

1.2 LIVING MELBOURNE: OUR METROPOLITAN URBAN FOREST STRATEGY N19-53

Responsible Director: Peter Panagakos

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. *Notes the Vision and Goals of Endorses Living Melbourne: our metropolitan urban forest strategy (Attachment 1):*

Vision: Our thriving communities are resilient and connected through nature,

Goals:

- a. *Healthy people,*
- b. *Abundant nature, and*
- c. *Natural infrastructure.*

2. *Endorses Living Melbourne: our metropolitan urban forest strategy, which means supporting Living Melbourne's Vision, Goals and Actions and committing to work in partnership with the other endorsing organisations towards its implementation; and*
3. *Authorises the use of the Monash City Council logo, as an endorsing organisation, in the final version of Living Melbourne, to be launched in June 2019.*

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is for Council to consider becoming an endorsing organisation of *Living Melbourne: our metropolitan urban forest strategy (Living Melbourne)*. Through giving endorsement, Council is committing to supporting *Living Melbourne's Vision, Goals and Actions* and authorises the use of the Monash City Council logo by *Living Melbourne*.

BACKGROUND

Living Melbourne: our metropolitan urban forest strategy is a bold new strategy for a greener, more liveable Melbourne. It is a vision of international significance in its massive scale, its outstanding collaboration, and its use of new and innovative mapping technology.

The Strategy, has been in development for the past two years and was led by The Nature Conservancy¹ and Resilient Melbourne², with input from 32 metropolitan councils (including a number of officers from Monash) the Victorian government, statutory authorities and academics.

Endorsement for *Living Melbourne* is being sought from the following organisations, who have been involved in its development:

- 32 metropolitan Melbourne Local Government Authorities
- Victorian Government (through DELWP)
- Municipal Association Victoria
- Melbourne Water
- Yarra Valley Water
- South East Water
- City West Water
- Parks Victoria
- Vic Roads
- Victorian Planning Authority
- Australian Institute of Landscape Architects
- Environment Protection Authority
- Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority

Following significant engagement across metropolitan Melbourne, including all local councils, Victorian government, and many other stakeholders, the *Resilient Melbourne* strategy was released in May 2016 – the first ever metropolitan-wide strategy led by local government. While still part of the 100 Resilient Cities network, Resilient Melbourne is 100% locally owned and funded.

As a flagship action of the *Resilient Melbourne* strategy, *Living Melbourne* provides a business case for nature as a driver of urban resilience and liveability. Its proposed framework aims to assist metropolitan Melbourne, and its communities, adapt, survive and thrive in response to anticipated climate change and increased urbanisation challenging our city, both now and in the future.

¹ The Nature Conservancy is a charitable environmental organization, headquartered in Arlington, Virginia, United States. Its mission is to "conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends."

² Resilient Melbourne is a collaborative project with input, guidance and support from metropolitan councils, organisations and community groups across Melbourne. The project is led by the Chief Resilience Officer who is funded by the 100 Resilient Cities initiative – pioneered by the Rockefeller Foundation.

DISCUSSION

What is Our Metropolitan Urban Forest?

Our metropolitan urban forest is made up of all the trees, shrubs, grasses, soil and water on public and private land across metropolitan Melbourne. It incorporates vegetation in streets, parks, gardens, plazas, campuses, river and creek embankments, wetlands, railway corridors, community gardens, green walls, balconies and roofs.

Together these elements of the urban forest protect human health, support life and provide numerous natural infrastructure services for our city.

The urban forest cleans our air and water, reduces damaging heat in our neighbourhoods, provides valuable habitat for flora and fauna, mitigates flooding, reduces energy costs and is a source of beauty. Exposure to nature reduces stress and the incidence of mental illness, and by creating natural spaces where people can congregate and recreate, the urban forest provides opportunities to strengthen community bonds.



Figure 1 – *Living Melbourne*, Benefits of nature in Urban Areas

Protecting and enhancing natural areas and habitat for flora and fauna in cities is essential for strengthening our resilience to acute shocks and chronic stresses, many of which will be exacerbated by climate change and rapid urbanisation.



Figure 2 – *Living Melbourne*, Shocks and Stresses on Cities

What is the challenge for our Metropolitan Urban Forest?

Metropolitan Melbourne is predicted to be a city of 8 million people by 2051, which would make it the largest city in one of the world’s most urbanised countries. While growth brings tremendous opportunities for innovation and economic development, it also presents a significant challenge for the natural environment and the many services nature provides to Melburnians.

People of Monash are proud of their leafy streets, public reserves and creeks. Our natural environment contributes to Melbourne’s status as one

of the world's most liveable cities. Our city's liveability requires a healthy natural environment, accessible to all.

Our economy also relies upon the greenness of our city. Destination Melbourne's 2017 report shows that visitors to Melbourne, who contribute approximately \$8 billion to the annual economy, rank parks and gardens as Melbourne's number-one unique attribute. Economic improvements to property value are also experienced in leafy green neighbourhoods

However, as metropolitan Melbourne expands outwards and also becomes more densely populated, green space is shrinking, putting many of our natural values at risk. Despite the perception of extensive green areas, some of Melbourne's local government areas have among the lowest urban tree canopy cover in Australia.

Within the City of Monash, the canopy cover has been reduced to 22%, which is a 4% reduction since 1992. Whilst this is a notable reduction in tree canopy across the municipality, the decrease in tree coverage has been on private land. In public open space areas there has been an overall increase in tree canopy cover, especially along waterway corridors where Council has undertaken extensive planting and revegetation.



Figure 3 – *Living Melbourne*, Loss of urban canopy and vegetation in eastern Melbourne

Why have a Metropolitan Urban Forest Strategy?

More than ever, we need strategies and actions to support nature in our city. Urban forest initiatives have been established by several metropolitan Melbourne local governments, the Victorian government, non-governmental and community organisations, private land owners and others to protect and enhance Melbourne's metropolitan urban forest.

What has been missing until now is a way for this work to be coordinated and supported at a metropolitan scale.

The purpose of *Living Melbourne* is to galvanise support for a collaborative effort across sectors and organisations, jurisdictions and land tenures.

Living Melbourne Strategic Framework

The *Living Melbourne* strategic framework (see figure 3) includes a vision;

“our thriving communities are resilient and connected through nature”,

three goals;

- 1) Healthy people,
- 2) Abundant nature, and
- 3) Natural infrastructure,

and six key actions;

- 1) Protect, restore species habitat and enhance connectivity,
- 2) Set targets and track progress,
- 3) Scale up greening the private realm,
- 4) Collaborate across sectors and regions,
- 5) Build a toolkit of resources to underpin implementation and
- 6) Fund the protection and enhancement of the urban forest.

The strategy proposes key actions to enable and inspire our rapidly changing city to connect, better protect and enhance our urban forest, across the metropolitan region. *Living Melbourne* will be a driver of transformational outcomes for the urban forest and the people, biodiversity, and services it supports.

Living Melbourne: our metropolitan urban forest strategy is supported by Living Melbourne: Technical report. The technical report (Attachment 2) provides technical evidence underpinning the strategy - both are intended to be read as standalone documents.

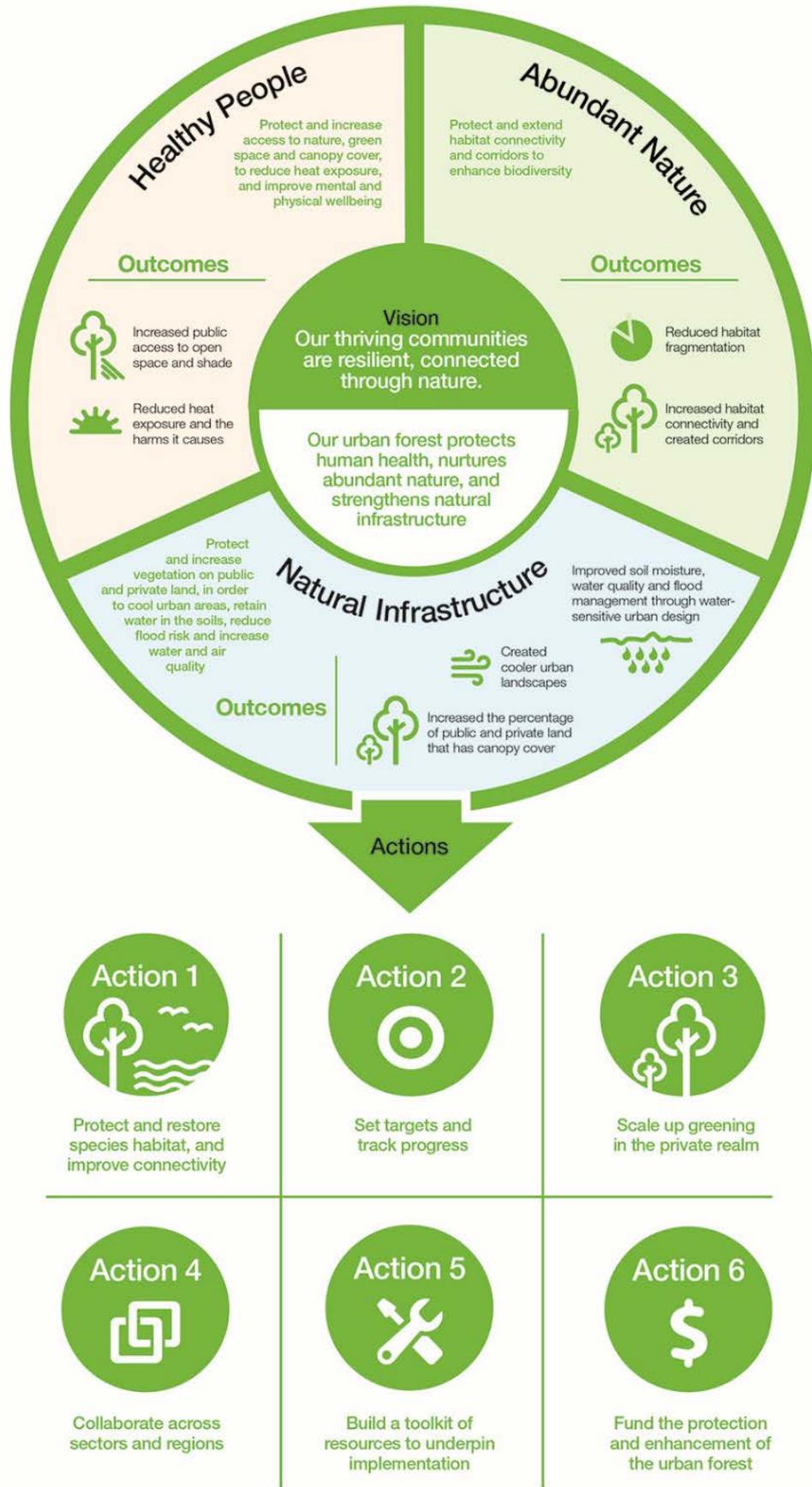


Figure 1 – Living Melbourne, Vision Goals and Actions

What does this mean for Monash?

The *Living Melbourne* strategy has been prepared on behalf of many partners across metropolitan Melbourne. To achieve the vision of thriving communities that are resilient and connected through nature, all sectors and regions have a role to play.

Local government authorities, such as Monash, will continue to perform an invaluable role as managers and custodians of many of the parks, streetscapes and open spaces that form a fundamental part of our urban forest, including working with residents, 'Friends of' groups and the broader community to generate local action.

Whilst the *Living Melbourne* strategy provides the missing link for multiple organisations to all work collaboratively in protecting and enhancing the urban forest, endorsing organisations are committing only to support *Living Melbourne's* Vision, Goals and Actions. This commitment also extends to work in partnership with the other endorsing organisations towards *Living Melbourne's* implementation. It is proposed that the endorsing organisations will develop an implementation plan collectively and invite others to be involved.

In committing to the six actions outlined in *Living Melbourne*, the implications for Monash are summarised below:

Action 1: Protect and restore species habitat, and improve connectivity

Protect and restore habitats, and increase ecological connectivity of all types between streetscapes, conservation reserves, riparian and coastal areas, open spaces and other green infrastructure across metropolitan Melbourne

This action is consistent with the *Monash Urban Landscape and Canopy Vegetation Strategy*, Council and the work currently undertaken by Horticulture and supported by various community groups through planting plans and creek corridor works.

Action 2: Set targets and track progress

Set urban canopy and understorey targets for each metropolitan region, and decide on a clear and consistent method for long-term monitoring and evaluation of the quality and extent of the urban forest

The *Monash Urban Landscape and Canopy Vegetation Strategy*, adopted in October 2018 sets a canopy vegetation target of 30% by 2030. The proposed target in *Living Melbourne* is consistent with the Monash City Council target, recommending a tree canopy cover of 30%

by 2050 for the Eastern region of Melbourne (Monash, Manningham, Maroondah, Whitehorse and Yarra Ranges).

Action 3: Scale up greening in the private realm

Strengthen planning and development standards and relevant guidelines to increase the greening of the private realm

Council's adoption of Amendment C125 in February 2017, to create new residential zones and development standards, aimed at protecting Monash's 'garden city' character, supports Monash's ability to implement this action. This has been further strengthened through the adoption of the *Monash Urban Landscape and Canopy Vegetation Strategy* and the planting guidelines developed as part of this strategy.

Action 4: Collaborate across sectors and regions

Equip practitioners to protect and enhance the urban forest by building on existing resources and creating a shared toolkit to facilitate implementation of best practices

This action provides a metropolitan-wide structure that will allow Monash to formalise many existing collaborations and relationships under a consistent coordinated vision.

Action 5: Build a toolkit of resources to underpin implementation

Encourage collaboration between sectors and regions, to protect and expand the urban forest by strengthening existing regional partnerships, and establishing new ones, and by accelerating greening efforts on private land

Should Council chose to become an endorsing organisations, Monash would be well supported through the benefits made available to additional resources, such as mapping tools, which would aid in implementing this action – see [Benefits of Endorsement](#) below.

Action 6: Fund the protection and enhancement of the urban forest

Establish a set of funding and financing options to suit different types of urban forest action

In addition to the funding already within Council's annual budgets for urban forestry and horticulture, endorsing organisations will be given access to future financial investment from various state bodies – see [Benefits of Endorsement](#) below.

Benefits of Endorsement

100 Resilient Cities has invested significantly in the development of *Living Melbourne*, by facilitating pro-bono services to the project, including the project partner The Nature Conservancy, satellite imagery from Digital Globe, and data analysis and software provided by Trimble. Endorsing organisation will be given access to these mapping assets that accompany *Living Melbourne*.

Endorsing organisations will also be given access to future financial investment for actions.

In summary benefits for endorsing organisations include the following:

- Access to future financial investment for actions;
- Co-branding plus logo placement in final designed version of Living Melbourne;
- Access to aligned media opportunities;
- Opportunity to demonstrate collective leadership regarding Melbourne's future liveability;
- Opportunity to leverage collective metropolitan support to extend existing work;
- Licence to host mapping derivatives on website; and
- Use of satellite imagery for internal use.

Process of Endorsement

Endorsement of Living Melbourne means support for Living Melbourne's Vision, Goals and Actions and a commitment to work in partnership with the other endorsing organisations towards its implementation.

The process for endorsement is as follows:

- *Living Melbourne* is circulated to organisations, from which endorsement is sought. Those organisations work through their own governance procedures to seek authority to endorse.
- Endorsing organisations notify Resilient Melbourne of support and provide a copy of their logo by 10 May 2019.
- Leaders from endorsing organisations invited to attend the launch of Living Melbourne on World Environment Day, 5 June 2019 and publically sign the document.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

Living Melbourne has been developed with a broad range of stakeholders, across metropolitan Melbourne, coupled with advice from a Senior Reference Group and a Technical Advisory Group.

The Senior Reference Group comprises:

- City of Monash (Chair – Dr Andi Diamond)
- DELWP
- City of Brimbank
- The Nature Conservancy
- Melbourne Water
- City of Stonnington
- Resilient Melbourne
- City of Frankston
- City of Melbourne
- Parks Victoria
- City of Hume

Stakeholder involvement included a series of workshops to guide development of the strategy, incorporate stakeholder perspectives and review the strategy as it progressed and was finalised. The four major workshops focused on:

- 1) Establishing the baseline and setting the initial vision;
- 2) Developing the strategic foundation;
- 3) Technical evidence to guide the strategy; and
- 4) Draft strategy framing and development.

Stakeholders who contributed to the development of *Living Melbourne* include metropolitan Melbourne local government authorities, Victorian Government departments and statutory agencies, technical experts, land managers, policy makers, planners, academics developers and some community representatives (see the Acknowledgements section within *Living Melbourne* – attachment 1 – for a full list) .

Round 1 consultation on the early draft of the *Living Melbourne* strategy occurred between December 2018 and January 2019. The draft *Living Melbourne* strategy was circulated to over 60 organisations, including all metropolitan councils, relevant Victorian Government departments and agencies, as well as a range of statutory authorities.

Insightful, constructive feedback was received from 36 organisations, totalling 640 individual items of feedback demonstrating their commitment to *Living Melbourne* and involvement in its release and implementation.

Melbourne Water circulated information inviting *Healthy Waterways* stakeholders (community organisations and community members) to respond to a questionnaire on *Living Melbourne*, and:

- 100% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with a metropolitan wide approach to improve greening efforts and better protect nature across Melbourne.
- 100% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the vision and goals of the Living Melbourne strategy and 100% of respondents stated they would be likely to recommend that their local council endorses Living Melbourne.

Round 2 consultation on the draft strategy occurred from 22 February 2019 to 15 March 2019. Round 2 consultation asked organisations what needed to change in order for them to support or endorse the strategy. Resilient Melbourne received over 130 mostly positive comments from 18 organisations.

Overall stakeholders have indicated their support for the collective approach that *Living Melbourne* is proposing.

The version of *Living Melbourne*, for which endorsement is being sought, now incorporates all feedback and has been updated to ensure it is representative of the needs of the diverse Melbourne-wide partnership.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The goals and actions of *Living Melbourne* strongly align with the City of Monash's Annual Plan 2018/19, especially *A Liveable and Sustainable City* and *Inviting Open and Urban Spaces*.

The *Living Melbourne* Metropolitan Urban Forest Strategy is consistent with Council's recently adopted *Monash Open Space Strategy* and *Monash Urban Landscape and Canopy Vegetation Strategy*. These strategies highlight the importance of vegetation and canopy trees in protecting and enhancing the garden city character of Monash, and creating a more liveable and resilient environment for the community.

The *Monash Urban Landscape and Canopy Vegetation Strategy* also includes an objective to increase canopy tree cover to 30% by 2040 and through endorsement of the *Living Melbourne* strategy, Monash will gain access to tool and resources that will assist in achieving this target.

In addition, The Victorian Government is leading initiatives such as Action 91 of *Plan Melbourne* and the forthcoming *Metropolitan Open Space Strategy*, both of which have a strong metropolitan-wide approach, like the one set

out in *Living Melbourne*, and will require Monash to participate beyond the municipal boundaries.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no requirement for endorsing organisations to commit funding alongside endorsement. Action 6 of *Living Melbourne* outlines work being undertaken to raise and leverage finance for its implementation.

CONCLUSION

In developing *Living Melbourne*, consideration has been given to the current and future threats to Melbourne's liveability. It proposes actions to extend and improve the metropolitan urban forest to both mitigate impacts and provide a long term strategic approach for its future sustainability.

The 21st century will be remembered as the urban century, the century with the most significant urban growth ever witnessed. With the growth projected for the municipality over the coming decades and given the difficulties that this will create to maintain and enhance a sustainable and liveable city, it is crucial that we create and nurture our urban forest.

Admirable efforts are already under way to add to the natural features that make our city a safe, healthy and pleasant place to live. But Melbourne's urban forest is under pressure. Changes in urban form, a growing population and climate change – including increasing urban heat – leave it vulnerable. At the moment we lack a metropolitan-wide approach to assess and reduce the harm that these trends inflict upon the city and existing urban forest. This strategy, *Living Melbourne: our metropolitan urban forest*, is a timely and invaluable opportunity to rise to these challenges.

By becoming an endorsing organisation, The Council will gain access to significant benefits to support Council's own policies and strategies.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: *Living Melbourne: our metropolitan urban forest*
April 2019

Attachment 2: *Living Melbourne: Technical Report - April 2019*