B. CHRONOLOGY
B.01 INTRODUCTION

CHRONOLOGY - A SHORT HISTORY

Landscapes are never static - they undergo continual change and evolution. A chronology is a way of understanding the evolution of the creek by arranging events in their order of occurrence in time. It summarises the different periods in the creek’s history, and describes how attitudes towards the creek have resulted in the creek we have today.

Like any landscape, the Moonee Ponds Creek is at one moment in a long and ever changing journey. Understanding this evolution and how differing attitudes have shaped the creek is an important step in managing this inevitable change into the future. The chronology represents an important collaboration between the project team, Council and the Friends of the Moonee Ponds Creek. This rich visual history has become a community display to be used at public events. It communicates the need to understand the past to effectively design the future.

A Living Creek
This describes the creek prior to white settlement, including the important role it would have played in Wurundjeri life as a meeting and gathering place. Grasslands and patches of open woodland dot the landscape, with deep pools of water. It reminds us that the creek was once a source of abundant wildlife and was an integral component of the ecology of the region.

An Agricultural Creek
This describes the arrival of Europeans, the establishment of Melbourne, and the subdivision of the land to the high water mark of the creek. The landscape was cleared, fencing was erected and farming commenced. Sheep grazing was followed by wheat and other grains. Sand mining took place along the creek. The land was celebrated for its productiveness and the first State Farm was established on the banks of the creek in Parkville.

A Sewer Creek
This describes the despoliation of the creek and its treatment as a open sewer. Due to the lack of vegetation, erosion of the delicate creek embankment occurs and sedimentation becomes a major problem along the creek. Health concerns become common place and calls are made to undertake ‘improvement’ works to the creek. Flooding is a regular occurrence. Within a short period, the creek has been significantly altered in form and appearance.

A Drainage Creek
After the establishment of the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works, works commence to sewer the city and solve ongoing flooding issues along the creek. Many people are concerned about health and safety along the creek and the MMBW embark on a long term drainage scheme for the creek, which includes substantial alterations to its alignment and form, including construction of the concrete lining.

A Recreation Creek
Early in the twentieth century, there is growing recognition of the need to provide suitable spaces for recreation for a growing population with more time on its hands. The only cheap and available land is flood prone land along the creek, which leads to the location of recreational and sporting facilities along the creek. The seeds are sown for a linear park along the creek, although it fails to be constructed.

An Urbanised Creek
The post war period marks a significant phase in the growth of Melbourne with substantial migration from war ravaged Europe fuelling the rapid urban expansion of housing to the north along the creek. To service the new suburbs and the construction of a new international airport, as well as support the growing ownership of private vehicles, a new freeway is constructed on the creek floodplain. The creek is significantly realigned and channelised.

An Environmental Creek
The 1960’s and 70’s heralds a growing environmental awareness, with a significant shift in community attitudes towards the creek. There is growing recognition of the ecological and social importance of the creek and the need to protect and improve the creek from further works. The establishment of community groups seeking to improve the creek’s health and function is a critical development.

A Future Creek
Today, Melbourne faces important decisions about the type of city we would like to inhabit, and how we should live our lives. There is almost universal recognition of the magnitude of human intervention in global natural systems, and the need to significantly change our management of the natural and urban ecosystems. Melbourne commences its ‘second gold rush’ with substantial population growth and urban development rapidly reshaping the city.
A living creek...

... a sea of thick grassy woodland stretches out into a broad valley amphitheatre of basalt slopes. Emus and bush turkeys roam through the scattered yellow-box trees pushing through spears of threduna grass... Past the twisting trunks of majestic river red gums a series of deep ponds can be seen. A small group of people are harvesting luxuriant grass... Past the twisting trunks of majestic river red gums a series of deep ponds can be seen.

Wurundjeri Discussions

In July 2016, a Cultural Heritage Values Recording (CHVR) was undertaken by the Wurundjeri, as an important part of the development of the plan. The purpose of the recording is to identify and understand traditional and contemporary cultural values and meanings held by the Indigenous community associated with the creek corridor, and ways in which these values can be interpreted in a meaningful and practical way.

The recording was organised with the assistance of Ian Travers (Extent Heritage Pty Ltd), and took the form of a walk along different sections of the creek within the study area with six Wurundjeri elders, as well as members of the project team. The following notes are contained in the Cultural Values Recording which forms an important document within this plan.

During the walk, the main categories under which the Wurundjeri expressed attachments or concerns were as follows:

Interpretation Of Cultural Heritage

The Elders expressed several concerns around the way in which cultural heritage is currently interpreted in the study area. There is a general lack of interpretation of Aboriginal cultural heritage in the study area. Where interpretation is present this focusses on natural rather than cultural heritage.

The interpretation that is present lacks coordination. The interpretation panels at Strathnaver Reserve were cited as an example. These are of different vintages but repeat much of the same information.

In some instances where Aboriginal cultural heritage is highlighted, there is a lack of accompanying explanation. Elder Alice Kolasa highlighted the three related sculptures which together form the series entitled ‘The Totems’ (Glenn Romanson, 2002). Made from River Red Gum sourced from the Murray River, the sculptures are intended to tell the story of the history of the waterway. Auntie Alice was of the opinion that the sculptures were confusing without any accompanying story or other information.

‘The Totems’, Glen Romanson (2002) in Travancore Park, (left) and Boeing Reserve, Strathmore Heights (right), as inspected during the recording.

Importance Of Water

The Elders expressed the opinion that it was good to see the water flowing as this implied a healthier environment. Elder Bobby Mullins related that traditionally when the wattle blooms (when nice and yellow) it would be the right time to catch crayfish, and that you would do so by looking for their white pincers (their blue bodies being camouflaged). He related that the fish species likely to have populated the creek would have included brim (genus Acanthopagrus) and blackfish (Sarcoptes marmoratus), and that to catch them Aboriginal men would have used spears or fishnets, first laying rocks and banging on the water with sticks to drive them into the nets.

However, Uncle Bobby pointed out that the channelisation and introduction of bass (generally considered an ideal approach to preventing erosion. And exposure of tree roots. Revegetation was seen as such measures employed to prevent loss of vegetation needed to be slowed to encourage the return of these species to the study area.

Erosion/Revegetation

The Elders were keen to see further erosion of the creek banks prevented – for example through the rock channelisation and introduction of basalt rock rapids. The Elders felt it necessary to be allowed to encourage the return of these species to the study area.

The Importance of Water

The Elders were keen to see the water flowing as this implied a healthier environment. The Elders expressed the opinion that it was good to see the water flowing as this implied a healthier environment.

The Indigenous people who inhabited this land were our first explorers, colonisers and pioneers. Over their long association with the land, they developed land management and survival practices specific to their area. Large trees provided bark, a great, blue, saltwater lagoon...

A woman stands thigh deep in water collecting the starchy-sweet roots of water ribbons...

When the heavy rains come the deep, still ponds come alive, connected by a rush of water pushing against the richly coloured rocks and dense shrubs along the creek bank. The sudden torrent flows steadily through forests of casurina and carpets of golden murnong daisies terminating in a great, blue, saltwater lagoon...

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‘The Totems’, Glen Romanson (2002) in Travancore Park, (left) and Boeing Reserve, Strathmore Heights (right), as inspected during the recording.
The Elders felt revegetation along the lines of the vegetation along Mascoma Street, near the base ford in Strathmore, would be appropriate, and the denser vegetation along the inaccessible section of creek at Prince Street was also considered favourably.

There was recognition that the pre-contact environment could not be recreated, but that the reintroduction of Indigenous species would nevertheless improve the health of the environment and facilitate cultural strengthening amongst the Aboriginal community.

Warunjeri ecologist Fiona McCannachie commented that the recently introduced Indigenous revegetation at Booyong Reserve was fairly generic and typical of the mix of species employed by Melbourne Water in similar situations. She commented that it was difficult to source Indigenous species because of the cost of maintenance and supply, but that it would be good to get more local suppliers. It was suggested that a change in mindset regarding Indigenous species is required, and that improved supply would establish a positive cycle promoting further expansion of the corpus of species employed.

Aunty Alice expressed a wish to see native food plants, including murrung, cultivated in the study area. The Elders commented that it was difficult to source Indigenous species e.g. brim, blackfish and crayfish that would have drawn Aboriginal people.

Anonymous in the modern urban environment of the area.

Holistic, Long Term Management

The creek was a focus for Aboriginal people prior to European colonisation and would have been significant. The exception was a very large tree on private property 50m from the creek at 97 Fenton Street, Ascot Vale, but this is currently very low profile.

The creek runs through most of the study area often dotted with remnant trees and other vegetation wherever possible, but generally no specific occurrences were identified as of particular significance. The exception was a very large tree on private property 50m from the creek at 97 Fenton Street, Ascot Vale, but this is currently very low profile.

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“By 1845, the previously unsown soils of farms along the Moonee Ponds Creek and the Merri Creek were producing enormous yields. This farming landscape contained half the new colony’s acreage under grain, their crops including wheat, barley, oats and maize as well as potatoes, vegetables, vines and other plantings. The early prominence of local farming was reflected in the formation of the Moonee Ponds Farmer’s Society, which later became the Port Phillip Farmer’s Society. It held its first annual ploughing match on 27 July 1848 on Collier Robertson’s La Rose property overlooking the Moonee Ponds Creek. The match drew enthusiastic interest from all quarters of the Port Phillip District and marked the beginning of today’s Royal Melbourne Show. It also clearly highlighted the role of farming in the district and its growing importance as an organised, competitive activity.”

Source: Moreland Thematic History, City of Moreland, pg 44
a sewer creek...

“The growth of Melbourne during the second half of the 19th century was accompanied by a deterioration in sanitary conditions; human wastes were discharged directly in open drains; cesspools, ill kept privies and earth closets abounded; and night soil was dumped in close proximity to residential areas.”

Development of the Moonee Ponds Creek Drainage System, MMBW, 1981

December 3rd, 1887.


Moonee Ponds Creek is far too great to be borne locally, the Government may be fairly asked to place to everyone that this question is beyond the sphere of municipal politics, and as the cost of cleansing the subject of bringing the filthy state of the creek under the cognizance of the Government. It must be patent in passing a resolution inviting the neighbouring municipal bodies to a conference on the all important united action with regard to this nuisance, and also to show appreciation of the step taken by the latter it only just to compliment both the Western Ward vigilance committee, and the town council on their

1890  The Sanitary report from the Commission: “The Moonee Ponds Creek is a shallow tidal creek with sandy bed, covered in the Moonee Ponds area. (E.G. 5/1/99) 1890  The Rat plague: A house to house inspection was carried out by 20 PWD workmen. Preliminary work commencing from the Racecourse Road end, was carried out by 20 PWD workmen. Forty extra hands from the Labour Bureau were later employed to assist. The total cost of the project nearing completion. A total of 458 rats had been presented to Council for the 2d bounty. The reward was raised to 3d a

1899  Cleaning the Moonee Ponds Creek. Examinations and construction of 240 drain outlets for sewerage from the Metropolitan sewerage network, helping to reduce waste into the creek, although many unsewered properties remain, as well as industrial discharge into the creek. Into the creek reduced hydraulic capacity of the channel siltation and vegetation along the middle reaches bank erosion becomes a major problem along the middle reaches state of the creek. "it is a mere gutter of filth.” Kensington reported in the Age attributed to the filthy creek reduced hydraulic capacity of the channel acceberbated by illegal

1920's and 1930's connection of urban areas to the Metropolitan Boards of Works (MMBW) and further south to the Metropolitan Area. (E.G. 5/4/20) 1930's Moonee Ponds Creek no longer remains a shallow tidal creek, the state of the creek, acceberbated by illegal...
In response to the increasing frequency and severity of flooding as a result of urban development and loss of floodplain capacity, the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) commence a sixty year project to reconstruct the Creek as an urban drain designed to evacuate stormwater from the City as quickly and efficiently as possible, resulting in the concrete drain we have today. These works resulted in the straightening of the Creek’s meanders, lining of the creek and tributaries placed in underground drains (e.g. Melville Creek).
The development of a linear park along the Moonee Ponds Creek was first proposed back in 1929. After the Second World War there was increasing interest in providing recreational and open space opportunities for the rapidly growing population with increasing spare time and affluence. The creek’s floodplain provided cheap and available land to accommodate these activities.

1929: The Plan for General Development was a work which the Moonee Ponds Creek as a major linear park, noting the possibilities of linear parks for accommodating industrial, commercial and recreational uses. The plan suggested the park system would form a barrier to the external development of the city, acting as a buffer to industrial expansion.

1939: Residents of North Essendon were up in arms against the recent action of the Broadmeadows Shire Council in granting permission to the Patterson and Mockeridge to erect the track and stands on an area of land in the area to serve the 250 children. The reserve was at 157 residents was presented outlining the importance of a large areas of land for recreation grounds at Oak Park (11 acres) and Lebanon Park (17 acres), the latter being capable of accommodating two or three football ovals. (E.G. 24/3/49)


1947: The North Essendon Board Track, Source: http://board-tracks-that.html

1958: The Essendon Council requested a decision by the Board of Works. A wide range of activities were set up to enable families and residents to celebrate the occasion. (C.N. 6/3/85)

1963: In the south. (E.G. 6/3/85)
an urbanised creek...

After World War II, a new era of increasing prosperity arrived, fuelled by high prices for Victoria’s wool, increased government spending on transport and education, and the stimulus of renewed high immigration. These inﬂows rapidly transformed the city’s demographic proﬁle and many aspects of its life. This new growth required new spending on infrastructure such as roads, schools and hospitals, which had been neglected during the long decades of recession. The footprint of the city rapidly expanded, placing further pressures on the Moonee Ponds Creek.

The fate of the Creek has been closely aligned with the development of the major road to Broadmeadows along the Creek and the realignment of the creek. This area is now within the floodplain basin, with the creek experiencing more frequent flood ﬂows. The southern portion of the creek was an impetus for the massive realignment and development of the freeway linking the airport to the city and its alignment along the Creek in this area south of Brunswick Road does not appear to have been considered at the time. The second and third freeways were constructed either side of the Creek.

In the 1950’s to 70’s Major urban development occurring in Creek region led to decreases in vegetation and to the realignment of the Creek. This area is now within the floodplain basin, with the creek experiencing more frequent flood flows. The southern portion of the creek was an impetus for the massive realignment and development of the freeway linking the airport to the city and its alignment along the Creek in this area south of Brunswick Road does not appear to have been considered at the time. The second and third freeways were constructed either side of the Creek.

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In recent decades, a significant change in attitude towards the creek has taken place. Driven largely by the community, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of a more healthy creek to the functioning of the expanding city. While the creek cannot be returned to its former natural state, there is recognition that a new identity for the creek based upon enhanced livability, biodiversity and function must be forged.
**The Chain of Ponds plan invites residents, community members and stakeholders to come together to boldly re-imagine what Moonee Ponds Creek can be now and into the future. It is a call for radical and exciting ideas that will advocate positive change and begin an exciting new chapter in the life of the creek.**

**Proposed view looking north from Denzil Don Reserve, Brunswick West by Robert Lovick for Urban-Water Transect studio, led by Dr. Michaela Prescott, RMIT University, 2017**

**Proposed view near Brosnan Crescent, Strathmore Heights by Robert Lovick for Urban-Water Transect studio, led by Dr. Michaela Prescott, RMIT University, 2017**

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**Chronology | Chain of Ponds**

2015
- Tullamarine Freeway widening commences
- Western Distributor project announced
- Moonee Ponds Creek Linear Park Master Plan commences, reimagining ideas to rejuvenate and protect the creek.
- UN Climate Change Conference, COP 21 or CMP 11 was held in Paris. The conference negotiated the Paris Agreement, a global agreement on the reduction of climate change, the first of its kind which commits all of the world's countries to reduce their emissions over time.

2018
- Australia’s population reaches 25m - “Private sector demographer Mark McCrindle said Australia’s faster than anticipated population growth helps explain public frustration about traffic gridlock and crowded trains. ‘This is not a real surprise that infrastructure is playing catch up because the population has surpassed the forecasts on which the planning was based,’ he said.” The Age, Friday February 12th 2016

2025
- Volume of traffic on Melbourne’s freeways is on course to double in just 20 years according to VicRoads data

2040
- Melbourne’s population predicted to reach 8m (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics)
- The Chain of Ponds plan invites residents, community members and stakeholders to come together to boldly reimagine what Moonee Ponds Creek can be now and into the future. It is a call for radical and exciting ideas that will advocate positive change and begin an exciting new chapter in the life of the creek.

- Timeframe for meeting the vision to: provide innovative, collaborative and inspirational planning and management that will improve the ecological health of the Moonee Ponds Creek, support a happy, active and healthy community and protect the creek from inappropriate urban development.