

## APPENDIX B CONSULTATION, VIEWS AND VALUES

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The *Maribyrnong River Valley Design Guidelines* were originally developed following two workshops held in May 2004, which identified community views and values about the Maribyrnong River Valley.

Participants attended the workshops in response to newspaper advertisements. The consultation sessions took the form of facilitated discussions around questions posed on a series of photographic images. These images were chosen to illustrate a range of locations and development impacts along the river. Images from other rivers or waterways also helped facilitate discussion.

Below is a summary of the feedback from these workshops:

### **A landscape changing for the better**

The river is generally seen to be improving – a number of positive changes were reported. However, there were concerns that despite these positive changes there were still problems.

New housing development was identified as a threat, mainly due to the potential visual impact and associated loss of vegetation.

### **A connection with nature**

Keeping a sense of remoteness in some parts of the river was seen as a good idea by some participants:

*There are some parts of the river where there shouldn't be paths... there needs to be some areas that are hard to get to, because if you make it too easy to get to you will attract vandals, you'll attract idiots.*

People valued the wildlife associated with the river. There was support for the creation of wetlands but a concern about its management.

### **A connection with the past**

The river has a rich history and all participants thought preserving and explaining history was important. Many participants were happy to share their local knowledge. The potential for increased tourism based around heritage assets was raised in both sessions.

### **Landscape**

Most participants felt the landscape along the river should be indigenous but that exotic planting was appropriate where there was a clear justification: heritage, bank stabilisation, and the need for shade. Shade was raised as an issue by a number of participants.

*On really hot days you can walk along there and just boil. There is no shade whatsoever along there. There could be more trees... more shade.*

Views of the river itself are also highly valued and shading should not be at the expense of river views.

## Public space

There was a concern about private access right up to the river and a general belief this should be returned to public ownership when properties were sold.

There were mixed views about the benefit of roads running parallel to the river. While the benefits of roads that give people a chance to enjoy the river were recognised, the need to maintain a quiet and peaceful atmosphere was more highly valued.

The issue of commercial development close to the bank was explored. There was general support for this type of activity in limited places provided it focussed on the river and was generally accessible.

*It's another way to enjoy the river... a community and social gathering place.*

*It's nice to have somewhere you can go that is close to the river with the view.*

## Development

While preserving the natural values of the river was most important to participants, where industrial development had historically been close to the river participants were not opposed to development close to the river.

Concern was expressed that new development was removing vegetation from the valley.

Participants expressed mixed views about development in the river valley. Some participants saw development as an intrusion.

*You've been riding through quite a picturesque [setting] and suddenly you're confronted with a great block of houses and it intrudes on the experience that you have been having.*

Other participants welcomed some development.

*Personally I love it ... but I wouldn't want too much of it I think because of where it is on a hill and because they are white, and the way it is set out. But to have too much of it on the valley sides would not be attractive.*

Certainly no-one advocated for development where there wasn't any at the moment, but not all visible development was considered inappropriate. There was some preference for homogeneity in built form.

There were generally negative views expressed about modern architecture. While taller structures next to the river (certainly on the lower lengths) were not dismissed by participants, there was a concern that such structures fitted some appropriate context – physical or heritage.

## Heritage

Participants valued heritage places along the river.

## Crossings and other infrastructure

It was generally accepted by participants that there was a need for more pedestrian crossings over the river but little support for new road crossings.

Participants also felt there was a need for better facilities and infrastructure such as seats, toilets, and drinking fountains for walkers and cyclists.

## Submissions process

The Minister for Planning released the original consultant report *Maribyrnong River Valley Vision and Design Guidelines*, prepared by IUM and David Mayes Urban Design, on 19 April 2006.

The six week period of public consultation that followed included an information session and public submissions process. A total of 44 submissions were received from members of the public, community groups, private businesses and government agencies.

Copies of all submissions were provided to members of the Project Steering Committee: the Department of Planning and Community Development [formerly Department of Sustainability and Environment], Melbourne, Maribyrnong, Brimbank, Moonee Valley and Hume City Councils, Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water.

The five councils then formally considered the report, together with the submissions, and provided their responses to the Department of Planning and Community Development in July and August 2006.

## Summary of issues raised in submissions

### Policies, design objectives and guidelines

Most submissions expressed support for the general thrust of the policies, design objectives and guidelines. There was a general desire to prevent further development within the valley including the escarpment, particularly in the upper reaches above Solomon's Ford.

While some submissions supported greater clarity and specific performance standards, others noted the need for flexibility to cater for particular circumstances. Some design objectives and guidelines were amended based on feedback received.

### Public access to the river and land ownership

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There was general support for increasing and enhancing public open space along the valley, particularly along the Brimbank escarpment north of the current River Valley Estate development, around Brimbank Park and creating an Upper Maribyrnong Linear Park to link with the Organ Pipes National Park.

The original consultant report recommended investigating and acquiring river front land and/or construction of a pontoon near Woods Street in Ascot Vale to provide continuous public access along this river bank. Residents of Woods Street strongly opposed this proposal on a range of grounds and it has since been discounted as a viable option.

### Vegetation, river health and flooding

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All submissions referring to vegetation and river health supported the report's emphasis on indigenous plantings and the need to protect and enhance habitat – aquatic, riparian and terrestrial.

Issues raised included the noticeable reduction in pollution and the increase in fish populations in the last decade, the importance of regular water quality monitoring, the potential impacts of snag removal on fish breeding, the importance of water sensitive urban design in new developments, the need to prevent sediment runoff and other discharges from building sites and road works, and the need to treat eroded river banks.

A few submissions opposed further residential, commercial or industrial development on the floodplain and further alterations to the floodplain profile. Melbourne Water will continue to work with developers and actively seek opportunities to improve levels of flood protection.

### Public infrastructure

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A linked trail network, including access to surrounding areas and major attractions along or near the river valley, was supported by most submissions. Many submissions included ideas or comments about missing links in trails, suggested improvements to bridge crossings as well as new crossings.

### River Valley Estate

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Submissions from River Valley Estate Pty Ltd and associated consultants referred to the planning process, consultation and decision-making that has occurred over many years, and the fact that 40 per cent of the site is set aside as open space which is to be landscaped and maintained well beyond establishment.

It was also pointed out the land was previously used for quarrying, soil extraction and other industry and there is a need for a return on the investment in rehabilitating this degraded site.

Submissions from residents and community groups expressed concern about the development, suggesting it had destroyed the natural character of this part of the valley, which is seen as a peaceful retreat. Particular impacts mentioned were the loss of vegetation and wildlife, and the impact of construction on water quality and litter.

## Defence Site Maribyrnong

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A number of submissions stressed the significance of this site and the opportunity to set aside a large area as parkland. The vision and guidelines in this report are intended to assist more detailed planning and encourage an integrated approach to redevelopment of this site.

## Footscray Wharf and the Port

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Several submissions from individuals and community groups called for improved public access to the river for fishing, mooring and other activities. When the original consultant report was released, there was contention about the future of the Footscray Wharf.

In late 2006, the Port of Melbourne Corporation and Maribyrnong City Council signed an MoU which resolved the major issues of contention.

## River-based recreational activities

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Several submissions from anglers suggested the report should give more emphasis to recreational angling. There are a number of angling clubs close to the river and access for angling is generally good but several suggestions for improvement were made.

Facilities for launching or beaching of canoes and kayaks at selected points were supported. Parks Victoria's *Water and Land Access Plan* deals with the location of fishing, boating and related facilities in more detail.

## River health

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EPA Victoria drew attention to studies on fish and eel contamination, and a statutory environmental audit of risk to the lower Maribyrnong from industrial processes and activities.

## Governance

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Many submissions expressed strong support for the State Government leading implementation and for ongoing coordination between state and local government agencies through a coordination committee. There was also strong support for a review and protection of heritage sites, including Indigenous history.