



collaborations

Chain of Ponds Strategic Review 2021

Contents

Background & Approach	2
Key Findings	4
Recommendations	8



Background & Approach

Background & Project Brief

The Chain of Ponds Collaborations (CoP) was formally established in 2018, to support a whole of catchment approach to delivering improvements to 'transform' the Moonee Ponds Creek environment.

The work of the CoP is supported by a project lead based at Greater Western Water and a core Governance Group which includes:

- Rachel Lopes (Project Lead Greater Western Water)
- Andrew Hickey (Greater Western Water)
- Geraldine Plas (Melbourne Water)
- Ellen Mitchell (Melbourne Water)
- Nicky Kindler (Melbourne Water)
- Jesse Barrett (Melbourne Water)
- Alex English (City of Moreland)
- Gerald Colreavy (City of Melbourne)
- Damien Harrison (Hume City Council)
- Heather Graeme (Moonee Valley City Council)
- David Collins (Parks Victoria)
- Ruthven Davey-Greene (Yarra Valley Water)
- Chris Eales (Victorian Planning Authority)
- Travis Scicchitano (Conservation Volunteers Australia)
- Kaye Oddie (Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek)
- Liz Forbes (Kensington Association)
- Catherine Van Wilgenburg (Living Colour Studio)
- Frank Kinnersley (Moonee Valley BUG & Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek)

This review has been a highly collaborative process and the outcomes would not have been possible without the engagement, input and support of the individuals and agencies listed above and members of the broader Collaborations group.

The brief for this project outlines the process for review of the current MoU, Terms of Reference and 'Prospectus', calling for:

- Independent facilitation support to ensure appropriate input from all partners.
- Recommendations to support the preparation of a reviewed MoU, Terms of Reference and prospectus.
- Reflection on the operation of the CoP collaboration and identification of strategic directions for the future focus on the partnership.

Collaborations Pty Ltd was engaged in August 2021 to support the review process with research and facilitation skills.

The process for the review was co-designed with the Project Working Group that had been established to oversee this strategic Review for the CoP, comprising:

- Rachel Lopes (Project Lead Greater Western Water)
- Geraldine Plas (Melbourne Water)
- Andrew Hickey (Greater Western Water)
- Alex English (City of Moreland)

This report provides a summary of the process for the review and engagement with partners and identifies key areas to be addressed by the CoP Collaboration in the future.

Approach

In supporting the participation of the members of the CoP Governance Group and wider partners, a four-stage approach was adopted.

The data from each aspect of the research is available as separate appendices to this summary report.



Key Findings

Reflection on Process: how we are working together

Written Feedback

There were 22 responses to the initial survey, asking participants to reflect on the performance of the Collaboration in relation to the core principles and objectives in the MoU and the usefulness of these principles and objectives for the future of the CoP.

There is strong support for the current core principles. Respondents agreed that the Collaboration had performed well in relation to:

- Being transparent in all interactions.
- Taking a strengths and solutions-based approach.
- Learning together and building trust and respect.

Responses showed a need for the Collaboration to continue to work on:

- The sharing of knowledge and ideas.
- Collaborating to identify regional catchment priorities.
- Being considerate of other organisations respective circumstances and speaking with one voice.

“...results suggest a strong belief in the Collaborations raison d’etre across participating organisations” (survey report)

The CoP MOU has a set of objectives relating to the processes of operation and the desired outcomes. In general, there is continued support for these objectives, however some concern was identified in relation to the continued effectiveness of the outcome related objectives.

With respect to the objectives that relate to the way the CoP partners work together, respondents were most proud of the success of the Collaboration in relation to:

- Adopting a whole of catchment approach.
- Identifying collaborative opportunities.
- Advocacy for waterway management.

The responses identified the need to do more to:

- Ensure all views are considered in decision making.
- Reflect and learn together.
- Share information and expertise.

In addressing the outcome related objectives, respondents strongly agreed on the success of:

- Developing and implementing strategies for catchment protection.
- Realising opportunities for stormwater management.

There was a desire to achieve more in relation to:

- Managing the impacts of urban renewal.
- Mechanisms for co-investment.
- Protection of habitats and biodiversity.
- Delivering best practice waterway improvements.
- Developing an agreed monitoring framework.

In identifying operational areas of improvement, respondents nominated the following:

- Strengthening the strategic focus and direction, longer term planning.
- Engaging traditional owners as equal partners.
- Supporting group cohesion post covid.
- Broadening the participation of surrounding landowners.
- Greater certainty of financial contributions.
- Reporting and evaluation.
- Visibility, strategic input and involvement from higher organizational levels.

Almost all the organisations that responded could see themselves being involved in the Collaboration for at least the next two years.

“Victoria’s longest successfully running sub-catchment IWM collaboration” (survey respondent)

Governance Group Workshop I

The first Governance Group workshop in the review focused on:

- Key achievements and processes in relation to the MOU and Terms of Reference, particularly partnership and collaboration.
- Identifying lessons for the future to inform the partnership approach to the CoP and inform a revised MoU and Terms of Reference as required.

In reflecting on the survey results and discussing the Terms of Reference, the participants worked in small groups identifying the following areas for improvement:

- Clarifying and refining the objectives to remove overlap with the principles.
- Review and clarify roles and responsibilities of the partners, particularly reliance on project lead.
- Review membership to identify other key organisations and potential partners (Transurban, Citylink, landowners).
- Need to be inclusive of Traditional Owners.
- Acknowledging the different roles, skills, knowledge sets and responsibilities of staff and volunteers.
- Review number of meetings.
- Optimise role of working groups.
- Clarify meeting process, purpose and participation for the Governance Group.
- Address certainty in the financial agreements.

The whole group participated in a discussion of the lessons for the future emerging from the survey data and the conversations in small groups.

The strengths of the current Collaboration were identified as:

- Principles & ways of working
- The people involved
- Working collaboratively, sharing ideas, solutions & information.
- Funding and implementing priority projects
- Strategic approach to the whole of the creek
- Implementation of key reports
- Site meetings
- Rachel as project lead
- Advocacy
- Working groups

“Great people, sharing their ideas and solutions.”

“...a friendly and dynamic space where ideas, skills and efforts are pooled for action.”

The group also identified areas for change to support effective collaboration:

- Relying on volunteers to get projects happening
- Improved engagement of landowners
- Addressing unaligned members of key organisations
- Better integration of strategic directions and priority setting
- Overloading with the number of projects
- Relying so much on Rachel as project lead.

The group then discussed new ideas for the future:

- Get more out of the working groups and volunteer expertise.
- Tap into other organisations and initiatives that align with our priorities.
- Engage Traditional Owners.
- Improve reporting mechanisms
- Advocate for more time and resources from partner organisations.
- Identify resources for each project from the start.
- Clear realistic intent for our projects.
- Generating greater cross-organisational strategic ownership and participation.
- Engaging with landowners & others strategic players.
- More regular reflection & evaluation.
- Clear identification of strategic priorities – what & how – and associated implementation mechanisms.
- Establishing the value of volunteers – acknowledging the hours contributed and skills base of volunteers.
- Clear, short-term goals (12 months).

These ideas have implications for both what the Collaboration focusses on and how partners work together.

There is strong on-going support for the Collaboration and its overall vision.

Strategic Directions & Priorities: what we want to focus on in the future

Written Feedback

The second survey addressed strategic priorities and future projects. It was completed by 33 respondents, representing a mix of community organisations, water industry, state and local government and university.

The key strategic issues identified were:

- Impacts of urbanization and development.
- Naturalisation of the creek (vegetation, tree canopy and biodiversity).
- Rubbish and litter.
- Indigenous cultural heritage
- Access, inclusion and connectivity along the creek
- Future proofing and investment in green infrastructure.

In prioritising *environmental issues*, the following responses received the highest support:

- Impacts of development and urbanisation.
- Rubbish and litter.
- Protection and management of vegetation.

Those from community groups most-nominated biodiversity, rubbish and litter, impacts of development and urbanisation and vegetation quality and extent. Those from the water industry most-nominated impacts of development and urbanisation (5) and vegetation quality and extent (4).

With respect to *social and cultural issues*, the most important issues identified were:

- Acknowledgement of Indigenous cultural heritage.
- Inclusive access and connectivity.
- The quantity and diversity of open space.

Those from community groups most-nominated, quantity and diversity of open space, diverse and inclusive community connection to the creek, Impacts of development and urbanisation, conflicting uses (e.g. pedestrians & cyclists). Those from the water industry most-nominated access and connectivity to and along the creek, acknowledgement and protection of Indigenous cultural heritage.

In nominating priority *economic issues*, the responses were similar for all groups and included:

- Investment in green infrastructure and future proofing.
- Pressure from increased development.
- Ageing amenities and infrastructure.

Respondents were then asked to nominate priority projects and initiatives that would address these strategic issues. The following opportunities received the greatest support:

- Consistent development and planning controls along the creek.
- Traditional owners' engagement.
- Increasing vegetation and planting.
- All abilities access.
- Catchment litter management.
- Removal of concrete and reinstatement of natural values.
- Management of competing uses.
- Continuous access along the creek.
- Water quality and storm water management.

Governance Group Workshop II

A second workshop was held with the Governance Group to:

- Identify key strategic priorities for the next 3-5 years.
- Identify priority projects for the next 3 years.

The group endorsed the six strategic issues identified through the written feedback and discussed desired outcomes in relation to each issue. These included:

- Impacts of urbanisation – influence planning overlays and developers.
- Naturalisation of the creek- meet *Healthy Waterways Strategy* targets and increase the kms of naturalisation. *It is important to note, that there was significant discussion about the term 'naturalisation', as Melbourne Water has a specific definition associated with this term relating to the removal of concrete, from a community perspective the term is interpreted more broadly to incorporate vegetation, tree canopy, biodiversity, creek alignment, amenity and water quality to reinstate the natural values of the creek. "Returning the creek to its natural state as much as possible" (written feedback)*

Governance Group Workshop II (Strategic Issues cont)

- Rubbish and litter – endorse, implement and monitor the Catchment Litter Strategy.
- Indigenous cultural heritage – Catchment Cultural Values Assessment and engagement.
- Access, inclusion and connectivity – improved connectivity and social inclusion into and along the creek.
- Future proofing and investment in blue-green infrastructure – a catchment-based approach to water cycle management.

Key projects and initiatives were then discussed to realise these aspirations. The discussion of these initiatives is on-going and requires further refinement, however, the following initiatives were identified for future consideration.

Impacts of urbanisation

- Development and adoption of consistent planning overlays and guidelines for the waterway corridor and catchment.
- Professional development for planners.
- Information sheets for developers.

Naturalisation of the creek

- Increase revegetation and planting projects.
- Coordinated mapping and monitoring of tree canopy, biodiversity and vegetation.
- Removal of concrete and reinstatement of natural values of the creek.

Rubbish and litter.

- Implementation of a litter management strategy which targets key hot spots.
- Monitoring and reducing litter in the waterway.

Indigenous Cultural Heritage

- A broader Cultural values assessment of the whole catchment.
- Consistent land management in a culturally sensitive way.
- Active engagement of Wurundjeri in paid position, within the governance group and in land management.
- EcoArts – Bunjil and the Bandicoots on the flight path project.

Access, inclusion and connectivity

- Gap analysis to support continuous access along the creek.
- Review inclusive access into and along the creek.
- Improve quantity and diversity of open space.
- Provide diverse and inclusive community connections to the creek.

Future proofing and investment in blue-green infrastructure

- Catchment-based approach to water cycle management.
- Alignment of funding opportunities for infrastructure investment (flood protection, water quality).
- Collaboration on priorities and adaptable solutions.

“Returning the creek to its natural state as much as possible.” (written feedback)

“Review of the inclusive ability for all to access and enjoy the Moonee Ponds Creek.” (written feedback)

“Mentoring a Wurundjeri or ATSI person for the lead role position.” (written feedback)

“Consistent planning controls along the entire creek, protecting the creek environs...” (written feedback)

“Access to the creek is about balancing different needs – biodiversity vs passive vs active recreation.” (workshop participant)

Recommendations

In considering all the information gathered during the course of this review, it has been important to reflect on each of the key documents which inform the operation, focus and impact of the Chain of Ponds Collaboration. The recommendations provided here reflect the issues and opportunities raised in each of the different aspects of the consultation and research process and have been framed through on-going discussions with the Project Working Group.

Overall, there is an opportunity to consolidate and clarify the three key documents to provide a clearer sense of direction.

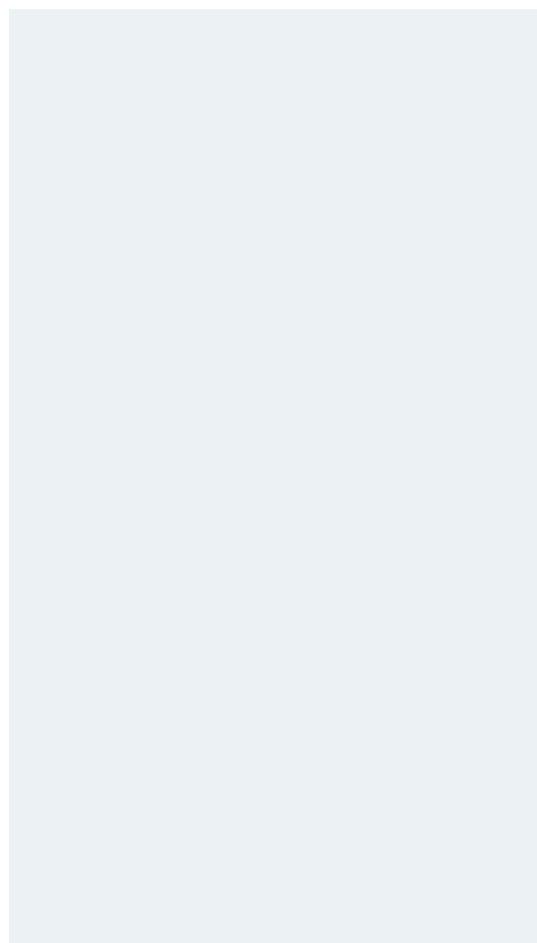
Vision and Objectives for the CoP Collaboration

- Review Mission Statement to include 'cultural' benefits.
- Clarify and refine objectives (too many, overlap with principles)
- Introduce regular reporting mechanisms which are better aligned with the objectives of the Collaborations.
- Support for process objectives, however, greater emphasis is required on inclusivity, learning and monitoring in the implementation process.
- Strengthen, refine, or relocate the outcome objectives.
- Optimise alignment with strategic directions of partner organisations.

Operation & Approach

- More strategic involvement from partner organisations – encourage consistent, strategic representation and identification of champions within each organisation for all strategic issues.
- Clearer outlining of resourcing, establish a binding financial agreement.
- Optimise the value and operation of the working groups, clarify powers of delegation.

- Acknowledge, value and respect volunteer knowledge and volunteer effort.
- Streamline meetings for Governance Group (frequency, information flow).
- Better define the role of the Governance Group as a strategic conduit to partner organisations.
- Clarify expectations of participation in meetings.
- Maintain quarterly meetings for broader Collaboration.
- Broaden membership to reflect diversity of interests and issues, prioritise Indigenous representation and engagement.
- Integrate a Strategic Review of the Collaboration in a further three years.



Strategy and Initiatives

The opportunity to integrate the Prospectus with the MOU was highlighted, to facilitate stronger commitment to key initiatives. The alignment of strategic priorities and desired outcomes was proposed:

- Impacts of urbanisation and development = consistent protection of the creek and parklands.
- Naturalisation of the creek environs (corridor) = reinstatement of the natural values of the creek environment (vegetation, tree canopy, biodiversity, removal of concrete, natural alignment and physical form).
- Rubbish and litter = Reduction of litter in the creek and surrounding open space.
- Indigenous Cultural heritage = recognition of Indigenous Cultural values and involvement of Wurundjeri in land management.
- Access and connectivity = Improved physical access, social inclusion and connectivity into and along the creek corridor.
- Future proofing and investment in blue and green infrastructure – improved water quality and sustainability of creek environs.

Nomination of priority projects/initiatives:

- Planning overlays and controls.
- Events and education for leaders, developers and decision makers.
- *Healthy Waterways Strategy* targets.
- Coordinated mapping of vegetation and biodiversity.
- Catchment Litter Strategy – resources, implement and monitor.
- Identification of litter hot spots.
- Litter awareness program.
- Indigenous cultural values assessment.
- Indigenous engagement and participation.
- Bunjil & the bandicoots on the Flight Path
- Cross organisational approach to water cycle management.
- Identification of future proofing examples for collaborative funding.
- Site specific removal of concrete and reinstatement of natural creek values.
- Connectivity/pathways gap and asset analysis.

These initiatives will be further discussed and developed through the final stages of the review.

How will success be judged?

(written feedback and workshop notes)

- *Evidence of...improvements to Moonee Ponds Creek becoming a natural waterway.*
- *Improvements to water quality.*
- *Extent of naturalisation.*
- *Number of projects delivered.*
- *A natural unpolluted waterway with healthy Indigenous vegetation supporting birdlife.*
- *Active engagement of Wurundjeri in governance group and land management.*
- *Community appreciation and value of the waterway.*
- *Progress on Healthy Waterways Strategy.*
- *Improved planning controls and protections.*
- *A catchment-based approach to water cycle management.*
- *Advocacy and support for residents passionate about the wellbeing of the creek.*
- *On-going active involvement of key partners in delivering on-ground outcomes.*
- *Verification of reported outcomes.*



Each of the nominated initiatives can be linked to the agree strategic directions as outlined in the table below.

Strategic Priorities and Project Opportunities

Impacts of <u>urbanisation</u> & development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Strengthening Planning Controls - via Waterways of the West. (Working Group) •Co-design and co-deliver Arden and Macaulay Precincts •Identify opportunities to influence developers.
Naturalisation of the creek environs (corridor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Site specific removal of concrete and reinstatement of natural creek values. •Co-deliver Healthy Waterways Strategy targets. •Coordinated mapping of vegetation and biodiversity
Rubbish and litter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Co-ordinate Catchment-wide Litter Action •Secure additional resources for implementation and monitoring of the Litter Assessment •Litter Clean Up Days •Litter hotspots behaviour change programs
Indigenous Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Indigenous Cultural values assessment •Continued engagement with Wurundjeri to define their preferred role in the Collaboration •Indigenous Cultural Heritage Awareness Training (Ongoing) •Bunjil & the bandicoots on the Flight Path •Develop Reconciliation Action Plan
Access and connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Connectivity/pathways gap and asset analysis •Endorse implement and promote the Trails, Transport & Connectivity Guidelines • Managing Conflicting Uses •Upper Moonee Ponds Creek Shared Path
Investment in blue-green infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Identification of future proofing examples of collaborative funding •Cross organisational approach to water cycle management •Co-delivery of Maribryong Integrated Water Management Forum targets.

The next stage of the review will be for the Chain of Ponds Strategic Review Working Group to revise the key documents (MOU, ToR and Prospectus) based on the findings and recommendations in this report.