

AMENDMENT - HUME PLANNING SCHEMES
PRECINCT STRUCTURE PLAN
CRAIGIEBURN WEST

SUBMISSION TO VICTORIAN PLANNING AUTHORITY

SUBMISSION BY THE MERRI CREEK MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE



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December 2020

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This submission is made by the Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC).

MCMC has reviewed the Amendment documents and Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) for Craigieburn West. The precinct includes the upper headwaters of Aitken Creek, a tributary of Merri Creek, and significant areas of biodiversity and landscape value.

MCMC's comments are focused on waterway health, and biodiversity values.

2.0 MERRI CREEK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE INC

2.1 Background

The Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) is an environmental coordination and management agency formed in 1989 to achieve the shared vision for the Creek held by the stakeholders in the Merri Creek catchment.

MCMC is an incorporated association whose members include all of the municipalities in the catchment, namely: the Darebin, Hume, Moreland, Whittlesea and Yarra City Councils plus Mitchell Shire Council; the Friends of Merri Creek and the Wallan Environment Group. Representatives of these member groups form a Committee of Management which guides the Committee's activities.

The primary purpose of the Merri Creek Management Committee is:

"...to ensure the preservation of natural and cultural heritage, and the ecologically sensitive restoration, development and maintenance of the Merri Creek and tributaries, their corridors and associated ecological communities"

2.2 Merri Creek and Environs Strategy

A key policy document for the MCMC is the 'Merri Creek and Environs Strategy 2009-2014'. The Merri Creek and Environs Strategy is a document intended to give direction to managers of the waterway corridors of the Merri catchment. As the title indicates, it has a strategic intent; however it also captures some important, often site-specific actions, which underpin its strategic direction.

All six Councils in the Merri catchment have formally adopted/endorsed the Merri Creek and Environs Strategy at Council meetings.

The vision in the Strategy for the Merri catchment waterway corridors is

"To achieve healthy living streams flowing through attractive environments which provide habitat for native animals and are valued by the community as peaceful, passive open space havens. To protect the natural and cultural features of the Merri catchment waterway corridors through sensitive management which will provide a lasting benefit for the community."

An addendum to the Strategy was produced in 2013 to specifically address issues associated with the designation of large areas of the upper catchment for urban growth and the inclusion of Wallan and environs within the urban growth boundary.

2.3 Familiarity with the PSP area

MCMC is familiar with the Merri Creek catchment, the Merri Creek and its major tributaries, and its key natural values. MCMC's knowledge includes specific experience of management of on-ground biodiversity and natural areas, experience in strategic planning for waterway and

biodiversity values, a comprehensive understanding of the impacts of urban development on biodiversity and waterway values, and a clear understanding of the benefits of waterways and open space to urban communities.

3.0 SPECIFIC COMMENTS

3.1 Tree Retention

MCMC is pleased to see the effort made to protect a significant number of the indigenous trees outside Biodiversity Conservation Area 29 by incorporating them into the proposed Local Parks and the Green Link (Linear Park).

We strongly support this proposal.

We also urge the PSP to go further than this and commit to protection of additional indigenous trees within public open space and the public realm.

3.2 Green Links

Additional green links are needed to ensure conservation areas are less landlocked and to allow fauna movement and encourage flora and fauna genetic exchange across and beyond the PSP.

We urge investigation into the potential for additional green links to enhance fauna movement and genetic exchange.

3.3 Fauna sensitive road bridges

Roads/bridges crossings over waterways should be explicitly designed to allow fauna to move along waterways/drainage lines.

3.4 Biodiversity Conservation Area 29

There is scope to re-orient BCA 29 and any associated local parks to pick up trees and significant indigenous vegetation closer to Mickleham Rd and potentially to provide a biodiversity link into the non-UGZ land to the west.

Note that Plan 4 says BCS boundary is subject to review and we are aware that the original time-stamping data shows high value vegetation across a wider area than the current BCS 29. This is also shown in the Fig.8 (p.12) of Treetec's Aboriginal Assessment Report.

We urge the VPA and Council work with DELWP to optimise the boundaries of BCA 29 to improve the biodiversity function of this area in the context of the wider landscape and potentially establish complementary local parks.

We note the legend in Plan 2 of the PSP lists BCA 29 as being for Growling Grass Frogs. This is surely a mistake.

3.5 G23

We strongly support G23 although think its reference to MNES could be expanded to include matters of state and regional conservation significance.

3.6 Revegetation and enhancement

We note the recommendation of the Beveridge North West Panel Report to include a guideline as follows:

*Where practicable, existing vegetation should be retained, protected and enhanced, and **indigenous revegetation** undertaken to provide habitat and movement corridors for local fauna. [emphasis added]*

The Craigieburn West vegetation guidelines should be reviewed with the aim of including appropriate wording about indigenous revegetation.

3.7 IWM

Our comments in relation to IWM relate particularly to the Aitken Creek subcatchment, a headwater catchment of the Merri.

MCMC believes the IWM targets for the Craigieburn West PSP should be comparable to the rest of the upper Merri which is in a Stormwater Priority Area that requires higher reductions in stormwater flows.

3.8 Sodic and Dispersive Soils

MCMC strongly supports the requirement for Sodic and Dispersive Soils Management Plans in the Schedule to the UGZ and the guidelines and requirements regarding sodic and dispersive soils in the PSP.

We have two recommendations for minor redrafting:

Sodic and dispersive soils management plan

~~For a~~*An application to subdivide land or construct or carry out bulk earthworks must **be accompanied by** a sodic and dispersive soils management plan, prepared by a suitably qualified professional, that describes..*

.....

- *Soils investigation, undertaken by a **certified professional** soil scientist*

An appropriate planning control is also needed for any non-UGZ land.