



Image credit: Sharon Blance @Imageworks

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).

Poornet, known as the Season of Tadpoles, marks the arrival of spring rains that fill the creeks and waterways, allowing young tadpoles and new plant life to flourish. It's a time of abundance, with wildflowers blooming and animals finding new food sources, as the land awakens from the coolness of winter.



For the Wurundjeri people, Poornet represents more than just a seasonal shift; it's a reminder of the interconnectedness of all life along the Birrarung (Yarra River) and throughout its lands. During Poornet, the community comes together to celebrate and respect these cycles, emphasising the shared responsibility to nurture and protect the ecosystems that sustain us all.



*Selection of photos from some of the 46 events in Birrarung Riverfest 2024 – a celebration of our river Birrarung
Image credits: Sharon Blance@Imageworks, David Redfern, Carolyn Tate.*

This September communities along the Birrarung came together to celebrate and connect with each other and the river as part of the Yarra Riverkeeper Association **Birrarung Riverfest**. Over 22 days, 46 amazingly diverse and engaging events were run by over 200 passionate individuals who live, work and play on the Birrarung. The festival brought over 2000 people to the river at events ranging from guided nature walks, canoe clean-ups, educational workshops, river cruises, bird watching, art installations, music and dance performances, panel discussions, student presentations, documentary showings and story-telling sessions. These activities offered a unique opportunity to experience the Birrarung in a new way, emphasising the river's significance as a living entity and a place of cultural heritage. The festival highlighted the Wurundjeri's enduring custodianship of the river and allowed the broader community to learn about the responsibilities we all share in caring for this vital waterway.

HEALTHWATERWAY STRATEGY MIDTERM REVIEW

The Healthy Waterways Strategy Mid-term review assesses progress of the strategy and identifies areas for improvement. The mid-term review findings were shared through a series of forums including in the Yarra catchment.



Some key findings include:

- Establishment of 367 hectares of new vegetation and maintenance of 5000 hectares of existing vegetation in the catchment.
- Initiation of environmental watering of Birrarung billabongs and ecological response monitoring
- Rural land and water targets largely on track

Some of the mid-term review recommendations in the Yarra catchment are:

- Accelerate delivery of storm water and pollution management targets
- Improve protection of natural wetlands and headwater streams
- Reinvigorate co-delivery between strategy partners
- Enable Traditional Owner-led input to review processes and implementation
- Coordinate effort across agencies to improve water for the environment in regulated and unregulated systems
- Find new ways of working with private landholders on vegetation management and deer control.

The next steps are to run issue-based forums targeting mid-term review priorities and develop catchment priority action plans.

MEET THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

Skye Haldane is the City of Melbourne's representative on the Burndap Birrarung burndap umarkoo's Yarra Collaboration Committee. Skye is a landscape architect whose work combines social science, ecology, history, and design – elements she loves bringing together to create spaces for people and urban wildlife. Her passion for the Birrarung (Yarra River) shines through her role on the committee and as strategic design lead on the Greenline Project, through which she has partnered with colleagues and Wurundjeri Elders, exploring how to transform and respect the river's landscape.



With roots in a remote farm childhood spent exploring nature, Skye has a deep respect for the river's role as a "living entity." She sees the river on her way to work and from her desk each day, observing its "mood" as tides shift. "It's a privilege to witness how it changes and to understand its influence on city life, and how we too can influence it" she says.

The success of the Greenline Project at the World Architecture Festival Awards exemplifies this stewardship approach, along with the City's floating wetlands trial project, which now hosts nesting dusky moorhens and black swans. "I am lucky to have a daily relationship with the Birrarung and I am enjoying learning about the river and how we can do things differently in planning, shaping and managing the public realm – engaging with Country, and shaping spaces that work well for all its inhabitants."

Photo credit: Atong Atem

PROJECT CORNER: BIRRARUNG RANGERS

Centring Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as leaders, decision makers and stewards of their Country.

The Birrarung Rangers project is a transformative initiative that places Traditional Owners at the heart of caring for the land and waterways they have nurtured for millennia. This priority project supports Wurundjeri Corporation's Narrap Unit Rangers, providing the opportunity for them to expand their skills and knowledge. Those stepping into the role of Birrarung Ranger will gain expertise in field-based research and interpretation, cultural knowledge, and the application of scientific techniques- i.e. environmental DNA (eDNA) and bird and vegetation surveys and water quality testing. This initiative is in the project planning stage and is seeking to identify two pilot study areas on Wurundjeri Country for the Birrarung Rangers to focus on.

Photo credit: Charlotte Hilbig

