

## STORMWATER COMMUNITY REFERENCE PANEL – EOI PROCESS UPDATE

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Report Author: Stormwater Management Engineer  
Responsible Officer: Director Built Environment & Infrastructure  
Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

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*The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.*

### CONFIDENTIALITY

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public. A confidential attachment has been included with the report which contains personal information that is not to be disclosed whilst the meeting is open to the public.

### SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Stormwater Community Reference Panel (SCRCP) Expression of Interest (EOI) period that was open from open from 4 December 2024 to 22 December 2024.

In total there were 14 applications received over the EOI period, with representation from all wards, with the exception of Walling Ward. One candidate withdrew their application following the conclusion of the EOI period. After consideration of all the applications received, all applicants were considered suitably qualified for panel recommendation and will be invited to participate.

While the amount of participants is marginally above the initial number sought, it is not inconsistent with other reference groups operating at Council and is considered to be able to practically function.

It is recognised that over the life the plan, additional community members may express interest in joining. Any future application would be subject to the existing evaluation process, with consideration of an appropriate and practical number of participants for a meeting to function.

It is anticipated the initial meeting (including induction) will occur in March 2025.

### RECOMMENDATION

***That Council notes the successful applicants to the Stormwater Community Reference Panel listed in Attachment 1.***

## **RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS/ FORUM REPORTS**

At the Council meeting on 10 September 2024, Council endorsed the Yarra Ranges Stormwater Policy and the Stormwater Management Plan 2024-2034. The Council resolution and Action 26 within the Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP) included establishing a Community Reference Panel to facilitate community input on stormwater projects and studies under the SWMP.

A briefing paper was presented at a Council Forum meeting on 03 December 2024, outlining the proposed Terms of Reference for the Panel. Following this, officers commenced a two-week Expression of Interest (EOI) process for community membership of the SCRCP.

## **DISCUSSION**

### ***Purpose***

The SCRCP will work collaboratively with Yarra Ranges Council to understand the stormwater and flood management challenges affecting the municipality. These challenges are anticipated to grow due to climate change, urban development, and increased population pressures.

The SCRCP will provide a community voice to guide the development of key projects, including municipal-wide flood modelling and stormwater management initiatives under the Stormwater Management Plan. This partnership will help shape council decisions and ensure that project-related communications reflect community concerns and priorities.

### ***Objectives of the Stormwater Community Reference Panel***

The SCRCP will help support the implementation of Stormwater Management Plan 2024-2034, by:

- Actively contributing to discussions about stormwater management and flood risk, with a focus on sustainability, biodiversity, and preparedness for natural disasters.
- Providing feedback and advice on flood mapping, stormwater infrastructure projects, and integrated water management strategies to help shape Council's response to stormwater challenges.
- Participating in the development and review of public communications and educational materials related to stormwater services, ensuring the community is well-informed and involved in the decision-making process.
- Strengthening strategic partnerships and community engagement to foster a sustainable and resilient environment in line with Yarra Ranges Council's vision for the future.

### ***Stormwater Community Reference Panel Structure***

The Panel is proposed to consist of individuals with specific interests and/or expertise in flood and stormwater management, including

- a) Thirteen (13) community members representing a balanced mix within the Shire.
- b) Interested Councillors.
- c) Council officers, including a senior Council officer, either a Director, Manager, or Executive Officer.

Consultants and representatives from external agencies such as Melbourne Water, may attend SCRCP meetings to provide specific input when required.

### ***Stormwater Community Reference Panel EOI Process***

EOIs for SCRCP were open to community members for a two-week period between 04 December 2024 to 22 December 2024.

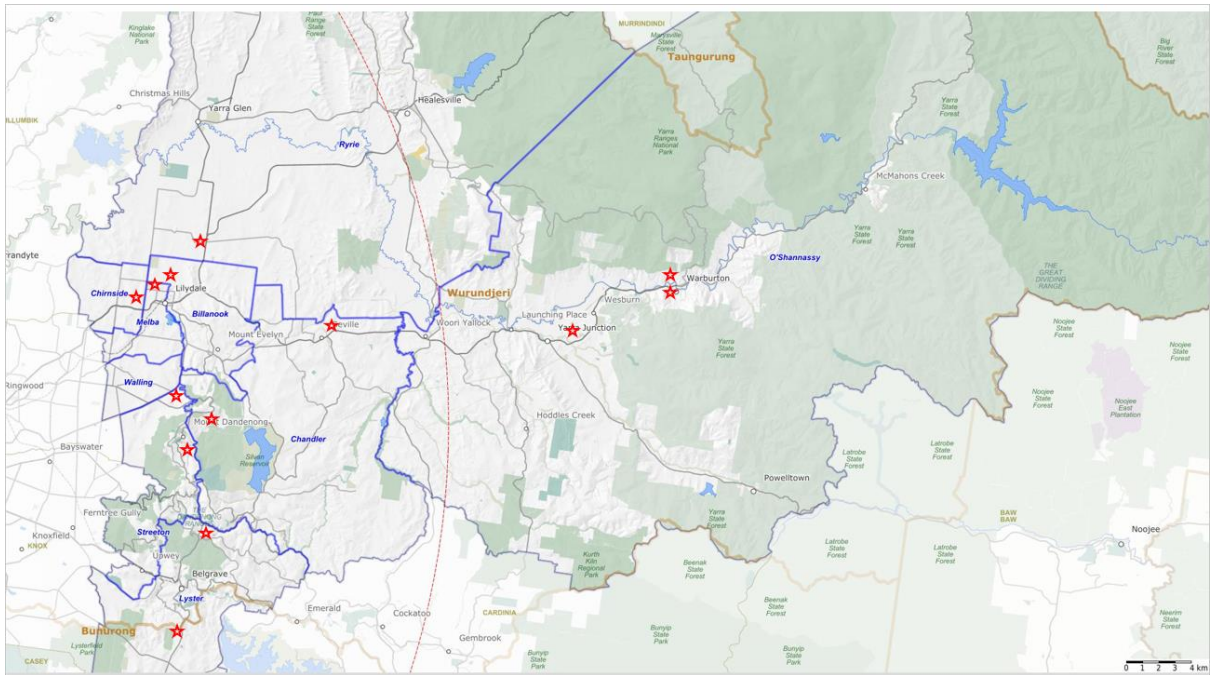
EOI process was advertised through Council's website, social media, local media and by communications to Councils broad network of community groups and local organisations.

The EOI included a Position Description for the SCRCP, Terms of Reference and a number of application questions via a YRC OpenForms portal with weighted response scores that will signify a person's eligibility for SCRCP membership.

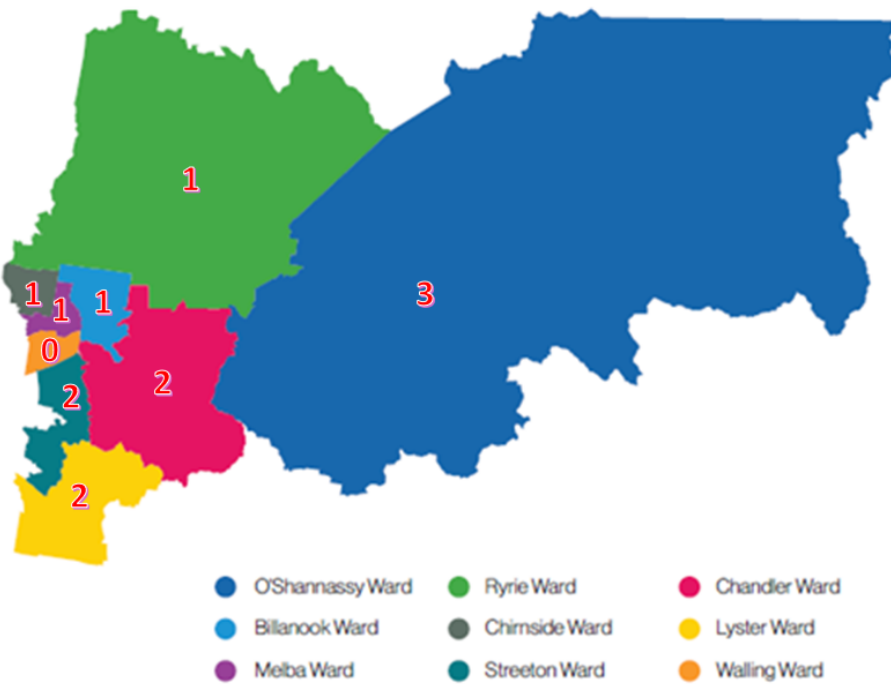
### ***EOI Results***

During the EOI period, 14 applications were received. One applicant withdrew their submission following the EOI period, leaving 13 applications available to select panel members.

The applicants are listed in an attachment. A wide range of applications were received from all wards except Walling ward. Figure 1 below shows the locality of each of the 13 applicants, while Figure 2 provides a summary of the number of applications received from each ward.



**Figure 1 - Application locality within ward boundaries**



**Figure 2 - Summary of the number of applications within each ward**

## ***Selection Criteria***

To achieve a diverse and widespread SCRPs, each applicant needed to answer questions that addressed the selection criteria of:

1. Representative community demographics.
2. Live or work in Yarra Ranges.
3. Have a personal interest in stormwater management.
4. Be personally or professionally impacted by flooding within the Yarra Ranges municipality.
5. Be able to commit to attending the regular meetings of the Panel.
6. Have a passion for working with Council to support better stormwater management.

Each of the criteria responses we assessed via the following scoring matrix:

*Table 2 - Scoring Matrix for the Stormwater Community Reference Panel Selection*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Score (0-5)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>1. Representative community demographics</b>	5%		Assess representation and alignment with diverse community demographics.
<b>2. Personal interest in stormwater management</b>	20%		Assess interest in and knowledge of stormwater management based on qualitative responses.
<b>3. Impact of flooding</b>	30%		Evaluate how applicants have been personally or professionally impacted by flooding.
<b>4. Passion for stormwater management</b>	20%		Assess enthusiasm and willingness to support Council initiatives, as reflected in qualitative responses.
<b>5. Previous experience in contributing to Stormwater Management in YRC</b>	15%		Assess previous participation in contributing to stormwater management in the Yarra Ranges
<b>6. Relevant experience</b>	10%		Consider previous participation in reference panels, community groups, or stormwater-related efforts.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>/5</b>	

The Score (0-5) was assessed on the following basis:

- 0 = Does not meet the criteria.
- 1 = Poor alignment with the criteria.
- 2 = Partially meets the criteria.
- 3 = Sufficient alignment with the criteria.
- 4 = Exceeds the criteria.
- 5 = Exceptional alignment with the criteria.

### ***Recommended option and justification***

After consideration of all the applications received against the scoring matrix represented in Table 2, it is recommended to include all eligible 13 applicants to ensure broad community representation. Refer to Attachment 1 (confidential) for list of applicants.

The list is confidential for the purposes of this report in line with requirements under the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014.

### ***Diversity Assessment***

The gender split for the applicants includes 5 women and 8 men, with 1 applicant being within the age ranges of 76-85, 3 applicants within 66-75, 4 applicants within 56-65, 4 applicants within 46-55, and 1 applicant being within 26-35.

In addition to the demographics of the proposed candidates, 1 candidate identified themselves as Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander, 1 candidate identified themselves as culturally and linguistically diverse, and one applicant is an unpaid carer of someone living with a disability.

### **FINANCIAL ANALYSIS**

The expenditure associated with the operation of the SCRP is met through Infrastructure Services Operational budget. This includes the costs of advertising the Reference Panels recruitment and ongoing operational expenditure.

### **APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES**

- Yarra Ranges Stormwater Management Plan 2024 – 2034.
- Stormwater Policy

### **RELEVANT LAW**

In recruiting members, Council strives to establish a reference panel that is diverse and representative of the community. This includes, but is not exclusive to, Aboriginality, gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, culture, nationality, refugee or asylum seeker background, migration or visa status, language, religion, ability, age, mental health, socioeconomic status, housing status, and geographic location.

The proposed representatives align with the requirements of the Gender Equality Act 2020, in ensuring diverse representation. This is represented within the Forum report, under the 'Diversity Assessment' within the Recommended option and justification section.

## **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

### ***Economic Implications***

The SCRP's contributions to stormwater management will enhance economic sustainability by promoting strategies that mitigate flood risks and prioritise cost-effective solutions. The panel will provide insights into local priorities and help refine funding mechanisms such as:

- Stormwater offsets: Facilitating developer contributions to local water-sensitive projects.
- Grant applications: Strengthening bids for state or federal funding by incorporating community-backed priorities.
- Proactive planning: Supporting initiatives that reduce costly reactive spending on flood damage by advocating for preventative infrastructure improvements.

Engaging the SCRP ensures that projects align with community expectations, fostering broader support and minimising potential conflicts that could delay implementation or increase costs.

### ***Social Implications***

The SCRP amplifies the social benefits of the SWMP by ensuring a diverse and representative voice in stormwater management. Its work will focus on:

- Improving community wellbeing: Reducing flood risks and increasing access to green spaces that foster better health outcomes.
- Addressing equity: Promoting the principles of the Gender Equality Act 2020 by considering the unique needs of all demographic groups, ensuring inclusive stormwater solutions.
- Strengthening community ownership: Facilitating transparent communication about stormwater management and promoting collaborative involvement in stormwater initiatives.

The SCRP's inclusive approach will support urban environments that are not only more liveable but also better prepared to withstand future challenges.

### ***Environmental Implications***

The SCRP plays a pivotal role in achieving the environmental goals of the SWMP, contributing to initiatives that include:

- Nature-based solutions: Advocating for stormwater harvesting, wetlands, and bioretention systems that enhance biodiversity and protect water quality.
- Integrated Water Management (IWM): Supporting strategies that balance urban development with the preservation of ecosystems, creating climate-resilient communities.

- Climate change adaptation: Ensuring that community perspectives are incorporated into infrastructure designs to improve resilience against extreme weather events.

By promoting sustainable practices and leveraging community expertise, the SCRP ensures that stormwater management aligns with long-term environmental priorities.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The SCRP aims to strengthen community engagement by:

- Facilitating dialogue: Enabling meaningful discussions on stormwater management, sustainability, and disaster preparedness.
- Incorporating feedback: Shaping flood mapping, infrastructure projects, and integrated water management strategies with community insights.
- Enhancing awareness: Reviewing public communications and educational materials to ensure they are accessible, clear, and aligned with community needs.
- Building trust: Promoting transparency in decision-making and fostering collaborative partnerships for a resilient and sustainable future.

## **COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

Collaboration with Melbourne Water has been sought to provide expert opinion/analysis on an ad-hoc basis. Melbourne Water were engaged to review the Stormwater Community Reference Panel Terms of Reference and submit any objections or amendments of their panel responsibilities to the responsible Council Officer. No objections or requests for amendments has been received.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

The application and selection process has ensured that Yarra Ranges Council recruits a balanced representation of people living in the Yarra Ranges who can provide Stormwater Management advice to Council.

The Terms of Reference (Attachment 2) brings clarity to the role and responsibilities of the Panel, its members and those who support it.

## **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

No officers and/or delegates acting on behalf of the Council through the Instrument of Delegation and involved in the preparation and/or authorisation of this report have any general or material conflict of interest as defined within the *Local Government Act 2020*.



## **ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT**

1. Stormwater Community Reference Panel – Applicants (Confidential)
2. Stormwater Community Reference Panel - Terms of Reference