



What we've already heard from our community

A review of recent Shire community consultation findings reports to inform the Nillumbik Biodiversity Strategy in 2023

Final-19 May 2023

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1. Aim and purpose of this review

The purpose of this document review is to interrogate the feedback gathered in recent Nillumbik Shire Council community consultation programs to identify input potentially relevant to the Nillumbik Biodiversity Strategy in 2023. This interrogation process (or secondary data analysis) involves reviewing existing feedback for a purpose that is different to the original data-gathering intention.

The following seven consultation findings reports were interrogated:

1. Climate Action Plan Consultation Findings Report (ChatterBox Projects, 2022)
2. Nillumbik Neighbourhood Character Strategy Stage 1 Consultation Findings Report (ChatterBox Projects, 2022)
3. Domestic Animal Management Plan Stage 1 Consultation Findings Report (ChatterBox Projects, 2021)
4. Draft General Local Law Consultation Findings Report (ChatterBox Projects, 2022)
5. Bend of Islands Proposed Local Law Consultation Findings Report (ChatterBox Projects, 2022)
6. Municipal Planning Strategy Review - Phase 2 Summary of Feedback - Incorporated Responses into the MPS (Nillumbik Shire, 2021)
7. Municipal Planning Strategy - Virtual Community Workshop Series Engagement Report (GHD, 2021)

This review was guided by the following biodiversity-related search terms (in alphabetical order).

- | | |
|---|--|
| ▪ Animals (fox, deer, kangaroo, feral, pest, domestic pets) | ▪ Flora and fauna |
| ▪ Biodiversity | ▪ Green (leafy, plants) |
| ▪ Biodiversity loss | ▪ Invasive vegetation and weed |
| ▪ Bio-links (wildlife corridors, native vegetation) | ▪ Land use management (agriculture, horse grazing, winery) |
| ▪ Bush and forest | ▪ Loss and degradation (tree, vegetation, garden) |
| ▪ Climate change | ▪ Native wildlife |
| ▪ Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) | ▪ Nature |
| ▪ Eco-systems | ▪ Residential development pressure (illegal clearing) |
| ▪ Environment (environmental, natural environment, impact) | ▪ Species |
| ▪ Environmentally sustainable | ▪ Trees (mature, canopy, understorey) |
| ▪ Erosion | ▪ Vegetation |
| ▪ Fire (regimes, bushfire risk, safety) | ▪ Water (waterways, water quality, flows) |

It is important to note the comments presented in this document have already been considered as feedback for the relevant Council strategic documents. Local government consultation feedback can be interrogated to generate insights about related matters, and efficiently inform other decision-making processes. By way of example, feedback received during the Draft General Local Law consultation has already been considered by Officers and Council in the context of reviewing Council's Draft General Local Law. In addition, feedback relating to the Draft General Local Law (Parts 20, 38, 44, 63, and 79) has been identified as also being potentially relevant to the Biodiversity Strategy review (see Section 2.4).

Taken together, a total of 2,200+ participants were engaged across the seven consultation programs reviewed in this report. While it is difficult to estimate the precise proportion, most participants provided feedback that directly or indirectly referred to at least one of the above biodiversity-related search terms.



2. Feedback from recent consultations that is relevant to the Biodiversity Strategy

This section presents the feedback gathered in recent Nillumbik Shire Council community consultation programs, which is also regarded as potentially relevant to the Nillumbik Biodiversity Strategy in 2023.

Key insights from this document review

Overall insights from the document review regarding community views on biodiversity-related topics include:

- Despite the variation in townships and lifestyles across the Shire, residents and participants **value the natural environment** and generally welcome Council actions that balance or minimise **environmental degradation and tree loss** (vegetation, canopy, and understorey), and subsequent impacts on wildlife, birdlife, ecosystems, and biodiversity.
- Mixed views on Nillumbik's **planning controls**, regarded as overly restrictive or insufficient in terms of protecting the environment.
- Council has an **advocacy** role to play to help encourage other levels of government and relevant stakeholders to value and protect biodiversity.
- **All native vegetation and animals are important**, not just rare and threatened species.
- **Tree loss** and **vegetation loss** needs to be reduced and **invasive species** controlled.
- Some people are seeking more education about, and prohibition or restrictions of, **non-Indigenous plantings**. Others believe Council's environmental weeds list is too extensive.
- The views and heritage of the **Traditional Owners**/ First Nations Peoples are important.
- A desire to prioritise Nillumbik as the **Green Wedge Shire** and preserve the **character** of the Shire.
- New residential developments, infrastructure upgrades, and agricultural enterprises to embrace **ESD/ sustainability designs**, and be **sensitive to the natural environment**.
- Support for Council acknowledging or declaring a **Climate Emergency**, including taking action to support a climate resilient natural environment.
- Mixed views about **vegetation protection versus fire prevention**, including balancing fire prevention measures (on Council and private land) with maintaining vegetation, counting roadside vegetation in rural areas; and supporting the community with fire risk education, preparation, and prevention as well as biodiversity and land management education and advice.
- A desire for more environmental and land management **information, communication, education, and enforcement**.
- **Pets** playing an important and positive role for many people. Protecting and enforcing targeted dog-free spaces is important, and support for 24-hour car curfew due to predatory behaviours. Mixed views about the presence, and management of, animals in some areas.
- Investigate **Biodiversity Sensitive Urban Design**.



2.1 Climate Action Plan Consultation Findings Report

The consultation period was 4 October to 7 November 2021, providing the community with the opportunity to review and comment on the draft Climate Action Plan Participation options were an online survey, four virtual drop-in sessions (including one for Council's Youth Council), and written submissions. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the proposed in-person workshops did not proceed. A total of 99 participants were engaged in this consultation program.

Key themes and comments potentially relevant to the Nillumbik Biodiversity Strategy are listed below.

Theme: Support for Council acknowledging or declaring a Climate Emergency

- Majority support for Council acknowledging a Climate Emergency.
- The region and quality of life is at risk including the wildlife, needs to prioritise the environment and have urgent and strong actions such as proactive integration of climate change mitigation and adaptation as Council actions.

Theme: Support for strong climate action leadership and culture

- Majority support strong climate action Council leadership and culture.
- Implement a genuine approach to involve the community, more community outreach (events, seminars, presentations, social media) and work with local environmental groups.
- Collaborate and advocate for action by all levels of government to reduce and respond to climate change and support Nillumbik. More advocacy to assist with costs of fire mitigation, reduce fire risk and achieve an integrated response to climate adaptation and mitigation.
- Actions to be guided by First Nation's culture and practices. Learn from the First Nation's culture and address cultural instincts and beliefs contributing to climate change.

Theme: Support for a climate resilient, adaptive, and safe community and climate resilient natural environment

- Majority support for a climate resilient, adaptive, and safe community.
- Majority support for a climate resilient natural environment.
- Incorporate clear targets and strengthen indicators. Include specific targets such as percentage increase in flora and fauna, tree canopy cover, biodiversity, tree canopy, vegetation coverage in rural areas, biodiversity, health of soils and waterways and reductions in chemical inputs, erosion, and reliance on polluting fuels by 2030. Targets with stated percentage increase for tree canopy cover and vegetation coverage in rural areas. Clear statements regarding responsibility for risk and vehicle for emissions reduction and indicators to be clear and examined from a climate science and agricultural sociology viewpoint.
- Increase understanding and protection of the natural environment. Focus on understanding and preserving biodiversity values, commission studies to obtain robust baseline evidence for biodiversity, native vegetation cover, tree canopy cover in urban areas to inform goal. Waterways, catchment areas and reservoirs must be protected, monitored and actions taken to reduce consumption, waste, and pollution. Need rules/regulations to retain and increase vegetation (native and non-native). Knowledge of ecosystem health and best management as held by Australia's Indigenous people be appropriately respected.
- Suggestions included: Inform and educate the community; Support the community with fire preparation and prevention; Incorporate clear targets and strengthen indicators; Increase understanding and protection of the natural environment; and Reduce the risk of bushfire.

Theme: A zero waste and circular economy is important for the environment

- The environment is being destroyed by rubbish and development is eroding the natural habitat of our birds and animals.
- Support and advice for septic systems being environmentally friendly, for example worm farms could help the community understand the benefit of these systems and what/how to implement.



- A shift in community behaviours and practices is required and there needs to be a strong community engagement/ outreach program.

Theme: Inform and educate the community

- Expand community education and information programs, establish an outreach program to activate community members and consider communicating the need to protect, retain and reinvigorate indigenous biodiversity.

Theme: Support the community with fire preparation and prevention

- Support fire prevention and preparing the community for bushfires and droughts, working alongside the CFA and stakeholders such as CSIRO outreach personnel, the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung people, and all land-managers/ stewards. Use traditional fire management systems where and when appropriate.
- Support Council fuel reduction to stop bushfire.
- Need to address there is only one way out of Eltham if there is a bushfire. Signage, information and/or QR codes for bushfire related information or direct people where to go if there is a bushfire.
- Safe community starts with Council reduction of fire fuel on Council land and roadside.
- Manage Council's roadside and bush reserves and engage with the community without compromising biodiversity values. Acknowledge that roadsides often contain indigenous vegetation and are often refuges for flora and fauna no longer found on surrounding properties, providing important food sources and a seedbank.

Theme: Mixed views about trees

- Keep the flammable trees under control.
- Stronger stance on native logging, Council needs to call for an immediate end to logging of native forests which increases bushfire risks.
- Council to provide trees for residents to plant.
- Nillumbik planning scheme permits too many trees to be cut down for development.
- No further removal of any trees or clearing of green areas and maintain tree canopy in urban areas.

2.2 Nillumbik Neighbourhood Character Strategy Stage 1 Consultation Findings Report

The consultation period was 28 March to 8 May 2022. Participation options were an online survey, paper-based survey, a range of in-person activities at three place-based pop-up engagements (at Diamond Creek, Eltham, and Hurstbridge), meetings with four of Council's Community Advisory Committees (Environment and Sustainability, Inclusion and Access, Positive Ageing, Youth Council), and submissions (email and written). A total of 578 participants were engaged in this consultation program.

Key themes and comments potentially relevant to the Nillumbik Biodiversity Strategy are listed below.

Theme: Residents value the natural environment and vegetation

- When asked which features of the neighbourhood character they like now, the majority selected vegetation, which includes trees, tree canopy, habitat, wildlife corridors, green wedge, and natural bushland/ bushy areas.
- When asked how new development could be designed to enhance or improve neighbourhood character, residents suggested:
 - Protect green wedge
 - Protect trees, canopy trees, large gardens, and habitat
 - Protect wildlife
 - Protect, enhance, and increase vegetation, trees, habitat, and wildlife corridors
 - Maintain gum trees, tree canopy
 - Minimise subdivisions and keep larger blocks



- New developments to include new vegetation and gardens
- New developments to respect current architecture/ green leafy character
- Retain hobby farms and grazing land.
- The unique neighbourhood character features that residents like includes vegetation, trees, canopy trees; the views; topography (hills and waterways); larger setbacks and blocks; low heights; older and diverse housing types (including mud brick); use of natural building materials; rural style paths/ roads; and the area having a rural, country, township feel.

Key challenge or priority: Balancing new development, neighbourhood character, and the natural environment

- Minimal loss of trees and vegetation and/ or more trees being planted.
- Incorporate environmentally sustainable design features while respecting local neighbourhood character.
- Neighbourhood character and tree planting to consider safety, accessibility, and connectivity.
- Proactively protect and reinvigorate indigenous flora and fauna, waterways, and soils. Council decision-making to include a rigorous assessment that centres on the health and reinvigoration of biodiversity. Ensure habitat connectivity occurs throughout the Shire, on a much larger scale than what is currently in place – from indigenous grasses and herbs to small shrubs, bushes, and giant trees.

2.3 Domestic Animal Management Plan Stage 1 Consultation Findings Report

The consultation period was 17 May to 25 June 2021. Participation options were online survey, paper-based survey, and a range of in-person activities at eight place-based pop-up engagement events (at Aqueduct Trail, Research, Diamond Creek Community Centre, Diamond Creek Dog Park, Eltham North Adventure Playground, Eltham Town Square, Hurstbridge Town Centre, Lower Eltham Park, and St Andrews Market). Approximately 868 participants were engaged in this consultation program.

Key themes and comments potentially relevant to the Nillumbik Biodiversity Strategy are listed below.

Theme: Support for a 24-hour cat curfew due to predatory behaviours towards wildlife and birdlife

- Reasoning behind **Strongly support** responses included: cats are hunters, predators and instinctively kill native wildlife, birds, and animals; cats are a nuisance, they poo in and disturb gardens and upset pets/birds; and cats roam and their movements are unrestricted and unpredictable.
- The reasoning behind **Somewhat support** responses included: not indoors exclusively, cats need some time outdoors for wellbeing and exercise; okay outside within own property, under supervision or on leash; and cats kill native wildlife, birds, and animals.

Theme: Cats are predators, and their presence can harm biodiversity and the environment

- Cat presence harms biodiversity and the environment.
- Evidence of cats living in sensitive environmental areas or reserves.
- Cats are hunters, predators and instinctively kill native wildlife, birds, and animals.
- Residents need to be aware that their domestic cat could be contributing to the toll on birdlife and wildlife and the extinctions that have already occurred due to feral cats.
- Reduce or trap feral cats, decrease the overall cat population.

Key challenge or priority: Managing domestic and other animals to protect native wildlife and the environment

- Native wildlife needs to be better protected and managed than the prioritising of exotic animals, cats, and dogs.
- Protect native wildlife and manage animals and impact broadly (horses, deer, birds, and livestock).
- Promote native animals as pets (blue tongue lizards, sugar gliders, dingoes) to break the barrier that people have with understanding native wildlife and the cycle of reproducing exotic invasive animals as pets.



- Residents to know how many domestic animals are permitted and where, including sheep and horses in bushland.
- Owners to pick up after all and any animals, horses included.
- Deer management is also important for safety of pets. Feral deer at night may aggravate dogs.

2.4 Draft General Local Law Consultation Findings Report

The consultation period was 1 November to 5 December 2021. Participation options were online survey, three online community information sessions, and submissions (email, online, and written). A total of 190 participants were engaged in this consultation program.

Key themes and comments potentially relevant to the Nillumbik Biodiversity Strategy are listed below and accompanied by a reference to the relevant section/part of the General Local Law.

Theme: Views about animals on public and private land

- 20. Activities which may be permitted in municipal reserves. Controlling horse riding on public reserves is unnecessary and reference to 'interfere' is confusing. Address specific sites instead of having a one-size-fits-all rule.
- 38. Feeding of wild birds on private land (mostly unsupportive). Do not support, hard to control and unenforceable.

Theme: Views about environmental weeds

- 44. Environmental weeds. When grown appropriately, agapanthus provide soil retention, green breaks and habitat; Support, control of weeds is good; Concerned about use of herbicides and pesticides on some public land where native animals graze and flora is impacted; Use round-up and remove onion weed; Community education program first; Do not support being fined for agapanthus; Offended by the requirement to control environmental weeds on private property when Council does not adequately control weeds on public land; Delete or include public land and revise the list of environmental weeds (remove agapanthus); Clarify if this applies to Council land.

Theme: Views about trees, tree protection, and new developments

- 63. Protection of amenity trees. Support, protect trees, tree canopies, vegetation and bush and environment, from developers and generally; Support strengthening the protection of amenity trees such as residents nominating significant trees, creating a tree register, enforcement, and significant fines for removing/ damaging; Support, essential for climate change and wildlife habitat purposes; Support and accompanied by a public information campaign.
- Developers/builders landscape plans should be adhered to, and a landscape bond held to ensure compliance, microclimate on our property has changed due to the removal of trees on adjoining properties.
- Need the strongest environmental laws throughout Nillumbik. Trees are being cleared at a fast rate, concrete and buildings are occurring, and the habitat of wildlife is being destroyed with suburban style homes and land clearing. Destroying the environment should not be allowed.

Theme: Views about vegetation protection and fire prevention

- 79. Protection of vegetation Support; Maintain the roadside vegetation in rural areas; Foster an appreciation of existing vegetation by provided ratepayers with a copy of the Live Local Plant Local guide; Does not permit removal of fallen timber from paths and trails on Council land and on road reserves, to ensure passable and safe; Address excessive vegetation growth that is inconsistent with the appropriate ecological vegetation class on Council and Parks land; Disagree with approval being required to remove dead timber that is a fire hazard; Do not support, in direct conflict with State legislatures pertaining to fire safety.

Key challenge or priority: New ideas in support of wildlife and environment protection



- Local law with supporting guidelines that requires all new fencing to be as wildlife friendly as possible, especially on rural properties, avoiding barb wire. This law would not take priority over existing legislation contained in the Impounding of Livestock Act 1994 or Building Regulations 2018.
- Ban use of glyphosate for health, safety, and environment reasons.
- Ban sale and use of plastic bags for environment reasons.
- Ban use of black-coloured timber garden mulch, for local character and environment reasons.
- Restrict any new non-indigenous planting to, say, 10% of any site area, excluding environmental reserves and waterways where no new non-indigenous planting should be allowed for local character and environment reasons.

2.5 Bend of Islands Proposed Local Law Consultation Findings Report

The consultation period was 1 November to 5 December 2021. Participation options were online feedback form, submissions (email and written), and two online community information sessions. A total of 180 participants were engaged in this consultation program.

Key themes and comments potentially relevant to the Nillumbik Biodiversity Strategy are listed below.

Theme: There are mixed views about the presence of domestic animals in Bend of Islands

- No domestic pets, no cats, or dogs. Support cats being prohibited and more freedom/allowance for animals such as dogs and hooved animals.
- If cats allowed, must be kept caged and inside. Limit dogs.
- Agree with prohibiting domestic animals including cats, other than assistance animals which shall be indoor only and not exercised in outdoor areas.

Theme: Residents value and want to protect the local flora, fauna, wildlife, and biodiversity

- Prioritise the local flora, fauna, wildlife, and biodiversity and protect BOI as a unique haven.

Theme: Residents support fire prevention measures, and some support stronger controls on grass and environmental weeds

- Grass slashing to be mandatory before fire season, more control of grass over summer and cleaning up kunzia, environmental weeds and debris on roadside and generally.
- Support more control of environmental weeds.

Key challenge or priority: Preserving the ecosystem by prohibiting non-Indigenous plantings except selective plantings and kitchen gardens

- Exclude the planting of non-Indigenous plants except in kitchen gardens.
- Allow selective planting of non-Indigenous plants.
- Support prohibition of planting of vegetation except for vegetation 'Indigenous to the area' and enforcement.
- The BOI also includes important flora, and the animals depend on that flora. We want to preserve this ecosystem. We want to see included in the local law that you cannot plant anything except Indigenous to the area (except in kitchen gardens).
- Prohibiting non-Indigenous planting, need to include in the BOI local law.
- One of the major threats is the introduction of non-Indigenous plants. Enforcement has not been successful over the years.
- People do not understand what Indigenous plants are or the difference between Indigenous and Indigenous to the local area. Council needs to educate the community.



2.6 Municipal Planning Strategy - Phase 2 Summary of Feedback - Incorporated Responses

Through September and October 2021, Council Officers delivered an extensive consultation program on themes for the Municipal Planning Scheme (MPS). There were multiple participation options including an online survey on Participate Nillumbik. Officers conducted four virtual community workshops, nine internal workshops, two Youth Council workshop, two Councillor workshops and attended seven Advisory Committee meetings (including the Wurundjeri Cultural Committee). Officers also provided presentations to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and various interested Advisory Committees.

Eighty-eight people registered to attend the virtual community workshops and 50 people attended (excluding staff, facilitators, and Councillors). A total of 458 submissions were received, 424 online survey responses and 34 written submissions.

Key themes and comments potentially relevant to the Nillumbik Biodiversity Strategy are listed below.

Theme: Views about activity centres and the environment generally

- Built environment should not impede on the natural environment.
- Maintain and increase tree canopy - specifically indigenous vegetation.
- All themes should prioritise Nillumbik as a Green Wedge Shire.
- Protect and enhance tree canopy.
- Protection of the natural environment to maintain the appeal and character of the activity centres.

Theme: Views about the built environment and the environment generally

- Protection of natural environment.
- More innovative, sustainable, biodiverse urban design.
- Maintain indigenous vegetation.
- Indigenous tree canopy and understorey are protected throughout Nillumbik, including areas of built environment and all new developments within the Shire. Council actively pursues net increase of indigenous vegetation in both urban and rural areas.
- Built form should not damage natural environment.
- Protecting habitat links and minimising fire and flood risk and erosion are important considerations in siting buildings and works, particularly in rural.
- Maintain green spaces.
- Sustainable design could be linked to climate change objectives
- Can we require a canopy tree with each development – a higher level statement that can support this – education the difference about canopy trees.
- Trails and footpaths – accessibility – but it should fit into the natural environment – trails shouldn't remove vegetation.
- Good that this references historical characteristics but needs to also reference environment, biodiversity, climate, urban tree canopy etc, as these are some of the key characteristics that we want to promote.
- Tree canopy and understorey to be protected, including in the built environment and all new developments.
- Greater considerations for innovative, sustainable, biodiverse urban design.

Theme: Views about climate change that relate to the environment generally, including bushfire

- Protect and enhance existing vegetation, tree canopy and natural environments to help minimise climate change impacts.
- Recognise and support the contribution made by rural landowners to mitigate bushfire risk.
- Promote ESD and Plan Melbourne objectives around sustainability.
- First Nations people should be consulted on land management.
- Review of ESO.
- Minimise development in fire risk areas.



- Address preparedness for impact of climate change on biodiversity.
- Climate change is also – floods, storms – widen definition – not just fire.
- Balance climate change versus BMO.
- Better climate resilience.
- Protect and enhance canopy cover.
- Not all about bushfire.
- Acknowledge that climate will increase bushfire risk.
- Identify provisions to enable new renewable projects (e.g., solar, wind, batteries) on existing cleared land in GW and RCZ without compromising biodiversity and conservation values.
- Provisions to restrict the cutting down of trees for the purpose of solar.
- Protect tree canopy, understory, and plant.
- ESD.
- Maintaining the current level of vegetation.

Theme: Views about economic development and the environment generally

- Support innovative, sustainable and encourage regenerative agriculture - not just soil based.
- Tourism should be a recognised priority in the green wedge with easy approval processes. Do not restrict commercial uses in the green wedge but support them. Green wedge is too restricted – room for flexibility without destroying GW purpose?
- It is essential that innovative sustainable agriculture and related or downstream enterprise is encouraged.
- Agriculture is significant for economic development.
- Enhance Eco Tourism in Nillumbik.
- Do not want to see soil-based agriculture over modern ways of farming – reduce animal footprint.
- Sustainable agricultural uses.
- Add in that "in conjunction uses" or other modifications to existing land use should be done through approved land management plans which detail how the environment, habitat links and biodiversity will be protected.
- Working with Traditional Owners to create a more sustainable economy.

Theme: Views about the Green Wedge

- Retaining and encouraging sustainable and regenerative agricultural land.
- Gap in knowledge sharing.
- More tools and information for landowners on maintaining and managing their land.
- Rural living and development should be allowed.
- Rural development should be discouraged.
- Conservation should be priority in the Green Wedge.
- Protection of the environment and biodiversity.
- Development in rural areas minimises potential fire risk in a way which is acceptable to, and compatible with First Nations people
- Rural landowners are overregulated by restrictive planning overlays.
- Review the application of Environmental Significance Overlays and Significant Landscape Overlays across the Green Wedge zones in line with Government policy, ensuring enforcement of protections and adequate resourcing
- Treat Urban Growth Boundary as a hard boundary
- State and Regional Planning do not identify Nillumbik as having environmental and landscape significance.
- Consider allowing further subdivision into smaller lots.
- Infrastructure should be a further priority - safer roads, better maintained, more sealed roads (to reduce water turbidity in runoff) and clearing of vegetation along road reserves to enable safe exits for people in the event of wildfire
- Upkeep of the remnant endemic bush land. It is a precious resource that is under threat.
- Recognition that rural landowners do a lot to maintain their land which levels of government heavily rely on - they should not be restricted in doing what they want with their land.



- Land clearing, Council responsibility and we do it poorly.
- Need more enforcement for illegal clearing – budget issues.
- Conflict between environment and engaged open spaces (BMX tracks).
- Nillumbik is 4th most biodiverse area in Australia, we need to protect and enhance.
- Better collaboration with private landowners that have an interface to public land/reserves.
- Horse grazing is an issue.
- Not just about protecting what is endangered, it's all flora and fauna.
- Objective about development mitigate fire risk – other way around? Should be assessing area before putting a house in it rather than putting a house in the trees and then cutting down all the trees.
- When managing conflicts, land management plans should address to ensure the land use doesn't affect the environment.
- Danger in focusing on environmental and landscape significance is that it leads to a narrow focus on significance under EPBC act rather than recognising all areas are significant - could show significance via maps
- Needs to state that in managing the conflict, this is done through land management plans that address environmental protection strategies
- Ensure development in rural areas mitigates potential fire risk - other way around - "Development should only proceed where fire risk can be minimised while meeting the first principle of avoiding and minimising loss of native vegetation and preserving biodiversity".
- Protect the current UGB and oppose any proposal to move it.
- Protection of environment and biodiversity should guide all planning in Green Wedge and RCZ.
- Trust for nature covenants should be extended where possible.
- Knowledge sharing between Council, communities, groups to promote, encourage and help understand best-practice land use and management techniques
- More effective controls for feral animals (deer, foxes, kangaroos) and invasive vegetation to protect indigenous flora and fauna.
- Lack of Bio links, and a review of ESOs and SLOs.

Theme: Views about heritage, arts, and culture and the environment generally

- Recognise the land, waterways, and all life they sustain are central to the cultural values of First Nations Peoples.

Theme: Views about housing and the environment generally

- Protect and enhance natural environment.
- More bushfire and other climate change related risks considered in housing developments.
- Eltham to be kept leafy, green, and low rise.
- More innovative, sustainable, biodiverse urban design.
- Indigenous tree canopy and understorey are protected throughout Nillumbik, including areas of built environment and all new developments within the Shire. Council actively pursues net increase of indigenous vegetation in both urban and rural areas.
- Development of a Nillumbik Urban Forest Strategy.
- Ecologically Sustainability Development (ESD) consultants/principles should be applied to all developments.
- Protection and enhancing of tree canopy.
- There is a gap in the MPS which is providing housing security and sustainability of rural lifestyle grazing and hobby farming residents or demonstrating any ability to recognise or accommodate long term multi-generational land occupancy.
- Develop an ESD policy and encourage ESD through the planning scheme: Encourage renewables on houses; Encourage water tanks; and Recycled, clean materials such as mudbrick.
- Greater focus on the protection of the natural environment in housing development to maintain the local character.
- Bushfire and other climate change related threats included in design considerations.



Theme: Views about infrastructure and the environment generally

- Ensure infrastructure upgrades are sensitive to and have minimal impacts on natural environment.
- Prioritise natural environment when considering all infrastructure projects.

Theme: Views about the natural environment

- Prioritise conservation of biodiversity.
- Strengthen enforcement.
- Minimise adverse impacts of development especially on tree canopy.
- Conservation of all flora and fauna, not just endangered species - prioritising indigenous species
- Infrastructure projects should consider and prioritise environmental impacts – roads, trails, amenities, car parking etc.
- Monitor habitat links.
- Waterways are important and should be emphasised.
- Needs to recognise the habitat corridors identified in the NEROC and State of Environment reports and support extending and reinvigorating them. Noting the importance of establishing and connecting the potential corridors as identified in the State of Environment report.
- Would like to see the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung heritage of care of the land acknowledged with intention to use consultation with Narrap team.
- Important to create, improve and maintain access to public environment (i.e., trails), as well as the environment around town centres (i.e., ensuring appropriate tree cover of streets and roads).
- Not just focusing on net loss of natural environment but also net gain. State policy sets the framework for native vegetation as no net loss.
- “Biodiversity urban sensitive design” is a requirement in urban areas.
- Connecting isolated pockets of vegetation to form wildlife corridors.
- Removal of weeds as a priority as they threaten flora, fauna, and bio diversities.
- Refer to State Listed Species to strengthen objectives to protect flora and fauna.
- Threatened ‘indigenous species to Nillumbik’ instead of ‘native’.
- Consideration of environmental values and the facilitation of drainage and sewerage in all areas that affect all rivers and creeks.
- Waterways play an important role in climate change – so we need to protect them.
- Maintain landscape values in the Shire.
- Focus on enhancement, not just protection.
- Prioritise biodiversity.
- ‘Placing conservation of biodiversity above all else’ – not good for policy.
- A map could be used here to identify existing and potential habitat links - it stipulated NEROC, State of Environment and Abzeco reports have info on this.
- References the Plenty River but there is no reference to our other waterways. An additional objective could recognise this too.
- Habitat links monitored and set out in the Planning Scheme, connection of small habitats for wildlife movement.
- Importance of waterway corridors, and the position of Melbourne Water on waterway corridors.
- Roadside Management Program – needs to maintain the integrity of the natural environment.
- More focus on conservation of run-off from private dwellings and monitoring of private dams and how that affects water flow.

Theme: Views about open space and the environment generally

- Provide open spaces for the community while minimising impacts on the natural environment.
- Viewing the land through the lenses of the heritage of First Nations people and showing acknowledgement through signage, plaques, art works in parks, reserves and playgrounds.
- Balancing access for the community with health of the natural environment.
- Conservation and regeneration of native flora and fauna.
- Priorities should be preservation of the green wedge, protection of biodiversity and action on climate change.



- Overarching objective that recognises the land, waterways, and all life they sustain are central to the cultural values of First Nations Peoples.
- Increase parkland (PPRZ) when opportunity arises.
- Prioritise indigenous species when protecting and enhancing vegetation.
- Retention and enhancement of habitats as a priority.
- More nature plays.
- Conservation and regeneration of native flora and fauna.

2.7 Municipal Planning Strategy - Virtual Community Workshop Series Engagement Report

The consultation period was September and October 2021. This report presents findings from four online workshops (conducted in conjunction with other engagement activities that are not reported here). A total of 50 participants were engaged in the online workshops.

Key themes and comments potentially relevant to the Nillumbik Biodiversity Strategy are listed below.

Theme: Conservation and the protection of the natural environment

- Participants were overwhelmingly strong advocates for the preservation of the natural environment. The local flora and fauna, particularly indigenous, was found to be invaluable for a range of reasons: biodiversity itself, its contribution to the character of local townships and rural areas, and the multitude of health and wellbeing benefits it offers residents and visitors. Much more needed to be done, participants agreed, to protect land from being cleared, infrastructure destroying natural environments, and to mitigate climate change impacts threatening Nillumbik.
- Protection of the natural environment. The need to respect the integrity of the natural environment was emphasized by the majority of participants. The loss of trees, shrubs and other vegetation was pointed to as a consequence of subdivision from consolidation of housing – while it was acknowledged consolidation was necessary, the loss of vegetation and garden space was of great concern for most participants.
- Discussions highlighted the interconnectedness of all the themes: flora and fauna were not only important for biodiversity itself, but the immense contribution it makes to the identity and character of the Shire, the health, wellbeing, and social benefits it provides to people, and the role it plays in mitigating impacts of climate change.
- Key sentiments: Maintain indigenous vegetation to preserve quality of life and sense of place; Abundance of vegetation is the very reason many people live in Eltham; Greater considerations for innovative, sustainable, biodiverse urban design; Crucial to maintain the unique character of the area.

Theme: Housing diversity, new development, and natural environmental impacts

- It was acknowledged that housing location was restricted geographically, but some participants pointed out they would like the type of housing to become more diverse, offering, for example, options that aren't just 4-bedroom houses. Any buildings should also ensure they do not impede on the natural environment, maintain tree canopy and other existing vegetation, as the loss of vegetation was said to be a key issue occurring as a result of development in the activity centres.
- Ensuring development does not threaten natural features. Most participants acknowledged and appreciated the abundance of vegetation in the activity centres as a key characteristic that makes them unique and attractive to locals and visitors. As such, several participants said that the loss of vegetation would be one of the key issues resulting from development – it is crucial nature and wildlife are protected to both maintain the local character, as well as the health of the natural environment.
- Key sentiments: Maintaining natural environments to preserve the character of the Shire; Protecting flora and fauna to maintain healthy ecosystems; and Commercial activities should stay within the Urban Growth Boundaries. Protection of the natural environment to maintain the appeal and character of the activity centres. Maintaining tree canopy, which contributes to the local character.

Theme: Ensuring there is space for wildlife, maintaining mature trees and spaces for community



- Many participants stressed the need to limit development in order to maintain open spaces that are untouched to allow biodiversity to thrive. Some expressed frustration with previous schemes and a 'culture of agreeing' before doing something different, indicating insufficient efforts were currently being dedicated to looking after the natural environment.
- Key sentiments: Retaining open spaces for plants and wildlife; and Protecting the environment from development.

Theme: Planning for bushfire risk

- Particularly in regard to bushfires, safety of the community played a key role in ensuring the unique character is maintained, as participants noted that they pose a threat to the townships and rural areas. Sustainable design needed to consider such risks and better education could assist in keeping the community safe.
- Key sentiments: Bushfire threat to safety of community; and Sustainable design and community education to mitigate risk.

Theme: Built environment to minimise environmental risks and protect native flora and fauna

- The majority of participants were deeply concerned about the loss of vegetation, and the subsequent degradation of the local character. Urban design that was sustainable and sensitive to the surrounding environment was therefore of key importance.
- Minimising development throughout the Shire. Those participants who said development should be limited and appropriate, noted it would otherwise precisely threaten the reasons for which they valued living in Nillumbik, e.g., the character of the area, the dispersed nature of some places, and the abundance of green and open spaces.
- Key sentiments: Crucial to maintain indigenous vegetation and old buildings, as well as new ones that complement them and contribute to the local character; Consider footprint on the land and regulation to minimise destruction; and Limiting development across the Shire.

Theme: Placing the conservation of biodiversity above all else, strengthening enforcement capacity, and minimising adverse impacts of development

- The majority of participants strongly supported measures and policies that enhance the protection of flora and fauna, stressing the focus on indigenous species and the conservation of all, rather than merely endangered species.
- Some participants said that any development, for example road sealing programs, needed to look at the environmental impact, while others underlined that land management plans seemed to be inefficient in protecting the environment. Others expressed exasperation and said little was being done to prevent the loss of natural environments through land clearing.
- Participants agreed that the integrity of the natural environment needed to be maintained, biodiversity looked after, and the intent of the Green Wedge and Conservation Shire prioritised.
- Key sentiments: The conservation of all flora and fauna, not just endangered species; Achieve net gain – increase quality and quantity and maintain the integrity of biodiversity; Road programs and other infrastructure projects - consider and prioritise their environmental impact; Strengthen Council's enforcement capacity to prevent further loss of environment and clearing of areas; Habitat links monitored and set out in the Planning Scheme, connection of small habitats for wildlife movement; – Importance of waterway corridors, and the position of Melbourne Water on waterway corridors; – Roadside Management Program – needs to maintain the integrity of the natural environment; More focus on conservation of run-off from private dwellings, and monitoring of private dams and how that affects water flow.

Theme: Providing open spaces for the community to connect while minimising impacts on the natural environment

- Most participants strongly supported the provision and maintenance of open spaces in which the community can connect and socialise. Some noted that any infrastructure required should not be considered if it would harm the natural environment and ecosystems, and that a balance was needed



between recreation needs and conservation. By restricting tourist activities to townships, one participant was supported by a few in saying this would further minimise adverse impacts on the environment.

- Key sentiments: Open Space Strategy has not yet been implemented – this would benefit from updating; Prioritising the health of the natural environment over recreational considerations; and Tourist activities should be restricted to townships so as not to destroy the amenity of the Green Wedge.

Theme: Viewing the land through the lens of the heritage of Traditional Owners, preserving and protecting it

- The health of Nillumbik's ecosystems was of utmost priority to most participants in the workshop. They stressed that maintaining a healthy natural environment was the very purpose of the Green Wedge. As such, Council should ensure certain areas remain protected from development and are retained as open spaces. While one participant mentioned that the MPS should be written from an environment, rather than human perspective, some others stated that Aboriginal Peoples' perspectives should be included in the valuation of the land, as it would result in greater respect for it.
- Key sentiments: Prioritising the protection of indigenous flora and fauna; Conservation Shire – growth corridor concept, and the idea that the Green Wedge would provide recreational areas; Pressure needs to be put on Council to ensure certain areas remain open spaces and protected from development; and Include the heritage of Indigenous Peoples in the protection of the land to value and respect it.

Theme: Balancing access for the community with the health of the natural environment

- There was clear acknowledgement among workshop participants of Nillumbik's ageing demographic and consequent mobility needs. Feedback did largely support improving accessibility to destinations and spaces, but also highlighted that this should not dominate, or harm the environment. A balance is to be struck between inaccessible natural environments, and spaces for recreation and socialisation.
- Key sentiments: Support for some all-abilities access, but not everything needs to be accessible to everyone all the time; Natural environments should be prioritised over infrastructure; and Conservation and regeneration of native flora and fauna.

Theme: Ensuring Council and community are well-informed and prepared and can confidently and actively respond to climate change issues

- Many participants stressed that residents of Nillumbik are insufficiently aware of or understand bushfire mitigation strategies, and that opportunities to learn these should be more widely available. To achieve this, a well-informed and well-educated Council team is needed, as was strongly expressed by some participants. An exchange in land management knowledge could also be achieved by breaking down cultural barriers and improving communication between communities, including Traditional Owners. Council support for landholders in burns (in the right season), with the help of Traditional Owner knowledge, was also advocated for by one participant.
- Key sentiments: Lack of understanding around mitigation strategies for bushfire risk; Well-informed and educated Council officers and councillors on climate change; Knowledge sharing with Traditional Owners to improve land management practices; and Consider water infrastructure and pressures and flows to protect against fire danger.

Theme: Protecting and maintaining existing vegetation, tree canopy, and natural environments to minimise climate change impacts

- At the forefront of this discussion, the natural environment and the preservation of its health was the highest priority for all participants. They noted its significant contribution to the community and the Shire, and the importance of looking after the environment for the conservation of biodiversity.
- Key sentiments: Protection of tree canopies to reduce the impact of increasing temperatures; and Great contribution to planting of native vegetation in private suburban areas.

Theme: Retaining sustainable, regenerative agricultural land

- The majority of participants were strongly supportive of the retention of agricultural land, under the condition it meets sustainable, regenerative farming practice standards and has a minimal impact on the environment. As such, participants said Council needed to clearly define what "enhancement of the



capability of the land” should entail, as well as set clear ambitious and protocols to protect the natural environment and indigenous systems.

- Many participants also agreed that better communication was needed to ensure landowners and residents understand how to manage the land, with the idea that there are no conditions on the land referred to as ‘outdated’. A lack of understanding, one participant said, results in self-resourcing, and landowners that don’t advocate for the land. Further, some participants supported the idea of providing incentives for effective land management which preserves local biodiversity.
- Key sentiments: The protection of regenerative agricultural land and enhancement of its capability, as well as enforcement of land management plans on future developments; The protection of the natural environment above all else; Local food production for Melbourne; Delivery of information on land management; Incentives for effective land use/management; and Mixed views in allowing some subdivision of large land holdings into still reasonable size lots (5+ acres).

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