



Yarra Link Project

July 2016

Background

The Yarra Link Project emerged in response to the desire to provide a location for the community to experience a re-vegetated space dedicated to environmental research, art installation, education, and community events. We are committed to creating a space where indigenous flora and fauna can flourish and act as a base for education and exploration of the natural environment, conservation efforts and sustainable technology.

We aim to reconnect with the meanings and traditional uses of the plants that were endemic to the area in order to foster a greater cultural understanding. In November of 2013 an opportunity arose to acquire a riverfront parcel of land within the Stonnington region and from there the Yarra Link Project found a natural home for these aspirations. By partnering with neighbouring land owners, The Yarra Link Project is set to become the largest indigenous garden within the CBD.

The property provides a unique environment close to public transport and major population centres but also with a vista that makes the city seem far away. We hope to share this space and make it an integral part of the community as we learn about and revive the history, culture, plants and animals of this special location.

Acknowledgement

In keeping with the spirit of Reconciliation, we acknowledge the Boonwurrung and Wurundjeri Peoples as the Traditional Owners of the lands where the Yarra Link Project now resides. We recognise the connection of these Peoples to the land and that these places have been sites of teaching and learning throughout history. We wish to pay respect to the Elders and acknowledge the role Aboriginal people continue to play within the local community.

Vision and Plan

The Yarra Link Project is an urban revegetation project that will educate the community about local ecology and sustainable use of plants and their medicinal properties. During 2016 the project is administering activities funded by a grant from Melbourne Water to begin re-vegetating the banks of the site. We have also worked with Melbourne landscape architects to develop plans for a jetty and small structure on site which can be used for workshops, environmental research, and administration.

The Yarra Link programs will combine the responsible use of sustainable land management techniques and technologies to support a productive and beautiful space for teaching, meeting

and participating in the regrowth of a diverse and representative indigenous ecology. This year the project hosted a Cleanup Australia Day event for dozens of volunteers. Recently a Monash engineering student designed an award winning litter catchment system which was tested at the Yarra Link Project site.



Objectives

The Project aims to involve the Melbourne community in urban ecological conservation activities.

Environmental

- Work with local organisations and authorities to improve land and water quality.
- Engage in research regarding indigenous plants and propagation of a diverse and representative sample of the local flora.
- Breed and distribute seeds of endangered species.
- Provide a test-case for application of minimal impact land management techniques (including management of invasive plants and improvement of water runoff capture).

Arts and Commerce

- The site will be utilised for educational workshops and cooperative projects with local groups including schools, the local university and community groups.
- Deploy examples of sustainable technologies suitable for soil and energy conservation.
- Maintain a multi-function open-air venue available for local artists.
- Collaborate with Melbourne businesses to bring tourists and visitors to an indigenous garden and community space.

Social

- To improve community knowledge of indigenous plants and urban revegetation practices.
- Provide a meeting point and group activities for a diverse cross section of community members.
- Improve the connections between community groups and encourage well-being through social engagement.
- Demonstrate traditional food and medicinal uses of plants.
- Engage local groups in accessible educational activities.

Next Steps

The Yarra Link Project is a growing community. We are planning a number of events and have some exciting changes happening to the site in 2017. There will be extensive soil improvement activities and planting of indigenous hedges around the paths on the site. We will be having events including music and educational events to introduce more people to the site. These plans go hand-in-hand with continuing to strengthen links with key stakeholders including the local community, Melbourne Water and the Yarra River Keeper. We will continue to be leaders in developing ecological strategies for the protection of the local environment and aim to begin educational sessions focused on plant diversity and water management.

