

6.2 CONSERVING OUR BUSHLAND RESERVES: VALLEY RESERVE AND DAMPER CREEK RESERVE

Submitting Councillor: Cr Paterson

MOTION

That Council:

- 1. Designates Valley Reserve and Damper Creek Reserve as conservation reserves, as per the conservation reserve definition found in the Monash Council Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2016-2026.*
- 2. Draws up a statement of purpose for both reserves in consultation with the Friends group for each reserve that outlines the long term vision for each reserve, their community value, and the role each reserve plays in conservation.*
- 3. Draws up a management plan for each reserve in consultation with the Friends group for each reserve that identifies the primary purpose of both reserves as conserving native flora and fauna and that ongoing management of the reserves will remain consistent with this purpose.*
- 4. Renames the Reserves to; Valley Conservation Reserve and Damper Creek Conservation Reserve and provides entry signage and updated collateral by 31/12/2020 to reflect this change.*
- 5. Gives in principle support to an integrated site plan (ISP) for Valley Reserve subject to the outcome of future budget discussions.*
- 6. Further updates signage in and around the reserves where required once the statement of purpose, management plan, and for Valley Reserve, the ISP are completed.*

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to consider a request from both the Friends of Scotchman's Creek & Valley Reserve and the Friends of Damper Creek Reserve to designate both Valley Reserve and Damper Creek Reserve as conservation reserves.

BACKGROUND

For many years, Valley Reserve and Damper Creek Reserve have played a unique role in Monash as areas in which the bushland environment has been preserved, restored and maintained. The reserves contain high value remnant vegetation conservation areas, and present a glimpse of what the local environment looked like prior to European settlement. Some of the remnant vegetation has been identified as vulnerable.

It is important to recognise that the Friends of Scotchman's Creek & Valley Reserve, the Friends of Damper Creek, other members of the community, Melbourne Water, council's Bushland Crew and Council itself have invested much time, energy and money on preserving these two significant reserves in

our city and ensuring their ongoing contribution to our natural environment and biodiversity.

The Monash Council Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2016-2026 states: Urban Ecology: *'Monash's most significant natural environmental areas are Valley Reserve, Jells Park and the riparian corridors of Dandenong Creek, Gardiners Creek, Scotchman's Creek and Damper Creek'* (Pg22)

And;

Objectives: *' 2. Long-term biodiversity outcomes are achieved on Council owned and managed conservation reserves'* (Pg22)

The primary purpose of Valley Reserve and Damper Creek Reserve falls within the definition of a Conservation Reserve given in the Glossary of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy *'Reserves with the purpose of conserving native fauna and flora'*.

The Monash Council Open Space Strategy identifies the importance of the environmental benefits of open space relating to the conservation of habitat and biodiversity, and the protection of biological and cultural heritage.

The strategy also notes that only 3% of Monash open space is currently bushland/forest and identifies the importance of managing bushland reserves so as to limit damage to bushland.

Council officers have already agreed in principal (letter from Mayor Paul Klisaris to Friends of Scotchman's Creek & Valley Reserve, 22/12/17) that the initiative to rename Valley Reserve as Valley Conservation Reserve aligns with key priorities of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2016-2026

Based on the above, it is important that Valley Reserve and Damper Creek Reserve be formally recognised not only as a bushland reserves, but also that their primary focus is on conservation and preservation of the best example of the very limited amount of relatively undisturbed native bushland left in Monash.

FINANCIAL

Expenses relating to signage upgrades and officer time to develop recommended responses.

CONCLUSION

That Council supports Valley Reserve and Damper Creek Reserve being renamed as conservation reserves and develops management plans for both reserves that reflect their primary purpose of conserving native flora and fauna.