

# Bellarine Basin rehabilitation

## Information sheet: Proposed site uses and activities

Barwon Water is embarking on a project to transform our former Bellarine Basin site into more than 30 hectares of environmental and public open space to be enjoyed by the community for years to come.



## What is planned for the site?

The former Bellarine water basin has been set aside for new public open space.

The first phase of the project focuses on rehabilitating the site and restoring the natural alignment of Yarram Creek. This includes bulk earthworks to remove the old water basin and realign the creek. Existing wetland areas will be protected, and waterway health will be at the centre of design work for restoring the creek.

Phase two involves working with Traditional Owners, key stakeholders and the local community to identify the most appropriate site uses and develop a concept plan for the site.

This project supports key actions in the Victorian Government's Water for Victoria plan and Barwon Water's Strategy 2030, by opening up government land for public use and recreational purposes.

## Proposed site uses and activities

Working together with our agency advisory group – which includes Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Corangamite Catchment Management Authority and City of Greater Geelong – we have developed a list of proposed site uses and activities.

We have also identified some uses as unsuitable for the site, based on the draft vision and objectives for the site, input from technical experts, feedback from our community, and government policy.

### Site uses and activities that will be included at the site:

- Public access (there may be sections that are excluded for public access for environmental protection)
- Protect high value vegetation
- Restoration of the waterway
- Recognition of Indigenous culture
- Walking paths and trails
- Car parking
- Seating

**Site uses and activities that we identified as unsuitable** - as they are not consistent with the vision and objectives for the site, developed in stage one and informed by feedback from the community and key stakeholders:

- Housing / hotel / function centre
- Commercial caravanning or camping
- Motorbike / trailbikes / motorsports
- Drones
- Sports fields / skate parks / golf
- Shooting / hunting

- Exotic / ornamental gardens
- Retaining the water basin

The proposed site uses and activities align with the Victorian Government's Distinctive Areas and Landscapes (DAL) program for the Bellarine, as well as support the site's cultural and environmental values, and our commitment to open this land for public use and recreational purposes.

To support health and wellbeing objectives, we have recommended activities such as walking paths and trails. These are low impact and compatible with the guiding principle 'protecting and restoring biodiversity'.

We are keen to propose activities that minimise impact to wildlife, as well as our site neighbours.

Motor sports, sport fields, skate parks, golf and shooting were assessed as unsuitable. These activities would compromise our ability to protect and enhance the site's unique features, habitats, ecosystems and biodiversity. Community feedback has also indicated strong support for natural and passive recreation – "a quiet place in nature for reflection" was a strong theme in the stage one consultation.

**We are keen to check in with the community to see if we have it right. As part of our stage two consultation, we are seeking community input on the proposed site uses and activities.**

## **Distinctive Areas and Landscape (DAL) program**

The Victorian Government has declared the Bellarine Peninsula a 'distinctive area and landscape'. This declaration offers protection for the environment, landscapes and lifestyle of the area. It helps protect the area from overdevelopment, as well as the impacts of climate change.

The state government funding for the Bellarine Basin rehabilitation project was announced in October 2020 to bring the project to life. The funding decision was driven by a desire to protect unique features of the landscape, enhancing conservation - including unique habitats, ecosystems and biodiversity - and recognising the connection and stewardship of the Traditional Owners with the land.

A requirement of the funding is that the former Bellarine water basin site would be set aside for new public open space. This provides a wonderful opportunity for community to connect with the natural and cultural values of the site.

## **Healthy environment**

Working and partnering with Traditional Owners, other agencies and community members, Barwon Water is applying a caring for country approach to our land and waterways.

Working with Traditional Owners we are learning to look, listen and think more about country through the knowledge and insight that they share with us.

We've been working with community and landcare groups to ensure we continue to put our customers first without compromising our environment.

We know our customers and community care about the impact we have on our environment, and we're excited that the Bellarine Basin rehabilitation can help us deliver a healthier environment for all.

We know that a healthier environment is essential to community health and wellbeing, and our projects aim to deliver spaces that benefit people and protect native flora and fauna. This underpins the draft vision and principles for the site renewal, and the proposed site uses and activities.

We've conducted detailed ecological assessments to ensure native flora and fauna are protected throughout the rehabilitation process. This includes vegetation and wildlife ecology assessments, with a focus on birdlife studies – recognising the pine trees have become an important habitat for some bird species.

## **Healthy communities**

Barwon Water is committed to fostering healthy communities. We are committed to improving cultural connectedness through active lifestyles, engagement and education.

We are aiming to activate over 100 Ha of public use over the 2018 to 2023 period, of which Bellarine Basin will account for 35 hectares.

Bellarine Basin is key to enabling Barwon Water to achieve our targets and provide beneficial open space to the community.

The site uses and activities proposed for Bellarine Basin aim to enhance our natural for our community to enjoy. Please let us know what you think via the community survey, by Monday 14 March 2022.

## Community feedback helps guide the proposed site uses and activities

99 community members provided feedback throughout August and September 2021 on a draft vision statement, project principles and objectives that were developed by the agency advisory group.

In general, the responses were very supportive of the draft vision statement, project principles and objectives.

There was strong support for a new natural area or parkland on the Bellarine Peninsula – including strong support for the site being accessible to the community.

Natural and passive recreation – eg. “a quiet place in nature for reflection” – was a strong theme. People were keen to see nature based activities and education on site.

There was strong support for all draft objectives, with each of them receiving between 80 and 90 percent support or strongly support. This has helped inform the proposed site uses and activities.

Read more about what our community had to say in the [stage one community feedback report](#) via the Bellarine Basin project web page:

[www.yoursay.barwonwater.vic.gov.au/bellarine-basin](http://www.yoursay.barwonwater.vic.gov.au/bellarine-basin)

Strong support for protecting and enhancing the natural environment and ecosystems – references to ‘green’ and ‘wildlife’ corridors

Strong support for connection to Wadawurrung people and their culture – “respecting and acknowledging Traditional owners of the land is imperative if we want to educate the next generation.”

## A draft vision, guiding principles and objectives for the site

Working together with our agency advisory group we developed a draft vision, guiding principles and objectives for the site. These received strong community support during stage one, and will be finalised as part of the masterplan process.

### Draft vision

"Yarram Creek (project working title) will be a unique, inclusive and accessible community place for people to celebrate, respect, enjoy and immerse themselves in its cultural, natural and recreational values."

### Draft principles

Accessible, safe and inclusive community place
Connecting people to nature
Protecting and restoring biodiversity
Wadawurrung storytelling and spiritual connection
Caring for and connecting to country
Balanced, diverse and compatible experiences
Connecting to the broader Bellarine
Engaging community along the journey
Sustainable design and management

### Draft objectives

<b>Objective 1: Nature</b>	Protect and enhance the unique features, habitats, ecosystems and biodiversity
<b>Objective 2: Culture</b>	Recognise the layers of human use and contact with the landscape, and the intangible connection of the Wadawurrung people
<b>Objective 3: Community</b>	The community is involved in guiding the future of the place and ultimately connects in a range of safe and compatible recreational and nature-based experiences
<b>Objective 4: Sustainability</b>	Well planned, ecologically balanced community place that can be maintained into the future

### Next steps

We will finalise the site uses and activities based on community feedback, environmental monitoring and further ecological assessments that are being undertaken in early 2022. We will seek input from technical experts – including ecologists – to ensure the proposed site uses are compatible with the vision, principles and objectives for the site.

Learn more and have your say: [www.yoursay.barwonwater.vic.gov.au/bellarine-basin](http://www.yoursay.barwonwater.vic.gov.au/bellarine-basin)