

Gardiners Creek (KooyongKoot) Regional Collaboration

Working together to protect and enhance the Gardiners Creek (KooyongKoot) catchment



The Gardiners Creek Regional Collaboration acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and original custodians of this land, and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

Gardiners Creek (KooyongKoot) Regional Collaboration

The Gardiners Creek (KooyongKoot) Regional Collaboration (G.C.R.C.) is an alliance of organisations and groups working together to protect and enhance the Gardiners Creek catchment. This document explains our vision and objectives, who we are, how we are going to work together and some of the projects and programs that we are going to work on in the immediate future.

The Gardiners Creek (KooyongKoot) catchment, located in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, has a vital environmental, community, cultural, social and recreational value. It's a green reprieve, a place of play and exercise, and community connection. It is the traditional land of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.

We are dedicated to ensuring we do not lose what makes the catchment special, as a space rich in biodiversity that brings people together in a range of community, environmental, cultural, social and recreational activities.



Gardiners Creek Catchment

Location

The Gardiners Creek catchment covers 112 square kilometres and spans across much of the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Its area includes large parts of the local government areas of Boroondara, Monash, Stonnington, Whitehorse and a small part of Glen Eira.

Gardiners Creek itself originates near Blackburn and flows through Burwood and Malvern East then alongside the Monash Freeway to the Yarra River (Birrarung), of which it is a tributary. Major tributaries include Scotchmans, Back and Damper creeks.



The catchment has significant impact on the quality and health of the Yarra River (Birrarung) and in turn Port Phillip Bay. Melbourne Water is the waterway manager and Catchment Management Authority, with Yarra Valley Water responsible for operational delivery of water services and sewerage in the catchment.

Traditional Owners

The catchment is the traditional land of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people. Gardiners Creek was originally known as KooyongKoot, meaning 'Land of the Waterfowl'. It was a source of vegetation used for food, tools and medicine by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung. The Collaboration recognise that the Traditional Owners have a key role in the management of KooyongKoot, and KooyongKoot is a place where we collectively celebrate and care for Country.

Biodiversity

The catchment contains biodiversity hotspots, including areas of remnant original habitat but they are fragmented islands without effective connection. The general ecological state is poor. There is declining canopy and understory coverage. The councils in the area, Melbourne Water and the large number of friends groups have long been actively involved in ecological restoration.

Recreation and Wellbeing

The catchment provides a significant open space network containing parks, reserves and sports grounds that provide recreation, exercise, events and activities including both organized team sports and informal activities like walking and cycling, the latter case not just for recreation but also for transport. These activities have an important community strengthening as well as health benefit.

Current Challenges and Opportunities

The catchment is impacted by continuing water quality and pollution issues as a result of the urbanisation in the region and the resulting changes to the stormwater flows. Implementing integrated water management is essential. There is a need to enhance and protect the catchment in response to densification and climate change. Restoring and maintaining the vegetation, increasing green space and increasing canopy cover is essential in combating the Urban Heat Island effect in the suburbs, as well as supporting biodiversity and the wellbeing of local community, through connection to nature and for recreation. However, increased densification and recreational use due to population growth, is putting growing pressure on the benefits that the catchment provides.

The Need for Collaboration

Catchments go beyond single Council or other organisational boundaries. To enhance and protect the catchment we need to take a collaborative, holistic approach and a commitment to work together on a regional, catchment scale.

To protect and enhance the catchment needs diverse representation and action from those that use and interact with it. Not just Councils, water authorities and friends' groups but tertiary education institutions and organisations representing the valued active and passive recreational uses that occur in the catchment including cycling and sporting clubs. Collaboration, with genuine and meaningful public participation, brings communities together and builds collective ownership.

A regional collaboration also enables effective engagement with major regional projects.



Our Vision

The following is the shared long-term vision agreed to by members of the Collaboration:

- KooyongKoot and its catchment is protected, valued and loved, supporting diverse uses and thriving biodiversity.
- As custodians of our natural environment, Traditional Owners play a key role in its management.
- Community and all stakeholders are working together to heal, strengthen and ensure the resilience of KooyongKoot and its catchment.

Our Objectives

The following are the objectives agreed to by members of the Collaboration:

- 1 Traditional Owners have a key role in the management of KooyongKoot, and KooyongKoot is a place where we collectively celebrate Country.
- 2 Protect sensitive environmental areas, enhance and expand biodiversity, habitat and bio-links along the creek corridors.
- 3 Promote consistent and collaborative planning across the catchment, recognising that impacts go beyond catchment borders.
- 4 Enable climate resilience.
- 5 Improve water efficiency, water quality and water management.
- 6 Enable diverse recreational uses to support health and wellbeing, community connection and environmental protection.
- 7 Encourage sustainable transport use within the catchment.
- 8 Preserve and expand green space.
- 9 Celebrate culture and heritage.
- 10 Connect people to nature.
- 11 Advocate to protect and enhance the ecological and social values of the catchment.
- 12 Manage expectations and encourage harmony between different stakeholders.
- 13 Encourage innovation and sharing of research and learning by community, education, corporate and public sectors.



How We Got Here

The Collaboration has been developed via a co-design process during 2021 and 2022. Here is our journey and that of the catchment.

Pre-1830s

For many thousands of years, Gardiners Creek (KooyongKoot) was under Aboriginal land management.

1830s onwards

Non-Aboriginal people started arriving in the 1830's.

Flood plains were cleared for farming which led to vegetation loss and introduction of exotic species.

1920s-1950s

After World War I, residential and industrial development occurred.

Water quality declined rapidly.

1960s-1970s

Extensive drainage and sewerage works undertaken by authorities, to improve flood management and water quality.

1980s-2019

Growing awareness of the issues and action by government authorities and community groups to improve the state of the catchment.

2020

Stonnington City Council identify in their Gardiners Creek Masterplan that regional collaboration was essential to protect and enhance the catchment.

Early 2021

Stonnington City Council in partnership with Melbourne Water start exploring with other stakeholders the potential for forming an ongoing regional collaboration.

Late 2021

Visions and objectives for the regional collaboration developed. Boroondara Gardiners Creek Masterplan starts to be developed.

Early 2022

Potential projects and programs and possible governance models for the regional collaboration explored.

Late 2022

Stakeholders confirm governance model and priority initiatives and M.O.U. signing process begins.

Mid 2022

A draft M.O.U. is developed, and the Project Host moves to Boroondara City Council.

Early 2023

Collaboration launches.

Who We Are

We welcome interested stakeholders, organisations and groups to partner with and work with us on improving the catchment for all. The members recognise the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung as Sovereign Owners.

The current members of this collaboration are as follows:



How We Work

Our governance model is a Partnership via Memorandum of Understanding (M.O.U.).

These are our principles of working together for the common good:

- dynamic
- collaborative
- inclusive
- representative of the whole catchment
- accountable
- transparent
- outcome focussed
- encourages participation and engagement.

Where We Plan to Start

Our vision and objectives will be delivered through key projects and programs. Below are some of the projects and programs that we have identified that we are going to focus on in the immediate future. We are seeking to form strategic and/or funding partnerships with different levels of government, business, community, educational and not for profit organisations to support delivery.



- 1 **A Strategic Plan** for the Collaboration to guide the delivery of the objectives cohesively and holistically, by identifying short-, medium- and long-term projects and programs. Particular focus would be biodiversity, climate resilience, coordinated planning, data collection, integrated water management and consideration of other strategies and plans.



- 2 **A Data Strategy and associated data collection program** for the Collaboration. The initial pilot would identify key challenges, followed by core baseline data collection and the development of a longer-term data strategy, including data aggregation and presentation platform.



- 3 **A Cultural Values Study** with Traditional Owners and Custodians to document the cultural values and significance of the Gardiners Creek catchment to them, improving understanding and reducing duplication.



- 4 **Identify regional priorities** for revegetation across the region that develop biodiversity corridors and seek funding for revegetating these sites.



- 5 In conjunction with a broad data program, **undertake a catchment litter and pollution study** to identify key litter and pollution sources and scale. Develop and implement stakeholder and community engagement programs that respond to key issues and that support improvement in water quality, protect and enhance biodiversity and improve the visual aesthetics of the creeks in the catchment.



- 6 Facilitate cross organisational collaboration **to identify and implement solutions to cross organisational challenges** such as:
 - a. points of congestion along the walking and cycling paths
 - b. opportunities for consistency in lighting and signage.



- 7 Working together to consider **improved planning controls and their implementation** and develop a collective advocacy plan.



- 8 **Developing a community engagement program** around catchment health starting with sporting clubs.



Blackburn Lake Sanctuary, at the headwaters of Gardiners Creek

Related Documents

This collaboration aligns and assists achieving the objectives of the:

- Central and Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy
- Water is Life: Traditional Owner Access to Water Roadmap
- Healthy Waterways Strategy (Yarra Catchment) 2018-2028
- Yarra Strategic Directions Statement 2018

And is supported by the:

- Boroondara Gardiners Creek (KooyongKoot) Master Plan 2022-2032
- Stonnington Gardiners Creek (KooyongKoot) Masterplan
- Whitehorse Integrated Water Management Strategy 2022-2042

These documents have been used as sources of information in this prospectus, in addition to the Gardiners and Scotchmans Creeks Waterway Plan (Melbourne Water, 2006).

For more information email:

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