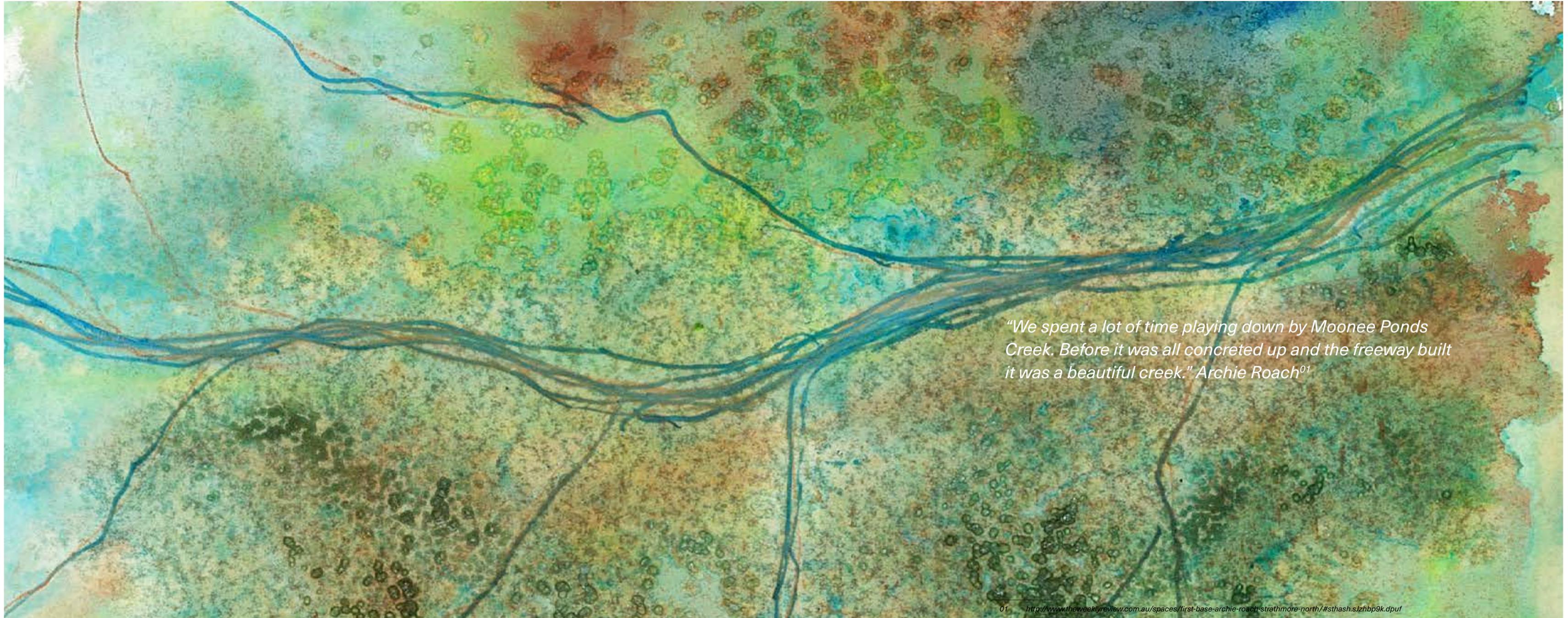


C. CREEK STORIES



"We spent a lot of time playing down by Moonee Ponds Creek. Before it was all concreted up and the freeway built it was a beautiful creek." Archie Roach⁰¹

⁰¹ <http://www.theweeklyreview.com.au/spaces/first-base-archie-roach-strathmore-north/#sthash.SJzhhp9k.dpuf>

C.01 INTRODUCTION

“The year is 1946. I am 4 years old and my parents have put their first payment down on a 3 small-roomed weatherboard house on a 1/4 acre piece of land with the title on one side ending in the creek. Some years later, the paddock out the front of the house became Margaret Street.

Our mail was delivered to the Post Office at the bottom of Gaffney Street across from the Pascoe Vale Station and our suburb had several name changes - Essendon North, Happy Valley and finally Oak Park. We had our own chickens, a cow, vegie garden and fruit trees. Our water supply came from two huge tanks and a spring on the bank of the creek on our land which is now covered in cement.

The natural Farmer's Market we topped up from was found in and around the Moonee Ponds Creek. There were eels, yabbies and rabbits and once a year mushrooms galore.

Dad would chop a pathway through the boxthorn hedges and wild aniseed plants to the base of the creek, and then roll stones to make a crossing to the other side. This was replaced after every flood that would run a banker and finish at our own doorstep. The widening of the creek and the footbridge that was built when Strathmore North State School opened made life easier.

Sadly to me, the covering of smooth cement with its harsh never changing appearance was like Botox on a face that loses its movement. As a small child, my family and our visitors enjoyed the freedom and adventures around this untamed country creek, but as the years rolled on a hardworking group joined as 'Friends of the Creek' to deliver a growing green wardrobe that brings colour and wildlife back into my little corner of the world.”

by Elaine of Strathmore.



Elaine's home in Margaret Street, Strathmore looking towards Essendon Airport, circa 1946

CREEK STORIES

The story and photograph on the previous page was provided by Elaine of Strathmore, gathered as part of the community consultation for the project. The story is an excellent reminder that landscapes are given life and colour by the many different memories and stories that are written and rewritten by the people who use and love the site.

We call these 'creek stories' and they form an invaluable and intrinsic part of the Moonee Ponds Creek. No two stories are the same; they are written from different viewpoints and capture the diversity present within the site. Everyone's story is different.

Importantly for sites like the Moonee Ponds Creek, most of these stories remain invisible to us, an unseen and intangible tapestry of ideas and memories that collectively form the community attitude towards the creek. It is these memories and associations that we are interested in, so assist in the development of suitable ideas that will strengthen the relationship between people and the creek.

Reading The Landscape

An important component of this project is engagement with the community to unearth some of these many stories which add detail, character and meaning to the creek and to make the people aware of the many, often different and conflicting views that are present in the community.

Such an appreciation promotes greater understanding of both the people and the landscape, and the wide range of attitudes towards the creek. Landscape architect Anne Whiston Spirn calls this process 'landscape literacy'. " As she describes "...landscape literacy is a cultural practice that entails both understanding the world and transforming it. To be literate in landscape is to recognise both the problems in a place and its resources, to understand how they came about, by what means they are sustained, and how they are related." ⁰¹

This project seeks to enhance landscape literacy around the Moonee Ponds Creek that will help the community come to terms with both the creek's history, as well as develop suitable strategies for improving the creek into the future.

⁰¹ *Design in the Terrain of Water, Pg 57.*

C.02 PREVIOUS PLANS

1975 NORTHERN WATERWAYS STUDY

The Northern Melbourne Waterways Study (1975)⁰² represents a ground breaking document in the changing attitudes towards urban waterways in Melbourne. For the first time, there was a real and palpable sense of urgency to address the deterioration of the waterways within the city, and the need to explore alternative responses to the pressures of urban development on natural systems.

Importantly, the study was initiated because of growing community concern about the treatment of these waterways. Community involvement in the Study was actively encouraged by advertising for submissions in the media and by holding an all day public conference in June 1975.

The thoroughness of the investigation extended to the inclusion in full of all community submissions and responses, as well as an extensive summary of the results of the public conference. These responses provide a vital clue to the changing attitudes of the time, and the growing environmental awareness developing within the broader community.

The following responses cited in the 1975 Study capture the spirit and intent of the investigation.

Submission by the Broadmeadows Environment Committee

“We consider that there is a strong case that portions of this unique creek valley be set aside for passive recreation.”

“...construction of concrete channelling with cyclone wire fencing is a deplorable move to make when other alternatives exist to prevent flooding and erosion...”

“Special emphasis should be placed on the planting of large trees...”

Submission by the North West Regional Council For Social Development

“The next stage would be the management of the surrounding riparian habitat to improve conservation and recreational amenity.”

“These waterways provide invaluable corridors of open space through the closely settled northern suburbs. Many of the small fragmented open space areas are located in close proximity to these streams, therefore any management program for these streams would need to consider their interaction with these open space areas.”

Individual Submission (Mr J Walker)

“It is better by far that a foreigner should come to our city and say, “Hey, Melbourne is an incredible place. They’ve got bush right in the middle of the city, and you can fish in the creek.”

Northern Waterways Conference Summary

Dr. J Franklin from the National Water Programme provided the following comments in his opening address to the conference -

“We see the basic need to reconcile a variety of requirements, in particular, to prevent flooding, if you can... but that is only one. At the same time those waterways constitute a valuable resource for recreation, for broad amenity considerations, and an important landscape element...they are quiet places within the urban environment. As such, they are too important we believe to just be considered as nasty places that flood now and again, and therefore to be covered up, to be piped so that they don’t flood, and to forget them.”

“If you put concrete channelling in an area where there is flooding, you may simply put the floods further downstream and somebody else cops it, and cops it worse perhaps.”

“I don’t think any of us particularly like miles and miles of trapezoidal concrete channels that just run along side a roadway.”

“If you put concrete in, you take the water away very quickly... It’s dirty, its nasty.”

“One should also think of limited acquisition.”

“I must say it is very nice to see so many people here, but in the context of what I have just said, I am sorry there are not hundreds here, there should be hundreds here, and one hopes that over time, more and more people will show an interest in this...”

The summary recommendations from the Conference suggested involving the community in planning, educating the community (especially children) to the value of the asset and the need for its careful use, judge success in waterway management by the return of past uses such as swimming, plan waterways on a catchment basis, prevent waterways becoming just drains, clean up streams, control the input of pollution to waterways, cease concrete lining and exclude freeways from waterways.

1992 CONCEPT PLAN

In 1991, the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) and the Moonee Ponds Creek Association jointly sponsored the preparation of the Moonee Ponds Creek Concept Plan, a strategic framework for the future development and use of the creek and its environs.

The first stage of the development of the Concept Plan was the establishment of a consultative process, which culminated in a community workshop in May 1991.

“The community consultation is based on quantitative and qualitative data collected during February 1991 and represents the direct input of 1137 individuals from along the Moonee Ponds Creek.

“At present the Moonee Ponds Creek, its surrounding parkland and open space is not highly valued by the community as a local resource. Young people and people who never use the area have a more negative perception of the creek than adults and people who are using the area. People who do not use the area see the creek and its environs as dirty, and the area is widely considered a dangerous place to spend time.”

The most significant factor restricting the wider use of the area is seen to be poor access from nearby residential areas and the quality and diversity of the path networks within the open space. The facilities available limit the use of the area by certain sections of the population especially the elderly and disabled. The existing facilities are also seen to restrict the range of activities possible.

There are a lack of facilities supportive of passive recreation, despite being the most common type of use of the creek and its environment. The bike track is not seen to be suitable as a multipurpose facility and linkage of the track to other path networks is inadequate. The creek itself is not a feature and restricted or difficult access to the water is considered to detract from the area.

Air and noise pollution were a problem for people using the creek area in certain sections, and the lack of shade was a significant factor inhibiting the extended use of the area for passive recreation along the whole creek.

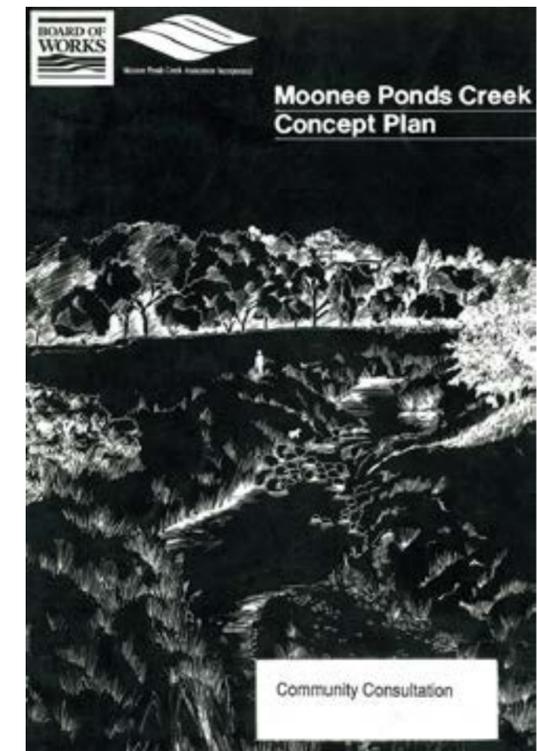
The community widely expressed the need for more native trees, shrubs and wildlife along the creek, and indicated that this would significantly increase their use of the area. It was however evident that tree planting alone would not change the overall pattern of use without a

simultaneous upgrading of access, both to and within the open space.

Young people particularly believed that the community should take an active part in the decision making over the future of the creek, though in general there was difficulty in imagining the creek and its environment in a positive way.”⁰³

Key issues were identified, including the provision of shade, air pollution, noise pollution, access to the bike track, use of the bike track, access to the creek, site use, habitat and the involvement of the community.

⁰³ Moonee Ponds Creek Concept Plan, Board of Works 1992.



2002 RESTING PLACES PROJECT

In 2001, Moreland City Council undertook a project to identify resting places along the Moonee Ponds and Merri Creek for people to stop, rest, eat, engage and contemplate the creek environment. A number of stakeholder workshops were undertaken in which the following issues arose as part of this consultation.

“The public perception of the creek’s identity and character revealed a general acceptance that the massively engineered concrete materiality of the creek is its unique character.”⁰⁴

“There is a position amongst stakeholder that the concrete channel provides a provocative canvas for exploration of, and public education about, ecological issues.”

Other issues raised in the consultation include -

- Interventions must respond to specific environmental context in a sensitive manner.
- Interventions should defer to better water and ecology quality.
- Celebrate the specific character of Moonee Ponds Creek as different to Merri Creek.
- Strategy should represent and inform existing ecological and historical environments.
- The engineered environments could be incorporated into the strategy to indicate

provocative celebration of infrastructure.

- Improved links for residents.
- Improved links to neighbouring suburbs and Moreland networks.
- Improved links to adjacent public areas.
- Improved circuit links (i.e. path on both sides, bridges etc.).
- Better access for elderly and disabled.
- Better access to water’s edge.
- Improve safety of paths (pedestrian/ bike conflict eg. speed traps, speed humps, segregated paths).
- Improve safety of path and resting structures.
- Improve safety for users (social considerations, informal surveillance, emergency phones).
- Improve safety of path and resting structures (management and design).
- Incorporate overall management cohesion consolidating water, trail and facility outcomes.
- Strategy must be implemented, ‘unlike arts strategy’.
- Integration with other strategies such as the art strategy.
- Define dog ‘on / off’ lead areas.
- All elements must be highly robust or replaceable.

⁰⁴ Moonee Ponds & Merri Creek Resting Places Strategy, Aspect, for the City of Moreland, 2002, pg 45

2011 STRATEGIC PLAN

In 2011, the Moonee Ponds Creek Coordination Committee oversaw the development of the Moonee Ponds Creek Strategic Plan. The plan involved a review of the 1992 Concept Plan and the development of “a revised plan to act as a framework for planning, development and management of the Creek environs.”⁰⁵

As part of the development of the Plan, discussions regarding potential development or aspirations were held with a range of key stakeholders and community groups. These groups “shared a number of common aspirations that were disclosed during the consultation process:

- at key stopping/rest points along the Moonee Ponds Creek Trail, construct water fountains, toilets and park benches;
- develop a cultural heritage trail/interpretive trail, highlighting both Indigenous and European heritage sites with relevant information;
- identify a strategic location for a daytime café at a key destination point. Seek to utilise existing facilities if available;
- continue to return areas to the north to native parkland;
- develop short walking trails/loops from car parks including the Woodlands precinct and Docklands precinct.”

Following this feedback, a workshop was organised to guide the development of the final plan. The workshop reiterated the previous aspirations and identified a number of further aspirations, including-

- create an integrated plan for the entire length of the Creek;

⁰⁵ Moonee Ponds Creek Strategic Plan, Land Design Partnership Pty Ltd, Urban Enterprise Pty Ltd, Golder Associates Pty Ltd (for Moonee Ponds Creek Co-ordination Committee), 2011

- improve linkages with other open space areas, community hubs, recreational facilities and residential areas;
- complete the Moonee Ponds Creek Trail for the full length of the Creek;
- protect areas of natural and cultural significance;
- develop cultural heritage and interpretive trails, highlighting both Indigenous and European heritage sites with relevant information;
- continue to return areas to the north to indigenous vegetation parkland;
- protect and enhance indigenous vegetation, habitat and biodiversity along the Creek Corridor;
- create biolinks;
- support ‘naturalisation’ of the Creek. In particular, seek reduction in the extent of concrete channelisation in the southern section of the Creek;
- identify responsibilities for Friends Groups, Local Government and State Government for implementation of the Moonee Ponds Creek Strategic Plan components;
- encourage adjoining landholder and stakeholder interest in the Creek and participation in revegetation and other projects.”⁰⁶

⁰⁶ 2011 Strategic Plan, 2011

KEEP MOONEE VALLEY MOVING 2015

In 2015, the City of Moonee Valley undertook an Integrated Transport Plan⁰⁷ for Moonee Valley. As part of this project, feedback was sought from the community on a range of transport issues. A number of comments relate to issues along the Moonee Ponds Creek, including -

“The Moonee Ponds Creek trail is really great and the path itself has good signage. However it’s difficult to know where you are...”

“ Can more lighting be added to such areas of the Moonee Ponds Creek Trail?”

“ Extremely dangerous area for cyclists and walkers. Frequently encounter dogs off leashes on these corners.”

“ Blind corners, narrow path, no lighting makes for a dangerous part of a cyclists commute.”

“Updating this wooden bridge to be concrete and much wider with better visibility around the corners would be fantastic (SAFER).”

“ Trees/bushes are not regularly pruned along the Moonee Ponds Creek Trail.”

“ Gravel and sand gets washed onto the path here when its rained. The corner is also a blind corner and very narrow. I’ve had a big crash here.”

“ Blind sweeping corner. Very narrow. High potential for accidents.”

“ Moonee Ponds Creek Trail - pitch black at night.”

“ There are issues with the shared path with regards to separating cyclists and pedestrians.”

⁰⁷ Keep Moonee Valley Moving, Integrated Transport Plan, Issues & Opportunities Paper, 2015