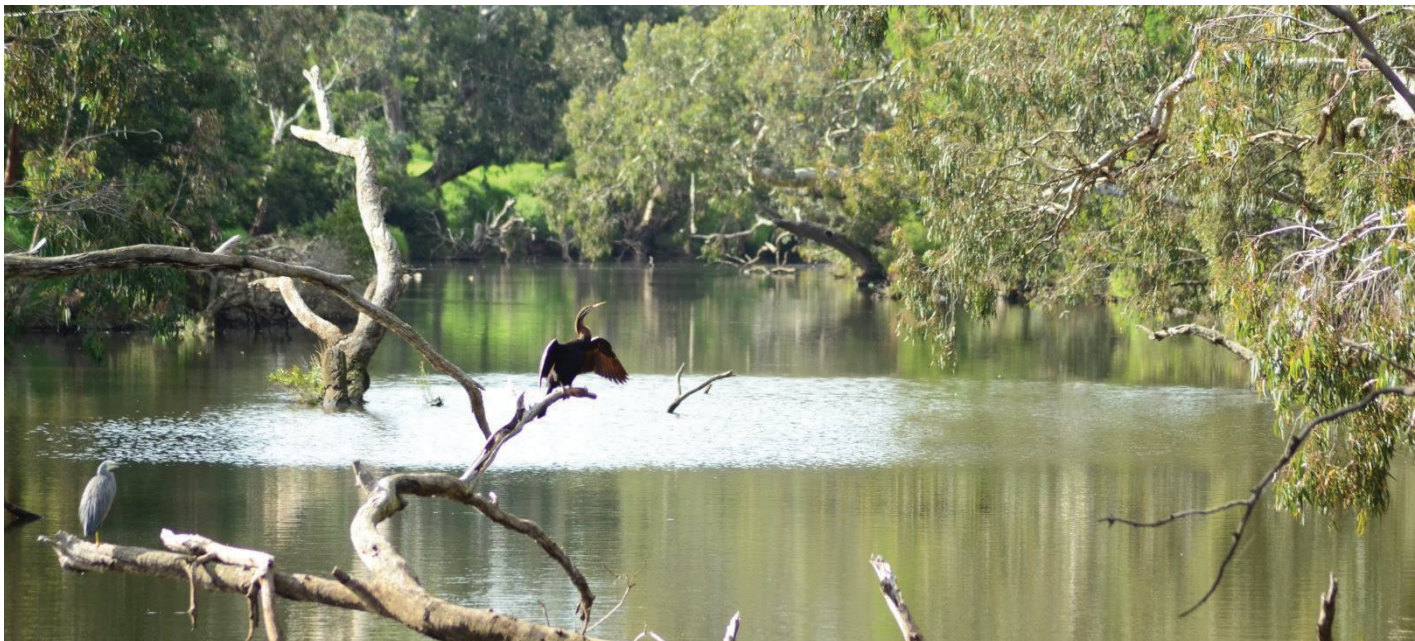




December 2024

Biodiversity Policy





Acknowledgement

Wyndham City Council recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first Peoples of Australia. We acknowledge the Bunurong and Wadawurrung Peoples as Traditional Owners of the lands on which Wyndham City operates. The Wadawurrung and Bunurong Peoples have and always will belong to the Werribee Yalook (river), creeks, stars, hills and red clay of this Country. We pay respect to their Ancestors and Elders who always have, and always will, care for Country and community today and for future generations.

Purpose

The community envisions Wyndham as a vibrant city featuring shaded areas and green spaces that foster healthy communities and natural environments. This Policy outlines how Wyndham City will manage its open spaces and natural environment in a way that protects and connects native flora and fauna in order to achieve this vision.

This Policy defines how Wyndham City will –

- Enhance its natural environment to protect native flora and fauna;
- Protect our natural environment and promote habitat connectivity;
- Plan our growing urban fabric to incorporate habitat and natural ecosystems;
- Support an educated and empowered community and provide residents access to nature for recreation and enhanced experiences of public spaces;
- Partner with stakeholders to maximise conservation outcomes within Wyndham and the wider region; and
- Monitor, learn and adapt to ensure that management regimes and biodiversity programs are effective.

Scope

This Policy applies to all open space on land owned or managed by Wyndham City, including streets, parks, reserves, and other open space.

The Policy is also intended to influence utility and government authorities, along with community members and private landholders, regarding how native flora and fauna are planted and managed on their land.

This Policy is applicable to any proposed Precinct Structure Plan, Development Plan, planning permit application, design plans or equivalent, or processes which have the potential to impact on biodiversity directly or indirectly. It also applies to Council works which have the potential to directly or indirectly impact on biodiversity, trees or waterways, as well as any native vegetation offset, or biodiversity conservation reserve located within the municipality.

This Policy applies to the daily activities and decision-making undertaken by Councillors, Council officers, contractors, and Council volunteers.

Background

Biological diversity or “biodiversity” is the variety of life forms, including plants, animals, micro-organisms and the ecosystems of which they are a part. Biodiversity encompasses all living things and, importantly, the functions and processes that link and sustain them.

Wyndham is a city in transformation. A naturally diverse landscape, encompassing volcanic plains grasslands, riparian woodlands, floodplains and internationally significant (Ramsar) coastal wetlands. Wyndham is also a rapidly growing municipality, home to approximately 325,000 people and expected to reach almost 500,000 by 2046. Rapid growth comes with many environmental challenges and increased competition for green space.

“The Wyndham community want to connect with, celebrate and protect their natural environment, enjoy the city’s parks and open spaces and live healthy, happy lives” (The Wyndham Plan 2023).

Wyndham retains significant natural areas that provide habitat for native plant and animal species of local, national and international significance. These natural areas are, however, highly fragmented and

modified with a range of threats to their ongoing health, including rapid urban development, invasive species and poor protection and management.

Historically, the Wyndham landscape was characterised by plains grasslands, coastal salt marshes, plains grassy woodlands and floodplain riparian woodland, all of which are now classified as vulnerable, endangered or depleted. The native grasslands, a once common ecosystem, is highly significant, being critically endangered at a national level and endangered at a state level. Many of the plants and animals known to have been found in Wyndham are threatened, including 52 nationally listed species and 127 state listed species (Victorian Biodiversity Atlas, September 2024).

Wyndham City has a diverse population with sometimes conflicting views regarding our natural environment and wildlife. Engagement with the community to ensure these assets are understood, valued and supported is essential. Wyndham City will collaborate with external stakeholders in protecting and managing the natural environment within and connecting to Wyndham. This includes providing education on the natural environment to the benefit of the municipality.

This Policy provides a decision-making framework for achieving Wyndham City's aim for our natural environment. It is to be read and administered in conjunction with Wyndham's *City Forest and Habitat Strategy 2017-2040: 2024 Update* and other relevant Council policies and plans to deliver on Wyndham City's vision for our natural environment.

Responsibilities

Wyndham City holds responsibility for the strategic management and final decision-making regarding native vegetation on Council-owned or managed land. This is carried out in accordance with the principles outlined in this Policy and in compliance with State and Federal legislation.

Wyndham City's Environment Team is responsible for the strategic planning for Wyndham City's natural environment in accordance with this Policy. This includes environment strategies and procedures, policies and action plans, internal and external consultation, and development of environmental education programs and resources as required.

Wyndham City's Open Space Department is responsible for the management of native vegetation and conservation areas on Council owned or managed land. This includes the creation of strategies, plans and procedures for the management of these reserves in accordance with this Policy.

All Wyndham City departments and officers, including those involved in day-to-day management of council land, statutory and strategic planning, and open space design, are responsible for decision making in accordance with the principles set out in this Policy.

Policy

Local flora, fauna and ecosystems make an important contribution to life in our community. Wyndham is committed to enhancing, protecting, planning, educating, partnering and monitoring for the protection of our biodiversity.

1. Enhance: Wyndham City is committed to enhancing biodiversity through ongoing, high-quality management and improvement of its own natural assets.

- a) Wherever possible, retain existing habitat structures on trees that need to be removed. Dead or damaged trees must be kept as habitat, including tree hollows and logs in conservation areas. If necessary, incorporate artificial habitat structures to support wildlife.
- b) Biodiversity values are protected and enhanced to achieve a net improvement in quality, extent, and connectivity of conservation assets within the municipality.
- c) Biodiversity corridors are to be created and enhanced across the municipality to connect valuable conservation assets.
- d) Constructed stormwater wetlands will provide quality habitat for wildlife and be managed for both biodiversity and water quality.
- e) Council will not use rodenticides that are harmful to wildlife during any pest animal control.
- f) Native grasses to be explored for use in mown areas adjoining or within conservation areas, waterways, and wetlands where possible. If successful, use to be expanded to low wear mown areas of other open space reserves.
- g) Council will support and encourage the establishment of nature strip gardens that support wildlife.

2. Protect: Wyndham City has a responsibility to protect existing natural assets that make up our environment.

- a) Unpermitted native vegetation removal, destruction or lopping must be enforced in line with the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.
- b) All Council works and projects must follow all relevant state and federal environmental legislation. All works and projects must adhere to avoid and minimise principles for native vegetation and wildlife habitat as a priority.
- c) Advocate for any native vegetation offsets required under section 52.17 of the Wyndham Planning Scheme to remain in Wyndham where possible.
- d) Advocate, where appropriate, for road closures and/or installation of wildlife friendly fencing to protect native vegetation.
- e) Removal of dumped rubbish must prioritise protection of native vegetation and be conducted in a way that doesn't damage or remove native vegetation, including roadside native grasslands.
- f) Retain genetic diversity of native vegetation to be removed under an approved planning permit where possible through seed collection, cutting propagation, or translocation if appropriate for the species, for use/reinstatement in conservation or open space areas, as agreed with the landowner and Responsible Authority.
- g) All Site Environmental Management Plans (SEMPs) must be in accordance with Council and Environment Protection Authority (EPA) guidelines and reflect best practice for erosion and sediment control. Biodiversity protection must be a high priority during construction works.
- h) Incorporate the protection of biodiversity into Council operations, processes, planning and development assessment.
- i) Non-harmful mitigation measures towards native fauna must be prioritised, such as community education, warnings, rerouting movements, to be the first actions taken in the cases of human

and wildlife interactions (eg. swooping birds), unless the animal is posing a significant threat to community and all other mitigation measures have been exhausted.

- j) Low-noise fireworks are to be used in Wyndham's open spaces where possible, including during community run events. Firework alternatives are encouraged for use within 500m of a conservation reserve.
- k) No Council or community events with more than 150 attendees will be held within a Council conservation area.
- l) Any Council or community events adjacent to or within a conservation area must not damage native vegetation and avoid and minimise impacts on wildlife. All relevant state and federal legislation must be adhered to.
- m) Environmental weeds indicated in the Advisory List of Environmental Weeds in Victoria must not be used in Council landscaping within 400m of conservation reserves or waterways.

3. Plan: Wyndham City will lead by example through planning and influencing the protection of biodiversity on behalf of the community, with a focus on strategic conservation gains in planning and decision making.

- a) Council will include indigenous and native plantings in all new and upgraded reserves and open space where appropriate.
- b) Any new landscaping plantings in roads and reserves adjacent to waterways, wetlands and conservation areas must use indigenous species within 20m of reserve boundary.
- c) Any new street tree plantings in roads and reserves adjacent to waterways, wetlands and conservation areas must use native species.
- d) No street or amenity trees to be planted within 10m of grassland conservation areas, unless otherwise stated in other plans and strategies.
- e) Advocate for future Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) development to prioritise retention of native vegetation and existing natural habitat. Development design must provide wildlife movement opportunities and minimise habitat fragmentation.
- f) Existing biodiversity corridors must be retained, and efforts must be made to reconnect fragmented biodiversity corridors where possible, including to neighbouring municipalities.
- g) Hollow bearing trees and significant vegetation and habitat will be prioritised for retention early in the design process.
- h) Conservation assets must be well integrated with the built environment and allows community access to enjoy the natural environment with minimal impact on conservation values.
- i) Habitat provision and quality improvement will be incorporated into Council projects and processes.
- j) Infrastructure services to be located at least 2m outside of conservation and native vegetation areas.
- k) Suitable access is encouraged for all conservation reserves (formal and informal paths), where this will not significantly impact on the biodiversity values of the reserve. These must be located outside of areas of significant habitat for biodiversity.
- l) Wyndham's future growth, land use, land zoning and urban design will be sympathetic to existing natural areas and habitat corridors. Biodiversity values must be considered early in the project design and planning process.

4. Educate: Wyndham City will support an educated and empowered community who will value, support and protect the conservation of local biodiversity.

- a) Collaborate with external parties to deliver effective environmental education and engagement to the wider community.
- b) Council events in open space adjacent to conservation areas will support positive community connection with native flora and fauna.

Wyndham's open spaces will provide diverse environmental education opportunities that foster strong nature connections between community and the natural environment.

- c) Council will promote Wyndham's rare and threatened flora and fauna as assets for the community to value and protect and encourage contribution to their recovery.
- d) New developments will include interpretative signage adjacent to wetlands, waterways, conservation or environmentally significant areas, where appropriate with the aim of enhancing visitor experience and increasing community connection to biodiversity.

5. Partner: Wyndham will maximise conservation outcomes within the municipality, and in the wider region, through sustained partnerships.

- a) Wyndham will partner with Traditional Owners to plan for, manage and promote local biodiversity, where appropriate.
- b) Council will collaborate with stakeholders to stay informed on and promote best land management practices.
- c) Council will support the increase of biodiversity on private land in both urban and rural Wyndham through education, grants, and community programs.
- d) Engage with private landholders to advocate for and support the use of native grasses for grazing pastures.
- e) Partner with responsible authorities (such as Agriculture Victoria) to engage and educate private landowners about their legal responsibilities as land managers.
- f) Council will grow existing partnerships and foster new ones with local environmental groups to increase the reach into the community.
- g) Council will partner with local environmental community groups other relevant local and state agencies to provide broader biodiversity outcomes across the region.

6. Monitor, Learn and Adapt: Wyndham will ensure that management regimes and biodiversity programs are effective and beneficial to biodiversity.

- a) Council will monitor and take on an adaptive approach to managing Council conservation areas.
- b) Council will trial innovative approaches to protecting, improving and monitoring biodiversity and increasing habitat connectivity.
- c) All Council native flora and fauna data will be uploaded to the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas.
- d) Council will explore new options for long term green infrastructure projects aimed at habitat provision.

Breach of Policy

Non-compliance with this Policy has the potential to be in breach of legislation at the local, state and federal levels. Failure to comply with this Policy will be treated seriously and may incur enforcement actions.

Key Related Documents and Legislation

Internal Policy and Strategy

Wyndham 2040 Community Vision
Wyndham Council Plan 2021-2025
The Wyndham Plan 2023
Wyndham Planning Scheme
Wyndham City Forest and Habitat Strategy 2017-2040: 2024 Update
Landscape Context Guidelines 2014
Wyndham Tree and Urban Forest Policy 2021
Wyndham Open Space Strategy, 2045
Open Space Lighting Policy 2023
Resilient Wyndham 2020-2025
Reconciliation Action Plan 2023-2025
Wyndham Play Space Strategy, 2030
Wyndham Active Transport Strategy, 2020
Werribee South Green Wedge Policy and Management Plan, 2016
Wyndham Coastal & Marine Management Plan 2020-2025
Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025
West Trails–Western Metropolitan Regional Trails Strategic Plan, 2017
Werribee River Shared Trail Strategy, 2013
Biodiversity Conservation Area Management Policy (Draft)

External Policy and Legislation

Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 (Vic) and 2019 Amendment
Protecting Victoria's Environment –Biodiversity 2037 (Vic)
Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (Vic)
Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation 2017 (DEECA)
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Federal)
Advisory List of Environmental Weeds in Victoria (DEECA 2018)
Wildlife Act 1975 (Vic)
Fisheries Act 1995 (Vic)
Victorian Waterway Management Strategy 2013
Melbourne Water Local Government Charter
Melbourne Water Healthy Waterways Strategy 2018-28
The Victorian Water Act 1989
Water for Victoria Water Plan
Planning and Environment Act 1987 (Vic)
Plan Melbourne 2017-2050 (Vic)
Precinct Structure Plans and Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines: New Communities in Victoria October 2021 (Vic)
Road Management Act 2004 (Vic)
Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic)
Wyndham Community Amenity Local Laws (2015)
Australian Standard AS4373:2007 - Pruning of Amenity Trees
Australian Standard AS4970:2009 - Protection of Trees on Development Sites
Australian Standard AS2303:2015 - Tree Stock for Landscape Use
Greening the West Strategic Plan
Living Melbourne: Our metropolitan urban forest

Definitions

Biodiversity	Biological diversity or “biodiversity” is the variety of life forms, including plants, animals, micro-organisms and the ecosystems of which they are a part. Biodiversity encompasses all living things and, importantly, the functions and processes that link and sustain them.
Biodiversity Corridors	Areas of vegetation that allow wildlife to travel from one patch of natural habitat to another.
Conservation Area	A parkland reserve managed by a public authority (including Council) for the purposes of the protection of biodiversity ecological values.
Environmental Weeds	Environmental weeds are plants that invade native ecosystems and have the potential to adversely affect the survival of native flora or fauna or the functioning of ecosystems. List of weeds as per the Advisory List of Environmental Weeds in Victoria (DEECA 2018).
Indigenous vegetation	Plants found naturally within Wyndham. Indigenous plants are the original or local plants that occur naturally, in a given location. They have adapted to the conditions within the local environment such as the soil and climate.
Infrastructure services	Infrastructure services include services such as sewers, pipes, power and telecommunications and similar.
Habitat Structures	Habitat structures include natural or artificial structures that provide habitat for native animals, such as tree hollows, logs, rocks, nest boxes and floating wetlands.
Native Vegetation	Plants indigenous to Victoria including, trees, shrubs, herbs and grasses.
Natural Environment	Areas of naturally occurring and revegetated native vegetation being protected and managed for conservation purposes. Includes ecosystems such as grasslands, woodlands, rivers and wetlands, and encompasses habitats, air, water, soils and biodiversity.
Significant Habitat	Ecosystems, native vegetation, and habitat structures that support or have the potential to support threatened and locally significant species of flora and fauna.

VERSION HISTORY

ID	Date	Author	Revision Reason/Key Changes	Review Date
1.0	25 August 2014	Peter Gibbs, Team Leader Environment	New Policy	3-5 years, or as required
2.0	4 December 2024	Julie Dickson, Environmental Planner	Revision	2029

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