

Report to the Future Melbourne Committee

Agenda item 6.2

Moonee Ponds Creek Advocacy Plan for Improvement Projects

19 March 2024

Presenter: Julian Edwards, Acting Director City Strategy

Purpose and background

1. On Tuesday 5 December 2023, Future Melbourne Committee (FMC) resolved that management is to provide an update on 12 key improvement projects within the Moonee Ponds Creek corridor and to prepare an advocacy plan to progress those projects outside of the direct control of the City of Melbourne. The resolution also requests management investigate suitable projects for grant applications to the Federal Urban Rivers and Catchment Programs grant scheme.
2. The City of Melbourne is committed to the protection, restoration and management of our waterways, which is identified as a Major Initiative within Council Plan 2021-25. The Moonee Ponds Creek plays a central role to the sustainable development of Arden and Macaulay urban renewal precincts, and the continued development of Docklands.
3. The City of Melbourne does not own or manage land adjacent to the Moonee Ponds Creek and as such has a primary role to advocate to the Victorian Government for funding and delivery of projects identified within the Council endorsed Moonee Ponds Creek Strategic Opportunities Plan 2019.
4. Management has also provided technical expertise to the Victorian Government to assist the progress of projects, including input to the Moonee Ponds Creek Implementation Plan (MPCIP) which was prepared by the Victorian Planning Authority in 2019 on behalf of the Victorian Government but has not yet been released.

Key issues

5. A new webpage has been published on the City of Melbourne corporate website [Moonee Ponds Creek Strategic Opportunities Plan - City of Melbourne](#), which includes an interactive map of the Moonee Ponds Creek corridor within the City of Melbourne and provides details of each of the nominated improvement projects in accordance with the resolution.
6. A corresponding Project Information Table has been prepared to identify the lead agency, project background, status update and potential funding pathways for each project (refer Attachment 2).
7. An Advocacy Plan has been prepared to identify key messages, stakeholders and approach to prioritise the following outcomes for Council's on-going advocacy (refer Attachment 3):
 - 7.1. Request the immediate release of the Moonee Ponds Creek Implementation Plan (MPCIP).
 - 7.2. Appointment of a lead Victorian Government Department or Agency to coordinate governance of the creek corridor, including State and Federal funding bids and grant applications.
 - 7.3. Commitment from Victorian Government to fund and deliver the re-instatement of the Moonee Ponds Creek trail in Docklands and construction of two new active transport crossings in Macaulay.
8. The timing for reinstatement of the Moonee Ponds Creek trail in Docklands and release of the MPCIP has been the subject of previous Council concern and a resolution on 8 November 2022 (Agenda item 6.3) that requested the Acting CEO write to Development Victoria and relevant Ministers.
9. The Urban Rivers and Catchments Program (URCP) is part of the Federal government's election commitment to restore the health of urban waterways through funding on-ground works such as

10. revegetation, establishing living wetlands, swales or bio-filters, conversion of concrete drainage channels into living streams and gross pollutant traps.
11. A review of the funding criteria indicates that many of the priority projects identified in the Notice of Motion are not eligible for funding through the URCP. The URCP does not include funding for construction or capital works of civil infrastructure (such as bridges), litter collection and community clean-up activities, public art installations, educational activities, and activities which government bodies are primarily responsible for undertaking.
12. Management will continue to explore future rounds of funding and other eligible funding opportunities for the priority projects.

Recommendation from management

13. That the Future Melbourne Committee:
 - 13.1. Notes the publication of the new interactive webpage, which includes the information within the Moonee Ponds Creek Project Information Table provided in Attachment 2 of the report from management.
 - 13.2. Approves the Moonee Ponds Creek Advocacy Plan provided in Attachment 3 of the report from management, through which Management will establish appropriate Councillor and/or Management engagement with key decision makers
 - 13.3. Notes that management will continue to explore projects and the associated criteria for grant funding opportunities through the Urban Rivers and Catchments Program, and any relevant applications will be referred through the usual capital works budget process.

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment (page 3 of 8)
2. Moonee Ponds Creek Project Information Table (page 4 of 8)
3. Moonee Ponds Creek Advocacy Plan (page 8 of 8)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendation from management

Finance

2. There is currently no Council budget allocated for projects identified in the MPC SOP.
3. Projects suitable for State or Federal grants will be dependent on matched Council or external partnership funding, identifying and partnering with the Victorian Government as the lead delivery agency and landowner, and obtaining necessary approvals and permitting. The preparation of a grant application and delivery of projects will require additional resources, funding, technical consultant support and annual capital works budgets.

Conflict of interest

4. No Council staff, or other persons engaged under contract, involved in advising on or in preparing this report has declared a material or general conflict of interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Health and Safety

5. In developing this proposal, no Occupational Health and Safety issues or opportunities have been identified.

Stakeholder consultation

6. The City of Melbourne is a member of the Chain of Ponds Collaboration Group, which includes representation from local government, State government, water authorities, research organisations, community groups and not-for-profits, who are committed to improving the Moonee Ponds Creek.
7. Community engagement was undertaken from March to April 2021 to inform the Moonee Ponds Creek Strategic Opportunities Plan, endorsed by Council later that year. This feedback was shared with and considered by the Victorian Planning Authority, as part of the preparation of the Moonee Ponds Creek Implementation Plan, which has yet to be finalised and released. A summary report of the engagement outcomes is provided on the [Moonee Ponds Creek Participate Page](#).

Relation to Council policy

8. This proposal aligns with the Council endorsed the Moonee Ponds Creek Strategic Opportunities Plan (2019) and Major Initiative 19, advocate for investment in City of Melbourne waterways, of the Council Plan 2021-25.

Environmental sustainability

9. The Moonee Ponds Creek is a natural asset that is highly regarded by the community, and plays a critical role in the environmental and economic value to our city.

Attachment 2 – Moonee Ponds Creek Project Information Table

No.	Improvement project	Landowner/ manager	Location	Lead Agency /Authority	Authorisation	Broad description of purpose and extent of the project	Short history of progress towards implementing the project	Current status of the project	Funding pathway
1	Commonwealth funding for Moonee Ponds Creek restoration	N/A	Whole of creek corridor	The Urban Rivers and Catchments Program (URCP) is administered by the Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR) on behalf of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (DCCEEW)	The URCP is a \$200 million grant program resulting from a Federal election commitment to restore the health of urban waterways for native plants, animals and local communities.	Projects supported by URCP need to demonstrate the following outcomes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Restored and/or improved riparian areas, stream banks or aquatic habitats, to benefit native species. Improved water quality, water in the landscape, and waterway connectivity to benefit native aquatic species. Improved urban green and blue space. 	The URCP is supporting Stage 1 of the Reimagining Moonee Ponds Creek project , which is being delivered by Melbourne Water on behalf of the Chain of Ponds Collaboration Group in partnership with the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DECCA), Greater Western Water, Merri-bek and Moonee Valley City Councils and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation. This portion of the creek corridor was identified as a priority area for concrete to be removed and the creek corridor to be re-naturalised.	The City of Melbourne has met with the Chain of Ponds Collaboration Group to review the eligibility of projects within the lower reaches of the Moonee Ponds Creek, however no immediate projects have been identified. Further investigation of appropriate projects for the URCP will be subject to Council budget and resource planning to prepare project bids for future grant programs.	N/A
2	Active transport bridge/s plan	Various Victorian Government agencies	There are five bridge crossings identified in the Council endorsed Moonee Ponds Creek Strategic Opportunities Plan 2019 and draft Macaulay Structure Plan 2021.	Victorian Government (lead agency undetermined).	Macaulay Structure Plan , Action 36: <i>Develop a prioritisation and delivery plan for two new pedestrian and bicycle crossings of the Moonee Ponds Creek.</i>	Planning for Macaulay and Arden Urban Renewal Areas confirms the strategic need for the Moonee Ponds Creek bridge to improve the walkability and connectivity of the area.	The Moonee Ponds Implementation Plan has been developed by the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) to identify clear delivery pathways for the projects outlined in the Moonee Ponds Creek Strategic Opportunities Plan and to identify a lead Victorian Government agency to coordinate complex land ownership and management within the creek corridor. Council is seeking the immediate release of the Moonee Ponds Creek Implementation Plan to provide transparency on project delivery pathways and to establish a coordinated approach to management of government-owned land within the creek corridor.	The City of Melbourne will prepare high level concept designs and costings for two bridge crossings to prioritise discussions with the Victorian Government around funding and delivery.	Victorian Government State and/or Commonwealth grant opportunity
3	Macaulay Development Contributions Plan controls	Various	Macaulay Structure Plan urban renewal area	Minister for Planning	Future Melbourne Committee resolved on 14 June 2022 to seek authorisation from the Minister for Planning to prepare and exhibit Amendment C417 which implements the Macaulay Structure Plan 2021.	The draft Macaulay Developer Contributions Plan (DCP) identifies and allocates funding required from developers towards essential infrastructure, including drainage, community facilities, open space and street upgrades. This includes public realm projects that will improve the Moonee Ponds Creek, such as Macaulay Terraces, Bent Street Access and new open space at the rear of Stubbs Street.	Planning Scheme Amendment C417 has been prepared by the City of Melbourne to implement the land use and built form objectives of the Macaulay Structure Plan. Changes to the Melbourne Planning Scheme include Schedule 2 to the Development Contributions Plan Overlay (DCPO2) to implement the DCP.	Amendment C417 which includes the draft DCP is awaiting authorisation from the Minister for Planning.	Macaulay Development Contributions Plan
4	VicTrack land transfer or community lease	VicTrack	341-343 Macaulay Road comprises three parcels of land: Lot 110 Lot 72 1\TP962951	City of Melbourne	Macaulay Structure Plan, Objective 13: <i>Create a network of high-quality open spaces in Macaulay</i>	VicTrack is the nominal landowner of large portions of land adjacent Moonee Ponds Creek, which have been identified as sites that have the potential to enhance access points and promote passive recreation along the western bank. It is proposed that this could be delivered through a community lease agreement (short term) or a land transfer (long term) with VicTrack.	The Council endorsed Moonee Ponds Creek Strategic Opportunities Plan 2019 identifies the Bent Street Access project (OS6). This was following consultation and feedback from the Kensington community around the need for improved access to the western embankment of the creek to improve opportunities for passive recreation. In 2019 the City of Melbourne applied for a community lease for Lot 110 and Lot 72. Following a number of delays, VicTrack responded in 2022 advising that Lot 72 is unavailable and that Lot 110 is not available	As part of the draft Macaulay Development Contribution Plan the City of Melbourne reprepared high level design concepts and costings for the Bent Street Access project. More detailed site investigations and further information from VicTrack is required to inform whether Council would want to consider a land transfer, including engagement with various key Victorian Government stakeholders to understand their	Dependent on negotiations with VicTrack as the land manager

							for community lease and a land transfer would be subject to further review and investigation.	role and timing in the delivering necessary water management infrastructure.	
5	Chelmsford Street local park	City of Melbourne	70-90 Chelmsford Street, Kensington	City of Melbourne	Action 58 of the Macaulay Structure Plan includes: <i>Deliver new public open space adjacent to the Moonee Ponds Creek corridor incorporating integrated water management within Stubbs and Chelmsford precincts</i>	The construction of the new Chelmsford Street open space responds to the need for three new local open spaces adjacent to the Moonee Ponds Creek corridor to support improved pedestrian access to revitalised creek environs.	In 2021 Council purchased 70-90 Chelmsford Street, Kensington for the purpose of delivering a new public open space. The site currently has a large warehouse building which will need to be demolished to create 3600m ² of new public open space.	The first stage of community engagement to seek feedback on the draft vision and opportunities for the project was completed in January 2024. The next stage of engagement will be undertaken on a draft concept plan in early 2024, with the final concept plan to be endorsed by Council mid-2024. Construction of the park planned to commence in 2025. Further updates of the project will be provided via the projects Participate Melbourne website .	City of Melbourne
6	Arden integrated stormwater management open space	Department of Transport and Planning	Arden North	Development Victoria are leading the delivery of Arden on behalf of the Department of Transport and Planning.	Arden Structure Plan, Strategies 21.3, 21.5, 21.6, 21.8 and Arden Development Contributions Plan June (Amended Dec 2023)	The Arden Structure Plan identifies three areas of open space which will provide integrated stormwater management. This is land that will be used as a retarding basin to store flood waters during periods of heavy rainfall. These spaces will be constructed to provide for ancillary sporting reserve or local park function.	Amendment C407 to the Melbourne Planning Scheme was approved by the Minister for Planning on 28 July 2022. The Amendment includes the Arden Structure Plan and Development Contributions Plan.	Development Victoria are leading the delivery of the first stage of precinct development, which will focus on the 14ha of Victorian Government owned land surrounding the new Arden Station, which is currently under construction as part of the Metro Tunnel Project, due for completion in 2025. Updates on the progress of the Arden project are provided via Development Victoria's dedicated project website .	Victorian Government
7	Creek hard rubbish and litter collection program	Melbourne Water is responsible authority for waterway health.	Lower reaches of the Moonee Ponds Creek	Ocean Crusaders in partnership with the Chain of Ponds Collaboration Group and Greater Western Water.	Through the 2023/24 annual budget process the City of Melbourne is supporting the Ocean Crusaders litter collection program with a \$50,000 grant which includes installation of the Automatic River Cleaner from October 2023 to April 2024, and a number of community events.	The lower reaches of the Moonee Ponds Creek are subject to litter flowing from the entire catchment. To build awareness around the litter problem, the trial will be supported with community education and clean-up events.	The Automatic River Cleaner named "Geoff" was installed downstream from Arden Street in October 2023. This litter removal program saw approximately 1.5 tonne of material in the lower estuary removed. The Ocean Crusaders are collecting data on the litter removed from Moonee Ponds Creek, to help guide source reduction tactics upstream, advocate for greater investment in litter collection and change in waste management and production policies.	Community clean-up events are ongoing and community education material is expected to be completed by August 2024. Information on upcoming events can be found from the Chain of Ponds Collaboration Group website or Ocean Crusaders website .	State and/or Commonwealth grant opportunity
8	Moonee Ponds Creek Implementation Plan (MPCIP)	Various	Whole of creek corridor	The Department of Transport and Planning	The Moonee Ponds Creek Implementation Plan has been developed by the Victorian Planning Authority as part of a Ministerial commitment made in 2018 to address the mitigation works for the West Gate Tunnel Project.	The Moonee Ponds Creek Implementation Plan seeks to identify clear delivery pathways for projects outlined in the Council endorsed Moonee Ponds Creek Strategic Opportunities Plan, and to identify a lead agency within the Victorian Government to coordinate complex land ownership and management with the creek corridor.	The finalisation and public release of the Implementation Plan has been subject to a number of delays, including to ensure it aligned with the Waterways of the West Actions Plan, which was released by DELWP in December 2021. In January 2023, Council wrote to the Minister for Planning to seek the immediate release of the Implementation Plan to provide transparency on project delivery pathways and to establish a coordinated approach to management of government owner land within the creek corridor.	The City of Melbourne is awaiting an update from the Department of Transport and Planning on the timing of its finalisation and release. The City of Melbourne will continue to advocate to the Victorian Government for the immediate release of the Implementation Plan.	N/A

9	West Gate Tunnel Project local trees replacement	Various	Various	West Gate Tunnel Project (WGTP), Major Roads Projects Victoria on behalf of the Victorian Government.	The West Gate Tunnel Project is authorised under the Major Transport Project Facilitation Act and has approval via Planning Scheme Amendment GC93.	The construction of the West Gate Tunnel Project has resulted in the removal of a significant number of trees, within Docklands and West Melbourne.	City of Melbourne (CoM) has been advocating for better tree replacement outcomes to offset the impact of tree removals. The Victorian Government has previously committed to providing a tree replacement ratio of 5:1 within the municipality. The approved project landscape plans do not deliver the 5:1 replacement ratio in CoM.	To date there has been little substantive progress on how the significant shortfall in tree planting numbers will be met. Discussion with WGTP, Major Roads Project Victoria is ongoing. With project completion by end 2025 it is critical that this matter is resolved to ensure that detailed planning can commence to deliver the 5:1 tree replacement.	West Gate Tunnel Project
10	Trail Reinstatement in Docklands	Property owners: Victorian Government Occupiers: Docklands Studios Melbourne Pty Ltd	458-490 Docklands Drive, Docklands	Development Victoria	No identified delivery pathway.	In 2019, the lower section of the Moonee Ponds Creek trail was closed due to construction of the Docklands Studios Melbourne (DSM) expansion, which was delivered on behalf of the Victorian Government by Development Victoria (DV). This development severed access to the creek and the off-road recreational link south of the O'Brien Icehouse to Ron Barassi Senior Park. While DV has previously agreed to investigate trail reinstatement options, DV does not have a preferred option or dedicated funding to deliver the trail.	The closure of the trail and lack of certainty around when it will re-open has been a source of growing concern and frustration for the community, including the Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek and the Chain of Ponds Collaboration Group. At Future Melbourne Committee on 8 November 2022, Council resolved to request DV and the Responsible Minister to articulate a process and date by which the Moonee Ponds Creek trail will be reopened. In January 2023, Council wrote to DV and the Responsible Minister requesting they outline a process and timeframe by which the trail will be re-instated. The City of Melbourne has developed a series of high level concept design options and indicative costings to assist DV consider funding and delivery pathways.	The City of Melbourne continues to advocate for DV to progress the trail reinstatement options and costings, to undertake further stakeholder and community engagement to identify the preferred option. Reinstatement of the path is a priority advocacy project for the Chain of Ponds Collaboration Group.	Victorian Government
11	Pumping Station Upgrades	Various	Various	Melbourne Water	Arden Macaulay Precinct Flood Management Strategy (2021)	The Arden Macaulay Precinct Flood Management Strategy (2021) identifies the need for upgrades to six pump stations and a new pump station within Arden Central. The pump stations are required when the flood level of Moonee Pond Creek exceeds the flood level of the local drainage system, meaning that the local drainage system's conventional gravity outlets to Moonee Ponds Creek are not able to discharge local catchment flows into the creek.	The Macaulay draft DCP and Arden DCP are the mechanisms to collect financial contributions from developers to contribute towards the construction of infrastructure identified in the DCP's. Melbourne Water is working to explore alternative funding mechanisms for major flooding and drainage infrastructure that had been identified for funding under the Urban Renewal Cost Recovery Scheme.	The pump stations are a component of the overall drainage strategy to allow the redevelopment of the Arden and Macaulay precincts, while achieving an appropriate level of service for drainage based on 2100 climate condition scenarios. The Arden Macaulay Precinct Flood Management Strategy (2021) includes a preliminary staging plan developed by Melbourne Water to indicate the sequencing of delivery of the components of the drainage strategy	Arden and Macaulay Development Contributions Plans and future Melbourne Water funding mechanism.
12	West Gate Tunnel Project New Bridge Locations and Veloway Design	Various	Various	Major Roads Projects Victoria on behalf of the Victorian Government	The West Gate Tunnel Project is authorised under the Major Transport Project Facilitation Act and has approval via Planning Scheme Amendment GC93.	The bridge structures are: 1. Road bridge north of Dynon Rd - Connection ramp between Dynon Rd and Wurundjeri Way extension. 2. Shared user path bridge over Moonee Ponds Creek south of Dynon Road. 3. Road bridge between Footscray Road and Dynon Road – connects new Footscray Road elevated road with Dynon Road and Wurundjeri Way extension.	The bridge structures have been approved by Major Roads Projects Victoria in line with project processes. The construction of a number of new elevated road bridges, ramps and shared user path bridges within the creek corridor has been underway for some time. A landscape plan has been approved generally between Footscray Road and Dynon Road, including a new park on west side of the creek north of Footscray Road.	It is expected that all bridges will progress towards completion over the course of 2024 with project opening by end 2025. See status below – 1. Road bridge north of Dynon Road - Substantially complete 2. Shared user path bridge over Moonee Ponds Creek south of Dynon Road - Substantially complete	West Gate Tunnel Project

						<p>4. Veloway – elevated high speed cycling route from Shepherds Bridge to west side of Moonee Ponds Creek.</p> <p>5. Shared user path bridge over Moonee Ponds Creek south of Footscray Road.</p>		<p>3.Road bridge between Footscray Road and Dynon Road - Substantially complete</p> <p>4. Veloway - Design is currently in the final stages of review. Construction programmed to commence in April 2024.</p> <p>5. Shared user path bridge over Moonee Ponds Creek south of Footscray Road - Construction commenced.</p>	
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Baseline

In 2019, Council endorsed the Moonee Ponds Creek Strategic Opportunities Plan (MPCSOP), which identifies a number of key projects to improve the creek and its environs.

The Moonee Ponds Creek Implementation Plan (MPCIP) was developed by the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) as part of a Ministerial commitment made in 2018, to address the mitigation works to the West Gate Tunnel project. The MPCIP seeks to identify clear delivery pathways for the projects outlined in the MPCSOP.

The MPCIP has not been publicly released by the Victorian Government following various delays since 2019.

In 2019, the lower section of the Moonee Ponds Creek trail was closed due to construction of the Docklands Studio Melbourne expansion, which was delivered by Development Victoria (DV) on behalf of the Victorian Government. This development severed access to the creek, and the shared path between the O'Brien Icehouse and Ron Barassi Park in Docklands.

While DV had previously agreed to investigate trail re-instatement options, DV does not have a preferred option or dedicated funding to re-instate the trail in Docklands.

Advocacy goal

To secure a governance and funding pathway to deliver Moonee Ponds Creek corridor transformation and restoring its ecological, cultural and recreational values.

Advocacy outcomes

- 1. The immediate release of the Moonee Ponds Creek Implementation Plan (MPCIP).** The MPCIP is critical in providing an endorsed Victorian Government position that identifies lead government agencies, delivery pathways for the projects identified in the Council endorsed Moonee Ponds Creek Strategic Opportunities Plan 2019, and short, medium and long term priorities for implementation.
- 2. Appointment of a lead Victorian Government Department or Agency to coordinate governance of the creek corridor, including State and Federal funding bids and grant applications.** This is required to support the delivery of the MPCIP by resolving the fragmented government land ownership along the creek corridor and providing a coordination point for the development of grant funding applications.
- 3. Commitment from Victorian Government to fund and deliver the re-instatement of the Moonee Ponds Creek trail in Docklands and construction of two new active transport crossings in Macaulay.** The lack of certainty on funding and timing for reinstatement of the Moonee Ponds Creek trail in Docklands by Development Victoria is a source of growing community concern. The creek crossings identified in the MPCSOP and the draft Macaulay Structure Plan are needed to support the renewal plans for the Macaulay urban renewal area and require multi-agency coordination and support.

