

Minutes of Meeting No. 36 held at Meeting Room, 7-9 Symes Road, Woori Yallock on 20 November 2018

1. Welcome and acknowledgement of traditional owners of the land

Convener Anne Langworthy opened the meeting, acknowledged the traditional owners of the land and welcomed the committee members and invited guest.

The convener also welcomed committee members whose position was confirmed by the Ministers 's letter (see Agenda Item 4.

Conflicts of Interest:

None declared.

Attendance:

Members: Anne Langworthy (Convener), Dan Harley (Zoos Victoria), Marianne Sawyer (Cardinia Shire Council), Merryn Kelly (DELWP), Peter Cooper (Community Rep–Yarra Ranges), Jeff Latter (Community Rep–Cardinia), Steve Hosking (Melbourne Water), Sue Tardif (Community Rep–Yarra Ranges), Corinne Mays (PPWCMA).

Guests: Dan Robertson (Melbourne Water), Justin Foster (Manager DELWP YCA Implementation Team), Conrad Annal (Parks Victoria).

Apologies: Cr. Jim Child (Yarra Ranges Shire Council), Ben Cullen (Trust for Nature), Uncle Dave Wandin (Wurundjeri Land Council).

Executive Officer: Joan Howard (YCACC)

2. Minutes of the previous meeting:

a) Acceptance of the Minutes of meeting No. 35 held on 16 October 2018.

MOTION:

1. That the Minutes of meeting No. 35 held on 16 October 2018 be confirmed.

Moved: Corinne Mays

Seconded: Jeff Latter

CARRIED

b) List of meeting Action Items for review

List of Action Items from previous meetings was included in the meeting papers but was not discussed.

3. Business Arising

None

4. Correspondence

a) Outgoing correspondence

- i. 18/10/2018 - Letter from YCACC Convener to the Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio requesting a short-term extension to the YCACC members' term of appointment until February 2019.

b) Incoming correspondence

- i. 30/10/2018 – Letters from the Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio were sent via Australia Post to individual YCACC members extending their term of appointment to 30 January 2019.

Note: Committee discussion noted that everyone who received the Minister's letter was invited to 'participate as a member of YCACC until the 31 January 2019'. Consequently, the Committee deemed that Anne Langworthy, Merryn Kelly, Uncle Dave Wandin, Corinne Mays, Peter Cooper, Sue Tardif, Jeff Latter, Marianne Sawyer, Cr Jim Child, Ben Cullen, Dan Harley, Steve Hosking, and Georgia Kerr have voting rights on the Committee.

- ii. 7/11/2018 – Email from Mr David Pratt regarding the Britannia Ridge Caravan & Camping Park was sent to YCACC Convener.

Note: Mr Pratt sought advice and received a formal response from DELWP regarding his enquiries. The context of this enquiry relates to permit conditions that might allow camping and campfires on the Crown Land portion of the Britannia Ridge Caravan & Camping Park. Advice to the Committee from both DELWP and Melbourne Water confirm that the stream frontage at Britannia Ridge Caravan & Camping Park is within the YCA and that conditions that currently apply will not change when the YCA is formally created under legislation. The facility is subject to current Stream Frontages and Riparian Zone legislation that do not allow for these activities. The current Land Manager, DELWP, and Melbourne Water are providing detailed advice for the response to Mr Pratt's query.

- iii. 12/11/2018 – A covering letter from Kelly Crosthwaite, DELWP Regional Director Port Phillip together with a copy of the *Independent Review of YCACC Report: Prepared for the Hon Lily D'Ambrosio Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change* authored by the Nous Group, was sent via Australia Post to individual YCACC members.

Note: See Agenda Item 7 for further Committee discussion.

ACTION 4b.ii: YCACC will provide a formal response to David Pratt's enquiry. [Anne Langworthy]

5. Starred Items

No starred items

6. Regular Updates

a) Budget*

A brief overview of the YCA Financial Statement as at October 2018 was tabled. The net position for the program is \$1,524,565.00

It was noted that:

- a budget surplus exists largely because of the low take up of grants through the Melbourne Waterways Stream Frontages Fund; and staff savings due to the movement of staff out of the DELWP Project Implementation Team (currently 2 positions are unstaffed; an engagement officer has recently been appointed);
- the highest cost items include contracted services and staffing;
- Greening Australia has a discretionary budget for revegetation and weed control however further funds are available to community groups and adjoining property owners for weed control activities – enquires can be directed to Merryn Kelly and Justin Foster [DELWP].

b) DELWP - YCA Project Implementation Team

- YCA DRAFT 10 YEAR PLAN - the project team are now working with DELWP communications and engagement staff to draft a preliminary engagement report.
- YELLINGBO CONSERVATION AREA BUSHFIRE RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN - a series of information sessions with CFA brigades is nearing completion. The DELWP YCA project team met with Gruyere CFA on 15th November. Feedback received from CFA brigades on access tracks and water points is currently being analysed;

Note: The Committee noted the persistence of ongoing concerns about planned burns in some sectors of the community. For some there is a perception that the number of controlled burns has reduced. Agency members indicate the available data does not support this contention.

The Committee noted that more information should be made available to the community and a useful mechanism for this is the interactive maps on various Agency websites including the YCACC website.

- the YCA Bushfire Risk Management Plan was presented to the Yarra Ranges Council, Fire Management Planning Committee Meeting on 7th November;
- the DELWP YCA team conducted 11 site visits during the period 16th October – 19th November;
- recruitment for the position of YCA Engagement Officer is complete, Amy Monagle is the successful candidate and will start with the team on 26th November; and
- recruitment for the position of property officer is ongoing.

Note: The Committee also discussed the ongoing community concerns about pest plants and weeds. DELWP and Melbourne Water YCACC members indicated their agencies are currently working more collaboratively on control programs to achieve better results including a more comprehensive community engagement endeavour to include local knowledge from YCA stakeholders and landowners to achieve negotiated outcomes.

Enquiries can be directed to Justin Foster [DELWP] and Dan Robertson [Melbourne Water].

The Committee noted that more information should be made available to the community

and a useful mechanism for this is the various Agency websites including the YCACC website.

- ACTION 6b.1: A re-drafted YCA 10 Year Plan and Community Engagement Report will be provided to YCACC at the December meeting. [Justin Foster]
- ACTION 6b.2: Follow up with the DELWP GIS Officer to update the planned burns information on the YCACC website interactive maps. [Merryn Kelly]
- ACTION 6b.3: FAQ's to be updated on the YCACC website. [DELWP, Melbourne Water, YCACC EO]

c) Parks Victoria

No project update provided.

d) Melbourne Water

Little Yarra River Vegetation Management Project

As part of the Healthy Waterways Strategy Melbourne Water developed a three-year river health improvement project for the Little Yarra River between Torango Road in Gladysdale and the Warburton Highway in Yarra Junction.

Work in this section will be undertaken as part of the project including the removal of environmental weed species such as blackberry and willows, land survey and minor revegetation. Works crews will access the crown land from road crossings, the Melbourne Water pipe reserve or through willing landowners' properties. All works will be done in accordance with ministerial directions and local management plans.

These works will reduce the cover of weeds which will allow natural regeneration of indigenous plant species, thus improving the streamside vegetation as well as reducing impacts on surrounding agricultural land. Works will be conducted by skilled and experienced environmental operators using a range of effective techniques including brush cutting, cutting-and-painting, and herbicide application. In areas with large willow infestations, these trees will be killed in-situ, felled and stockpiled using excavators. The piles will be either chipped and taken off site or later burned when seasonal conditions are safe to do so.

Melbourne Water has provided YCACC with a recent inventory of values and threats report done on the Little Yarra to prompt discussion about the importance of having good data to inform decision making particularly around prioritising sites for revegetation and weed control.

The Committee discussed how this information was being made available to the community. Melbourne Water produces regular community newsletters and provides current information on their webpage. Melbourne Water will provide a community update to YCACC to include on the YCACC website.

- ACTION 6d.1: Add Melbourne Water community update to YCACC website. [Joan Howard and Dan Robertson]

Tarango Road to Caulfield Gramma School

- completed 6km of initial weed control run. Next steps treatment of willow and revegetation to follow;

- 1000 plants at Caulfield Gramma planted with the students in fenced 5 x 10 metre plots; and
- 500 plants at Britannia Ridge caravan park.

Yarra River D/S of Dee River

- weed control is on track to start late this year with revegetation in Winter 2019.

Kayak Launch on the Yarra River at Don Road

- design is currently being reviewed to ensure it meets CFA requirements; and
- construction potentially will be delayed until the 2019-20 financial year as MW need to construct in summer during low flow periods.

e) PPWCMA

Phase 2 National Landcare Program, The Great HeHo Escape Project

- The contract with the National Landcare Program for Year 1 of the Great HeHo Escape project was finalised and signed off on 24 October 2018.
- The Year 1 project's *Monitoring Reporting, Evaluation and Improvement Plan* has been finalised and approved.
- The Project Work Order for Year 1 has been finalised and approved. The Work Order sets out the minimum services to be delivered, the unit rate for each service and the total "not to exceed" charge for the project.
- Contracts for services to be delivered by partners have been developed and circulated to the relevant partners.
- A *Request for Quotation* to develop two *Habitat Restoration Plans* for the Coranderrk area and the Yellingbo to Butterfields area was circulated to suitably qualified consultants. A Quotation Assessment Panel was established and included representatives from Zoos Victoria, Cardinia Council, DEWLP and PPWCMA. The Panel met on 7 November 2018. Current in the final phase of appointing consultant/s to deliver the project.
- On 2 November 2018 the PPWCMA received advice from the Australian Government that the organisation was not successful in obtaining funding for projects in Years 2 to 5 of National Landcare Program's Regional Land Partnerships.

Yarra4Life Update

- The Yarra4Life Committee met on Wednesday 14 November 2018.
- *Yarra4Life Annual Action Plan* was presented to the committee. The actions contained in the Action Plan align to the *Yarra4Life Strategic Plan 2017-2022*.
- *Yarra4Life Coordination Committee Charter* was reviewed and updated by PPWCMA Board in October 2018.

ACTION 6e:1: Yarra4Life snapshot report to be provided to YCACC and added to YCACC website.
[Corinne Mays and Joan Howard]

f) Community Members

No update provided - see discussion at Agenda Item 3.

7. YCACC Review and Annual Report

The *Independent Review of YCACC Report* prepared for the Minister by the Nous Group was mailed out to individual Committee members via Australia Post by DELWP staff on 12/11/2018.

The Committee noted the unusual procedural process that informed YCACC Committee members of the Minister's decisions about the future of the Committee.

- The Chair had previously been informed by DELWP that no process had been developed to appoint new members to YCACC after the current Committee ends its term of appointment on 30 November 2018.
- The Committee requested an extension of the term of the current Committee so these processes and obligations could be clarified; and the Committee could properly review and advise the Minister on the achievements and challenges of the Committee and provide recommendations for the second 3-year term of the Committee.
- All YCACC members—including acting members—received a letter from the Minister dated 30/10/18 [the last day of Government before Caretaker mode became operational] advising that the Committee term had been extended until 31 January 2019.
- All YCACC members—including acting members—received a letter from the DELWP Regional Director Port Phillip together with a copy of the *Independent Review of YCACC Report: Prepared for the Hon Lily D'Ambrosio Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change* authored by the Nous Group. This correspondence was sent out by DELWP staff on 12 November 2018 via Australia Post. The covering letter informed YCACC members that:
 - the review found that continued coordination and collaboration by land managers in the YCA and continued community engagement is needed in the next phase of the management of the YCA;
 - for the next phase the review recommends that the creation of a coordinating committee of land managers focussed on coordinating land management works in the YCA; and the creation of a community reference group;
 - the Minister accepted the findings and recommendations in the report;
 - the Minister has asked the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) to prepare terms of reference to outline the structure of the recommended new entities;
 - details of relevant processes will be available once planning is complete;
 - YCACC will not be renewed once current member terms expire on 31 January 2019; and
 - new governance arrangements will be implemented to ensure the good work of YCACC is continued and built on.

The Committee discussed at length the process involved in the external review and the subsequent recommendations made to the Minister in that report.

There was concern expressed that the Minister had made a decision without any reference to YCACC or before YCACC could consider the independent review.

There was concern expressed that the report was not confidential given the means of distribution outside committee processes and to non committee members. It was noted that neither the covering letter from DELWP nor the Nous Report contained any indication of the report being classified as confidential.

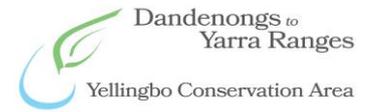
There were concerns expressed by the Committee regarding:

- the confidentiality and independence of the report;
- the balance of interviewees selected;
- privacy and anonymity as the report identifies particular individuals;
- the use of single person quotes to substantiate a particular perspective without any indication of how representative the quote is of the general Committee view;
- the conclusions and recommendations are not supported by rigorous analysis of the role, functions, and activity of the Committee;
- whilst the report reflects some of the larger issues of concern for the committee the interrogation and assessment of these issues is not analysed with an appropriate level of detail;
- no interrogation of the VEAC recommendations for the establishment and function of the Committee and no justification provided for changing the VEAC model;
- no analysis of how the anomalies in the current Committee Terms of Reference might be better structured to assist the functioning of the Committee; and no analysis to support the contention that a new advisory committee will provide a better model;
- concern that the Advisory model will be less effective and will have less influencing power than the existing YCACC model – it is a step backwards;
- many members believe the Committee has ‘done the hard yards’ of formation and consolidation in spite of significant barriers and it would be a waste to dissolve the Committee at this point when there appears to be important progress being achieved;
- concern expressed that the report did not read as ‘independent’ and there was a ‘value overlay’ articulated by the report authors which favoured a specific agency perspective;
- impressions raised in the report implied a community v/s agency dichotomy that many YCACC members do not believe exists in the Committee;
- there was some support for the Committee structure suggested in the Nous report as being a better model for community input—the alternative view however challenged the effectiveness of the reference group model;
- for some members there was no point in any further analysis of the report and the Committee should focus on the future model so as to build on what has been achieved by the outgoing Committee.

ACTION 7.1: The committee will provide a response to the report and advice to the minister on how to move forward at the December meeting.

ACTION 7.2: The Convener and Executive Officer will meet with Merryn Kelly to develop a plan for the transfer of YCACC knowledge capital and resources.

Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee



Meeting Close

12:30pm

Date of Next Meeting

Date: Tuesday, 18 December 2018

Time: 09:00 to 12:30

Place: Symes Road, Woori Yallock VIC 3139