Frankston's Biodiversity Policy

(A3567350)

opportunity » growth » lifestyle

1. Policy statement

Frankston City Council (FCC) values the biodiversity, and its constituent ecosystems, that support the health, wellbeing and quality of life of the community and its visitors.

The Biodiversity Policy provides a framework for making structured, consistent and environmentally sound decisions for all biodiversity assets within the Municipality, with the goal to increase Frankston City's healthy ecosystem coverage, quality and connectivity.

Vision

It is of the utmost importance that Australia's biodiversity is healthy and resilient to threats, and valued in its own right and for its essential contribution to our existence.

Frankston City contributes to national biodiversity health by supporting healthy and resilient ecosystems connected by a network of biolinks (wildlife corridors) that provide benefits for the entire community, for present and future generations. The Municipality's landscape is defined by a diversity of well-connected habitats and a healthy canopy allowing the movement of plants, animals and exchange of genetic material within Frankston City and beyond.

An educated and engaged community values and supports the conservation of local biodiversity. Frankston's ecosystems, biolinks and healthy waterways enhance the liveability of our Municipality and foster strong community connections with nature.

2. Reason for Policy

FCC has a key role to play in biodiversity conservation. It will strive to be a leader in biodiversity conservation, as well as advocate for protection of environmental values from external threats.

Background

Before European settlement the Frankston municipality sustained a highly diverse mix of natural ecosystems including heathlands, woodlands, coastal headlands and dunes, grasslands, creeks, wetlands estuaries and marine ecosystems. These habitats supported a profusion of wildlife and this diversity and abundance of plants and animals was integral to the diet and lifestyle of the traditional Aboriginal custodians.

By 2017, 85 to 90 percent of Frankston's native vegetation had been cleared, resulting in a significant reduction in biological diversity within the Municipality. The loss of native vegetation since European settlement resulted in habitat loss for native animals that has led to the local extinction of large iconic species such as Kangaroos, Emus, Wombats, Goannas and Dingos. Some well-loved natives such as

Koalas, Swamp Wallabies and Echidnas are now vulnerable to local extinction as native vegetation continues to be cleared.

In recent years the requirements for development and bushfire protection has seen major losses of native vegetation from the Municipality, yet it continues to support many important areas of natural habitat and a diversity of native plants and animals. There are 23 different major native plant communities known as Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs)[1] within the Municipality, providing habitat for at least 534 native flora species (documented records in Council Natural Reserves refer to Appendix 1) and at least 312 species of native fauna, of which 40 are listed as threatened species[2] (documented records in Council Natural Reserves refer to Appendix 1). Frankston City is also home to the southern part of the Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands, the only urban wetland in Victoria listed under the international Ramsar Convention.

Frankston's geographical position on Melbourne's urban fringe, between the natural and rural landscapes of the Mornington Peninsula and Westernport and the south eastern growth corridor means that the objectives of urban growth and development and protection of natural values and biodiversity are potentially in conflict and need to be finely balanced through careful planning and a commitment to maintaining, enhancing and protecting Frankston's biodiversity assets.

There is potential for impacts on biodiversity through disturbance, development pressure and widespread and rapid removal of native vegetation and habitat for local species.

In addition to urban development, other pressures exist in both rural and urban environments which threaten local flora, fauna and ecosystems. These include impacts of pest plants and animals, land water and air pollutants, littering, inappropriate land management and changing climate due to global warming.

The Major Threats to Frankston's Biodiversity Values include:

- Inappropriate development
- Pest and feral animals
- Weed invasion
- Land, water and air pollutants
- Illegal vegetation removal and vandalism
- Dumping of rubbish
- Inappropriate land management practices
- Impacts of global warming

3. Scope

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

[1] Ecology Australia (2006) Frankston Vegetation Study

[2] Frankston City Council Natural Reserves Flora and Fauna lists compiled by Specialist Vegetation Unit

4. Authorisation

This Policy is managed by the Planning and Environment Department, and is approved by Frankston City's Mayor and Council's Chief Executive Officer (CEO):

Mayor, Frankston City

CEO, Frankston City Council

in accordance with Frankston City Council resolution at its Ordinary Council meeting of 19 February 2018.

5. Revision date

This Policy will be reviewed and presented to Council no later than September 2022 or earlier as deemed necessary by Council, and therefore once within each subsequent Council term.

6. Principles

6.1 Protect and Enhance

Principles of high quality planning and development within the Municipality must include protection and maintenance of strong healthy ecosystems that improve the overall amenity and liveability of the Municipality.

State biodiversity and native vegetation provisions place emphasis on protecting biodiversity that is recognised as significant or important at national and state levels.

While some of Frankston's biodiversity assets are protected under state and federal legislation and managed accordingly, many local assets are not recognised. Local and regionally significant indigenous vegetation, fauna, wetlands and waterways make an important contribution to the biological diversity of the Municipality and the southeast region of Melbourne. It is vital to protect, maintain and enhance this biodiversity.

Municipal policy is important for local biodiversity conservation because it influences directly how and where development takes place. This in turn affects Frankston's ecology and landscapes.

FCC has recognised the importance of locally significant biodiversity through strengthening its Environmental planning controls including the Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO) and the Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO). However there are many biodiversity assets such as scattered large old habitat trees that are not protected by overlays or other planning controls.

Whether formal planning protection is or is not provided, throughout the Municipality the importance of biodiversity assets including native canopy trees, large old hollow-bearing trees, wildlife corridors and fauna habitat will be recognised and considered in all use and development decision making.

6.2 Avoid, Minimise and Mitigate

The Municipality seeks to avoid removal of, and adverse impacts to, biodiversity assets including canopy trees (particularly those with hollows), indigenous vegetation, and habitat for indigenous fauna, waterways, wetlands and coastal environments.

There will be circumstances where removal of some indigenous vegetation or trees is deemed unavoidable. Vegetation and tree removal may be deemed necessary for tree health and human safety, to manage bushfire risks, to protect existing infrastructure, to facilitate approved development or for ecological restoration.

In all situations, potential impacts on biodiversity values will be assessed by a suitably qualified and experienced Council officer and the 'avoidance hierarchy' (avoid, minimise and mitigate) will be applied prior to recommendation for vegetation removal or impact. Under the avoidance hierarchy alternate options such as development re-design or re-sighting will be considered.

Where impact on vegetation is unavoidable, FCC will seek to minimise vegetation and habitat removal and the impact on biodiversity values. Such effects will be mitigated through sound management practices, protection of other sites with biodiversity values and revegetation or reinstatement of ecosystems.

Mitigation measures for approved removal or impact on biodiversity assets will be appropriate to compensate for the vegetation and habitat removed or destroyed. In those cases where removal is approved, mitigation measures will include (but not be limited to), replacement planting, installation of nest boxes, improvement works and protection to the satisfaction of FCC. Such mitigation measures must be provided as soon as practicable. Mitigation measures must be reported on to monitor their success.

Council is committed to:

- Ensuring all Council capital works projects and maintenance operations adhere to the 'avoid, minimise, mitigate' principles;
- Advocating for capital works projects and maintenance operations undertaken on public land by other agencies to adhere to the 'avoid, minimise, mitigate' principles wherever possible;
- Critically assessing use and development proposals which will disrupt ecological functions based on habitat connectivity with other natural areas and values at both landscape-scale and a localised context;
- Critically assessing all permits to remove native vegetation, including understorey, canopy trees and large old hollow-bearing trees, with a view of achieving the best possible biodiversity outcomes including avoidance and minimisation of impacts where a reasonable alternative can be identified;
- Advocating for Native Vegetation Offsets for removed or destroyed vegetation to remain within the Frankston municipality; and
- Advocating for Frankston's future growth, land use, land zoning and urban design to be sympathetic to existing natural areas and habitat corridors.

6.3 Protect Threatened Species

Frankston City provides habitat for a number of plants and animals that are listed as threatened with extinction either within Victoria, nationally and, in some cases internationally. These species include trees, orchids, shrubs, grasses, fish, frogs, reptiles and birds (including international seasonal migrants).

The Municipality recognises it plays an important role in supporting populations of these threatened species within our region and contributes to the protection and enhancement of their populations within Victoria, Australia and internationally.

Council is committed to:

- Continuing to identify and map habitat for threatened species through on-going surveys;
- Critically assessing development proposals, capital works plans and maintenance operations which may potentially impact on key habitat for threatened species or impact on habitat connectivity with a view to achieving the best possible outcomes for these species;
- Managing parks and reserves supporting rare and threatened species to protect and enhance their populations; and
- Promoting Frankston's rare and threatened flora and fauna as assets for the community to value, protect and contribute to their recovery.

6.4 Enhance Connectivity

Continual development within the Municipality and further fragmentation of habitat is threatening the persistence and resilience of wildlife by creating barriers to movement essential for their ongoing survival.

Greening Our Future, Frankston City's Environment Strategy identifies creation and protection of wildlife corridors or 'biolinks' as a key action aimed at addressing this threatening process. Enhancement of existing linkages and creation of new ones across all land tenures will enable plants and animals to disperse and exchange genetic material and protect populations from long term decline and local extinction as a result of isolation.

Council has identified a network of connected habitats located on both private land and public land within the Municipality where there is potential for enhancement of existing biolinks.

The Frankston Fauna Linkages and Crossing Structure Design Study (Practical Ecology 2012) is a technical document prepared for FCC to provide a strategic approach to the protection and enhancement of wildlife corridors and inform various aspects of strategic and statutory planning. The map showing the Very high and high priority linkages is an important visual tool which guides decision making (Attachment 1).

The Municipality recognises that strengthening of connecting habitat links is critical in maintaining biodiversity within the municipality.

Council is committed to:

- Ensuring all capital works projects and maintenance operations carried out by FCC and other public agencies consider the *Frankston Fauna Linkages and Crossing Structure Design Study* as part of the

design or planning phase and ensure biodiversity values are being considered early in the project design and planning process;

- Ensuring all development proposals, capital works plans and maintenance operations which may impact on habitat connectivity are critically assessed with reference to the *Frankston Fauna Linkages and Crossing Structure Design Study* with a view to achieving the best possible outcomes for maintain and enhancing biolinks; and
- Considering options to strategically protect and enhance land for conservation of local ecosystems, focusing on linking existing biodiversity sites and conserving high quality flora, fauna and ecosystems.

  Working with other agencies and land owners to communicate the importance of certain land parcels for connectivity and assisting with the appropriate management to improve their ecological value"

6.5 Encourage Replanting

FCC seeks to maximise opportunities to increase its indigenous vegetation cover (including tree canopy cover) through replanting projects. Replanting with species of local provenance is a key component in the success of local biodiversity preservation. Council runs and promotes a number of community planting projects including National Tree Day and Schools Tree Day and supports local 'Friends' groups.

Further opportunities for replanting will be identified in parks and reserves, other Council owned and managed land, and on land owned and managed by other agencies (in partnership). Replanting projects will be strategic and include enhancement of key habitat patches and biolinks.

FCC will promote this objective through education programs and by increasing community awareness of the value of natural habitat, indigenous vegetation and canopy cover. Private landholders in areas of high biodiversity value will be encouraged to undertake replanting as part of the overall management of their properties and new development will be required to provide suitable landscaping.

Council is committed to:

- Continuing to run events and community engagement programs;
- Identifying key sites along biolinks suitable for replanting;
- Requiring replacement planting for any trees and vegetation approved for removal; and
- Developing guidelines for landscaping and replanting to ensure suitable species are being used.

6.6 Community consultation, education and engagement

Community awareness and education are critical in conserving Frankston's biodiversity both now and for future generations. FCC encourages consultation and communication with residents about protecting and managing the Municipality's biodiversity assets.

FCC is committed to improving community understanding of biodiversity, including the importance of biodiversity in a local, regional, state and national context. Frankston City Council recognises that a strong connection with nature within the community inspires an appreciation of natural areas. This can be encouraged through activities that foster a sense of connection, understanding and appreciation for natural areas.

Ongoing support will be provided to the community via biodiversity extension/incentive programs, education and other on-ground and innovative projects.

Council encourages community ownership, pride and respect of conservation areas through its support and partnerships with community volunteer 'Friends' groups, the Frankston indigenous nursery and the Frankston Environmental Friends Network (FEFN). Council supports community planting days and tree giveaways through various events and programs.

Fact sheets, management programs and community activities will be provided on Council's website, social media, newsletters and local papers. These resources will cover FCC's biodiversity assets, and legislation relating to biodiversity and its conservation.

FCC recognises that our ecosystems and species exist across municipal and other land tenure boundaries. As such Council will ensure that land managers including governments at all levels, businesses, communities, private landholders and non-government organisations work together to maximise conservation outcomes.

Partnerships will continue to be developed with relevant agencies, authorities and the community to further biodiversity conservation objectives in our region and ensure consistent decision-making to protect biodiversity assets.

Council will develop partnerships with agencies and the community for local and regional biodiversity projects and activities to create most efficient use of resources and continue to provide clear and consistent advice and response to internal and external customers including landholders and the community.

6.7 Management Practices

Frankston City manages 55 bushland reserves which contain examples of the Municipality's key natural ecosystems and fauna habitat. These natural reserves are managed by specialist teams and contain some of the best ecological sites within the municipal boundary. To maintain their values, the Municipality undertakes informed, dedicated and strategic management.

FCC will investigate, promote and adopt on a site specific basis the use of predator proof fencing and wildlife friendly fencing (that aims to reduce barriers to fauna movements and prevent injury) in its natural reserves and encourage other organisations and private landholders to adopt a similar approach.

Council will maintain updated management plans for its natural reserves and ensure that plans and strategic documents addressing threats to biodiversity, including pest species and fire management, are reviewed and revised in a timely manner.

FCC is committed to:

- Retaining, maintaining, managing and enhancing biodiversity within areas of its control and mitigate threats to biodiversity;
- Supporting well-resourced, knowledgeable and well trained environment and conservation staff, who in turn can assist in embedding policy principles throughout the organization;
- Ensuring its employees understand and value Frankston's natural environment and relevant legislation in order to make informed decisions that provide biodiversity protection and improvement to the environment;
- Recognising that in an increasingly fragmented environment, planted and natural vegetation in urban areas plays an important role in habitat connectivity between our natural reserves;
- Retaining existing and reconnecting fragmented biodiversity corridors where possible, including to neighbouring municipalities and
- Planning and decision making for long term resilience and adaptability of biodiversity in a changing environment and climate.

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 Manager Planning and Environment and the Coordinator Biodiversity shall be responsible for ensuring Councillors, Managers and Coordinators, contract and volunteer documents are informed of this policy and its guiding principles, relevant legislation, and the value of Frankston's natural environment.

7.2 Managers and Coordinators within Council are responsible for ensuring all Council Officers consider the principles of this Policy in all activities and decision making processes

7.3 Managers and Coordinators within Council will support staff in seeking further knowledge and training in biodiversity issues where there is value in the sharing of knowledge within the organisation and community

7.4 Manager Planning and Environment and the Coordinator Biodiversity shall be responsible for the review of this policy.

8. Policy non-compliance

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.

9. Related documents

- Council Plan 2017-2021
- Frankston Fauna Linkages and Crossing Structure Design 2012
- Green Wedge Management Plan (under development)
- Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan (under development)
- Integrated Water Action Plan 2016-2026
- Climate Change Impacts and Adaptations Plan 2011
- Open Space Strategy 2016-2036
- Draft Frankston City Community Plan 2017-2021
- Coastal Management Plan 2016
- Urban Forest Policy 2017
- Urban Forest Action Plan (under development)
- Greening our Future – Environment Strategy 2014-2024
- Environmental Sustainability Policy 2010

10. Implementation of the Policy

This Policy (in conjunction with other Related Documents) will be implemented by the Planning and Environment Department. The policy will be incorporated into the key decision making processes of all areas within Council. The Planning and Environment Department will develop a range of tools to assist in the understanding of the values of Frankston's natural environment to work towards achieving the vision of this Policy.

11. Definitions

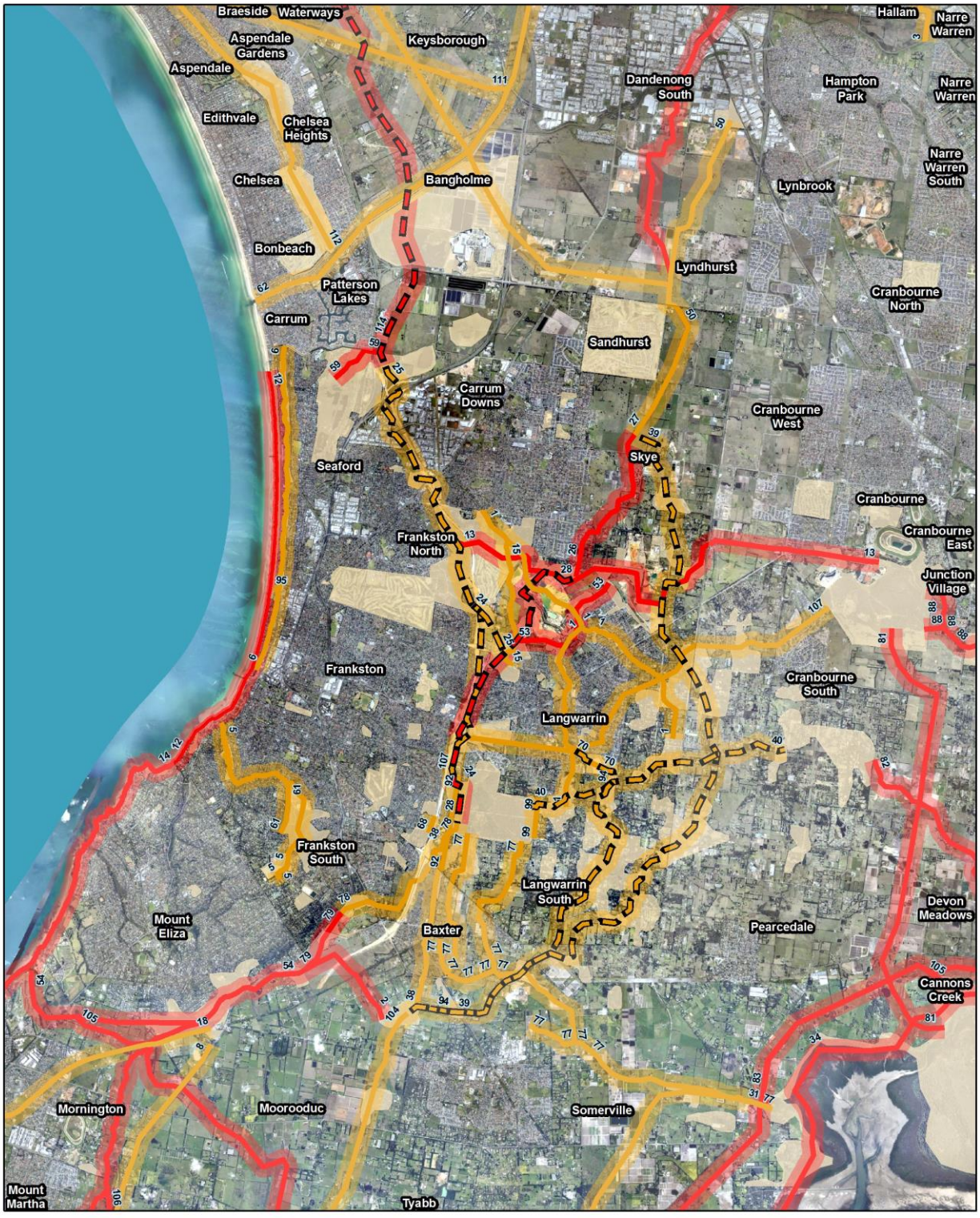
Biodiversity
Biodiversity is the variety of life in an area including the animals, plants and micro-organisms, the genes they contain and the ecosystems of which they are a part. Conservation of biodiversity is important for a healthy environment that supports life, human well-being and economic sustainability within our Municipality. Biodiversity provides us with fresh air, clean water and plant pollination, which contributes to food security. Frankston's biodiversity assets include indigenous vegetation and fauna, canopy trees, waterways, wetlands and coastal environments.

Biolinks / Wildlife Corridors
Biolinks or wildlife corridors are connections across the landscape that link up areas of habitat. They support natural processes that occur in a healthy environment, including the movement of species to find resources, such as food and water.

Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC)
Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVC's) is a Victorian vegetation classification system that groups vegetation communities based on the types of plant species, the components and vegetation structure and the ecological features present in an area.

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is an international treaty first signed in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971. This treaty provides the framework for national action and international co-operation to protect wetlands around the world. It is administered by the Ramsar Bureau, which is based in Geneva, Switzerland.



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Corridor Link Type and Priority
- stepping stone-high priority
- continuous-high priority
- stepping stone-very high priority
- continuous-very high priority
- patch linkage

*Note: corridors are labelled at both ends

Fauna Linkages and Designs
High Priority Corridors

N

0 1 2 Km

Version	02	Date	20/12/2012

APPENDIX 1 – Flora and Fauna Surveys conducted in Council Natural Reserves

Flora

SMEC (2011) Flora and Fauna Assessment of Natural Reserves in Frankston

Practical Ecology (2008) Flora and Fauna Assessment of Five Natural Reserves in Frankston

Brunner, H. & Courtney, B. (1996). "Flora and Fauna Surveys of Natural Reserves in Frankston".

Ecology Australia (2006). "Frankston Vegetation Study". Project 05-5 Planning Review

Brunner, H. & Courtney, B. (1999). "Flora and Fauna Surveys of Baxter Park Bushland".

Carr, G.W., Robinson, R. W., & McMahon, A.R.G. (1991). "Vegetation of the Ti-Tree Crescent Study Area, Seaford". Ecological Horticulture, Clifton Hill.

Brunner, H. & Coutrney, B. (1999). "Flora and Fauna Surveys of Bunarong Park".

Felix Botanica (2004). "Frankston Foreshore Weed Management Strategy & Revegetation Recommendations". Draft

Brunner, H. & Courtney, B. (1999). "Flora and Fauna Surveys of Kananook Creek Reserve".

Biosis (2004). Correspondence with Landscape Architect Kananook Trail

Brunner, H. & Courtney, B. (1999). "Flora and Fauna Surveys of Seaford Wetlands.

Department of Conservation & Environment (1991). "Seaford Foreshore Reserve Management Plan".

Practical Ecology (2008) Flora and Fauna Assessment of Five Natural Reserves in Frankston (Fairbridge, D., McCaffrey, N., & Legg, M.)

Ecology Australia & Woodward-Clyde (1997). "Frankston City Vegetation Study".

Kananook Creek Corridor (2009) Kananook Creek Association.

Terra Forma (1999) "Paratea Management Plan"

Practical Ecology (2004). "Habitat Assessment for Six Sections of Riparian Corridor around Melbourne, Victoria". Draft. Kern, L., Gannon, P. & Bales, T. report prepared for Melbourne Water.

Terra Forma (1999) "Sweetwater Creek Reserve Management Plan" (Lower).

Gordes, C. & F. (2000) "Significant Species Paratea Reserve". Informal Survey.

Terra Forma (2003) "Illawong Reserve Management Plan".

Terra Forma (2003) "Banjo Rise Reserve Management Plan"

Terra Forma (2003) "Wallace Avenue Reserve Management Plan".

Riparian Australia (1999). "Studio Park Management Plan".

Riparian Australia (1999). "Casuarina Reserve Management Plan".

Terra Forma (1999) "Frankston Foreshore Reserve Management Plan".

Practical Ecology (2007). "Flora and Fauna Assessment of 315 North Road, Langwarrin" (Stringybark)

Terra Forma (1999). "Bunarong Park Management Plan".

Walker, G. (1992). "Management Plan for Habitat Restoration in Seaford Flora and Fauna Reserve". (Seaford Foreshore)

Terra Forma (2003). "Outlook Reserve Management Plan".

Practical Ecology (2010). "Flora and Fauna Assessment of Frankston and Seaford Foreshore".

Letter Correspondence from Biosis to Landscape Architect FCC (2004).

Biosis (2005). "Pest Management Plan: Willow Road Reserve, Frankston Victoria". Yugovic, J. & Koehler, S.

Save the Bush (1993). "The Vegetation and Management of Seaford Foreshore Reserve".Walker, G., Greening, J. & Duggan, D.

Terra Forma Pty. Ltd. (2000). "Baxter Woodland and Equestrian Reserve. Draft Management Plan".

Terra Forma Pty. Ltd. (2000). "Belvedere Bushland Reserve Management Plan".

Terra Forma Pty. Ltd. (2002). "Belvedere Bushland Reserve Management Plan".

Brunner, H. & Courtney, B. (2003). "Flora and Fauna Survey of Belvedere Reserve".

Terramatrix Wildlife Management Services & Indigenous Design Land Management. (2010). "Bunarong Park: Natural Reserves Fire Management Zones".

Terra Forma (1999). "Seaford Foreshore Reserve and Keast Park Management Plan".

Environmental Resources Management Australia (2005). "Spring Hill Estate and Acacia Heath Estate Flora and Fauna Assessment, Langwarrin".

Fauna

Brunner, H & Courtney, B (1999) Flora & Fauna Surveys of the Kananook Creek Reserve

Fairbridge, D. McCaffrey, N. & Legg, M. (2008) Flora & Fauna Assessment of Five Natural Reserves in Frankston (Practical Ecology Pty Ltd)

Koehler, S & Yugovic J (2005) Flora & Fauna of Willow Road Reserve, Frankston, Victoria

Norris, K. & Associates (1992) The Fauna of the Pines Study Area and Recommendations for its Management

Brunner, H. & Wallis, R.L. (1993) The Vertebrate Fauna of the Seaford Foreshore Reserve - Final Report

Riparian Australia (1999) Seaford Wetlands Management Plan Frankston City Council

Brunner, H. & Courtney, B (1999) Flora & Fauna Surveys of Baxter Park Bushland

Brunner, H. & Courtney, B (1999) Flora & Fauna Surveys of Bunarong Park

Brunner, H. & Courtney, B (1999) Flora & Fauna Surveys of Seaford Wetlands

Brunner, H & Courtney,B (1996) Flora and Fauna Surveys of Natural Reserves in Frankston

Casuarina Reserve Management Plan (1999). Prepared by Riparian Australia

Practical Ecology. (2003) Flora and Fauna Assessment of 115 Aqueduct Rd, Langwarrin

Practical Ecology. (2010) Flora and Fauna Assessment of Frankston and Seaford Foreshore

SMEC (2011) Flora and Fauna Assessment of Natural Reserves in Frankston

Practical Ecology. (2007) Flora and Fauna Assessment of 315 North Rd, Langwarrin

Legg, M (2012) Fauna Surveys of 6 City of Frankston Bushland Reserves

Legg, M (2013) Fauna Surveys of 5 City of Frankston Bushland Reserves

Environmental Resource Management Australian (2005) Spring Hill Estate and Acacia Heath Estate Flora and Fauna Assessment Langwarrin.