



# Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee (YCACC) Self-evaluation Report

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



*December 2018*



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## 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

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The Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee (YCACC) Self-evaluation 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 this Report draws on the expertise of committee members at the October and November monthly YCACC meetings, and a short survey completed at the October meeting.

Information for this report was provided by:

- Anne Langworthy – Independent Convener, YCACC
- Ben Cullen – Trust for Nature;
- Corinne Mays – Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (PPWCMA);
- Cr Jim Child – Yarra Ranges Council;
- Dan Harley – Zoos Victoria;
- Jeff Latter – Community Member, nominated by Cardinia Shire Council;
- Marianne Sawyer – Cardinia Shire Council;
- Merryn Kelly – Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP);
- Peter Cooper – Community Member, Yarra Ranges Council;
- Steve Hosking – Melbourne Water;
- Sue Tardif – Community Member, nominated by Yarra Ranges Council;
- Uncle Dave Wandin – Wurundjeri Land Council.

## Introduction

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This YCACC report has been prepared for the Hon Lily D'Ambrosio, Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes.

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 a Yellingbo Conservation Area Action Plan, an Annual Report to the Minister, and an Annual Business Plan.

- YCACC completed the *Yellingbo Conservation Area Action Plan* in 2017 and has provided a review of this plan for the Minister for the year ending 2018. The review reports against YCACC Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and actions listed in the Action Plan.
- YCACC has also completed and submitted the YCACC Annual Report for 2018.
- A YCACC Business Report has not been completed in traditional format because YCACC did not manage the financial accounts nor the YCA implementation.

According to the YCACC Terms of Reference the business plan should include:

- the nature and scope of the activities to be undertaken by the committee to address the functions specified in the terms of reference
- the performance targets and other measures by which the performance of the committee may be judged in relation to its functions; and
- estimates of the expenditure required to support the operation of the committee for the financial year.

Many of the requirements of the YCACC Business Plan are articulated in the Action Plan and Annual reports. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) who managed the YCA budget will be able to inform the Minister of the financial requirements for the establishment and ongoing costs of maintaining the Yellingbo Conservation Area.

This YCACC Self-evaluation Report addresses a Committee Key Performance Indicator as listed in the *Yellingbo Conservation Area Action Plan 2016 -2018*.

## YCACC Membership (as at December 2018)

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- 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 YCACCC 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

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### 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.

# YCACC Self-Assessment and Reviews

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## YCACC Reviews

According to the YCACC Terms of Reference the Committee is required to undertake an annual self-evaluation. The purpose of the YCACC self-evaluation is to form part of 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;
- the Committee's performance against the performance indicators and other measures in its annual report and action plan in lieu of the business plan; and
- for this year, advice to the Minister on the transition to the YCACC next term.

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 proceeded with the self-evaluation process at the 16 October 2018 meeting. Below is a summary of that process.

In response to YCAC's request for an extension of the Committee term until February 28 in order to assist in the transition process, On 30 October 2018 the Minister wrote to YCACC inviting members to extend their term until 31 January 2019.

On Monday 12 November YCACC were advised that the Minister has given permission for the Nous Group External Review Report of YCACC to be provided in confidence to all who participated in the interviews. DELWP staff forwarded the confidential report via Australia Post to all participants on Monday 12 November 2018. As the report was not notated as confidential, YCACC members subsequently learned that the report had been potentially circulated more widely before YCACC was provided the opportunity of examining the report and responding to the Minister.

A brief analysis of key differences between the two reviews follows the self-evaluation report below.

## YCACC Self-evaluation

### Key Performance Indicator – 12 meetings held annually.

The Committee has met on the third Tuesday of every month. The January 2018 meeting was deferred to 6<sup>th</sup> February resulting in two meetings being held in February. Two meetings during this period failed to meet the requirements for a quorum and decisions were deferred to the next meeting.

### Key Performance Indicator – 75% attendance at meetings.

The overall attendance at Committee meetings over the last 12 months [*January to December 2018*] was 78% (94 attendances; 26 apologies; 12 meetings).

### Key Performance Area - Number of out-of-session Working Groups and other meetings.

At least 41 out-of-session working group and other meetings were held during the year. A number of meetings were also held between specific agencies some of which are described in the agency reports.



**Table 1: Working Groups and other Meetings**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>WORKING GROUPS AND OTHER MEETINGS</b>
02/01/18 28/02/18 23/03/18 20/04/18 18/05/18 22/06/18 10/08/18 07/09/18 12/10/18 30/11/18	Haining Farm Implementation Working Group  (10 meetings during 2018)
not recorded	Grazing Licences Working Group (3 meetings)
18/4/2018 9/5/2018 4/6/2018	YCACC Web Development Working Group (3 meetings)
23/1/2018	Emerald Village Township Group (presentation)
4/04/2018	Cardinia Youth Council (presentation)
12/12/2107 10/1/2018 30/1/2018 20/2/2018 30/5/2018	Youth Ambassadors Yarra Ranges Council (meetings and presentation to YCACC)
28/2/2018	Millgrove Township Group (presentation)
6/3/2018	Woori Yallock Township Group (presentation)
13/3/2018 29/5/2018	Landcare Network (presentations)
21/4/2018	Yarra Ranges Environmental Advisory Committee (presentation)
20/6/2018	PPWCMA Field Trip
28/8/2018+	YCACC External Review Interviews Nous Group (individual interviews)
16/9/2018	Wurundjeri Cultural Awareness (training)
17/8/2018 18/8/2018 23/8/2018 24/8/2018 25/8/2018 28/8/2018 31/8/2018 1/9/2018 4/9/2018	YCA Draft 10-Year Plan - Community Consultations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Pop-up – Healesville</li> <li>• Community Pop-up – Yarra Junction</li> <li>• Community Drop-in – Healesville</li> <li>• Community Pop-up – Seville</li> <li>• Community Drop-in – Yarra Junction</li> <li>• Community Pop-up – Monbulk</li> <li>• Community Pop-up – Emerald</li> <li>• Community Pop-up – Cockatoo</li> <li>• Community Drop-in – Monbulk</li> </ul>
16/10/2018	One self-evaluation process was conducted

*\*NOTE: This is an underestimation of the out-of-session meetings involving YCACC members given the number of meetings convened by the YCA Project Implementation Team (additional mapping meetings for example). No formal records of these meetings were reported to YCACC.*

## Annual Committee self-evaluation

### Brief Questionnaire

At the 16 October 2018 YCACC monthly meeting ten YCACC Committee members reviewed the progress of the Committee over the last 11 months and all members filled in a short self-evaluation which asked Committee members to rank on a scale of 1-10 YCACC's Performance relating to:

1. Capacity to set strategic directions;
2. Implementation of the VEAC Recommendations;
3. Effectiveness in building partnerships;
4. Effective co-ordination role;
5. Engagement with the community; and
6. Overall performance.

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.

De-identified responses are provided below.

### Rankings

Figure 1: YCACC overall performance rank

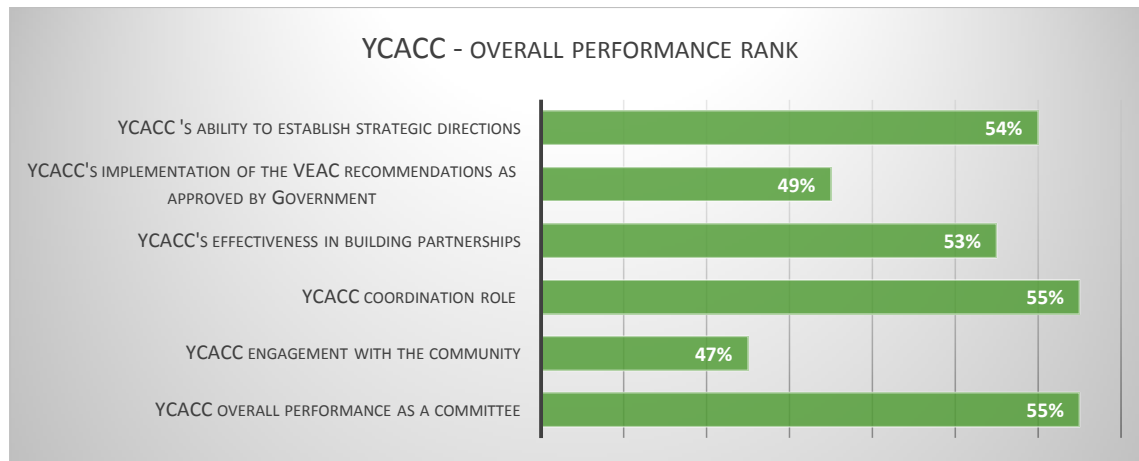
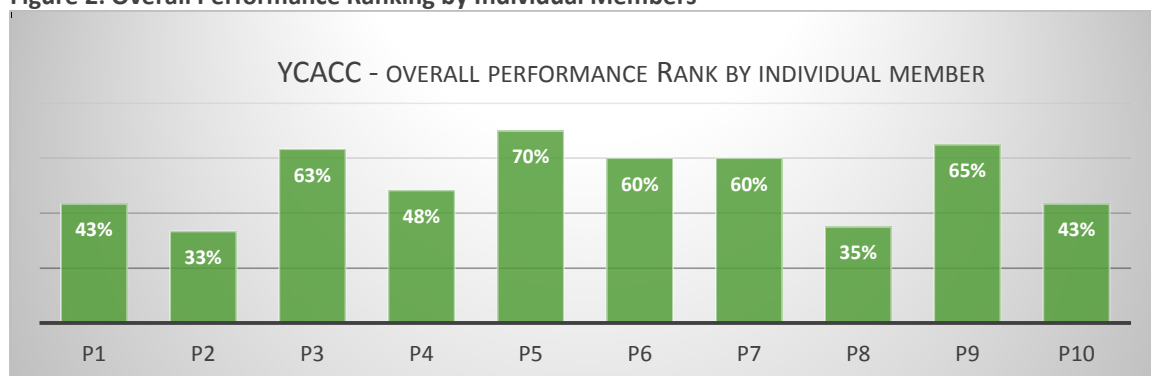
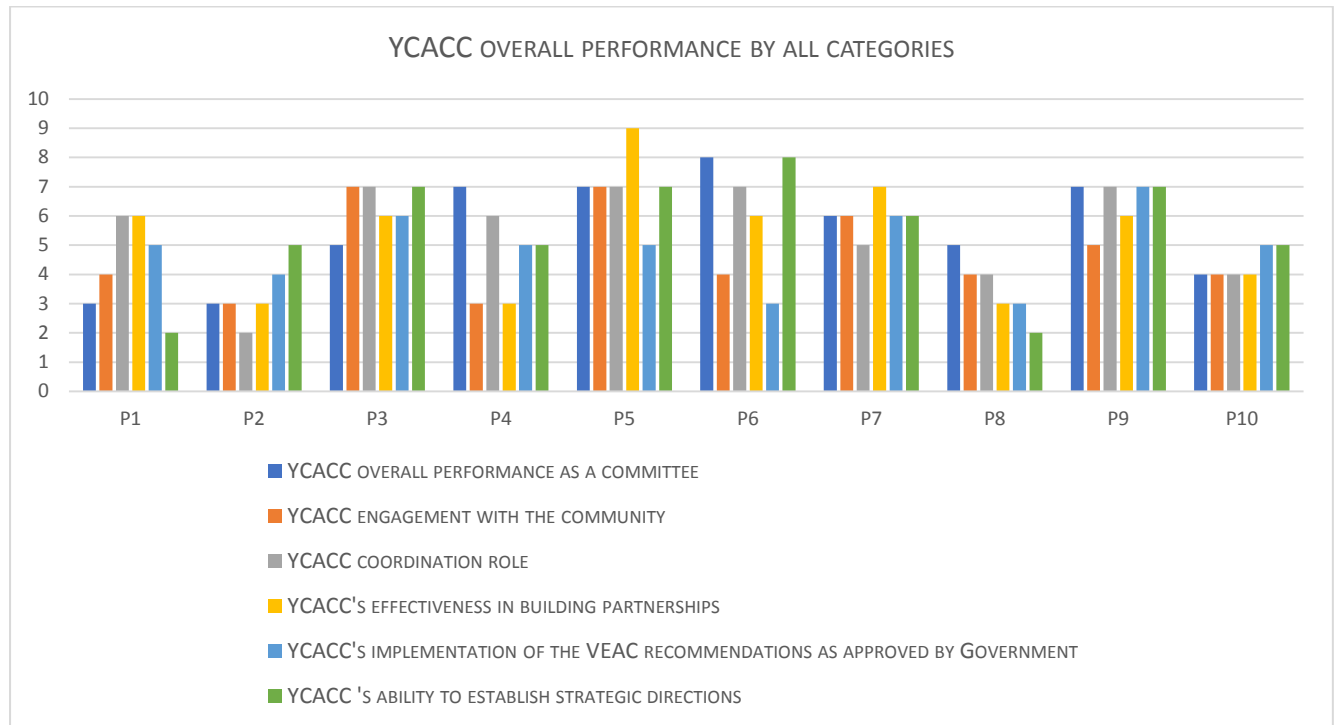


Figure 2: Overall Performance Ranking by Individual Members



**Figure 3: Individual performance rankings by all categories**



Figures two and three above demonstrate the variation between the rankings of YCACC’s performance by individual Committee members.

Rankings differ from as low as 2/10 to as high as 8/10 as in response to YCACC’s ability to establish strategic directions or as low as 3/10 and as high as 9/10 for YCACC’s effectiveness in building partnerships.

YCACC’s engagement with the community shows a variation from 3/10 to 7/10 but achieves the lowest overall ranking of 43%.

Similarly, the variation from 3/10 to 7/10 is shown in response to YCACC’s implementation of the VEAC recommendations with the second lowest overall ranking of 49%.

Only two responses “fail” YCACC overall with all responses 5 or less.

### Open ended questions – all responses verbatim.

#### What do you think is YCACC’s main advantage as a committee?

- YCACC brings all agencies and community into one forum for discussion and exchange of information.
- Multi-agency.
- Getting the Agencies to the table to allow knowledge sharing and awareness of programs and projects.
- local conversation.
- Coordinating land management Agencies and communicating various projects happening across the YCA. Coordinating the activities/goals that have come out of the VEAC recommendations and government response. Provide a point of liaison between Agencies in the implementation of VEAC recommendations and response.

- Bring all the stakeholders together on a frequent basis to discuss issues and enable more efficient collaboration and coordination. Strategic perspective to overall goals for the area and strengthening relationships.
- The main benefit of YCACC in my opinion is that it serves as a networking tool between agencies and the community.
- Key Agency commitment and goodwill of Committee members.
- The Committee has a good level of representation i.e. relevant agencies, community and indigenous groups.
- Bringing Agencies together - per comments to external review.

**What do you think is YCACC's main barrier to achieving the VEAC Recommendations?**

- DELWP has not been willing to share decision making with the Committee even though this is highly relevant to YCACC.
- Capacity doesn't reside within YCACC (DELWP Implementation Team does have capacity). Complex planning phase has slowed implementation.
- Lack of consistent understanding of our role - even after 2 years I still don't think we are all in agreement.
- Poor local communication.
- Processes between Agencies differ. Timelines for certain activities are longer than expected.
- Delays in implementing surveys and forming implementation plan. Setback from original poor stakeholder engagement around licence changes (and subsequent resource impacts to re-engage). Lack of resource continuity at DELWP and PV. Poor decisions by DELWP outside of Committee.
- The lack of communal funding. I think some of the public reactions have halted progress. I also think there has been confusion over the purpose of the Committee. This has been a big problem and dominated meetings at times.
- Parallel process with DELWP Implementation Team. No control. No governance / due diligence over budget / implementation.
- The Committee requires stronger support from the Minister e.g. appointing replacement people in a timely way.
- Funding - per comments to external review.

**Should YCACC continue, what recommendation would you make to the Minister for the ongoing role for the Committee?**

- YES! the Committee should continue; the model is a sound idea.
- Change ToRs. Control of budget. More senior representation. Distributed implementation.
- DELWP and PV should up their involvement with YCACC and share information. Revolving chair at PV should be resolved. Possibly Parks Planning would be a more appropriate representative.
- Advisory Committee to support land managers - meet quarterly.
- To be better resourced. Current funding does not allow for the issues to be resolved in a timely manner.
- All about communication.
- Fewer members to the Committee being key stakeholders. Meeting bi-monthly or quarterly.

- Retain predominately the current structure and objectives - after initial teething problems progress now being made. Commit to funding and resources for the YCA.
- I think the YCACC should continue as a Yarra 4 Life type of working group. To raise funds for communal projects and to work collaboratively.
- Per comments to external review.

## Key Messages

### The main advantage of YCACC

- Committee members are consistent in their view that the main advantage of YCACC is the bringing together of agencies and other key stakeholders. There is more variation in identifying the purpose and outcomes of that “bringing together”: from networking to knowledge sharing and awareness of programs and projects to 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 identify issues relating to DELWP implementation and YCACC (no sharing of decision making, capacity lying with DELWP and not with YCACC, the complex planning phase delaying implementation, the parallel process of Committee deliberation and DELWP implementation, 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 (specifically 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, for example.

### Recommendations to the Minister should YCACC continue

Responses divide into two categories: recommended changes to improve the effectiveness of the Committee; and recommendations for an alternative committee.

- Those who want the existing Committee to continue (n=6) propose changes to the Terms of Reference: 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.
- Two respondents indicate a preference for an alternative committee – an Advisory Committee to support land managers - meeting quarterly or a Yarra4 Life type of working group to raise funds for communal projects and to work collaboratively.

The messages from the questionnaire are repeated and amplified in the notes from the Committee discussion reported as follows.

## YCACC Feedback to the Minister

Agenda Item 8, 16 October 2018 addressed the Annual Report and discussed feedback YCACC should be providing to the Minister. The session was taped and transcribed in part to allow for more in-depth reporting.

As noted above, the discussion further amplified issues raised in the questionnaire responses. It is also noted that this discussion took place before the Committee was notified that the Minister had decided to discontinue YCACC beyond 31 January 2019. Thus the reporting of this discussion is necessarily brief with limited analysis of issues raised. Direct quotations are included in italics.

YCACC suggests that these observations and 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.

## Key issues

### The Committee needs more time to achieve the desired outcomes

- need time to deal with Committee issues;

*'The Committee has taken some time to come together – to gel – to take the time to consider what we actually have to do around this table to do what we have to do – you get the money up front but we were in no position at all for the first 12 to 18 months. This is what the Plan is directing us to – the Plan is where we start to flesh out where our priorities sit and this is one of the lynch pins – that is where we are up to now [Question: So you would be sad to see the Committee end?] – absolutely - we've struggled from time to time but we're getting better and we are moving into a phase where we are beginning to show some results for the effort – we've still got some issues to address with public education and awareness and engagement for sure – but it would almost be a waste to disband at this point because there has been a degree of resources and effort already thrown at it but that would stand to be lost if we were dismissed.'*

- establish the YCA in a staged process supported by legislation;
- establish Flagship projects;
- advocate ongoing Committee – deliver results and increase public engagement;
- waste if YCACC disbanded and dismissed – we are moving to a space where we are getting results;
- delays understandable given the complexity with land management changes - this is understandable – this is a long-term legacy project;
- internal Committee communications needs improvement – what are we doing – what work has been happening outside the Committee;
- we are not co-ordinating yet;

*'Committee expectation was that this was about implementation — but actually has been mostly dealing with planning challenges - one of the good examples would be the [riparian licensing] working group - you came up with guiding principles for grazing licences so we've kind of been caught in dealing with those kind of spaces or how we're going to deal with encroachment and incursion issues – at some point we'll get beyond and get into a role out phase.'*

*'...but capacity to do stuff doesn't exist in the Committee – and that itself sat with DELWP's project implementation team'*

*[but] 'every agency represented around this table has a capacity to implement something in this sphere – that's the whole purpose of communication and coordination.'*

- work has been happening almost outside the Committee to meet the VEAC recommendations.

*'...for example we spent nearly \$600,000 last year but we didn't get any guidance [from YCACC]– that [work] wasn't funnelled through the Committee whereas in an ideal world we would develop an annual work proposal – put that to the Committee – and match it against Committee expectations – get approval – and then we would just be the delivery arm but at the moment annual works but we did not get any guidance - not put to Committee to approve – [we] implement without reference to YCACC.'*

### **Changes to the Terms of Reference**

- Many things have changed by default – Parks were initially managing the process but transferred to DELWP who established implementation team who now manage many executive functions. (e.g. ToR 48. Parks Victoria will provide secretariat support to the Committee and will act as the liaison between the Committee and the Minister).
- Allow flexible agency membership (potentially given to a position rather than an individual) to provide for proxy voting so the Committee can work more effectively.
- Allow proxy voting.
- 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; and
- Clearer role in allocation of funds and budget due diligence - YCACC must have ability to agree on dollars spent in the YCA.

### **Better engagement required**

- The initial DELWP communications around grazing licences continue to impact on YCACC's community interactions:  
*'DELWP's initial communications around removal of grazing licences created significant distrust in the farming community which has had ongoing consequences for YCACC and progressing the development of the YCA. However, despite the lack of trust articulated by some groups there is still potential for YCACC – YCACC needs to develop more effective and positive targeted communication strategies - need to define a way to break through to that community.'*
- Need to work through opposing ideas.
- [The proposed] Forum(s) are a good strategy to open dialogue.
- Look at conservation values – what is the tipping point for achievement.
- Promote values – look for common ground.
- Threatened species provide a common goal.
- Failed in disseminating the message that the project does not represent not large-scale change - no new land incorporated in the YCA

- Don't know what barriers are: effort; funding; expertise.

### **YCACC must get through the communication barriers that inhibit dialogue with farmers**

- YCACC need to put words into actions.
- Start with negotiation.
- This will be a win for the environment.
- There is a need to reduce fear in the farming community.
- There is a need to understand the issues from the farmers perspective.
- Farming practices are changing.
- Farmers are not against the environment.

[There is a] *'need for ongoing community engagement – identify audience and how to engage – understand drivers behind audience - drivers behind farmers, drivers behind youth - once you know what's important to them it is easier to engage.'*

- *'We could do better in creating buy in from community - identify how community groups, Landcare and such, can support this program – so you have the Yellingbo to Butterfield project to mention where buy in from community, landowners and understanding of what the project is about has really accelerated in that area from the work Gaye Gadsden is doing in the area.'*
- *'Landowners information has increased because of the work [the project officer for the Yellingbo to Butterfield Project] is doing – good communication model – [the]community has a good understanding of the project and there is not so much fear and misunderstanding – [the project] has potentially set the ground work for more buy-in';*
- Look at more sites in open farming areas and streamside.
- Help community understand – more but with less angst.
- More focus on public education.
- *Priority 2 - community engagement.*
- *'We have a showcase place in the YCA – Haining Farm – it must be completed, and funding maintained – in time will showcase example for whole reserve'.*

### **Secured resourcing**

- Resources are not yet secured for the ongoing establishment costs of the YCA;  
*'Resourcing is the primary barrier - struggle to get continuity and keep positions filled – inhibits capacity of Agencies to move forward at the rate and speed we'd like to and get things done – important to demonstrate to public what is being achieved by change on the ground – can address fear issues with practical demonstration of what is being done – visible changes in the landscape and highlight that as much as we can, a live sight that people can come and see – that's the gap in our communication.'*
- YCA team is short staffed – results on ground are not being achieved – this barrier/gap prevents on-ground outcomes that could demonstrate what is happening;
- Strategic allocation of resources is required.



- A budget excess exists but there are no applications for further funding.
- There has been no discussion at YCACC about allocating money;
- There needs to be a shared discussion;
- *Priority 1 – secure funding [this] will determine success or failure.*

### **Understanding different processes and obligations of each agency**

*'We as agencies have roles and functions to perform that existed before YCACC came along – none of those roles will disappear for the next 5 – 10 years and we are stretched to do something more in the environment without further resources – [it was noted that the YCA budget still indicates a significant positive balance and funds are available for project and resource allocations] – that is indicative of the fact we have not had the resources/staff to push forward into that space where we can spend that money'.*

- One of the key barriers is incompatible systems and processes between agencies which impede outcomes – a difference of opinion between how things are done and should be carried out – this very much creates delays in some areas.

### **The Importance of continuing to implement the YCACC Action Plan and further develop the YCA Plan**

*...the Plan is where we start to flesh out where our priorities sit and this is one of the lynch pins – that is where we are up to now [Question: So you would be sad to see the Committee end?] – absolutely - we've struggled from time to time but we're getting better and we are moving into a phase where we are beginning to show some results for the effort – we've still got some issues to address with public education and awareness and engagement for sure – but it would almost be a waste to disband at this point because there has been a degree of resources and effort already thrown at it but that would stand to be lost if we were dismissed.*

- There is a need to implement plans to demonstrate visible outcomes.

### **Concurrent on-ground works, research and implementation**

- Removal of pest plants and animals (*'practical demonstration of what is being done – visible changes in the landscape and highlight that as much as we can'*)
- There is a need research to develop mitigating strategies for deer;
- There is a need for mapping of YCA values.

### **Staged role out of the new Conservation Park (note Conservation Area category will not exist in future under recommended VEAC Statewide classifications)**

- How do we want to facilitate staged role out of the new park?
- Individual parcels of land need to be sorted out.
- There is a need to understand the transition process from DELWP to Parks Victorian Governance.
- The mechanism to achieve transition does not require changes to Section 4a of the Parks Act.
- Bringing the community along is important otherwise will not succeed.

- There is a need to articulate a vision.
- There is a need to engage with stakeholders.
- Survey work contributes to the problem – NE corner should be left until the last phase given the resources required to resolve survey issues.
- There is a need to manage a community asset as a whole rather than individual processes.

### **Renaming the YCA**

- Urgent attention to renaming process for the Reserve is required.
- There is a need to reengage with Wurundjeri regarding naming.
- One name for whole YCA and retain current common name for each reserve.

### **The next YCACC three-year term?**

Committee discussion included the following points:

- The current term should be extended to end of February 2019.
- There is no succession plan for the Committee and thus the Committee will lapse – the Committee should not lapse and reform otherwise embedded knowledge is lost.
- The Committee has not yet been provided with a copy of the external review (as at October Meeting) and will need additional time beyond the 30 November 2018 end of term for the Committee] to review and comment on the recommendations of the external review.
- The embedded knowledge and collaboration generated by the Committee has at times been fraught, but the process and outcomes have been a valuable conduit for Agency and community engagement and ongoing discussions about priorities for the YCA.
- It is important to examine the process that might impede successful Committee outcomes.
- Maintain the Committee until clear implementation processes are in place.
- VEAC recommendations support continuing Committee.
- The Committee is valuable has not directly achieved many outcomes, but projects have resulted from Committee collaborations and shared information.
- Perhaps reconstituted as an advisory committee.
- YCACC creates an overall vision shared across agencies.
- YCACC must have ability to agree on dollars spent in the YCA.
- YCACC must have ‘decision makers’ around the table who are empowered to make recommendations and decisions within their organisations.
- YCACC should have more diverse membership.
- YCACC should seek a short-term extension to ensure continuity of the Committee until after the election and the 10-year Plan is finalised.
- YCACC should make recommendations for revised ToRs;
- *“Not to continue YCACC would be a shocking waste”.*

Note: these issues were further discussed at the YCACC meeting on 20 November 2018 after YCACC members had received a copy of the Nous Report and are noted in the approved minutes of the

meeting. Those further discussions reiterate the issues noted above and identified concerns with the External Review as follows.

## External Review

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### *Process and Recommendations*

On June 28 2018, David Shelton, Manager, Governance, Land Management Policy Division, Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning advised YCACC that DELWP was commissioning an independent review of YCACC with the imperative for this review coming from the:

*Premier's Circular No. 2013/2 [which] 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 2018 (3/08/2018 email from Kelly Crosthwaite to YCACC members) to conduct an independent review of YCACC [see Appendix C]:

*...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.*

and

*The review will:*

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

Nous conducted interviews in August, meeting YCACC members including the convener on August 28, interviewing others by telephone (arrangements with non-YCACC members unknown to YCACC). Interviewees were invited to complete a short online survey on August 30 with the survey closing on September 6. The report was provided to DELWP in September and had not been provided to the Ministers Office prior to the YCACC meeting held on October 16.

The Report was provided to YCACC members on November 12, 2018. Of considerable concern to YCACC is the breach of confidentiality both within the report where interviewees are identified and with the distribution of the report as already noted.

### Nous Recommendations

*In thinking about the appropriate arrangements for the next phase of the management of the YCA, there still seems to be two important functions:*

- *continuing to encourage coordination and collaboration by land managers in the YCA, albeit with an increasing focus on land management works*

- *continuing to engage with the community effectively in ways that help win support for the objectives of the YCA while addressing community concerns.*

*The reviewers propose that these functions are addressed by two different sets of governance arrangements both largely focused on supporting DELWP in the implementation of the YCA Draft 10 Year Plan. These arrangements would replace YCACC.*

*Recommendation 1: Creation of a coordinating committee of land managers (and community groups with land management responsibilities) focussed on coordinating the land management works in the YCA (citing Yarr4Life with a slightly different goal as the model); and*

*Recommendation 2: Creation of a broader-based community reference group, designed to assist DELWP engage more effectively to win community support for YCA objectives whilst addressing community concerns (p. 21).*

## **YCACC Comments and Concerns**

The review Report to the Minister includes a number of inaccuracies and minor errors (e.g. reference the Monbulk Creek which is not in the YCA and characterising a return to the original meeting time after over a year of an agreed extended meeting time required by the YCA Planning process as a reduction of meeting time). The larger issues relate to the following:

### **Review interviews**

Nous reports interviewing 17 YCACC members but in fact interviewed only 10 YCACC members and 7 non-members and no members who have left YCACC (noted that YCACC members have resigned due to a change of agency role or personal circumstances in the case of two community members). This has significant impact upon claims of “most Committee members” holding certain specified views in the report. It is unknown how many of the 12 survey respondents were YCACC members.

Two Regional Directors, DELWP and Parks Victoria, were interviewed for the review but both have attended only one YCACC meeting. Regional Directors from other agencies represented on YCACC were not interviewed (Melbourne Water, Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority) nor were the Directors of the two local government authorities or the Chair of the Wurundjeri Land Council.

It is noted that some YCACC interviewees are identifiable despite confidentiality assurances from the external interviewer.

### **Independence of the review process**

A perception that the independent integrity of this review has been compromised exists because the review process was determined by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) who have substantial directive influence whilst also being a YCACC representative agency. Three DELWP staff including the DELWP YCACC member, the DELWP Regional Manager, and the DELWP YCA Project Implementation Team Manager were interviewed resulting in a perceived over representation of the DELWP perspective.

There are indications in the language used in the report that also indicate bias and a lack of understanding of the full complexities faced in establishing the coordination model although the authors do acknowledge that YCACC has grappled with difficult topics, and that the development of the Draft 10-year YCA Plan has been a slow and laborious process. Examples of biased language include but are not limited to the following:

- *All YCACC members are in **furious agreement** that the achievements of YCACC to date have been modest and hard won* (p. 4);
- *Of course, **it is easy to overstate YCACC's achievements here** – agencies have other avenues to collaborate* (p. 5);
- *Community members ... observe that from a community perspective it looks like agencies still largely focus on their own remit ... This review has **some sympathy** for the agency experience here* (p. 5).
- *The new website in particular is a great resource but **once again** took a long time to develop* (p. 10).

The use of quotations from a single interviewee without evidence that these quotations represent the views of most Committee members is a further indication of lack of impartiality.

### **Depth of the analysis and justification of the review recommendations**

Based on 12 surveys and 17 interviews, nine of which are with YCACC members who have served over two years on YCACC (the tenth member has served just over one year), Nous identifies three key findings:

1. **The achievements of YCACC have been modest and hard won.**  
Nous reference the various plans without questioning the need for repetitive planning efforts or why the website took so long to produce;
2. **Most of YCACC's challenges stem from fundamentally different understandings of YCACC's role.**  
Nous identify significant role confusion with no analysis as to where the perspective that YCACC is an advisory committee has arisen or why—despite the clear definition of the coordinating committee in the VEAC recommendations which is acknowledged by the reviewers—this confusion persisted; and
3. **Other governance challenges have impeded YCACC's effectiveness.**  
Nous references the cumbersome Committee appointment process and the number of long term vacancies but do not interrogate other significant governance issues. There is no discussion of potential solutions to better assist the functioning of the current Committee. It could be argued that the function of governance is not well understood in the Nous Report given the statement that the two committees provide “two different sets of governance arrangements both largely focused on supporting DELWP...” (p. 21).

In making the recommendations the reviewers:

- Reference the relationship between the convener and DELWP as unsustainable. This however is not a relevant basis for the recommendations proposed. Whilst the assertions made about the Convener are contentious the Convener has indicated both to the Committee and to the Minister's Office that she will not renominate for a position on YCACC at the completion of the current term and only remained in the position to assist in the transition process.
- Attribute the responsibility for not establishing a direct relationship with the Minister to the Convener however YCACC has most frequently received communications from the Minister via DELWP who have managed all communications including the appointment of YCACC members, responses to YCACC queries, and responses to the reports and plans that YCACC has submitted to the Minister as required.
- Have not provided an adequate discussion of the relevance of the YCACC Action Plan as the head strategic planning document required by YCACC's Terms of Reference but have focused instead on the fact that DELWP is responsible for the YCA Draft 10-year Plan which the reviewers identify as the key plan even though their report notes that it is still in draft form and yet to be tested.

- Describe the next stage for the Committee as moving from planning to implementation ignoring the fact that the YCACC brief is to coordinate the implementation of the VEAC recommendations.
- Identify DELWP as having the resources to develop the Draft YCA 10-year Plan and therefore the capacity and implied responsibility to implement the VEAC recommendations. This ignores the fact that the Terms of Reference identify Parks Victoria as providing the YCACC secretariat, will act as the liaison between the Committee and the Minister and that the initial YCA funding was managed by Parks Victoria. The funding is not DELWP funding but funding to implement the VEAC recommendations which included the establishment of YCACC.

Nous makes two recommendations:

1. Creation of a coordinating committee of land managers (and community groups with land management responsibilities) focussed on coordinating the land management works in the YCA (citing Yarr4Life with a slightly different goal as the model); and
2. Creation of a broader-based community 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 (with no apparent accountabilities) both largely reporting to and supporting DELWP which would appear to contravene the VEAC recommended coordination and collaboration between agencies and the community and the acknowledgement of decades of work undertaken by voluntary conservation groups endorsed by the Victorian Government.

These recommendations also ignore the significant amount of work still required to establish and coordinate the processes which will enable the creation of the YCA in accord with the VEAC recommendations as reported in the *Yellingbo Conservation Area Action Plan review 2018*.

## Key Review Differences

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Please note:

- The purpose of the Nous Review was “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”.
- The purpose of the YCACC self-evaluation is to form part of 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;
  - the Committee’s performance against the performance indicators and other measures in its annual report and action plan in lieu of the business plan; and
  - for this year advice on the transition to the YCACC next term.
- The Nous Group conducted one-hour interviews with 10 YCACC members and 7 agency representatives; a short online survey with 12 respondents; and examined selected documentation;
- YCACC conducted two discussion sessions and one self-evaluation survey with YCACC member attendees at YCACC monthly meetings (October and November);

- The Nous Group used a 5-point scale and had 12 respondents including an unknown number of YCACC members [interviewees: YCACC members n=10; non-YCACC members n=7].
- The YCACC self-review questionnaire used a 10-point scale and had 10 YCACC member respondents.
- The discussion format differed for both groups but strong similarities arose.

**Table 2: Key Review Differences**

Questionnaire	Nous	YCACC
Achievements of YCACC	75% to a modest extent	55% overall average performance of the Committee
YCACC collaboration and coordination	10% to a large extent 40% to a moderate extent 40% to a small extent 10% not at all	55% overall average
YCACC has established strategic priorities	60% to a small extent 30% to a moderate extent 10 % to a large extent	54% overall average
Engagement with the community	30% to a small extent 70% to a moderate extent Website an achievement Community members frustrated with the opportunities to contribute to their potential Well managed community engagement process for Draft 10 Year YCA Plan	47% overall average Website an achievement. Frustration expressed about capacity to undertake ongoing community forums (youth, farmers). Well managed community engagement process for Draft 10 Year YCA Plan.
YCA overall performance as a Committee/Effectiveness in discharging key functions	30% To a small extent 70% To a moderate extent	55% overall
Roles and responsibilities well understood	60% to a small extent 30% to a moderate extent 10% to a large extent	Two Committee members highlight lack of consistent understanding/agreement on the role of the Committee as the major barrier to achieving the VEAC recommendations.
Power imbalance	Attributed to agencies versus community members	Four members (40%) identify DELWP independent implementation and poor decision making outside the Committee as the major barrier to achieving the VEAC recommendations.
Meetings effective and efficient	15% not at all 35% to a small extent 35% to a moderate extent 15% to a large extent	not mentioned.

Terms of Reference	No recommendations but acknowledgement of cumbersome appointments processes.	<p>Recommendations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible agency membership (potentially given to a position rather than an individual) to allow for proxy voting to allow Committee to work more effectively.</li> <li>• Proxy voting allowed.</li> <li>• More consistent senior agency representation - YCACC must have 'decision makers' around the table who are empowered to make recommendations and decisions within their organisations.</li> <li>• More timely replacement process for vacant Committee positions specified.</li> <li>• Clearer role in allocation of funds and budget due diligence - YCACC must have ability to agree on dollars spent in the YCA.</li> </ul>
Resources required	50% - "The investment of time by YCACC members is substantial but YCACC doesn't have access to resources to implement initiative – the budget for implementing the Government's response to the VEAC recommendations is managed by DELWP who from time to time allocate resources in support of YCACC objectives" (p. 20).	40% of respondents identify funding/resource issues as the main barrier to achieving the VEAC recommendations.
Recommendations to the Minister	YCACC Discontinued and replaced by a coordinating committee of land managers focussed on coordinating the land management works in the YCA and a separate community reference group, both supporting DEWLP in implementing the YCA Draft 10 Year Plan.	Continuation of YCACC with improved ToRs.



## Conclusions

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YCACC tended to make more critical judgement on achievement and more detailed and nuance assessment of barriers and potential solutions than the external reviewer.

Although many of the issues highlighted in the Nous Review have been identified and discussed prior to the review, the conclusions differ.

Nous concludes that YCACC should be replaced and provides no analysis as to why this should be so or how the replacement committees will solve the barriers faced by YCACC. It is noted that by recommending the termination of YCACC, the Nous Group have actually exceeded the brief.

For YCACC, the majority of respondents want YCACC to continue but with amended Terms of Reference, appropriate resourcing, and must have 'decision makers' around the table who are empowered to make recommendations and decisions within their organisations. Others are happy with an advisory committee model. Committee members are concerned that the YCA Action Plan and Draft 10-year YCA Plan will not be followed through, the VEAC recommendations not implemented, and that so much work undertaken by Committee members will produce no outcomes: *"Not to continue YCACC would be a shocking waste"*.

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## 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
<b>Anne Langworthy</b> <i>Chairperson and Independent Convener</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100%
<b>Ben Cullen</b> <i>Trust for Nature</i>	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	A	A	✓	A	✓	A	✓	58%
<b>Dan Harley</b> <i>Zoos Victoria</i>	✓	A	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	83%
<b>Jeff Latter</b> <i>Community representative – Cardinia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	92%
<b>Cr Jim Child</b> <i>Yarra Ranges Council</i>	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	A	✓	75%
<b>Marianne Sawyer</b> <i>Cardinia Shire representative</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	83%
<b>Merryn Kelly</b> <i>Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)</i>	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	83%
<b>Peter Cooper</b> <i>Community representative - Yarra Ranges</i>	✓	A	✓	A	✓	✓	A	A	A	✓	✓	A	50%
<b>Stephen Hosking</b> <i>Melbourne Water</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	83%
<b>Sue Tardif</b> <i>Community representative - Yarra Ranges</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	A	75%
<b>% Members attending</b>	100%	50%	100%	80%	90%	80%	60%	80%	50%	90%	80%	80%	78%
<b>Vacant Position</b> <i>Parks Victoria</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Vacant Position</b> <i>Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (PPWCMA)</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Vacant Position</b> <i>CFA</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Vacant Position</b> <i>Community representative - Yarra Ranges</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Vacant Position</b> <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
<b>Dan Robertson</b> <i>Melbourne Water</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100%
Mark Scida <i>Melbourne Water</i>							✓						
Sarah Gaskill <i>Melbourne Water</i>									✓	A	A		
<b>Justin Foster</b> <i>Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)</i>	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	75%
<b>Corrine Mays</b> <i>Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (PPWCMA)</i>	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	83%
<b>Charley Woolmore</b> <i>Wurundjeri Tribe Land Council</i>				✓		✓							
<b>Uncle Dave Wandin</b> <i>Wurundjeri Tribe Land Council</i>										✓	A	A	
<b>Jack Dinkgreve</b> <i>Parks Victoria</i>	✓	A	✓	✓									
<b>Conrad Annal</b> <i>Parks Victoria</i>		✓									✓	✓	
<b>Georgia Kerr</b> <i>Parks Victoria</i>					A	✓	✓	✓	✓	A			
<b>Joshua Chikuse</b> <i>Parks Victoria</i>		✓	✓				✓						
<b>Rachel Lee</b> <i>Youth Ambassador - Yarra Ranges Council</i>		✓											
<b>Amelia Featherstone</b> <i>Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)</i>	✓												
<b>Tori McLennon</b> <i>Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)</i>					✓								
<b>Doug West</b> <i>Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)</i>	✓												
<b>Roland Maxwell</b> <i>Boojum – Lead Designer</i>	✓												
<b>Suzie Wells</b> <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	
<b>Samantha Cross</b> <i>Coordinator Passive Reserves Cardinia Shire Council</i>				✓									
<b>Bronwyn Koll</b> <i>Queensland Fruit Fly Regional Coordinator Yarra Valley</i>					✓								
<b>Gaye Gadsden</b> <i>Project Coordinator Yellingbo to Butterfield</i>								✓					
<b>Ross Williamson</b> <i>Director, Healesville Sanctuary</i>								✓					