City of STONNINGTON

DRAFT

Water Sensitive and Flood Ready Stonnington

Action Plan 2026-2029

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Statement of commitment to Australia's First Peoples

Council acknowledges that the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong people of the Kulin Nations are the Traditional Custodians of the land now known as Stonnington, and that they have strived to retain their identity and cultures through more than two hundred years of dispossession and colonisation.

We recognise and accept our responsibility to learn from, and promote the intrinsic value of, First Peoples cultural values, knowledges, heritage, and contemporary aspirations to the wider Stonnington community. We understand that doing so will enrich our shared heritage, culture, and the health of community and Country.

Council respects the special relationship the people of the Kulin Nations have to Country in Stonnington, and we recognise and commit to protecting sacred sites and significant places.

Why are we planning for a water sensitive and flood ready Stonnington?

Water is one of our most valuable resources. We rely on it for our health and wellbeing, to sustain the trees, gardens and open spaces that keep our neighbourhoods cool and green, and to keep our rivers and creeks alive. At times, water also challenges us – too little rain can strain our waterways and landscapes, while too much can overwhelm our streets, homes and businesses.

Stonnington is home to two of Melbourne's most important urban waterways, Birrarung (Yarra River) and KooyongKoot (Gardiners Creek). They sustain much of the city's green space, form connected habitat corridors through an otherwise fragmented landscape, help cool our neighbourhoods, and carry stormwater through Stonnington on its way to Port Phillip Bay.

Much of Stonnington is covered by hard, sealed surfaces, particularly in the denser western suburbs. Rain runs off quickly instead of soaking into the ground. This increases flood risk and sends stormwater, which can be polluted by heavy metals and oils from road runoff, cleaning chemicals and fertilisers, litter, and illegal discharges, into our waterways. As Stonnington grows denser, we need to make more room for water – absorbing, storing and reusing it where possible to ease pressure on drainage, protect waterway health, keep the city cooler and greener and reduce our reliance on valuable drinking water. We also need to better understand flood risk, reduce it where we can and help people prepare.

Our role is to embed these approaches into the way we plan, design, build and maintain our streets, drains, parks, open spaces and buildings. We will also consider this in the advice, information and support we provide to households, businesses and developers.

Water is not restricted by municipal boundaries. It moves through catchments – the areas of land that drain toward a shared creek, river or bay. Using water wisely, caring for our waterways and managing flood risk requires collaboration at a catchment scale with Traditional Custodians, neighbouring councils, Melbourne Water, and other agencies. The community also has an important role to play.

Sustainable Stonnington 2040 establishes our long-term direction for a water sensitive and flood ready city. This Action Plan sets out the practical steps we'll take over the next three years, and how we'll support our community, to use water wisely, get ahead of flood risk, and care for our living waterways.



Delivering Sustainable Stonnington 2040

This Action Plan is one of five that support delivery of our environment strategy, Sustainable Stonnington 2040.

Alongside this Action Plan, the suite includes:

- Resilient, Adaptable and Empowered Stonnington 2026-2029
- Climate Positive Stonnington 2026-2029
- Biodiverse, Green and Connected Stonnington 2026-2029
- Circular and Resource-Conscious Stonnington 2026-2029

These five Action Plans are designed to work together – actions delivered through one will often support outcomes in others.

Thinking differently about water

Water is more than just a resource or a hazard to be managed. How we understand its value influences the way we design our city, prepare for floods and care for our waterways. This Action Plan reflects three important shifts in how we think about and relate to water.

WATER SENSITIVE

From water as waste to water as a resource

Melbourne's stormwater systems have traditionally been designed to move rain from roofs, streets and paved areas quickly into drains, waterways and the bay. While this helps protect streets, buildings and public health, it treats stormwater as something to remove rather than a resource to capture, clean, store and reuse.

A water sensitive approach uses integrated water management and water sensitive urban design to work with the natural water cycle. Many water sensitive assets blend into their surroundings but do more than meets the eye – raingardens collect and filter stormwater, tree pits absorb and store runoff, and permeable paving allows rain to soak into the ground. These features support healthier trees and landscapes, cool the local environment, ease pressure on drains and reduce polluted stormwater entering rivers and creeks.

Applying these approaches strategically will become increasingly important as our city grows and continues to densify.

FLOOD READY

From reacting to floods to getting ahead of the risk

Flood management has often focused on responding after an event – clearing drains, repairing damage and supporting recovery. Being flood ready means acting earlier - understanding where water is likely to flow, designing streets, drainage, buildings and public spaces to reduce its impact, and helping households and businesses understand and prepare for their risk.

A more absorbent, or 'spongier' city can reduce runoff and lower flood risk, while also delivering benefits for cooling, greening and water quality. However, even the best-designed landscape cannot hold all the water produced by the heaviest storms.

Flood readiness also depends on accurate mapping, effective planning controls, targeted drainage improvements, asset protection, emergency planning and an informed community.

WATERWAYS

From passive channels to living entities

Like many of Melbourne's urban waterways, Stonnington's rivers and creeks have been straightened, piped and buried over generations of growth and treated primarily as drains. Thinking differently means recognising them as living systems that need healthy surrounding land, connections with groundwater, wetlands and floodplains, and have room to move and flood naturally. It also means considering and planning to reduce the impacts of stormwater flows and flooding on waterways.

Traditional Custodians have always understood waterways as the lifeblood of Country and people, with caring for water grounded in principles of reciprocity and responsibility. If we look after our waterways, they will look after us in return. This is now also recognised in Victorian law. The *Wilip-gin Birrarung murron (Yarra River Protection) Act 2017* recognises Birrarung as one living, integrated entity.

This understanding shapes how we manage stormwater, restore habitat, plan and design around waterways, and work with Traditional Custodians and the community to care for them.

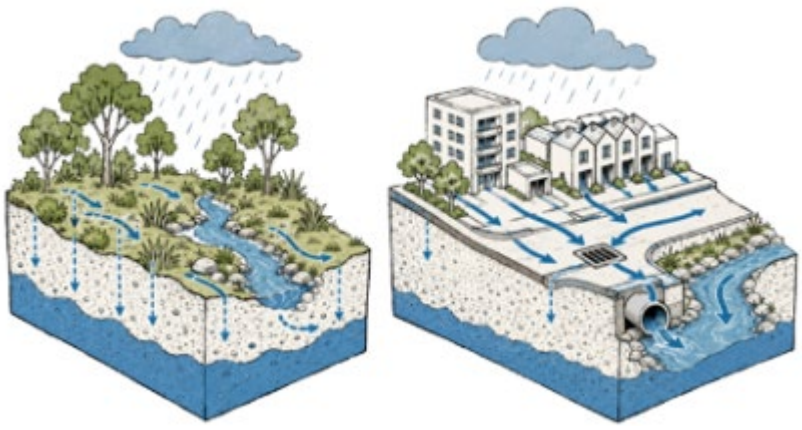


Figure 1. *Natural stormwater flows (left) versus 'traditional' stormwater management.*

Examples of water sensitive urban design (WSUD) assets

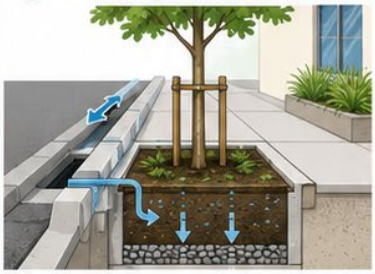
These assets help to slow, filter, store and reuse water in urban environments.

1 Raingarden



A planted basin that captures runoff from nearby streets or paths, allowing water to soak through soil and plants that filter out pollutants before it enters the drain.

2 Passive irrigation tree pit



A street tree pit designed to receive stormwater from the gutter, helping water soak into the soil while keeping trees healthier and cooler streets greener.

3 Permeable paving



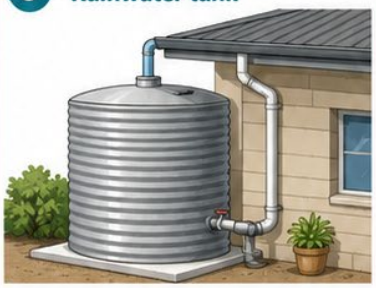
Paving with gaps or porous surfaces that lets rain soak through into the layers below, reducing runoff and helping replenish soil moisture.

4 Constructed wetland



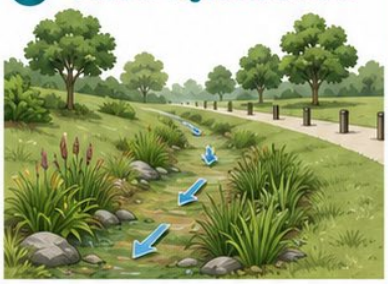
A larger vegetated system that slows and stores stormwater, improves water quality, and provides habitat before water flows downstream.

5 Rainwater tank



A tank that captures roof runoff for later use, such as garden watering or toilet flushing, reducing demand on drinking water supplies.

6 Swale or vegetated channel



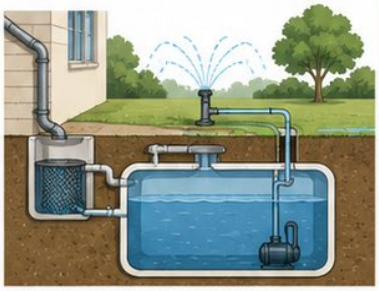
A shallow planted channel that slows stormwater, directs it safely through a site, and helps trap sediment and pollutants along the way.

7 Green roof



A vegetated roof surface that absorbs rainfall, reduces heat, and slows the amount of stormwater flowing from buildings into drains.

8 Stormwater harvesting system



A system that captures, stores and treats stormwater so it can be reused, for example to irrigate parks or sportsgrounds.

9 Gross pollutant trap



A structure installed in the drainage system that captures larger litter and debris before it reaches waterways and downstream environments.

Who contributes to water management in Stonnington?

Creating a water sensitive and flood ready Stonnington is a shared responsibility. Water moves across property lines and municipal boundaries, so no single organisation or household can manage it alone. Different groups influence how water is used, where stormwater flows, how flood risk is managed, and how waterways are cared for.

Australian Government

Sets national legislation, standards and strategic direction, supports climate adaptation and disaster resilience and funds industry projects and innovation.

Victorian Government

Holds primary responsibility for water and land-use planning in Victoria. It sets the policy, planning controls and investment priorities for waterways and catchments, drainage, flood management and urban development.

Local government

Manages local drainage, stormwater assets, parks and open spaces, and prepares for and responds to local flooding. Councils also influence development through planning and help communities understand water and flood risks. Under state legislation, local government is responsible for managing local drainage and stormwater, protecting water quality, and reducing local flood risk.

Traditional Custodians

Hold enduring cultural, spiritual and custodial responsibilities for water and Country, and are formally recognised as partners in waterway planning and decision-making through the *Wilip-gin Birrarung murron (Yarra River Protection) Act 2017*. Their knowledge and care practices guide respectful approaches to waterway planning, restoration and stewardship.

Melbourne Water and water retailers

Melbourne Water manages waterways, major drainage systems and flood modelling for the Port Phillip and Western Port region, which includes Stonnington.

Water retailers manage drinking water, recycled water and wastewater services and support more efficient water use.

Regional collaborations

The Yarra (Birrarung) Collaboration Committee (YCC) and the Gardiners Creek (KooyongKoot) Regional Collaboration (GCRC) each bring together councils, agencies, Traditional Custodians and community partners to protect Birrarung and KooyongKoot at a regional scale.

Developers

Shape how water and flood risk is managed in new buildings and precincts. Design and construction decisions influence water use, stormwater runoff, permeability and how well development responds to flooding.

Community

Households and businesses can use water efficiently, prevent pollutants entering drains, create more permeable properties and prepare for local flood risk. Community organisations and groups also connect people with waterways through education, stewardship, planting, clean-ups and community monitoring.



BURNDAP BIRRARUNG BURNDAP UMARKOO (YARRA STRATEGIC PLAN)

The Burndap Birrarung burndap umarkoo, Yarra Strategic Plan, made under the *Wilip-gin Birrarung murron (Yarra River Protection) Act 2017*, is the first integrated, long-term plan for Birrarung. It means 'What is good for Birrarung is good for all' in Woi-wurrung language.

The plan establishes a whole-of-river vision and brings Traditional Custodians, government agencies and councils together to coordinate how the river and its lands are planned, developed and cared for. Its priorities include improving the health of the river and its surrounding land, protecting cultural values, managing development impacts and strengthening people's relationship with Birrarung. It was developed collaboratively through the Yarra Collaboration Committee (YCC) and is coordinated by Melbourne Water, with oversight from the Victorian Government. As YCC member and one of the municipalities through which Birrarung flows, Council helps to deliver the plan locally.

Initiatives in this Action Plan that will support delivery of the plan include implementing the Greening Birrarung Guide and strengthening how care for Birrarung as a living entity is reflected in local planning policy and community engagement. We will also continue contributing to collaborative projects and programs.

KOOYONGKOOT CATCHMENT-SCALE STRATEGIC PLAN

The KooyongKoot Catchment-Scale Strategic Plan is the first coordinated plan for KooyongKoot and its catchment.

Co-designed by the organisations that form the Gardiners Creek (KooyongKoot) Regional Collaboration (GCRC), with significant input from the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, it grew from Stonnington's earlier KooyongKoot Masterplan and was inspired by the integrated approach taken for Birrarung, recognising that caring for a waterway that crosses multiple council boundaries requires shared effort.

The plan coordinates planning and investment across the catchment. Its objectives include strengthening the role of Traditional Custodians, protecting cultural values, improving waterway health and biodiversity, expanding habitat, reducing litter and pollution, building climate resilience and strengthening community connection with KooyongKoot.

Over the next three years, Council will work with the GCRC and other regional partners to deliver priority actions.

These include establishing shared data and governance systems, supporting a Wurundjeri-led Cultural Values Study, identifying habitat-restoration priorities, improving integrated water management, coordinating catchment-wide litter monitoring and prevention, and strengthening joint planning and advocacy.



Where we are now

Current pressures

Climate change

Climate change is placing new pressure on our drainage systems, landscapes and waterways. Victoria is experiencing drier conditions overall and less cool-season rainfall, while more rain is falling in short, heavy bursts that the ground, drains and waterways can struggle to absorb.

Warmer temperatures and longer dry periods also dry out soils, reducing their ability to absorb rainfall when it arrives. Less rain also means our parks, sportsgrounds, gardens, and trees become more reliant on the drinking water we all depend on to keep healthy and green. This increasing both water scarcity and flood risk.

Urban growth and ageing drainage

Like much of Melbourne, Stonnington continues to grow and change. The Victorian Government's Train and Tram Zone Activity Centres Program will see more high-density housing, with a target of 50,000 additional homes across Stonnington by 2051.

When buildings and other hard surfaces replace gardens and permeable ground, rain has fewer places to soak in. More water runs rapidly into the stormwater network, increasing pressure on local drains, waterways and flood-prone areas. In addition,

Lack of permeability and rainwater infiltration reduces the groundwater flows which feed our rivers and creeks, depleting their health and habitats. It can also impact the health of our trees as well as the properties of our soils, leading to potential damage to foundations of buildings and structures.

At the same time, much of Stonnington's drainage infrastructure was designed for past rainfall patterns and less intensively developed catchments. When heavy rain exceeds its capacity, water can spill into low-lying streets, gardens, homes and businesses.

Responding requires both upgrading priority drainage infrastructure and reducing runoff before it enters the system. Water sensitive design can capture, slow, absorb, clean and reuse rain, helping protect waterways and make better use of water when it falls. Limiting new hard surfaces and creating a greener, more permeable city will be increasingly important as Stonnington grows.

CLIMATE SCIENCE SPOTLIGHT

How a warming climate changes rainfall patterns

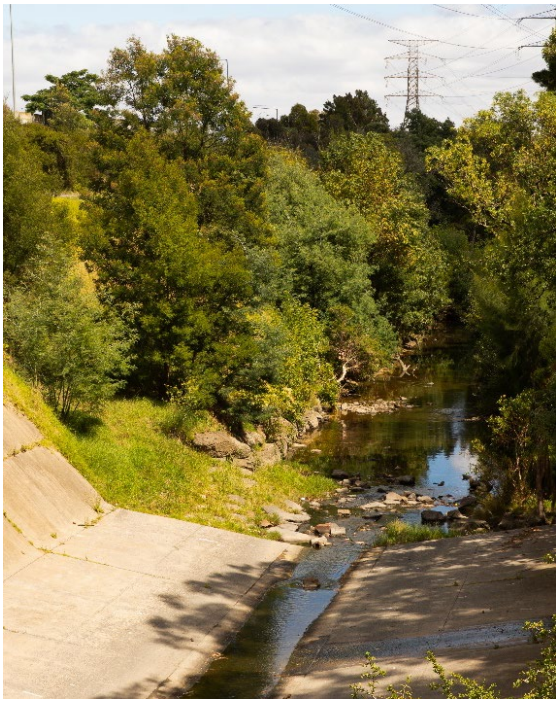
As greenhouse gases accumulate, they trap incoming radiation from the sun and outgoing radiation from earth and release it into our atmosphere instead of back out into space. This process is what is known as the 'greenhouse effect'. Too much of these gases is what is causing the overall increase in global average temperatures we are experiencing.

Warmer air holds more water vapour. For every 1°C, the atmosphere can hold up to 7% more moisture. When weather systems trigger rainfall, this additional moisture can result in more intense downpours.

However, this is not the only way climate change is impacting rainfall patterns. It is also changing the weather patterns that bring rain, including to southern Australia.

As the climate warms, high-pressure systems are becoming stronger and more common in Victoria. These systems bring clear, dry weather and can block low-pressure systems bearing rain from reaching us.

Together, these changes help explain why climate change can increase both droughts and floods. There may be longer dry periods overall, but they will be punctuated by more intense downpours.



Litter and pollution

When it rains, stormwater picks up litter, sediment, oils, fuel residue, nutrients, chemicals, heavy metals, sewage leaks, microplastics and other pollutants as it flows across roofs, footpaths, roads and construction sites. These pollutants are carried into drains and flow into our waterways.

Urban stormwater is recognised as one of the most significant threats to the health of Birrarung and KooyongKoot, and ultimately the waters of Port Phillip Bay. Polluted runoff can reduce water quality, degrade aquatic habitats, harm aquatic plants and animals, and diminish the environmental, cultural and recreational values of these waterways.

- **Litter and microplastics** can ensnare or be ingested by aquatic animals and accumulate in their bodies and the broader food chain
- **Sediment** from eroded soils, construction sites and exposed or weathered surfaces can cloud waterways, smothering aquatic habitats, reducing light penetration and damaging the breeding and feeding areas of aquatic species
- **Oils and fuel residues** can form a coating over aquatic habitats, limiting access to oxygen and introducing toxins
- **Excess nutrients** (particularly nitrogen and phosphorus) can impact waterway health by promoting excessive algal growth and reducing oxygen levels in the water and disrupting the balance of aquatic ecosystems
- **Chemicals** (like cleaning products) can harm wildlife, water quality and broader ecosystem health
- **Heavy metals** (such as copper, zinc and lead) can accumulate in sediments and food sources for aquatic animals, harming their growth, fertility and overall health
- **Microbes and bacteria** from animal waste, sewage leaks and organic pollution can pose risks to human health, make water unsafe for recreational activities and affect aquatic ecosystem health

These pollutants come from many everyday sources, including fertilisers and pesticides, pet poo, vehicle exhaust and wear and tear of tires and break pads, building and construction activities, detergents and household cleaning chemicals, litter, and the gradual breakdown of urban materials such as paints, plastics and road surfaces.

Because stormwater is generally not treated before entering local waterways, preventing pollution at its source is one of the most effective ways to protect water quality.

Protecting waterway health requires a combination of better stormwater management, litter and pollution prevention, community action and catchment-wide collaboration.

Every piece of litter that is prevented from entering a drain, every pollutant kept out of runoff, and every opportunity to slow, filter and treat stormwater contributes to healthier waterways downstream.



What we're building on

Stonnington is not starting from scratch. Over many years, Council and our partners have invested in drainage infrastructure, flood risk management, water sensitive urban design, urban greening, water efficiency and waterway restoration, while building our understanding of local climate, catchment and flooding challenges.

Strong partnerships with Traditional Custodians, Melbourne Water, water corporations, neighbouring councils and community organisations help align local work with priorities across the Birrarung and KooyongKoot catchments.

Council also manages a diverse network of water assets. At different scales, these assets capture, store and treat stormwater, support biodiversity and provide cooler, greener places for the community. We currently manage:

287
Passive irrigation tree pits across 10 sites

75
Raingardens across 22 streets

15
Permeable paving assets across 7 sites

3
Constructed wetlands

MAKING BETTER USE OF RAIN

Harvesting stormwater for our thirsty sportsgrounds

Sportsgrounds require a lot of water to stay green, healthy and safe for sport and recreation, particularly during summer.

Stonnington's sportsgrounds use around 75 megalitres of water for irrigation each year. That's roughly equivalent to the annual water use of roughly 500 average Melbourne households.

Some irrigation water comes from alternative sources, including water drawn from creeks when flows are high, but much of the water used on our sportsgrounds is still drinking water. As the climate changes, diversifying our irrigation sources will help maintain high-quality sportsgrounds while reducing pressure on precious drinking water supplies.

Stormwater harvesting offers one solution. During heavy rainfall, stormwater can be captured, treated and stored for use during dry periods. Although these systems require significant upfront investment, they can improve drought resilience, reduce reliance on drinking water and support waterway health by reducing polluted runoff.

Council has developed designs for stormwater harvesting systems at a number of sportsgrounds. Delivery of these projects will depend on external funding but having shovel-ready designs ready positions us to pursue funding opportunities and respond as water security pressures increase.



What we heard from you

Through the Sustainable Stonnington 2040 engagement process, community members and local stakeholders shared their experiences of climate impacts, the steps they are already taking, the barriers they face and the kinds of support they would like Council to provide.

While we heard many consistent messages, priorities varied between groups.

Water was a particularly high priority for younger cohorts, who expressed a range of suggestions including increasing education, awareness and positive reinforcement in encouraging environmental stewardship and action. Residents in areas more affected by urban drainage issues and flooding, focused more on maintenance, flooding hotspots and practical infrastructure solutions like improving local permeability, whereas residents living in denser areas were more likely to think about water through the lens of waterway health and care.

Across groups, limited knowledge emerged as a common barrier to flood preparedness and caring for waterways. This points to a need for clear, practical information about local flood risk and the actions people can take.

Common priorities and actions



Plan and prepare for flooding



Create water sensitive gardens



Reduce water use at home



Keep drains clear and reduce stormwater runoff



Increase use of rainwater, recycled stormwater and greywater



Reduce and report litter, illegal dumping and pollution



Improve water use at sportsgrounds and aquatic centres



Protect and care for waterways



Learn from and partner with Traditional Custodians

Barriers	How Council can help
Limited understanding of local flood risk and lack of targeted information	▶ Provide clear information about local flood risk and practical preparedness actions. ▶ Tailor information and support for different audiences, including renters, apartment residents and priority communities.
Affordability	▶ Promote existing financial support pathways. ▶ Advocate for increased rebates and subsidies from other levels of government. ▶ Provide free or low-cost programs, resources and incentives.
Unsure where to start or unaware of local opportunities	▶ Provide clear, practical and accessible information, including step-by-step advice and simple actions, through channels people are already using. ▶ Promote local opportunities to care for waterways and reduce and report litter, illegal dumping and pollution.
Lack of confidence that actions will make a difference	▶ Share local success stories and practical examples of community action. ▶ Monitor and report on outcomes of Council action and community efforts.

Where we're headed

A water sensitive and flood ready Stonnington is one where water is valued, used wisely and given space within the landscape. It is a city where streets, parks, open spaces, buildings and drainage systems work together to conserve water, reduce flood impacts and protect the health of our waterways.

Sustainable Stonnington 2040 sets our long-term direction for how we will care for our environment and support a sustainable, resilient Stonnington. Over the next three years, we will make better use of water, improve our understanding and management of flood risk, and work with Traditional Custodians and regional partners to care for Birrarung and KooyongKoot.

We will also support households, businesses and community organisations to use water efficiently, reduce pollution entering drains, understand local flood risk and connect with local waterways. We will continue to advocate for the policies, investment and collaboration needed to achieve changes beyond Council's direct control.

Some initiatives in this Action Plan are expected to provide direct benefits within its three-year timeframe. Others will strengthen the evidence, planning, processes and partnerships needed to guide future investment and ensure our response becomes more targeted and effective over time. Both are important.

Part of a bigger picture

A water sensitive and flood ready Stonnington relies on work being delivered through the wider Sustainable Stonnington 2040 suite.

- Our **Climate Positive Action Plan** tackles the emissions and energy use at the root of a changing climate.
- Our **Resilient, Adaptable and Empowered Action Plan** strengthens how we prepare and respond to extreme weather and climate-related disruption.
- Our **Biodiverse, Green and Connected Action Plan** strengthens the canopy, habitat and green spaces that help slow, absorb and filter water.
- Our **Circular and Resource-Conscious Action Plan** guides our work to keep litter and pollution out of our drains and waterways.

These plans reinforce one another and deliver shared benefits for our environment and community.

Our approach

Our approach is guided by the principles of the Victorian Government's **Integrated Water Management** framework.

Integrated water management considers all forms of water, including drinking water, rain and stormwater, wastewater and waterways, as one connected system.

Instead of addressing each issue separately, it looks for solutions that use water efficiently, reduce flooding and pollution, support greener places and improve waterway health at the same time.

The three focus areas in this Action Plan apply this thinking by planning ways to use water more wisely, get ahead of flood risk and care for waterways as living systems.

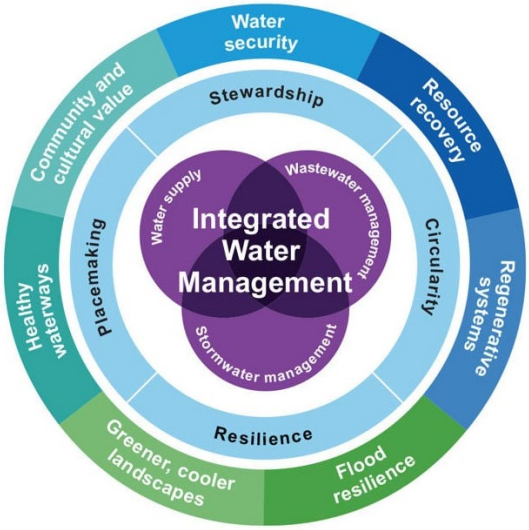


Figure 2. Integrated Water Management framework. (Source: Arup, 2025)

Ongoing activities

Integrated water management is already embedded across a range of Council services plans, partnerships, and programs. The activities below reflect work we already deliver as part of our core businesses. They provide an important foundation for the new actions in this Action Plan and will continue alongside them.



Water sensitive and flood ready assets

We maintain, renew and upgrade our drainage network to that it can respond to intense rainfall events. Through asset and building renewal programs, we are continually upgrading our corporate and community facilities so that they use water efficiently and capture and store rainwater and stormwater for appropriate uses.

We also incorporate water sensitive urban design into our urban infrastructure to help absorb water back into our environment and reduce flooding.



Water quality and efficiency

We are continually supporting the improved health of our waterways through the ongoing maintenance and regular renewal of natural drainage systems and wetlands and through revegetation, installing blue-green infrastructure such as raingardens and including permeable surfaces in our streetscapes and open spaces.

We plant drought tolerant turf, trees and other vegetation and optimise the use of irrigations systems so that our sports grounds and open spaces can be enjoyed by our community with reduced water use.



Encouraging water sensitive and flood ready development

We consider integrated water management outcomes when making decisions about the use and development of land. This includes promoting building and precinct design with water efficient fixtures and fittings, rainwater tanks, effective stormwater management, and permeable surfaces.

Through participation in collaborations such as Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE) we share knowledge and resources and collectively advocate for stronger planning and building requirements where controls sit with the Victorian Government.



Working with partners to extend our influence

We are active members of the Yarra Collaboration Committee (YCC) Gardiners Creek (KooyongKoot) Regional Collaboration (GCRC) and the Yarra Integrated Water Management Forum. We also work closely with Traditional Custodians. Together, we collaborate to improve the health of our waterways and deliver integrated water management outcomes in Stonnington and beyond.

We also work with Melbourne Water to maintain flood modelling that considers our changing climate, and with water retailers to improve water use efficiency.



Supporting our community

We support residents, households, businesses and community organisations to care for Stonnington's waterways and create water sensitive gardens through educational events, resources and programs and citizen science.

Over time, this will expand to include a stronger focus on connecting with waterways as living entities, creating flood-ready homes, and improving permeability, water use efficiency and water quality.



Understanding our impact through data

We monitor and report on drinking water, stormwater and harvested rainwater use associated with our operations and services so that we are publicly accountable and can track our progress.

We also monitor the water quality of our ponds and wetlands to ensure they are safe and functioning properly.

Over time, this will expand to include monitoring and tracking stormwater and waterway water pollution and flood impacts.

What you can do

Alongside the work of governments and organisations, there are practical actions people can take in their homes, neighbourhoods and communities.

We recognise that not every action is possible for every person, household or group, but everyone can play a part in ways that work for their circumstances.



In your home

Changes to your home and garden can make a difference for your own comfort and costs, and for the streets and waterways around you. You can:

- Choose water-efficient taps, showerheads and appliances, and fix leaks
- Plant drought-tolerant species and build healthy soil so your garden can hold more water and requires watering less often
- Capture and absorb rain through rainwater tanks, raingardens or permeable surfaces
- Keep gutters, downpipes and private drains clear so water can flow during heavy rain
- Dispose of paint, oil and household chemicals safely – never down the sink, drain or gutter (our online Waste and Recycling Guide lists appropriate disposal options)
- Use garden fertilisers and pesticides sparingly so less washes into waterways
- Keep litter, leaves, and garden clippings out of gutters and stormwater drains
- Find out whether your home is flood-prone, plan what you and your household (including pets) would do in a flood and know where to find warnings and advice



In your neighbourhood

Neighbours who know and support one another are better placed to share information, lend a hand and recover together when flooding hits. You can:

- Get to know your neighbours and agree on simple ways to check in with or help one another during heavy rain and flooding
- Share trusted information, useful skills or resources, like how you created your flood plan or what you've done to make your garden water-wise
- Help care for local street trees, nature strips and raingardens
- Be aware of flood-prone locations near you, avoid them during heavy rain
- Report blocked public drains or other hazards to Council



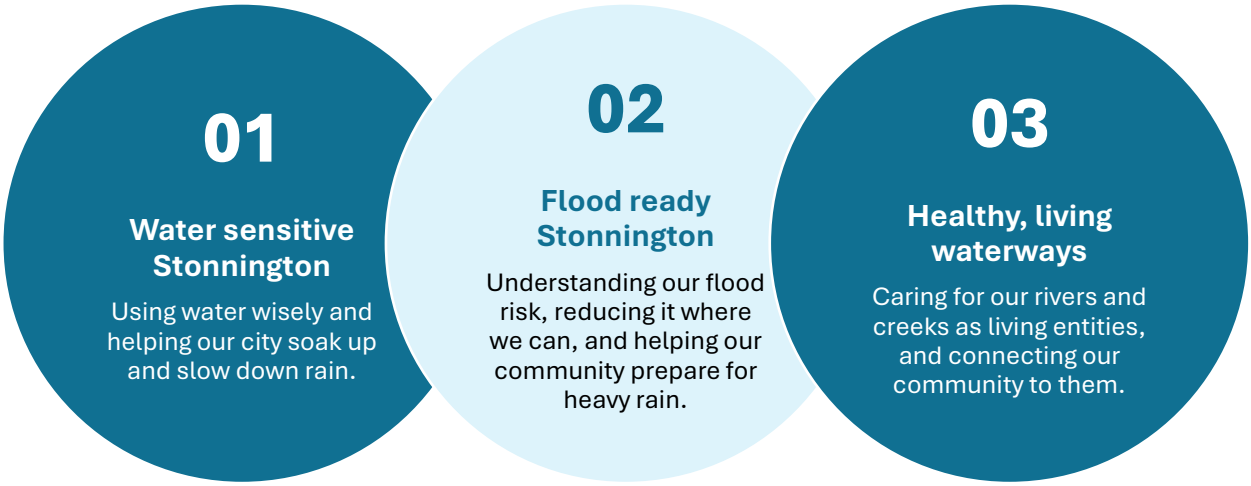
In your community

Acting together, communities can care for waterways, support people with fewer options and influence decisions that affect everyone. You can:

- Join or support a local environmental, waterway or community organisation
- Take part in planting, clean-ups or citizen science and other activities along local rivers and creeks
- Invite others to join in too and help make community activities welcoming and accessible to people with different needs and circumstances.
- Share your experiences of local flooding, and your ideas for solutions, through Council's engagement opportunities
- Advocate for water sensitive, flood-ready homes, streets and public spaces that benefit the whole community

Our focus for the next three years

Building a water sensitive and flood ready Stonnington requires action across our organisation and community. This Action Plan is organised around three connected focus areas that together strengthen how Stonnington lives with water as the climate changes. The three work hand in hand: a more water sensitive city floods less and sends cleaner water downstream.



Reading the action tables

Each focus area includes an action table setting out what we will deliver over the next three years. For each action:

TIMING shows when an action is expected to begin, progress or be completed during the Action Plan. Key:

- ● Active years
- ○ Years where the action is not yet underway or has been completed

Note: Years refers to financial years, with 'Year 1' of this plan being financial year 2026-27.

COST provides a high-level indication of the likely scale of investment required. Key:

- Deliverable within existing staff resources
- **$** Low - less than $50,000 per year
- **$$** Medium - approximately $50,000 to $250,000 per year
- **$$$** High - greater than $250,000 per year, generally associated with capital works or multi-site delivery programs

Note: Cost estimates are indicative and intended to guide planning. Funding decisions are considered through Council's annual budget process and actual costs may vary depending on scope, design, delivery timing and opportunities to secure external funding.

CO-BENEFITS identifies where an action is expected to also contribute to another priority of Sustainable Stonnington 2040. Actions have been assigned to the Action Plan where they are most directly delivered; however, environmental outcomes are interconnected, and many actions will support more than one priority at the same time. Key:

Resilient, Adaptable & Empowered | Climate Positive | Biodiverse, Green & Connected

Circular & Resource Conscious

Focus Area 01: Water sensitive Stonnington

Using water wisely and helping our city soak up and slow down rain.

A growing network of water sensitive features is already at work across Stonnington, quietly holding rain that would otherwise rush to drains and filtering stormwater before it reaches our rivers and creeks.

Our aim is to make water sensitive design a standard part of how we renew streets, open spaces and buildings. Over the next three years, we will trial new permeable surfaces and other water-absorbing treatments, expand stormwater harvesting and smart irrigation, and reduce water use and stormwater pollution across Council operations. We will also help households and businesses to use water more efficiently and keep pollutants out of drains.

This will ease pressure on our drains and waterways, reduce reliance on drinking water and help keep our streets, parks and gardens cooler and greener through dry periods and better able to cope when heavy rain arrives.

Action		Timing	Cost	Co-benefits
1.1	**Embed water sensitive design into street renewals** Update Council's internal guidelines and standard drawings for streetscape water sensitive urban design, including tree pits, raingardens and permeable surfaces. Identify and deliver opportunities to incorporate passive irrigation as part of planned street-renewal works, making water sensitive design considerations standard practice in streetscape renewals.	●●●	$$	
1.2	**Trial permeable materials and water-absorbing streetscape treatments** Trial soil aeration, permeable kerb and channel materials, and permeable paving at selected road renewal sites and car parks. Use the results to recommend where these treatments work best and guide broader adoption through future renewal programs.	●●○	$	
1.3	**Establish water efficiency standards for turf at Council-managed sites** Develop internal guidelines and specifications for turf installation across Council-managed sites, prioritising turf species and irrigation systems that reduce water, fertiliser and herbicide use. This will reduce water use and chemical runoff while keeping open spaces green and usable.	●○○		
1.4	**Progress stormwater harvesting for sportsground irrigation** Subject to grant funding from Melbourne Water and other organisations, deliver stormwater harvesting and reuse systems at priority sportsgrounds. Works will be coordinated with sportsground renewals where possible, guided by Council's Sports Infrastructure Plan.	○●●	$$$	
1.5	**Trial smart irrigation systems across Council-managed open spaces** Trial smart irrigation technology, including soil-moisture sensors and weather-based scheduling, starting at Malvern Valley Golf Course. Monitor outcomes of the Malvern Valley Golf Course trial and review identify other Council-managed open spaces that could benefit from similar technologies.	●●●	$$$	
1.6	**Improve water efficiency at Council's highest-use buildings and facilities** Audit Council's highest water-use buildings and facilities to identify opportunities to reduce consumption through behaviour change and fixture upgrades. Begin implementing priority improvements and monitor water use at those sites.	●●●	$	

Action		Timing	Cost	Co-benefits
1.7	**Embed water sensitive standards into Council buildings** Update service level standards for Council-owned buildings so high-efficiency fixtures and fittings, rainwater tanks, and stormwater capture where appropriate, become standard considerations in future maintenance and renewal works.	○●○		
1.8	**Review water and discharge management at Council aquatic centres** Review how Harold Holt Swim Centre and Prahran Aquatic Centre manage operational water, including backwash, chemical handling and other discharges. Identify opportunities to reduce water use, ensure effective pollution controls and inform the timing of future plant and equipment upgrades.	○●○	$	
1.9	**Review and enhance stormwater and pollution management at the Stonnington Depot and Waste Transfer Station** Assess stormwater practices and infrastructure at the Stonnington Depot and Waste Transfer Station, develop a site management plan and begin implementing priority improvements. This will reduce waste and pollutants entering stormwater and waterways from Council operations.	●●●	$$$	
1.10	**Help households save water with Home Resource Efficiency Kits** Expand Council's Home Energy Efficiency Kits to include water-saving tools and information and make the rebranded Home Resource Efficiency Kits available through libraries. Trial water efficiency upgrade packs, such as water-efficient showerheads and tap fittings, for households that borrow a kit. *This action will be coordinated with related household energy efficiency actions in the Climate Positive Action Plan, supporting an integrated approach to more sustainable homes.*	●●○	$	
1.11	**Advocate for stronger integrated water management requirements in building and planning controls** Advocate to the Victorian and Australian governments for stronger building and planning requirements that improve integrated water management outcomes of private developments and new construction. *This action will be coordinated with related advocacy actions across the companion Action Plans, providing an integrated approach to a sustainable built environment in Stonnington.*	●●●		
1.12	**Support local businesses and developers to use water efficiently and prevent pollution** Develop and deliver practical education and resources that help local businesses and developers reduce water use and prevent pollutants from entering stormwater through their operations. Promote relevant tools, incentives and simple changes businesses can make. *This action will be coordinated with related business support actions across the companion Action Plans, providing an integrated approach to local business sustainability.*	○●●	$	

Focus Area 02: Flood ready Stonnington

Understanding our flood risk, reducing it where we can, and helping our community prepare for heavy rain.

When a downpour outpaces the drains, water doesn't wait – it flows across roads, pools in low-lying streets, and finds its way into homes and businesses. While we can't remove flood risk entirely, we can reduce how often flooding happens, how bad it gets, and how exposed our community is when it does occur.

Melbourne Water leads flood mapping and floodplain management across the region. We will work with them to update Stonnington's flood mapping and use this evidence to develop a dedicated Flood Risk Management Plan. From this, we will strengthen planning controls for flood-ready development, investigate water-sensitive responses and deliver drainage improvements across our city. We'll also develop practical support for households to understand and prepare for their flood risk**.**

Action		Timing	Cost	Co-benefits
2.1	**Update Stonnington's flood mapping with Melbourne Water** Through the Greater Melbourne Flood Information Program, work with Melbourne Water to update flood mapping for Stonnington using current modelling techniques and climate projections. The mapping will give Council and the community a clearer picture of flood risk under current and future conditions and underpin much of the work in this focus area.	●●○	$	
2.2	**Use water sensitive urban design to reduce flooding in key precincts** Model how streetscape water sensitive urban design, green infrastructure and rainwater tanks could reduce flood impacts in the Chapel Street precinct. Apply the findings to future planning for future precinct masterplans, testing how distributed features across a catchment can contribute to flood management in intensely developed areas.	●●●	$$	
2.3	**Develop a Flood Risk Management Plan** Develop a dedicated Flood Risk Management Plan informed by the updated flood mapping. The Plan will establish a prioritised, long-term program encompassing drainage upgrades, nature-based and water sensitive solutions, planning controls, community education and household support.	●○○	$$	
2.4	**Update planning controls and guidelines to respond to flood risk** Following finalisation of the updated flood mapping, work with Melbourne Water to prepare and progress amendments to the Stonnington Planning Scheme and develop local planning policy and design guidelines that support water sensitive, flood-ready development. This will help ensure new buildings and precincts are designed for the flood conditions they may face.	●●○	TBC	
2.5	**Expand smart monitoring of our stormwater drains** Review Council's stormwater pit-sensor trial, identify priority locations and install additional sensors at selected sites. The sensors will help identify blockages so drains can be cleared before heavy rain, reducing the risk of localised flooding.	●●●	$	
2.6	**Help households prepare for and reduce flood risk** Scope, design and trial a Flood Ready Home Upgrades Assessment Service to help households identified as being at risk understand practical home and garden improvements. Provide subsidised flood-ready assessment for vulnerable households in impacted areas. Alongside the trial, provide practical education on actions households can take, including garden landscaping approaches, maintaining private drainage and using rainwater tanks to capture roof runoff and ease pressure on drains.	●●●	$	

Focus Area 03: Healthy, living waterways

Caring for the health of our waterways and connecting people to the role of water in our lives and community.

The health of our rivers and creeks is partly determined upstream – what we capture, slow and clean across the catchment shapes what eventually reaches our waterways. But caring for waterways is also a relationship and responsibility in its own right.

Working with Traditional Custodians, Melbourne Water and catchment partners, we will act on our commitments to Birrarung and KooyongKoot, support Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung stewardship, and improve our understanding of waterway health.

We will also create more opportunities for people to experience and care for local waterways through riverside places, events, education and community monitoring. Communities that feel connected to rivers and creeks are more likely to value and care for them, strengthening a shared culture of respect for the cultural, spiritual and ecological significance of water.

Action		Timing	Cost	Co-benefits
3.1	**Formalise our commitments to Birrarung (Yarra River)** Adopt a Statement of Commitment to Birrarung setting out Council's approach to caring for the river as a living entity and become a signatory to the Swimmable Cities Charter in support of a long-term ambition for a swimmable Birrarung.	●○○		
3.2	**Support Wurundjeri-led stewardship of Birrarung** In partnership with the Yarra Collaboration Committee, support the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to strengthen its self-determined capacity for stewardship of Birrarung and participation in delivering the *Burndap Birrarung burndap umarkoo, Yarra Strategic Plan*.	●●●	$$	
3.3	**Create places for the community to connect with Birrarung** In partnership with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and Yarra Collaboration Committee, design and deliver the Birrarung pathway and revegetation project at Cray's Landing and support implementation of the Birrarung Valley Walk. These projects will restore the river's parklands and help people experience and connect with Birrarung as a living entity.	●●●	$	
3.4	**Connect the community with our waterways through events** Partner with the Yarra Riverkeeper to deliver and grow Birrarung Riverfest, and with the Gardiners Creek (KooyongKoot) Regional Collaboration, to deliver annual events such as World Rivers Day and National Water Week. These events will help people enjoy, understand and care for local waterways.	●●●	$	
3.5	**Build waterway health and respect into Council projects** Update Council's Project Management Framework so that relevant capital projects consider water sensitive outcomes and appropriate Traditional Custodian engagement from the earliest stages of planning.	●○○		
3.6	**Phase out synthetic turf on nature strips** Update Council's Nature Strip Planting Policy to prohibit the replacement of synthetic turf nature strips at end-of-life, so they are instead transitioned to permeable, living vegetation. This will help rain soak into the ground and reduce microplastics entering stormwater and waterways.	●○○		

Action		Timing	Cost	Co-benefits
3.7	**Assess synthetic and natural turf at sports fields** Undertake a comparative assessment of natural and synthetic turf at Council-managed sports fields, considering the need to accommodate high levels of sporting demand within limited open space alongside while managing environmental impacts such as water use, permeability and flood management, urban heat, microplastic pollution, maintenance requirements and end-of-life outcomes. Develop recommendations to guide future surface selection and management.	●○○	$	
3.8	**Protect culturally significant sites from flood impacts** Informed by updated flood mapping, work with Traditional Custodians to understand potential impacts on sites of cultural significance and identify appropriate protection, adaptation and recovery responses. This work will be guided by self-determined participation and cultural authority.	○●●	$	
3.9	**Guide development along waterways to help protect them** In partnership with the Yarra Collaboration Committee and Gardiners Creek (KooyongKoot) Regional Collaboration, develop guidelines that help development along Birrarung and KooyongKoot protect waterway health, cultural values, landscape character and the function of waterways as living systems and deliver net gain for the environment.	●●○	$$	
3.10	**Assess opportunities for restoration and naturalisation of degraded waterway sites** Subject to grant funding, assess the long-term feasibility of restoring historic waterways to a more natural form and function. This could include reshaping engineered channels, restoring vegetation or bringing buried waterways back to the surface to help manage flood risk and improve biodiversity and water quality.	○●●	$$	
3.11	**Develop a water-quality monitoring program** Design and cost an ongoing monitoring program for Council-managed wetlands, ponds and key drainage outlets, combining smart devices, periodic sampling and Melbourne Water and Environment Protection Authority data. The program will build a clearer picture of waterway health and guide maintenance, renewal and improvements, as well as reporting, advocacy, and education.	○●○	$	
3.12	**Support community Waterwatch groups** In partnership with Melbourne Water, the Yarra Riverkeeper, the KooyongKoot Alliance and other local groups and organisations, support community Waterwatch groups in areas where data is limited, helping residents monitor and care for local waterways and waterbodies.	●●●		
3.13	**Build understanding of waterways as living entities** Working with Traditional Custodians and catchment partners, and informed by the Birrarung Cultural Narrative once complete, deliver community education and interpretive signage that strengthen understanding of waterways as living entities and their cultural, spiritual and ecological significance.	●●●	$	

How we'll measure progress

We will track progress at two levels, monitoring both the delivery of actions and the longer-term outcomes they are intended to influence.

Strategic indicators

This Action Plan contributes to the strategic water outcomes established in Sustainable Stonnington 2040. These strategic indicators help will us understand whether Stonnington is using water more wisely, reducing flood risk, and improving the health of our waterways over time.

Some of these outcomes are influenced by many factors, including some outside Council's direct control. Change may also take time, with variable progress year to year, so we will consider the indicators together and monitor longer-term trends.

Strategic indicator	Baseline	2040 Target	Data source
Council drinking water use Megalitres of drinking water used for irrigation each year. Megalitres of drinking water used in Council-managed buildings each year. *Note: Seasonal conditions and changes to facilities and services may influence this outcome.*	To be established (2026/27)	Decrease	Council water bills
Stormwater harvesting and reuse Megalitres of stormwater harvested and used on Council facilities each year. *Note: Seasonal conditions may influence this outcome.*	To be established (2026/27)	Increase	Council data
Water sensitive urban design Number of water-sensitive urban design assets installed	374	Increase	Council data
Community flood preparedness Percentage of respondents who feel confident that they know how to prepare for and respond to flooding in their local area	To be established (2028/29)	Increase	Sustainable Stonnington survey (every three years)
Health of Birrarung and KooyongKoot Water quality (environmental) for Birrarung and KooyongKoot	Birrarung: Very low (2025) KooyongKoot: Very low (2025)	Increase	Melbourne Water Healthy Waterways Strategy data

Delivery indicators

The following delivery indicators align with the broader outcomes set in Sustainable Stonnington 2040 but translate them into specific targets for 2026-2029 that are relevant to the actions outlined in this Action Plan.

Delivery indicator	Target (2029)
Actions delivered on schedule	≥85%
Note: additional delivery indicators will be confirmed based on final list of actions adopted	

Evaluating programs and trials: Community programs, trials and training delivered through this Action Plan will be evaluated as they are developed and implemented. Evaluation will be proportionate to the scale and purpose of each initiative and may include participation and uptake, reach among priority communities, participant feedback or changes in knowledge or confidence following participation.

Monitoring, review and reporting

Delivery will be monitored through an internal implementation plan, which will track progress against each action and capture relevant program outcomes. Progress will be reviewed internally each quarter to support accountability, identify barriers early and adjust delivery where required.

Progress against this Action Plan, along with progress across the other four companion Action Plans, will be reported publicly through an annual Sustainable Stonnington 2040 update.

This Action Plan reflects our priorities and commitments at the time of adoption. As delivery progresses, new evidence, partnerships, funding opportunities or emerging climate risks may require us to adjust our approach. Any material additions or changes will be tracked through the internal implementation plan and reported through annual updates.

This Action Plan will be formally reviewed and updated in the final year of its three-year term, or sooner if circumstances require it.

