



Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee (YCACC) Annual Report

*Prepared for the Hon Lily D'Ambrosio
Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change
Minister for Solar Homes*



**TRUST FOR
NATURE**
Habitat forever

December 2018



© The Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee (YCACC) 2018



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). You are free to re-use the work under that licence, on the condition that you credit the Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee (YCACC) as author. The licence does not apply to any images, photographs or branding including, but not confined to, the following images: Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee logo; Victorian Coat of Arms; Victorian Government logo; Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning logo; Parks Victoria logo; Melbourne Water logo; Yarra Ranges Council logo; Cardinia Shire Council logo; Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority logo; Zoos Victoria logo; Trust for Nature logo; Country Fire Authority logo; Wurundjeri Tribe Land Council logo.

To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Disclaimer

This publication may be of assistance to you but the Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee (YCACC) and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	iv
List of Figures	iv
List of Acronyms.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Introduction	1
YCACC Membership (as at December 2018).....	1
Vision, Mission and Values.....	2
Progress and Achievements.....	3
Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee (YCACC)	3
Yellingbo Conservation Area Action Plan Review Report 2018	3
YCACC Key Performance Indicators	4
Self-Evaluation	4
Key messages from three open ended questions included in the questionnaire	5
The YCACC External Review	7
Agency Contributions to the YCA.....	8
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)	8
YCA Project Implementation Team.....	8
Development of the YCA Implementation Plan.....	8
Haining Farm	8
Yellingbo Conservation Area Draft 10-Year Plan	8
Landholder Engagement.....	9
On-ground works	10
Survey of the Conservation Area	10
Assessment of uncategorised public land identified by VEAC.....	11
Yellingbo Investigation Area Bushfire planning process.....	11
Engaging with Other Groups.....	12
Parks Victoria	13
Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve (YNCR)	13
Haining Farm	14
Sassafras Creek Nature Conservation Reserve	14
Warramate Hills Nature Conservation Reserve	14
Melbourne Water	15
Works Programs.....	15
Grants and Incentives Programs.....	15

Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (PPWCMA)	16
Yarra4Life Program	16
Achievements in 2017/18	16
Zoos Victoria	17
Yarra Ranges Council	18
Resources allocated to YCA	18
Highlights	18
Cardinia Shire Council	19
Fire management works	19
Natural Reserves - Operational works undertaken/ongoing July 2018- June 2019	19
Other indirect activities	19
Trust for Nature	20
Coordination	21
Learnings	22
Telling the Story	22
YCA Values	22
Resources Required	22
Conclusions	22
Recommendations	23
References	24
Appendix A: Meeting Attendance	25
Appendix B: External Review Terms of Reference	28

List of Tables

Table 1: YCACC Key Performance Indicators	4
Table 2: DELWP site inspections 2018	9
Table 3: DELWP on-ground works	10
Table 4: DELWP Public Land Surveys	11
Table 5: Melbourne Water Direct Works.....	15
Table 6: Melbourne Water Grants and Incentives Programs	15
Table 7: Cardinia Shire Natural Reserves - Operational works July 2018- June 2019	19

List of Figures

Figure 1: YCACC Performance Rank	5
--	---

List of Acronyms

ADA	Australian Deer Association
CFA	Country Fire Authority
CoM	Committee of Management
CSC	Cardinia Shire Council
DELWP	Department of Environment, Land, Water, and Planning
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
Land Managers	The public land managers in the YCA include Parks Victoria, DELWP, Zoos Victoria, Yarra Ranges Council, Cardinia Shire Council, VicRoads, and local Committees of Management (CoMs) e.g., Millgrove Township Group. In all planning Melbourne Water and the PPWCMA provide information and evaluation.
MER	Monitor, Evaluation, Review
MW	Melbourne Water
PPWCMA	Port Phillip & Westernport Catchment Management Authority
PV	Parks Victoria
SSAA	Sporting Shooters Association Australia
TfN	Trust for Nature
ToR	Terms of Reference
VEAC	Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
ZV	Zoos Victoria
YCA	Yellingbo Conservation Area
YCACC	Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee
YNCR	Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve
YRC	Yarra Ranges Council

Acknowledgements

The Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee (YCACC) Annual Report is the result of a collaborative process integrating information shared by YCA land managers, agencies and community members constituting the YCACC. The information contained in the YCACC Annual Report draws on the expertise of committee members at the monthly YCACC meetings, and the various working groups throughout the year.

Information for this report was provided by:

- Anne Langworthy – Independent Convener, YCACC
- Amanda Smith – Yarra Ranges Council;
- Ben Cullen – Trust for Nature;
- Conrad Annal – Parks Victoria;
- Corinne Mays – Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (PPWCMA);
- Cr Jim Child – Yarra Ranges Council;
- Dan Harley – Zoos Victoria;
- Dan Robertson – Melbourne Water;
- Georgia Kerr – Parks Victoria;
- Jeff Latter – Community Member, nominated by Cardinia Shire Council;
- Justin Foster – Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP);
- Marianne Sawyer – Cardinia Shire Council;
- Merryn Kelly – Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP);
- Peter Cooper – Community Member, Yarra Ranges Council;
- Sarah Gaskill – Melbourne Water;
- Steve Hosking – Melbourne Water;
- Sue Tardif – Community Member, nominated by Yarra Ranges Council.

Introduction

This YCACC report prepared for the Hon Lily D'Ambrosio, Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes, is required by the YCACC Terms of Reference.

The Terms of Reference for the Yellingbo Conservation Area Co-ordinating Committee (YCACC) were published in October 2015 and the Committee first met in December 2015.

These Terms of Reference require the Committee to provide an annual report to the Minister which includes:

- an evaluation of the Committee's discharge of its functions, as described in the Terms of Reference;
- the completion of actions prioritised by the plan; and
- the Committee's performance against the performance indicators and other measures in its annual business plan.

On 30 October 2018 the Minister wrote to YCACC inviting members to extend their term until 31 January 2019.

On 12 November 2018 Kelly Crosthwaite Regional Director Port Phillip, DELWP wrote to YCACC members on behalf of the Minister attaching a copy the external review of YCACC, thanking Committee members for their contribution, and relaying the Minister's decision to accept the recommendations of the external review to replace YCACC with two new committees.

The deliberations of YCACC up until the Committee meeting on 18 December 2018 are included in this report for the Minister's information.

YCACC Membership (as at December 2018)

- Anne Langworthy - Independent Convener;
- Ben Cullen - Trust for Nature;
- Corinne Mays - Port Phillip & Westernport Catchment Management Authority nominated representative confirmed by Minister's letter extending YCACC term until January 31, 2019 dated October 30, 2018;
- Cr Jim Child - Yarra Ranges Council;
- Dan Harley - Zoos Victoria;
- Georgia Kerr Parks Victoria - substitute representative confirmed as ongoing by Minister's letter dated 30 October 2018 extending YCACC term until 31 January 2019;
- Jeff Latter - Community member nominated by Cardinia Shire Council;
- Marianne Sawyer - Cardinia Shire Council;
- Merryn Kelly - Department of Environment, Land, Water, and Planning;
- Peter Cooper - Community member nominated by Yarra Ranges Council;
- Steve Hosking - Melbourne Water;
- Sue Tardif - Community member nominated by Yarra Ranges Council;
- Uncle Dave Wandin - Wurundjeri Land & Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Incorporated – nominated representative confirmed by Minister's letter dated 30 October 2018 extending YCACC term until 31 January 2019.

Vacant Members

- Country Fire Authority (*position vacant awaiting appointment*);
- Community representative Yarra Ranges Council (*position vacant awaiting appointment*).

Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

The Yellingbo Conservation Area will be a stronghold for biodiversity conservation with improved landscapes, healthy rivers, active and passive recreation opportunities, and an engaged and inspired community.

Mission

The YCA will be managed in an integrated way to achieve the long-term security of our natural biodiversity and other natural values across the landscape, by improving ecological resilience and connectivity, restoring the habitat for threatened species, and enhancing community appreciation and involvement in the protection of these values.

Values

- Integrity:** We act in a respectful, fair, honest, and non-discriminatory manner.
- Collaboration:** We model collaborative practice and work in partnership with all YCA stakeholder groups, agencies, government and the wider community.
- Sustainability:** We act in ways that build resilience in our natural environment by promoting biodiversity, natural values, environmental sustainability, and community engagement.
- Advocacy:** We work together with an engaged community to raise awareness of the conservation and natural values of the YCA.

Progress and Achievements

Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee (YCACC)

Significant amounts of time and effort have been expended by YCACC members over the last year in establishing the *Yellingbo Conservation Area draft 10-year Plan* after dedicating much of 2017 in establishing the *Yellingbo Conservation Area Action Plan 2016–2018* as required by the Committee's Terms of Reference. A second wave of community consultation, based on the draft plan, concluded in October 2018.

Yellingbo Conservation Area Action Plan Review Report 2018

The initial three-year Action Plan was developed during 2017 and submitted to the Minister of Energy, Environment and Climate, Minister for Solar Homes, the Hon Lily D'Ambrosio alongside the 2017 YCACC Annual Report in December 2017.

The 2018 Review updates the status of all goals, key performance indicators and actions action identified in the *Yellingbo Conservation Action Plan 2016 - 2018* as of November 2018. The progress, achievements, obstacles and delays in the journey to establishing the YCA during 2018 are discussed in more detail in the 2018 YCACC Annual Report.

Based on the VEAC Report recommendations of as endorsed by the Victoria Government, the *YCA Action Plan 2016 - 2018* identifies nine Goal Areas, 28 Key Performance Indicators and 70 Actions. These actions are mapped against specific VEAC approved recommendations.

In summary the 2018 review of the Action Plan demonstrates that:

- progress has been made to some degree in all of the goal areas (mostly in Goals 1, 3, and 5; less likely in Goals 2, 4, 8 and 9);
- much of the work in each of the goal areas is ongoing;
- of the 70 action items identified, 20% (n=14) have been completed, 41% (n=29) are ongoing [or data has not been provided to YCACC], 39% (n=27) are not started yet; and
- much work is still required to implement the VEAC Recommendations as approved.

Whilst progress has been made to some degree in planning (Bushfire Plan, Draft 10-Year YCA Plan, Communication and Engagement Plan, for example), the concomitant monitoring and evaluation processes have not been progressed thus limiting capacity to evaluate outcomes or achievement of Key Performance Indicators.

- Little progress has been made in mapping – whilst mapping the boundaries of the YCA has commenced, mapping the values of the YCA beyond broad precinct descriptors not commenced.
- A YCACC Working Group led by Steve Hosking developed *Licensing Principles for Fencing and Grazing within Yellingbo Conservation Area* which was included in the draft YCA Plan however little progress has been made on the ground with renegotiated licensing arrangements. Whilst grazing licenses have not been renewed and some work has been done in developing new riparian management licences, required development of management agreements and conservation agreements has not commenced.
- Whilst the DELWP YCA Project Implementation Team is discussing legislative changes and time frames with the DELWP Land Policy Group, development of the required legislation is ongoing.

- Most importantly ongoing funding and resources to establish the YCA has not yet been secured. It is noted that YCACC have been advised by DELWP that discussions relating to ongoing funding have been occurring and a process is in train to develop a funding bid however YCACC has not been updated on the outcomes of these discussions.

YCACC Key Performance Indicators

As part of the Yellingbo Conservation Area Action Plan 2016–2018 four Committee Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were specified. The table below briefly outlines YCACC performance against these indicators. It is pleasing to note that the Committee meets the benchmarks specified for three indicators and the benchmark established in 2017 for the fourth indicator.

Table 1: YCACC Key Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators	Status Report
12 meetings held annually	The Committee has met on the third Tuesday of every month. The January 2018 meeting was deferred to 6th February resulting in two meetings being held in February. In 2018 two meetings failed to meet the requirements for a quorum and decisions were deferred to the next meeting.
75% attendance at meetings	The overall attendance at Committee meetings over the last 12 months [January to December 2018] was 78% (attendance = 94; apologies = 26; meetings = 12).
Number of out of session working group meetings [and selected meetings]	Working Group Meetings = 16; Other selected meetings and presentations = 25
Annual Committee self-evaluation	One self-evaluation process has been conducted (16 October 2018)

Self-Evaluation¹

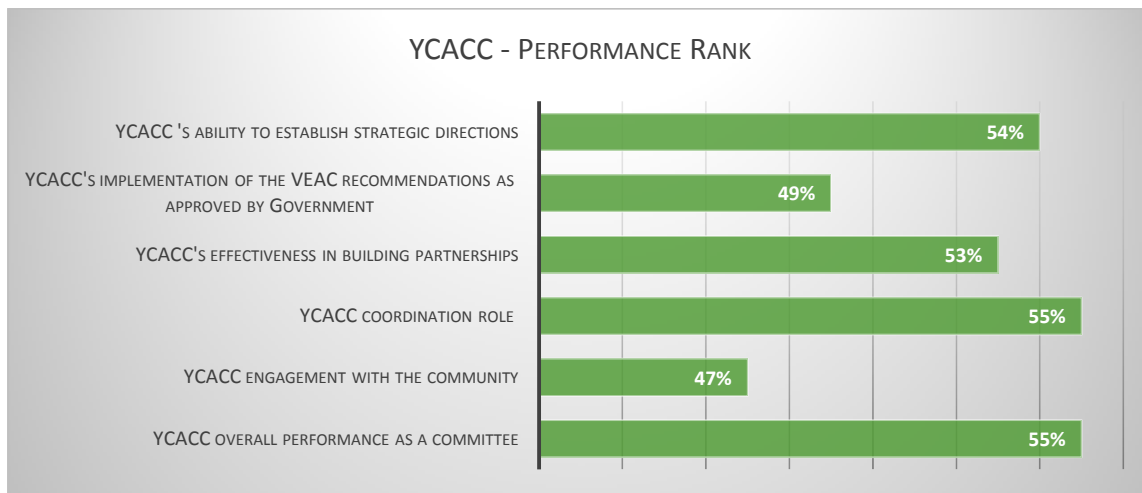
According to the YCACC Terms of Reference and Action Plan KPIs the Committee is required to undertake an annual self-evaluation. The Committee delayed this process in deference to the YCACC review being undertaken by an external consultant. The Committee was advised they would have access to the external review report and, not wishing to duplicate areas covered by the external review, delayed the internal process until the report was made available to YCACC.

YCACC proceed with the self-evaluation process at the 16 October 2018 meeting. The self-evaluation methodology included extensive discussions at both the October and November YCACC meetings together with a short written qualitative survey completed at the October meeting. *[A copy of the external review was not sent to YCACC members until 12 November 2018].*

The self-evaluation rated the YCACC overall achievement at 55%

¹ Please note that the DELWP YCACC representative has indicated that DELWP does not endorse the YCACC Self Evaluation Report.

Figure 1: YCACC Performance Rank



Key messages from three open ended questions included in the questionnaire

Committee members were also three open ended questions:

- What do you think is YCACC's main advantage as a committee?
- What do you think is YCACC's main barrier to achieving the VEAC Recommendations?
- Should YCACC continue, what recommendation would you make to the Minister for the ongoing role for the Committee?

It should be noted that the open-ended question asked for a main advantage, a main barrier and a recommendation to accommodate the short time allocation for completing the questionnaire.

The main advantage of YCACC

- Committee members were consistent in their view that the main advantage of YCACC has been bringing together agencies, the Wurundjeri Land & Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Inc. and three Community Members nominated by the two Council's into a single coordinating/consultative committee. There is more variation in identifying the purpose and outcomes of that "bringing together" including: networking, knowledge sharing, and increased awareness of other stakeholder programs and projects enabling more efficient collaboration and coordination.
- Commitment and goodwill and the strengthening of relationships were also noted.

The main barrier to achieving the VEAC recommendations

- Four responses identified issues relating to the lack of decision-making authority within YCACC as the DELWP YCA implementation program progressed. These issues included: capacity and resources lying with DELWP and not with YCACC; the complex planning phase delaying implementation; the parallel process of Committee deliberation and DELWP implementation; and delays implementing surveys and forming implementation plan; poor decisions by DELWP outside the Committee.
- Although the YCA has been allocated \$3.2 million for the first three years, four responses identify funding/resource issues: lack of communal funding; lack of resource continuity at DELWP and Parks; setback from original poor stakeholder engagement around licence changes and subsequent resource impacts to re-engage; lack of governance/due diligence over budget and implementation.

- Two responses highlight lack of consistent understanding/agreement on the role of the Committee, “a big problem and dominated meetings at times”.
- Other barriers to achieving the VEAC recommendations identified include: poor local communication; processes between agencies differing making timelines for certain activities longer than expected; and stronger support required from the Minister in replacing vacant Committee members.

Recommendation to the Minister for the next YCACC term

Committee members’ views about how YCACC might continue under a better functioning model divide into two categories:

1. Recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the Committee (the majority view)
The majority proposed changes including: better resourcing, distributed implementation, control of budget, DELWP and PV (“removal of the revolving chair”) improving their involvement with YCACC and sharing information. Whilst one respondent identifies the need to have more senior representation, another suggests fewer key stakeholders and a bi monthly or quarterly meeting.
2. Recommendations for an alternative committee (two members indicate a preference for an advisory committee meeting quarterly).

The messages from the questionnaire are repeated and amplified in the notes from the Committee discussion held on October 16 Meeting and highlighted the importance of:

- renaming the YCA;
- the Committee needing more time to achieve the desired outcomes;
- changes required to the Terms of Reference;
- better engagement;
- the priority of securing resourcing;
- the importance of continuing to build understanding of the different processes and obligations of each agency;
- the importance of continuing to implement the YCACC Action Plan and further develop the YCA draft 10-year Plan;
- the importance of concurrent on-ground works, research and implementation; and
- a staged role out of the new Conservation Park (given that Conservation Area category will not exist in future under VEAC State-wide classifications).

The Committee determined that YCACC should write to the Minister requesting an extension of the Committee’s term until February 28, 2019 in order to ensure that the Committee could provide sound advice to the Minister on the future of YCACC and fully consider the recommendations of the external review in undertaking the required annual YCACC self-evaluation.

The YCACC External Review

On 28 June 2018, David Shelton, Manager, Governance, Land Management Policy Division, Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning advised YCACC that the:

Premier's Circular No. 2013/2 mandates that all entities must be reviewed - against the tests in the Circular - within three years of their creation, and then at least every six years thereafter.

The Nous Group (Nous) was engaged by DELWP in August to conduct an independent review of YCACC. The review brief focussed on the role and effectiveness of YCACC, including recommendations for any changes to the structure and function of YCACC that would make it more effective.

The review report to the Minister includes a number of inaccuracies and minor errors. The larger issues relate to the following:

- review interviews;
- independence of the review process;
- depth of the analysis and justification of the review recommendations; and
- the exceeding of the brief by the reviewers.

Concluding their report Nous makes two recommendations to replace YCACC:

1. The creation of a co-ordinating committee of land managers and community groups with land management responsibilities focussed on coordinating the land management works in the YCA (citing Yarra4Life with a slightly different goal as the model); and
2. The creation of a broader based reference group designed to assist DELWP engage more effectively to win community support for YCA objectives whilst addressing community concerns.

Nous indicates that this provides two sets of governance arrangements both largely supporting DELWP.

Agency Contributions to the YCA

The following information has been provided by each agency represented on the YCACC. It is noted that although YCACC has begun the process of identifying and recording good practice, much of the work undertaken by community groups in the YCA has not been systematically collected. The Committee does however recognise the importance of the continuing on ground work of many volunteers that has been instrumental in preserving biodiversity in the YCA through Landcare Groups and Friends Groups, particularly in the streamside reserves.

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)

YCA Project Implementation Team

The Yellingbo Project Team continues to work with YCACC, other agencies and the community to deliver on implementing the Government response to the VEAC Yellingbo Investigation.

The team consists of:

- Project Manager (Yellingbo Conservation Area) (Justin Foster);
- two Natural Resource Engagement Officers (Doug West and Amy Monagle; and a
- Property Officer (currently vacant).

Each staff member brings different and complementary approaches to the project which has enabled a lot of significant actions to occur over the last 12 months.

Funding for the implementation of the government response was initially allocated to Parks Victoria (as the ultimate land manager once the *National Parks Act* applies to the area) however DELWP has been identified as the responsible agency for majority of the recommendations in the government response. As such, this funding was transferred to DELWP.

Development of the YCA Implementation Plan

The Yellingbo Conservation Area Implementation Plan has been prepared. It documents the objectives, key deliverables and resources associated with implementing the Government's response to the VEAC report.

Haining Farm

Please refer to the Coordination section for information on Haining Farm.

Yellingbo Conservation Area Draft 10-Year Plan

Over the course of the last 12 months, the *Yellingbo Conservation Area Draft 10-Year Plan* has been prepared. The Draft Plan provides overall direction on how the Conservation Area will be managed into the future. The Draft Plan was prepared in accordance with "*The Process for Developing the Yellingbo Conservation Area Plan*", which outlines the steps that will be taken to prepare the final *Conservation Area Plan*. This has involved:

Stage 1

- Targeted facilitated workshops with conservation groups, recreation and tourism groups, the Yarra Ranges Rural Advisory Council, Cardinia Shire Council and various township organisations; and
- Engage Victoria went live for 4 weeks, starting 20 November 2017, to get input from the wider community on what they consider the three most important things that the establishment of the Conservation Area should do and what they think are the three biggest issues that the establishment of the Conservation Area should focus on. An engagement report of this consultation was prepared.

Information gathered above, along with significant input from YCACC was used to prepare the Draft Plan.

Stage 2

A Communication and Engagement Plan for the YCA Draft 10 Year Plan was developed prior to the Plan's release, which determined the supporting communication and engagement actions that needed to be undertaken. The Yellingbo Conservation Area Draft 10-Year Plan was open for public comment for eight weeks, from 12 August 2018 to 7 October 2018. The Draft Plan was uploaded to the Engage Victoria website to facilitate this process. During this period, three community drop in sessions were held, supported by six smaller 'pop-up' sessions. In addition to the drop in and pop up sessions, the following activities assisted the consultation outcomes:

- flyers, signs and posters were distributed to notify local community of the survey and drop-in sessions;
- media releases promoted the YCA Draft 10-Year Plan, encouraging the community to take the survey on Engage Victoria and attend drop in sessions;
- responses were provided proactively to local media enquiries regarding articles being run;
- organic Facebook posts featured the Yellingbo Conservation Area video and stills from video;
- boosted dark Facebook posts featured the Yellingbo Conservation Area video and still from video—posts were boosted only to local community in postcodes 3139, 3159, 3770, 3777, 3781, 3782, 3783, 3787, 3788, 3789, 3791, 3792, 3793, 3795, 3797, 3799;
- letter drop to adjacent landholders Yarra Ranges Shire and Cardinia Shire supplied addresses of all properties within 100 metres of the YCA boundary for mailout;
- emails to stakeholders and everyone who took part in last stage of survey;
- one-on-one meeting with key stakeholders who specifically requested additional information;
- meetings with local CFA brigades to provide information on the YCA Bushfire Risk Management Plan and discuss access tracks and water points; and
- Youth engagement - Shire of Yarra Ranges after school program.

In combination, the communication and engagement actions reached over 22,000 people, and the YCA project team received 281 responses.

The next step is to review the submissions and update the Draft Plan in conjunction with Parks Victoria.

Landholder Engagement

The DELWP Yellingbo Conservation Area Project Implementation Team continue to liaise directly with landholders who have properties adjacent to the conservation area to discuss options for management, fencing, and grants to manage and improve the environmental values in the reserve.

Table 2: DELWP site inspections 2018

Current team inspections (2018)	Number of Properties
Badger (Coranderrk) Creek	2
Cockatoo Creek	5
Little Yarra River	5
McCrae Creek	4
Menzies Creek	1
Woori Yallock Creek	5
Yarra River	12
TOTAL	34

NOTE: This compares with 84 inspections between 2016 and 2017 as reported in last year's (2017) Annual Report.

Site meetings were largely conducted in partnership with Melbourne Water’s assessors, in response to applications for funding under the Stream Frontage Management Program, to discuss weed control, fencing alignments, future licencing options and provide information on the Yellingbo Conservation Area project generally.

Several site inspections were conducted to respond to reported boundary alignment issues, ad-hoc weed control requests, fence and gate damage, and to evaluate current land management and provide information and advice to landholders.

Information has been gathered to enable maps to be generated on site and assist with showing landholders the landscape context within and around their properties.

On-ground works

These works have been identified and coordinated through the project team, undertaken by Greening Australia / Australian Ecosystem Services.

Table 3: DELWP on-ground works

Site	Works Completed to Date	Future works Dec 18 – Dec 19
Young’s Swamp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slashing of Phragmites • gunnel Matting installed • Installation of 45,000 seedlings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supply & install 20,000 plants • maintenance runs x 6
Millgrove	10 weed control cycles completed (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 months site maintenance • supply & install 3000 plants
Britannia Creek	10 weed control cycles completed	4 weed control cycles
Yarra Bridge Streamside Reserve	10 weed control cycles completed	n/a
Woori Yallock Creek	10 weed control cycles completed	4 weed control cycles
Menzies Creek	7 weed control cycle completed	2 weed control cycles

Survey of the Conservation Area

The DELWP YCA Project Implementation Team are continuing to work with the Office of Surveyor General who have previously surveyed large blocks of public land in the Conservation Area. Surveys of the large blocks of public land, such as Warramate and Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserves, are detailed in the table below.

The DELWP YCA Project Implementation Team continue to work with DELWP’s Land Management Policy Division to create a plan for gazettal under the National Parks Act for the large blocks which have already been surveyed.

No further surveys were conducted during 2018. The DELWP YCA Project Implementation Team is involved in ongoing discussions with the Office of Surveyor General to plan for commencement of surveys of riparian areas in 2019.

Survey reports provided to date:

Table 4: DELWP Public Land Surveys

Name of existing public land unit	Issues identified by surveyor (may apply only in part to the land)
Coranderrk NCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • boundaries not defined in cadastre and require survey to define • divestment / revocation required
Warramate NCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adjoining crown land to be added to reserve • minor and substantial encroachment • map base error • tenure over land
Haining Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • road to be formalised • area to be excluded from reserve or considered for crown grant
Yellingbo NCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unmade government road to be added to reserve • minor encroachment • road to be formalised
Sheepstation Creek <i>(part of Yellingbo NCR)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unmade government road to be added to reserve • minor and substantial encroachments • land locked freehold parcel that requires access • tenure over land (lease or licence)
Hoddles Creek Education Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • road to be formalised • Parks Victoria indicated not wanted in the reserve (It is noted that the area in the very south east corner of the public land was not included in the VEAC recommendations and is uncategorised public land).
Shepherds Creek	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minor and substantial encroachment • miscellaneous issues
Beenak Bushland Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unmade government road to be added to reserve • substantial encroachment • road to be formalised • miscellaneous issues
Wright Forest Bushland Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unmade government road to be added to reserve • minor encroachment • road to be formalised

Assessment of uncategorised public land identified by VEAC

Desktop assessments have been conducted of parcels / areas of land identified as uncategorised public land. This land will be assessed and retained or disposed of as appropriate. Assessment of this land is underway, in accordance with the Victorian Government Strategic Crown Land Assessment Policy and Guidelines and the Victorian Government Landholding Policy and Guidelines.

Yellingbo Investigation Area Bushfire planning process

The Yellingbo Conservation Area is located in an area with existing high level of bushfire risk and the local communities have raised concerns that bushfire risk has the potential to increase following revegetation of areas of Crown land.

In response to these concerns, the Minister for Energy, Environment, and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes committed to prioritising the development of a bushfire management plan, incorporating community knowledge and a risk-based approach to revegetation that will not increase bushfire risk to the local and broader communities. The *Yellingbo Conservation Area Bushfire Risk Management Plan 2018* (YCA Bushfire Risk Management Plan) has been prepared.

DELWP engaged Dr Kevin Tolhurst AM (University of Melbourne/Tolhurst Bushfire Services) and Justin Leonard (CSIRO) as independent fire science experts in the field of bushfire risk, to examine risk at both a landscape scale and at a local level. Dr Tolhurst and Mr Leonard provided independent advice and expertise in measuring the risk associated with the establishment of the Conservation Area and in developing mitigation measures that can be incorporated into the design of the Conservation Area. In consultation with Dr Tolhurst, DELWP used PHOENIX RapidFire bushfire modelling to measure the likelihood of bushfire in the local area (Yellingbo Investigation Area) and possible changes in risk as a result of increased vegetation on Crown land.

Consultation with key fire experts, agency staff and the CFA occurred during the development of the plan, and post the plan being released. This included:

- two information sessions on bushfire risk in the Yellingbo Investigation Area held in October/November 2017 with local CFA brigade captains to inform the plan—these sessions were led by Dr Tolhurst and Mr Leonard;
- meetings with local CFA brigades to provide spatial data on existing and proposed water points and access tracks to inform the plan;
- draft report was provided to CFA District 13 for review, prior to publication; and
- following the release of the *YCA Bushfire Risk Management Plan*, information sessions were held with each Cockatoo, Macclesfield, Yarra Junction, Gembrook, Hoddle’s Creek, Millgrove, Badger Creek, Yellingbo, and Gruyere CFA Brigades.

The *YCA Bushfire Risk Management Plan* and Kevin Tolhurst’s independent bushfire risk assessment were included on the Engage Victoria website on 13 August 2018.

Engaging with Other Groups

DELWP staff members have met with a range of stakeholders to discuss the implementation of the government response to the VEAC report. Meetings have included:

- working with Melbourne Water on two capital works programs within the Yellingbo Conservation Area;
- meeting with Yarra Ranges Council, Parks and Environment Team meeting to update progress;
- meeting with Yarra Ranges staff regarding the Yarra Valley Trail project;
- meeting with DELWP staff about the Yarra River Protection Act;
- meeting with Millgrove Residents Action Group to discuss an on-ground works program between Dee Road and River Road;
- meeting with Friends of Warramate to discuss the concept planning process and how mountain bike riding in Warramate would be considered as part of the process; and
- meeting with Greening Australia, Zoo’s Victoria and Parks Victoria to discuss Haining Farm.

Merryn Kelly, Regional Manager
Natural Environment Programs, Port Phillip Region
Department of Environment, Land, Water, and Planning (DELWP)

Parks Victoria

Parks Victoria continues to manage the existing Nature Conservation Reserves within the YCA and contribute to YCACC deliberations. For all of 2018 the District Manager position was vacant and various Area Chief Rangers and other senior personnel acted in the position for a succession of three-month periods. Those in acting positions continued to provide reports to YCACC but necessarily were limited in contributing to ongoing coordination. The following report has been provided by the current Acting District Manager.

Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve (YNCR)

Significant achievements in the Reserves within the Yellingbo Conservation Area include:

- continuation of strong partnership approach to the ongoing management of Yellingbo NCR with the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater – this year celebrating 50 years of Yellingbo NCR and volunteer involvement;
- contributing to revegetation programs (site preparation and weed control);
- restoration of the JESWA land on Ewen Road and Burringmar Biik (previous Clark property) near Parslows Bridge, regular meetings and safety audits;
- mapping the extent of key pest plant species and development of pest plant control program;
- delivery of pest plant program utilising Good Neighbour grants and recurrent funds across the reserve (target species included ragwort, St Peters Wort, blackberry, climbing plants such as honeysuckle, and wandering trad);
- delivery of fox and cat control throughout key areas of the reserve;
- continued delivery of the Deer Control Program as part of the District Deer Program including 16 programmed shoots, 22 deer culled (17 Fallow, 5 Sambar) with 318 volunteer hours from Sporting Shooters Association Australia and Australian Deer Association (SSAA & ADA);
- importantly for Yellingbo NCR, three private property landholders permitted the ADA and SSAA to shoot on their private property for the first time (legal arrangement made direct between landholder and SSAA & ADA). This enabled deer previously unable to be shot due to land tenure and restricted access within the Reserve to be culled resulting in a net gain for both the Reserve and landholders—Yellingbo Private properties 19 deer culled (18 Sambar & 1 Fallow);
- started deer monitoring using pellet count surveys to determine effectiveness of the deer control program;
- investigating road infrastructure improvements for fire access as part of the Melbourne Fire and Emergency Program (projects planned for 2018/19 and 2019/2020);
- upgrading boardwalks and access for volunteer field workers;
- managing the last Green Army team activities within the reserve in partnership with the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater;
- development of revegetation plan for Youngs Swamp revegetation site in preparation for Faunal Emblems Program 2018-2020;
- delivery of fire protection works;
- implementation of the Cockatoo Swamp dewatering project by Melbourne Water and key partners;
- control of Bell Miner colonies in proximity to key breeding areas for the Helmeted Honeyeater;
- contribution to the review of the Helmeted Honeyeater Five Year Recovery Plan;
- involvement in numerous committees and attendance at meetings;

- supporting the Australian Research Council grant investigation into the response of vegetation to hydrological regimes being led by Melbourne University.

Haining Farm

- Haining Farm Implementation Working Group formed by Parks Victoria with members representing PV, CFA, DELWP, Zoos Victoria, Melbourne Water, Shire of Yarra Ranges, Greening Australia, YCACC, community representatives;
- winding up of farm operations with progressive removal of cattle from the farm in consultation with Peter Doyle (share farmer);
- clean-up of farm including removal of asbestos, derelict fencing, environmental and noxious weeds;
- development of wetland cells, fencing of conservation zone, revegetation of conservations zone (commenced);
- implementation of bushfire mitigation measures (\$670k) by Melbourne Fire and Emergency Program to be completed by March 2019;
- ongoing community engagement and involvement in the future use of the old dairy site and north east corner of the reserve.

Sassafras Creek Nature Conservation Reserve

- 25k contract weed works in Sassafras Creek and Perrins Creek from the Peri Urban weed funding;
- 30 days of in house labour allocated to weed control along the entire length of Sassafras Creek focussing on Blackberry, Cape Ivy, Wandering tradescantia, Blue periwinkle, Montbretia, Angled Onion and English ivy;
- 50k funding allocation to purchase materials to repair existing infrastructure on Sassafras and Menzies Creeks;
- 180 days of in house labour allocated during 18/19 financial year to do track/asset improvement works on Sassafras and Menzies creeks. Works include pressure cleaning of bridges and boardwalks, gradual replacement of bridge and boardwalk decking with fibre reinforced plastic, clearing of fallen trees and carting and laying gravel/rubble to repair eroded or wet sections of track;
- monthly working bees held by Friends of Sassafras Creek in the vicinity of Lyrebird Falls reception Centre focussing on weed control;
- ongoing roadside weed control via contractors engaged by Yarra Ranges Council.

Warramate Hills Nature Conservation Reserve

- annual Fox control program in the reserve;
- Deer Control program as part of the District deer program. 16 programmed shoots, 18 Sambar culled, 467 volunteer hours;
- continued deer monitoring using pellet count surveys to determine effectiveness of the deer control program;
- fuel break slashing as part of the annual fuel break slashing program continues;
- liaison with Friends of the Warramate and Yarra Ranges Mt Bikers regarding mountain biking in the reserve continues;
- undertook monitoring of the 2 million tree revegetation to determine attrition rates;
- Burgan control in priority areas to protect revegetation;
- fauna survey undertaken with Field Naturalist Club of Victoria.

Conrad Annal, Area Chief Ranger
Parks Victoria

Melbourne Water

While the major waterways of the Yarra, Little Yarra and Woori Yallock draw our attention, Melbourne Water does undertake activities across the whole catchment. Works are delivered directly through a range of capital works projects and maintenance activities and indirectly through incentives and grants offered to landholders such as through the Stream Frontage Management Program and Rural Land Program.

The table below provides the Melbourne Water level of investment in the Yellingbo Investigation Area over the last twelve months across the different programs. (These are works across waterways within the entire investigations area as Melbourne Water does not limit our activities to the public land spaces only).

Capital projects have been spread across the Yarra River, Cockatoo Creek, McCrae Creek, Little Yarra River, Hoddles Creek, Woori Yallock Creek, Macclesfield Creek and Wandin Yallock Creek.

Melbourne Water has through the Stream Frontages Program and other established long-term engagement with many neighbouring landowners in the riparian zones.

Works Programs

Summary data for 1/11/2017 to 1/10/2018:

Table 5: Melbourne Water Direct Works

MW Direct Works	Amount Paid Inc. GST	No. of projects / work orders
Capital Works Projects	\$367,379	12 projects
Operational Expenditure:		
Programmed Maintenance -		
Natural Resource Management (Vegetation management incl. weed control, revegetation, pest control)	\$748,236	182 work orders
Unprogrammed Works:		
Civil (Stabilisation, Debris, Litter Removal)	\$97,224	23 work orders
Natural Resource Management (Vegetation mgmt. incl. weed control, revegetation, pest control)	\$70,092	14 work orders
TOTAL DIRECT EXPENDITURE	\$915,552	12 Projects 231 work orders

- This includes any Direct Works within the broader VEAC investigation area and is the same as the area reported on last year.

Grants and Incentives Programs

Summary data for 1/11/2017 to 1/10/2018:

Table 6: Melbourne Water Grants and Incentives Programs

Grants & Incentive Programs	Amount Paid including GST	No. of projects
Community Grants	\$49,390	4
Rural Land Program	\$8,450	2
Stream Frontage Management Program	\$285,373	91
TOTAL GRANTS	\$343,213	97

- This includes any grant project paid within the broader VEAC investigation area and is the same as the area reported on last year.

- We have enhanced our reporting methodology from previous years. Our method has improved to involve an interrogation of spatial data and thus a greater number of grant sites within the area have been picked up.
- Note that the projects include any waterway condition improvement projects funded in the VEAC investigation area through the RHIP during the nominated time period – whether these were due to specifically targeting new landholders as part of the VEAC project or they just happen to be ongoing sites that fall within the area.

*Sarah Gaskill, Acting Team Leader – Upper Yarra
South East & Upper Yarra Regional Services, Waterways & Land, Service Delivery Group
Melbourne Water*

Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (PPWCMA)

Yarra4Life Program

Established in 2007, Yarra4Life is a multi-agency collaborative program which brings together agencies, non-government organisations and community groups to protect and enhance the unique environmental values of the Yarra Valley. The driving force of Yarra4Life has always been that by working together we can achieve more than we could working alone. The Port Phillip & Westernport CMA coordinates Yarra4Life on behalf of the partner organisations by convening a Coordination Committee, managing the project's finances and employing project staff who lead the delivery on on-ground works, reporting and promotion.

Yarra4Life's Vision is that ecosystems across the Yarra4Life landscape are protected, connected and resilient, and supported by a community that values the natural environment. Between 2013 and 2018 Yarra4Life coordinated a \$1 million project, funded by the Australian Government's National Landcare Program, that focused on improving the condition and extent of habitat for the Helmeted Honeyeater and lowland Leadbeater's Possum.

Achievements in 2017/18

A major achievement for Yarra4Life in 2017/18 was the completion of the five-year, \$1Million National Landcare funded project 'Protecting and connecting EPBC listed species in the Yarra Ranges Project'.

Overall the project has achieved the following outputs:

- development of an Ecological Character Description (ECD) for the Helmeted Honeyeater and Lowland Leadbeater's possum, including habitat modelling;
- development of an action plan associated with the ECD;
- 20.8 Hectares of revegetation in priority areas to enhance habitat connectivity and structure;
- 2.3 Hectares of land now known as Burrungma Biik was purchased and transferred to the National Reserves System and in the process of being restored;
- 13.8km of fencing with 40.5 Ha protected through fencing activities;
- 91 Ha of weeds were treated;
- 514.5Ha of pest animal control was undertaken;
- 30 landowners adopted improved natural resource management practices on their properties;
- 31 community events attended by 929 participants.

In addition, the Yarra4Life Coordination Committee also developed a new five-year Strategic Plan and undertook a review of the Yarra4Life Communications Plan.

*Corinne Mays, Environmental Projects Manager
PPWCMA.*

Zoos Victoria

Zoos Victoria currently manages the Coranderrk (Bushland) Nature Conservation Reserve and leads or contributes significant research and strategies relating to threatened species including the Helmeted Honeyeater and Leadbeater's Possum.

Captive populations of Helmeted Honeyeater and Lowland Leadbeater's Possum were maintained at Healesville Sanctuary, and five captive-bred Helmeted Honeyeaters were released to Yellingbo NCR in September. Intensive population monitoring was undertaken to document the condition of the Lowland Leadbeater's Possum population, which now numbers fewer than 40 individuals. Strategies to improve genetic diversity within Helmeted Honeyeater and Lowland Leadbeater's Possum populations have been developed with Monash University and other programme partners, and implementation has commenced. Two projects, focused on habitat protection fencing and improving floodplain hydrology, were initiated with Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water and the University of Melbourne in order to protect and enhance the condition of the most critical Lowland Leadbeater's Possum habitat at Yellingbo NCR along the Macclesfield Creek. Surveys were undertaken beyond Yellingbo to identify new potential release sites for both species.

Below is an update on actions being implemented by Zoos Victoria in the Coranderrk Bushland.

Zoos Victoria completed the following works during the financial year 2017–2018:

- 48,000 shrubs planted in Barak floodplain;
- \$33,500 weed control in Barak and Boggy floodplains;
- 0.7 ha of Kunzea cleared from northern end of reserve;
- Eastern Grey kangaroo sterilisation program continued – another 17 males treated, bringing it to a total of 36 animals treated to date in order to restrict population growth;
- fox control undertaken, but there is still at least one onsite;
- \$200K upgrade works to fox exclusion fence including:
 - replace 3.5km floppy top;
 - major vegetation pruning back from fence external side;
 - new plastic collaring of external trees adjacent to fence to stop climbing;
 - removal of old structures adjacent to fence to stop climbing;
- eradication of all feral/stray cats from the property; and
- rabbit suppression program undertaken – ongoing.

Thus far for the financial year 2018–2019 the following works have been completed:

- works completed to restore the hydrology of Barak floodplain— additional \$10K hydrology modification works in Barak floodplain scheduled for summer 2019 (on top of \$65K spent summer 2018);
- 45,000 stems planted within Barak floodplain to restore habitat for Helmeted Honeyeaters and Lowland Leadbeater's Possums (and 93,000 stems during the past 18 months);
- targeted weed control in Barak and Boggy Creek floodplains—additional \$10,000 spent on weed control in both floodplains;
- ongoing control of foxes and cats—the site has now been cat free for 12 months but new fox incursions have occurred—fox scent detection dogs from Phillip Island Nature Parks utilised to assist fox control for a week in October;
- trapping and relocation of Swamp Wallabies to manage browsing impacts on habitat condition and revegetation;

- ongoing sterilization of Eastern Grey Kangaroos to manage population growth.

***Dr Dan Harley, Threatened Species Biologist**
Wildlife Conservation and Science, Healesville Sanctuary*

Yarra Ranges Council

The Yarra Ranges Council owns/manages land parcels within or immediately adjacent to the YCA the Warburton Rail Trail, Butterfield Wildlife Reserve, Doon Road Caravan Park, Rockingham Reserve, Everard Picnic Ground, Baynes Park and Yarra Junction Recreation Reserve, for example. These areas are managed for conservation and community use.

Resources allocated to YCA

In addition to staff participation, Council resources, plans and policies which support the work in the YCA include:

- Cultural Heritage resources – YRC Reconciliation Framework; and Indigenous Development Officer;
- Recreation resources - YRC Recreation and Open Space Strategy, and Hike and Bike Plan;
- Waterway health resources - Integrated Water Management Plan, and the proposed Planning Scheme Amendment C148 mentioned earlier; and
- Biodiversity resources - Environment Strategy, Flora and Fauna Strategy, and Environmental Significance Overlays.

Highlights

Other highlights include:

- assisting with information, strategies for community engagement and venues for community consultation and worked towards shared consultation and integrated communications;
- providing specialist staff advice and participation in meetings and working groups;
- assisting with management of bushfire risk through the roadside and reserve annual fire slashing program and targeted woody weed control works to reduce fuel loads in roadside reserves;
- preparation of councils Catchment Priority Mapping project which assesses the water catchments within Yarra Ranges and assists with prioritising actions to protect and enhance those catchments;
- management of biodiversity and control of pest plants in roadsides and reserves in proximity to the Conservation Area;
- obtaining a Biodiversity Response Planning grant from DELWP for the ‘Birds to Butterfield’ project, which will deliver weed control, deer control, remnant vegetation fencing and education activities to private landowners and some public land in the area between Yellingbo NCR and Butterfields Reserve over three years;
- influencing land management and development on private land adjacent to the YCA through Council’s “Ribbons of Green” habitat restoration program that aids land managers to increase habitat values on their land. Around 60,000 plants per annum are provided to private landholders, school, community groups and onto council sites. The program also provides land managers in priority landscapes with funds to fence remnant vegetation and assist with weed control. This program also facilitates the delivery of several training courses in good land management, including practical sessions on weed control techniques, restoration and revegetation methodologies, pasture management and biodiversity protection;

- the Proposed Planning Scheme Amendment C148 proposes to update our existing Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO) to include additional areas supporting high biodiversity values, particularly along waterways. This will afford a higher priority to the protection of biodiversity values on land within the new ESO when assessing planning permit applications for use and development; and
- Council's annual works program ensures on ground maintenance and development of land owned/managed by Council within and adjoining the YCA.

Amanda Smith
Coordinator Biodiversity Conservation
Yarra Ranges Council

Cardinia Shire Council

Through Cardinia's annual operational works program, the following activities have commenced or have been undertaken in areas of land under council's jurisdiction which occur within the YCA's southern boundary.

Fire management works

- fuel break slashing program in reserves - assessing sites for 1st cut underway; and
- slashing of strategic and tactical fire breaks along roadsides – first cut underway mid November.

Natural Reserves - Operational works undertaken/ongoing July 2018- June 2019

NB. Works in the following list of reserves include herbaceous, grassy and major woody weed control, minor revegetation works, track clearance, minor infrastructure installation.

Total estimated expenditure - \$50,000

Table 7: Cardinia Shire Natural Reserves - Operational works July 2018- June 2019

Reserve name	Works conducted/underway for 2018/19
Avonsleigh Common Bushland Reserve	Herbaceous, grassy and major woody weed control, minor revegetation works, track clearance. Grass slashing.
Emerald Lake Park	Herbaceous, grassy and major woody weed control, minor revegetation works, track clearance
Wattle Creek Bushland Reserve	Herbaceous, grassy and major woody weed control. Track clearance
Baker Street Reserve	Herbaceous, grassy and major woody weed control. Track clearance
Stewart Rd Reserve	Woody weed control around revegetation zone and blackberry control in surrounding bushland.
Garden City Estate (Wrights Forest Reserve)	Controlled burn conducted in conjunction with PV and CFA, August 2018 for fuel reduction/ecological purposes
Emerald Quarry/Bob James Reserve	Woody weed control scheduled for Dec-June

Other indirect activities

- member of Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Team – have appointed a consultant to carry out an investigation on the potential of nodes along Cardinia creek as future release site for the Helmeted Honeyeater;
- member of Yarra 4 Life Project, and assisting in program development, and identifying collaboration opportunities with other member agencies;

- advocacy of best practise environmental management on private land through landholder participation in Council's Weed Control Grant Scheme 2018/19 round;
- continuation of the Cardinia Gardens for Wildlife Program;
- support to Macclesfield Landcare and Johns Hill Landcare Group for environmental activities - e.g. From Yellingbo to Butterfield Project;
- undertaking a review of the Cardinia Shire *Pest Plant Management Strategy 2012 -2017*;
- key stakeholder in the development of a draft *Eastern Regional Pest Animal Strategy*;
- development of a draft Biodiversity Strategy with an accompanying Biodiversity audit, quantifying Cardinia's biodiversity assets.

***Marianne Sawyer, Biodiversity Officer
Cardinia Shire Council***

Trust for Nature

Throughout the VEAC investigation area there are thirty-one properties permanently protected with Trust for Nature conservation covenants, eight of these were established during the time of YCACC. Historically Trust for Nature has been extensively involved in the purchase and transfer of new additions to Crown Land Reserve with particular focus on the Yellingbo Conservation Area. Currently, Trust for Nature is the owner of Wanderslore Reserve in Launching Place. The site is managed in collaboration with the Wanderslore Committee of Management.

2017-2018 Activities:

- in collaboration with the PPWCMA, Friends of Helmeted Honeyeater, negotiated and contributed to the purchase of the 2.3 hectare Burrungma Biik Reserve;
- in collaboration with the Friends of Helmeted Honeyeater, Judith Eardley Saves Wildlife Foundation negotiated and contributed to the purchase of the 19.66 hectare Jeanne Wilcox Reserve;
- Yarra4Life Coordination Committee Member;
- the registration of 5 new conservation covenants in the VEAC investigation area;
- in collaboration with the PPWCMA, delivered a Certificate III in Conservation and Land Management Course for Traditional Owners;
- completed 19 Conservation Management Plans for properties in the VEAC Investigation Area; and
- assisted on the prioritisation of private land purchase with the Friends of Helmeted Honeyeater.

***Ben Cullen, Regional Manager - Port Phillip & Westernport
Trust for Nature***

Coordination

The YCACC Annual Report 2017 identified that:

“Whilst the co-ordination model that is defined for YCACC can be seen to have many benefits and potential strengths, implementation is challenging. YCACC has an opportunity to make the model work but some changes are required – suggestions from the September Agency meeting include: defining roles and responsibilities; MOUs with all agencies to agree on their long term commitment to the project including; accessibility of information readily available in a central location, including Action Plan for agencies and community; quarterly works programming session where we can strategically coordinate projects; and creation of spatial overlays on projects each agency is working on – living document online”.

Collaborative work within the YCA between conservation groups and the Landcare Network continue notably in the Yarra4Life *Yellingbo to Butterfield project* where conversations with landholders from 50 properties resulted in projects being planned/undertaken on 29 properties and 7 more doing works themselves or with Melbourne Water. This included weed control works on 15 properties; revegetation works planned for 8 properties; feral animal control on 5 properties; fencing to protect remnants and allow natural regeneration of bushland on 6 properties; fencing gullies and dams on 4 properties; wetland creation and rehabilitation on 3 properties; and erosion control works on 3 properties.

In addition, further support for the protection of the Helmeted Honeyeater has been achieved by the Shire of Yarra Ranges and regional partners through the Biodiversity Fund.

Co-operation between agencies has provided some on-ground works within the YCA as detailed by the lead agency previously in this report.

Two major areas that demonstrate co-ordination are:

- the establishment of the YCACC website which provides a valuable YCA resource including information on all agency capital works, relevant strategies and research to inform and assist key stakeholders (including other agencies) and the wider community – all information provided in a central location as identified in 2017. The website has also been able to publish a number of good practice case studies that help to publicise the benefits of collaboration; and
- the draft 10-Year YCA Plan that, although driven and managed by the DELWP Implementation Team, involved contributions from all agencies and YCACC Committee members.

The stakeholder database has been used in communication but provides the opportunity for further development and more constant communication in future.

The opportunity to conduct quarterly works programming session which would have enabled YCACC to strategically coordinate projects and opportunities for Ministerial engagement (the good news stories) still exist but require the ongoing existence of a coordinating body.

The development of YCA Agency Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) was not fully investigated during YCACC’s three-year term but still remains a possibility for the future.

Learnings

Telling the Story

The need for a compelling narrative and promotion of the values being preserved in the YCA has been highlighted by the community stakeholder meetings leading up to the development of the draft 10-Year YCA Plan.

Whilst the YCACC website has been developed, good practice case studies published, and the Bushfire Plan produced, a number of myths and preconceptions about the establishment of the YCA are yet to be addressed and good ideas and suggestions identified in a number of community meetings are yet to be processed systematically.

Although the Wurundjeri Land Council was contacted regarding a less confusing and potentially iconic name for the Conservation Area the establishment of a new name has not been progressed.

YCA Values

The establishment and description of six precincts in the YCA has progressed the mapping of YCA boundaries but detailed smaller scale mapping of the actual values (for example, cultural heritage, remnant vegetation, pest plants and animals, species diversity and hotspots) and threats has not yet been undertaken.

Resources Required

Whilst one of the drivers for establishing the YCA draft 10-year Plan was to provide the compelling case for further State Government funding for establishing and maintaining the YCA, this is yet to be developed. YCACC discussions regarding the desirability of complementary funding from corporate sponsorship, Federal grants, and partnerships with Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Authority and Yarra4Life for community group partnerships to access philanthropic funds have also not progressed.

Conclusions

It is pleasing to note that the Committee meets the benchmarks specified for three indicators and the benchmark established in 2017 for the fourth indicator.

However, the 2018 review of the Action Plan demonstrates that:

- progress has been made to some degree in all of the goal areas (mostly in Goals 1, 3, and 5; less likely in Goals 2, 4, 8 and 9);
- much of the work in each of the goal areas is ongoing;
- of the 70 action items identified, 20% (n=14) have been completed, 41% (n=29) are ongoing [or data has not been provided to YCACC], 39% (n=27) are not started yet; and
- much work is still required to implement the VEAC Recommendations as approved;
- a new name be assigned to the YCA as a priority - the current name (Yellingbo Conservation Area) has and remains a significant impediment to the community understanding of the conservation area.

Whilst progress has been made to some degree in planning (Bushfire Plan, Draft 10-Year YCA Plan, Communication and Engagement Plan, for example), the concomitant monitoring and evaluation processes have not been progressed thus limiting capacity to evaluate outcomes or achievement of Key Performance Indicators.

The Committee self-evaluation demonstrates concern about progress in establishing the YCA but also commitment to improving co-ordination and overcoming barriers to progress.

Recommendations

Given the decision of the Minister, conveyed to YCACC by the DELWP Regional Director Port Phillip Kelly Crosthwaite in a letter on 12 November 2018, YCACC acknowledges that recommendations from the Committee are no longer required.

However, it is noted that YCACC had identified recommendations to improve YCACC into the next term given the original ten-year commitment to YCACC.

YCACC suggests that these recommendations should be considered strongly where applicable in the establishment of the new coordinating committee of land managers and the broader-based community reference group.

These recommendations include:

- Flexible agency membership (potentially given to a position rather than an individual) to allow for proxy voting to allow the Committee to work more effectively;
- Proxy voting allowed;
- More consistent senior agency representation - YCACC must have 'decision makers' around the table who are empowered to make recommendations and decisions within their organisations;
- More timely replacement process for vacant Committee positions specified;
- Clearer role in allocation of funds and budget due diligence - YCACC must have ability to agree on dollars spent in the YCA; and
- Stronger community representation.

References

- Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI). (2014, March). *Victorian Government Response to Victorian Environmental Assessment Council's Yellingbo Investigation Final Report*. Melbourne: State Government of Victoria. Retrieved from <http://www.veac.vic.gov.au/documents/Victorian-Government-Response-to-VEAC-Yellingbo-Investigation.pdf>
- Department of Environment Land Water and Planning (DELWP). (2018). *Yellingbo Conservation Area Draft 10 Year Plan: For Public Comment*. Melbourne: Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) & Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee (YCACC). Retrieved from <https://ycacc.com.au/coordinated-management/yca-plan/>
- Department of Environment Land Water and Planning (DELWP). (2018). *Haining Farm Bushfire Mitigation Measures*. Melbourne: State Government of Victoria. Retrieved from https://s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/hdp.au.prod.app.vic-engage.files/4315/3301/9892/20180731_HainingFarmBushfireMitigationMeasuresreport.pdf.
- Department of Environment Land Water and Planning (DELWP). (2018). *Haining Farm Bushfire Risk Analysis*. Melbourne: State Government of Victoria. Retrieved from https://engage.vic.gov.au/download_file/7230/1657
- Department of Environment Land Water and Planning (DELWP). (2018). *Yellingbo Conservation Area Bushfire Risk Management Plan*. Melbourne: State Government of Victoria. Retrieved from https://engage.vic.gov.au/download_file/10447/944
- Tolhurst, K. G. (2018, April 9). *Bushfire Risk Analysis in the Yellingbo Area*. Melbourne: School of Ecosystem and Forest Sciences, University of Melbourne. Retrieved from https://engage.vic.gov.au/download_file/10415/944
- Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC). (2013). *Yellingbo Investigation Final Report*. East Melbourne: VEAC. Retrieved from http://www.veac.vic.gov.au/documents/YellingboFINAL_REPORT-interactive-web.pdf
- Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee (YCACC). (2017). *YCA Action Plan 2016 - 2018*. Woori Yallock: YCACC. Retrieved from https://ycacc.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/YCACC_152.pdf
- Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee (YCACC). (2017). *Annual Report*. Woori Yallock: YCACC. Retrieved from <https://ycacc.com.au/about-us/reports/>
- Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee (YCACC). (2018). *Licensing Principles for Fencing and Grazing within Yellingbo Conservation Area*. In *Yellingbo Conservation Area draft 10 Year Plan* (pp. 98 - 107). Knoxfield: Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). <https://ycacc.com.au/coordinated-management/yca-plan/>

Appendix A: Meeting Attendance

YCACC Member	YCACC Meeting Dates 2018												
	6 Feb	20 Feb	20 Mar	17 April	15 May	19 June	17 July	21 Aug	18 Sept	16 Oct	20 Nov	18 Dec	% Attended
Anne Langworthy <i>Chairperson and Independent Convener</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100%
Ben Cullen <i>Trust for Nature</i>	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	A	A	✓	A	✓	A	✓	58%
Dan Harley <i>Zoos Victoria</i>	✓	A	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	83%
Jeff Latter <i>Community representative – Cardinia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	92%
Cr Jim Child <i>Yarra Ranges Council</i>	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	A	✓	75%
Marianne Sawyer <i>Cardinia Shire representative</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	83%
Merryn Kelly <i>Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)</i>	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	83%
Peter Cooper <i>Community representative - Yarra Ranges</i>	✓	A	✓	A	✓	✓	A	A	A	✓	✓	A	50%
Stephen Hosking <i>Melbourne Water</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	83%
Sue Tardif <i>Community representative - Yarra Ranges</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	A	75%
% Members attending	100%	50%	100%	80%	90%	80%	60%	80%	50%	90%	80%	80%	78%
Vacant Position <i>Parks Victoria</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Vacant Position <i>Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (PPWCMA)</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Vacant Position <i>CFA</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Vacant Position <i>Community representative - Yarra Ranges</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Vacant Position <i>Wurundjeri Land Council</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Invited Guests													
	6 Feb	20 Feb	20 Mar	17 April	15 May	19 June	17 July	21 Aug	18 Sept	16 Oct	20 Nov	18 Dec	% Attended
Dan Robertson <i>Melbourne Water</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100%
Mark Scida <i>Melbourne Water</i>							✓						
Sarah Gaskill <i>Melbourne Water</i>									✓	A	A		
Justin Foster <i>Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)</i>	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	75%
Corrine Mays <i>Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (PPWCMA)</i>	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	83%
Charley Woolmore <i>Wurundjeri Tribe Land Council</i>				✓		✓							
Uncle Dave Wandin <i>Wurundjeri Tribe Land Council</i>										✓	A	A	
Jack Dinkgreve <i>Parks Victoria</i>	✓	A	✓	✓									
Conrad Annal <i>Parks Victoria</i>		✓									✓	✓	
Georgia Kerr <i>Parks Victoria</i>					A	✓	✓	✓	✓	A			
Joshua Chikuse <i>Parks Victoria</i>		✓	✓				✓						
Rachel Lee <i>Youth Ambassador - Yarra Ranges Council</i>		✓											
Amelia Featherstone <i>Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)</i>	✓												
Tori McLennon <i>Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)</i>					✓								
Doug West <i>Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)</i>	✓												
Roland Maxwell <i>Boojum – Lead Designer</i>	✓												
Suzie Wells <i>Boojum</i>	✓												

Invited Guests													
	6 Feb	20 Feb	20 Mar	17 April	15 May	19 June	17 July	21 Aug	18 Sept	16 Oct	20 Nov	18 Dec	
Samantha Cross <i>Coordinator Passive Reserves Cardinia Shire Council</i>				✓									
Bronwyn Koll <i>Queensland Fruit Fly Regional Coordinator Yarra Valley</i>					✓								
Gaye Gadsden <i>Project Coordinator Yellingbo to Butterfield</i>								✓					
Ross Williamson <i>Director, Healesville Sanctuary</i>								✓					

Appendix B: External Review Terms of Reference

2 Attachments



Scope YCACC review.docx



Untitled attachment 00036.htm

From: David.Shelton@delwp.vic.gov.au [<mailto:David.Shelton@delwp.vic.gov.au>]

Sent: Thursday, 28 June 2018 10:13 AM

To: anne.langworthy@bigpond.com; Ben Cullen; Charley Woolmore; craig.bray@parks.vic.gov.au; CrJimChild@yarraranges.vic.gov.au; [Dan Harley](mailto:Dan.Harley); [Sue Tardif](mailto:Sue.Tardif); jl7321@cenitex.vic.gov.au; [Peter Cooper](mailto:Peter.Cooper); [Marianne Sawyer](mailto:Marianne.Sawyer); steve.hosking@melbournewater.com.au; [Corinne Mays](mailto:Corinne.Mays); Merryn.Kelly@delwp.vic.gov.au

Subject: Fwd: YCACC Review

Good morning YCACC members,

As Merryn has mentioned, DELWP is commissioning an independent review of YCACC.

The imperative to conduct this review comes from long standing government policy. YCACC was created on 27 October 2015. Premier's Circular No. 2013/2 mandates that all entities must be reviewed - against the tests in the Circular - within three years of their creation, and then at least every six years thereafter.

You will also be aware that YCACC member terms expire on 30 November 2018 (one week after the election). In light of this, and the fact that caretaker arrangements will operate from 1 November, it is timely to conduct this review now.

The review scope is attached. As Merryn has outlined, the review presents an opportunity for YCACC members to provide objective feedback on the committee, the terms of reference and how the committee could be improved.

DELWP is finalising procurement of a consultant at present, and the consultant will be in touch once appointed.

Regards,

David Shelton

David Shelton

Manager, Governance | Land Management Policy Division

Energy, Environment and Climate Change | Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning

Review of Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee June 2018

Purpose

To review the role and effectiveness of YCACC and to make recommendations about any changes to the structure and function of YCACC that would make it more effective for its next term.

Context

YCACC was created on 27 October 2015. Premier's Circular No. 2013/2 mandates that all entities must be reviewed - against the tests in the Circular - within three years of their creation, and then at least every six years thereafter.

In addition, YCACC terms expire on 30 November 2018 (one week after the election). In light of this, and the fact that caretaker arrangements operate from 1 November, this review is being undertaken now to ensure there is a smooth transition to any new arrangements and new appointments.

Scope

This is intended to be a streamlined review, that can be completed within short timeframes.

An independent person will be appointed to undertake this review, and report directly to the Minister.

The review will commence on 1 July 2018 and will be completed by mid-August 2018.

The review will:

- consider the effectiveness of the Committee in delivering against its Terms of Reference
- evaluate the extent to which the Committee has improved coordination and collaboration between land managers and other agencies in line with the VEAC recommendations

The review will make recommendations about adjustments, if any, to the structure and responsibilities of the committee that would improve effectiveness and efficiency.

Process

Step 1: An inception meeting with the DELWP Governance Unit (David Shelton)

Step 2: Interview with Anne Langworthy, Convener YCACC

Step 3: other interviews as determined by the reviewer (including YCACC members)

A report will be delivered to the Minister.