

Frankston's Biodiversity

A Discussion Paper



opportunity >> growth >> lifestyle



Nature is life and includes everything from the land, soil, rocks, groundwater, waterways and every living thing ('Biodiversity'). All human activities and land uses ultimately rely on a diverse and functioning natural environment.

The critical role of maintaining healthy natural systems and the benefits of connecting with nature for society and personal health and well - being are increasingly recognised by governments and communities worldwide.

Frankston's Habitats - past and present

Of Melbourne's urban fringe areas, the diversity of habitats and plant and animal communities in Frankston is notably high and includes wetlands, coastal scrub, open grassy woodlands, forest, heathlands, and grasslands. This diversity is the legacy of the geological origins of the region with sand blowing out of Port Phillip Bay over millennia collecting at different depths, supporting heathlands and heathy woodlands and often creating barriers that created wetlands as streams flowing to the sea were blocked. Where the sand didn't reach the underlying clay soils supported open grasslands and woodlands.

Since European settlement, most of the native vegetation cover of the city has been lost but, despite the impacts of urbanization, the high diversity of habitats remains although in a much depleted and fragmented state.



Additionally, there is a growing appreciation that the contribution residential backyards and pocket parks can also play in supporting biodiversity with a growing momentum of Gardens for Wildlife programs being implemented across the state.

The importance for biodiversity conservation of small bush blocks, urban waterways, road reserves and even smaller backyards have increased significantly in the context of the catastrophic loss of habitat and flora and fauna that occurred during the 2019-20 fires and increased residential development.

However, small and fragmented habitat patches face a range of threats including weed invasion, the impacts of pest animals such as foxes and rabbits and clearing of canopy trees and understory vegetation.

Managing threats to local biodiversity and improving the quality of the remaining habitat for plants and animals in our local area as well as balancing competing needs such as fire prevention are significant challenges for Council and the community and meeting these challenges will be the focus of the Frankston Biodiversity Action Plan.



Remnant indigenous vegetation still covers about 13% of the municipality, making an important contribution to regional biological diversity and includes all 17 vegetation types that were here before European settlement.

The diversity of native habitats in Frankston is supported by its extensive network of Council bushland reserves and the conservation reserves managed by Parks Victoria. But while public land protects much of our biodiversity, some of the rarest habitats are almost exclusively found on private land.

Conventional wisdom in past decades has been that large national parks and conservation reserves would provide secure long term protection for biodiversity but the impacts of climate change are resulting in a new understanding and appreciation of the critical role of fragmented bushlands in urban and semi-urban areas.

The extensive wildfires of the summer 2019-2020 caused massive losses of biodiversity in south eastern Australia across some of our largest national parks. Now, areas outside the public reserve system in the rural, semi - urban and urban landscapes are being recognized for their contribution to maintaining our biodiversity.

Research shows

There is vast body of scientific evidence documenting the rapid global decline and increasing threats to almost all ecosystems, plants, animals and other life-forms. There are also clear pathways to addressing this decline which must be taken by all levels of government and society.

There is now strong evidence to show that that when people spend time in nature, be it a local park or the bush they are more likely to recognise its importance to their own wellbeing and to society, and therefore to behave in ways that help to protect and sustain it. In addition research shows that time spent in natural spaces and working to manage and protect them is linked to positive long-term health outcomes across demographics and age- groups.



Legislation

International

As a party to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and a range of related international conventions, Australia contributes to the global biodiversity framework, and its targets, to conserve and use biodiversity in a sustainable manner and share benefits arising from genetic resources in a fair and equitable way.

National

Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019-2030 is the overarching framework for all national, state and territory and local strategies, legislation, policies and actions that target nature.

The strategy's central principle is connection with nature - *"By connecting people with nature, we enhance their desire to care for nature, which in turn builds knowledge that can be shared to improve our care for nature and the benefits we receive from connecting with nature"*.

State

The federal approach also underpins Victoria's state-wide biodiversity strategy –

Protecting Victoria's Environment - Biodiversity 2037 which identifies as a main goal, increasing the number of people active in nature and thereby engaging the community in biodiversity conservation.

Local

Councils are the interface where large-scale conservation goals can be translated into policy and action at the local scale. In 2018 Council adopted its Biodiversity Policy and is currently engaged on its Biodiversity Action Plan which will work towards supporting a healthy ecosystem and strong community connections with nature.

