



Australian Institute  
of Landscape Architects  
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Yarra River Protection Program Manager  
Planning Policy Implementation  
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To whom it may concern

**Re: Yarra River (Birrarung) Discussion Paper**

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) Victorian Chapter provides the following submission in response to the *Yarra River (Birrarung) Discussion Paper* prepared by the Ministerial Advisory Committee (Yarra MAC) for the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).

AILA is the peak organization for the landscape architecture profession in Australia and is a growing national advocacy body that promotes over 2,500 active and engaged landscape architects and their crucial role in shaping the world around us. Our membership covers a diverse range of professional services including strategic planning, urban design, building settings, open space design and natural resource management. Landscape architects work across all levels of government and within the private sector. Our profession creates benefits for communities by delivering meaningful landscape design that is adaptive to social and environmental change. We support environmental stewardship through thoughtful leadership in planning, design, construction and management of quality open spaces.

AILA supports the contents of the Discussion Paper and praises the Victorian Government's commitment to protect the Yarra River for future generations. In particular, AILA advocates for an integrated approach to managing the Yarra River that will ensure this significant Victorian landscape is enriched and fostered. The Discussion Paper represents considerable and necessary contributions from the Yarra MAC and interest groups, including the paramount need for a unified vision to guide future responses to the environmental, economic and socio-political challenges for the Yarra River in the context of a changing city.

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AILA would like to see the following elements covered in the Yarra River strategic plan:

- The Yarra should be secured as a public asset, and not privatised (real or perceived) by inappropriate or over-scaled development.
- Preserving and increasing quality public open space along the river should be a priority, as well as providing connectivity and access these spaces. There is a need for broader open space planning across Melbourne, including open spaces along the Yarra. There should be better integration with broader strategic plans (Plan Melbourne and the proposed Melbourne Open Space Strategy).
- Public access to the river should be carefully and creatively designed to 'touch the earth lightly' and not diminish the natural beauty of the Yarra.
- Ecosystem services provided by the river should be celebrated and the value of green infrastructure in creating sustainable, quality, and attractive public open spaces recognised.
- Greater funding commitment for the protection of the river's ecological functions is required.
- Comprehensive masterplans should be developed, which identify opportunities for a multiscale assessment approach for improving the river's amenity and significance.
- The cultural story of the Yarra and how it connects places and people should be reclaimed, elevated and celebrated in public consciousness, through media campaigns and education. Indigenous cultural history is the basis of this story and should inform future management and interpretation of the Yarra. There should be a focus on promoting design proposals that tackle site-specific landscape requirements and opportunities to enable community members to incorporate their knowledge and values.
- Community use and interaction with the river are vital, including a need for broader education about the river's significant values and numerous tourism opportunities, which elevate and highlight the importance of the river.
- Dynamic social activities, which stretch beyond precinct boundaries, should be understood and considered.
- There should be greater consideration and incorporation of research and innovation to inform planning and management decisions, especially in the context of climate change and environmental impacts for the river system. An integrated management plan outlining clear roles and responsibilities of public agencies is essential to sustain the health of the Yarra and its tributaries, including water quality and riparian landscape - from the Yarra's source to the sea.

AILA urges the Yarra MAC to be brave in its protection of the Yarra River and consider the careful management of the river. AILA commends the Minister for Planning on committing to implement stronger and consistent planning policy and controls along the Yarra, but proposes further investment and streamlined governance are needed to improve its overall environmental quality and secure its amenity.



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AILA recommends that aspects of the anticipated Yarra River Protection Act be further developed to ensure that the best outcomes for public interest are achieved under state legislative and regulatory support. We also support a new management model and overseeing body for the Yarra River with the aim of developing a strategic plan and vision for the river,

providing support and advice for existing agencies and service delivery programs, and advocating for priority project funding. In addition, we agreed to the proposal for an independent agency to oversee monitoring and audits to ensure delivery of key objectives as part of the Yarra River Protection Act.

AILA is pleased that the landscape architecture profession and values are represented on the Yarra MAC by Kirsten Bauer, former AILA Victorian state president. We also request AILA's ongoing involvement as a key stakeholder in any future planning and strategy development for the Yarra River. We look forward to seeing more detail and the opportunity to provide further input into future planning for the Yarra River.



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