



# *yarra4life*

## **STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2033**

[www.yarralife.com.au](http://www.yarralife.com.au)

# Acknowledgement

The Yarra4Life program works on the lands and waters of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Peoples and acknowledges them as Traditional Owners. We pay respect to their Elders, past and present, as well as other Elders with a connection to the region.

Yarra4Life recognises the Wurundjeri as the first people and custodians of the lands, waters and sky that are vital to the Yarra4Life area. We acknowledge their ongoing connection to and stewardship of the lands and waters of this area for tens of thousands of years, and that sovereignty was never ceded. We seek to embed their traditional knowledge, understanding of culture and connection to Country in all work we undertake.

# What is Yarra4Life

Yarra4Life brings together community groups, non-government organisations, business groups and government agencies to drive positive environmental change in the Yarra Valley. The collaboration helps coordinate work across the partners so it has the greatest impact, drives new investment into priority areas, and builds connections between people and the unique natural and cultural values of the area so more people actively care for those values into the future.

Yarra4Life has been working on practical, collaborative projects that have provided tangible environmental benefits to the Yarra Valley since 2006. Our membership has grown and changed over time with the addition of new community groups and organisations, further strengthening our collaborative approach.

Yarra4Life seeks to provide a respectful and robust forum in which to share information and opportunities, with a focus on addressing gaps rather than replicating what our partners and other organisations and groups are already doing.



*Figure 1: Yarra4Life planting*

# Mission statement for Yarra4Life

Yarra4Life brings together agencies and communities in genuine collaboration to protect biodiversity and rehabilitate the unique natural values of the Yarra Valley, expand the engagement of communities in actively caring for the region, and acknowledge and incorporate the approaches of Traditional Owners to heal Country.

## Partners

Melbourne Water coordinates Yarra4Life on behalf of the following organisations:

- Cardinia Council
- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
- Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater
- Friends of Leadbeater's Possum
- Melbourne Water
- Nangana Landcare Network
- Parks Victoria
- Trust for Nature
- Victorian National Parks Association
- Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation
- Yarra Ranges Council
- Yarra Ranges Landcare Network
- Yarra River Keeper Association
- Yarra Valley Water
- Zoo's Victoria

## Yarra4Life area

The Yarra4Life area is a special part of our region and our state. It is home to Victoria's two faunal emblems – the critically endangered Lowlands Leadbeater's Possum and Helmeted Honeyeater. It retains spectacular protected areas where native plants and animals thrive. It supports thriving agricultural, horticultural and viticultural sectors. It is a catchment for a significant portion of greater Melbourne's drinking water. It is a destination for tourism from bird watchers to adventure seekers. And it is home to a passionate and engaged community that care for these diverse values every day.

The Yarra4Life program area takes in roughly 111,000ha of the Yarra Valley, on the eastern outskirts of Melbourne's fringe. It extends from the foothills of the Yarra Ranges in the north to the Cardinia Reservoir in the south and flanked by the Dandenong Ranges to the west and Kurth Kiln Regional Park and Bunyip State Park to the east. The area is overwhelmingly peri-urban and rural. The largest urban centre is Lilydale with a population (in 2021) of 17,348.

Most of the Yarra4Life program area falls within the local government authority of Yarra Ranges Council, along with some within the abutting local government area of Cardinia Shire Council. Approximately 55% of the area covered by Yarra Ranges Council is comprised of Crown land

and National Parks. The Yarra Valley is one of Victoria's most valuable, attractive and visited regions; renowned for its rural landscapes, food, wine, rivers and wildlife. The region received approximately 6.6 million domestic (overnight and daytrip) and international overnight visitors combined, who spent an estimated \$871 million in the 2019 financial year.



## Strategic Plan 2023-2033

The Yarra4Life program area is home to four of the State's six emblems (avian, mammalian, floral and mineral) and the only area in which the State's avian emblem (the Helmeted Honeyeater) and the lowland variety of the State's mammalian emblem (Leadbeater's Possum) exist in the wild.

The Traditional Owners of the Yarra4Life are the Wurundjeri Woio-wurrung people. Yarra4Life recognises the Wurundjeri as the first people and custodians of the lands and waters that are vital to the Yarra4Life area. We seek to embed their traditional knowledge, understanding of culture and connection to Country in all the work we undertake.



*Figure 3: Lowland Leadbeater's Possum (photo by: Kylie Fideler)*

The Wurundjeri People take their name from the Woio-wurrung language word 'wurun' meaning the Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) which is common along 'Birrarung' (Yarra River), and 'djeri', the grub which is found in or near the tree. Wurundjeri are the 'Witchetty Grub People' and our Ancestors have lived on this land for millennia.<sup>1</sup>



*Figure 2: Helmeted Honeyeater*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wurundjeri.com.au/our-story/ancestors-past/>

# Yarra4Life Program area

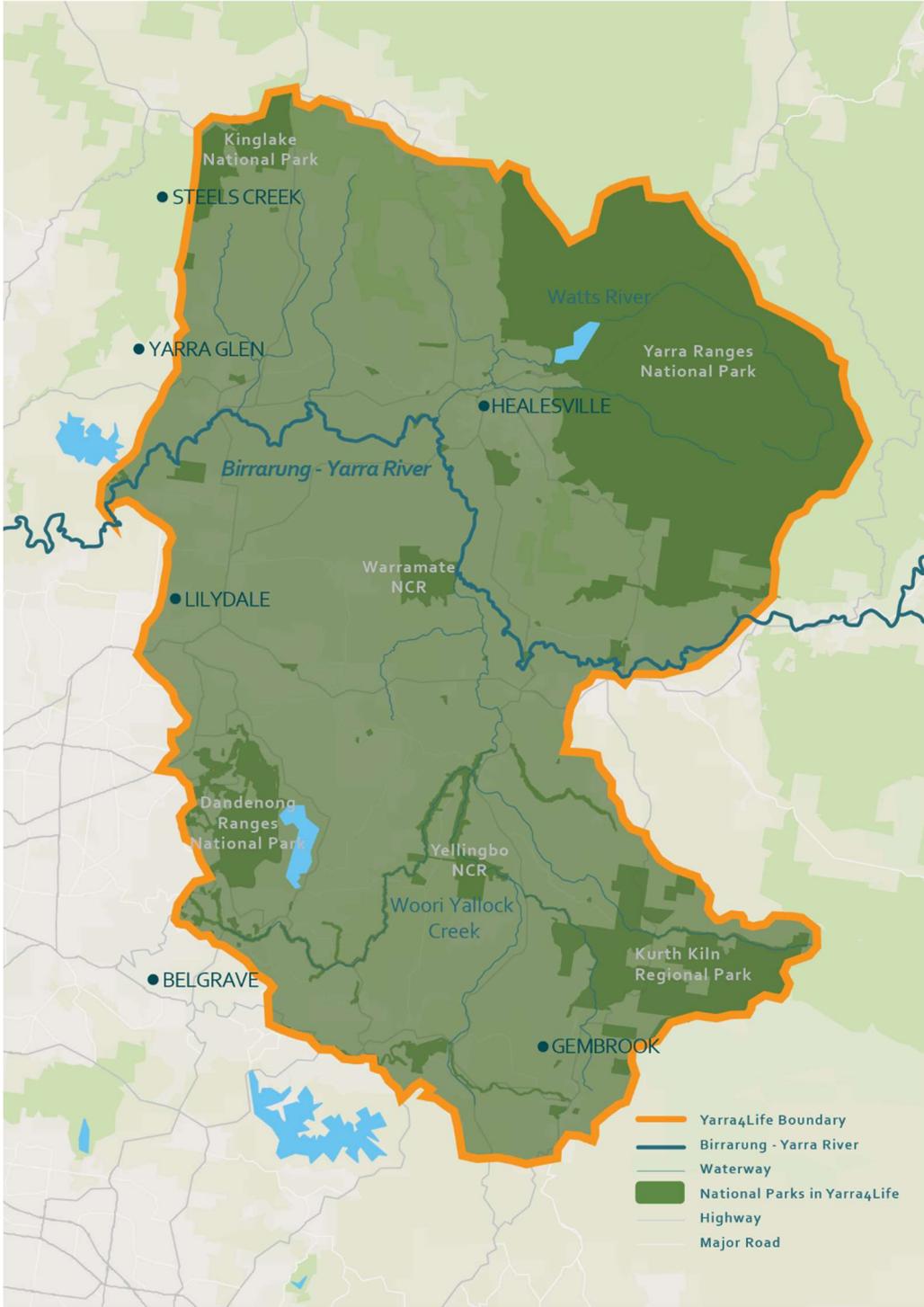


Figure 4: Yarra4Life program area

# 2033 Goals

## Goal One - Rehabilitating landscapes

Yarra4Life drives on-ground projects that increase protection and improve the condition and resilience of habitats – across both public and private land, including agricultural, horticultural, equicultural, viticultural and lifestyle properties – in the Yarra4Life area, to support a diverse range of flora and fauna, including our State’s faunal emblems and indigenous and more climate resilient flora. Yarra4Life also works to increase the biodiversity values of these protected habitats through initiatives, involving corridors and other elements of connectivity, that can link these various habitats.



Figure 5: Indigenous nursery stock

## Goal Two - Aligning efforts

Yarra4Life facilitates alignment of planning and investment across partners to gain better outcomes from the work each partner is doing, and identify gaps and new opportunities for future focus.

## Goal Three - Connecting community



Yarra4Life brings together community groups and government agencies in a forum where voices are equally valued. Those stakeholders work together to drive greater connection of the broader community to the natural environment, greater valuing of that environment, and greater active stewardship through increased participation in citizen science, Landcare, and community events.

Figure 6: Yarra4Life event

## Goal Four - Traditional Owners

Yarra4Life recognises Traditional Owners as Sovereign Partners. Yarra4Life provides a platform for the voice of Traditional Owners to be heard in relation to the natural and cultural values of the area. Yarra4Life is also an avenue for agencies to take action based on what has been heard, in partnership with Traditional Owners or under their guidance.

### Principles supporting these goals

- Focusing on habitat protection and improvement for key species has benefits for more than those species, and holistic benefits will be recognised.
- Habitat connectivity and waterway protection and improvement are strongly linked and will be considered together where possible.
- Sustainable agriculture approaches are an opportunity to both improve habitat and biodiversity, and protect the social and economic values of the Yarra Valley region.
- Climate adaptation and resilience will be built into everything we do, i.e. it is how we operate, rather than a separate focus area.
- Working with Traditional Owners is a fundamental part of how we operate; Goal 4 above goes further to commit to seeking greater opportunities for ongoing Traditional Owner management of land and waters and incorporating Traditional Knowledge. Yarra4Life recognises and links to the existing partnerships with Traditional Owners through partner organisations.
- Understanding the environmental health of the Yarra4Life project region is important to underpin all projects; opportunities to measure the current health to benchmark against in the future, will be embraced wherever possible, and an environmental monitoring framework will be built over time.



*Figure 7: Deer proof fencing protecting habitat*

## Monitoring and reporting

Yarra4Life will develop a three-year Action Plan outlining a schedule of activities that work towards achieving our four goals. Progress towards our Action Plan will be monitored and reported annually.

As a medium-term action, Yarra4Life will pursue the development of an environmental monitoring framework to establish baseline condition and monitor change over time and progress towards our goals. This framework will seek to use existing data sets and established monitoring frameworks where appropriate.



*Figure 8: Yarra4Life landscape*



*Figure 9: Yarra4Life supported rehabilitation*

## Appendix A: Assumptions

These assumptions outline core principles that underpin Yarra4Life's goals and will form the framework for guiding our actions:

- A healthy and resilient environment – including waterways – will support a diverse range of flora and fauna in a changing climate.
- Habitat in the Yarra4Life area is varied, with habitat consisting of small and large fragmented reserves, habitat corridors and, newly established patches of native vegetation. There is both unique and common flora and fauna native to the Yarra4Life area.
- Current and future conditions will be monitored to effectively measure changes in condition over the 10-year timeframe of this plan.
- Yarra4Life will more efficiently and effectively deliver against our goals when we are able to tap into the community's vast array of local knowledge, skills and influence.
- A strong network of diverse partner organisations will provide a strong organisational foundation for Yarra4Life. Embracing opportunities to bring in other stakeholders for periods of time, when appropriate, will expand our opportunities to achieve our goals in novel ways.
- Regular, genuine and respectful engagement is undertaken with Traditional Owners to establish and foster a trusted relationship where a deep understanding of desires and needs can be honestly and safely shared.
- Traditional Owners have a desire and capacity to participate in project planning and implementation.
- Traditional Owners have and/or are supported to have the appropriate skills and knowledge to partner in project planning and implementation.

## Appendix 2: Other key values

The Yarra4Life Coordination Committee identified a number of themes of high importance to the Yarra4Life area, but considered that these were either well covered by other organisations and processes or were outside of the remit of Yarra4Life. These are listed below to both acknowledge their importance to the broader Yarra4Life area and to provide an opportunity to revisit these themes if circumstances change in the future.

The ongoing implementation of the Liwik Barring Landscape Conservation Area has broad benefits for the Yarra4Life area and has strong links to Yarra4Life's vision and goals. The Yellingbo (Liwik Barring) Landscape Conservation Area 10-year Plan guides the implementation of this project, with DEECA, Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water having specific responsibilities in delivering this plan. Yarra4Life partner organisations will have key overlaps which will assist in the the delivery of specific aspects of this plan.

- The Yarra Strategic Plan (Burndap Birrarung burndap umarkoo) also has strong links with Yarra4Life's goals and vision of the Yarra4Life area. Melbourne Water is the lead agency for the implementation of this plan.
- Collaboration between the tourism industry and environmental action is a significant opportunity for the Yarra4Life area. While tourism carries risks to the protection of natural resources, the tourism industry can also be a strong enabler of increasing environmental stewardship and motivating direct action. Tourism is not a focus of Yarra4Life at this time, but is recognised as an important influence on the overall goals of the collaboration.
- The inappropriate extraction of natural resources from industries such as logging and mining is acknowledged as a significant concern to the environmental health of the Yarra4Life area, however is considered beyond the direct scope of Yarra4Life.
- Supporting planning controls such as Green Wedges, and maintaining the current urban growth boundary, is recognised as another important tool in protecting the unique values of the Yarra Valley. Yarra4Life supports the work of local councils in using these planning mechanisms for the protection of the environment but does not have a role in driving them.

# yarra4life



Energy,  
Environment  
and Climate Action



TRUST FOR  
NATURE



Wurundjeri  
Woi-wurrung  
Cultural Heritage  
Aboriginal Corporation



YARRA  
RIVERKEEPER



Yarra  
Valley  
Water



Yarra  
Ranges  
Council



**ZOOS**  
VICTORIA  
Fighting Extinction



Friends of  
the HELMETED HONEYEATER inc.



Friends of Leadbeater's Possum Inc.  
www.leadbeaters.org.au



Cardinia



Yarra Ranges  
Landcare  
Network



Nangana  
Landcare  
Network



VICTORIAN  
NATIONAL PARKS  
ASSOCIATION  
Be part of nature

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