



# Dandenong Creek Community Panel report

**Enhancing our Dandenong Creek – Sewer upgrade deferral**

July 2018



# Table of contents

**Preamble ..... 3**

The remit ..... 3

Engagement outcomes ..... 3

**Part A: Report from the Community Panel**

**1.0 Introduction ..... 4**

Community panel members ..... 4

**2.0 Information provided ..... 5**

**3.0 Panel values ..... 5**

3.1 Value budgeting ..... 5

3.2 Additional comments..... 6

**4.0 The remit ..... 7**

4.1 Rationale for final vote ..... 8

**5.0 Recommendations for value areas ..... 9**

5.1 Pollution reduction ..... 9

5.2 Biodiversity and vegetation .....10

5.3 Amenity improvements .....11

5.4 Behaviour change, education and community engagement .....12

5.5 Prioritisation of actions by voting .....12

**6.0 Desired outcomes for the next five years ..... 14**

**7.0 Next steps ..... 15**

**8.0 Conclusion ..... 16**



## Preamble

Melbourne Water engaged Max Hardy Consulting to design and facilitate a deliberative panel process. The task of the panel was to provide advice about alternative work in place of the proposed deferral of sewer upgrades to the Ringwood South Branch Sewer near Dandenong Creek (required for EPA compliance) until 2030 in favour of other environmental and amenity works.

This alternative work is part of the Enhancing Our Dandenong Creek Project (EODC), a Melbourne Water pilot project that has just concluded its first five-year program. EODC is related to the section of Dandenong Creek between Bayswater North and Boronia Road. It is acknowledged that although this is the target area for works, due to the nature of the creek, works may be completed upstream or downstream as required. The Emergency Relief Structure (ERS) that is subject to spilling is located near Rachele Drive, Wantirna. As part of Melbourne Water's broader 'next gen' engagement process, this work seeks to engage the community around the next steps for this pilot program.

The forum was held across two separate Sundays on the 22 July and 29 July 2018, and included 24 representatives selected from a broad cross-section of the community, nine of whom had previously been engaged in the EODC project. 15 participants were recruited to from the general public and 9 stakeholders who have been engaged in the project previously. All participants were required to attend both days, and actively engage in deliberation and make judgements based on the information provided.

## The remit

The purpose of the day was to provide a response to the following remit:

*To what extent do you support Melbourne Water deferring sewer upgrades until 2030 and focusing on environmental and amenity improvements?*

## Engagement outcomes

The desired outcomes from this workshop were:

- To inform the community of the EODC project and the underlying drivers
- To build community knowledge and capacity in understanding the current environmental, social and economic issues surrounding the sewer
- To determine the extent of community support for a variety of EODC proposals for the next five years
- To identify community values in relation to Dandenong Creek
- To develop a range of prioritised amenity plans and corresponding level of support for each to be shared with the broader community.

# Part A: Report from the Community Panel

## 1.0 Introduction

This report is based on the EODC panel output over the two-day forum and reflects the opinions of the panel, although not necessarily the opinions of any single individual. This report is put forward to Melbourne Water for consideration by the board moving into the next phase of the EODC project.

The report is in response to the remit:

*'To what extent do you support Melbourne Water deferring sewer upgrades until 2030 and focusing on environmental and amenity improvements?'*

### Community panel members

The members of the community panel were selected from a group of existing stakeholders as well as randomly selected participants that were recruited externally by an independent specialist, Nivek Thompson of Deliberately Engaging. These participants were recruited from the federal electorates of Deakin and Aston, with a stratified sampling approach to ensure diversity of panel members. The panel consisted of the following members:

Colin Arnold  
Ray Beaton  
Graham Bower  
Michael Brown  
Kimberly Cornell  
John Cull  
Jude Dwight  
Deborah Farago

Matt Gilbert  
David Haskins  
Yin Ingamells  
Julie Koska  
Susan Laukens  
Malcolm Lord  
Karen Martin  
Trish McGee

Pat O'Donnell  
Roger Pearce  
Erica Peters  
Brandon Pope  
Rajesh Samel  
David Sautner  
Trajco Vilarov  
Alice White



Caption: The panel in action

## 2.0 Information provided

Panel members were provided with an information package, and Sarah Watkins, EODC's project manager, presented substantial information about Dandenong Creek. They also had the opportunity to interact with subject matter champions to gain answers to their many questions.

The subject matter champions were:

Michelle Wotton – Sewerage systems

Rhys Coleman – Aquatic biodiversity

Claudette Kellar and Professor Vincent Pettigrove – Pollution

Kelly Bayton - Vegetation

## 3.0 Panel values

The Dandenong Creek is a complex environment with many competing issues and drivers that impact on the creek that are both influenced by and external to the ERS spill issue. The core areas of interest included pollution reduction programs, biodiversity and vegetation works, amenity improvements, behaviour change/education and community engagement programs and other works. The panel was asked to allocate a percentage to any or all of these groups reflecting the proportion of funds Melbourne Water could invest, from savings, in each interest area.

### 3.1 Value budgeting

On the first day of deliberation the panel was asked to work in table groups to provide their initial budgets with regards to Dandenong Creek values. These initial values are provided in Table 1.

	Table 1	Table 2		Table 3	Table 4	Table 5
Vegetation	10	10	15	30	15	25
Aquatic biodiversity	10	15	15		17	
Riparian biodiversity	10					
Reducing pollution	50	25	50	40	35	40
Improving amenity	5	30	5	10	16	5
Behaviour change and education	10	10	15	10	11	15
Broader community engagement	5	10	5	10	6	15

Table 1: First assessment of small group panel values – Day 1

On the second day of the forum, and after reflection and additional information, the group created a final value budget. On average the panel allocated the following proportion of resources to each of these areas:

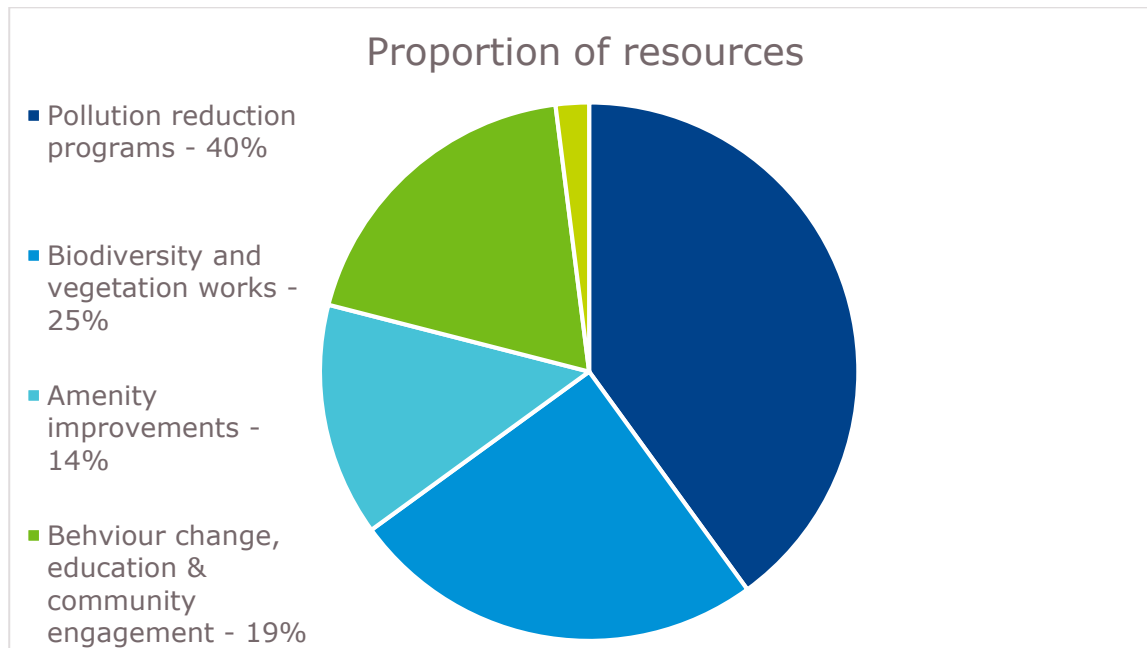


Table 2: Proportion of resources – Day 2

The 'other' category included the following suggestions:

- Looking at future technologies and supporting the cost of EPA monitoring
- Support for existing community groups
- The control of stormwater flow through Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD)
- More safe walking tracks.

### 3.2 Additional comments

Additional individual comments made in written response to presented values and priority actions included:

- Some pollution measures will relate to behaviour change. Therefore, some engagement and behaviour change will extend to other topics.
- Amenity works may be premature.
- Pollution is the key issue for the creek. There are many contributors – industry, dog poop, stormwater, etc. If pollution is not addressed, eventually the creek could be too full and any of the other amenity improvements might be irrelevant. Increase awareness, education and accountability.
- Regarding amenity, healthy people forget what it is like to be ill/disabled/pregnant.
- Amenity improvements should include an overhead shelter to use in inclement weather.
- Extend the life of the sewer for as long as possible by reducing flows in wet weather events. There is technology and evidence that this can be done.
- Walking and cycling tracks need to be separate for safety reasons.
- Could you create waterway ambassadors among the kids in local primary and secondary schools and regularly meet and talk to them? Why not strike while the iron's hot and ask who is interested from among your tree planters?
- Some monitoring of dogs and owners regarding the disposal of faeces.
- Youth engagement with high schools.
- Increase in EPA fines.
- Support to community groups/ citizen science activities.

## 4.0 The remit

The core purpose of the panel was to reach a consensus or majority vote in response to the remit:

*To what extent do you support Melbourne Water deferring sewer upgrades until 2030 and focusing on environmental and amenity improvements?*

The panel voted several times over the process to identify their opinion on the remit as they received more information. Figure 2 shows the proportion of votes each category received over the course of the entire panel.

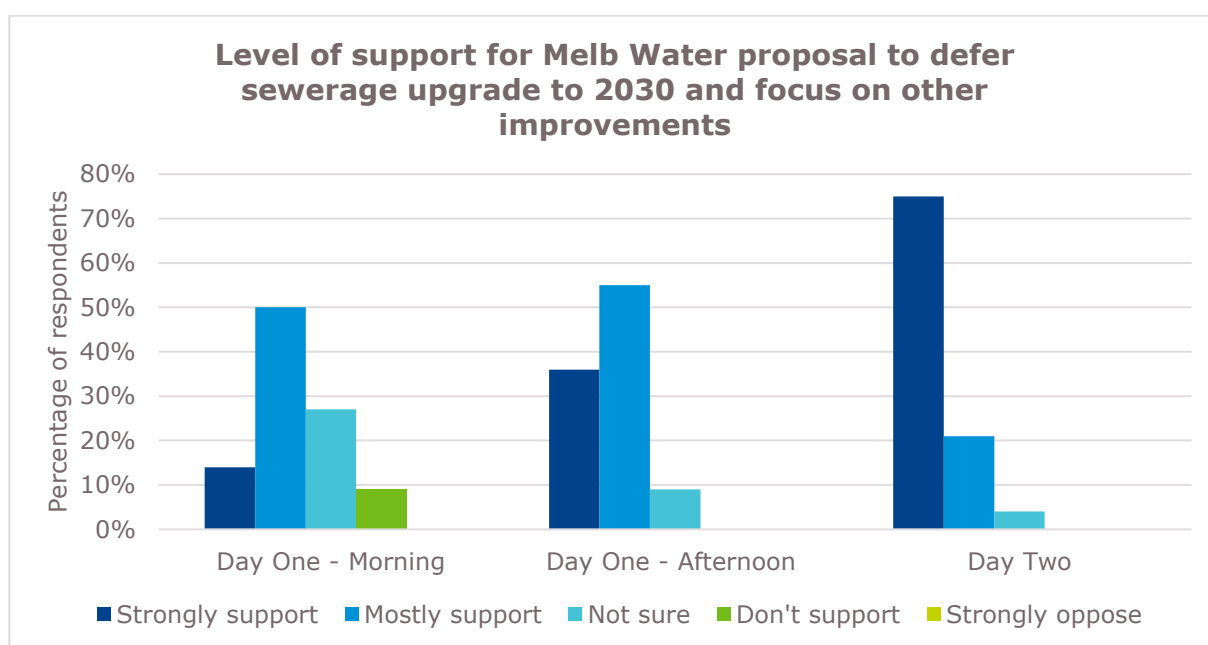


Figure 1 - Graph showing the level of support for the remit over three separate polls

A breakdown of the voting data is shown in Table 2.

	Strongly support	Mostly support	Not sure	Don't support	Strongly oppose	Total
Day One - Morning	14%	50%	27%	9%	0%	100%
Day One - Afternoon	36%	55%	9%	0%	0%	100%
Day Two	75%	21%	4%	0%	0%	100%

Table 2: Voting data breakdown

What is immediately apparent when viewing this data is the change in opinions over the course of the panel. We can note the following:

- There was a 61% change (positive) in the number of people that strongly supported the remit between day one and day two.
- After the first session, there were no longer any panel members that did not support the remit (reduction of 9%).

- There was a large decrease in the number of panellists that weren't sure between day one – morning (27%) and day two (4%).

This trend shows that the information provided was sufficient for the panel to be comfortable supporting the remit, with 96% strongly supporting, or mostly supporting Melbourne Water's proposal.

#### **4.1 Rationale for final vote**

Panellists provided a number of reasons for their supportive final vote in response to the remit. A selection of these reasons include:

- The research says it is okay; additionally, the researchers were credible experts with high status.
- Stormwater pollution evidence.
- Prioritising environment over other development.
- Evidence from subject matter champions was easy to accept (knowledgeable).
- EPA approved deferring in the past.
- Confidence in the resources provided, and that experts were available and aligned.
- It is a five-year plan so there is an opportunity for review and for it to be adaptive.
- Information received throughout the week (provided by Sarah Watkins) was valuable to help clarify.
- Melbourne Water already implementing this direction and want to see it progress; Melbourne Water has already achieved a lot of work (demonstration of commitment to follow through).

The panel also identified the strength of this process and were confident that Melbourne Water would give due consideration to their work.



## 5.0 Recommendations for value areas

For each of the four key value areas, panel members looked at their top priority ideas, including a rationale for why these ideas were priorities. This process included the development of ideas by panel members who chose their main area of interest, followed by feedback from the wider panel.

### 5.1 Pollution reduction

#### **Priority 1 – Chemical identification and testing**

Identify chemicals found in creek and drains at point source. Diffuse pollution is more problematic. Need to provide alternatives to things such as termite treatment.

##### *Rationale*

To prevent pollution at the source. It is easier to keep the stream healthy if we keep pollutants out of the creek.

#### **Priority 2 – Deal with known sites of pollution**

Where there are known sites of pollution they should be dealt with on site e.g. Joes Creek Industrial Park; dog owners deal with any droppings more responsibly.

##### *Rationale*

This would prevent pollution from moving down stream and would make industrial sites more accountable to contain pollution on site.

#### **Priority 3 – Instream water flow mitigation**

Instream water flow mitigation and widening of creek (filtration at the source of pollution).  
(Note this has linkages with the biodiversity and vegetation improvements)

##### *Rationale*

Improves water quality and public health.

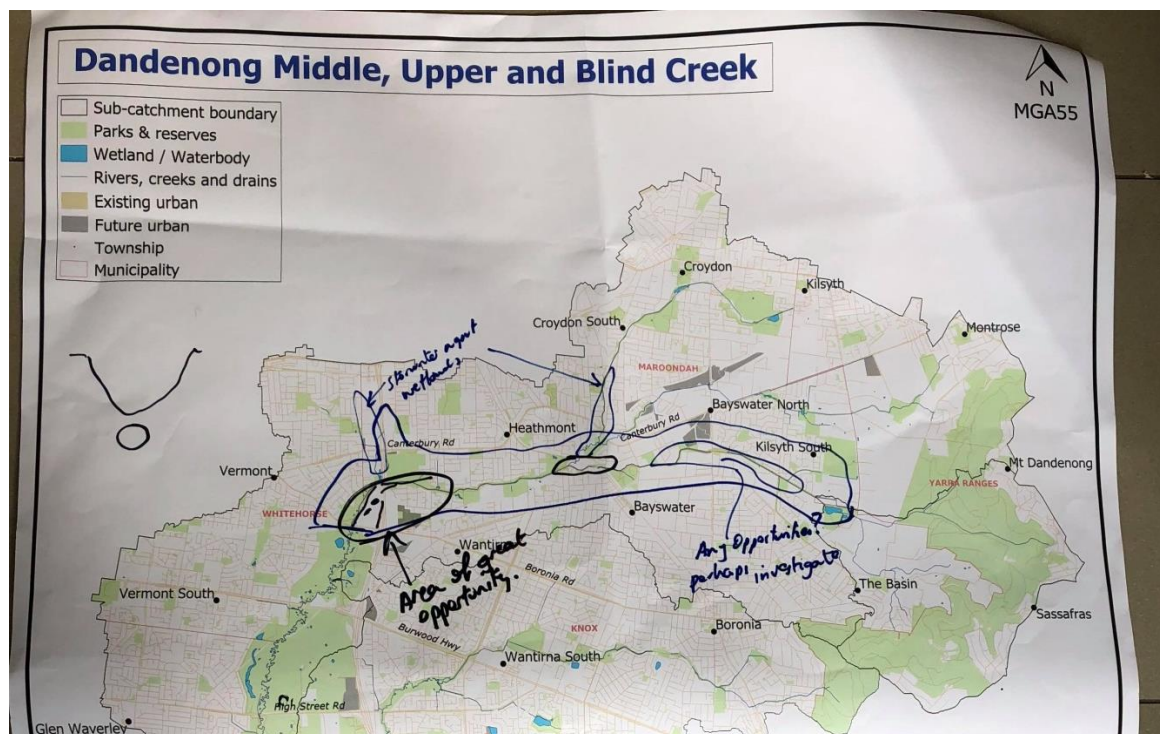
#### **Priority 4 – Onsite filtration in industrial estates**

Promote on site filtration of water via stormwater infrastructure in industrial estates.

##### *Rationale*

Smaller scale manageable at a local level. Individuals taking responsibility

## 5.2 Biodiversity and vegetation



**Figure 2 - Areas of opportunity for biodiversity and vegetation**

### Priority 1 – Meandering waterway

Recreate meandering waterway between Wantirna Road and Boronia Road

#### *Rationale*

Slow the water flow, create instream biodiversity where the creek was previously straightened

#### *Suggested Aspirational Targets*

An ambitious target was suggested by the panel for this priority, for "By 2030, 70% of Dandenong Creek to be 'naturalised'".

### Priority 2 – Winton Wetlands extension

Divert water to Winton Wetlands and create new wetlands and urban forest with amenity aspect such as walks and boardwalks. Build in fit-for-purpose habitats for priority fauna.

#### *Rationale*

Winton Wetlands source water cut off by Eastlink. These wetlands are a site of biological significance.

#### *Suggested Aspirational Targets*

An ambitious target was suggested by the panel for this priority, "By 2030 Winton Wetlands and surrounds is a RAMSAR recognised site"

### Priority 3 – Redirect stormwater for passive irrigation

Identify opportunities for tributaries and stormwater drains to be redirected to passively water open space and cool the area without making a bog. Incorporate sedges and grasses in addition to trees into the habitat recreation.

*Rationale*

Reduce stormwater pollution, slow flow rates and decrease directly connected pervious areas to improve waterway health.

*Suggested Aspirational Targets*

An ambitious target was suggested by the panel for this priority, “By 2030 over 50% of tributaries or drains entering Dandenong Creek have some form of stormwater treatment”

**Priority 4 – Business offsets**

Develop an offsets program for businesses to invest in revegetation.

*Rationale*

This may leverage additional \$s and also allow interested corporates and the like to invest in the local waterway

*Suggested Aspirational Targets*

An ambitious target was suggested by the panel for this priority, “By 2030 an official offset program be in place.”

### **5.3 Amenity improvements**

Note: Improvements to Amenity, include those projects that improve the visual appearance of the creek (which may also relate to other categories such as pollution management) as well as tangible objects to improve amenity such as bike racks or seating.

**Priority 1 – Shelters, seats and views**

Dandenong Creek improvements including shelters, seating and maintaining views of the Dandenongs.

*Rationale*

Provide the ability to get out of inclement weather. Seating for people that are not healthy. Healthy people forget what it is like to need seating. Improve and maintain view sheds.

**Priority 2 – Accessibility audit**

Audit of accessibility along and to the creek, taking into account people’s health and abilities.

*Rationale*

Independent review of accessibility of facilities to report on accessibility for all.

**Priority 3 – Manson Reserve Wetland improvements**

Manson Reserve Wetland (located at end of oval land that extends to the shared path along Dandenong Creek):

- Oval becomes very saturated during wet weather
- Capture stormwater and filter.

*Rationale*

This could improve drainage, amenity and water quality making use of land outside of the recreation oval.

## 5.4 Behaviour change, education and community engagement

### Priority 1 – Involve young stakeholders

Involve more young stakeholders to actively help through project-based learning (setting challenges/projects/competitions). This should include primary and secondary school projects and may include measuring the pollution in Old Joes Creek. Utilise Knox Innovation, Opportunity and Sustainability Centre (KIOSC) – high schools strengthen existing community groups e.g. First Friends.

#### *Rationale*

We believe that young people are important in preserving and enhancing the creek in the long run. This will also ensure that what is started is sustained into the future. Also reflects evidence that young people that grow up in the area move back into the area.

### Priority 2 – Spread awareness with communication

Improve how we communicate. Use a range of media including Knox and Whitehorse leader paper, YouTube video clips and social media. Possibly employ a community engagement officer.

#### *Rationale*

This will improve the empowerment of the community and give them some 'buy in'. The more they feel a part of the solution the more they will look after the creek and its future.

### Priority 3 – Empower action-to-change behaviour

A few (not too many) signs on waterway with phone numbers and/or apps to use to inform (regulatory) bodies about pollution. Use schools, scouts for clean-up. Involve more of the community in pressuring industries to change e.g. having teens as advocates. Also, consider business programs and events to connect all employees to local environment and incentivise change behaviour rather than just criticising.

#### *Rationale*

This will improve the level of communication between those on the ground who have a stake in the environment and those who can monitor and enforce penalties for polluters. Will also encourage businesses to get on board and be good corporate citizens.

## 5.5 Prioritisation of actions by voting

	Strongly Support	Support	Not Sure	Don't Support
<b>Pollution Reduction</b>				
1. Chemical identification and testing	80%	10%	10%	0%
2. Deal with onsite source of pollution	90%	10%	0%	0%
3. Instream mitigation	64%	23%	13%	0%
4. Water filtration at industrial sites	50%	45%	5%	0%



<b>Biodiversity and Vegetation</b>				
1. Meandering waterways	76%	19%	5%	0%
2. Winton Wetlands extension	82%	9%	9%	0%
3. Stormwater treatment and passive irrigation	52%	39%	9%	0%
4. Business offsets	48%	35%	17%	0%
<b>Amenity Improvements</b>				
1. Shelter, seats and views	23%	27%	41%	9%
2. Accessibility audit	22%	39%	35%	4%
3. Manson Reserve Wetland improvements	43%	33%	14%	10%
<b>Behaviour Change, Education and Community Engagement</b>				
1. Involve young stakeholders	83%	9%	4%	4%
2. Spread awareness with new communication	57%	35%	9%	0%
3. Empower action to change behaviour	71%	10%	19%	0%

Based on these results, the top five priorities (those with highest % strongly support) for investigation are:

1. Deal with onsite source of pollution
2. Involve young stakeholders
3. Winton Wetlands extension
4. Chemical identification and testing
5. Meandering waterways.

## 6.0 Desired outcomes for the next five years

Sarah Watkins of Melbourne Water indicated that while all ideas will be explored, not all ideas may turn out to be feasible. To help Melbourne Water honour the suggestions, panellists were invited to develop a list of their desired outcomes over this next five-year process for EODC. These lists are provided for each value area below.

### **Pollution reduction**

- Measurable reduction in volume of pollutants.
- That the creek looks like a creek instead of a drain.
- Survey sites of biological significance to identify improved biodiversity.
- Improvement flow volume measurements in creek → evening out the extreme variations in water height.

### **Biodiversity and vegetation**

- Cool, greener and cleaner refuge in middle of suburbia.
- Increased community awareness, interest and ownership of Dandenong Creek.
- Improved habitat value that supports a greater range of plant and animal species.

### **Amenity**

- Improvement/works/projects that provide all people, including those with disabilities or health issues, with better access and facilities that connect people with the values of the waterway and its environs.
- The improvement/works/projects include seating and shelter; gates need to be wide enough for wheelchair access.

### **Behaviour change, education and community engagement**

- More people of all backgrounds value the creek and see themselves as custodians of the creek, actively participating in its upkeep. This will be visible through:
  - Greater use of the creek.
  - Projects in KIOSC are embedded.
  - Projects along the creek are embedded in primary/high school curricula. Each school has a waterway ambassador (student) who promotes the creek to the school and works with Melbourne water.
  - Organisations linked to/near the creek are giving back/helping to support its health e.g. sports groups have fundraising, businesses take ownership for preventing pollution and improving the wellbeing of the creek.
  - Clear reduction in pollution due to greater reporting, etc. (including less waste on Clean Up Australia Day).
  - Increased number of members of support groups such as First Friends of Dandenong Creek and more areas of creek supported by groups.
  - More information in community – via old and new media.
  - Community engagement officer works with all parties.

## 7.0 Next steps

Panel members were invited to indicate their level of interest in participating further in the EODC project.

The following table includes the names and interests of attendees to the forums for future collaboration and ongoing development of the key themes that arose on the day. Attendees that have indicated that they are willing to share their contact details, provided as an appendix to this report.

Name	Send me final reports	Project Updates	Working Groups
John Cull	✓	✓	
Mike Brown	✓	✓	
Rajesh Samel	✓	✓	
Alice White	✓	✓	✓
Kimberly Cornell	✓	✓	
Trish McGee	✓	✓	✓
Dave Sautner	✓	✓	✓
Deborah Farago	✓	✓	✓
Colin Arnold	✓	✓	✓
Roger Pearce	✓	✓	
Ray Beaton	✓	✓	✓
Malcom Lord	✓	✓	✓
Erica Peters	✓	✓	
Brandon Pope	✓	✓	
Susan L	✓	✓	
Pat O' Donnell	✓	✓	✓
Yin Inganells	✓	✓	✓
Trajco Vilarov	✓	✓	✓
Graham Bower	✓	✓	✓
Julie Koska	✓	✓	✓
David Haskins	✓	✓	✓
Karen Martin	✓	✓	✓
Jude Dwight	✓	✓	✓

## 8.0 Conclusion

Based on the information provided over the course of the two days and the deliberation of the panel, the panel can confirm that the majority (96%) strongly support or mostly support Melbourne Water deferring sewer upgrades until 2030 and focusing on environmental and amenity improvements.

This opinion was based on Melbourne Water investing available resources in the following proportions;

- 40% of resources for additional works into pollution reduction programs,
- 25% into biodiversity and vegetation works,
- 19% into behaviour change, education and community engagement programs,
- 14% to amenity and
- 2% for other works.

The top 5 highest priority projects of the community panel, for Melbourne Water to investigate for feasibility include:

- Deal with sources of pollution on site
- Involve young stakeholders
- Winton Wetlands extension
- Chemical identification and testing
- Meandering waterways

These projects should be considered first, but it was recognised by the panel that due to overlaps and feasibility other projects may be a better fit for an initial works package.



"I'm impressed that Melbourne Water is interested in community opinion and stakeholders that may or may not have expertise on these issues."



"I feel far more informed about how the creek functions, how pollution occurs, what the issues are and what the role of Melbourne Water is."



"I love that the panel members were all so passionate about the significance of our creek."



"The whole process was very informative both in terms of the sewerage issue and the alternative opportunities to enhance the creek."