



Welcome to the Birrarung newsletter, your source of updates on the Burndap Birrarung burndap umarkoo – Yarra Strategic Plan – the plan to realise the communities’ vision of a healthy and diverse Birrarung (Yarra river).

Waring season is here - cold and misty mornings, long dark nights, rain moths emerging and, if you are lucky, a wombat or two.

In early June, we marked the second annual **Burndap Birrarung burndap umarkoo Executive Forum**. The forum took place at Abbotsford Convent not far from the river.

It brought together decision-makers from councils, government agencies, and the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (Wurundjeri Corporation) to strengthen our commitment to transform how we care for and respect the Birrarung, across organisational boundaries.

The key themes of the meeting were the Birrarung Council’s recommendations, self-determined Traditional Owner engagement and authorisation of our transformative projects that aim to fulfil the actions in the Plan.



*Uncle Dave Wandin, council and government agency executives, and Yarra Collaboration committee members at 2024 Executive Forum.
Photo credit: Sharon Blance, Image workshop.*

“The role of the Traditional Owners as custodians of Yarra River land should be acknowledged through partnership, representation and involvement in policy planning and decision-making.”

Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn (Yarra River Protection Act) 2017





Commissioner
for Environmental
Sustainability
Victoria

STATE OF THE BIRRARUNG (YARRA) AND ITS PARKLANDS 2023 REPORT

The Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability's 5-yearly State of the Birrarung Report was tabled in parliament in May. It's not a lot of good news, but there are positive trends in some of the 36 indicators used to evaluate the condition of the river and its parklands.

Some of the recommendations:

- support Traditional Owners to implement a program to restore the knowledge system of Traditional Owners for the Birrarung and its parklands.
- ensure community knowledge and perspectives are central to implementation of BBBU.
- commit to a long-term research program to identify the changes to habitat and species occurring in the Yarra and its parklands in response to climate change.
- develop consistent litter monitoring, collection and removal processes and publicly release an annual litter report.

Continued investment and delivery of activities by government agencies and local councils, together with our transformative projects, will contribute to addressing the Commissioner's recommendations. We are also seeing strong alignment between that of the Commissioner's findings and those from the Healthy Waterways Strategy mid-term review.

MEET THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

Paul Mitchell is the Burndap Birrarung burndap Umarkoo (Yarra Strategic Plan) Lead with the **Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation**.

Paul has a PhD in ethnohistory and extensive experience in agricultural and environmental management. For much of Paul's career he has been working with indigenous groups on sustainable livelihoods within a contemporary economy- culturally and environmentally sustainable ways of living on country.



Paul enjoys working cross-culturally, he believes it is a way of enriching your world view. He is excited to work with Wurundjeri on the BBBU as an opportunity to support the recognition and respect of Wurundjeri history, knowledge and contemporary management responsibilities. Since working for Wurundjeri he now sees the landscape where he lives very differently. "Wurundjeri life and knowledge can enrich us all if we allow it to".

When asked what the Birrarung as a living and integrated natural entity meant to him. He said "I am lucky I live near the Birrarung. I can walk along the river and listen to the bush. It is always an encounter, a discovery of untamed life and processes. That immersion is what it means to me."

Photo credit: Jenny Mitchell

PROJECT CORNER: BIRRARUNG FLOATING WETLANDS

Bringing habitat for wildlife back to the urban reach

The lower stretch of the Birrarung was once a rich ecosystem, described as a "temperate Kakadu," and held significant importance for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and the broader Eastern Kulin nation. Extensive urbanisation have left little of this landscape intact.

The floating wetlands project is reintroducing native plantings and providing a study of the potential for restoring the river's wetlands, and opportunities to improve the river system's health and urban landscape. The community can contribute to this effort by recording wildlife observations via iNaturalist, aiding in the project's monitoring and ecological knowledge-building. (adapted from [COM Birrarung Trial Floating Wetlands](#)) For more information see [Channel 31 Community designs episode](#) on YouTube. *Photo credit: Rob Mollov*



Events: Birrarung RiverFest 2024 - 1 to 22 September - more info at <https://yarrariver.org.au/>