

# CHAPTER 07 LIVEABILITY

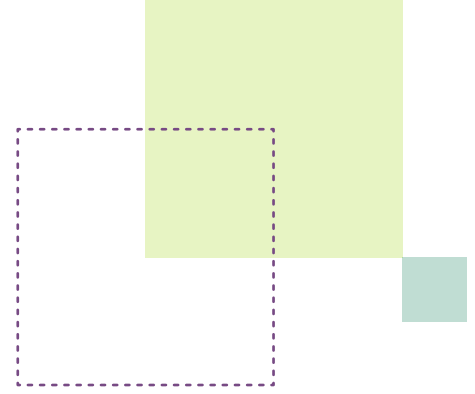


Plan Melbourne Outcome 4:  
Melbourne is a distinctive and  
liveable city with quality design  
and amenity

'Liveability' is about the things that enhance people's quality of life. For many years Melbourne has been regarded as one of the world's most liveable cities due to its social and economic stability, diverse communities, distinctive heritage, high level of amenity and the opportunities it provides for a rich social and cultural life.



Photo credit: Tim Bell Studio



Plan Melbourne aims to maintain and extend the city's liveability by celebrating its culture, diversity and distinctiveness. The challenge ahead is to design and plan for a future city that protects the best aspects of the natural and built environment, supports social and cultural diversity, and creates a strong sense of place.

The Eastern Metro Region is renowned for its distinctive and varied landscapes, which have high amenity, tourism and biodiversity values. The region has high cultural significance for Aboriginal people and a rich post-European settlement heritage. Its regional-scale landscapes and open spaces include the Yarra Ranges and Dandenong Ranges National Parks, the Yarra River (Birrarung) corridor and the Yarra Valley. It is important for these natural and cultural values to be protected into the future.

## State of play

### Landscapes and biodiversity

The Eastern Metro Region is defined by its distinctive landscape of mountains, forests, valleys, rolling green foothills and waterways. These landscapes are intrinsic to the region's identity and have high biodiversity and cultural values. They are protected within the region's three green wedges.

The rural landscapes, waterways and forests of the Eastern Metro Region's green wedges provide highly significant areas of habitat and regional biodiversity. Within urban areas, vital pockets of biodiversity such as Blackburn Lake Sanctuary, Mullum Mullum Valley and Dandenong Valley Parkland, provide habitat for flora and fauna and a sense of escape for residents.

Throughout urban areas, the existing tree canopy, waterways and parklands are defining features and major contributors to its amenity and liveability. These features assist in extending the region's biodiversity links into and throughout the urban area.

Protecting and enhancing these features will also provide residents with a range of benefits, such as urban cooling during heatwaves, reduced stormwater pollution and healthier ecosystems, improved neighbourhood character and aesthetics, and access to areas for social connection and recreation.

The region's key landscapes and biodiversity areas are described in **Table 11**.

### Aboriginal cultural heritage

The lands that now make up the Eastern Metro Region feature places and waterways of cultural significance and continuing connection for Traditional Owners. The Wurundjeri people, represented by Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, are the recognised Traditional Owners for much of the Eastern Metro Region. The Taungurung people, represented by the Taungurung Land and Waters Council, and the Bunurong people, represented by the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, are also Registered Aboriginal Parties within the region, as shown in **Figure 17**.

As Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs), these corporations have responsibilities to protect cultural heritage assets under the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2006*.

The Yarra River is central to the lands of the Wurundjeri people. The *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrnong) Act 2017* sets the foundation for Traditional Owner management of the river and its lands, and delivery on the aspirations of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation's *Nhanbu narrun ba ngargunin twarn Birrarung (Ancient Spirit & Lore of the Yarra)* water policy.

### Heritage and visitor places

Following European settlement of Melbourne, the region was one of the city's early growth areas, due to its attractive, undulating topography, good soils and relatively high rainfall. In the early 20th century, urban development in the region closely followed the Lilydale, Belgrave and Glen Waverley rail corridors. It later radiated out to occupy the remaining available land, stopping at the environmentally sensitive Dandenong Ranges and Upper Yarra Valley, which limit Melbourne's expansion to the east. This early settlement history is identified through a legacy of industrial heritage including timber, brick and tiling industries that evolved around the expanding train network, particularly around the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges. Forestry and agriculture were of great significance in the development of the region, with orchards and farms still operating in the region.

Significant visitor places include the Heide Museum of Modern Art, Puffing Billy Railway and Schwerkolt Cottage Museum. Tourism precincts of Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges include the Warrandyte Township, Healesville, Healesville Railway and Healesville Sanctuary, Puffing Billy Railway, Yarra Ranges Regional Museum, Dandenong Ranges Botanic Garden and William Ricketts Sanctuary. Key visitor places are shown in **Figure 19**.

**TABLE 11. Key landscapes and biodiversity areas in the Eastern Metro Region**

LANDSCAPE AND BIODIVERSITY AREA	SIGNIFICANCE, PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT
<b>Yarra River</b>	The Yarra River is a major environmental, biodiversity and tourism feature of the region, flowing from its source in the state-significant Upper Yarra catchment. <i>The Yarra River Protection (Willip-gin Birrarung Murron) Act 2017</i> declared the river corridor, and many hundreds of parcels of public land it flows through, as 'one living, integrated natural entity' for protection and improvement. The Yarra River corridor is identified in Plan Melbourne as one of the city's most significant networks of water's edge parklands.
<b>Waterways</b>	Many of the region's waterways are tributaries of the Yarra River, including the Watts and O'Shannessy rivers and the Mullum Mullum, Hoddles, Coranderrk, Koonung Koonung, Brushy and Gardiners (Kooyongkoot) creeks. Most of these waterways are now enclosed by parkland corridors and some are part of the region's trail network. Other major waterways are the Dandenong and Scotchmans creeks.
<b>Wetlands</b>	Numerous wetlands exist throughout the region. Many wetlands within rural areas are located on private property and lacking in protection. The Bolin Bolin Billabong in Bulleen, Montpellier Wetland in Ivanhoe, the wetland at Spadonis Bushland Reserve in Yering and Yering Backswamp are key wetlands along the Yarra River corridor.
<b>Dandenong Ranges</b>	The ridgeline of Dandenong Ranges forms the highest point of elevation in metropolitan Melbourne and is a prominent natural landmark on the city's eastern horizon.
<b>Yarra Valley and other rural landscapes</b>	The Dandenong Ranges, Christmas Hills and Warburton Ranges create the backdrop to the Yarra Valley, which is a picturesque and productive agricultural region of state significance. Other parts of the region's green wedge areas comprise rolling open grazing land, densely wooded areas and pleasant rural-residential environments for people who seek to live in semi-rural surroundings.

### Open space and regional trails

The Eastern Metro Region's open space areas, river corridors and wetlands provide places for a diverse range of recreation and leisure experiences, and an opportunity to connect with others and to nature.

The Eastern Metro Region provides for an average of 58.9 square metres of public open space per person, similar to the metropolitan Melbourne average of 57.5 square metres per person. Manningham has the greatest public open space per person at 92.5 square metres while the Whitehorse provides for 36.7 square metres. Approximately 80 per cent of the Eastern Metro Region is within 400 metres of public open space.

Open space per person for the Eastern Metro Region LGAs is shown in **Figure 18**. Open space per person across metropolitan Melbourne is shown in **Figure 19**. While the quantity of open space is one measure of provision, the function, mix, quality, accessibility and proximity of open space also need to be considered.

Open space across the region includes major parklands such as the Yarra Valley Parklands along the Yarra River corridor, the six parklands that make up the Dandenong Valley Parklands along the Dandenong Creek and Lysterfield Park-Churchill National Park. Many of the region's waterways are now enclosed by parkland corridors and some of these form part of the region's trail network. The Dandenong Ranges Botanic Garden, the R J Hamer Arboretum and Pirianda Garden are just a few of the formal public gardens in the region.

Current open space initiatives identified in *Open Space for Everyone: Open Space Strategy for Metropolitan Melbourne 2020* include the designation of the Greater Yarra Urban Parklands along the Yarra River corridor, the creation of the 3,000 hectare Yellingbo Conservation Area, completion of the Healesville Freeway Linear Park Reserve, upgrades to Wattle Park and the Warburton Mountain Bike District project.



The Eastern Metro Region has an extensive network of interconnected trails used by pedestrians and cyclists for commuting and recreation including the Main Yarra Trail, the EastLink Trail, Heathmont to Belgrave Trail, Nunawading to Syndal Creek Trail and Healesville Freeway Reservation Trail (Eastern Regional Trails Strategy, 2018, p. 2).

Construction projects are expected to link and/or extend many of these trails. The Box Hill to Ringwood Rail Trail is proposed to be extended west

of Box Hill Station to Hawthorn Station and east of Ringwood Station to Croydon Station, to link up with the Carrum to Warburton Trail. Upgrades to the Glen Waverley Rail Trail are proposed to close the gaps around Jordanville, Mount Waverley and Glen Waverley stations.

Work is currently underway to build the Yarra Valley Trail. This will link Lilydale, Yarra Glen and Healesville and join into the Lilydale to Warburton Rail Trail, creating a valley-wide loop.

**FIGURE 17. Eastern Metro Region Aboriginal cultural heritage**

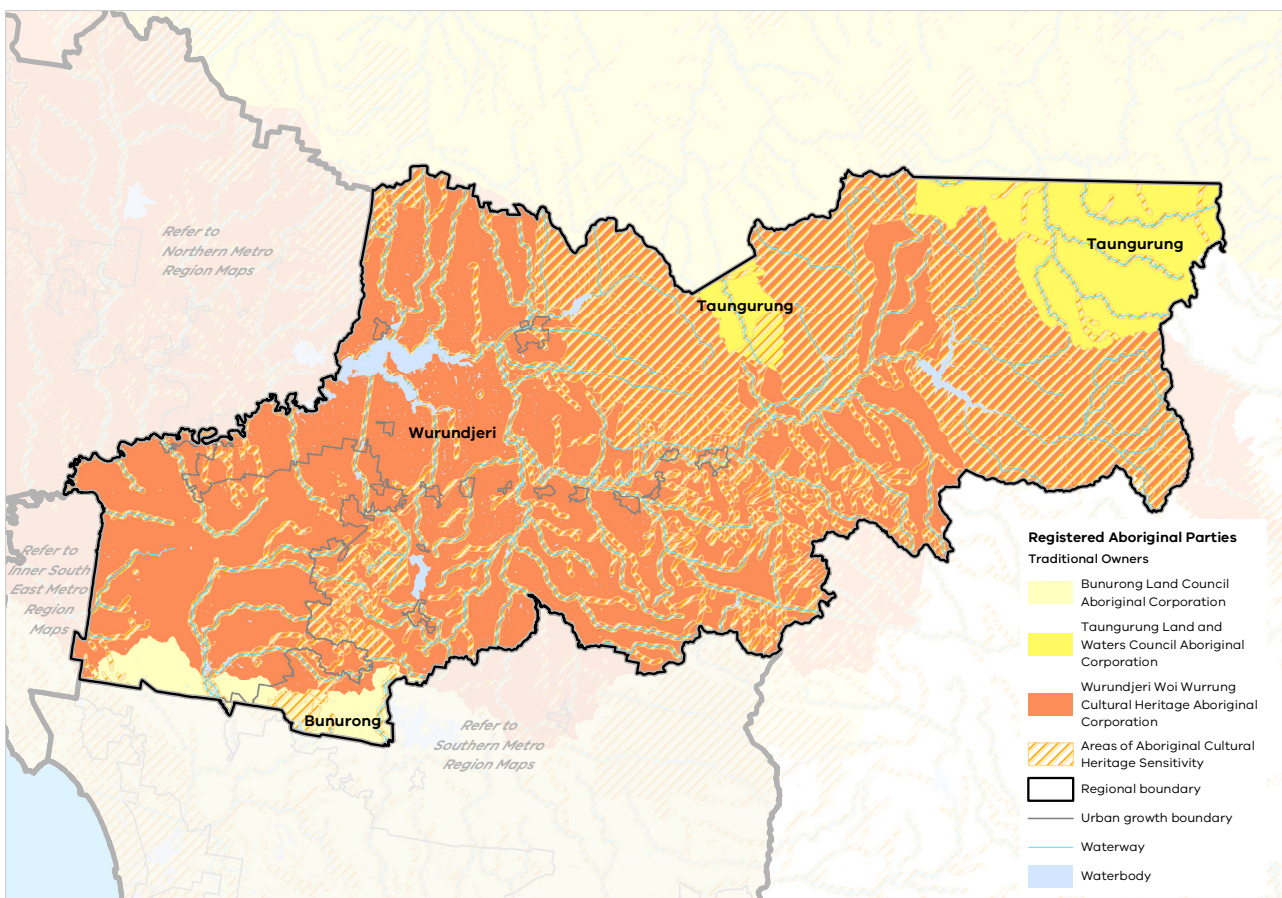
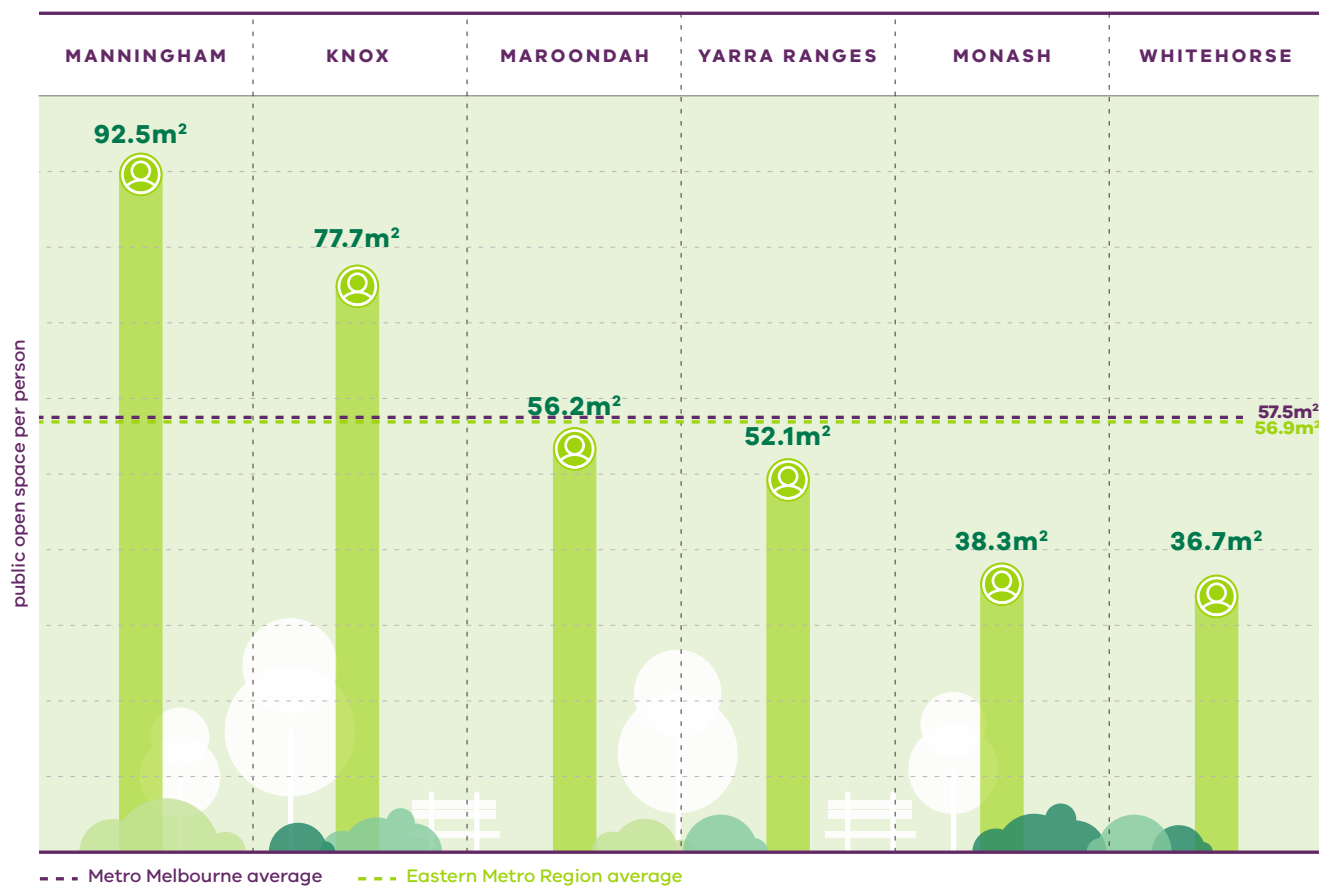




FIGURE 18. Open space per person for Eastern Metro Region LGAs



Source: Victorian Planning Authority (2017) Metropolitan Open Space Network: Provision and Distribution, State of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia.

### Regional strengths

- There are opportunities for Traditional Owners to play a greater role in the protection and management of the region’s landscapes and biodiversity.
- The Eastern Metro Region benefits from extensive open space and recreational trails – opportunities exist to expand this network and fill in gaps.
- The region’s waterways, including the Yarra River, present opportunities for improvement as the spines of an integrated open space network.
- Green boulevards are a key feature of many of the region’s urban areas and new boulevards can be created to further enhance its sense of place.

### Regional challenges

- Areas of heritage, landscape and biodiversity value must be protected from the impacts of development.

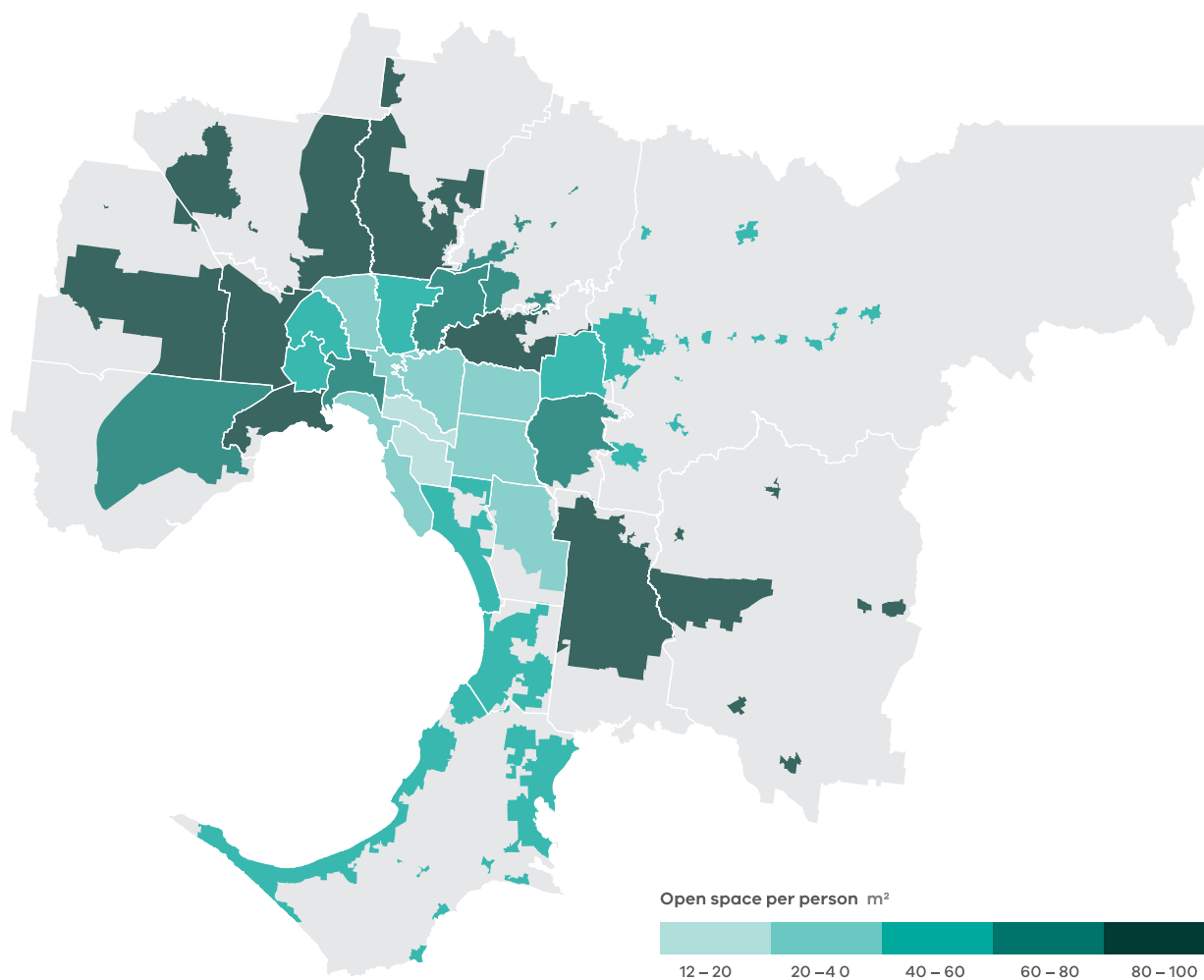
### Directions and strategies

The directions identified to achieve the 2050 vision for the Eastern Metro Region in terms of Liveability and Outcome 4 of Plan Melbourne are:

<b>Direction 16</b>	Protect and enhance the region’s landscapes, waterways and biodiversity
<b>Direction 17</b>	Create a legacy of great civic places
<b>Direction 18</b>	Transform key road corridors into green boulevards
<b>Direction 19</b>	Strengthen the network of open spaces and trail connections across the Eastern Metro Region

Each direction is implemented through regionally-specific strategies identified in this LUFFP.

Map 6 shows how liveability will be enhanced across the Eastern Metro Region by 2050 as a result of these directions and strategies, together with Plan Melbourne and other strategies and initiatives as outlined in Appendix 01.

**FIGURE 19.** Open space per person for metropolitan LGAs

**Source:** Data from the Victorian Planning Authority Metropolitan Open Space Network portal, 2016

**Note:** only areas within the UGB were calculated and mapped in this figure. Areas outside the UGB are shown in grey.

**MAP 6. Eastern Metro Region liveability 2050**

**Precincts and Activity Centres**

- Metropolitan activity centre
- Major activity centre
- Victorian Heritage Register Site
- Community/tourism site
- Puffing Billy tourist railway

**Transport**

- State-significant road corridor
- Road network
- Train station
- Rail network
- Strategic Cycling Corridor

**Environment**

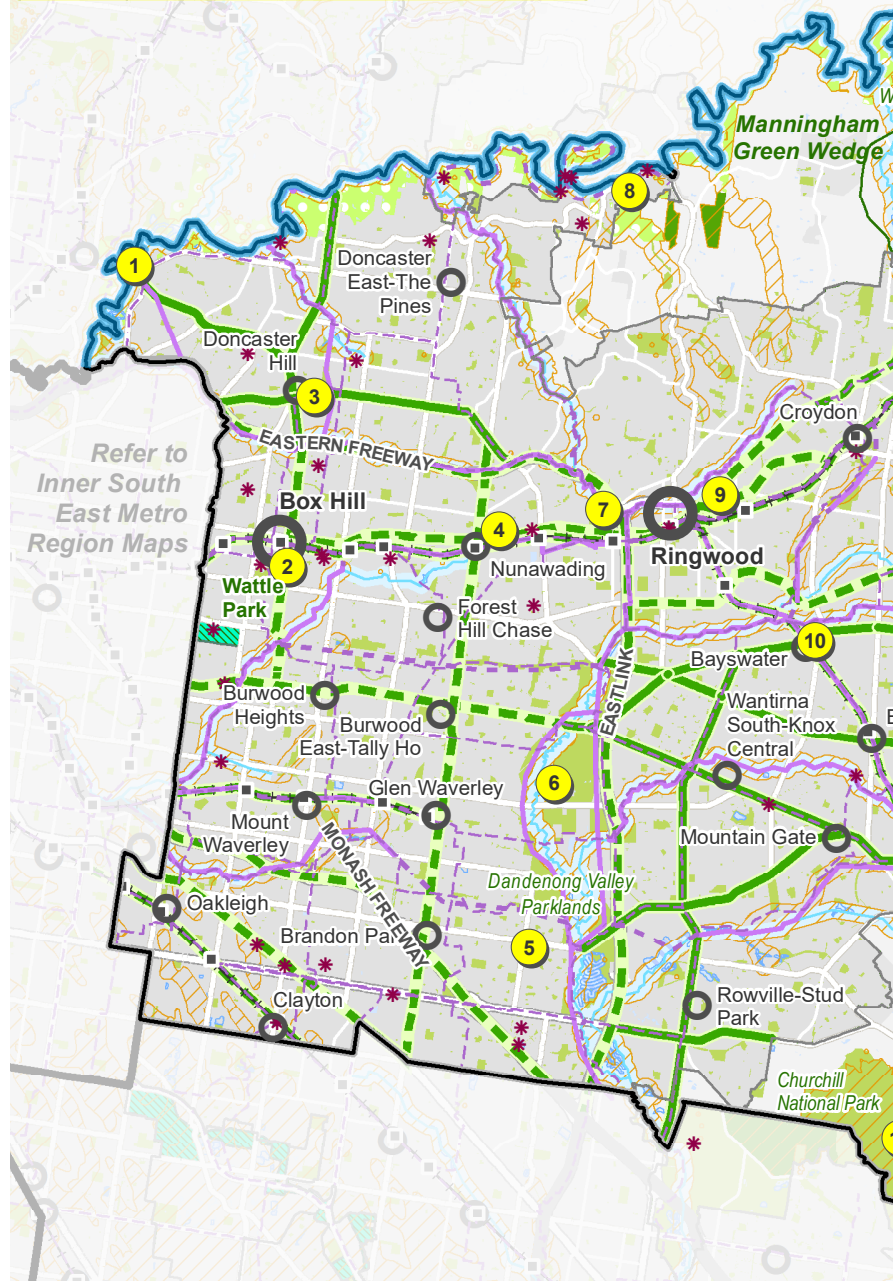
- National park/state park
- Regional Park - expanded/improved
- Public open space
- Regional green boulevard - existing
- Regional green boulevard - potential
- Yarra River land
- Wetlands
- Water's edge parkland
- Waterway and waterway corridor
- Reservoir
- Waterbody
- Existing regional trails
- Proposed regional trails
- Areas of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Sensitivity

**Land use/Administration**

- Regional boundary
- Green wedge land
- Urban area
- Urban growth boundary

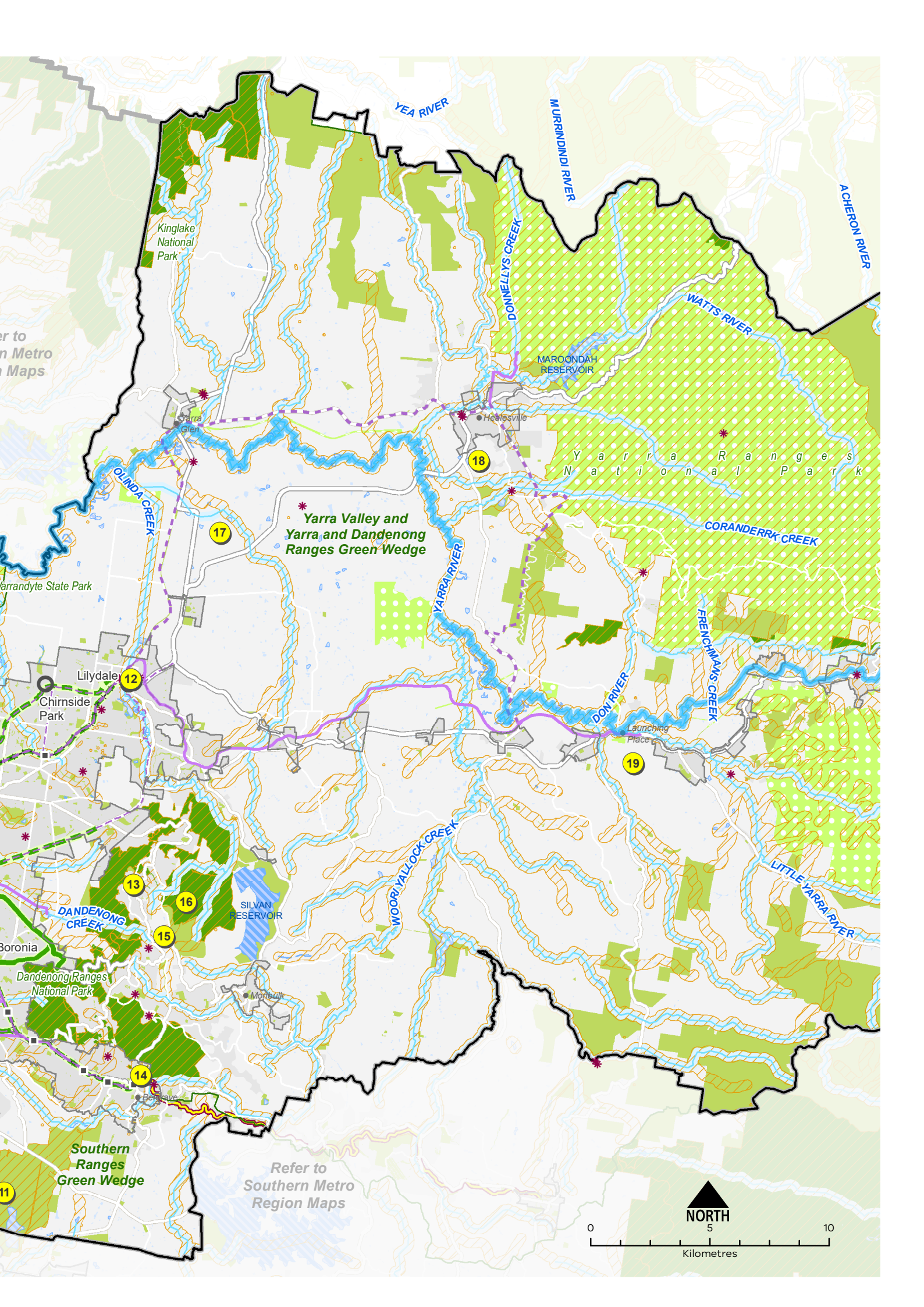
**Map ID Community/tourism site**

- 1 Heide Museum of Modern Art
- 2 Box Hill Community Arts Centre
- 3 Manningham Art Gallery
- 4 Whitehorse Centre
- 5 Monash Gallery of Art
- 6 Dandenong Valley Parklands
- 7 Schwerkolt Cottage and Museum
- 8 Warrandyte Township
- 9 Karralyka Centre
- 10 Knox Community Arts Centre
- 11 Lysterfield Park
- 12 Yarra Ranges Regional Museum
- 13 William Ricketts Sanctuary
- 14 Puffing Billy Railway
- 15 Dandenong Ranges Botanic Garden
- 16 Dandenong Ranges
- 17 Yarra Valley
- 18 Healesville, Healesville Railway, Healesville Sanctuary
- 19 Warburton Township



Location Map





**DIRECTION 16.**  
**Protect and enhance the region’s landscapes, waterways and biodiversity**

A range of planning policies and protections apply to the landscape and environmental values of the Eastern Metro Region’s green wedge areas (Figure 20). However, additional protection is required to ensure that development does not impact on waterways, wetlands, ridgelines and key view corridors.

Engaging with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians to include Aboriginal values and traditional ecological knowledge in biodiversity planning and management is an essential component of protecting and enhancing the region’s landscapes and biodiversity.

Implementation of the Wurunderji Woi Wurrung *Ancient Spirit and Lore of the Yarra* and the *Yarra Strategic Plan* will ensure long-term protection of the Yarra River, including actions to improve its overall environmental health, enhance community access to and use of the river and adjoining parklands, improve development interfaces with the river, and recognise cultural and heritage values.

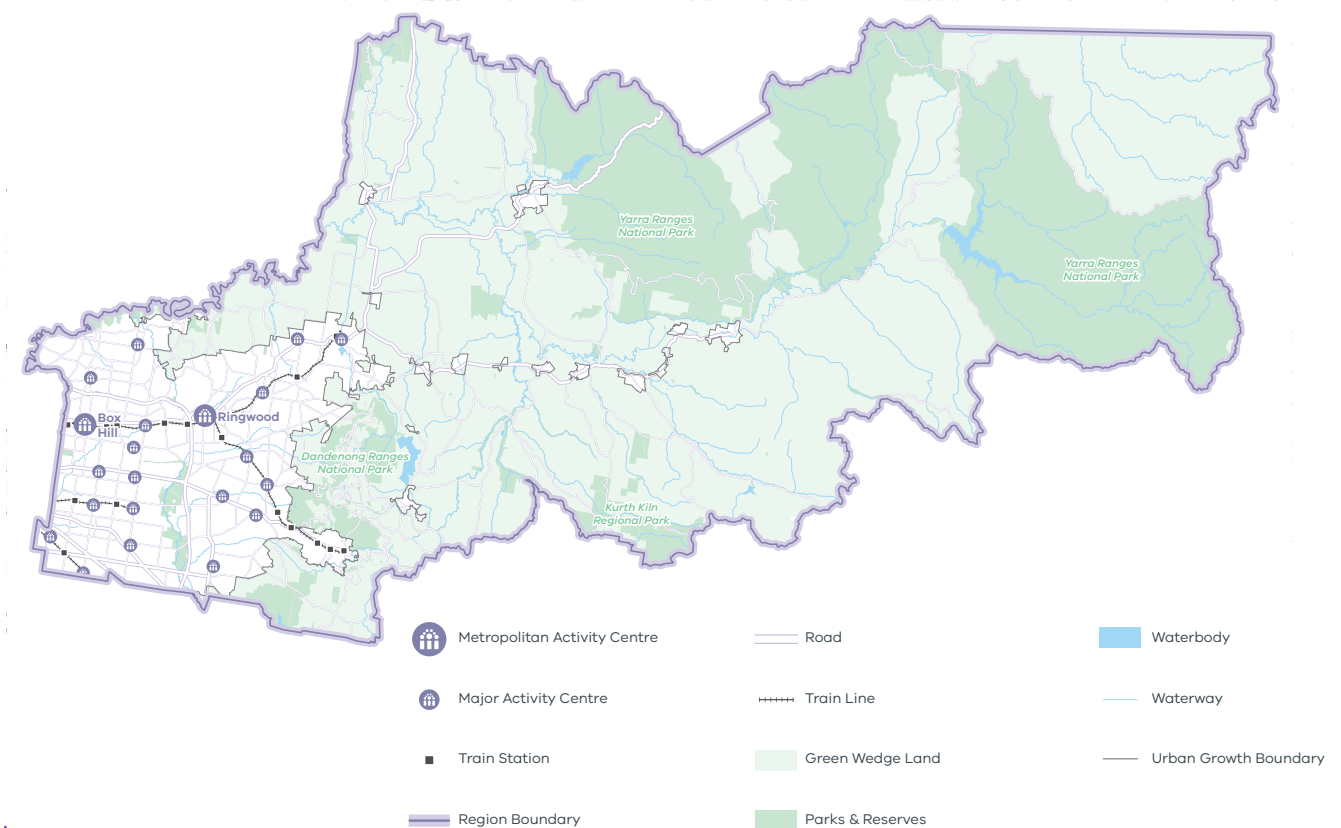
The *Healthy Waterways Strategy* (Yarra and Dandenong catchments), has identified the need to protect the values of waterways and wetlands in the region, including identifying priority areas for revegetation and enhanced stormwater management.

**STRATEGY 47.** Work with Traditional Owners to protect and enhance the region’s significant landscapes of waterways, waterway corridors, wetlands, mountain ranges, forests and rural landscapes for their contribution to biodiversity and liveability.

**STRATEGY 48.** Strengthen the region’s inter- and intra-regional open space and habitat connections.

**STRATEGY 49.** Ensure the design of new development within the region’s green wedges responds to its landscape and biodiversity values and provides adequate buffers from areas of landscape or biodiversity sensitivity, including the rural character of land adjoining the UGB.

**FIGURE 20. Eastern Metro Region green wedge areas**



**DIRECTION 17.****Create a legacy of great civic places**

There is already a legacy of great civic spaces and precincts across the Eastern Metro Region that are critical to establishing people's mental map of the area and their enjoyment of place. The region's rich cultural heritage provides a strong legacy for creating distinctive places which foster community pride and a sense of place.

Many activity centres, both large and small, include formal and informal places with high civic values that help people better understand, orientate within and appreciate where they live and visit. Existing places that establish the region's civic legacy include the former Box Hill Town Hall, the newly established Realm in Ringwood, MC Square in Doncaster, Ringwood Lake, the Bellbird area and Blackburn Lake, the Yarra Valley Parklands and Jells Park. Heritage townships in the Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges also have highly valued civic spaces. It is important to protect and enhance these civic places for future generations.

As the region's activity centres grow, new civic places will be created that add to the region's sense of place. Regionally-significant places such as the Monash NEIC have the potential to evolve as unique and memorable civic precincts.

**STRATEGY 50.** Identify, enhance and protect existing places and spaces that have high civic values, and which contribute to people's understanding and enjoyment of the region.

**STRATEGY 51.** Ensure well designed, high-quality public spaces in new developments to foster a strong sense of place and reinforce the region's amenity, character and identity.

**STRATEGY 52.** Recognise the different layers and aspects of the region's history in the design of new buildings, public spaces, infrastructure and public artwork.

**DIRECTION 18.****Transform key road corridors into green boulevards**

Green boulevards exist throughout the Eastern Metro Region and should be extended to other main road corridors where possible to reinforce the treed character of the region. This includes planting of canopy trees (or vegetation appropriate to the available road space) and enhancing pedestrian and cycling amenity.

Several road corridors in the region have been identified as potential green boulevards with high pedestrian and cycling amenity. These include Burwood Highway, Manningham Road, Doncaster Road, Fitzsimmons Lane/Williamson Road, Boronia Road, Mount Dandenong Road, Stud Road, Maroondah Highway, Springvale Road, Canterbury Road, Wellington Road and Ferntree Gully Road.

Maintaining the green character of streets and boulevards with well-established street trees will contribute to the amenity of the region. Designing streets to harvest stormwater would also help strengthen tree canopies and lower storey vegetation while strategic undergrounding of powerlines in key locations would enhance the streetscape character.

Design of new development along these corridors should make a positive contribution to the region's valued character. This includes key attributes such as ensuring buildings are an appropriate scale for the local context, preserving sunlight access to public streets and spaces, minimising the impact of car parking and making a positive aesthetic contribution to the streetscape.

**STRATEGY 53.** Upgrade key pedestrian streets and public spaces to foster their civic and community role.



## **DIRECTION 19.** **Strengthen the network of open spaces and trail connections across the Eastern Metro Region**

Plan Melbourne envisages a network of accessible, attractive and connected linear parklands, river corridors, green wedge areas and associated shared trail networks.

Within the Eastern Metro Region this includes the major parkland and river assets of the Yarra River corridor and the creation of the Greater Yarra Urban Parklands. It also includes the Scotchmans, Gardiners, Koonung Koonung and Mullum Mullum creeks, the Dandenong Valley Parklands along the Dandenong Creek corridor, the Lilydale-Warburton Rail Trail and the new Yarra Valley Rail Trail currently under construction.

Collaboration at a regional and metropolitan level and with Traditional Owners will be necessary to connect open space and enhance biodiversity assets.

*Open Space for Everyone: Open Space Strategy for Metropolitan Melbourne 2020* focuses on providing a diverse range of open spaces to meet the needs of the community while protecting existing open space assets.

The *Eastern Regional Trail Strategy* is a planning framework and action plan prepared jointly by the region's local councils to establish a high-quality network of integrated shared trails that link communities, destinations and urban and natural environments. It identifies immediate priorities to expand the regional trail network, including the extension of the Box Hill-Ringwood Rail Trail, connections from the Main Yarra Trail to Warrandyte, the Yarra Valley Trail and the extension of the Main Yarra Trail to Warrandyte.

Dandenong Valley Parklands is a significant open space asset and biodiversity corridor that will be even more important to the region's liveability as the population grows. Regional cooperation is needed to plan for the future of this parkland corridor which spans three municipalities.

**STRATEGY 54.** Protect the region's network of significant parklands and open space corridors as key aspects of its identity and liveability.

**STRATEGY 55.** Create new open space where it can serve a walkable catchment from residential areas or activity centres.

**STRATEGY 56.** Improve the region's shared trail network, including key inter- and intra-regional connections, to improve access to open space and active transport opportunities.

**STRATEGY 57.** Support active recreation and cycling trails in the green wedges.

### **ACTIONS – Liveability**

**ACTION 8.** Prepare a vision for the Dandenong Valley Parklands, including defining the optimal extent of the parklands, and a framework to ensure key access points and integrated water management objectives are acknowledged in local planning decisions.



Photo credit: Tim Bell Studio