



Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee (YCACC) Annual Report

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



**TRUST FOR
NATURE**
Habitat forever

*by Anne Langworthy
Independent Convener, YCACC*

November 2017



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List of Acronyms

CFA	Country Fire Authority
CoM	Committee of Management
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, Trust for Nature, Yarra Ranges Shire Council (roadside verges), Cardinia Shire Council (roadside verges), VicRoads (roadside verges). 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
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

Acknowledgements

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

Whilst this report was a collaborative effort the final report was made possible by the addition of many voluntary hours contributed by Anne Langworthy in addition to her usual duties as Independent Convener of YCACC.

Written submissions to this report as credited were provided by:

- Meryn Kelly – Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP);
- Victoria Purdue – Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP);
- Emma Trottman – Parks Victoria;
- Steve Hosking – Melbourne Water;
- Kacie Melfi – Yarra4Life;
- Dan Harley – Zoos Victoria;
- Simon Woodland – Yarra Ranges Shire Council; and
- Marianne Sawyer – Cardinia Shire Council.

Introduction

The decision to create the new Conservation Area resulted from the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) Yellingbo Investigation, requested in 2011 and completed with the July 2013 Final Report. The Victorian Government's response to the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council's (VEAC) Yellingbo Investigation was published March 2014 and largely endorsed the VEAC recommendations, one of which was:

(a) [State Emblems Conservation] Area Coordinating Committee be established to oversee and coordinate land management for nature conservation and biodiversity programs in the State Emblems Conservation Area, set strategic directions and policies, provide guidance for land management, and increase the profile of the biodiversity and ecological values of the area and their protection¹

The Victorian Government endorsement of this recommendation acknowledged the need for:

- improved coordination of the management of the Conservation Area and collaboration between the various agencies, land managers and the community;
- establishment of strategic priorities and clear directions for the area to assist land managers, local government and the community, to work in partnership to achieve better environmental outcomes;
- a key role in issues that arise at a regional level (e. g planning for bush fire control, tourism, and pest plants and animals); and
- a point of contact for engagement and liaison with stakeholders on matters relating to land management.

YCACC Annual Report

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

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

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

The first convener resigned after chairing two meetings and the current convener chaired her first meeting in October 2016 which has contributed to a delay in providing the minister with his report, the YCACC Action Plan and Business Plan which accompany this Report. The YCACC Action Plan details the agreed actions, their prioritisation and progress and includes the Committee's agreed performance indicators.

The committee's performance against performance indicators is detailed in this report.

¹ Victorian Government Response to the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Yellingbo Investigation p. 6

YCACC Membership (as at November 2017)

- Anne Langworthy - Independent Convener;
- Merryn Kelly - Department of Environment, Land, Water, and Planning;
- Craig Bray - Parks Victoria;
- Steve Hosking - Melbourne Water;
- Cr Jim Child - Yarra Ranges Shire Council;
- Marianne Sawyer - Cardinia Shire Council;
- Stephen Thuan - Port Phillip & Westernport Catchment Management Authority - *resigned July 2017*;
- Kacie Melfi - Port Phillip & Westernport Catchment Management Authority - *designate*;
- Dan Harley - Zoos Victoria;
- Ben Cullen - Trust for Nature;
- David Renkin - Country Fire Authority - *resigned September 2017, replacement to be confirmed*;
- Wurundjeri Tribe Land & Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Incorporated - *nomination to be confirmed*;
- Sue Tardif - Community representative nominated by Yarra Ranges Shire Council;
- Bob Anderson - Community representative nominated by Yarra Ranges Shire Council;
- Peter Cooper - Community representative nominated by Yarra Ranges Shire Council; and
- Jeff Latter - Community representative nominated by Cardinia Shire Council.

Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

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

Mission

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

Values

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

Progress and Achievements

YCACC

The YCACC represents a new approach to coordination of land management and collaboration between agencies and the community through the development of an interdepartmental committee, with strong community representation and an independent convener.

Many who live and work in the YCA area see themselves as stewards of the natural environment. The establishment of the YCA led by YCACC offers a powerful programming space within which regional stakeholders and others can coordinate ongoing activities that engage residents and visitors to build an appreciation for the value of biodiversity.

Although achieving the co-ordination role envisioned by VEAC and the Victorian Government has not been an easy task, there has been much learning and development of the working relationships around the committee table and amongst working groups since the committee's inception in December 2015.

The committee's commitment to the task of establishing the new conservation area is demonstrated by the time commitment and outcomes over the last year. Initially the monthly committee meetings ran from 9 am until 12 pm. On 20th October 2016, a Planning Day running from 9 am until 3 pm replaced the normal monthly meeting and enabled progress in establishing the planning framework. From the May meeting 2017 on, YCACC Meetings have been extended and now run from 9.00 am to 2.00 pm in order to include a workshop component given the amount of work to be done and the difficulty in scheduling out-of-session group meetings. This has proved a successful strategy.

Significant amounts of time and effort have been expended by YCACC over the last year in establishing the three year YCACC Action Plan as required by the Committee's Terms of Reference and as further demonstrated by the detailed planning process which will reach fruition with the establishment of the ten-year YCA Plan by mid 2018. The initial consultation process commenced in September 2017 will be completed in December 2017. A second wave of community consultation, based on the draft plan, will be run from February until April 2018.

As part of the YCACC Action Plan four Committee Key Performance Indicators have been specified. The table below briefly outlines YCACC performance against these indicators. It is pleasing to note that the committee meets the benchmarks specified for three indicators and establishes a benchmark for the fourth.

YCACC Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicator	Outcome
12 meetings held annually	The committee first meet in December 2015 and has met on the third Tuesday of the Month every month since that date.
75% attendance at meetings	Overall attendance at YCACC Meetings from October 2016 until October 2017 is 83%. (29 apologies from a total of 172 attendances).
Number of out of session working group meetings	Six working groups have met during the past year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Spatial Categorisation Working Group; • the Good Practice Working Group; • Licenses/Conservation Agreement Working Group; • the Action Plan Working group; and • The YCA (Concept) Plan Working Group. There have been at least 26 out of session working group meetings/consultation sessions
Annual Committee self-evaluation.	Two self evaluation processes have been conducted (October 2016 and October 2018)

Table 1: YCACC Key Performance Indicators

Self-Evaluation

The two self-evaluation exercises demonstrate perceived improvement which can be substantiated by outputs over the last year.

In 2016 committee members had concerns about the effectiveness of the committee, co-ordination and the lack of clear strategies and/or plans. Concerns were expressed about issues including: role clarity; clarity of vision, mission and goals; the relationship between agency and community members; the focus on licence removal at the expense of other priorities; YCA finances and the lack of access full incoming/outgoing financial reports. Although potentially attributable to delays in establishing the committee, and the early resignation of the first YCACC Convenor, the perception of some members that there is a disconnect between project implementation and the Committee deliberations has caused further concern. Lack of timely information and clear reporting against agreed goals or specified key performance indicators compromised the Committee's ability to fulfil the terms of reference and in some instances put the Committee at reputational risk in the community.

In 2017, planning advances and the development of agreed YCACC Vision, Mission, Values and Goals reduced concerns about strategies and plans. Improved meeting protocols, knowledge and expertise within the Committee, improved relationships and information sharing are considered strengths of the Committee. Governance and the relationship between the committee's role "to oversee and coordinate land management for nature conservation and biodiversity programs ..., set strategic directions and policies, provide guidance for land management, and increase the profile of the biodiversity and ecological values of the area and their protection" and project implementation remains a work in progress.

Highlights

Committee highlights include:

- YCACC website <http://ycacc.com.au> is in the process of being redesigned with expanded capability including the provision of an e-newsletter and subscription capability, upgraded Content Management System and maximised interactivity (the design will allow for the changes required when the Conservation Area is formally named);
- preparation of briefing notes and issues papers as preparation for meeting deliberations;
- development of YCACC Vision, Mission, and Values statement;
- development of the induction package and process for new committee members;
- development of the Engagement and Communication Plan;
- completion of the 2016-2018 Action Plan;
- increased committee representation with the appointment of a CFA representative and the process in train to appoint a Wurundjeri Council representative;
- development of the YCA Planning Process;
- commencement of well planned and facilitated targeted community engagement sessions with key stakeholder groups; and
- two YCACC newsletters have been developed, one in December 2016 that had a small circulation and little feedback, and the second in November 2017 which is more comprehensive and has better production values. This newsletter has been sent to the YCACC database with the invitation to sign up for the subsequent quarterly e-newsletters. The Engage Vic website survey also included and invitation to sign up for further information.

Committee Progress

The Committee self-evaluation conducted on 19 October 2017 identified the following areas of progress in Committee functioning. YCACC is perceived to have:

- developing knowledge and expertise within the Committee;
- improved relationships between agencies;
- improved information sharing between agencies and community;
- adaptive management improvements in a changing and challenging environment (incorporated the learnings from Haining Farm, feedback on bushfire planning, Yarra Strategic Plan, and Yarra Trail, for example); and
- a commitment to collaborative decision making and integrated outcomes between agencies and the community (e.g. YCACC Action Plan which is considered to be a milestone achievement).

Agency Contributions to the YCA

The following information has been provided by each agency represented on the YCACC.

Melbourne Water

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

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

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

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

Melbourne Water Direct Works	Amount Paid Inc. GST	No. of projects / work orders
Capital Works Projects	\$451,420	11
Operational Expenditure:		
Programmed Maintenance -		
Natural Resource Management (Vegetation management incl. weed control, revegetation, pest control)	\$793,013	210
Unprogrammed Works:		
Civil (Stabilisation, Debris, Litter Removal)	\$217,354	21
Natural Resource Management (Vegetation mgmt. incl. weed control, revegetation, pest control)	\$148,497	26
TOTAL DIRECT EXPENDITURE	\$1,610,284	268

Table 2: Melbourne Water Direct Works

Grants & Incentive Programs	Amount Paid Inc. GST	No. of projects
Stream Frontage Management Program	\$134,542	22
Rural Land Program	\$45,486	1
Community Grants	\$54,804	5
Corridors of Green	\$36,082	6
TOTAL GRANTS	\$270,914	34

Table 3: Melbourne Water Grants and Incentive Programs

Steve Hosking, Team Leader Upper Yarra, Waterways & Land, Service Delivery Group

Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (PPWCMA)

Yarra4Life Highlights

- The Port Phillip & Westernport CMA coordinates Yarra4Life on behalf of numerous partner organisations.
- Yarra4Life includes a 5-year, \$1 million project funded by the Australian Government’s National Landcare Programme.

Yarra4Life is a major environmental project in the Yarra Valley that aims to protect, improve, increase and connect habitat for native animals including the Helmeted Honeyeater and the Leadbeater’s Possum.

A long-term goal is to have habitat links from the Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve north to the Yarra Ranges National Park, south-east to Kurth Kiln Regional Park and west to the Dandenong Ranges National Park, thereby expanding the habitat range for these and other native animal species.

Partner organisations working together in Yarra4Life in 2016/17 included:

- Parks Victoria,
- Yarra Ranges Shire Council,
- Melbourne Water,
- Yarra Ranges Landcare Network,
- Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater,
- Trust for Nature,
- Victorian National Parks Association,
- Friends of Leadbeater’s Possum,
- Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning,
- Wurundjeri Tribe Land & Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Inc., and
- Conversation Volunteers Australia.

The Port Phillip & Westernport CMA coordinates Yarra4Life on behalf of the partner organisations by convening a Coordination Committee, managing the project's finances and employing project staff who lead the delivery on on-ground works, reporting and promotion.

Achievements in 2016/17

The major Yarra4Life activity in 2016/17 was delivering the fourth year of a five-year, \$1 million project funded through the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme. This included the completion of on-ground works by 13 landholders engaged in the first round of the private land incentives program and allocation of funding for round two of the private land incentives program. These works will improve habitat values in high-priority locations. By the end of 2016/17, these on-ground works resulted in:

- 1.45 hectares of weed control;
- 128 hectares of pest animal control;
- 6.1 hectares of revegetation; and
- 11.1 hectares of existing native bushland protected by 3.5 kilometres of fencing.

Work has started on the second stage of a two-year grant awarded to the Wandoon Estate Aboriginal Corporation for fencing, weed control and revegetation works at their 'Coranderrk' property near Healesville. This second stage included the installation of 11 km of fencing and planting 10,000 indigenous plants across 5.4 hectares. Many of the plants were planted during 3 community planting days, where volunteers were welcomed in a smoking ceremony by Traditional Owners and enjoyed some 'bush tucker' before getting stick into the tree planting.

Yarra4Life secured funding in 2015/16 from the Victorian Government's Threatened Species Protection Initiative and the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme to purchase 2.3 hectares of land adjoining the Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve. The purchase of the land has been completed and is now in the process of being transferred into the National Reserve System. Plans for the rehabilitation of the site are underway with works expected to begin in early 2017/18.

Ongoing engagement and reciprocal learning activities between the Yarra4Life Coordination Committee and the Wurundjeri Tribe Land Compensation and Cultural Heritage Council were also undertaken. The Wurundjeri have been engaged to assign a Woiwurrung name to the 2.3 hectares of land recently purchased and participated in a visit to this site in April 2017. The site visit included a stop at the Friend of the Helmeted Honeyeater nursery and a feeding station, where 4 Helmeted Honeyeaters were sited on the day.

Looking Ahead

2017-18 will see the completion of the 5 year \$1 million project funded by the Australian Government's National Landcare Program. This will include:

- the delivery of on-ground works funded through round two of the private land incentives program;
- the completion of a multiyear project at Coranderrk Estate;
- the delivery of a deer control and monitoring program in the Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve; and
- the restoration of a 2.3ha block of land purchased to expand the Yellingbo Nature Conservation reserve.

In addition, Yarra4Life will be rolling out a series of education and training programs in partnership with the Yarra Ranges Shire Council.

In 2017 -18 the Yarra4Life Coordination Committee will develop a new 5-year Strategic Plan an annual Business Plan and review the Yarra4Life Communication plan.

Kacie Melfi, Environmental Projects Coordinator PPWCMA

Parks Victoria

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

Sassafras Creek

- significant weed control works undertaken by the Friends of Sassafras Creek. \$80k funding via Federal Government CMA grants and Melbourne Water grants;
- annual weed management coordination work shop for Sassafras Creek NCR with Parks Victoria, Yarra Ranges Shire Council and Melbourne Water;
- revegetation works of riparian Cool Temperate Rainforest along Sassafras creek;
- partnership program established for track maintenance with Bushwalking Victoria and Maroondah Bushwalking Club as part of the “Adopt a Track program”;
- Lyrebird Surveys conducted by the Friends of Sassafras Creek; and
- boundary encroachments are being identified and preliminary discussions are being conducted with private land owners to understand issues.

Warramate Hills Nature Conservation Reserve

- annual Fox control program in the reserve;
- Deer Control program as part of the District deer program, of which there were about 58 Sambar taken from Warramate during the last financial year;
- started deer monitoring using pellet count surveys to determine effectiveness of the deer control program;
- blackberry control around the 2 million tree revegetation site;
- \$2k worth of weed control along the Woori Yallock Creek as part of the Corridors of Green program;
- a number of tracks throughout the reserve were upgraded as part of the Melbourne Bushfire Protection Program works;
- fuel break slashing as part of the annual fuel break slashing program;
- closure of informal mountain bike track network;
- liaison with Friends of the Warramate and Yarra Ranges Mt Bikers regarding mountain biking in the reserve; and
- undertook monitoring of the 2 million tree revegetation to determine attrition rates.

Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve (YNCR)

- partnership approach to the management of the reserve with Friends of Helmeted Honeyeater – contributing to the revegetation program (site preparation and weed control), development of trial school engagement program, restoration of the JESWA land on Ewen Road, regular meetings and safety audits;
- delivery of pest plant program across the reserve (target species included ragwort, St Peters Wort, blackberry, climbing plants such as honeysuckle, and wandering trad);
- delivery of fox and cat control throughout key areas of the reserve;
- Deer Control program as part of the District deer program;
- started deer monitoring using pellet count surveys to determine effectiveness of the deer control program;

- upgrading road infrastructure for fire access including Beers Bridge replacement (MFEP);
- upgrading boardwalks and access for volunteer feeders;
- managing Green Army activities within the reserve and developing GA bids for 2017/18;
- fencing and site preparation of Youngs Swamp revegetation site in preparation for 20 million trees project to be partially delivered by Greening Australia Victoria;
- delivery of fire protection works;
- working with Melbourne Water and other key stakeholders to finalise the planning processes around the Cockatoo Swamp dewatering project;
- control of Bell Miner colonies in proximity to key breeding areas for the Helmeted Honeyeater;
- contribution to the review of the Helmeted Honeyeater Five Year Recovery Plan;
- involvement in numerous committees and attendance at meetings;
- supporting the Australian Research Council grant investigation into the response of vegetation to hydrological regimes being led by Melbourne University.

Parks Victoria also manages Wrights Forest Bushland Reserve within the YCA.

A staff member has been taken off line to produce discussion papers on revegetation techniques and other restoration methods.

*Emma Trottman, District Operations Coordinator,
Dandenong Ranges & Yarra Ranges District*

DELWP YCA Implementation Project

Establishment of the Yellingbo Project Team

The Yellingbo Project Team has been established which is responsible for implementing the Government response to the VEAC Yellingbo Investigation.

The team consists of:

- Project Manager (Yellingbo Conservation Area) (Victoria Purdue)
- Two Natural Resource Engagement Officers (Amelia Featherston and Doug West); and
- Property Officer (currently vacant).

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

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

Development of the YCA Implementation Plan

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

Haining Farm

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

Yellingbo Conservation Area Plan

As part of the ongoing management and use of the Conservation Area, a more detailed plan is required. The *Yellingbo Conservation Area Plan* will provide overall direction on how the Conservation Area will be managed into the future. As part of the development of the plan, DELWP and YCACC have prepared “*The process for development in the Yellingbo Conservation Area Plan*”. This outlines the steps that will be taken to prepare final *Conservation Area Plan*.

A YCACC Working Group worked on the community engagement strategy for the plan.

The YCACC Convenor and DELWP have been involved in organising and undertaking targeted stakeholder facilitated workshop sessions to get input to a draft *Yellingbo Conservation Area Plan* for the reserve. DELWP staff and the YCACC Convenor have organised and attended targeted sessions with conservation groups, recreation and tourism groups, the Yarra Ranges Rural Advisory Council, Cardinia Shire Council and various township organisations.

The *Engage Victoria* website went live Monday 20 November for 4 weeks to allow the community to provide input into the development of the Plan. A questionnaire on the site encourages people to identify what they consider the three most important things that the establishment of the Conservation Area should do and what they think are the three biggest issues that the establishment of the Conservation Area should focus on.

DELWP, in consultation with YCACC, will be preparing the plan over December 2017 to February 2018 and the draft plan will then be opened for public consultation.

Landholder Engagement

The DELWP Yellingbo Project Team continue to liaise directly with adjacent landholders to the reserve to discuss options for management, fencing and grants to manage and improve the environmental values in the reserve. In addition, the Project Team are meeting with owners of businesses that have encroachments into the reserve to discuss options for management.

Current team inspections (2017)	Number of Properties
Blackleather Creek	1
Britannia Creek	4
Cassell's Creek - Trib Sassafras Creek	1
Cockatoo Creek	5
Don River	1
Emerald Creek	1
Hoddles Creek	2
Little Yarra River	3
McCrae Creek	3
Menzies Creek	2
Other waterway	1
Sassafras Creek	3
Slaty Creek	1
Woori Yallock Creek	7
Yarra River	20
SUBTOTAL	55

Table 4: YCA Implementation Team - Site inspections 2017

Current team inspections (2017)	Number of Properties
Previous inspections 16/17	
Britannia Creek	1
Hoddles Creek & Wet Lead Creek	1
Little Yarra River	5
McCrae Creek	1
Other waterway	4
Sheepstation Creek	1
Yarra River	16
SUBTOTAL	29
Grand Total properties	84

Table 5: YCA Implementation Team - Site inspections 2016/2017

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

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

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

On-ground works

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

Site	Works Completed to Date	Future Works Dec 17 – Dec 18
Young’s Swamp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> site prepared – mulched gunnel Matting installed follow up weed control carried out – not budgeted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> supply & install 45,000 plants maintenance runs x 2
Millgrove	10 weed control cycles completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 weed control cycles supply & install 1000 plants
Britannia Creek	5 weed control cycles completed	9 weed control cycles
Yarra Bridge Streamside Reserve	3 weed control cycles completed	8 weed control cycles
Woori Yallock Creek	2 weed control cycles completed	10 weed control cycles
Menzies Creek	1 weed control cycle completed	7 weed control cycles

Table 6: YCA Implementation Team, Greening Australia, Australian Ecosystem Services on-ground works

Survey of the Conservation Area

The Project Team are continuing to work with the office of Surveyor General who are surveying the large blocks of public land and streamlines of the Conservation Area. Surveys of the large blocks of public land, such as Warramate and Yellingbo Nature Conservation reserve, have been completed (see below table). Survey work will continue into 2018.

The Project Team continue to work with DELWP’s Policy team in the preparation of survey plans and the new Schedule 4 under the National Parks Act.

Survey reports provided to date:

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

Table 7: Public land surveys

Assessment of uncategorised public land identified by VEAC

There are approximately 30 parcels / areas of land identified as uncategorised public land. This land was recommended to be assessed and retained or disposed of as appropriate. Assessment of this land is underway, in accordance with the Victorian Government Strategic Crown Land Assessment Policy and Guidelines and the Victorian Government Landholding Policy and Guidelines.

Yellingbo Investigation Area Bushfire planning process

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

In response to these concerns, the Minister for Energy, Environment, and Climate Change committed to prioritising the development of a bushfire management plan, incorporating community knowledge and a risk-based approach to revegetation that will not increase bushfire risk to the local and broader communities. The Yellingbo Conservation Area Bushfire Management Plan 2017 (YCA Bushfire Plan) is currently in preparation.

The Plan will be developed by:

- using PHOENIX software which uses information about weather, topography, vegetation and fire history to simulate and predict the behaviour and impact of bushfires;
- using local knowledge through partnering with Parks Victoria and local CFA brigades in the area in its development; and
- employing independent experts in the field of bushfire risk assessments (Dr Kevin Tolhurst and Justin Leonard) to be involved in the plans development and meet with each brigade to develop bushfire mitigation measures such as water points and access tracks.

DELWP have facilitated meetings with local CFA brigades in Yarra District and East Metro District, and Kevin Tolhurst and Justin Leonard to provide information about YCA and fire management planning to the CFA. The project team is arranging one-on-one meetings with each brigade to identify areas of concern and locations where access and water points can be provided or improved upon.

Engaging with Other Groups

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

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

Merryn Kelly
Regional Manager, Natural Environment
Programs, Port Phillip Region

Zoos Victoria

Achievements in the Coranderrk Bushland over the past 12 months

Barak Floodplain (future habitat for Helmeted Honeyeater's and Lowland Leadbeater's Possums):

- 40,000 plants revegetated & weed control completed;
- assessment of vegetation and hydrology completed by the University of Melbourne, in co-operation with Melbourne Water; and
- consultation with Melbourne Water to improve hydrology within the site.

Vegetation management – control of *Kunzea leptospermoides* (an invasive native species):

- 6 ha of Kunzea cleared in 2017, which is 9.5% of the total area marked for removal; and
- ongoing trials of removal methods to achieve the best ecological outcomes for individual sites.

Introduced predator management:

- ongoing upgrades being conducted to the predator exclusion boundary fence; and
- 4 foxes and 3 cats were removed in the last 12 months - there have been ongoing fox and cat incursions.

The Long-nosed Bandicoot population is growing well and we recently detected a Brush-tailed Phascogale on one of our camera traps.

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

Yarra Ranges Shire Council

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

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

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

Other Highlights

- assisting with information, strategies for community engagement and venues for community consultation and worked towards shared consultation and integrated communications;
- providing specialist staff advice and participation in meetings and working groups;
- assisting with management of bushfire risk through the roadside and reserve annual fire slashing program;
- management of biodiversity and control of pest plants in roadsides and reserves in proximity to the Conservation Area;

- influencing land management and development on private land adjacent to the YCA through Council's "Ribbons of Green" habitat restoration program that aids land managers to increase habitat values on their land. Around 60,000 plants per annum are provided to private landholders, school, community groups and onto council sites. The program also provides land managers in priority landscapes with funds to fence remnant vegetation and assist with weed control;
- the Proposed Planning Scheme Amendment C148 proposes to update our existing Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO) to include additional areas supporting high biodiversity values, particularly along waterways. This will afford a higher priority to the protection of biodiversity values on land within the new ESO when assessing planning permit applications for use and development; and
- Council's annual works program ensures on ground maintenance and development of land owned/managed by Council within and adjoining the YCA.

Cardinia Shire Council

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

Fire Management Works

- fuel break slashing program in reserves- all complete, assessing sites for 2nd cut underway; and
- slashing of strategic and tactical fire breaks along roadsides – first cut underway.

Natural Reserves - Operational Works Undertaken/Ongoing July 2017- June 2018

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

Total estimated expenditure - \$50,000

Avonsleigh Common Bushland Reserve, Emerald Lake Park, Wattle Creek Bushland Reserve, Clematis Bushland Reserve, Baker Street Reserve, Pepis Land Reserve Wetland, Stewart Rd Reserve, Garden City Estate (Wrights Forest Reserve), Emerald Quarry/Bob James Reserve

Other Indirect Activities

- advocacy of best practise environmental management on private land through landholder participation in Council's Weed Control Grant Scheme 2017/18 round;
- launch of the Cardinia Gardens for Wildlife Program;
- Macclesfield Landcare and Johns Hill Landcare Group environmental activities - e.g. From Yellingbo to Butterfield Project;
- undertaking a review of the Cardinia Shire *Pest Plant Management Strategy 2012 -2017*;
- key stakeholder in the development of a draft *Eastern Regional Pest Animal Strategy*; and
- development of a draft Biodiversity Strategy with an accompanying Biodiversity audit, quantifying Cardinia's biodiversity assets.

Specific YCA Event Involvement

- YCACC briefing to Cardinia Shire Councillors – Action Plan and YCA Plan. 20th Nov 2017;

- participation in the YCA community consultation sessions as per the YCA *Community Engagement and Communications Plan*; and
- attendance to YCACC monthly meetings.

Coordination

Twenty- nine agency and Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee (YCCAC) members attended the Agency Stakeholder Meeting held on September 19, 2017. The meeting had an ambitious agenda that included developing a SWOT analysis of coordination in establishing the Yellingbo Conservation Area and four group workshops that considered the following aspects of YCA planning in more detail:

- Coordination Required to Implement and Manage the YCA (Leader Steve Hosking);
- Resources Required to Implement and Manage the YCA (Leader Merryn Kelly);
- Prioritising Values of the YCA (Leader Marianne Sawyer); and
- Opportunities to improve or add value to the YCA (Leader Sue Tardif).

The SWOT analysis, the four workshops and the responses from the 23 participants who responded to online evaluation have provided a wealth of information the detail of which is provided in this report.

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

Commitment between all agencies and stakeholders, agreed and prioritised key goals, transparency, understanding accountabilities and operational constraints, and understanding opportunities to partner for future investment in the YCA are required to build the culture of coordination. In addition success will depend upon a suite of plans in place that are supported and agreed by all alongside political support and alignment with government policy.

Many Conservation, Landcare and Friends groups operate in the YCA. With funding support from the PPWCMA, local Councils and philanthropic groups as well as Victorian Government agencies like Parks Victoria and DELWP they are able to achieve good outcomes. However these groups have made it clear to YCACC that reliance of volunteer labour has its limits and that more resources will be needed to fully achieve the YCA outcomes desired.

Sample collaborative work within the YCA is briefly described below

Sample Collaborative Projects

Yellingbo to Butterfield

The Yellingbo to Butterfield project is embedded within a larger strategic collaboration of the Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Team (including avian and ecological experts from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Parks; Parks Victoria; Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater; Zoos Victoria; and Trust for Nature).

Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater (FoHH) along with project partners Macclesfield, Monbulk and John's Hill Landcare Groups, have established a project to work closely with landowners whose

properties adjoin the Woori Yallock Creek (WYC) south of Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve (YNCR). The in-kind contribution of these groups has been support by a grant from the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust which has enabled the employment of a project officer.

The overarching aim of this project is to restore habitat, including the threatened Sedge-rich *Eucalyptus camphora* swamp habitat and re-establish the significant corridor linking YNCR with Butterfield Reserve for threatened species. These species include the critically endangered Helmeted Honeyeater and Lowland Leadbeater's Possum, the Powerful Owl, Spotless Crake, Growling Grass Frog, Dusky Woodswallow and Eastern Swamp Skink.

Bilagal

The Trust for Nature and Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater with the support of the Judith Eardley Save Wildlife Association has purchased a property which destined to be habitat for threatened species. A plaque will be unveiled at Bilagal to honour the work that the late Jeanne Wilcox put into the Judith Eardley Save Wildlife Association in December

Removal of the Invasive Sycamores in and around Sassafras Creek

Collaboration between the Friends of Sassafras Creek, The Community Weed Alliance of the Dandenong Ranges (CWAD), The Shire of Yarra Ranges and Vic Roads has enabled significant removal of the invasive pest sycamores in the Sassafras Creek Nature Conservation Reserve and abutting private properties including those along the Monbulk Belgrave Road.

The community engagement model developed by CWAD ensured the high level of property owner participation.

Mapping the Threatened Slender and Skirted Tree Fern Population

A Dandenong Ranges Environmental & Bushfire Reduction Grants was secured by the Friends of Sassafras Creek to:

- survey and map the current Slender and Skirted Tree Fern population;
- identify and map weed threats and other threatening processes;
- prepare a Slender Tree Fern management plan with an emphasis on weed control to protect this population; and
- undertake necessary weed control works identified.

Haining Farm

An initial partnership between Parks Victoria, Zoos Victoria, Melbourne Water and Greening Australia obtained Commonwealth Government Funding for the re-establishing the habitat of the critically threatened Helmeted Honeyeater and Lowland Leadbeater's Possum. Some local community members objected to the plans for the property which has been maintained as a dairy farm by Parks Victoria since the property was donated to the State by the J T Reid Trust. DELWP ran a community consultation meeting in an attempt to assuage the fear of bushfire and engage local community members. A working group was established consisting of 5 representatives from the local community, Hillcrest Fire Brigade (CFA), Yarra Ranges Shire Council, Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee, Yarra Waterways Group, CFA, Parks Victoria and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

The group met from February to September produced three Concept Plans for Haining Farm which were then presented to the wider community through two drop-in sessions and an Engage Victoria online survey. The response to the community engagement process was unprecedented and a total of 2,345 responses were received. The majority of respondents, approx. 80% were supportive of the site providing habitat for the two threatened species with community access. The local community were supportive of Concept 2 which focussed on retaining a commercial farming operation of the site and provided minimal conservation along the waterways. The broader community were

supportive of the developing focussing on conservation and providing habitat for the two threatened species and community access. The final decision was to modify concept 3 (the conservation option) and incorporate some elements of the other options that the working group identified as important to them, including open fields along Don Road and additional fire mitigation.

Despite considerable efforts to engage the community, there is still a level of disaffection in the Don Valley Community. Hopefully the Haining Farm implementation process will overcome misinformation and fears.

Yarra Ranges Landcare Network

The Landcare Network is made up of 11 groups covering predominantly the area of the Yarra Ranges Shire Council - from McMahons Creek in the north-east, to Emerald and Belgrave in the south. The Network supports environmental volunteers with representation on landscape scale projects such as Yarra4Life, supporting the delivery of training events with partners such as Yarra Ranges Shire Council and the PPWCMA and identifies opportunities for support through various grants.

The Network has assisted member groups to run the popular “Landcare for Singles” events over the last 7 years and spin-offs – “Landcare for Single Parents” and “Landcare for Cyclists” – raising the awareness of Landcare and attracting new members to the Landcare groups.

The Network recently partnered with Yarra Ranges Shire Council to pilot a “Gardens for Wildlife” project in Upwey. The pilot was supported through a Norman Wettenhall Foundation Grant, engaged with over 50 properties and delivered 3 workshops to 40 interested residents, centred around the Southern Dandenong Community Nursery.

The voluntary Network Committee works hard to represent Landcare in the Yarra Ranges and partners with other agencies to enable better outcomes for the environment.

Learnings

Telling the Story

The need for a compelling narrative and promotion of the values being preserved has been highlighted by the recent community stakeholder meetings.

It is hoped that increasing positive timely messaging, having useful published information on the website, and increasing the profile of YCACC will address any lack of understanding and awareness in both agencies and the community. It will be important for the YCACC to address any community concern where misconception and misunderstanding has proliferated - perceptions that can be potentially addressed by the science (increased bushfire risk, for example) and by success stories.

A less confusing and potentially iconic name for the Conservation Area is also needed.

Community meetings have resulted in a significant range of good ideas and suggestions which would certainly have a very positive impact on the YCA Plan development and implementation and align with or enhance the YCACC Engagement and Communication Plan. However, the fact that some strategies have not been able to be implemented must be addressed by YCACC.

YCA Values

Much work has been invested into the landscape spatial categorisation designed to guide the uses of the land. The spatial prioritisation is based on a mixture of inputs including the likely value for specific species or communities and the current status of the land. However, feedback suggests that the YCA Plan will require more detailed smaller scale mapping of both values (for example, water quality, cultural heritage, remnant vegetation, species diversity, hotspots) and threats.

Resources

It is generally agreed that significant resources will be needed to implement and maintain the YCA to a standard that will inspire community confidence. This will require a compelling case to be developed for State Government funding but should also consider complementary funding from corporate sponsorship; Federal grants; Partnerships with Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Authority and Yarra4Life for community group partnerships to access philanthropic funds. The possibility of YCACC incorporation in order to access non-government funds was also raised.

Other innovative ideas include “piggybacking” off other projects / strategies; identifying opportunities for joint funding applications; and establishing a trust.

The Committee is charged with the developing an Action Plan and a Business Plan but has been inadequately resourced to do this nor to undertake the significant community engagement necessary to promote partnerships between land managers including private land owners, agencies and the regional community. Whilst the employment of a suitably qualified and experienced executive officer this year has gone some way to solving this problem in the short term; a full time executive officer and areas of specialist expertise are required.

The Next Steps

A new name for the Conservation Area

The community has made it clear to YCACC that the name Yellingbo Conservation Area is confusing given the existence of the high profile Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve. The confusion between the actual Conservation Area and the Yellingbo Investigation Area has also contributed to misunderstanding. The Committee understands that the Minister is open to changing the name of the Conservation Area and thus consultation has begun with the Wurundjeri Tribe Land & Compensation Cultural Heritage Council to develop naming options in the Woiwurrung language.

Completion of the YCA Plan

The first stage community consultation will be completed by December 2017. The information gathered will contribute to the development of the Draft Plan. Stage two community consultation will begin in February and completion of the YCA Plan is due by May 2018.

Improving Coordination

More than goodwill is required to maximise the outcomes of co-ordination between the land managers other agencies and the wider community. Practical suggestions coming out of the Agency Workshop include:

- The development of YCA Agency Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) which will result in longer term commitment to the establishment of the YCA;
- A quarterly works programming session which will enable YCACC to strategically coordinate projects; and
- Constant communication through the stakeholder list
- Opportunities for Ministerial engagement (the good news stories)

Further collaboration with private landowners whose properties adjoin or are close to the YCA to improve management will assist in achieving the aims of the YCA.

YCACC Website and Communication

The redevelopment of the YCACC Website is currently progressing. It is hoped that the website will be able to provide useful information resource (also combatting misinformation), a methodology for

facilitating the E Newsletter and a central, and accessible agency information exchange. Good practice studies are seen as important learning and communication tools for the community and will feature on the reinvigorated website. Providing live current information could include more sophisticated mapping -the creation of spatial overlays on projects each agency is working on can provide a living document online, for example.

Increased positive messaging and use of the media will be important in engaging the community with the establishment the Conservation Area.

YCA Values

The spatial categorisation has provided the basis for some decision making and separate values maps have been developed and edited through the targeted stakeholder consultations but more detailed mapping of conservation values, access points and community interaction at a local level is required as a basis for community engagement, further projects and transparent decision making.

Funding

YCACC will need to facilitate a coordinated financial plan which is based on State funding as proposed by the VEAC recommendations as approved by the Victorian Government but also other potential funding sources including:

- Corporate sponsorship
- Philanthropic grants
- Federal grants
- Partnerships with CMA for community group to access philanthropic funds

Further investigation of YCACC's capacity to hold funds or YCACC incorporation in order to access non-government funds is required.

Education

Providing educational opportunities for the community is one of the recommendations yet to be fully addressed by YCACC. In addition to the two opportunities to develop/further develop facilities for biodiversity education (Haining Farm and Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve), there is a significant opportunity to engage the community in the preservation and appreciation of the YCA through citizen science. This may be one of the most effective strategies to engage young people and the wider community not already involved with volunteering in our region.

Appendix A: YCACC Self-Assessment

YCACC Self-Assessment October 2016

Twelve Committee members and three project officers responded to the YCACC Survey sent to members prior to the Planning Day held on October 18, 2016. The survey was conducted and results analysed by convener Anne Langworthy.

Priorities in order of weighted average response

1. Developing an Action Plan
2. Seeking and managing additional funding for programs and activities
3. Establishing long term management direction
4. Establishing partnerships
5. Coordination of land and biodiversity management activities of member organisations
6. Providing a point of contact for external organisations and community
7. Monitoring and reporting of activities relating to the YCA
8. Involving Community in management of the YCA
9. Generating communications and publicity materials
10. Advocating and negotiating for nature conservation in the region
11. Encouraging complementary management on private land

Functioning of the Committee

Committee members tended to rate overall committee functioning poorly. As one respondent commented:

"There are good people on this committee. I think the current situation is largely reflective of 3 major start-up issues: (1) the process of revoking grazing licences started approximately 12 months prior to the committee being formed; it provided no opportunity for discussion/review before plans were finalised; what were we there for - rubber stamp? (2) the 1st Chair resigned early (3) limited member induction. A number of us know each other, but in different contexts, so there was assumed knowledge as a consequence."

I am not sure agency reps are used to having community reps working alongside them as equal members; the PD and application process was sound, but the role within the committee needs definition/agreement"

Committee members agreed on average with the following statements:

1. Committee papers are provided in timely manner.
2. Information provided prior to Committee meetings fully informs Committee members and enables them to make the decisions required at Committee meetings.
3. Committee members bring the views of the wider community back to the Committee table.
4. Committee members contribute to reviewing and ensuring the accuracy of meeting minutes.
5. Committee members are diligent in preparing for meetings.

On average committee members disagreed with the following statements regarding the functioning of the committee (in order of highest level of disagreement to lowest):

1. The Committee is marked by a culture of self-improvement, regularly carrying out Committee team building and assessment activities.
2. The Committee has in place both short term and long term goals and strategies to provide direction.
3. The division between the Committee and Agency/partner roles and responsibilities is well understood.
4. The Committee is governing/co-ordinating the development of the Yellingbo Conservation Area well.
5. There are clear expectations of the contribution and commitment required of Committee members which are articulated in a formal written position description.
6. The induction provided to Committee members prepares them well for contributing to YCACC.
7. The Committee works to educate the community about YCACC's role and mission.
8. Committee members bring the views of the wider community back to the Committee table.
9. Financial reports satisfy the coordination and action plan responsibilities of Committee members.
10. The committee understands the role of each agency partner and their implementation responsibilities (as identified by the State Government in response to the VEAC recommendations).

Committee satisfaction with progress

Committee members demonstrated a lack of satisfaction with the following aspects of YCACC progress ranked in order of highest levels of dissatisfaction to lowest):

1. Shared understanding of the strategic directions of YCACC
2. YCACC project achievements and outcomes
3. Identifying opportunities and seeking additional funding
4. Shared understanding of the YCACC vision and mission
5. The entrepreneurial attitude of the Committee
6. Well articulated and understood policies
7. Shared understanding of the purpose of the YCACC project/s
8. YCACC governance

Committee members indicated satisfaction with their personal contribution to YCACC

Priority Committee Roles (in prioritised order)

- Developing the overarching strategy for the implementation of the YCA
- Developing a Community Engagement Strategy
- Monitoring reporting and publicising of activities within the YCA
- Seeking additional Funding
- Developing strategic action that will protect the Developing good practice case studies.

Selected Comments/Concerns

"I think we need to think outside of just the lease agreements and come up with strategic and cooperative actions that will protect the area and its conservation values"

“Don't be afraid of divergence of views on the committee. For long term sustainability of the YCA we need to be confident that the committee is hearing and dealing with a full range of community views, and not living in a bit of a green bubble”

“[We need a] dedicated session on roles and functions of the Committee with Q&A time to explicitly address committee member questions/hypotheticals. This will clearly show what's on the table and what's off.”

“Although the committee is not responsible for expenditure of the funding, it doesn't sit well with me that we don't have access to full incoming/outgoing financial reports. Naivety is no excuse for any committee member.”

YCACC Planning Day October 18, 2016

The Planning Day addressed many of the issues highlighted by the committee survey.

Objectives of the Planning Day

In order to develop the required action plan, that the committee

- has an understanding of the current roles, responsibilities, investment and concerns of the existing public land managers and responsible agencies;
- develops a shared understanding of the role of the committee, key stakeholders, challenges and opportunities;
- identifies the desired 2025 outcomes of the YCACC term; and
- builds on the DELWP 2016-2018 Communications and Engagement Plan to establish a YCA Stage One Committee Communications and Engagement Plan (to be incorporated in the required Committee Action Plan)

Agency presentations

Agency partners were asked to present on their roles, specific works and investment in the YCA. The following agencies presented over the course of the morning sessions.

- Catchment Management Authority
- Melbourne Water
- Shire of Cardinia
- Shire of Yarra Ranges
- Zoos Victoria
- Trust for Nature
- Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater
- DELWP

Vision 2015

A facilitated discussion developed the basis for the future mission vision and values of YCACC which have been further developed and refined to produce the final document now included in all plans.

Role of the Committee

The final session of the planning day although pressed for time explored the role of the committee and provided valuable insights for further discussion over the ensuing months.

The YCACC Action Plan lists an annual YCACC self-review process as an identified KPI. The first self evaluation was undertaken in October 2016 as a precursor to a YCACC Planning Day and the second evaluation in October 2017.

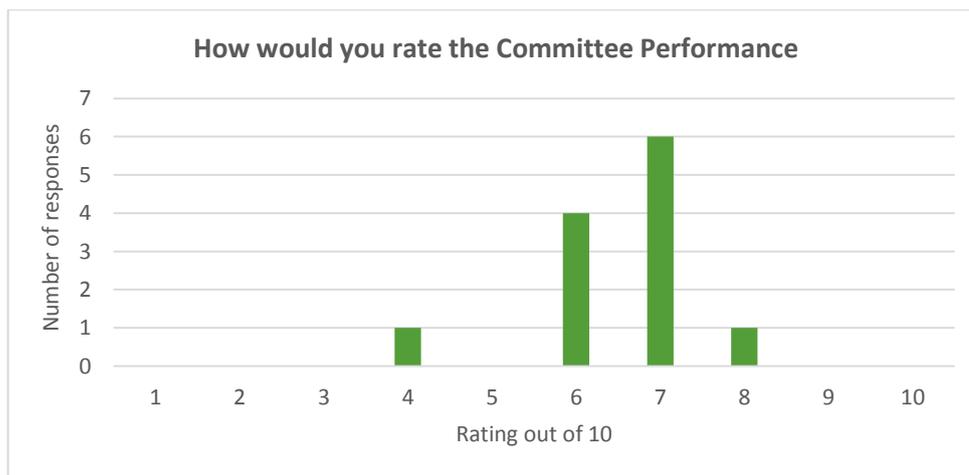
YCACC Self Evaluation October 18, 2017

Two questions were put to the Committee and strengths and weaknesses of current operations canvassed:

Question 1:

On a scale of 1 to 10 how would Committee Members rate how the Committee is going as a coordinating body; how well is the Committee working together?

Committee members were given post it notes and asked to note their answer anonymously on the sticky note with 1 being 'the Committee is not working well together' and 10 being the Committee is working very well together'



Result: An average score of 6.5/10

Question 2:

Committee members were asked to make one suggestion to improve the score they had just assigned to how the committee is functioning?

Responses included:

- communication from the Minister re our role;
- better use of meeting papers to reduce discussion time in meetings;
- more open and timely information from agencies;
- continue to look for areas to collaborate and compromise where there are conflicts to achieve outcomes in a reasonable timeframe;
- keep conversation on track with meeting agenda – no talking over others;
- allow people to talk, actively listen, explain technical information;
- strategy v/s output;
- stronger focus on defining actions and completing them on time;
- strengthen relationship/partnership with DELWP;
- more detail about what is happening around the core issues of landholder engagement of those on the current agreements and those who aren't (yet);
- more public input and information.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The YCACC has undergone some changes in membership composition and has actively adapted to challenges that have changed the working environment for Committee members.

The Committee workshop session articulated the following strengths and threats

Strengths

- adaptive management within the committee in response to changes in Convenor, committee support, and administrative direction;
- improved Committee membership;
- developing knowledge and expertise within the Committee;
- improved relationships between agencies;
- improved information sharing between agencies and community;
- adaptive management improvements in a changing and challenging environment;
- commitment to collaborative decision making and integrated outcomes between agencies and the community e.g. YCA Action Plan which is considered to be a milestone achievement;
- incorporated the learnings for Haining Farm, feedback on bushfire planning, Yarra Strategic Plan, and Yarra Trail;
- the level of commitment demonstrated by individuals on the Committee;
- the role of sub groups / working groups;
- developing YCACC website as a community engagement/information portal (work-in-progress);
- understanding how YCA fits into the broader landscape;
- better at referring to the right area;
- beginning the process for renaming the YCA in consultation with the traditional owners;
- adaptive responses to concerns about the YCA Plan;
- the influence of the YCACC in instigating better and more area specific bushfire modelling to address community concerns about bushfire risk in the YCA and surrounding areas;
- bushfire management benchmark;
- spatial categorisation
- responding to concerns and adapting responses to local conditions;
- economic issues in the area;
- community understanding about the YCA is increasing;
- benefits discussed – social as well as conservation;
- community membership – good connection to networks.

Threats

- Terms of Reference for the YCACC impede the administrative effectiveness and operational functionality of the committee;
- disconnect between the YCACC and the YCA project team – roles, responsibilities and reporting not structurally aligned;
- budget complexities;
- internal communication – integrating the role of the committee and the role of agencies – most activities are Agency led - lines of accountability - developing the business plan;
- inability to roll out communications strategy;

- short time frame for community engagement;
- problems with website;
- major structural problems;
- finances/budget;
- ToRs a hurdle;
- understanding of the challenge of establishing a new park;
- lack of defined guidelines for the issue of individual Riparian Licences for conservation and the criteria for grazing as a management tool;
- bushfire risk – community fear and lack of understanding – bushfire modelling and management plan not yet available;
- misinformation about revegetation plans;
- private access/use on public land and economic impact of any change on landowners;
- ecological impact of v/s economic benefit;
- individual benefit v/s community benefit;
- change in policy - 10 metre ruling created significant changes to project delivery;
- difficulty in establishing boundaries;
- uneven focus on the northern boundaries;
- balancing conservation, landowner and community needs;
- short time frames – hugely underestimated;
- difficulty in establishing boundaries;
- good practice case studies not done;
- different issues for different areas.

Conclusions

The two self evaluation exercises demonstrate perceived improvement which can be substantiated by outputs over the last year.

In 2016 committee members had concerns about the effectiveness of the committee, co-ordination and the lack of clear strategies and/or plans. Concerns were expressed about issues including: role clarity; clarity of vision, mission and goals; the relationship between agency and community members; the focus on licence removal at the expense of other priorities; YCA finances and the lack of access full incoming/outgoing financial reports. Although potentially attributable to delays in establishing the committee and the early resignation of the first YCACC Convenor, the disconnect between project implementation and the YCACC Committee deliberations caused further concern. Lack of timely information and clear reporting against agreed goals or specified key performance indicators compromised the Committee’s ability to fulfil the terms of reference and in some instances put the Committee at reputational risk in the community.

In 2017, planning advances and the development of agreed YCACC Vision, Mission, Values and Goals reduced concerns about strategies and plans. Improved meeting protocols, knowledge and expertise within the Committee, improved relationships and information sharing are considered strengths of the Committee. However, governance and the relationship between the committee’s role “to oversee and coordinate land management for nature conservation and biodiversity programs ..., set strategic directions and policies, provide guidance for land management, and increase the profile of the biodiversity and ecological values of the area and their protection” and project implementation remains problematic.

Appendix B: Working Groups/consultation

Working Group	No. of Meetings	Leader/s		
Good Practice – later engagement	1	Stephen Thuan		
Spatial Prioritisation – Categorisation Meetings	5	Victoria Purdue		
Working Relationship with DELWP Meeting 13/12/16; 10/01/17	2	Anne Langworthy		
Engagement and Communication Meetings	2	Anne Langworthy Merryn Kelly		
Licences Meetings	2	Steve Hosking		
Action Plan Meetings: 5/12/16;29/4/2017;23/5/2017;11/7/2017; and 25/7/2017	5	Anne Langworthy Victoria Purdue		
YCA (Concept)Plan Meetings: 4/8/2017; 9/8/17; 22/8/17; and 19/9/17	4	Anne Langworthy Merryn Kelly		
Agency Consultation Meeting 19/9/17		Anne Langworthy Meryn Kelly		
Targeted Community Consultation Sessions 25/11/17; 26/11/17; 2/11/17; 3/11/17;20/11/17, 5/12/17	7	Victoria Purdue		
Haining Farm Meetings:				
Date	Start time	Finish time	Hours	
10 December 2016	9am	13.30	4.5	
4 February 2017	8.30am	15.30	7	
16 February 2017	6pm	10pm	4	
25 February 2017	8.30am	12pm	3.5	
9 March	6.00pm	10pm	4	
18 March	8.30am	12pm	3.5	
30 March	6pm	9pm	3	
8 April	8.30am	12.30pm	4	
20 April	6pm	9pm	3	14
				Victoria Purdue

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25 May	6pm	9pm	3		
3 June	8.30	1.30	5		
13 July	6pm	9pm	3		
27 July	6pm	9pm	3		
17 August	5.15pm	7.15pm	2		
			52.5		
Total				42	

Appendix C: Meeting Attendance

YCACC Member	Meeting Dates 2017													
	2016		2017											
	15 Nov	20 Dec	17 Jan	21 Feb	21 Mar	18 April	16 May	20 June	18 July	15 Aug	19 Sept	17 Oct	21 Nov	19 Dec
Anne Langworthy <i>Chairperson and Independent Convener</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ben Cullen <i>Trust for Nature</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	A	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	A
Bob Anderson <i>Community representative - Yarra Ranges</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	R
Craig Bray <i>Parks Victoria</i>	✓	A	A	✓	A	A	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	A	A
Dan Harley <i>Zoos Victoria</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	A	✓
Dan Robertson <i>Melbourne Water</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Dan will continue to attend meetings as a regular guest		
David Renkin <i>Country Fire Authority (CFA)</i>	Appointed Jan 2017		A	✓	A	✓	A	✓	✓	A	A	resigned		
Jeff Latter <i>Community representative – Cardinia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cr Jim Child <i>Yarra Ranges Shire Councilor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Marianne Sawyer <i>Cardinia Shire representative</i>	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓
Merryn Kelly <i>Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)</i>	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓
Peter Cooper <i>Community representative Yarra Ranges</i>	Appointed Jan 2017		✓	✓	✓	✓	A	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A
Stephen Hosking <i>Melbourne Water</i>	attending as invited guest – see below											✓	✓	A
Stephen Thuan <i>Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (PPWCMA)</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	A	resigned				
Sue Tardif <i>Community representative Yarra Ranges</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Appendix D: Invited Guests

Invited Guests	Meeting Dates 2017													
	2016		2017											
	15 Nov	20 Dec	17 Jan	21 Feb	21 Mar	18 April	16 May	20 June	18 July	15 Aug	19 Sept	17 Oct	21 Nov	19 Dec
Victoria Purdue <i>YCA Implementation Project Manager Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓
Conrad Annal <i>Parks Victoria</i>		✓				✓								
Dan Robertson <i>Melbourne Water</i>			attended as YCACC member									✓	✓	✓
Steve Hosking <i>Melbourne Water</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	appointed as YCACC member		
Kelly Crosthwaite <i>Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)</i>				✓										
Dr Kevin Tolhurst <i>School of Ecosystem and Forest Sciences, University of Melbourne</i>					✓									
Damien Cross <i>Yarra Ranges Shire Council</i>					✓									
Chris Vassos <i>Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)</i>					✓									
Chris Hardman <i>Parks Victoria</i>						✓								
Martin Kilner <i>Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)</i>						✓								
Seamus Cale <i>Yarra Ranges Shire Council</i>							✓							
Tony Rowley <i>Cox Architects</i>							✓							
Leon Hassell <i>Yarra Ranges Shire Council</i>							✓							
Jayson Kelly <i>Xyst</i>							✓							
Darren Stewart <i>Makin Trax</i>							✓							
Laurence Gaffney <i>Friends of Hoddles Creek Inc.</i>								✓						
Anne Fitzpatrick <i>Yarra Valley & Dandenong Ranges Landcare Network</i>								✓						

Invited Guests	Meeting Dates 2017													
	2016		2017											
	15 Nov	20 Dec	17 Jan	21 Feb	21 Mar	18 April	16 May	20 June	18 July	15 Aug	19 Sept	17 Oct	21 Nov	19 Dec
Karen Garth <i>Mount Toolebewong and District Landcare Group, Yarra Ranges Conservation Alliance</i>								✓						
Jessica Pocklington <i>Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)</i>									✓					
Emma Trotman <i>Parks Victoria</i>									✓					
Joanne Wand <i>Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)</i>										✓				
John Terrick <i>Wurundjeri Tribe Land Council</i>								✓			✓			
Charley Woolmore <i>Wurundjeri Tribe Land Council</i>											✓			
Kacie Melfi <i>Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (PPWCMA)</i>												✓	✓	✓
Roland Maxwell <i>Boojum Pty Ltd</i>													✓	
Matt Ruchel <i>Victorian National Parks Association</i>													✓	