



Moreland
City Council

DRAFT

Moreland Nature Plan

Consultation Report

July 2020



Contents

Executive summary 3

Introduction 4

About the project.....4

Methodology4

Participation4

Findings..... 6

Vision6

Support for proposed actions.....7

Opportunities for improvement.....8

Next steps..... 19

Appendix..... 20

Executive summary

Moreland Nature Plan – enhancing biodiversity and celebrating nature in our City

The development of a biodiversity strategy, or Nature Plan, is an action in the Moreland Open Space Strategy 2011-2021 and was funded for development in the 2019-20 financial year. The Plan will provide strategic direction to enhance biodiversity and celebrate nature in our City.

After an initial community consultation phase in late 2019, a draft Moreland Nature Plan was developed. The draft was endorsed by Council to be released for community consultation at the May 2020 meeting.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, an extended six-week consultation period was held using a range of communication tools including online surveys, posters, social media, publications and direct emails to community groups and previous participants. A total of 260 submissions were received including 26 detailed submissions from 11 key local community groups.

Feedback was overwhelmingly supportive of the proposed actions (80-90%) and is summarised in this report. Feedback and suggestions are recorded and have been incorporated in the Nature Plan where appropriate. This report will accompany a revised Moreland Nature Plan for consideration at the August 2020 Council meeting.

Introduction

About the project

The development of a biodiversity strategy, or Nature Plan, is an action in the Moreland Open Space Strategy 2011-2021 and was funded for development in the 2019-20 financial year.

The Moreland Nature Plan will provide strategic direction to enhance biodiversity and celebrate nature in our City.

An initial consultation phase was held at the pre-draft stage to gain community thoughts on the priorities for the Plan. The purpose of this secondary community consultation phase was to seek further feedback, particularly around the proposed key goals and actions and to check in with our stakeholders and community as to whether we have met their expectations.

Methodology

Due to COVID-19 social distancing and work from home rules, face-to-face and pop-up information sessions that were originally proposed for the consultation were not possible. Therefore, most of the consultation was in digital format and focused through the Conversations Moreland website.

The consultation period was advertised through social media, posters across the municipality, Inside Moreland, the on-hold message system and the Aged and Community Newsletter. All participants from the initial survey in October/November 2019 were contacted and notified. Local Friends and community groups, including community gardening groups, were contacted via email and asked to circulate the survey through their networks.

To support people without online access, direct telephone conversations were held and availability was made to post hard copies of the plan on request (two hard copies were requested and delivered). The consultation period was extended to 6 weeks (rather than 4) to allow more time for the community to respond in this challenging consultation climate.

An online submission form was provided on the Conversations Moreland website. The form asked respondents for: general demographic information; how strongly they supported the vision in the plan; and, prioritisation of a number of key actions in the Draft Action Plan. Similar or related actions were combined for simplification. As well as the scoring exercises, participants were invited to provide their views on opportunities to improve the Plan. The offer of making open, written submissions was available through both email and postal means.

An opportunity to present the Draft Plan through an online session with the Moreland Teachers Environment Network was delivered on 7 May 2020.

An online session was held with Wurundjeri Tribe Council to discuss the draft and the proposed actions in the Plan for closer working relationships with the Wurundjeri people.

Data from the online form was summarised automatically using the digital system and the raw report is available as an appendix to this report. Key themes that arose from the online and open submissions were identified, summarised and discussed in detail in this report with resulting outcomes for the Nature Plan clearly indicated.

Participation

234 submissions were received through the online form available on the Conversations Moreland website.

Submissions were received from across the municipality (and one external) with most representation from Coburg (22%), Coburg North (18%) and Brunswick (13%). See pie graph overleaf.

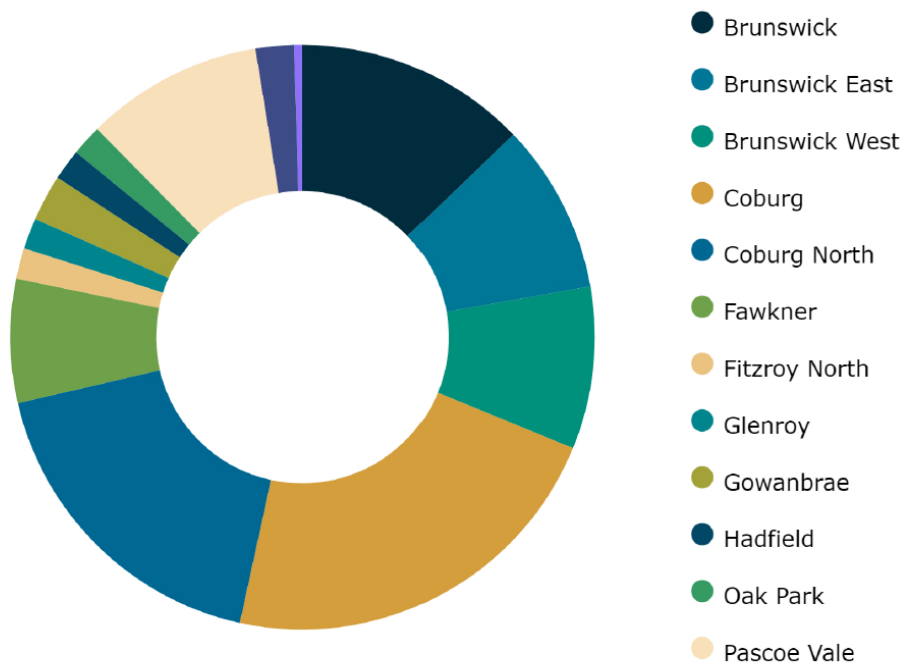


Figure 1. Suburb location of participants responding to the Draft Moreland Nature Plan using the Conversations Moreland online form

Other than Under 12s, all age brackets were represented but the majority of submissions were received by those aged 35-44 years (33%), 45-54 (26%) and 25-34 (14%). See pie graph below.

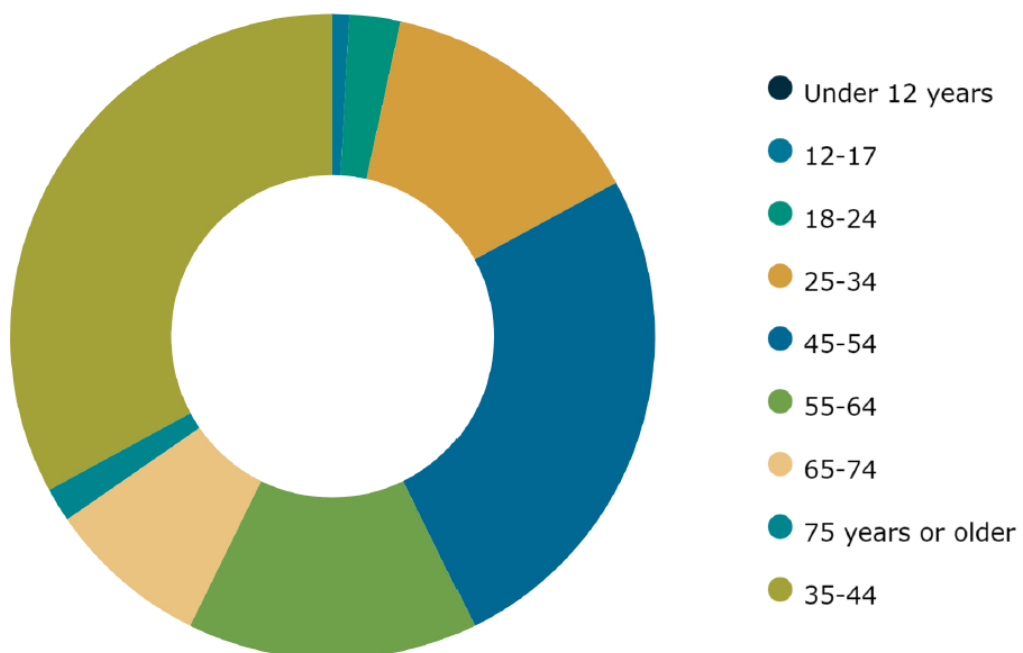


Figure 2. Age brackets of participants responding to the Draft Moreland Nature Plan using the Conversations Moreland online form

26 open submissions were received including both formal submissions made on behalf of community groups (11) and personal submissions. Formal group submissions were received from:

- Brunswick Communities for Nature
- CERES Community Environment Park
- Climate Action Moreland
- Creating Gardens for Wildlife in Moreland
- Friends of Edgars Creek
- Friends of Edward Street
- Friends of Merri Creek
- Merri Creek Management Committee
- Merri-Myrnong Group
- Productive Gardens Group
- An official response wasn't received from the Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek, however, three members of the group provided written responses.

Findings

The discussion below covers the key themes that were identified through the consultation phase and how they have been addressed in the Final Moreland Nature Plan for Council consideration.

Vision

The vision in the Draft Nature Plan states:

The City of Moreland will support a more diverse, connected and resilient natural environment where native birds and animals thrive. Our residents will value the local environment and appreciate opportunities to explore and connect with nature in the City.

Participants were asked to indicate their level of support for the proposed vision and/or provide recommendations for improvements.

There was overwhelming support for the vision with 88% (71% strongly supporting). This number may in fact be higher as some participants (up to 16 or an additional 7%) that selected 'strongly disagree' provided no comment on the vision and went on to score high numbers for the individual actions or made comments such as 'they love the vision so much', suggesting this could be a scoring error.

There was general good support for the vision from local community groups in their submissions. The Friends of Edgars Creek (FOEC) noted strong support for the vision with a clear alignment between FoEC's vision and strategic objectives for the Edgars Creek corridor and those outlined in the Draft Nature Plan.

Eight submissions clearly disagreed or were indifferent with the vision stating reasons such as:

- Like more diversity in landscapes than gum trees (3)
- Believe projects are above and beyond what they are worth (1)
- Found the plan too difficult to understand (1)
- Spend more money on maintenance and rubbish than left-wing green initiatives (2)
- Need for Nature Plan unwarranted (1).

Suggestions for improvements included making more reference to climate change and/or the climate emergency; including more species than just birds and animals (eg plants, invertebrates, fungi etc); including sustainability and indigenous; being more committed with wording and greater recognition of the wider community and community groups. All are worthy and valuable contributions.

In light of this, it is recommended to change the vision:

*The City of Moreland will ~~support~~ **have** a more diverse, connected and resilient natural environment where **indigenous plants** and animals thrive **in a challenging and changing***

environment. Through fostering strong partnerships, Council supports its residents community to treasure the local environment by providing opportunities to discover, connect and care for nature.

Support for proposed actions

The online submission form asked participants to score a number of key actions in the Draft Action Plan. Similar or related actions from the Plan were combined for simplification.

As can be seen from the table below, there was overwhelming support for the proposed actions with at least 80% total support for each, many over 90%. There was slightly less support (and less strong support) for nature education and engagement actions, such as Adopt-a-verge (81%), as opposed to on-ground actions such as expanding and improving conservation sites and increasing diversity on Council managed land (over 95%).

How well do you support the following actions?	strongly support	support	% total support
Theme 1: Protect and enhance biodiversity on Council managed land			
Develop a habitat connectivity plan for the City including consideration of nature in schools, parks and streets	81	12	93
Expand and improve conservation sites through maintenance, revegetation and renewal programs	88	7	95
Support diversity through understorey planting and habitat replacement	87	9	96
Construct wetlands and naturalise creek corridors to retain and treat stormwater	90	5	95
Theme 2: Seek opportunities for the private realm to contribute positively to biodiversity			
Establish a Gardens for Wildlife program in Moreland	79	10	89
Fund/resource the 'Adopt a tree/verge' program to support the revitalisation of nature-strips.	70	11	81
Investigate the impacts of domestic animals, particularly cats, on biodiversity in Moreland and consider the adoption of a cat curfew.	70	14	84
Undertake a review of planning control mechanisms to strengthen the protection of vegetation and amenity values, particularly along waterways	81	12	93
Theme 3: Connect people to nature			
Deliver a program of nature-based community engagement activities	71	12	83
Expand supports for schools, early years centres and community groups to engage in nature-based activities	77	11	88
Develop and deliver a 10 year capital program for access and amenity improvements along waterway corridors.	77	14	91

Develop and begin implementing activation/master plans for undeveloped areas along waterway corridors (eg Merri Creek, Fawkner)	84	7	91
Theme 4: Improving governance and collaboration in natural resource management			
Partner with Traditional Owners in natural resource management	84	10	94
Continue to support Merri Creek Management Committee and the Chain of Ponds Collaboration	68	18	86
Establish an ongoing biodiversity monitoring program, including opportunities for citizen science.	79	10	89

Opportunities for improvement

The online form encouraged participants to provide ideas for additional actions or ideas on how the Draft Nature Plan could be improved. Below is a summary of the key themes that emerged from both the online and written submissions on the following topics:

- Strategic context
- Community partnerships
- Education and engagement
- Management of domestic animals
- Stormwater treatment and litter management
- Pest animals
- Built form and planning controls
- Artificial lighting
- Artificial habitats
- Restoration and weed control programs
- Climate change
- Creek naturalisation
- Access and amenity
- Traditional owners
- Productive and community gardens
- Monitoring and targets
- Park access and land acquisition
- Resourcing
- Other comments
- Editorial changes
- Comments outside the scope of the Nature Plan

Strategic context

There was a call from seven submissions to aim higher for nature and make indigenous plantings/ bushland character the default choice for open space with plantings in all parks and streetscapes to be locally indigenous. A concern that there is conflicting information in Council strategies was raised in one submission and another queried how the Nature Plan relates to various international, national and state policies. Providing greater clarification of where the Nature Plan sits in a strategic context will assist in answering these queries.

The vision, objectives and actions identified in the Nature Plan are closely aligned with a range of international, national, state and regional policies and strategies relating to biodiversity. Relevant State, regional and local strategies have been identified in Section 6.0. This can be extended to identify international and national strategies including the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, and the National Strategy for Nature 2019-2030. It will also be extended to include reference to relevant pest plant and animal management strategies such as the Invasive Plants and Animals Policy Framework.

These strategies all identify the importance of managing biodiversity assets to build resilience and diversity, mitigating impacts from threatening processes, connecting people to nature and inclusive governance and collaboration, all of which strongly align to the goals of the Moreland Nature Plan.

Within the Moreland context, the Nature Plan is an Action Plan which sits under the Moreland Open Space (MOSS) and Urban Forest Strategies (UFS). Both these strategies emphasise the importance of having a diversity of open space and planting types across the municipality.

The UFS and MOSS recognise the importance of biodiversity and making places for nature with key opportunities for enhancement in conservation zones and habitat corridors. With the exception of existing waterway plans, there is a need for clear, localised practical actions for enhancing biodiversity and connecting the community with nature in Moreland of which the Nature Plan provides.

The proposed habitat connectivity plan (Action 1.1) will assist in the identification of other parks and open spaces away from creek corridors that play an important role as stepping stones/links for biodiversity. Recognition of the function of these parks in this way will help to direct planting styles and inform the review of the Open Space Strategy (due 2022).

Outcomes for the Plan

Additional information in Section 6.0 Strategic Context to provide further clarity around the hierarchy and context of Council's strategies and connections to wider international, national and state strategies.

Community partnerships

The breadth of work that volunteers contribute to Moreland's natural environment cannot be overstated. The Draft Nature Plan mentions the history of community input in section 5.10 but more explicit recognition of the value and importance of community should be recognised in the Plan and the future vision. This was, understandably, raised in a number of community group submissions.

Outcomes for the plan for community partnerships:

An additional section in the Background and Technical Report 'Community partnerships' which acknowledges the contribution of community groups/volunteers, separating this from 5.10 Community nature engagement activities.

Change to the vision to better recognise the importance of partnerships (as outlined above)

Extend the description of the guiding principle 'Council cannot work alone' with **Inclusion, empowerment and support for community groups** in recognition of the way we will do things.

Additional action

- Recognise community groups and individual volunteer contributions to Moreland's natural environment through nominations to the Moreland Awards – Environment Category.

Education and engagement

Fifty-five respondents made comments in relation to nature education and engagement. Comments included the need to offer programs which:

- Involve schools and early learning/nature play programs to engage children at a young age and foster care for the environment. Continue to support local groups such as CERES and MCMC in education programs.

- Design programs tailored to engage a diverse range of audiences, such as cultural/religious groups, sporting organisations, mental health and disability sectors.
- Engage with businesses/corporate organisations
- Offer a range of topics
- Offer face-to-face as well as online options; and
- promoted outside the usual user groups.

There was a good range of topics suggested from what lives, and what to grow, in your backyard, adult education programs like Nature Stewards, how to make a bee hotel and learning from traditional owners. These ideas have been noted and will inform the breadth of nature activities delivered as part of Action 3.4.

It was noted in a small number of submissions (2), and perhaps reflected in the slightly lower scorings (discussed above), that given the lower public benefit, these activities should be relatively modest and of low cost to Council. The design of these programs should take learnings from, and be developed in strong partnership with, existing community groups such as the Brunswick Communities for Nature and Creating Gardens for Wildlife in Moreland and can also be supported through grants programs.

The proposed costs currently identified in the Plan for these actions are low in comparison to the proposed on-ground delivery actions on Council land. The intention is for Council to partner with and support, community led initiatives in these programs. Some minor wording changes to the Plan will help reflect this.

Outcomes for the plan for education and engagement:

Acknowledge the existence, importance and contribution of community groups in the Background and Technical Report (see also community partnerships section below)

Modify action 2.1 ~~Establish~~ **Support the further establishment of a** 'Gardens for Wildlife' program in Moreland.

Modify Action 3.4 Deliver an annual program of nature-based activities to engage residents in learning about and valuing the natural environment **with a focus on engaging new and diverse audiences.**

Management of domestic animals

84% of online survey participants supported Action 2.9, Undertake an investigation into the impacts of domestic animals, particularly cats, on biodiversity in Moreland and consider the adoption of a cat curfew. A large proportion of submissions (39) went further to add comment in relation to this action.

The majority of these (35) specifically related to the cat curfew, 30 calling for this action to be an urgent and immediate action, with the impacts of cats already well documented and other Councils already initiating curfews. A small number of submissions (5), raised concerns that the introduction of curfews in urban areas are not effective, would not be enforceable, could be seen as 'green washing' and/or have potential animal cruelty impacts.

Before implementing a curfew in Moreland, it would be prudent to better understand the enforcement implications and effectiveness of such curfews, particularly gaining knowledge from other Councils who have initiated curfews. Without enforcement, curfews are unlikely to modify behaviour beyond existing educational campaigns.

The impact from off-leash dogs was also raised (10 submissions) calling for increased fenced dog parks, fencing of sensitive habitats, limiting off-leash areas and enforcing responsible dog ownership (including poo collection) along creek corridors.

Conflicts between park uses such as these, can be reduced if addressed at the planning and renewal stage, such as during development of activation/master plans as recommended in Actions 3.11 and 3.19.

Fencing can also be considered part of Action 1.4 in relation to the maintenance, regeneration and renewal of conservation areas as a management tool where problem areas exist and other options (such as planting buffers) are unsuccessful/inappropriate. Targeted education campaigns and enforcement of dog on-leash areas in high conservation zones will also assist in protecting wildlife.

The Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) is Council's key document in relation to domestic cats and dogs and is due for renewal in 2021/22. Recommendations for any changes to off-leash dog areas and/or the initiation of cat curfews will be investigated prior to, and considered as part of, the DAMP review.

Outcome for plan for domestic animal management:

Further discussion on these topics incorporated into Section 5.15 in the Background and technical report (Part 1).

Modify Action 2.9 to state 'Undertake an investigation into the cost implications and effectiveness of a cat curfew in Moreland in the 2022/26 Domestic Animal Management Plan'

Expand action 1.4 Continue maintenance, regeneration and renewal of conservation areas through intensive weed management, ecological burning, *fencing* and enhancement planting.

Additional action:

- Education and enforcement of dog on-leash areas and dog poo collection, prioritised in high conservation areas.

Stormwater treatment and litter management

Thirty-five submissions called for more stormwater treatment and litter management programs to help improve water quality and reduce harmful and unsightly pollutants in our waterways.

Section 5.3 (Urban stream degradation and loss of water in the landscape) of the Background and Technical Report (Part 1), discusses the impacts of modified stormwater regimes on urban waterways and makes reference to Council's Watermap 2020 strategy. This document has recently been refreshed and, now titled Moreland Integrated Water Management (IWM) Strategy 2040, it includes a number of actions in relation to improving waterway health, particularly in Outcome Area 4: Healthy Waterways. This includes the design and delivery of Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) projects, wetlands and litter management programs, including the implementation of a Litter and Gross Pollutant Action Plan and increased support for community initiatives to reduce plastic pollution in the environment (Action 5.1).

Two wetland projects have been specifically listed in the Moreland Nature Plan, Gavin Park and Somerlayton wetland, as they are located along habitat corridors, will have high biodiversity outcomes and are budgeted for delivery within the life of this Nature Plan (4 years).

Outcomes for the plan for stormwater and litter management:

Further reference to the IWM strategy included in Section 5.9 Urban stream degradation and loss of water in the landscape

Additional action

- Implement recommendations from Moreland's Integrated Water Management Strategy (IWM) 2040, particularly Outcome area 4: Healthy Waterways, to reduce stormwater impacts on local waterways.

Further reference to the IWM 2040 Strategy in the Nature Plan will reinforce the important links between the two documents.

Pest animals

Discussion around the management of pest animals was an omission in the Draft report and was identified in 14 submissions, particularly noting foxes, rabbits and Indian Mynas. In line with National and State strategies, pest animal programs should be undertaken on an asset-based risk mitigation approach and are therefore targeted where they have potential to cause most impact such as in conservation areas rather than more broadly.

Given its urban context, Moreland is fortunate to have only relatively small populations of rabbits, located mostly in Fawkner and Coburg North. These populations, and the impacts from them on conservation programs, have been manageable using non-chemical approaches such as ferreting, netting and dogging on an annual basis and these should be continued.

Control of Indian Mynas and foxes is much more problematic in the urban environment and require regional style programs and it should be noted that the RSPCA does not currently support Indian Myna trapping and euthanasia programs. Preventative measures, such as

Outcomes for the Plan

An additional section in the Background and Technical Report 'Pest animals' which discusses the challenges and opportunities for Pest animal control.

Expand action 1.4 Continue maintenance, regeneration and renewal of conservation areas through intensive weed management, ecological burning, fencing, *pest animal control* and enhancement planting. Develop seed lots and propagation programs for significant species as part of these programs.

Additional action

- Provide information on Councils website on measures for discouraging pest animals, such as Indian Mynas and foxes.

Built form and planning controls

Thirty-three submissions related to opportunities to protect and enhance biodiversity through the built form. The need for vegetation protection, particularly of large trees and stronger planning controls along waterway corridors to protect both vegetation and creek character were both raised.

The review of planning controls along waterways is already covered in Action 2.5. Council is currently in the process of developing a register of significant trees (referred to in Action 2.11) which will secure protection of these trees in the Planning Scheme.

Several submissions requested stronger planning controls to manage stormwater run-off (and protect downstream waterway health) and support ecologically inclusive design (rooftop gardens and vertical gardens) as part of development. These objectives are considered in application of Clause 22.08 Environmental Sustainable Development in the Moreland Planning Scheme. This covers a range of environmental design criteria including stormwater management and urban ecology.

Tools used for implementation of this policy, such as the Built Environment Sustainability Scorecard (BESS), includes an urban ecology category. It is important to note, however, that scores are not currently available for habitat objectives. A review of this policy is due to occur in the next 2-3 years and the inclusion of best practice guidelines and scoring criteria for habitat improvements in line with the urban ecology objectives of this policy will form part of this review.

Outcomes for the plan for building and planning controls:

Add further information in section 5.6 Impact of urban development on environmental and landscape values of the Background and Technical Report on Clause 22.08.

Additional action under Goal area 2

- Strengthen Urban Ecology objectives as part of the wider review of Clause 22.08 Environmental Sustainable Development of the Moreland Planning Scheme

Artificial lighting

Seven submissions identified concern over the impact of artificial lighting (street and domestic) on wildlife, and particularly impacts on habitat corridors.

Councils Public Lighting Policy (2018) provides for the design, installation, maintenance and application of public lighting throughout the city. It aims to improve public safety, provide equity of lighting across the municipality, and ensure that public lighting meets community expectations for illumination performance, while minimising operating costs and environmental impacts.

The minimum Moreland standard for lighting in streetscapes in the policy is for alignment with Australian Standards AS1158. The policy recognises that artificial lighting can have an impact on wildlife and notes in standards for lighting in open space 'Where the habitat value of a park is the predominant attribute of the park (often known as habitat open space), the potential impacts on native wildlife are to be considered as the primary reason against the need for lighting. The design, location and level of illumination of new public lighting in parks should be chosen to minimise impacts on trees and wildlife.'

The Lighting Policy was adopted in 2018 but since then, the Commonwealth Government has released a set of guidelines to help reduce the impacts of light pollution. These guidelines should be referred to in the review of the Public Lighting Policy which is due in 2023.

Outcomes for the plan for lighting:

An additional section in the Background and Technical Report 'Artificial Lighting'.

Additional action under Goal area 1:

- Consider, and make reference to, the National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife including Marine Turtles, Seabirds and Migratory Shorebirds in 2019 in the review of the Public Lighting Policy (2023)

Artificial habitats

Five submissions made requests for the inclusion of more artificial or supplementary habitats, such as nest boxes and bee hotels, and/or interest in engagement programs that support the building of them. The inclusion of artificial habitats is already discussed in section 5.8 (Simplified Landscapes – lack of diversity) and incorporated in Action 1.6 'Increase habitat diversity through the incorporation of enriched understorey planting (particularly flowering plants) rocks and logs in restoration sites and consider artificial habitat opportunities (eg nest boxes, bee hotels). Community engagement and education activities on building these have been discussed above under Education and Engagement.

No change to Plan.

Restoration and weed control programs

Expanding and improving conservation areas and increased diversity of habitats were identified as key priority actions with over 95% of participants supporting these actions. The development of a habitat connectivity plan (Action 1.1) was also highly supported in the online survey (93%) and noted in 6 group submissions as a key action which will help prioritise resources for the biggest impact.

There were a number of submissions that identified specific locations requiring greater focus for restoration/improvement programs, specifically Fawkner (6), Pascoe Vale/Westbreen Creek (2) and Brunswick West (2). The Draft Plan already acknowledges the need for more investment in these particular areas through Action 1.5, 1.10, 3.11, 3.15 and 3.16 and as such, these requests are noted, but no further change is recommended to the Plan.

Several requests were made for more planting of trees to increase tree canopy in general. This is already well covered in Morelands Urban Forest Strategy. Actions 1.1 (Connectivity and Revegetation Plan) and 1.5 (Continued revegetation programs) will continue to deliver on this.

Concerns were raised about conflicting actions between Council policy and delivery in both planting and maintenance operations undertaken by council and community. This includes the use of non-indigenous species in habitat corridors, damage or removal of vegetation during infrastructure projects, lack of maintenance and off-target damage through weed control operations. This issue was touched on through a Notice of Motion by Councillor Abboud at the May Council meeting and a subsequent Council report recommended the development of planting and maintenance guidelines be included as an action in the Nature Plan. These guidelines will make reference to the National standards for Ecological Restoration Australasia, Greening Australia Climate Future Plots program and DELWP resources such as Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC) benchmarks.

Actions 4.1 (develop an inventory of NRM sites) and 4.2 (undertake a review of services between Council and Melbourne Water maintenance operations) will also assist in improving cohesion between Council operations and will be extended to include community groups.

Outcomes for the plan for revegetation and weed control programs:

Additional action under Goal area 4

- In consultation with local creek management bodies, review existing development and revegetation guidelines and develop best practice planting guidelines for bushland, habitat corridor and creek / waterways plantings undertaken by both Council and Community Groups / Organisations.

Modify Actions 4.1 and 4.2 to include 'community groups'.

Climate change

Three submissions requested more recognition of climate change, the climate emergency and its impact on biodiversity is needed in the Plan. The climate emergency is raised in the Executive Summary and introduction, and the impacts on biodiversity and need to build resilience are discussed more broadly in Section 5.1.

The implementation of a specific climate resilience habitat restoration project using non-indigenous/non-provenance species based on future climate scenarios was suggested. Greening Australia, in partnership with research organisations, have already established a program with similar intentions,

Climate Future Plots. This program will be referred to in the development of the bushland planting and maintenance guidelines (mentioned above in Revegetation and weed control programs).

No change to plan.

Creek naturalisation

Naturalisation of concrete sections of the creek corridors, particularly the Moonee Ponds Creek, has long been advocated for by Council and community. Action 1.12 in the Draft Plan proposed 'Continued advocacy for naturalisation of concrete sections of the Moonee Ponds Creek as outlined in the Chain of Ponds Plan'. Naturalisation of the Moonee Ponds Creek and for a small section on the Edgars Creek was raised in 15 submissions.

Since the development of the Draft Plan, the Victorian Government has made a welcome announcement to contribute \$5 million towards the transformation of the Moonee Ponds Creek which delivers on Action 1.12. It is therefore recommended that this Action be changed in light of this announcement to contribute to the delivery of this project, including a funding contribution (subject to business case) of \$1M.

Outcomes for the plan for creek naturalisation:

Modify action 1.12 – ~~Continued advocacy for~~ **Contribute to the naturalisation of a concrete section of the Moonee Ponds Creek as outlined in the Chain of Ponds Plan in Oak Park in partnership with the Victorian Government, Melbourne Water and Moonee Valley Council.**

Additional action under Goal area 1

- Advocacy for the naturalisation of the concrete section of the Edgars Creek in Coburg

Access and amenity

Eight submissions requested more amenity infrastructure along creek corridors including wayfinding (toilet signs), walkways, playgrounds and rubbish bins.

One submission requested the need for better access to, and from, natural areas with safe walking and cycling routes. This is beyond the breadth of the Nature Plan and more related to the Moreland Integrated Transport Strategy and will be referred for consideration. The east-west habitat corridor links identified in the Urban Forest Strategy, and shown in the Moreland Nature Map, are intended to provide natural linkages for both animals and people.

Amenity upgrades along creek corridors are currently already covered under Actions 3.12, 3.13 and 3.14 and through the development and implementation of activation plans for currently undeveloped spaces (Actions 3.11 and 3.19). Requests for amenity upgrades are noted and will be considered as part of delivery of Action 3.13.

No change to Plan.

Traditional owners

Actions to work more closely with Traditional Owners, specifically through partnering with the Narrap team, was highly supported with 94% of online survey participants supporting this action and four open submissions highlighting the importance of this action. The opportunity to learn and connect with traditional owners and heritage was also raised.

Through discussions with the Wurundjeri Tribe Council and internally during the consultation period, partnership opportunities with the Narrap team have advanced. Re-allocation of existing funds for Indigenous internships was approved at the July Council meeting to support partnership and ongoing employment opportunities for the Narrap team.

Therefore, this action is changed from a proposed action (requiring additional budget) to an approved action with existing budget.

Outcomes for the plan for Traditional Owners:

Modify action 4.6 – Partner with Traditional owners (eg Narrap team) in Caring for Country in Moreland from a proposed action to an approved action within existing budgets.

Productive and community gardens

Ten submissions, including an open submission from The Growing Farmers Project, called for community gardens/orchards and showcasing of edible native plants.

As can be seen with the success of CERES and Joes Community Garden, community gardens have the capacity to activate spaces, connect communities to nature, promote biodiversity, empower individuals to engage with their private land and support resource management and land maintenance.

Urban food growing and biodiversity conservation and enhancement can be complementary, not competing, objectives. Through regenerating under-utilised land, urban food growing spaces can contribute to a diverse, connected and resilient natural environment by improving diversity and the quantity of flora, fauna and improved soils with thriving microbiota; and providing ecosystem services such as pollination, natural pest control, and climate regulation (Lin et al 2015).

Food growing on public land is best reserved to places where it can contribute most effectively to increasing biodiversity - such as sites of lower conservation and habitat value. Consideration for opportunities for community gardens can be investigated as part of activation plans for currently underutilised and neglected spaces, such as sections of the Merri Creek, Fawkner (Action 3.11).

The Moreland Food System Strategy is Council's key document supporting productive gardening and the establishment and management of community gardens. A recognition of the contribution of productive gardening plays in fostering nature connection and appreciation should be referenced in the Nature Plan and considered more broadly during the review of the Open Space Strategy.

Community and productive gardens also offer an opportunity to grow and show-case indigenous food plants and have potential to act as seed orchards for wider landscape plantings. This has been raised in discussions with garden managers at both Joes Community Garden and Fawkner Food Bowls as well as the potential to incorporate alternative water sources with nearby wetland projects. These actions can be supported through both Nature Plan and the Food Systems Strategy implementation.

Outcomes for the Plan:

An additional section in the Background and Technical Report on 'Productive and community gardens' and further discussion about the opportunities for activation through community gardens as part of Section 5.14 Activation of natural spaces.

Recognition of the Moreland Food System Strategy in Section 6 Strategic Context

Identification of existing community gardens on the Moreland Nature Map.

Additional actions:

- Undertake a feasibility study and business case for creating an indigenous food garden at Edna Grove Coburg as part of a wetland and integrated stormwater project
- Support the establishment of an indigenous food garden at Fawkner Food Bowls

Monitoring and targets

Eight submissions highlighted the importance of ongoing monitoring, including the need for sufficient baseline data and opportunities to utilise existing tools/programs (eg Waterwatch, frog census, bird counts and the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas). A review of the Moreland Indigenous Vegetation Assessment (MIVA) was also recommended as this is nearing 10 years old.

The intention of Action 4.4 is to develop a monitoring program which identifies and follows the trend of key indicator/representative species (plants and animals) that are readily measurable through citizen science as well as targeted expert surveys. The design of the program will form part of the role of the proposed Conservations Program Officer (Action 3.1) working with community groups.

Some baseline data is available through existing data resources, such as those mentioned above, and will also be collated through the implementation of other actions (eg Action 1.1 connectivity plan and 4.1 active inventory of NRM sites). However, the need for some further expert field assessments will be required and as such, Action 4.4 will be separated into two actions 1) to collate the baseline data and 2) develop a monitoring program.

The draft Nature Plan included a number of measures and indicative targets to monitor the implementation of the Nature Plan which were generally supported. However, three submissions called for higher and more definitive targets (eg. 1 hectare per year or ten hectares per decade). The targets provided in the Plan are indicative only.

The development of the habitat connectivity plan, collation of baseline data and mapping inventory (including mapping additional revegetation areas), will enable council to identify longer term visions (10, 20 and 50 year) for revegetation and key indicator species and then set relative, measurable annual targets. Targets for community programs, such as Gardens for Wildlife, will be better determined once these projects are more thoroughly designed in partnership with community groups.

One submission noted that the recommended indicators will be a good record of what Council is doing well but there is no recognition of vegetation lost or damaged as a result of works. As part of implementation of the Urban Forest Strategy, annual vegetation cover measures on both public and private land will be measured using aerial photography analysis technology. Inclusion of this indicator will also provide a good measure of how we are tracking against nature goals as well and will be included in the list of indicators.

Outcomes for the plan for monitoring and targets:

Separate Action 4.4 into two actions

- Collate existing biodiversity data and undertake field assessments to develop baseline data for an ongoing monitoring program.
- Develop an ongoing monitoring program to monitor the effectiveness of this Plan utilising citizen science opportunities where possible.

Include annual vegetation cover (m2) on private and public land as an annual indicator for measuring success of the Nature Plan.

Park access and land acquisition

A small number of submissions (7) placed emphasis on a desire for the creation of more parks, such as further land acquisitions and road closures, to create more places for nature. The reference to the Moreland Planning Scheme and Open Space Strategy goals for a continual 30m vegetated buffer and 50m open space corridor along the waterways was also highlighted.

Action 1.16 seeks to review land ownership and management along waterways and key habitat corridors to identify opportunities for improved connectivity and will be amended to reference the above strategies. A specific mention was made to pursue the Bridges Avenue- Tonkin Road connection identified in the Merlynston Linear Park Plan which has been noted and will be considered as part of the implementation of Action 1.16.

Outcomes for the plan for park access and land acquisition:

Modify Action 1.16 - Undertake a review of land ownership and management along waterways and key habitat corridors to identify opportunities to improve connectivity for both habitat and public access **to support the minimum 30m vegetated and 50m open space buffer as outlined in the Planning Scheme and Open Space Strategy.**

Resourcing

Many of the submissions that were received from community groups acknowledged the challenges and competing budgets that Council must manage while emphasising the need to adequately resource the Nature Plan with operational and capital budgets. One submission raised concern about any rate increase required to implement the Plan.

Particular support was noted for additional staffing resources (as outlined in Action 3.1), increased delivery of revegetation and activation plans (eg. Actions 1.3 and 1.5), increased support for community groups (Action 3.3) and for the ongoing management of increasing restoration areas (Action 4.3). One

submission suggested even further expansion of budgets for community group support and nature education activities is warranted.

Developing more innovative, collaborative partnerships with other public and private stakeholders, such as Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA), Landcare and corporate sponsorships (including local businesses) was also suggested as an opportunity for resourcing restoration programs. Council has, in the past sought these opportunities with considerable success, such as with the Green Army, Department of Justice Corrections Program, Greening Australia and more recently, Working for Victoria Program.

Outcomes for the plan:

Additional action

- Seek and develop innovative partnerships with other public and private stakeholders to resource/implement natural resource management programs.

Other comments

Population growth predictions - one submission questioned the population predictions stated in the Background and Technical Report (page 5). Population projections are one important consideration when planning delivery of services. They are less relevant to the Nature Plan other than highlighting the ongoing impact of urban consolidation with the loss of private open space. While a valid point, it is not the role of the Nature Plan to estimate a sustainable population for Moreland. The Moreland population is growing and yet Council is working hard to create a sustainable city.

Recognition of author – three submissions noted there was no recognition of the author of the draft Nature Plan. The Plan was developed internally by Council by staff from the Open Space Design and Development Unit with input from internal and external stakeholders. An acknowledgement has been added to the Plan.

Editorial changes

As stated in three submissions, the Nature Plan will be a useful reference document for Council staff, community groups, schools and tertiary students. A range of minor information additions and editorial changes were recommended which do not change the intention of the Plan but which improve its context, readability and/or usefulness and have been incorporated into the document where appropriate.

Comments outside the scope of the Nature Plan

There were several comments received during the consultation period that are noted below but are considered beyond the scope of a Nature Plan.

- Need to address air quality and noise from industrial sites
- Out-reach program for rough sleepers
- Stop 5G as it will kill off nature
- More off-street parking required

Next steps

The changes outlined in the above discussion will be made to the draft Nature Plan with a revised version to be presented to Council for consideration at the August 2020 Council meeting.

Appendix

Conservations Moreland online survey report