

MARIBYRNONG RIVER VALLEY

A SHARED VISION FOR A VIBRANT RIVER

APRIL 2010



MINISTER'S FOREWORD

The Maribyrnong River is one of Melbourne's most loved and well-used rivers.

Thousands of Melburnians spend time relaxing along it every day – from its source above the Organ Pipes National Park through the suburbs of Keilor, Essendon, Footscray and Yarraville to where it meets the Yarra River near the West Gate Bridge.

Coordinated planning is essential to protect and enhance the Maribyrnong River's natural and built environment for current and future generations.

Maribyrnong River Valley Design Guidelines is an overarching framework to help achieve greater planning consistency along the river valley.

The Guidelines set out a broad vision for a healthy, vibrant river with quality open space, good walking and cycling trails and sensitive development that protects the river's natural and urban features.

Many agencies contributed to the development of these Guidelines: Brimbank, Hume, Maribyrnong, Melbourne and Moonee Valley Councils, the Department of Planning and Community Development, Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water and the Port of Melbourne Corporation.

The Guidelines also contribute to the Government's wider vision for a more liveable, sustainable city, as outlined in the *Melbourne 2030: a planning update – Melbourne @ 5 million*, where people have access to high quality housing, transport, community facilities and open space.

In addition, the Guidelines establish for the first time a Maribyrnong River Valley Coordinating Committee, which will oversee strategic planning along the river valley.

Membership of the committee will include Brimbank, Hume, Maribyrnong, Melbourne and Moonee Valley councils, the Department of Planning and Community Development and Parks Victoria.

By working together we can protect and enhance the special qualities of the Maribyrnong River Valley for everyone, now and into the future.

Justin Madden MLC
Minister for Planning

The Maribyrnong River Valley offers a wide variety of public open space for residents and visitors – from natural bushland, secluded gorges and formal parks to historic wharves, industrial heritage and spectacular views over the Port of Melbourne.

The Maribyrnong River is part of the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people and their ancestors have frequented its banks for at least 40,000 years. The river has also played a significant role in Melbourne's development as a city.

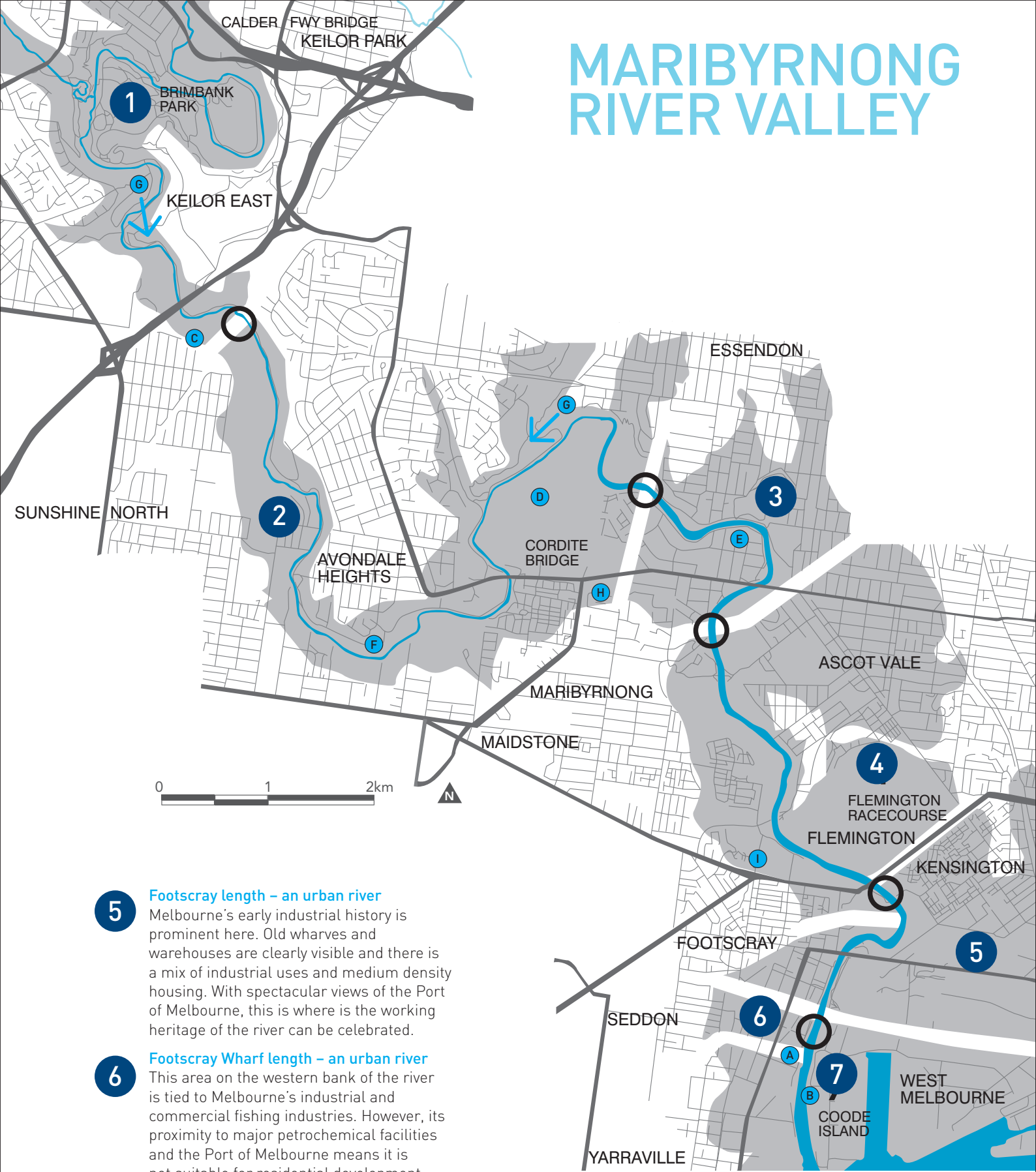
In the second half of the 19th century much of Melbourne's industry was located along the river but since the closure of many factories in the 1960s and 1970s the waterway upstream from the Port is fast becoming a place of recreation and leisure.

Today the Maribyrnong River supports a range of native vegetation and animals. The upper river valley includes native grasslands, escarpment shrublands and woodlands and provides a habitat for a range of mammals and bird species.

Maribyrnong River Valley Design Guidelines focus on the characteristics of the river valley that need to be conserved, repaired or enhanced. To help guide future development, river has been divided into seven sections or 'lengths', each with a preferred character type.

- 1 Brimbank length – a natural river**
The remote character and natural features of this length of the river are its most valuable assets. In terms of future development, there is a need to strike a balance between protecting these natural values and providing facilities for residents and visitors.
- 2 Steele Creek length – a secluded river**
Here the river flows through a steep valley with significant vegetation along its banks including prominent river red gums. It is important to preserve the remote character of this part of the river by ensuring new development is minimised or setback and appropriately landscaped. Redevelopment of sites such as the Defence Site Maribyrnong will allow the creation of significant areas of public open space.
- 3 Maribyrnong length – a suburban river**
This part of the river has a long history of recreation and leisure. There are numerous sporting facilities, formal open parks, picnic areas and cafes in the area. Retaining an active, people-friendly environment will be a priority for this length.
- 4 Racecourse length – river flats**
Here the river opens out into broad river flats. Visible from the water's edge is Flemington Racecourse, the home of Australia's most famous horse race, as well as a range of suburban housing. Future development needs to remain relatively discrete to retain the sense of an open floodplain.

MARIBYRNONG RIVER VALLEY



5 **Footscray length – an urban river**
Melbourne's early industrial history is prominent here. Old wharves and warehouses are clearly visible and there is a mix of industrial uses and medium density housing. With spectacular views of the Port of Melbourne, this is where the working heritage of the river can be celebrated.

6 **Footscray Wharf length – an urban river**
This area on the western bank of the river is tied to Melbourne's industrial and commercial fishing industries. However, its proximity to major petrochemical facilities and the Port of Melbourne means it is not suitable for residential development. Its future is likely to include some public access to the river and redevelopment as a commercial marina.

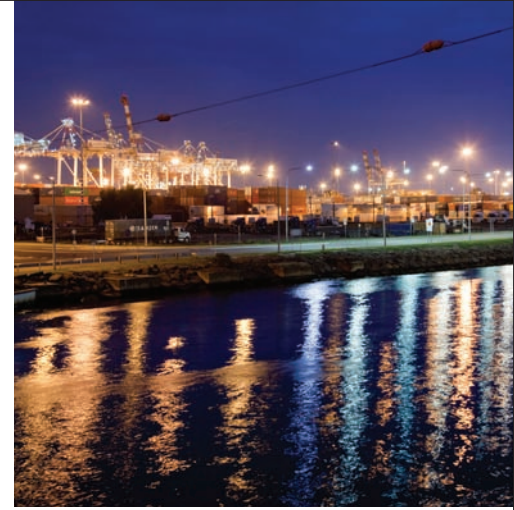
7 **Port length – a working river**
Shipping and heavy industrial activities define and dominate this part of the river. There is potential for further industrial and commercial development that could include advanced manufacturing, maritime and service industries that have a strategic need to be near the Port of Melbourne.

Map key

- 6 River length
- Primary study area
- River channel
- Transition points between river lengths
- A Priorities for action



‘A healthy river flowing through a continuous network of open spaces and cultural landscapes that reflect its journey from a natural river to a working river. A river that provides a range of recreation experiences that value local landform and landscape character and preserve cultural heritage, including significant plantings. A river that supports indigenous vegetation and fauna.’



PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

The following is a summary of high priority actions for achieving the vision and preserving and enhancing the preferred character of the Maribyrnong River. These priority actions are for the river valley from the Organ Pipes National Park through to the river mouth near the West Gate Bridge. This includes areas upstream of the current Urban Growth Boundary called the Hume and Brimbank Green Wedges. Some actions are already underway but most will commence over the next five years.

IMPROVING RIVER GOVERNANCE

To achieve the vision and broad objectives outlined in the *Maribyrnong River Valley Design Guidelines*, a coordinated governance structure for the river valley will be established as a two-year trial.

Membership of the new Maribyrnong River Valley Coordinating Committee will include Brimbank, Hume, Maribyrnong, Melbourne and Moonee Valley councils, the Department of Planning and Community Development and Parks Victoria.

Although individual projects will remain the responsibility of each agency, the committee will oversee the planning of all priority actions on public and private land along the river valley.

The committee will provide a forum for local councils and relevant government agencies to work together on strategic planning for the river valley, ensure consistent and effective planning controls, seek funding from a range of sources and drive consistent public land management.

The Maribyrnong River Valley Coordinating Committee will also improve community awareness by developing a comprehensive website and promotional materials about the river's attractions, environmental heritage and history.

ENLARGING THE OPEN SPACE CORRIDOR

One of the major aims of these Guidelines is to maximise the amount of public open space along the Maribyrnong River and provide a consistent framework for how it should be managed. Actions include:

> **Creating linked parkland along the river** – further residential development in the upper reaches of the river valley will be avoided and funding sought to acquire suitable areas for public open space.

> **Enhancing public amenity at Footscray Wharf **A** and the Port of Melbourne **B**** – work is being carried out on a non-riverfront path linking the Maribyrnong Trail with the Bay Trail. Options for maximising views of the Port of Melbourne's Swanson Dock are being explored.

> **Investigating an Upper Maribyrnong Linear Park** – work will be carried out to determine the boundaries of a proposed Upper Maribyrnong River Linear Park as part of the Green Wedge Management Plans, currently being prepared by Hume and Brimbank City Councils.

> **Undertaking strategic planning in Sunshine North **C**** – detailed planning has been undertaken between Orbital Drive and Balfour Avenue, Sunshine North to establish preferred land uses and identify areas of open space and native vegetation to be protected.

> **Completing detailed planning for the Defence Site Maribyrnong **D**** – following handover of this site to the Victorian Government, an integrated landscape and development strategy will be prepared that ensures public open space is set aside along the entire length of the river corridor.

IMPROVING PRECINCT PLANNING

There are a number of critical locations along the Maribyrnong River where more detailed, integrated planning is required to improve access and amenity. Actions include:

> **Ensuring nodes of activity complement the river environment** – nodes of activity such as small-scale cafes and visitor facilities will be encouraged where they complement the local environment and create a direct relationship with the river.

> **Creating points of transition between river lengths** – clear transitions between each river length will be designed to create an abrupt but artful change of character, rather than having long sections of gradual change where the character is unclear.

> **Improving parkland along the river** – masterplans will be developed to improve planting and facilities at several undeveloped areas of parkland along the river including: land along Chifley Drive **E**; river frontage between Waterford Green and the rock ford **F**; and open space between Afton Street and Brimbank Park. **G**



UNDERTAKING NEW CAPITAL WORKS

Works are required along the Maribyrnong River to improve recreational use and enjoyment. Actions include:

> **Improving trails and related infrastructure** – funding will be sought to complete works on both sides of the river to create a continuous trail along the water’s edge. However, alternative links will be created near the Port of Melbourne and in a small part of Ascot Vale where there is private housing on the river’s edge.

> **Upgrading river-based infrastructure** – funding will be sought for new pedestrian and cycling crossings over the river, side trails to attractions such as Highpoint Shopping Centre **H** and Victoria University **U** and consistent signage. Other new facilities will also be installed such as seats, shade, lighting, drinking fountains, toilets, bicycle parking and boat, canoe and kayak landing points.

AMENDING PLANNING CONTROLS

Giving effect to the design guidelines recommended by the *Maribyrnong River Valley Design Guidelines* requires specifically drafted overlay provisions in local planning schemes.

The Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO) is the most appropriate planning mechanism to use as it will ensure a broad range of actions that may threaten the river valley are subject to permit approval. However, an ESO also allows for local circumstances to be taken into account in all planning decisions.

The *Maribyrnong River Valley Design Guidelines* will be introduced as a reference document into all relevant planning schemes and reflected in council Municipal Strategic Statements. The design guidelines component and other key elements of the report will be used to develop the schedules to the ESOs.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Coordinated planning is essential to protect and enhance the Maribyrnong River Valley’s natural and built environment for current and future generations.

Maribyrnong River Valley Design Guidelines includes a set of 22 design guidelines to improve clarity and certainty for planners, public land managers and developers.

These design guidelines aim to achieve planning consistency for both private and public land along the river’s urban length downstream of the Urban Growth Boundary. They will also benefit the wider community who enjoy the river valley for leisure and recreation.

The main purpose of the 22 design guidelines is to protect open space and guide development along the river, as well as expand and link existing parkland, walking paths and cycling trails.

These design guidelines will also reinforce the preferred character of the seven river lengths and provide direction on:

- > Additional open space
- > Open space management (landscape)
- > Open space management (access)
- > Landform
- > Urban development interface
- > Site layout and building visibility
- > Building design
- > Infrastructure design.

