

**To:**

City Strategy Team,  
City of Melton  
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## Submission to the Western Plains South Green Wedge Management Plan

**June 2023**

**From:**

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Dear Melton City Council City Strategy Team,

The Werribee River Association (WRA) is pleased to submit its thoughts on the Western Plains South Green Wedge Management Plan.

WRA is an [active community environmental organisation](#) based in Wyndham, but working across the whole Werribee Catchment and working in advocacy, education and engagement, supporting a growing and diverse community, connecting them to the waterways and landscapes of the west.

In 2020, the then Planning Minister, Richard Wynne said of the green wedges and farmland, *"We're protecting these important green areas to support thousands of jobs while protecting our food supply and improving Melbourne's liveability."*

WRA was directly involved during 2017-2021 in the advocacy and campaign to bring about the [Waterways of the West Action Plan](#), a transformational approach to protecting the iconic waterways and landscapes of Melbourne's west.

In 2021, in a foreword to the Waterways of the West Action Plan, co-signed by Mr Wynne, the Hon Lisa Neville MP Minister for Water said, *"The west will become home to a million more people over the next 30 years. Alongside a changing climate, the pressures of urban development create a compelling need for action... and we (must) take steps to protect our vital waterways for future generations."*

WRA has become a professional environmental agency, with a team of five part-time staff, working with hundreds of community volunteers, across multiple programs, and in partnership with dozens of stakeholders. [See Annual Report 2021-2022](#).

When discussing landscapes in Section 7, the Western Plains South Green Wedge Management Plan states *"...Community awareness and education is required ..."*. WRA agrees wholeheartedly with that, stating that a major need exists in the west of Melbourne to educate our new communities and existing stakeholders about the importance and uniqueness of these western plain's landscapes. The benefits of green wedges themselves need proclaiming via education and promotion so that the waterways and landscapes of the western plains can be protected for generations to come.

Please accept WRA's comments on the Melton South Green Wedge (Melton component) which are outlined below.

Yours sincerely,



John Forrester, Werribee Riverkeeper

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<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Chapter 4 – Agriculture, Irrigation and Natural Resources</b>	<b>WRA Comment</b>
<b>A1</b>	Work with Greater Western Water to investigate future opportunities for access to recycled water for agriculture along the WIN pipeline route and throughout the study area.	<b>Supported</b> It is noted that the community has concerns with <a href="#">emerging contaminants</a> in recycled water.
<b>A2</b>	Consider a Council agri-business officer, or other additional tourism or economic development roles, to encourage and support activity in our rural areas.	<b>Supported*</b> Note WRA's comments in footnotes below, re Actions A3, E2, E5, E10 and E11, supporting the vital work of community groups
<b>A3</b>	Advocate to DTP on key issues affecting the Green Wedge area including discretionary uses, land banking, and advocating against any amendments to the Urban Growth Boundary that would result in a loss of Green Wedge land.	<b>Highly Supported*</b>
<b>A4</b>	Investigate an agricultural rates rebate scheme or similar incentives to encourage greater agricultural activity and land management.	<b>Supported</b>

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Chapter 5 – Infrastructure and Land Use</b>	<b>WRA Comment</b>
<b>IN1</b>	Continue to contribute to the Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP) in conjunction with key agencies to improve environmental outcomes affecting Green Wedge land.	Supported but with a suggestion that advocacy should take place urging state and commonwealth government to fund projects to hasten the use of alternative water sources
<b>IN2</b>	Preparation of road sealing strategy by Council's Engineering Services team to plan for future sealing of rural roads and interface roads.	<b>Supported</b>
<b>IN3</b>	Ensure that developments should be sited to avoid unspoiled greenfield sites and reduce impacts on the existing rural landscape character and views of the Green Wedge. Advocate to DTP for improved policy on Renewable Energy Generation facilities.	<b>Highly Supported.</b> It is noted that the <a href="#">Waterways of the West Action Plan</a> Direction 3 (Planning Policy) would support such initiatives.
<b>IN4</b>	Ensure major developments are limited to sites with suitable utilities and infrastructure such as sealed road access, and demonstrate that impacts on existing uses, the landscape, and agriculture have been addressed including considering alternative options during the planning process.	<b>Highly Supported</b> It is noted that the Waterways of the West Action Plan Direction 3 (Planning Policy) would support such initiatives.
<b>IN5</b>	Advocate to the DTP on behalf of the Chartwell community to protect community interests in relation to the OMR final road alignment, amenity issues, and urban design issues affecting landowners.	<b>Supported</b> It is noted that major road projects in the west of Melbourne do need this approach.

<b>IN6</b>	Discourage inappropriate freeway related and discretionary development in proximity to the proposed OMR, by observing the intended use and purpose of the Green Wedge and preventing any proliferation of inappropriate activity.	<b>Highly Supported</b> It is noted that the OMR should not become another industrial strip in Green Wedges
<b>IN7</b>	Discourage discretionary uses that result in fragmentation of the land, including places of worship and schools or any other uses that have no connection to the area and may be better located closer to existing urban infrastructure.	<b>Highly Supported</b> It is noted that this matter is of great concern in other Green Wedges across Melbourne
<b>IN8</b>	Discourage discretionary uses such as accommodation, markets, places of assembly, restaurants, or other such uses where there is no direct connection to an ongoing primary use of the land that is, or will be, established before the discretionary use commences.	<b>Highly Supported</b> It is noted that this matter is of great concern in other Green Wedges across Melbourne
<b>IN9</b>	Ensure that the siting, layout, built form, and external materials/finishes of all development must respect and complement the existing character of the Green Wedge areas in accordance with Councils Rural Landscape Character Policy and Landscape Features Strategy/Guidelines.	<b>Highly Supported</b> It is noted that this action would assist the preservation of environmental values in adjoining land to the green wedge.
<b>IN10</b>	Encourage low impact sustainable development that supports appropriate agriculture, land management, tourism, recreation, or nature-based activities.	<b>Highly Supported</b>
<b>IN11</b>	Advocate to State and Federal governments for additional road safety funding and upgrades that will take pressure off arterial roads in Melton's non-urban areas including Mount Cottrell Road and Exford/Greigs Road.	<b>Supported</b>
<b>IN12</b>	Encourage applications for new solar farms and other relevant development proposals to provide a detailed assessment of whether and how the land between structures can still be used for agricultural activities such as grazing livestock, which may then benefit from the shade and shelter provided.	<b>Supported</b> It is noted that these proposals should have minimal impact on water catchments by the making of multiple farm dams out of excavated soil pits.

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Chapter 6 – Environment</b>	<b>WRA Comment</b>
<b>E1</b>	Create a biodiversity strategy and build internal capacity to monitor biodiversity across the study area.	<b>Highly Supported</b>
<b>E2</b>	Collaborate and advocate with State agencies, land managers, and local environment groups to identify and pursue opportunities for improvements in biodiversity, landowner education, and land management programs.	<b>Highly Supported*</b> <a href="#">WRA's 2023 live-trapping platypus surveys</a> show the fragility of the now threatened platypus in the Werribee River.
<b>E3</b>	Continue to work with landowners to manage weeds and feral animals, including through Council's Environmental Enhancement Program, and highlight land management obligations under local and State laws.	<b>Highly Supported</b> It is noted that <a href="#">Melbourne Water's Healthy Waterways Strategy</a> , (Region-wide threats 13.2) supports such initiatives

<b>E4</b>	Investigate an update to the ESO2 mapping to ensure accuracy and consistency with the operation of the overlay.	<b>Supported</b>
<b>E5</b>	Advocate to DEECA, DTP, CFA, FRV, and Parks Victoria for improved management of the Western Grasslands Reserve interface with the Green Wedge.	<b>Highly Supported*</b> This initiative will lower community concerns and secure the future of the reserve.
<b>E6</b>	Work with Southern Rural Water, Department of Transport and Planning, and EPA to restrict vehicle access to waterways and address illegal dumping.	<b>Supported</b> It is noted that the Waterways of the West Action Plan Direction 4 (Amenity) would support such initiatives.
<b>E7</b>	Advocate for, or directly pursue through further strategic planning work, changes in the Melton Planning Scheme to improve planning controls relating to the management of fill generated by bulk earthworks.	<b>Supported</b>
<b>E8</b>	Advocate to DTP, DEECA, and the State Government for an improved land acquisition process to complete the Western Grasslands Reserve, and for improved communication and engagement with landholders whose land is affected.	<b>Highly Supported</b> This initiative will lower community concerns and secure the future of the reserve.
<b>E9</b>	Engaging through the Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee, continue to work with, CFA, FRV, DEECA and Parks Victoria to identify programs that provide education and support to improve public awareness and response to local bushfire risks.	<b>Supported</b>
<b>E10</b>	Support any opportunities that arise for work to understand and protect the recently identified Werribee Blue Box tree ( <i>Eucalyptus Baueriana subspecies Thalassina</i> ) and land management action to conserve it.	<b>Highly Supported*</b> WRA volunteers led the research which led to the naming of this species, exemplifying the value of volunteers to the environment. See the <a href="#">Victorian Environmental Volunteering Plan</a>
<b>E11</b>	Manage reserves to benefit from the direct wildlife and habitat corridor links available to flora and fauna between Eynesbury Forest, Melton Weir and Werribee River, Surbiton Park and Pinkerton Forest, Bush's Paddock, the Western Grasslands Reserve, and the Mount Cottrell reserves.	<b>Highly Supported*</b> It is noted that <a href="#">PROTECTING VICTORIA'S ENVIRONMENT – BIODIVERSITY 2037</a> Priority 18 calls for such initiatives.

*\*All these actions can be greatly assisted by directly funding community groups to recognise and support their absolute importance in achieving advocacy, benefits and opportunities for the environment beyond business as usual.*

See WRA's [business case](#) for an [environmental hub](#) in the west of Melbourne.

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Chapter 7 – Landscape</b>	<b>WRA Comment</b>
<b>L1</b>	Encourage landowners, developers, and State government to engage with Council planners early in the planning process for any large infrastructure projects proposed to impact the Green Wedge.	<b>Supported</b>
<b>L2</b>	Work with Parks Victoria, DEECA, and other relevant government agencies to examine opportunities for park works and infrastructure for nature-based tourism in appropriate Green Wedge areas that support local and regional visitation.	<b>Highly Supported</b> WRA notes that <a href="#">‘Victorians Volunteering for Nature’ 2018</a> indicates infrastructure may assist recruitment of volunteers
<b>L3</b>	Consider changes to the complex N=A/20 legacy subdivision controls in the Green Wedge and Farming Zone schedules to provide simpler controls for appropriately large sized lots.	<b>Supported</b>

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Chapter 8 – Cultural Heritage</b>	<b>WRA Comment</b>
<b>CH1</b>	Investigate opportunities with First Nations Peoples and State government to better recognise areas of cultural heritage and related activities within the Green Wedge.	<b>Highly Supported.</b> It is noted that the Waterways of the West Action Plan Direction 2 (TO Values) would support such initiatives.
<b>CH2</b>	Work with First Nations Peoples, Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee and Councils Environment Enhancement Program for regular Cool Burn Grant funding within the study area.	<b>Supported</b>
<b>CH4</b>	Invite and involve a First Nations Peoples working party to help guide future planning, respect, conservation, and management of the Mount Cottrell reserves. Cooperatively scope respectful opportunities to provide for community access and understanding of the significance of Mount Cottrell.	<b>Supported</b>

	<b>Precinct Actions: (10 Actions)</b>	
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Precinct 1 - Brookfield</b>	<b>WRA Comment</b>
<b>1A</b>	Review the DPO3 overlay to determine whether it should be amended or deleted.	<b>Supported</b>
	<b>Precinct 2 - Exford</b>	
<b>2A</b>	Work with Southern Rural Water to improve grass clearing and management of land adjoining the Werribee River and Weir in Precinct 2, and to improve communication with adjoining landowners.	<b>Supported</b>
	<b>Precinct 2 - Exford</b>	
<b>2C</b>	Upon the completion of any revised Melton Weir Strategy, seek to implement any recommended actions to enhance its tourism and recreational potential.	<b>Supported</b>

	<b>Precinct 3 - Parwan</b>	
<b>3A</b>	Protect landscape values of the precinct such as the Eynesbury Forest and views of the Werribee River and Mt Cottrell from inappropriate development impacts.	<b>Highly Supported</b>
	<b>Precinct 4 - Strathulloh</b>	
<b>4A</b>	Ensure any new stages of residential development adjacent to Strathulloh Estate provide suitable interface treatments. These must be consistent with approved PSP plans and provide for appropriate setbacks and siting of roads, infrastructure, landscaping, and reserves along the interface.	<b>Supported</b>
	<b>Precinct 5 - Surbiton Park</b>	
<b>5A</b>	Investigate with Greater Western Water the potential for a viewing and bird watching platform at Surbiton Park/Melton Recycled Water Plant site and a link to the Werribee River.	<b>Highly Supported</b>
<b>5B</b>	Continue to advocate for funding to facilitate the construction of the Werribee River Shared Trail extension between Exford Road/Greigs Road and Molony's Reserve (Eynesbury). Explore options with the City of Wyndham as recommended by the Western Metropolitan Regional Trails Strategic Plan.	<b>Highly Supported</b>
<b>5C</b>	Explore opportunities with Greater Western Water that could potentially allow an acceptable level of community access to view the heritage ruins at Surbiton Park/Melton Recycled Water Plant site.	<b>Supported</b>
	<b>Precinct 6 - Mt Cottrell</b>	
<b>6A</b>	Reinforce the hierarchy of the road network (with signage and design) to minimise through traffic on local roads within the precinct 6 Mt Cottrell area.	<b>Supported</b>
	<b>Precinct 7 - Chartwell</b>	
<b>7A</b>	Advocate for careful consideration and mitigation of stormwater and creek flooding impacts during the design of the OMR, and for planning controls to be suitably updated to reflect the altered landscape once the works are completed.	<b>Highly Supported</b> It is noted that the Waterways of the West Action Plan Direction 7 (Pollution) would support such initiatives.
<b>Action</b>	<b>Monitoring And Review</b>	<b>WRA Comment</b>
	Over time, regular Planning Scheme Review processes should review the status of both of the City of Melton Green Wedge Plans, and consider if any significant changes have made a review of either Green Wedge Plan required, or likewise if other associated Green Wedge policy work is necessary.	<b>Highly Supported</b> This is now very apparent with recent legislation and initiatives such as mentioned above, growing urban development and research.

*End of submission.*