate with land managers to address the prevalence of feral deer across Yarra Ranges, through partnerships, funding programs, education of residents and advocacy to achieve an overall reduction in the impact of deer.	Years 1–10	\$50,000 per annum operational funding sought, plus external funding	Seeking Investment (operational). External funding sought (DEECA, MW, Federal Government)
3.3 Utilise prioritisation matrix, Biolinks Plan and updated levels of service to develop Bushland Reserve Management Plans for high priority reserves, with emphasis on invasive species that drive ecological change.	Years 2–3	\$70,000	Seeking investment
3.4 Promote Yarra Ranges cat curfew and deliver supporting community education regarding impact of cats on wildlife. Investigate mechanisms for enforcement of existing local laws.	Years 1–10	Not required	Within existing resources
3.5 Facilitate strategic development of municipal pest action plans as part of legislative requirements, support community pest animal programs and collaborate with the Eastern Region Pest Animal Network.	Years 2–10	\$125,000 per annum	Seeking investment





## People and Nature

**Target:** Engage at least 200 land stewards in council-led programs each year to improve the biodiversity on their land

This target aims to support programs which incentivise community to protect and enhance biodiversity on their land. Community is critical to the success of this target given 30% of land within the municipality is privately owned therefore the capacity for our community to lead positive change is substantial.

Council will support the delivery of this target through its extension programs including, but not limited to; Ribbons of Green, Gardens 4 Wildlife, Weed Wipeout, Environmental education programs and volunteer support programs. This will be supplemented through grant funds delivering on cross-tenure pest plant and animal programs.

Data that will be reported on may include:

- participation in incentive and extension programs
- engagement with on-ground program delivery and survey data of residents
- education program participation translating to tangible action.

Further metrics are likely to be identified as program delivery evolves over implementation of the Nature Plan.

**Target: Engage at least 200 land stewards in council-led programs each year to improve the biodiversity on their land**

**Objective**

Traditional owners are empowered to engage in cultural land management practices on Country within Yarra Ranges. Our community has access to and a deep connection with nature; they are inspired to take action to actively care for the environment and create a legacy for our future.

Action Description	Timeframe	Investment	Funding source
4.1 Support the development of areas suitable for the application of contemporary concepts of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being & Doing such as cultural burning. Enhance opportunities for Council and community connection through delivery of cultural awareness program.	Years 2–3	Not required	Within existing resources
4.2 Enhance opportunities for cultural awareness and integration of indigenous land management practices into bushland management through employment of Indigenous Ranger.	Years 4–10	\$110,000 per annum	Year 1 Council-funded, ongoing funding required
4.3 Enhance biodiversity in urban townships through increase in street tree cover and habitat planting, along with expanding community support through Gardens 4 Wildlife.	Years 1–10	\$145,000 per annum	Partially Council-funded, remainder unfunded. Street tree planting program partially Council-funded.
4.4 Support council network of environmental volunteers, including Friends of groups, Landcare networks and others to undertake direct action and community-led knowledge sharing of environmental values.	Years 1–10	\$55,000 per annum	Seeking investment
4.5 Provide a suite of environmental education programs, events, and opportunities to engage the community in environmental topics. A renewed focus on providing opportunities for equitable access and diversity of offerings to reach more of our community.	Years 1–10	Not required	Within existing resources

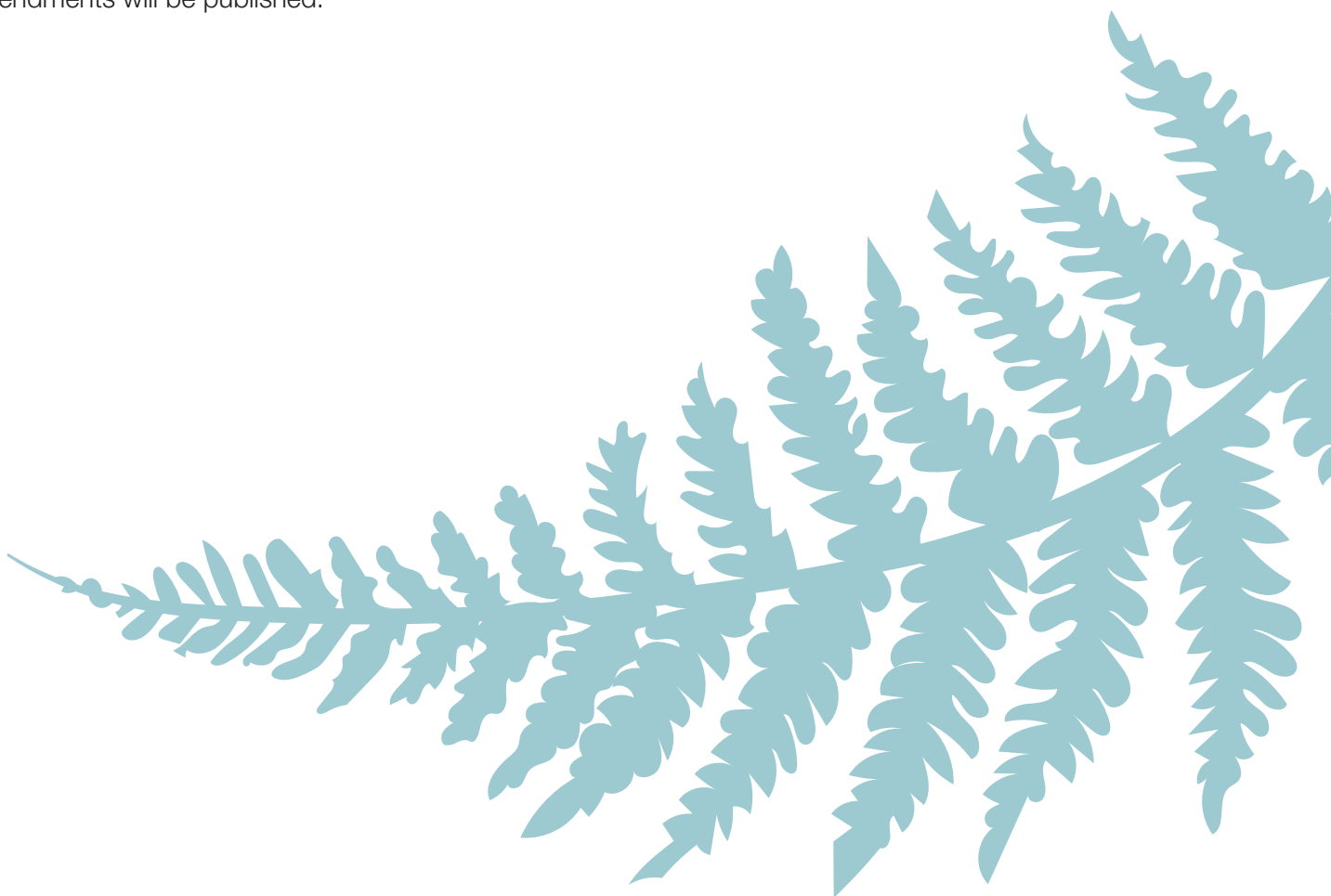
# Monitoring & Review

The Nature Plan will be reviewed and reported on regularly to determine progress of the actions, contribution towards the targets and balance the changing dynamics of political, social and environmental landscapes. This will enable continuous improvement and an adaptive management approach to delivery of this strategy.

Regular review of the actions and investment required will ensure accountability and an agile, pragmatic approach. If substantial changes to investment, including leveraged funding, are incurred these will be updated and published as required.

Council is committed to promoting gender equality in all our work. As such, a gender impact assessment will be conducted on relevant policies, programs, and services developed during implementation of this plan.

Where there are substantial changes to the targets or priority actions, amendments will be published.





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