



AGENCY MEETING REPORT

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Executive Summary

Twenty- nine agency and Yellingbo Conservation Area Co-ordinating 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: 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.

However whilst the evaluation demonstrates a generally positive response, the agenda was ambitious for the time allowed and some participants would have liked to address fewer topics in more depth.

Key messages/themes:

Improving co-ordination

Whilst the model 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 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

For one survey respondent at least *“It is time for the YCACC to review its charter as members and for the government agency representatives to articulate their views of YCACC”*.

Telling the story

The need for a compelling narrative and promotion of the values being preserved was highlighted across the meeting.

The dearth of positive timely messaging, useful published information and the low profile of YCACC and its objectives has resulted in a lack of understanding and awareness in both agencies and the

community. In the community this has created a vacuum 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.

The meeting 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 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 the meeting 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 required

It was 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 (PPWCMA) 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

Lessons for future stakeholder meetings

Although there was a generally positive participant response to the meeting, the adaptive management process identified in the YCACC Action Plan requires us to learn from experience in order to improve. Recommendations were made by survey respondents relating to the meeting organisation (personal contact prior to the meeting, ensuring meeting information allows prior planning, for example). In addition there are two particular points from which we can learn for future meetings with key stakeholders: to approach the meeting with a view to building relationships rather than as a one-off consultation; and to reduce the amount of material/topics for discussion and allow for more in-depth consideration and agreed outcomes.

The Next Steps

The issues identified at the Agency Meeting will inform the development of the draft YCA Plan along with the outcomes from other stakeholder consultation meetings.

Feedback from participants regarding the structure conduct and content of the consultation meeting has been used to adapt the conduct of further consultation meetings in this phase of the plan development.

Specific recommendations for YCACC are currently being further considered by the Committee (including the development of longer term commitment to the establishment of the YCA through Agency Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) and the form of a central, accessible agency information exchange, for example .

A further Agency Meeting, where possible inviting the same participants, will be held once the Draft YCA Plan is completed early in 2018.

Introduction

The agency meeting held on September 19, 2017 was the first in a series of stakeholder meetings which will guide the development of a ten year Yellingbo Conservation Area (YCA) Plan. The Government Response to the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) Final Recommendations emphasises the importance of improved co-ordination in conserving the “significant biodiversity and ecological values” of the YCA. This is to be achieved through the establishment of The Yellingbo Conservation Area Co-ordinating Committee (YCCAC), which has a membership comprised of key stakeholder agencies and community representatives, and through the establishment of partnerships. This meeting gives us an opportunity to investigate the effectiveness so far of this co-ordination and explore ways to improve and thereby add value to the individual roles of each agency YCA stakeholder.

Objectives:

- To assess the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats to co-ordination in establishing and managing the YCA
- Confirm values for different areas to guide the type and scale of use in different areas across the YCA
- Identify the existing threats to the identified values
- Identify opportunities to improve/add value to YCA
- To build a collective understanding and of the coordination required, the role of key agencies and the resources needed to deliver the YCA as envisioned by the Government Response to the VEAC Final Recommendations

Attendance

YCACC Agency members were asked to nominate additional representatives from their organisation. Calendar invitations were sent incrementally as representatives were nominated. Although pre reading was sent a week prior to the meeting with the agenda, some nominees were still being confirmed up until the day prior to the meeting.

Thirty-two agency and YCACC members were invited to the meeting with 29 people attending. It must be noted that some of the attendees attended in place of the original invitees. In addition to the agencies represented on YCACC, representatives from Greening Australia and VicRoads were invited and attended the meeting. (See Appendix A for the final attendance list).

Structure of the Meeting

The initial session involved all participants and included:

- a welcome and introduction;
- the background to the YCA Planning Process;
- presentation of two existing co-ordination examples (see appendix B for the two case studies sent to participants one week prior to the meeting); and
- identification of the strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats to co-ordination (

The second session involved four smaller working groups focussing in on four topics led by designated YCACC committee members:

- 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)

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Strengths

- combined resources
- expertise
- building awareness between agencies and community
- securing funding (combined influence)
- community advocacy
- building stronger existing relationships
- gives resilience
- volunteers working with agencies
- allows for clear overarching objectives and facilitates understanding
- still a clear commitment from agencies / organisations if individuals move on
- strong political support
- tangibles – HeHo, LBP, and 85 threatened species
- vision is clear and agreed
- plan at landscape scale allows for cross tenure planning
- building on existing good work
- new model of collaboration – great opportunity for success and change in the way we do things
- uses practical on ground knowledge links
- allowing communities to be involved
- sharing the knowledge
- encourage stakeholders to be more strategic and add value

Weaknesses

- need to get better at telling the story of the end point from a conservation perspective
- community understanding of the YCA is low
- the name too closely linked with YNCR
- its very conservation focus – could easily be expanded to include social benefits (e.g. stock protection, water quality improvements)
- communities' fear and concern re fire is not well understood
- messaging re increased trees does not mean increased fire risk is challenging to get across – how do we put this in a way that community understands
- information of conservation values and cultural heritage values is piecemeal and has gaps
- still siloed
- change aversion – need to do things differently but human nature applies
- gaps in vegetative continuity based on landowners willingness to be involved

- our engagement processes in the past haven't been effective
- not clear how the legislative process will come together
- fragmented landscape is challenging to manage
- Government driven therefore hard to build trust
- closed reserves like YNCR breed misinformation (e.g. weed haven)
- scale of change unclear in the community

Opportunities

- operate over the whole landscape
- look at other land to deal with fragments and gaps
- stronger private land representation on committee
- set up an education forum (especially around fire and conservation values)
- good model into the future
- building on initiatives already happening
- build on social licence so people understand the benefits to them
- tell more of the story
- get government excited in this space
- set up a new process/model to deal with fragmented landscapes
- constructive use of media
- being able to define / clarify the name and its purpose – relevance and sustainable
- define what this public land is for
- bringing links together (e.g. access points)
- protect two critically endangered species and Melbourne water supply
- use existing scientific information/data to help identify importance for HeHo

Threats

- media / social media
- time (lack of)
- not showing progress- patience runs out therefore decrease in funding especially in government agencies
- loss of government support
- lack of ongoing community support
- perception of fire risk
- pest / weeds / deer
- perception public land not well managed
- NIMBY's
- extinction of HeHo / LBP
- taming the bush – changing of property owners can result in lowered environmental values
- practical challenges
 - off-stream stock watering
 - ongoing management issues
- differences between environment and landscape objectives
- disagreement – loss of stakeholders support
- differing perceptions of what is good management
- lack of understanding of the values we are protecting
- climate change – plan needs to be resilient to climate change

Group Workshops

Green Group Discussion: Coordination required to implement and manage the YCA

Improved collaboration between the various agencies and the community will be done through the establishment of the Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee, under section 12 of the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*.

The coordinating committee will seek to improve coordination and collaboration between land managers and other agencies involved in the management of the Yellingbo Conservation Area.

The coordinating committee will also play a key role in issues that arise at a regional level (e. g planning for bush fire control, tourism, and pest plants and animals). The coordinating committee will be a point of contact for engagement and liaison with stakeholders on matters relating to land management (*Victorian Government Response to the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Yellingbo Investigation*).

Leader Green Group:

 Steve Hosking

Participants:

 Cr Jim Child
 Conrad Annal
 Peter Boyle
 John Terrick
 Sean Carter
 Tammy Garrett

Focus areas for discussion:

- Enhancing the role of agencies
- Type of coordination (networking sharing information up to full partnership)
- Formal or informal agreements required
- Implications for Schedule Four of the National Parks Act 1974

What is necessary for effective coordination?

- Commitment between all agencies and stakeholders
- Transparency
- Collate all projects that agencies are working on so there is 'line of sight' across all agencies
- Opportunities are understood to partner with future investments
- Understanding accountabilities and operational constraints
- Leverage off agencies and stakeholder's strengths and weaknesses
- Using each other's skills for engagement – identifying community leaders
- Agreed clear goals prioritised - and who is accountable
- Suite of plans in place that are supported and agreed by all
- Gain political support and alignment with government policy

How do we get there?

- Defining roles and responsibilities
- MOUs with all agencies to agree on their long term commitment to the project
- 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
- Report to YCACC on project progress
- Creation of spatial overlays on projects each agency is working on – living document online
- Constant communication through the stakeholder list
- Opportunities for Ministerial engagement (the good news stories)
- Lift profile of YCACC and its objectives
- Pathways to tapping into stakeholder groups

Red Group Discussion: Resources required to implement and manage the YCA

The Government will ensure that departments and agencies are appropriately resourced to implement supported recommendations as required under the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*.

The Government will consider requests for additional resourcing for biodiversity conservation, pest plant and animal control and fire management and preparedness where required to implement the objectives of the supported recommendations. Land managers will be responsible for identifying priority areas where funding is needed to support implementation. Resources required to implement supported recommendations, that exceed current funding arrangements, will be subject to normal budgetary processes.

The Government's response to R5 will also assist and reduce the costs of compliance by enabling a uniform set of regulations to apply to the entire Yellingbo Conservation Area (*Victorian Government Response to the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Yellingbo Investigation*).

Leader Red Group:

 Merryn Kelly

Participants:

 Craig Bray
 Peter Cooper
 Bob Anderson
 Corrinne Mays

Focus areas for discussion:

- YCACC Terms of reference – “value for the taxpayer dollar”
- Role of agencies
- Opportunities to add value
- Realistic resources and timeframes

Resources

- PV – staffing will depend on the number of licences to be managed
- Community concern – the belief that Parks has more to manage in an area where they can't manage what they have
- Ongoing maintenance is the concern by the community
- Need to shift community expectations
- How can we get the community to act on our behalf to manage public land?
- Leveraging involvement – friends of...groups, conservation community groups etc.
- Fostering relationships
- Partner land manager and other groups for efficient local management – add value
- Good planning is the key to successful planting – otherwise it is a waste of \$s
- Using incentive programs – ribbon of green etc.
- Being smart in our planting (e.g. deer control fences etc.)
- It may mean smaller amounts of revegetation but done better
- More resources needed

Recommendations:

- Lobbying and using case studies showing off successful projects
- Ramp up the advocacy
- Getting groups to bid for funding
- Develop a coordinated financing plan
 - State funding
 - Corporate sponsorship
 - Federal grants
 - Partnerships with CMA for community group to access philanthropic funds
 - YCACC incorporation in order to access non-government funds?
- Partner with Yarra4Life
- Clear plan of priorities of what we need to address
 - community expectations
 - \$\$ to deliver community expectations
 - signage spruiking our achievements – need locals to be proud of it to get support
 - Education Centre near Haining Farm and build up the YNCR area
 - show funding is being spent widely
- Branding is critical
- Investigate if YCACC can hold funding to allow applications for funding
- Develop a model of linking corporate sponsors to the area e.g. AGL and Marine Response Unit
- Create narrative
- Ensure wise spending to foster community support
- Needs to be done correctly e.g. willows vs natives – erosion control
- Lobbying by community groups to the government
- Get the practical wins out into the community e.g. hydrological work in YNCR

Yellow Group Discussion: Prioritising Values of the YCA

Using the YCA prioritisation maps initially:

Confirm values for different areas in the YCA to guide the type and scale of use in different areas across the YCA

- Identify the existing threats to the identified values
- Where do riparian management for conservation licences fit?
- Where do conservation agreements fit?
- Where do community access and recreation fit?

Leader Yellow Group:

 Marianne Sawyer

Participants:

 Rod Anderson
 Jeff Latter
 Dan Robertson
 Matthew Hoogland
 Dave Wandin
 Jo Oldham
 Elisa Raulings

Focus areas for discussion:

Conservation, recreation, tourism, industry and adjacent land use.

Recommendation 1:

- Combine value maps to better see overlap in values

Recommendation 2:

- Some areas have existing uses which are not likely to cease / be compromised
- There are some new opportunities for different land use

Recommendation 3:

- The presence of 'movement corridors' on the map implies that other areas don't provide this function – be mindful of this

Recommendation 4:

- Need to be proactive in consultation to address fire threat issue
- Belief that increased vegetation increases fire risk
- Clearly communicate that the way the YCA is proposed to be managed in the future won't increase the fire risk in the area
- Fire Management Strategies already in place

Identify existing threats to conservation values

Issue 1: Water quality issue – grey water

Recommendation 1: improve waste water infrastructure (no sewerage in Dandenongs.)

Issue 2: Pest – plant and animal

Recommendation 2: integrated interagency programs at legislative and local level

Issue 3: Access issues

Recommendation 3: Ensure adequate/appropriate access which doesn't impact on values

Issue 4: Informal land use – unregulated

Recommendation 4: Land surveys – compliance process

Identify existing threats to recreation and tourism values

Issue 5: Alienate some users in some reserves

Recommendation 5: Potentially develop Recreation Strategy

Recommendation 6: Change map so that other natural values are highlighted e.g. water quality, remnant vegetation, species diversity, hotspots

Recommendation 7: Remove wording on conservation map to 'managed for conservation purposes'

White Group Discussion: Opportunities to improve or add value to the YCA

- How to acknowledge and support the existing management of Public land by volunteer groups and individuals, including adjoining landowners.
- Identifying strategies for agencies to work collaboratively with community groups

Leader White Group:

 Sue Tardif

Participants:

 Sue Drummond
 Seamus Cale
 Charley Woolmore
 Kacie Melfi
 Antony Nimbs
 Rhys Collins

Focus areas for discussion:

Agencies:

- Stronger plan
- United front
- Clear messaging – e.g. potential loss of 2 State emblems
- Needs to have appropriate staffing levels (management team) – needs its own team

Acknowledging groups working in the area

- Acknowledge groups in Plan
- Offer training / up-skilling

What doesn't work?

- Letter box drops, newspaper notices

How can we add value to the YCA

- Covenants
 - how do we reward landowners who take covenants?
 - funds to support maintenance
- Planning overlays for significant areas
- Working with local industry groups – berries, orchards, cattle
...[contact – Karen Thomas (CMA); Rowan Hore (MW); Uncle Dave]
- Build ongoing relationships to open opportunities for promotion – individual rural industry bodies not just networks
- Building the ‘what’s in it for me’ message
- Overcoming / working with perception of ownership over public land – how can we do this?
- Overcoming initial wariness of government / YCA reps – finding local champions
- Cost/ benefit of acquiring blocks of private land – annex parts of private land to reserve; via service charge

How do we raise the profile?

- Flagship species
- Water quality outcomes (promote)
- Working with the other projects in the area (Yarra Strategic Plan, recreation strategy etc.)
 - ID opportunities for collaboration
 - working with Friends Groups
- Catch phrase / song
- Promotion through schools / universities
- Succession planning for Friends Groups
- Broad range of communications – field / community forums

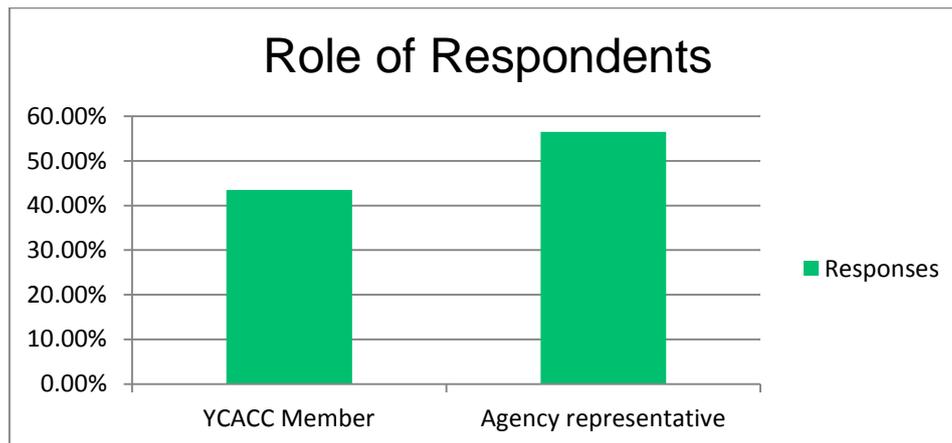
Limited resources

- Piggyback off other projects / strategies
- ID opportunities for joint funding applications etc.
- Establish a trust (Gregory Andrews, TSC)

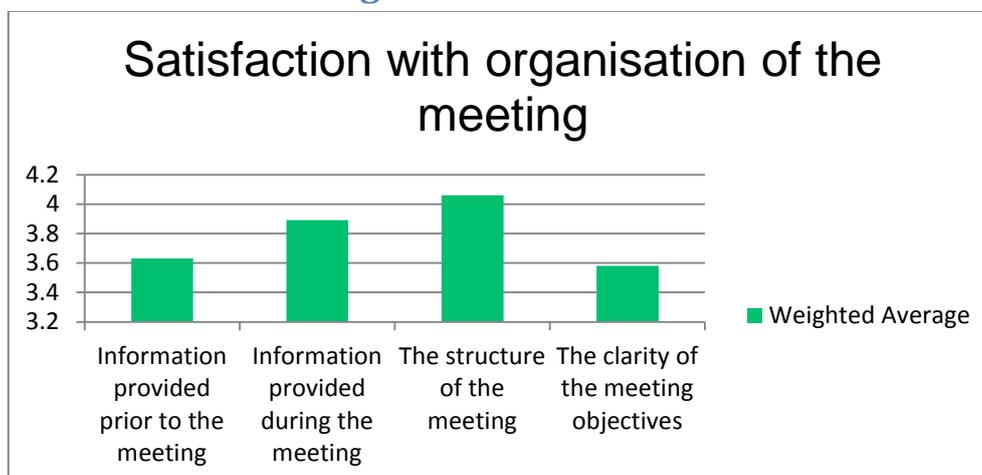
Evaluation

An online evaluation survey open from the 22nd of September until the 2nd of October was conducted after the Agency Meeting. An invitation to complete the survey was sent to each of the 29 participants with one reminder sent on the 29th September to those who had not responded or completed the survey.

Twenty three participants (79%) responded to the survey (an additional participant apologised for leaving his response too late). Nineteen respondents (82%) completed the survey and four submitted partial responses.



Organisation of the meeting



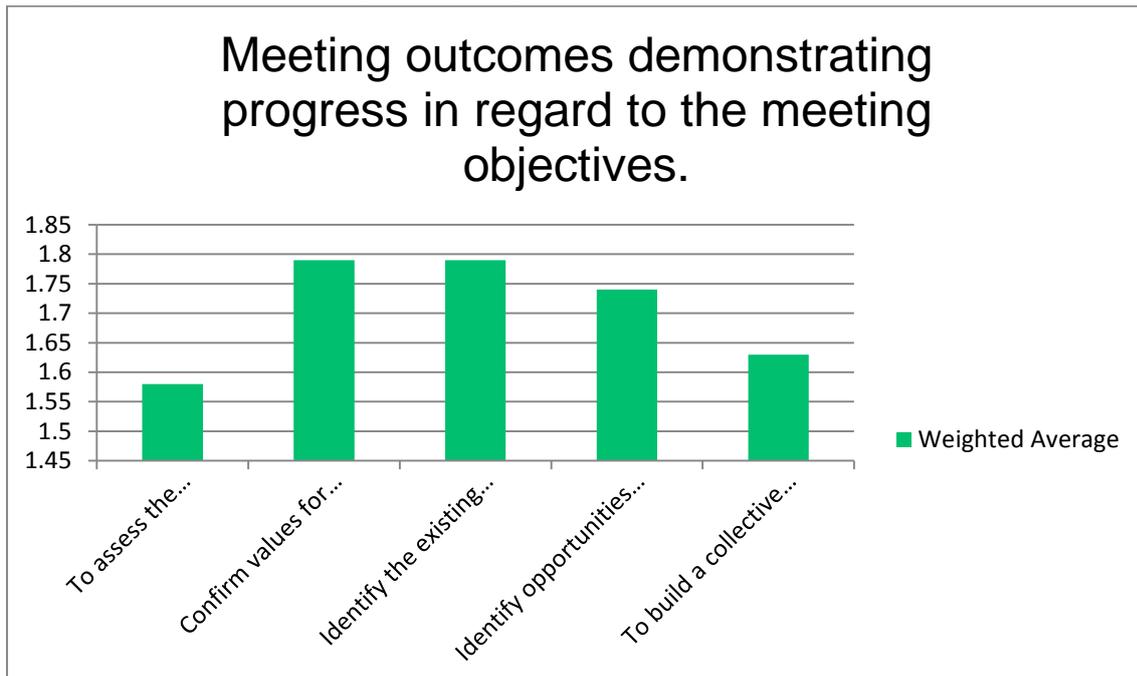
The weighted average indicates overall satisfaction

Respondent Comments regarding meeting organisation

- Some contact from those invited beforehand may have helped to set the scene. I did not have a chance to communicate with some of those invited.
- I found that a few invited agency reps who were part of the small group work didn't understand core things about YCA e.g. the area it covers; whether it includes private and public land

- Due to some technical difficulties it is understood that some information was not available to the day. Perhaps may have been useful for all attendees to have been advised of what process was going to take place and which group they would be assigned to so that some pre-planning / thinking on their part may have occurred to feed in to the discussion points.
- I thought the group discussions and workshops opened up great interaction and positive feedback on subject matters, the way each group had different topics to discuss.
- The opportunity to do forward planning between all orgs involved would be useful

Progress in achieving meeting objectives



Most respondents agreed or agreed somewhat that the meeting demonstrated progress in regard to the meeting objectives. One respondent indicated disagreement that progress had been made in the objective *Confirm values for different areas to guide the type and scale of use in different areas across the YCA* and two disagreed that progress had been made the objective *Identify existing threats to existing values in the YCA*. (It is not known if these participants participated in the relevant small working groups related to these objectives.)

Respondent comments regarding progress in achieving meeting objectives

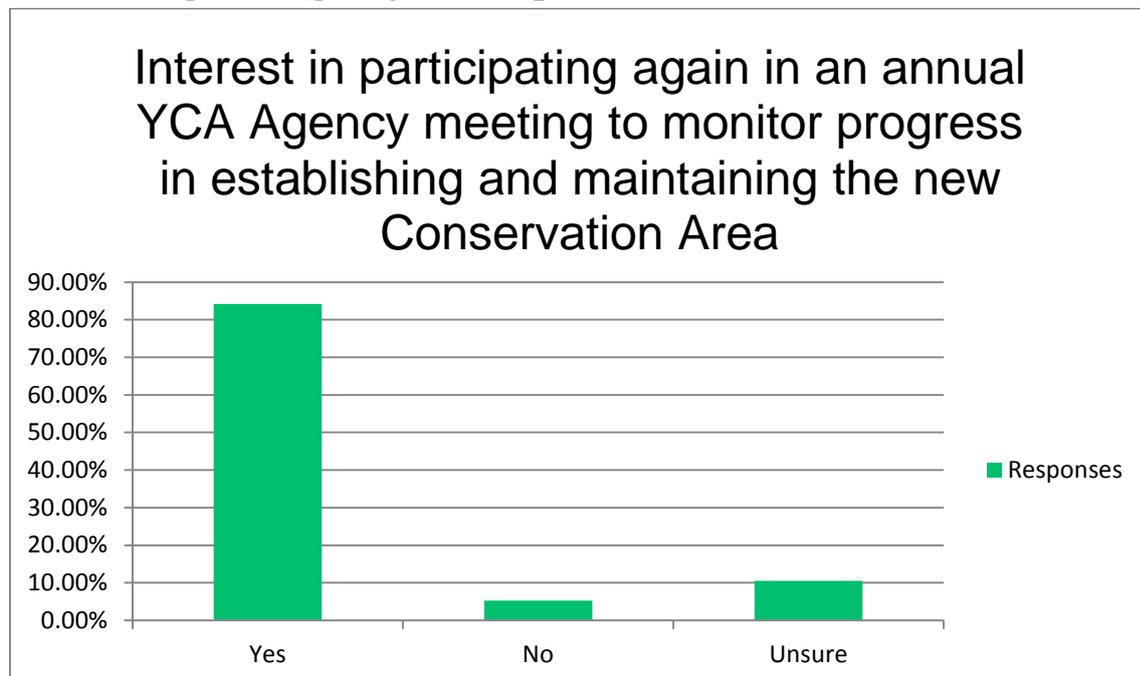
- I look forward to seeing the results of the workshops. There was a lot of information proffered in such a short time.
- Probably needs more dissection; but definitely progress has been made
- I think in most areas the discussion has contributed to the thinking that was already occurring around the respective topics. I am not sure that anything particularly new or different emerged from the tables. This can be reassuring in some ways that the Committee have not missed anything major but for the most part I don't think it has moved us on significantly.
- Nothing more I could add thanks

- Out group facilitator could have been better prepared in order to be clearer and get out of our group what was needed in such a short session.
- It was great to see the work being done by all the agencies in developing the planning. It would be good to also see some integration from scientists such as at ARI that may assist with further prioritising key areas and associated activities.

Recommendations for YCACC

- Maybe define a little more the appropriate people to send. One person in the small group had a personal agenda that side-tracked discussions
- This process seems ok, early days.
- Be very clear on what the meeting objectives are and how they will be achieved. Ensure all participants understand this before they arrive. For the most part when dealing with stakeholders with only limited historic exposure to the issues, it may be better to present a range of possible solutions / options that have been worked on by YCACC and get input around the options presented, rather than provide blank slate requesting solutions.
- No more to add
- None, thought it covered it well
- Better prep for or choice of group facilitators
- Sessions to allow detailed discussion on a particular issue or topic rather than a small amount of time on many issues.
- follow up collaboration between agencies and establishing MOU so that there is not conflicting objectives
- works need to be coordinated

Continuing YCA Agency Participation



Most respondent indicated interest in attending future YCACC agency meetings.

Recommendations for YCACC to improve co-ordination

- It is time for the YCACC to review its charter as members and for the government agency representatives to articulate their views of YCACC.
- Keep reiterating the need for it; ensure it becomes a case-study of how this can work
- ALL informed, common goal. All includes the public.
- Continue to build relationships and lines of communication on regular basis. Ownership of the Action Plan by all agencies and parties with high focus on ensuring actions are being delivered on time.
- I think the role of the YCACC need to be clarified (including details on its scope of responsibility) and a clear and consistent message about its objectives communicated to both the community and agencies. It would also be helpful to understand that roles and responsibilities of each of the agencies involved and where there are overlaps and synergies.
- better DELWP to YCACC communication
- Development of an MOU to ensure agency commitment, with quarterly meetings to engage with each agency
- More communication
- Central place for all to input annual work plans, strategies etc and for someone/YCAC to have an overview of this to look for opportunities
- The VEAC recommendation report is clear that the area should be set aside for nature conservation, but I think it would be helpful if you develop a vision and clear objectives for different reaches/areas. In my experience, having a common objective is very unifying in bringing together people and getting the job done. Of course, you may have already done this! Happy to discuss this further if you would like more information.
- YCACC is where the coordination should be happening. Don't go over ground that has already been covered.
- Agencies need to be open to sharing information in a time appropriate manner. Issues papers should be prepared by agencies on particular topics rather than just providing general advice.
- stop being exclusive to other agencies
- communication system that can be accessed by all stakeholders
- The of MOUs between agencies

Other comments or suggestions regarding the YCA Plan

- No, I want to see YCA Plan with the last meeting mark-ups.
- Keep Charley Woolmore involved
- It is very important to underpin the planning with science, to build confidence from agencies. This also helps build the public confidence (for the science believers), and for the non-science believers it assists with defending your position and demonstrating best practice. As I think I mentioned, not all areas are created equal.
- survey's of ecological & heritage values required

Conclusions

Did the meeting achieve its objectives?

Objective	Comment
To assess the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats to co-ordination in establishing and managing the YCA	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were brainstormed and recorded in a group session and were further developed by the co-ordination and other workshops. Suggestions were reinforced by additional comments in the evaluation survey. Potential strategies and action were identified
Confirm values for different areas to guide the type and scale of use in different areas across the YCA	The workshop group focussing on Prioritising Values of the YCA were able to partially address this objective concentrating on conservation, recreation, tourism, industry and adjacent land use and threats. One recommendation addressed the need to map water quality, cultural heritage, remnant vegetation, species diversity, hotspots. Other recommendations addressed changes required on the draft maps presented.
Identify the existing threats to the identified values	The workshop group focussing on Prioritising Values of the YCA were able to partially address this objective and develop seven recommendations regarding threats which included: fire risk, water quality, pest plants and animals, access, unregulated land use, and potential alienation of community members (suggesting the development of a recreation strategy).
Identify opportunities to improve/add value to YCA	The workshop group focussing on Opportunities to improve or add value to the YCA identified a range of opportunities and strategies which addressed this objective including covenants, planning overlays, working with local industry groups, building relationships with individual industry groups and not just networks and building relationships to open opportunities for promotion and overcoming identified barriers and misconceptions This group also identified a number of ways to raise the profile of the YCA and successful outcomes as well as ways to overcome shortage of resources.
To build a collective understanding and of the coordination required, the role of key agencies and the resources needed to deliver	The meeting tended to identify ways to build an understanding of the co-ordination required rather than have the time to fully discuss the role of key

<p>the YCA as envisioned by the Government Response to the VEAC Final Recommendations</p>	<p>agencies.</p> <p>The workshop group focussing on Resources Required to Implement and Manage the YCA highlighted the importance of promotion: lobbying and using case studies showing off successful projects; ramping up advocacy, branding and creating the narrative.</p> <p>The group also suggested signage spruiking our achievements (need locals to be proud of it to get support) and using the education centres proposed for Haining Farm and YNCR.</p> <p>The group recommended developing a coordinated financing plan including: State funding; Corporate sponsorship; Federal grants; Partnerships with CMA and Yarra4Life for community group to access philanthropic funds; and YCACC incorporation in order to access non-government funds?</p> <p>The meeting demonstrated an understanding that significant resources were needed to implement the YCA to meet community standards.</p>
<p>In summary</p>	<p>A wealth of information was garnered from the meeting overall and all meeting objectives were achieved at least in part.</p> <p>However the agenda was ambitious from the time allowed and some participants would have liked to address fewer topics in more depth.</p>

Key messages/ themes

Improving co-ordination

Whilst the model 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 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

For one survey respondent at least *“It is time for the YCACC to review its charter as members and for the government agency representatives to articulate their views of YCACC”.*

Telling the story

The need for a compelling narrative and promotion of the values being preserved was highlighted across the meeting.

The dearth of positive timely messaging, useful published information and the low profile of YCACC and its objectives has resulted in a lack of understanding and awareness in both agencies and the community. In the community this has created a vacuum 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.

The meeting 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 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 the meeting 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 required

It was 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 (PPWCMA) 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

Lessons for future stakeholder meetings

Although there was a generally positive participant response to the meeting, the adaptive management process identified in the YCACC Action Plan requires us to learn from experience in order to improve. Recommendations were made by survey respondents relating to the meeting organisation (personal contact prior to the meeting, ensuring meeting information allows prior planning, for example). In addition there are two particular points from which we can learn for future meetings with key stakeholders: to approach the meeting with a view to building relationships rather than as a one-off consultation; and to reduce the amount of material/topics for discussion and allow for more in-depth consideration and agreed outcomes.

The Next Steps

The issues identified at the Agency Meeting will inform the development of the draft YCA Plan along with the outcomes from other stakeholder consultation meetings.

Feedback from participants regarding the structure conduct and content of the consultation meeting has been used to adapt the conduct of further consultation meetings in this phase of the plan development.

Specific recommendations for YCACC are currently being further considered by the Committee (including the development of longer term commitment to the establishment of the YCA through Agency Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) and the form of a central, accessible agency information exchange, for example .

A further Agency Meeting, where possible inviting the same participants, will be held once the Draft YCA Plan is completed early in 2018.

Appendix A: Agency Meeting Attendance

First Name	Last Name		Organisation/Department
Marianne	Sawyer	YCACC	Cardinia Shire Council
Tammy	Garrett		CFA
Anne	Langworthy	YCACC	Chairperson
Jeff	Latter	YCACC	Community Representative
Peter	Cooper	YCACC	Community Representative
Robert	Anderson	YCACC	Community Representative
Sue	Tardif	YCACC	Community Representative
Peter	Boyle		Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning (DELWP)
Joan	Howard	YCACC	Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning (DELWP)
Merryn	Kelly	YCACC	Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning (DELWP)
Rod	Anderson		Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning (DELWP)
Elisa	Railings		Greening Australia
Catherine	Drummond		Melbourne Water
Dan	Robertson	YCACC	Melbourne Water
Steve	Hosking	YCACC	Melbourne Water
Antony	Nimbs		Parks Victoria
Conrad	Annal		Parks Victoria
Craig	Bray	YCACC)	Parks Victoria
Matthew	Hoogland		Parks Victoria
Rhys	Collins		Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (PPWCMA)
Corinne	Mays		Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (PPWCMA)
Sean	Carter		VicRoads
Charley	Woolmore		Wurundjeri Tribe Land Council
Dave	Wandin		Wurundjeri Tribe Land Council
John	Terrick	YCACC	Wurundjeri Tribe Land Council
Jo	Oldland		Yarra Ranges Council
Seamus	Cale		Yarra Ranges Council
Jim	Child	YCACC	Yarra Ranges Council
Kacie	Melfi		Yarra4Life

Appendix B: Case Studies

From Yellingbo to Butterfield: A community-led model of habitat restoration for endangered and threatened species

Species extinction is a great challenge of our time. The Yellingbo environs provide the only home to the Helmeted Honeyeater (Victoria's bird emblem) and lowland population of Leadbeater's Possum (Victoria's mammalian emblem). The collaborative Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Program has made significant progress with the Helmeted Honeyeater population at Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve (YNCR) *increasing* from 50 birds in 1989 to nearly 200 today. Additional suitable habitat has become imperative for this rapidly growing population.

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 YNCR. The aims of this project are to:

- Capitalise on the 3 "nodes" of intensively restored habitat each organisation is currently undertaking along this reach of the Creek
- Restore threatened Sedge-rich *Eucalyptus camphora* swamp habitat to support critically endangered Helmeted Honeyeater and lowland Leadbeater's Possum populations
- Restore habitat for threatened species including the Powerful Owl, Spotless Crake, Growling Grass Frog, Dusky Wood swallow and Eastern Swamp Skink
- Strengthen this significant corridor linking Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve to Butterfield Reserve
- Strengthen social cohesion between landholders
- Create greater community awareness of local threatened species and how to protect them
- Leverage funds to support habitat restoration works on private land
- Complement a \$2.2M Melbourne Water capital investment along same reach of the Woori Yallock Creek
- Increase collaboration between partnering volunteer groups and
- Provide a successful model of rural communities effectively leading protection of endangered and threatened species

Our partnership 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).

The project steering committee undertakes to report to and seek advice from these collaborators along with identified key stakeholders Melbourne Water, Port Philip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (PPWCMA) and Yarra Ranges Council (YRC)

This project builds on what the partner organisations are currently doing individually on different parts of the 8 Km stretch of WYC and enhances the more than 15 years of weed control and revegetation works conducted by Melbourne Water on the frontage of WYC and works conducted by both PPWCMA and Yarra Ranges Council along the same waterway.

Prepared by Project Officer Gaye Gadsden

Case Study: Development of a reach scale multi-function node on the Yarra River

Purpose: The purpose of this document is to provide a detailed review of a particular reach of the Yarra River and make recommendations of how the reach could be managed. The review will summarise past and present financial investment, provide details of potential future projects and outline opportunities for collaboration.

Node/reach location: From the Little Yarra confluence in Launching Place to Yarra Bridge Reserve in Woori Yallock approximately 12 Km

Description: From a geomorphic perspective this reach of the Yarra is an unconfined alluvial floodplain waterway with sinuous form and flood plain connectivity. The majority of the waterway is bound by Crown Land of various widths on both banks. The surrounding land use in this area comprises a mixture of agriculture, lifestyle properties, Public reserves (of various kinds) and a waste water treatment plant. The main tributaries in this reach are the Don River and Hoddles Creek, The Yarra in this reach has very good water quality, natural channel form and provides habitat for a range of fish species. The riparian vegetation is patchy in terms of quality with some areas being degrade over time through clearing and stock grazing. However there are good stands of over storey manna gums throughout and scatter remnant mid story shrubs giving a representation of the riparian forest ecological vegetation class. This reach has been identified under the Healthy Waterways Strategy as a priority for investment due it vegetation and amenity values.

Recent/current investment by Melbourne Water (MW): Over the past 7 years Melbourne Water has invested significant resources into capital projects and incentives programs throughout the Multi-Function Node to enhance river health. See summary below:

Capital and Maintenance (estimated value of approx. \$2.1M):

- Capital Willow removal, fencing and revegetation of the Yarra River Frontage (historic)
- Capital Weed control, fencing and revegetation of the Don River Frontage (historic)
- Capital weed control, fencing and revegetation of the riparian area opposite Haining Farm (historic)
- Capital Willow removal, fencing and revegetation downstream of Healesville Koo Wee Rup Road to Haggards Lane (current, due to be completed in 2018)
- Aquatic habitat restoration on the site on the opposite bank (current, due to be completed in 2019)
- Current Programmed Maintenance works (approx. bimonthly visits) on both the Don River and Yarra River frontages adjoining Haining Farm.

Investigations/design (estimated value of approx. \$75K):

- A walking trail on the crown frontage on the site on the left hand bank of the Yarra River, opposite Haining Farm; and

- A Kayak/canoe launching ramp upstream of Don Road at Launching Place.

Stream Frontage Management Program (SFMP) (estimated value of approx. \$200K):

- There are 12 properties listed on SFMP in this reach. 5 are currently being funded; 2 are currently in the assessment phase, 3 have been previously funded and 2 have not been funded.

Suggested key activities/themes in the node:

- Threatened species conservation
- Waterway restoration
- Education
- Recreation
- Agriculture/licensing

Discussion:

Haining Farm

Greening Australia in collaboration with Zoos Victoria (ZV) and Parks Victoria (PV) are planning to undertake a substantial restoration project at Haining farm to create suitable floodplain habitat for the critically endangered Lowland Leadbeater's Possum and Helmeted Honey Eater. Importantly in addition to the revegetation aspect of the restoration project there is also an emphasis on education and recreation. The restoration plans includes interpretive signage and tours to inform the public about the importance of biodiversity conservation. The restoration plan also incorporates walking tracks and other user facilities to enhance opportunities for recreation and public enjoyment. Haining farm will represent a good example of complimentary multiple uses.

Dalry Road Treatment Plant

Zoos Victoria and Friends of the Helmeted Honey Eater (FHeHo) have had initial discussions with Yarra Valley Water (YVW) about the possibility of expanding revegetation efforts beyond the crown land frontage undertaken to date and onto the freehold land at the treatment plant in Dalry Rd. Yarra Valley Water has indicated that they may be supportive of this approach. In addition to the works conducted at Haining farm, increased vegetation at the treatment plant would create another important habitat area. With two large patches of vegetation in close proximity to one another the intervening stretch of riparian corridor could become an important candidate for restoration in order to enhance connectivity. Currently there is a significant weed (willow and blackberry) infestation particularly on the right hand bank in this area that requires treatment. Melbourne Water may be able to undertake a weed removal and revegetation*(10 m width) project in this area to help establish a suitable corridor. If the treatment plant, riparian corridor and Haining farm restoration were undertaken at this location and sufficient access could be arranged the riparian Crown Land may be best suited to direct management by PV rather than through licensing.

Walking path, south of Haining Farm

Immediately to the South of Haining farm on the left hand bank of the Yarra River between Don Road and the Hoddles Creek confluence Melbourne Water (MW) have commissioned a functional design for the creation of a recreational walking trail. The site has had significant capital investment over the last 5 years including weed removal and revegetation; critically the crown/freehold

boundary has been re-established by a licensed surveyor and fenced on the boundary. It is also important to note that during a previous capital project MW installed a ramp/driveway and gate off the rail trail allowing potential access for pedestrians and management vehicles with only minor upgrades.

The path will link the popular Lilydale-Warburton rail trail to the Yarra River. If constructed the trail would provide opportunities for a range of user experiences and includes plans for interpretive signage to educate the community about waterway values and indigenous cultural heritage. As part of the planning process for the project MW sought to engage with agencies and the local community, feedback received was incorporated into the design.

In order to advance this project beyond planning MW is seeking to collaborate with partners to fund the path and the ongoing maintenance. The area South of Haining farm is another example of an area providing recreation and education benefits to the community and the extensive riparian plantings and weed control have greatly enhanced river health. Given the adjacent landowner at this location had his Crown land license cancelled for non-compliance with licenses condition and the plans for an alternate use are well developed licensing and grazing as a management tool may not be appropriate at this location.

Kayak launch, upstream of Don Road

Upstream of Don Road on the left hand bank of the Yarra opposite the Launching Place pub, MW have developed detailed design plans for the construction of a Kayak Launch. In addition to the construction of the ramp itself the overall project would also see the removal of significant environmental weeds and some revegetation. Looking at the GIS layers of this area it appears that the crown land in this area is quite wide. If this project was to gain support through the planning process and the resources were available to undertake this project MW would be looking to work closely with our colleagues at DEWLP to ensure this area was primarily set aside for recreation, amenity and waterway restoration.

Extensive consultation was undertaken with stakeholder and user groups to inform the design including direct interviews and an online survey. A large amount of useful information relating to recreational use of the river was elicited through the community consultation. This information included feedback about the amount of willow debris in the river and how this reduces the amount of paddling in a given reach of river. If we are to construct a kayak launch thereby encouraging more paddling in the multi-function node we need to consider the downstream willow populations and how we manage their removal. Fortuitously the removal of willows also aligns well with MW other goals of improving river health. The largest infestation of remaining willows in the Multi-functional Node MFN occurs between Haining farm and the YVW treatment plant on the right hand bank. Another piece of community feedback relating to Kayaking was in regards to signage and wayfinding; users said that they would like signs that showed things like distance/time to paddle to the next stop. It is anticipated that signage of this type would be required at Launching Place if this project was to proceed.

(MW is currently undertaking a consultation and engagement process around Kayaking use along the entire Yarra River which should be completed November 2017. In addition MW are also working

with Yarra Ranges Council to assist them in upgrading their Kayak launch at Spidonis Reserve in Yarra Glen.)

Stream Frontage Management Program

As mentioned above there are a number of landowners within the MFN who have actively been on the SFMP for a number of years. Some of these landowners have done an excellent job of managing the adjacent crown land by controlling weeds, undertaking revegetation and fencing out stock. These landowners have shown an ability and willingness to manage the crown land under license. Where possible these landowners should be given the opportunity to continue doing so.

(NB. For privacy reasons MW is unable to disclose the status of SFMP interactions. Therefore they all appear on the map as all one colour which can be slightly misleading.)

Yarra Bridge Reserve

At the very downstream extent of the MFN is the Yarra Bridge Reserve. This small parcel of public land is managed by Parks Victoria and is valued by local residents as a place for walking and a kayak pull out area. Environmentally the site has small flood plain wetlands which provide habitat for a number of bird and frog species. Recently MW undertook an investigation into the water regime in the wetlands.

Other considerations, access points

The ability to easily access the streamside reserve from a public road is of critical importance in being able to undertake effective management. There are two potential access points within the MFN that I believe warrant further investigation. The first is located at the end of Cairncroft Ave near the rail trail, if developed this access point could service a large portion of the Southern or left hand bank of the river downstream of the Hoddles confluence. The other potential access point is that offered by Ismails lane off Dalry road on the Northern or right hand bank. Whilst I believe it is currently an unmade/paper road it may be possible to upgrade it in the future.

Prepared for the YCA Agency Meeting

Dan Robertson

Melbourne Water

11/9/17