

Living Melbourne

Our metropolitan urban forest



Resilient Melbourne and The Nature Conservancy are pleased to present you with an overview of *Living Melbourne: our metropolitan urban forest*. This is an Australian first – a metropolitan strategy galvanising support for a unified vision across local government, state government, water authorities, statutory agencies, academics and more. Our vision is for a more liveable Melbourne – where our thriving communities are resilient, connected through nature.

In addition to this strategy overview, *Living Melbourne: our metropolitan urban forest* comprises two documents:

- *Living Melbourne: Strategy*
- *Living Melbourne: Technical Report* which provides technical evidence underpinning the strategy

www.resilientmelbourne.com.au/living-melbourne

This work has been made possible through the work of 100 Resilient Cities and benefits from the work and support of the following 100 Resilient Cities Platform Partners:

Satellite imagery for mapping provided by DigitalGlobe and mapping analysis software provided by Trimble



The following organisations have endorsed *Living Melbourne: our metropolitan urban forest*. Endorsement means organisations support *Living Melbourne's* Vision, Goals and Actions and commit to work in partnership with the other endorsing organisations towards its implementation.



Aboriginal acknowledgement

Living Melbourne, and its many contributors and owners, respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal people as Australia's First Peoples and the local Traditional Owners as the original custodians of the land and water on which we rely and operate, and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and future. We acknowledge the continued cultural, social and spiritual connections that Aboriginal people have with the lands and waters, and recognise and value that the Traditional Owner groups have cared for and protected these lands and waters for thousands of generations. We recognise and value the essential and continuing contribution of Aboriginal people to the region.



Why does Melbourne need an urban forest strategy?

Melbourne is a city consistently applauded as one of the world's most liveable. Key to this liveability are the parks, gardens and leafy streets that we all enjoy. These green spaces get us outside, keep us healthy, provide cooling shade in summer and provide accessible and inclusive places for us to congregate, meet and play.

Melburnians value and are proud of their parks and gardens. Admirable efforts are already under way to add to the natural features that make our city a safe, healthy and pleasant place to live. But Melbourne's urban forest is under pressure.

Changes in urban form, a growing population and climate change – including increasing urban heat – leave Melbourne's greenery vulnerable, and could severely compromise the benefits derived from urban nature like cleaner air and water, reduced heat and habitat for wildlife.

Melbourne needs a plan to reverse this current and future decline and sustain Melbourne's liveability for people and nature, across the entire city and its suburbs.

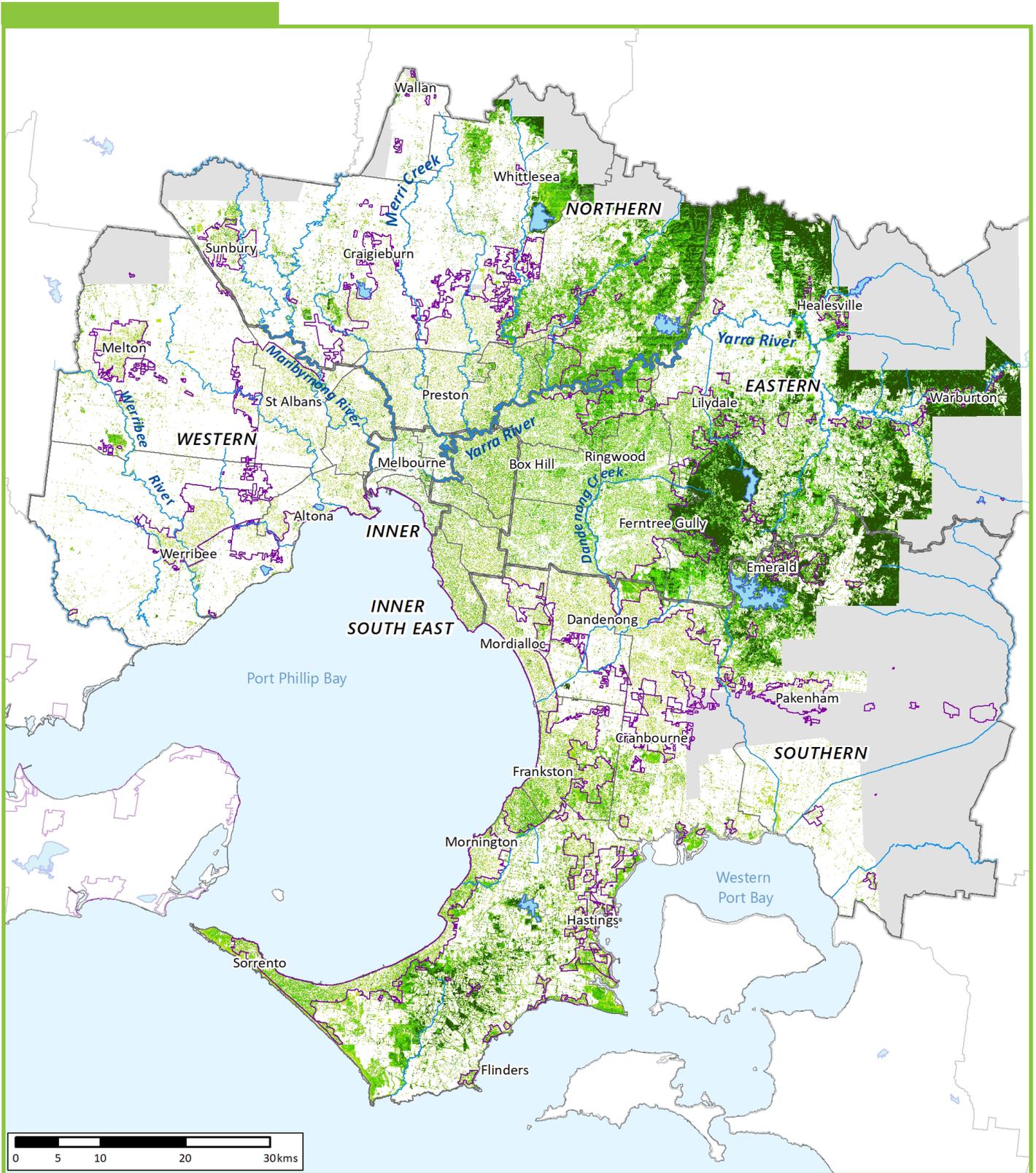
Living Melbourne: our metropolitan urban forest is that plan. It's a bold new strategy for a greener, even more liveable Melbourne into the future. It presents a vision of international significance for its massive scale, its outstanding collaboration, and its use of new and innovative mapping technology.

In developing the strategy, 32 metropolitan councils, state government agencies, non-government and community organisations, and many other partners united around a common vision for our urban forest – **our thriving communities are resilient, connected through nature**. Living Melbourne establishes tangible actions to turn that vision into reality.

Living Melbourne aims to create a profound shift in the way we think about, value and grow Melbourne into the future. Until recently, cities have existed in conflict with nature. Increasingly, around the world, people understand that the success and long-term viability of cities depend on them being able to instead live alongside nature.

The urban forest cleans our air and water, reduces damaging heat in our neighbourhoods, and provides valuable habitat for native flora and fauna. Exposure to nature reduces stress and the incidence of mental illness, and provides opportunities to strengthen community bonds by providing spaces where people can congregate, connect and recreate.

The 21st century will be remembered as the urban century, with the most significant urban growth ever witnessed. Today, just over half of the world's population lives in urban areas, and this is predicted to rise to just over two-thirds by 2050. This is not news for Melbourne. With a population of eight million people projected for 2051, we will soon be the largest city in one of the most urbanised nations on Earth. Given the difficulties that we will face in the urban century, it is crucial that we connect, extend and enhance our urban forest.



Legend

- Metropolitan Partnership Boundaries
- Local Government Areas
- Urban Extent as of 2015
- Major Rivers and Creeks
- Lakes and Reservoirs
- Tree height data not available

Vegetation Heights

- 0.3 - 3m
- 3 - 10m
- 10 - 15m
- > 15m

Melbourne's urban forest



Building resilience in the face of urban challenges



The urban forest is made up of native and exotic trees, shrubs, grasslands and other vegetation, growing on public and private land across metropolitan Melbourne, and the soil and water that support them. This includes vegetation in parks, reserves and private gardens; along railways, waterways, main roads and local streets; and on other green infrastructure such as green walls and roofs. The urban forest encompasses all types of vegetation and ecosystems, but among the most iconic elements are its trees and shrubs. Fauna is an important component too, with complex interrelations between animals and plants helping to maintain the urban forest.

Urbanisation, globalisation and climate change are causing more people to move to cities. This presents a series of challenges which reduce and threaten the liveability of those cities. More than ever before, we need nature in our cities. Although growth brings tremendous opportunities for innovation and economic development, it also threatens the natural environment and the many ecosystem services it provides to Melburnians.

As metropolitan Melbourne expands outwards and also becomes more densely populated, green space is shrinking, putting many of our natural values at risk.

Images (a) and (b) demonstrate where three dwellings have been redeveloped to yield eight dwellings. This resulted in a gain of five dwellings, but with less private open space, less overall vegetation and canopy cover and a significant gain in impervious surfaces (source: Nearmap).



(a) 2010



(b) 2018

Despite the perception of extensive green areas, some of Melbourne's local government areas have among the lowest urban tree canopy cover in Australia. With Melbourne's population growing and its area expanding, we must act now if we are to maintain and improve our city's liveability and appeal for generations to come.

To build resilience we must look at our city in its entirety, to understand its many assets and systems and how they interact with each other. Nature is increasingly recognised as one of our most valuable resilience assets: the urban forest and the biodiversity that it supports can take pressure off our increasingly strained built infrastructure. Failure to protect and improve our urban forest is a missed opportunity to unlock the economic, health and social dividends that strengthen Melbourne's ability to thrive, no matter what the future holds. Protecting and enhancing natural areas and habitat for flora and fauna in cities is essential for strengthening our resilience to acute shocks (such as heatwaves and extreme weather events) and chronic stresses (such as climate change, development pressure on ecosystem services and vulnerable communities). Climate change and urbanisation both exacerbate all of these challenges.

Benefits of an urban forest

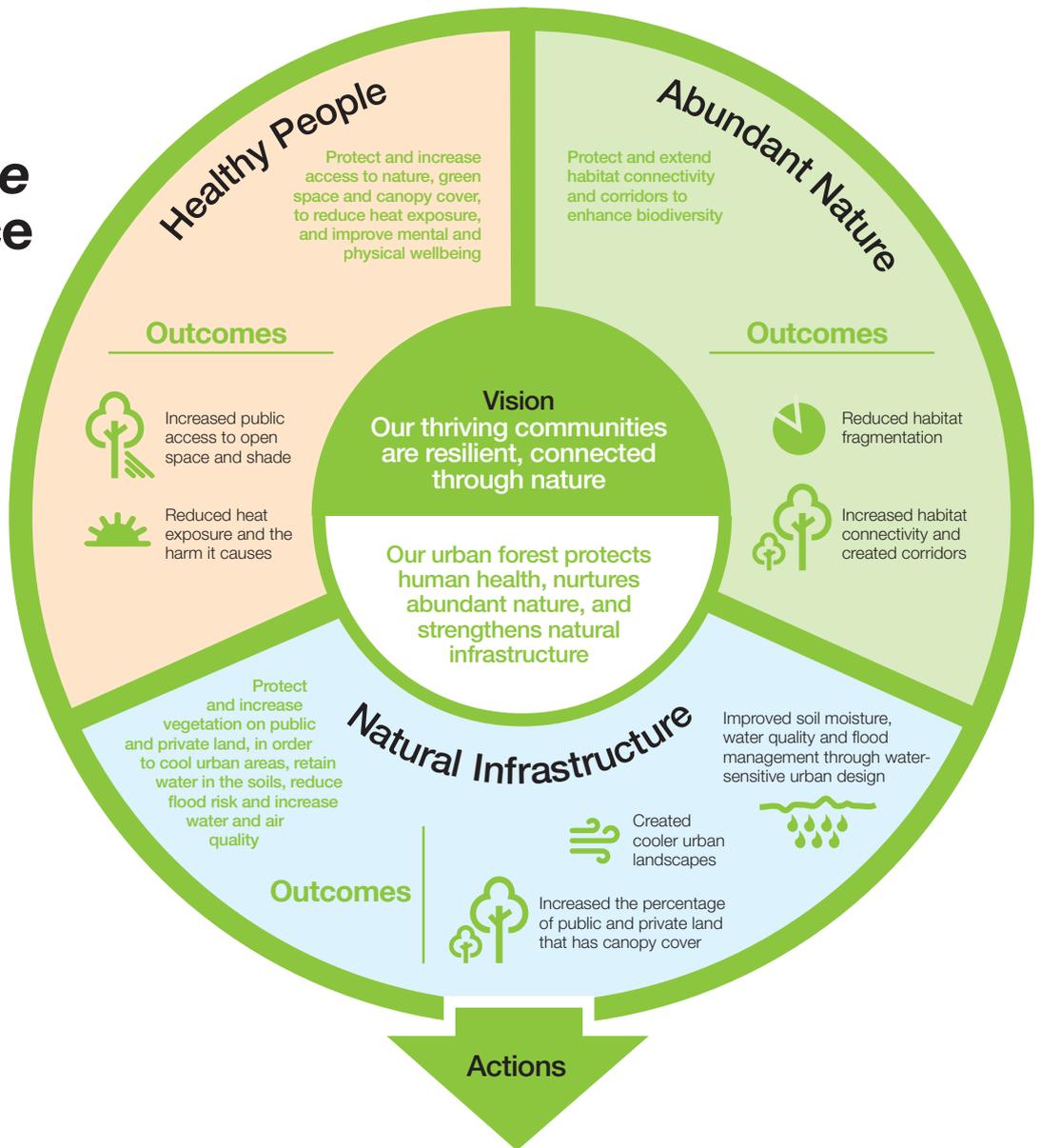


Beyond delivering critical services, nature provides our communities and our economy with valuable co-benefits that build community resilience and support individual wellbeing. The integration of natural spaces in the urban environment helps solve important problems and improves the daily lives of a diverse and growing urban population.

Trees and other vegetation are essential components of urban infrastructure, providing a range of benefits.



Living Melbourne at a glance



Action 1

Protect and restore species habitat, and improve connectivity



Action 2

Set targets and track progress



Action 3

Scale up greening in the private realm



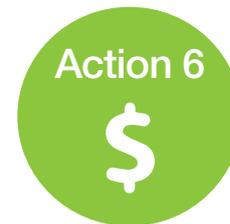
Action 4

Collaborate across sectors and regions



Action 5

Build a toolkit of resources to underpin implementation



Action 6

Fund the protection and enhancement of the urban forest

Join us in delivering *Living Melbourne*

The *Living Melbourne* strategy has been prepared by The Nature Conservancy and Resilient Melbourne on behalf of many partners across metropolitan Melbourne. To achieve its vision of thriving communities that are resilient and connected through nature, all sectors and regions have a role to play. Local government authorities across the metropolitan region will continue to perform an invaluable role as managers and custodians of many of the parks, streetscapes and open spaces that form a fundamental part of our urban forest. Their involvement is also essential for working with residents and the broader community to generate local action. It is hoped that this strategy provides the missing link for us to all work better together to connect, protect and enhance Melbourne's urban forest.

Find out more by visiting www.resilientmelbourne.com.au/living-melbourne to view and download the full strategy and supporting technical report.

