Living Links

2025-26 SNAPSHOT



Melbourne Water Urban Cooling Revegetation Project along the Dandenong Creek, Heatherdale.

www.livinglinks.com.au

Creating a connected network of thriving natural spaces where people are engage with nature.

Living Links is an urban nature partnership dedicated to creating a network of thriving green spaces where people and nature can flourish across Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs.

By enhancing connections between parks, reserves, open spaces, coastlines, beaches, trails, rivers, creeks and wetlands, Living Links is working towards a world-class urban ecosystem. These connections not only improve habitat for wildlife but also provide more opportunities for people to experience the health, wellbeing and community benefits of engaging with nature in their everyday lives.

The partnership brings together 20 organisations, including local councils, government agencies and community groups, all working towards a shared vision for a greener, more connected landscape. We are pleased to welcome three new partners to the Living Links Committee: Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne, Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust, and the Suburban Rail Loop Authority.

Our Catchments Our Communities - Vital Landscapes Project

The Victorian Government's Our Catchments, Our Communities program has invested $505,000 to restore native vegetation across the Mid-Dandenong Creek catchment between 2024 and 2028.

Delivered in partnership with local councils, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, DEECA and the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, the project focuses on the implementation of the Lower Dandenong Creek Management Plan 2020 including: ecological restoration, cultural heritage, stewardship and community engagement to improve biodiversity, climate resilience and community wellbeing.

Key Achievements 2025 - 2026:

- **143.45 hectares of weed control** completed along the Dandenong Creek and the Dandenong Police Paddocks. Works conducted by the City of Greater Dandenong and Parks Victoria.
- **23 hectares revegetated,** achieving 74% of the project target at Dandenong Police Paddocks and at Brady Rd along the Dandenong Creek.
- **11 ecological surveys** completed at Police Paddocks and Brady Rd.
- **2 management plans** delivered by Knox Council for Police Paddocks & Greater Dandenong for Brady Rd Reserve along the Dandenong Creek.
- **4 engagement events** conducted with site visits by the Living Links Committee and the Living Links Display Tent at the Discover Dandenong Creek Festival.
- **24 volunteers engaged** in tree plants and ecological assessments with the City of Greater Dandenong along the Dandenong Creek.
- **Cultural Burn Assessment** is underway in partnership with DEECA, Parks Victoria, Knox Council and Traditional Owners.

Our Catchments, Our Communities

VICTORIA State Government

Living Links Committee Site Tours

Myuna Farm, Wetlands & Bat Colony

On 9 October 2025, the Living Links Committee was hosted by Casey City Council at Myuna Farm for its committee meeting. The visit included a tour of the collaborative revegetation project being delivered by Melbourne Water and Casey City Council across the Myuna Wetlands adjacent to Dandenong Creek in Doveton. Committee members also visited the site's large resident Grey-headed Flying Fox colony.



Living Links Committee Members



Ranger Tour of Braeside Park with Adrian Howard.

Site visit & Christmas break up - Braeside Park Ranger Tour

On 4 December 2026, Parks Victoria hosted the Living Links Committee meeting at the Braeside Park Visitor Centre. The meeting was followed by a ranger-led tour of Braeside Park, where members learned about the benefits of ecological burning for native wildflower populations, rabbit and fox control programs, wetland management, revegetation and weed control initiatives, and the history of the site. The visit concluded with a Christmas lunch at the Visitor Centre, providing an opportunity for members to celebrate the year's achievements and connect with partners.

Mordialloc Estuary & Yammerbrook Nature Reserve.

On the 19th March 2026, the City of Kingston hosted the Living Links Committee meeting at the Mordialloc Life Saving Club overlooking the bay followed by a site tour of the Mordialloc Estuary and Yammerbrook Nature Reserve. The amazing site visit explored the many diverse management issues of the estuary, wetlands, stormwater, litter and litter traps, weeds, native vegetation, visitors, salinity and the adjoining retarding basin and levee bank.



Living Links Committee site visit at Yammerbrook Nature Reserve, hosted by Kingston Council

Update on the Climate Future Research Plots

In June 2024, five Climate Future Research Plots were established across the municipalities of Greater Dandenong, Knox, and Maroondah. The trials utilised seed collected from four provenances representing a range of climatic conditions and have been designed to investigate how native plant species respond to projected future climates. The project will provide valuable evidence to support the development of more climate-resilient urban landscapes.

Participating councils continue to undertake site maintenance, including weed management, while Federation University leads the research, monitoring, and data collection program. During the first two years, the plots have established well overall, although some plant losses were recorded. In accordance with the project protocol, these losses were addressed through replacement planting in the first year to maintain consistency across all sites.

A significant challenge emerged when two species from one provenance were identified as hybrids, potentially compromising the scientific integrity of the dataset. To ensure the long-term reliability of the research, these species have been removed and will be replaced by June 2027. This corrective action will help maintain consistency and data integrity over the 20-year lifespan of the project.



Greater Dandenong Climate Plot 2024/25 - Year 1 (credit: Federation University)



M (credit: Melbourne Water)

Greater Dandenong Climate Plot 2025/26 - Year 2 (credit: Federation University)

Discover Dandenong Creek Festival 2026

Around 1,000 community members gathered along Dandenong Creek in April 2026 to celebrate the annual Discover Dandenong Creek Festival, enjoying a vibrant day of activities in the autumn sunshine before the rainstorm arrived in the afternoon The event showcased the environmental, cultural and recreational values of the creek through a range of hands-on experiences, displays and family-friendly attractions designed to inspire a deeper connection with the local environment.

The festival commenced with a meaningful Welcome to Country delivered by Bunurong, followed by a Smoking Ceremony and traditional dance performance, recognising the rich cultural significance of the area. Community organisations and project partners played a key role throughout the day, with engaging displays and activities presented by groups including Greater Dandenong Environment Group, Federation University and Melbourne Water. The Living Links stall was a popular destination, helping visitors learn more about local conservation efforts and opportunities to get involved. Congratulations to the City of Greater Dandenong on delivering another successful community celebration of Dandenong Creek



The very busy Living Links Tent



Melbourne Water Catchment model

Living Links Ambassador School 2026

Two outstanding school projects have been selected for the Living Links Ambassador School Program this year. Lyndale Greens Primary School and Hillsmeade Primary School were recognised for the quality of their project proposals within the Dandenong Creek catchment and have each been awarded a $2,000 grant.

The funding will support the creation of Indigenous gardens within their school grounds, providing habitat for insect pollinators and featuring bush tucker species. These gardens will also be integrated into the school curriculum, delivering a range of environmental, cultural and educational learning opportunities for students. These projects will be completed at the end of the 2026 school year.

Living Links Collective Partnership Outcomes 2025/26

Category	Measure	Outcome
Habitat Restoration	New native vegetation established	284.47 ha
	Riparian vegetation established and improved	15.79 km
	Weed control and vegetation improvement	4,771.5 ha
	Number of plants planted	257,341
Pest Animal Management	Fox control	72.7 ha
	Rabbit control	Not reported
	Deer control	15 ha
Wetland Creation & Management	Wetlands created	4
	Wetlands maintained	28
Traditional Owner Engagement	Traditional Owner engagement hours	446.6 hours
	Events where Traditional Owners were employed by Living Links partners	5
Community Participation	Community events delivered	121
	Total event attendees	5,756
	Volunteers involved	2,526
	Volunteer hours contributed	24,686.5 hours
Access & Connectivity	Trails and paths established or improved	10.4 km



Parks Victoria revegetation at Dandenong Police Paddocks 2026 (credit: Parks Victoria)

Looking forward to 2026-2027

- The **Living Links 20-Year Celebration** lunch will be held at the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne on 3 December 2026, bringing together current and former Living Links Committee members, partners, and community environmental leaders to celebrate two decades of achievements, reflect on the partnership's impact, and strengthen connections across the network.
- **Strategic Direction:** The continued implementation of the Living Links 10-year Strategic Plan shaping future direction, priorities and collaborative activities of the Living Links Partnership.
- **Our Catchments Our Communities (OCOC):** Year three of the **OCOC-EC6** Vital Landscapes Project will focus on implementing five targeted initiatives, with robust contract management, delivery oversight and reporting frameworks ensuring successful project outcomes. Planning will commence for the development of **OCOC-EC7** projects to be delivered from 2028-29 to 2032-32.
- **Climate Research Plots:** Federation University will lead ongoing monitoring of the Climate Future Research Plots, while the Cities of Greater Dandenong, Knox, and Maroondah will continue site maintenance to support successful plant establishment over the next two years. Two hybrid species discovered in the plots will be replace by June 2027 to ensure consistency and data integrity.
- **Tree Dieback Sub-Committee:** Living Links Committee members, Melbourne Water, research partners, Landcare groups, and other stakeholders will collaborate to discuss and engage with a Melbourne Water Consultant to map tree dieback across the Port Phillip and Western Port catchment, (including the Dandenong Creek catchment), to better understand its extent, causes, and potential management solutions.

More information on Living Links:

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www.livinglinks.com.au

Living Links

South East Water

VICTORIA State Government | Environment, Land, Water and Planning

Melbourne Water

Parks VICTORIA Healthy Parks Healthy People

Bunurong Land Council

Yarra Ranges Council

Maroondah City Council

Bayside City Council

Greater Dandenong

The Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Est. 1880

City of Whitehorse

City of Monash

Frankston City

Knox City Council

City of Kingston

City of Casey

The Greater Dandenong Environment Group Inc.

Suburban Rail Loop

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