

Draft Nature Plan 2023-33

Protecting our Biodiversity Assets

Community Consultation Summary

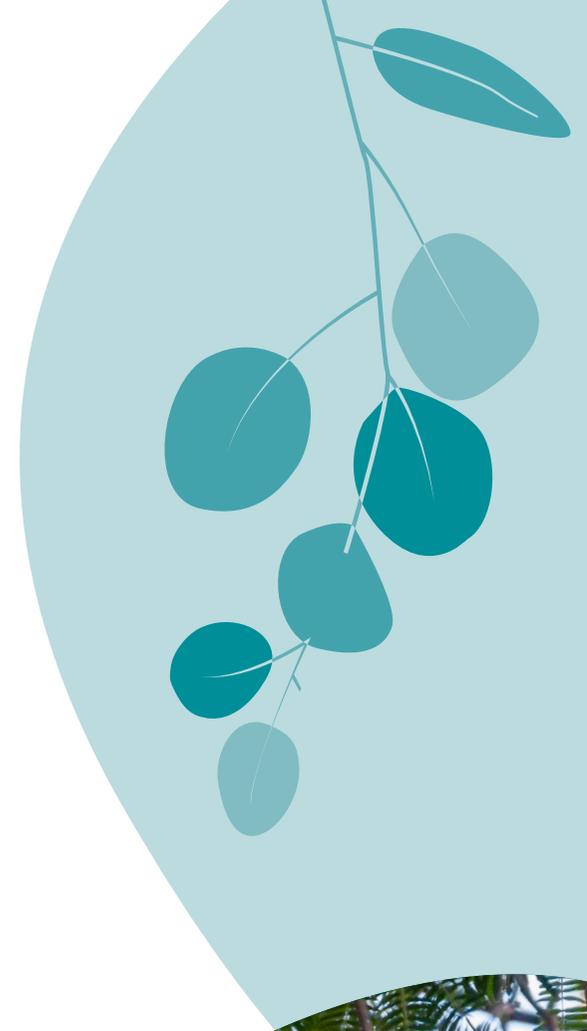
About the consultation

The Draft Nature Plan 2023-33 Protecting our Biodiversity Assets for Yarra Ranges Council was released to the community for comments between 25 August and 25 October 2022.

The consultation invited comments via the Shaping Yarra Ranges website, and comments were also submitted via direct email/mail to Council and in face-to-face conversations at various events and pop-up events across the municipality.

The consultation period was advertised by an email update to Shaping Yarra Ranges subscribers and various community groups and networks, via a social media campaign, advertising and notices in Council and community newsletters, community links and various local businesses.

Prior to the development of the Draft Nature Plan, Council engaged with Council advisory groups, community focus groups and agency partners to benchmark and establish a basis for development of the plan. Many of these groups and organisations were also re-engaged during the consultation period open to the broader community, which further informed the final plan.



Community participation in consultation

Visits to the Shaping Yarra Ranges page: 1,506

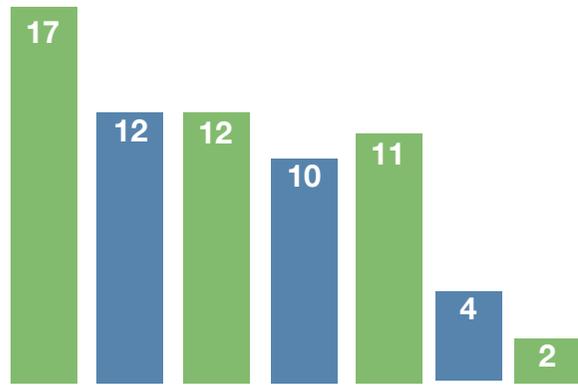
Draft plan downloads: 646

A targeted agency and natural resource management professionals feedback session was run during consultation, which had high participation and attendance representing 14 organisations.

Council's Sustainable Environment, Rural, Indigenous, Youth and Disability advisory committees were met with and valuable feedback obtained (approx. 40 participants).

Thirty-six people participated in one of two webinars offered to the community.





Age of contributors (total data points = 68)



Non-binary

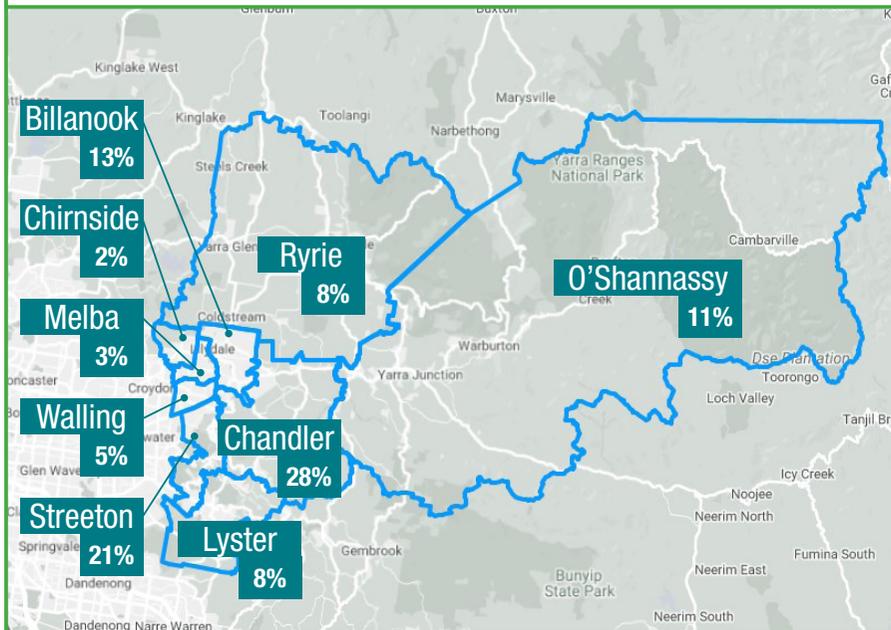
1%



Groups 8%

Gender of contributors (total contributors = 130)

Contributors by locality



Types of feedback received

The feedback received through the consultation related to all components of the Draft Nature Plan, along with general feedback on biodiversity related matters within the municipality.

A combination of individual responses and submissions by registered groups and organisations gave a breadth of feedback to Council on all themes of the plan and their inherent actions.

Key points of feedback

We asked what you thought of our proposed targets by theme:

- Yarra Ranges achieves an overall ‘net gain’ in native vegetation cover by 2033.
- Triple restoration and revegetation works across private and Council-managed land per annum.
- Increase the conservation value across our bushland reserve network over the next 10 years.
- Engage at least 200 land stewards in Council-led programs to improve the biodiversity on their land each year.

Community consultation key comments:

- Our target for an overall ‘net gain’ in native vegetation was insufficient.
- The targets aren’t clear enough. How will they be measured? What do they mean?

In our final plan we will:

Maintain our current target, with wording changes to improve clarity. The data we have indicates that the ‘net gain’ target will be a stretch goal for Council and is a reasonable target.

Add clarification of each target, how it is defined and the metrics we will use to report on our progress towards all targets.



We asked what you thought about the actions listed in our action plan under the themes of Landscapes & Ecosystems, Land Use & Changing Climate, Pest Plants & Animals, and People & Nature.

Landscape & Ecosystems

Community consultation key comments:

- Increasing native vegetation is crucial for the protection of habitat.
- Need to stop clearing land/ biodiversity.
- It is unclear how a 'net gain' in vegetation will be achieved/'Net gain' in native vegetation cover is not a sufficient target.
- Need more investment in improving habitat.
- How does fire management look alongside gain in vegetation?

In our final plan we propose to:

- Retain the target of achieving 'net gain' of native vegetation. This is considered a 'stretch target' based on current data and Victorian Auditor Generals Report (VAGO).
- Support community as land stewards with Environment Officer to deliver land management and environmental regulation education through addition of Action 2.6.
- Add a description of each target to provide context and supporting metrics for reporting on targets.
- Support for Ribbons of Green (Action 2.1) and new action and investment proposition for Bushland restoration activities (Action 2.4).
- Consider fuel management in strategic planning for development of the Biolinks Plan and revegetation programs. CFA will be an important partner in this project.



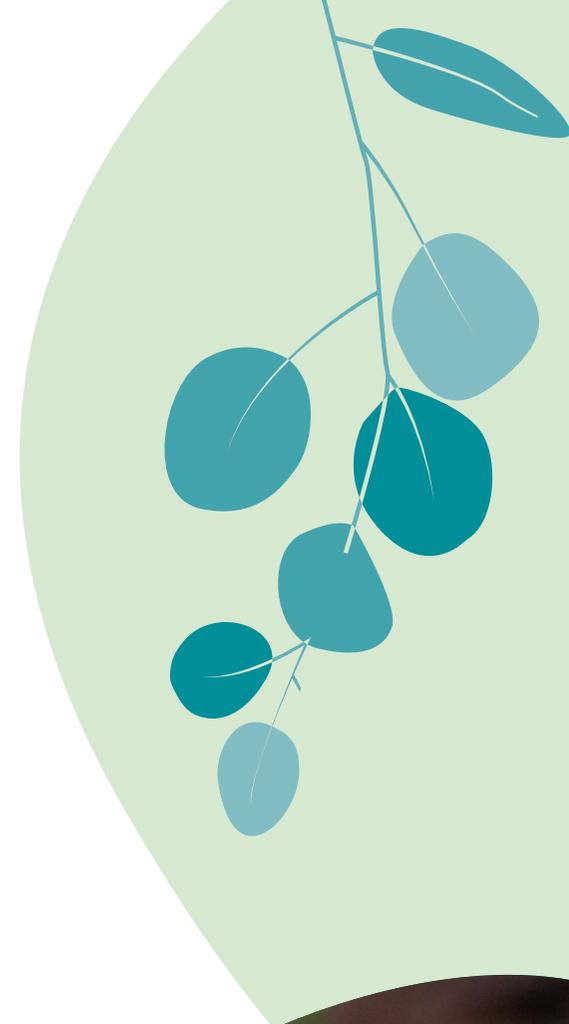
Land Use & Changing Climate

Community consultation key comments:

- Better coordination and support required from Council to improve fuel management practices.
- Ribbons of Green is great, however, it needs strengthening.
- There needs to be more education for the community in relation to the importance of trees and tree removal rules.
- What extra measures are Council taking to tackle climate change – e.g., carbon capture? adaptive species?
- Regenerative agriculture/ agroforestry/permaculture is necessary for better environmental outcomes.

In our final plan we propose to:

- Embed sustainable bushfire reduction, regenerative and agricultural land management practices into existing Actions 2.2 and 2.3.
- Strengthen the Ribbons of Green program through proposed increase in investment.
- Support community as land stewards to deliver land management and environmental regulation through addition of Action 2.6.
- Add wording to articulate existing collaboration with Sustainability Programs through Liveable Climate Plan and Tree Canopy Strategy.
- Provide support for regenerative practices to increase across the municipality through education and incentives in Action 2.2.



Pest Plants & Animals

Community consultation key comments:

- Deer in the shire should be controlled to stop biodiversity loss and property damage.
- Council needs to invest more in our bushland reserves, including improved weed management programs.
- Council must enforce cat curfew and improve domestic pet management regulation and penalties, to reduce impacts on wildlife.
- Support for landowners in removing weeds and revegetating with native plants.

In our final plan we propose to:

- Include programs to support community in addressing biodiversity impacts resulting from deer and other pest animals through Actions 3.1, 3.2 and 3.5.
- Include a new action (2.4) to increase the investment in restoration activities in Council managed bushland reserves across the municipality.
- Increase education, empower the community and support enforcement of Council's cat curfew through Action 3.4.
- Provide greater support to community for addressing pest plants & animals through Ribbons of Green (Action 2.1) and Gardens 4 Wildlife (Action 4.3) and other programs.



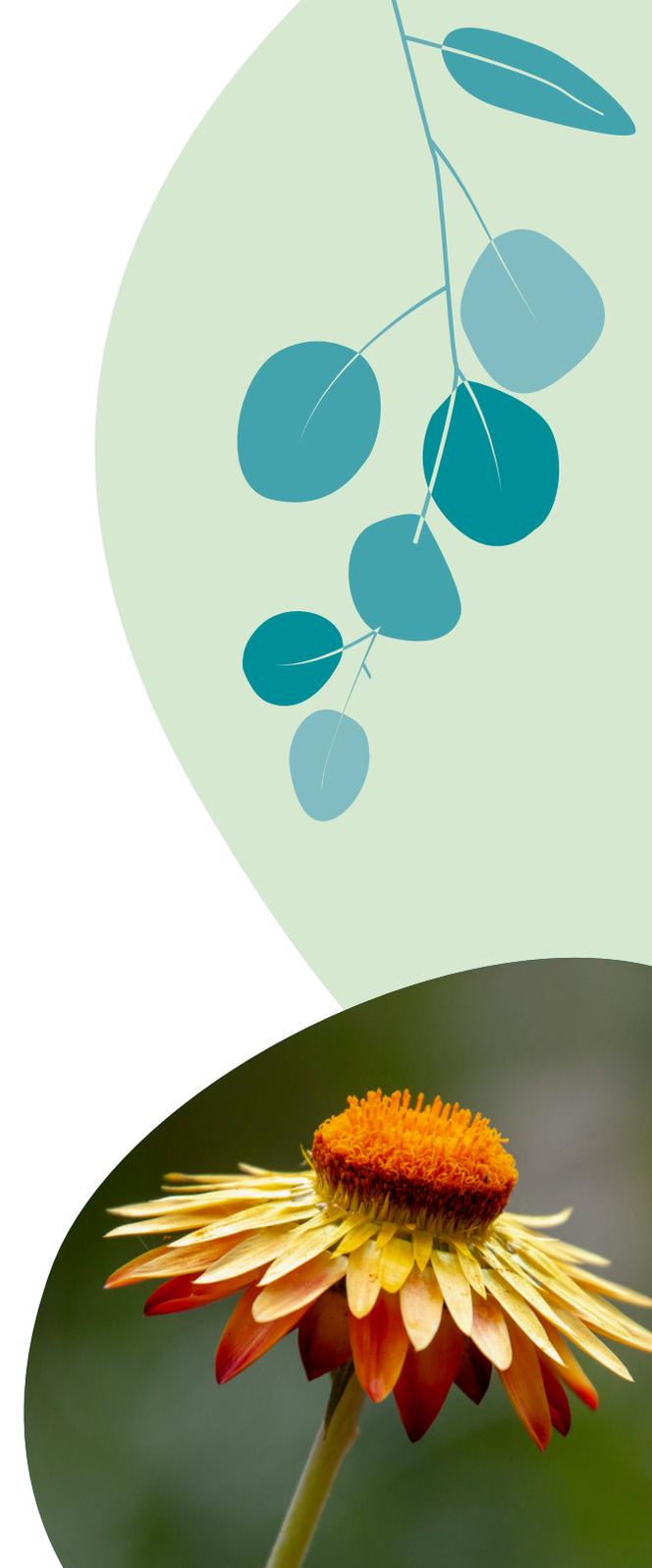
People & Nature

Community consultation key comments:

- Educate us please! The community value and want more education material.
- Many in the community want to learn more about how to create a habitat or native garden. Gardens for Wildlife needs to expand and better support residents.
- Create opportunities and events focussed on young people, make it fun and appealing to attract them / Council need to provide more support to environmental volunteers.
- Strong support for land steward program and its expansion.
- What does a target of 'enable at least 200 land stewards to improve biodiversity...' mean?

In our final plan we propose to:

- Bolster resourcing of environmental volunteer support and education programs, building on existing action from Landcare and Friends of Groups with a focus on broadening our audience and diversifying our offerings, to ensure more of our community actively cares for the environment (Actions 4.4 & 4.5).
- Provide greater support to residents to engage with the Gardens 4 Wildlife program and create habitat gardens through increased investment (Action 4.3).
- Increase investment in programs that build environmental stewardship in our community and encourage action for biodiversity on private land including Actions 2.1 and 2.2.
- Expand on our targets provided with descriptions and examples of metrics we will use to report on for greater clarity to community.



General feedback

Community consultation key comments:

- How are the targets presented throughout the plan going to be measured and monitored?
- Support for Indigenous knowledge throughout the document.
- Natural environment needs more funding than what is presented in the Draft Plan.
- Council should be supporting the establishment of the Great Forest National Park.

In our final plan we propose to:

- Expand on our targets provided with descriptions and examples of metrics we will use to report on for greater clarity to community.
- Support the collaboration with traditional owners and enhance the investment in Indigenous knowledge in bushland restoration, including cultural burning through multiple actions (2.2, 2.3, 4.1 & 4.2).
- Include a new action (2.4) to increase the investment in restoration activities in Council managed bushland reserves across the municipality.
- Include an advocacy action for the Victorian Forestry Plan regarding biodiversity conservation (Action 1.7).

Next steps

A range of feedback from the community has been presented during the extensive consultation for the Draft Nature Plan.

Each item outlined in this summary, as well as other feedback received, will be considered in the

development of the final plan, and in the actions to be delivered through implementation.

Whilst not all feedback can be incorporated into the final plan, for reasons including; conflicting submissions, Council's role and

responsibilities and resourcing constraints, due consideration was given wherever feasible.

The final copy of the Nature Plan will be available for public viewing from late 2023. Actions subject to funding availability.

