

Consultation Findings Report

December 2023

Biodiversity Strategy

Table of contents

1. Executive summary	3
1.1 Context	3
1.2 Engagement and Communication Activities	3
1.3 Results	4
1.4 Recommendations	5
2. Overview	6
3. Engagement Objectives	6
4. Participation and Engagement Methods	7
4.1 Participation Overview	7
4.2 Engagement Methods	8
Community Biodiversity Working Group	8
Shaping Banyule and Kids' Corner	8
Community and Environmental Friends Group Workshops	9
Targeted Consultation	9
Internal and External Stakeholder Engagement Workshops	9
5. Consultation Feedback Results	11
5.1 Community Working Group	11
5.2 Shaping Banyule and Kids' Corner	13
5.3 Community and Environmental Friends Group Engagement Workshops	18
Community Engagement Workshops	18
Environmental Friends of Group Workshops	19
5.4 Targeted Consultation	21
Teachers and Educators Group	21
Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Corporation	22
Young Persons Workshop	22
5.5 Internal and External Stakeholder Engagement Workshops	23
6. Recommendations	24

1. Executive summary

1.1 Context

Banyule is fortunate to have many conservation areas, wildlife corridors and green open spaces that support a diverse range of local plant and animal communities. Banyule's community is passionate and engaged in our natural spaces and helps to support and contribute to its overall health.

The Community Vision priority theme 'Our Sustainable Environment' sets out the strategic objective to be:

"A progressive and innovative leader in protecting, enhancing and increasing the health and diversity of our natural environment where we all commit to playing a role in achieving environmental sustainability, waste and carbon reduction".

To achieve this objective, Council's Biodiversity Plan 2019 delivers on the following Council Plan priorities:

- Protect and enhance our natural environment, providing connected habitat for diverse flora and fauna.
- Engage and work with the community and partners to protect, enhance and experience the environment.

Banyule's Community Vision 2041 also outlines the community's value for our natural environment.

"We in Banyule area a thriving, sustainable, inclusive, and connected community. We are engaged, we belong, and we value and protect our environment".

A review and redevelopment of the Biodiversity Plan commenced in 2023 to ensure that Council is continuing to achieve its commitment to protecting, enhancing, and ensuring the ongoing health and resilience of our natural environment.

The review included a focus on how the community can meaningfully connect and engage with the natural environment, and how Council and the community can work together to achieve positive environmental outcomes. As such, consultation set out to understand:

- What do people see as Council's role is in managing biodiversity?
- What threats do people see facing biodiversity now and into the future?
- How can Council help people meaningfully connect with nature?
- What are we all currently doing to support biodiversity in Banyule?

1.2 Engagement and Communications Activities

Over the consultation period, a total of 331 contributions were made. Of these contributions, 58% of participants were female, 38% male, 3% preferred not to identify and 1% were non-binary. 82% of the participants indicated they were above the age of 35, all Banyule suburbs had representation and 96% of people either lived or worked in Banyule. The following engagement and communications activities were used over the consultation period from March 2023 to October 2023:

- Community Biodiversity Working Group workshops.
- Internal Stakeholder Working Groups (Strategic and Operational)
- Shaping Banyule Survey
- Kids' Corner
- Biodiversity Post Cards
- Social Media Campaign
- Community Engagement workshops
- Environmental Friends Group workshops

- First Nations Engagement workshop
- Teachers Environment Group workshops
- Online Teachers and Schools Survey
- Young Persons Workshop
- Internal Stakeholder Focus Groups
- External Stakeholder Focus Groups
- Individual Submissions
- One-on-one consultation with Biodiversity Adviser

The following participation and engagement numbers were captured through the engagement process:

- 8 community members participated in 3 Community Biodiversity Working Group workshops.
- 9 key Council officers formed an internal Biodiversity Working Group.
- 105 people completed the online survey through Shaping Banyule.
- 41 primary-aged children made contributions through the 'Kids' Corner' on Shaping Banyule.
- 635 clicks were registered over the social media campaign (24 July to 7 August and 20 September to 2 October).
- 76 people participated through in-person Community and Environmental Friends Group workshops.
- 3 Aunties representing the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Corporation were engaged through the First Nations workshop.
- 18 teachers and educators were engaged over 2 Teachers Environment Network sessions.
- 34 responses to the Teachers' and Educators' survey on biodiversity in education spaces.
- 5 young people attended and participated in the Young Persons Workshop.
- 30 internal stakeholders participated in internal workshops.
- 35 individuals representing external stakeholder groups (e.g., Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria) were engaged in external workshops.
- 4 submissions were received from 4 individuals.
- 3 one-on-one consultations took place with Council's Biodiversity Adviser.

1.3 Results

A snapshot of the results is presented below and shows a number of clear and consistent reoccurring themes. More detail on the results is presented in Section 6 of this report, 'Consultation Feedback Results'.

Community Engagement
1) Partner with and support community groups to manage biodiversity threats
2) Provide biodiversity education to increase community literacy
3) Deliver biodiversity engagement programs
4) Develop an effective monitoring program and provide transparent reporting on biodiversity trends
5) Better resource biodiversity sectors in Council to provide meaningful engagement program and biodiversity support to our community
Internal and External Stakeholder Engagement
1) Effectively manage the key threats to biodiversity
2) Increase biodiversity literacy and value internally
3) Appropriately resource biodiversity across Council so that we are better biodiversity managers
4) Develop toolkits for teams to support better biodiversity outcomes outside of traditional biodiversity spaces.
5) Monitor biodiversity to inform current and future management

Table 1 - summarised main themes emerging from community and stakeholder engagement sessions.

1.4 Recommendations

Following community and stakeholder engagement and analysis of consultation data, this report makes the following recommendations to support drafting the new Biodiversity Strategy.

1. Identify gaps between the current Biodiversity Plan and consultation feedback to ensure the new Biodiversity Strategy is addressing the findings in this report.
2. Consider feedback from the consultation process and new emerging themes to integrate into an updated Biodiversity Strategy.
3. Develop actions in the Biodiversity Strategy to minimise the threats to biodiversity that have been identified through the consultation.
4. Develop actions in the Biodiversity Strategy to outline how the community can meaningfully engage with nature in accordance with opportunities identified through the consultation period.

2. Overview

The 2019-2022 Biodiversity Plan was developed in 2018 and adopted in 2019. This iteration of the Plan had a core focus on community facing programs and current land management practices, which include minimising the threats to biodiversity in Banyule.

Council's Environment Team is leading the review and redevelopment of the Biodiversity Plan, which requires extensive community and internal and external stakeholder engagement, to ensure that Council is adequately protecting, enhancing and connecting our natural environment. It also needs to continue to support the community to meaningfully engage with nature, to ensure that both Council and the community are contributing to positive biodiversity outcomes.

Biodiversity is in decline nationally, so acting locally can make a significant difference to this trend. Banyule's Council Plan recognises the importance of its natural environment through the strategic intent to be:

"A progressive and innovative leader in protecting, enhancing and increasing the health and diversity of our natural environment where we all commit to playing a role in achieving environmental sustainability, waste and carbon reduction".

To ensure Banyule remains a leader in biodiversity management, a review of the Biodiversity Plan is important. Managing biodiversity is not one authority's responsibility and requires a collective approach with industry and the community to achieve meaningful and positive outcomes.

Consulting with all stakeholders and the community is a crucial step for Council understanding its key focus areas to remain a progressive leader in biodiversity management.

This report provides an overview of the consultation process and key findings from the engagement period.

3. Engagement Objectives

Objective 1

To understand what Council's role is in managing biodiversity.

Objective 2

To understand what people see as the threats facing biodiversity.

Objective 3

To understand how Council can help people meaningfully connect and engage with nature.

Objective 4

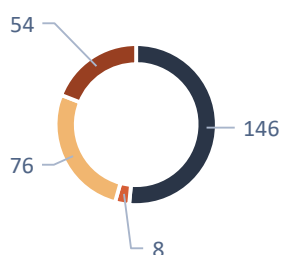
To understand what we are all doing currently to support biodiversity in Banyule.

4. Participation and Engagement Methods

4.1 Participation Overview

Council received an enthusiastic and generous response from the community over the consultation period. The below results are a combination of demographics collected over the different consultation periods, excluding the internal and external stakeholder engagement sessions. Total engagement numbers for community, internal and external stakeholder engagement was 331 people. Demographics collected were over the community engagement period and numbers for this are reflected below (demographics for internal and external stakeholder engagement were not captured). All data below excludes duplicated participation (some community members attended multiple sessions).

Engagement Participation

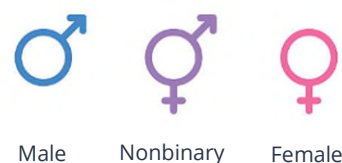


- Shaping Banyule
- Community Working Groups
- Community and Friends Engagement Session
- Targeted Consultation

635

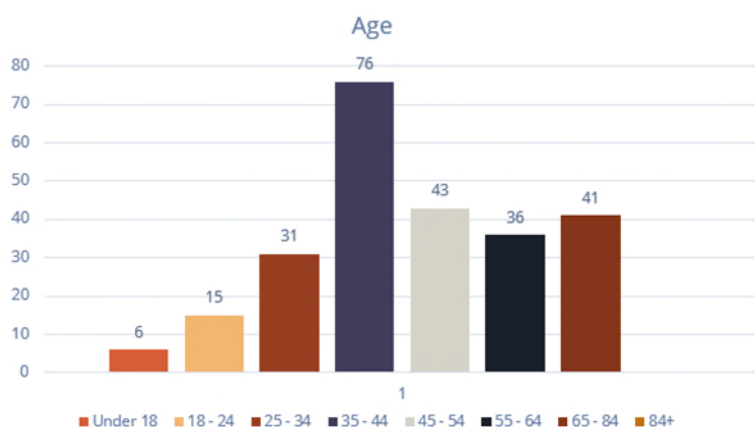
clicks over the social media campaign.

Gender

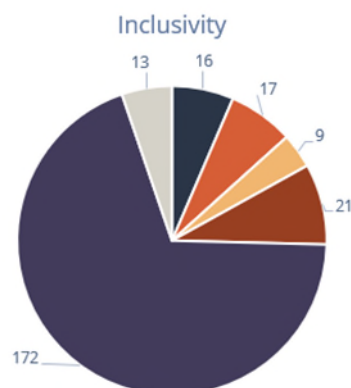


10 respondents preferred not to say.

All suburbs had residents participate through the engagement period.



41 Kids' Corner contributions



- A person with a disability, inclusive of mental illness
- A person identifying as LGBTQA+
- A person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent
- A person speaking English as a second language
- None of the above
- Prefer not to say

Relationship to Banyule

- 86% - Live in Banyule
- 8 % - Work in Banyule
- 2 % - Study in Banyule
- 4% - Other relationship to Banyule

4.2 Engagement Methods

Five main engagement methods were delivered through the engagement process to capture input from the community and key stakeholders. These engagement methods were supported by an advertising and social media campaign to reach and promote with a broad audience.

Community Biodiversity Working Group

A *Community Biodiversity Working Group* was established in March 2023. The working group was formed as a function of the Banyule Environment and Climate Action Advisory Committee's (BECAAC) current Terms of Reference (ToR) and included two BECAAC members and six other community members. It was chaired by a Councillor and sessions were facilitated by Council staff.

An expression of interest was sent out inviting community members to apply for the six community positions, to which 26 submissions were received. A staff panel selected the six successful applicants based on having a professional experience in the environmental industry, experience working or volunteering with community groups, environment organisations or government or experience in planning and/or community development and/or policy development.

The Working Group's function was to:

- Help develop a baseline understanding on the current threats facing biodiversity in Banyule.
- Identify what the community believes Council's role is in managing biodiversity.
- Understand how the community can be meaningfully engaged in biodiversity.
- Identify key community groups to engage throughout broader community consultation period.

The work achieved in these sessions created a base for the broader community engagement phase and allowed Council to test the data and gaps identified by the Working Group sessions with the broader community. The Working Group also helped to identify groups to target throughout the engagement period.

Shaping Banyule and Kids' Corner

A homepage was created on Shaping Banyule with supporting documents and information on what biodiversity is, why Council needs to protect and enhance our natural environment and a link to the *2019-2022 Biodiversity Plan*. This page contained a survey for the wider community which helped to shape an understanding of what the community can expect Council to do to support local biodiversity.

Participation in the Biodiversity Plan Survey through Shaping Banyule was promoted through a paid social media campaign and postcards with a QR code link to the survey which were left at Council's customer service offices and the Watsonia Community Library. Postcards were also distributed to Environmental Friends Groups and Environmental Volunteers to help engage the wider community through their networks.

As part of the Shaping Banyule page, a Kids' Corner was set up which asked school aged children to '*draw what nature means to me...*'. This information has been analysed as part of the overall results.

Other groups that were directly engaged to provide input into the online survey and welcomed to contact the Biodiversity Adviser directly included:

- Local Scouts Groups
- Businesses in Banyule
- Sporting Clubs.

Community and Environmental Friends Group Workshops

Two in-person community engagement workshops were held over the consultation period to receive in-person feedback on the proposed questions. These sessions were held in Ivanhoe and Greensborough, one on a weekend and one a weeknight. This was intentional to provide broader geographic and time options for the community to participate.

We also ran two Environmental Friends of Group sessions to engage with the community groups who volunteer in Banyule and proactively help manage and protect local biodiversity. One session was held in Heidelberg in the evening and the other in Macleod during the day on a weekend. This was designed to provide broader geographic and time options for these groups to participate.

In-person meetings and written submissions from the community were also included in this data set and have been incorporated into the results section of this report.

Targeted Consultation

The Community Biodiversity Working Group also helped to identify the following specific groups to engage due to their engagement with biodiversity in Banyule.

- Teachers' Working Group, which helped to form an understanding around how educators in Banyule can engage with and support local biodiversity. Teachers were also provided with a specific survey to understand what they would like Council to consider for support programs within their schools.
- Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Corporation, which helped inform how the Biodiversity Strategy can support our First Nations community and understand ways that Council can effectively partner into the future.
- Young People's Working Group, which helped to understand what young people (ages <18 years of age) see as the challenges facing biodiversity and how to effectively engage young people in biodiversity.

Internal and External Stakeholder Engagement Workshops

Running parallel to the community consultation period was internal consultation with Banyule staff and teams who work in the biodiversity space, such as the Bushland Management Team, or make decisions that have an impact on biodiversity outcomes.

External stakeholder groups, such as Melbourne Water and Parks Victoria were also engaged through this period over multiple sessions. In March 2023 an initial working group was set up with key officers and managers from:

- Bushland Management
- Urban Forestry
- Parks Presentation
- Environmental Operations
- Open Space Planning
- Strategic Planning
- Development Planning

This process allowed us to pull together all the key internal teams to understand what we do currently to support biodiversity, the barriers/challenges we face and how we can better support biodiversity in future. Further specific team workshops were created to understand how teams specifically support biodiversity and develop ideas to improve current practices. These groups included:

- Bushland Management and Parks Presentation Teams
- Open Space Planning, Urban Forestry and Environmental Operations
- Strategic and Development Planning
- Environment Team

Banyule's First Nations Team helped facilitate an engagement session with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Council. This session presented an invitation to create a First Nations acknowledgement which the Council would approve.

Staff attended the meetings of two established industry working groups to consult on the Biodiversity Strategy. These groups, whose members manage natural assets, land and biodiversity in Banyule, included:

- Darebin Creek Catchment Working Group
 - Darebin Council
 - Banyule Council
 - Narrap Rangers – Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Corporation
 - La Trobe Wildlife Sanctuary and Indigenous Nursery
 - Whittlesea Council
 - Melbourne Water
 - Parks Victoria
 - Darebin Creek Management Committee (DCMC)
- Middle of the Yarra Working Group
 - Nillumbik Shire Council
 - Banyule Council
 - Manningham Shire Council
 - Melbourne Water
 - Yarra Valley Water
 - Victorian Indigenous Nursery Cooperative (VINC)

The Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Corporation's on the ground Ranger Team, the Narrap Team, were consulted over the period through written submission. Further consultation with this group is planned to take place when developing actions for the Biodiversity Strategy.

5. Consultation Feedback Results

5.1 Community Working Group

The Community Biodiversity Working Group met three times and helped form a baseline understanding of biodiversity threats, management and engagement in Banyule. Members of the Group had different areas of expertise and experience with the natural environment and provided a technical understanding of trends they see locally. The questions posed to the Working Group and resulting themes were taken and tested with the wider community. The below are the summarised themes from questions posed to the Working Group.

Session 1

What are the challenges facing biodiversity in Banyule?

Challenge 1 – Council and the community not valuing and/or having a relationship with biodiversity.

Challenge 2 – The conflict between the built and natural world.

Challenge 3 – Human created and introduced environmental impacts.

Challenge 4 – Lack of meaningful revegetation projects.

What things contribute to a biodiverse Banyule?

Nature – Ecosystems are protected, enhanced, and connected.

People – Opportunities exist for our community to experience and interact with nature.

Council – Plans and strategies are developed with biodiversity in mind.

What ways can the community meaningfully engage with biodiversity in Banyule?

Connection – The community has opportunities for meaningful connection with nature.

Education – The community is provided with nature themed education.

Support – The community has access to biodiversity support, advice, and programs.

What do you see as Council's role in biodiversity management?

Practical – That Council manages, monitors, and reports on biodiversity.

Education – That Council educates its staff and the community about biodiversity.

Collaboration – That Council leads in collaboration with all stakeholders for better biodiversity outcomes.

Advocacy – That Council champions biodiversity externally and internally.

Session 2

This session was dedicated to workshopping ideas to test with the community from the previous workshop. The data collected in this session helped to understand the value, importance and threats facing biodiversity in Banyule for the community survey.

What are the challenges facing biodiversity?

The working group was asked to identify a list of threats to include in a survey question. After ranking their three highest responses, the following list was generated for the survey:

- 1) Lack of Community Awareness.
- 2) Climate Change.
- 3) Development and urbanisation.
- 4) Pest plants and animals.
- 5) Insufficient resourcing.
- 6) Environmental legislation not being strong enough.
- 7) Low value in biodiversity.
- 8) Pollutants and litter impacting on wildlife.

What things contribute to a biodiverse Banyule?

The working group was able to come up with three questions to consider when developing value-based questions in the survey. This exercise covered the value and importance of biodiversity.

- 1) Ask people what biodiversity means to them.
- 2) Determine what level of value people place on biodiversity.
- 3) Ask about the features of biodiversity that are important to them.

Session 3

This session was similar to Session 2 but themed more around the long-term vision, biodiversity support, advocacy and Council's role in biodiversity management. From the information gathered in this session, further targeted engagement sessions were established to seek feedback from specific groups with meaningful influence on positive biodiversity outcomes.

What ways can the community meaningfully engage with biodiversity.

The working group looked at current programs offered at Banyule to support the community to engage with biodiversity and make suggestions on specific groups for Council to engage with who are either currently supporting or can influence biodiversity in Banyule.

- 1) Engage directly with environmental Friends Groups.
- 2) Engage with teachers and educators.
- 3) Seek feedback on current biodiversity related programs.
- 4) Understand how youth and young people relate to biodiversity.

What do you see as Council's role in managing biodiversity?

This exercise was designed to understand the key themes emerging from session one around this question. Identifying what the working group saw as specific role of Council was in managing biodiversity, and what would the community like Council to advocate for in relation to biodiversity?

The following were the results of what people saw as Council's role in managing biodiversity.

- 1) Land management and bushland management.

- The Working Group was also asked to come up with ideas of what Council could advocate for meaningfully. The following is the list they came up with.

- ## 5.2 Shaping Banyule Survey and Kids' Corner

1. Complete the sentence: 'Biodiversity to me means...'



Consultation Report – Biodiversity Strategy

2. What is important to you regarding biodiversity? Choose your top three priorities.

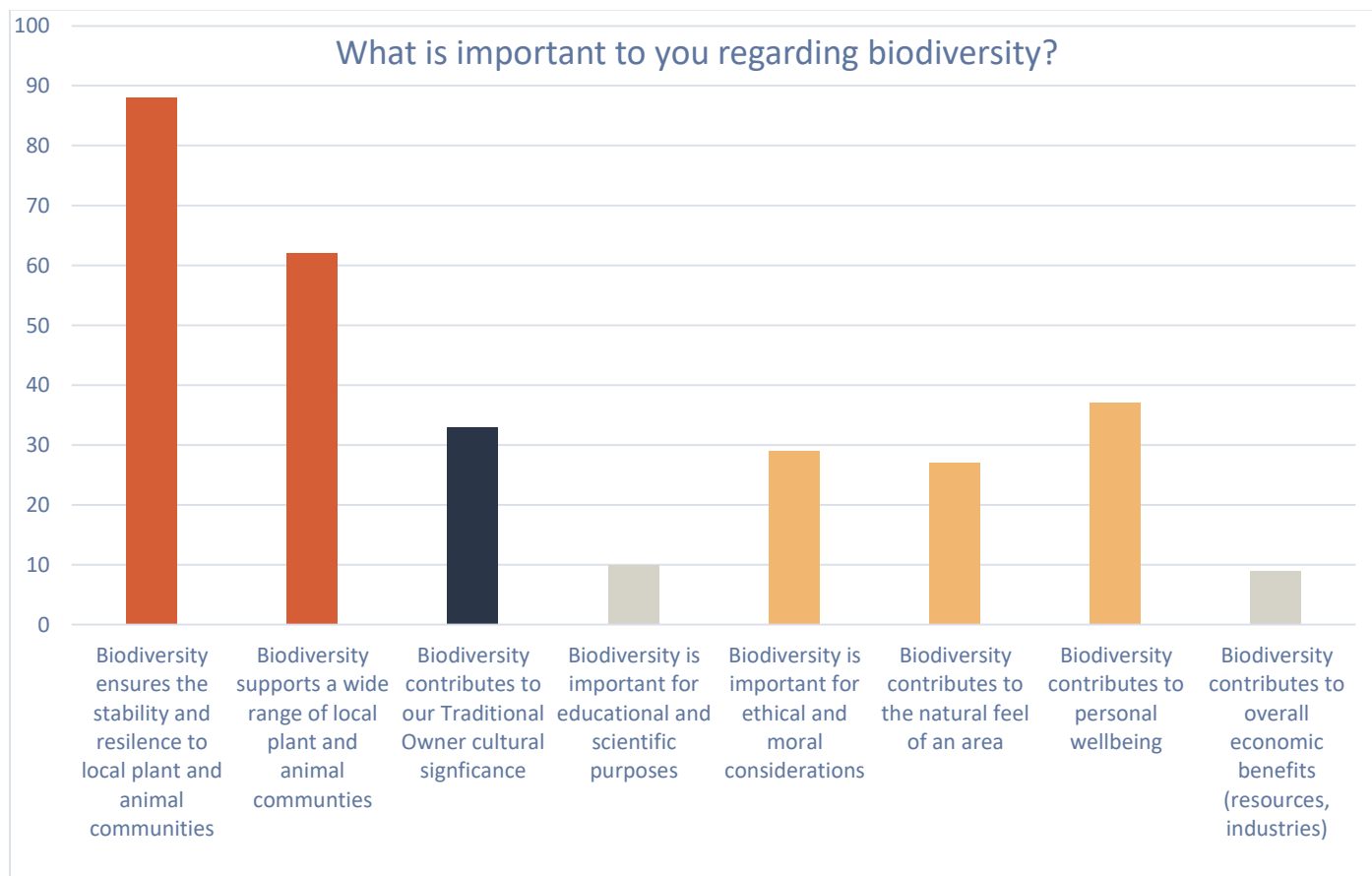


Figure 2- results of what people see as their number one priority of biodiversity's importance. Results are cumulative from people being asked to rank their top three responses.

Figure 2 shows that people consider biodiversity to be important for a number of reasons. Responses can be categorised into three main areas which people see as a priority. The first is that biodiversity is important for **diversity and resilience** of local plant and animal communities, accumulating 51% of all responses. 32% of people believe biodiversity is important for **value-based reasons**, like personal wellbeing, moral considerations and contributing to the natural feel to an area. While 11% of people see that biodiversity is important for contributing to our Traditional Owners' **cultural significance**.

3. Do you support the working definition of biodiversity for Council to consider?

One of the things we wanted to understand through the engagement was whether the definition of biodiversity resonated with the wider community. This was important to ensure that Council concluded a definition that would work for staff and the community to connect with and build a shared understanding of biodiversity.

The working definition of biodiversity presented during the engagement was:

"In Banyule, we define biodiversity as the wide variety of local plant, animal, fungal and microorganism communities that make up and support the function of our local ecosystems. All these species and organisms work together in an intricate and complex way to support the health and wellbeing of all living things."

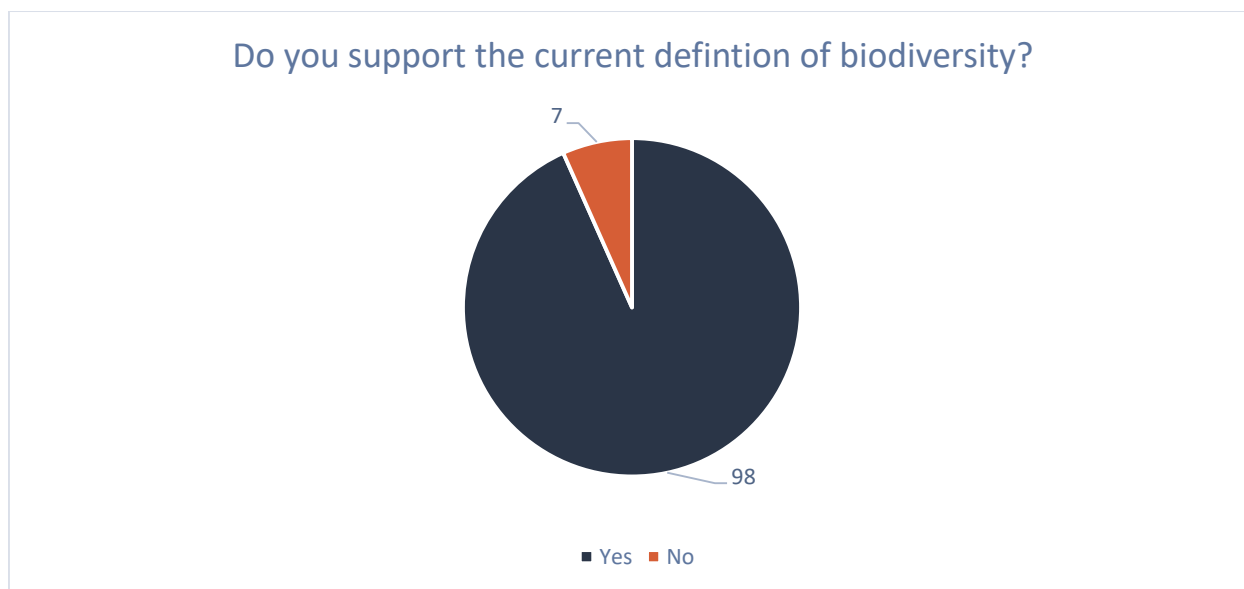


Figure 3 – responses to whether respondents agreed with the working definition of biodiversity.

This response shows that 93% of respondents believe the working definition is something they can connect with and support, and 7% of people don't agree with the working definition.

This question included a follow up question asking if there was anything missing from the definition. The following suggestions appeared most frequently in people's responses as things that should be referenced in the definition.

Suggestion	Number of mentions
Species richness	12
Indigenous species	8
Soil health	5
Abundance	5

Table 2 – top four phrases which appeared in responses to the question, is there anything missing?

4. What do you see as the three biggest threats facing biodiversity?

Table 3 shows 21% of people view vegetation loss due to the impact of development as the number one threat to biodiversity. Pest plants and animal impacts are second with 16% of responses and fragmented habitats had 14%. The other threats were evenly spread, with biodiversity being under resourced, weak environmental legislation, climate change and lack of value for biodiversity all receiving 10% of the responses.

Development impacts (vegetation removal)	21%
Pest Plants and Animals	16%
Fragmented Habitats	14%
Biodiversity being under resourced	10%
Weak Environmental Legislation	10%
Climate Change	10%
Lack of value for biodiversity	10%
Litter and Pollution	6%
Lack of community awareness	4%

Table 3 – responses to what the community see as the biggest threats facing biodiversity.

5. What would you like Council to advocate for to State and Federal Government levels for biodiversity?

Figure 4 indicates that 35% of respondents would like to see Council advocate for 'stronger biodiversity legislation at a State and Federal government level'. 17% of respondents would like to see Council advocate to for 'stronger biodiversity planning controls' and 16% would like to see Council advocate for 'leading state-wide wildlife corridor plans'.

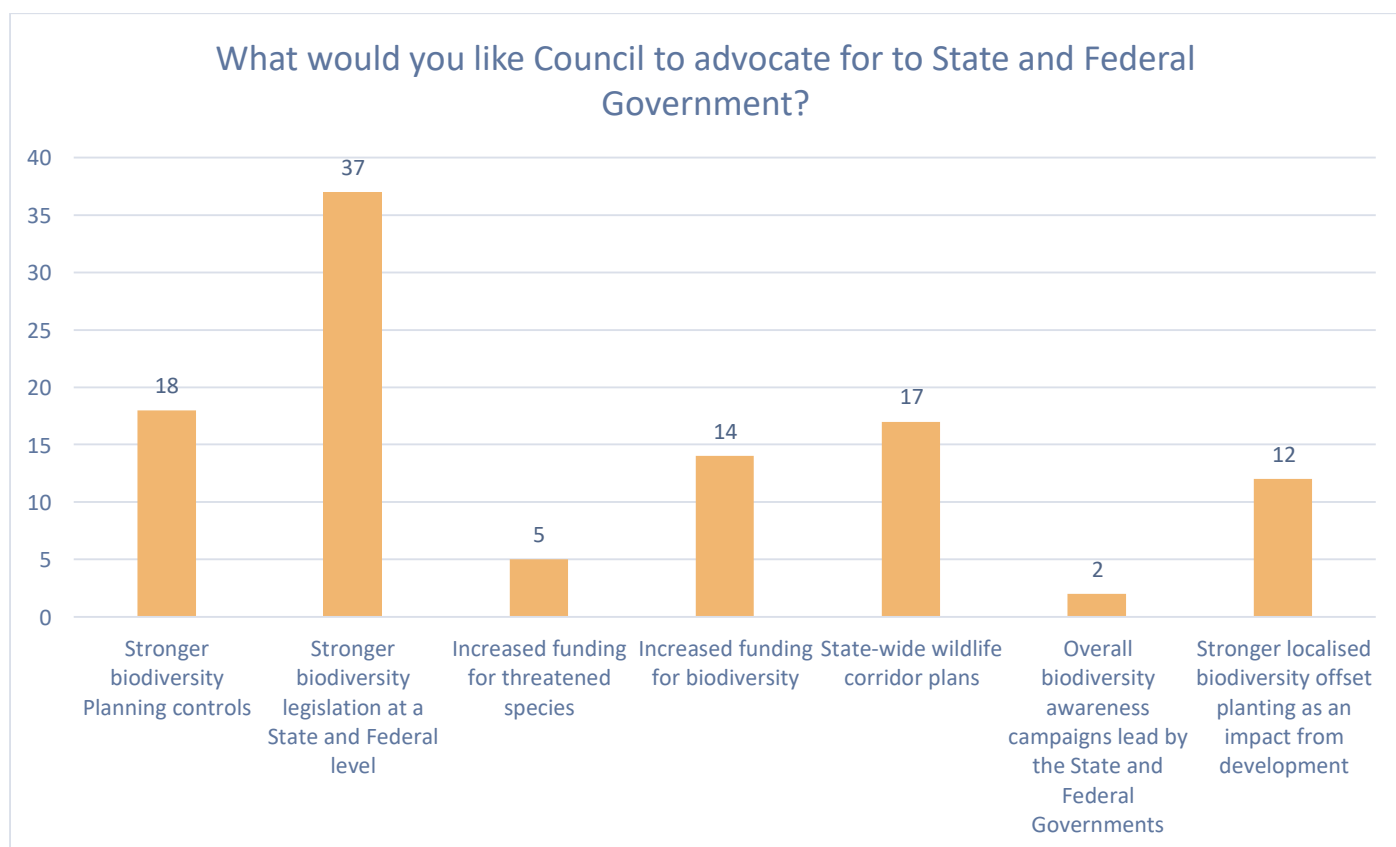


Figure 4 – responses on what people want Council to advocate to higher levels of government.

6. What do you see as Council's role is in managing biodiversity?

Table 4 shows that people believe that Council has a diverse role to play in managing biodiversity. 25% of people see '*management of natural spaces*' as Council's core role and 19% see '*enforcement of Environmental Planning Scheme controls*' as a key role in managing biodiversity.

Managing natural spaces for conservation	25%
Enforcing Environmental Planning Scheme controls	19%
Having a clear biodiversity advocacy campaign	9%
Understanding how natural areas are being connected (wildlife corridor mapping)	9%
Providing programs for residents to engage with biodiversity	8%
Providing biodiversity related education to the community and schools	7%
Having effective partnerships with other agencies	6%
Providing biodiversity advice to residents	6%
Providing connection to Traditional Owner land management knowledge	6%
Provide opportunities to connect with nature	4%

Table 4 – priority list of what people see as Council's role is in managing biodiversity.

7. Which of the following biodiversity programs have you engaged with?

Figure 5 shows the ways that respondents engage with current biodiversity programs provided by Banyule.

The results suggest that a high proportion of survey respondents had not engaged in Council-offered programs before. Exceptions were the longstanding incentive-driven programs developed through the current Biodiversity Plan, such as the Buy 1 Get 1 Free Indigenous Plant Voucher and the Gardens for Wildlife Programs. Some of the newer programs like Schools for Wildlife (a targeted program for School groups) and the City Nature Challenge (a citizen science program) showed low participation amongst respondents. Responses to local Friends groups activity was lower than expected, though strong participation by Friends of Group members at the in-person forums (see section 6.3 below) could explain this.

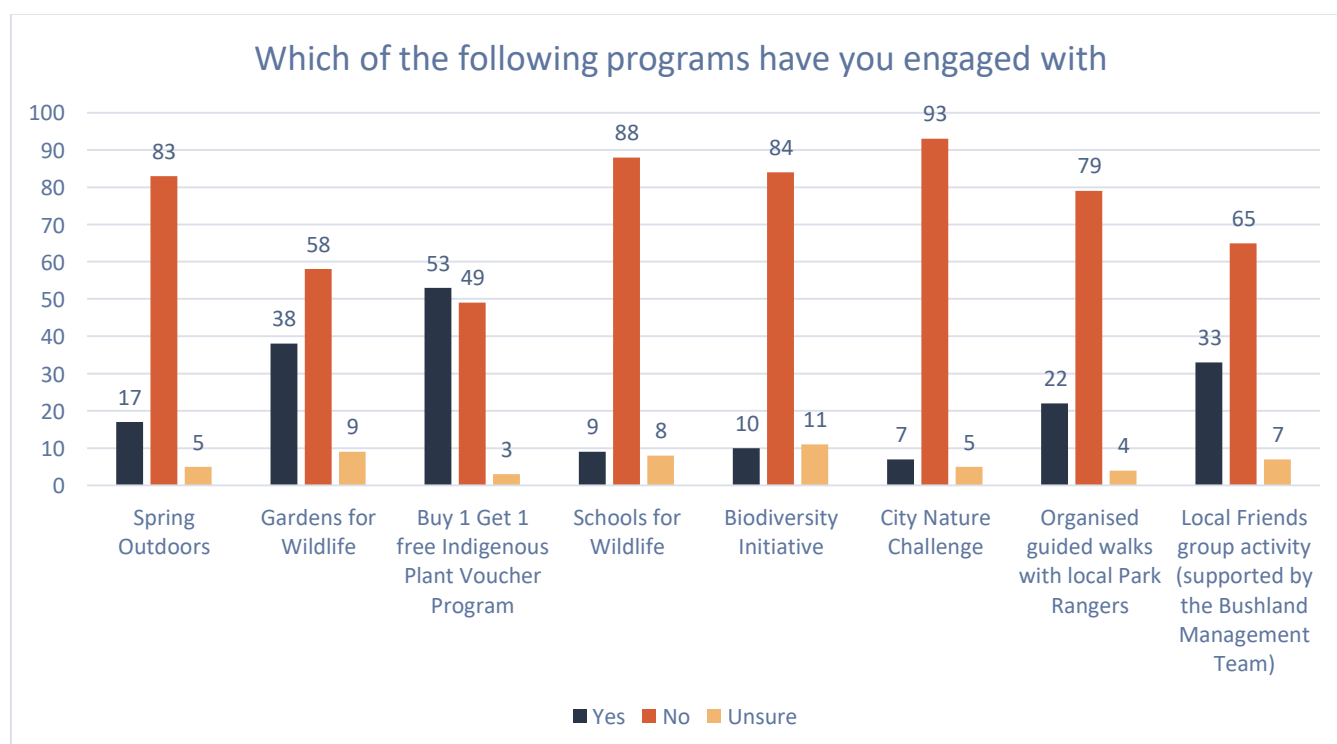


Figure 5 – proportion of survey respondents who participated in existing Council biodiversity programs.

8. Kids' Corner – what does nature mean to you?

There was an activity in the Kids' Corner on the Biodiversity Plan Shaping Banyule page asking children to draw "what does nature mean to you". The responses showed consistent themes emerging including more trees for birds and shade, more spaces for animals and plants, more nature and space for animals. The majority of responses had strong themes of more natural spaces through local areas. Other emerging themes included nature engagement through enjoying natural areas, plants, animals and walking in the bush.

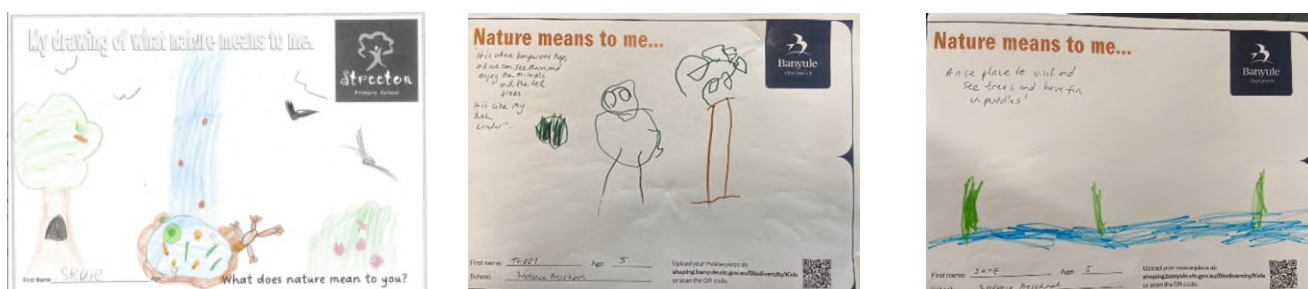


Figure 7 – some images from students who submitted to Kids' Corner, with text of what nature means to them.

5.3 Community and Environmental Friends Group Workshops.

Both of the Community and Environmental Friends Group engagement sessions focused on overarching themes emerging from the Community Biodiversity Working Group. The threats facing biodiversity, understanding Council's role in managing biodiversity and values-based understanding of how people in the community contribute to biodiversity outcomes.

These sessions were designed to engage with the community and volunteers in-person as another way of collecting data during the consultation period. At each of the sessions, members were reminded about the online survey and encouraged to engage there also. Below are the summarised themes/priorities emerging from these sessions.

Community Engagement Workshops

1. What do you see as the threats facing biodiversity?

Development pressures from a growing population and biodiversity being an afterthought. Increase in housing density, reduction in spaces for biodiversity, poor outcomes from landscape designs and habitats becoming increasingly fragmented.

Pest plants and animals having a greater impact on the natural worlds more than ever. Increase in domestic animal issues (cats in particular) having a large impact on biodiversity. Pest plants becoming an increasing problem in conservation spaces and not enough resources to deal with them.

Litter and pollution have increased noticeably with an increase in population trends leading to direct impacts on terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

Lack of awareness and value around biodiversity in the broader community and internally at Council. There is a need to elevate the awareness and support for biodiversity in local government. The risk of doing business as usual and assuming Council are doing well in this space will lead to worse biodiversity outcomes not just locally, but throughout the state and country.

Bureaucracy and governments' priorities being at odds with biodiversity protection and enhancement. There doesn't seem to be any prioritisation of biodiversity to ensure decline does not continue.

2. What do you see as Council's role in managing biodiversity?

Management of development impacts through enforcement and penalties for development not adhering to Environmental Planning regulations. There are also opportunities for introducing biodiversity appropriate planting pallets available to developers through planning recommendations.

Creation of monitoring programs to inform on biodiversity trends. Monitoring and reporting on trends can lead to more informed decisions and not be so reactive in the biodiversity management space.

Identification and use of non-traditional spaces for biodiversity. Look at land that we can have for biodiversity, not just people. Nature strips are an example of where real gains can be made for biodiversity and connecting habitats.

Management of existing biodiversity (including threat reduction). The need for ongoing management of our conservation spaces for both flora and fauna are crucial but increase in resourcing is essential to ensure biodiversity doesn't decline further.

Providing education and support programs for the community and internal staff to increase biodiversity literacy and value, leading to better outcomes. Providing support to local Friends Groups and other Environmental Volunteers. Increase capacity of proactive programs like Gardens for Wildlife and Schools and Citizen Science opportunities.

Create a clear biodiversity advocacy campaign to talk to all stakeholders, in particular at State and Federal Government level.

Climate adaptation and understanding how biodiversity plays a role in supporting positive climate change outcomes.

Creating and maintaining effective partnerships with other industry leaders in biodiversity to ensure Banyule is having a say and being involved in joint projects.

3. How do you contribute to Banyule's overall biodiversity values?

Providing feedback to Council to ensure that biodiversity is front and centre when other plans, policies and strategies are being developed.

Implementation through planting Indigenous plants at home, in the community and wherever we can. Maintaining natural spaces through connection to local Friends Groups and other environmental volunteers. Helping to educate others through art, interaction and social engagement.

Advocacy through awareness (local art) and active campaigning to other community members and Council. Raising awareness around projects that will impact on biodiversity and how to mitigate them.

Monitoring and observing changes over time in the natural environment. Contributing to citizen science programs and inputting them into environmental observation platforms.

Environmental Friends of Group Engagement Workshops

The Environmental Friends Group sessions were designed to engage with volunteer groups and members who have historically worked with Council to maintain biodiversity in conservation areas and wildlife corridors throughout Banyule. Questions were also asked to the groups about ways in which Council could better support them in the future.

1. What are the threats facing biodiversity?

Development and fragmentation of habitats: an increase in dwellings through Banyule is seeing less space for nature in yards, increased fragmentation of usable land for biodiversity and invasion of species that are becoming weedy. There is also an increase in pest animal species with an increase in urbanisation due to their ability to adapt to urban environments.

Population Growth: an increase in people is having a significant impact on our local environment, through increase in traffic to conservation spaces, litter, pets (cats and dogs), use of harmful chemicals for the environment, pollution and general pressures placed by higher levels of people.

Pest Plants and Animals (including domestic): with the increase in population and urbanisation, there are many more pest plants entering the environment from people's gardens and a low funded conservation team who can't always keep up with the increase in weed management. Pest animals like foxes and common mynas are increasing and domestic animals like cats are becoming the largest threat to biodiversity very rapidly.

Resourcing: friends groups work very closely with the Bush Crew and Environment Team, and they are heavily under resourced to keep up with the increasing pressures on our conservation spaces and wildlife corridors. Generally, the environment sector is underfunded and valued which leads to poor biodiversity outcomes.

Awareness, understanding and value: there is a general increase in the lack of value for nature with people being so time poor. This leads to a lack of understanding and a decrease in value. There is also a great unknown as to what biodiversity values we have and have potentially lost.

Climate change: the increase in temperatures and extreme weather events are impacting on local biodiversity. Local Indigenous species have been proven to be highly resilient to change and need to be prioritised in future proofing out ecosystems.

2. What do you see as Council's role in managing biodiversity?

Promotion of Friends Groups – to help generate new members. Volunteers are essentially an extension of an under resourced sector within local government, so assistance in recruitment of volunteer members can help.

Resourcing the environment sector – increase the resourcing through the Bushland Management Team and Environment Team to increase the capacity for biodiversity across Banyule.

Manage Biodiversity Threats – through continued conservation work and educational campaigns. Some of the greatest weed threats come from the private realm and all the work we and the Bush Crew do is in vain when people are allowed to have highly weedy plants on their properties un-managed.

Biodiversity Education – Council has a wide reach throughout the community and with their industry partners and has the power to educate a wide sector of the community. Schools need to be included in this as they are the key to young people valuing the natural environment.

Management of Development Impacts – Council needs to work with developers to get better biodiversity outcomes. Too many trees are being lost through development and too many landscaping outcomes are poorly designed and don't support biodiversity.

Biodiversity advocacy – advocacy at all levels, not just at the State and Federal government levels. Advocacy needs to take place internally more than anywhere first to have a unified approach to good biodiversity management.

3. How does your group currently support biodiversity?

Practical applications – groups all do various weeding and planting activities through the conservation areas and wildlife corridors they manage. They also work on threatened species protection, under the supervision of the Bushland Management Team, allowing for the protection and enhancement of Federally and Locally threatened species.

Advocate – on the importance of biodiversity to the wider community and Council. Often form joint submissions from our groups to Council for other plans and strategies to consider biodiversity more.

Education – lead in providing education sessions and guest speakers for members of our groups and the wider community.

Monitoring programs – Undertaking different citizen science programs (Sugar Glider Census, Powerful Owl Monitoring, Frog and Bat Census) to help inform on biodiversity trends throughout Banyule.

4. How can Council support your group in the future?

Partnership - continue to work with Bush Crew and Environment Team on projects that support overall biodiversity health.

Promotion – provide opportunities to promote the volunteer groups through Council communications channels to help with the recruitment of volunteers.

Upskilling – continue to provide the recent upskilling workshops that build volunteer knowledge on biodiversity.

Networking – provide an opportunity for environmental volunteers to gather so they can network and build relationships with other groups. We often find we are working in isolation for the same common goal, so it would be good to get together and network more.

5.4 Targeted Consultation.

Further targeted consultation was undertaken with key groups suggested by the Community Biodiversity Working Group and included teachers, Wurundjeri and young people. Each group were believed to provide a unique perspective from their areas on local biodiversity.

Teachers and Educators Group

Teachers were directly engaged through the Teachers Environment Network (TEN) meetings, which are existing forums for teacher development supported by Banyule Council and Nillumbik Shire. During the sessions Teachers were asked, 'What do you currently do at school to support biodiversity?' and 'What supports would you like Council to consider assisting you with biodiversity education?' The below points are key takeaways from these two sessions and the qualitative data from the survey.

1. What do you do to support biodiversity at School currently?

- Planting pollinator gardens and habitat gardens.
- Taking students on bird census walks.
- Taking part in citizen science programs over Citizen Science weeks (like iNaturalist).
- Applying for grants to get more biodiversity education into the school.
- Sustainability initiatives to reduce our impact on the environment overall.
- Ensuring the school is clean by picking up litter to stop it entering out water systems.

2. What supports would you like Council to Consider for biodiversity education?

- Provide biodiversity information packs to schools to help guide discussion in class and allow teachers to educate their students internally.
- Programs that support biodiversity in schools.
- Providing an officer to come in and give incursions to schools on biodiversity related topics.
- Support schools with habitat planting through the provision of plants.

Some specific program supports Council could consider for schools were asked in the survey where teachers could select options to indicate if this would be something their school would engage with.

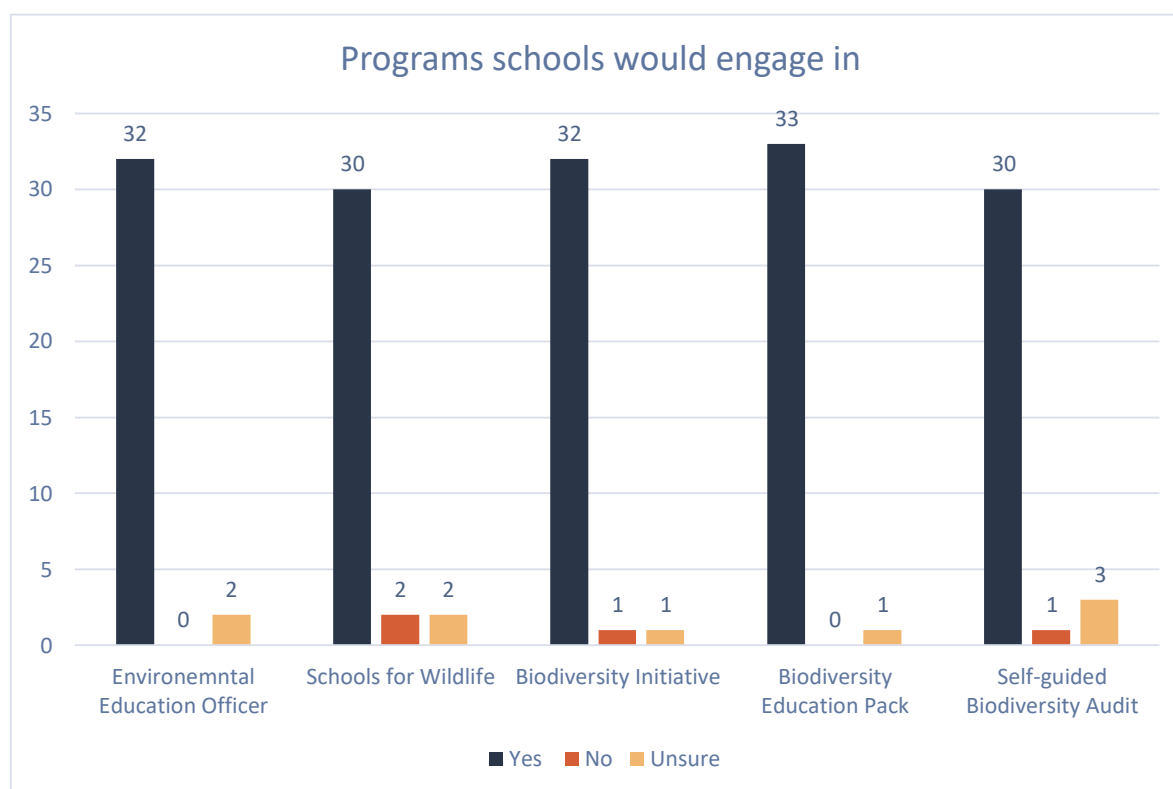


Figure 8 – Indication of what programs Schools would consider if Council could provide them.

The results show that overwhelmingly, each of the programs would be supported by a school with a minimum of 30 schools interested in each of the programs. The highest response was Biodiversity Education Packs for schools, with 33 ‘yes’ responses.

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Corporation

The engagement with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Corporation was held through an online meeting with three Aunties representing the community. The session focused on ways in which Wurundjeri and Council can work together to achieve joint biodiversity wins. The below points are the key takeaways from the discussion.

- Work with Narrap Rangers on sites of significance to Wurundjeri.
- Continue to support Narrap through existing funding and work partnership program.
- Work with Wurundjeri on totem species and build links between local biodiversity.
- Continue to work on promotion of cultural events with Uncles and Aunties in Spring Outdoors with a focus on First Nations land management practices.
- Look for other opportunities to incorporate First Nations land management practices into daily conservation works.

Young Persons Workshop

The Young Persons Workshop had the intention to engage people under 18. The demographics collected throughout the Shaping Banyule Survey showed this group was underrepresented and therefore a targeted session with young people was required. It was also highlighted by the Community Biodiversity Working Group that this was an important demographic to connect with. The key findings are highlighted below.

- Provide interesting information about biodiversity to capture the imagination of young people.
- Attend existing events like Youth Fest to promote biodiversity.
- Work with local brands to get biodiversity messaging into the youth space.

- Advertise biodiversity-related information in places that young people go like local shops and shopping centres.
- Link biodiversity crisis with climate crisis because young people are highly aware of the climate emergency but may not see the links with biodiversity crisis.
- Provide programs for young people to interact with biodiversity.
- Develop an awareness campaign that engages young people to make them aware of the biodiversity crisis in Australia. Link it to how they can make a difference locally.

5.5 Targeted Consultation Internal and External Stakeholder Engagement

Workshops.

Internal and External Stakeholder groups with high levels of influence on biodiversity outcomes in Banyule were asked similar questions to the community around threats they see to biodiversity and barriers they are facing. Engagement questions centred on the opportunities each group saw to improve support for biodiversity in Banyule and which would embed biodiversity management across a wide cohort of Council.

Internal Stakeholder Engagement	
Threats	<p>Development: Habitat fragmentation from urbanisation – leading to stress on genetic diversity of Indigenous plants and animals</p> <p>Value: Organisational value on biodiversity prioritised low. No clear internal education plan on the importance of biodiversity.</p> <p>Funding: Insufficient resourcing to be effective biodiversity managers</p> <p>Human Induced Threats: the known and current threats to biodiversity from human influence – pest plants and animals, climate change, litter and rubbish, storm damage</p>
Barriers	<p>Education: no clear internal biodiversity awareness or educational campaign, allowing biodiversity to be embedded into the broader Council space.</p> <p>Opportunities: Focusing opportunities on current biodiversity management and not seeking outside the norm ideas. Opportunities for conservation and other land management officers to test new ideas and work on biodiversity programs outside of current responsibilities.</p> <p>Resources: Limited resourcing to operational and strategic crews is not allowing for progressive biodiversity management.</p>
Opportunities	<p>Resourcing: Increase resourcing to operational and strategic crews to manage and support better biodiversity outcomes and increase education capacity.</p> <p>Monitoring: Develop effective monitoring programs to inform future management decisions.</p> <p>Review: Review existing biodiversity planning scheme supports and documents to ensure best biodiversity advice is considered through developments.</p> <p>Education: Provide expert advice to teams (operational and strategic) on best practice biodiversity management and outcomes.</p> <p>Toolkits: Development of biodiversity toolkits (e.g., biodiversity maps, species lists) for teams to know how to effectively support biodiversity.</p>
External Stakeholder Engagement	
Threats	<p>Climate Change: and the unknown impacts on biodiversity. There is a need to better understand and manage the impacts of changing climates on local ecosystems.</p>
	<p>Development: Big scale projects impact acting across organisation land management responsibilities (e.g., NELP). Local smaller developments having a gradual. All adding up to local biodiversity being pushed further away from urban areas.</p>
	<p>Population Growth: increase in population leads an increase on resources and space. This lends itself to rapid and gradual impacts local biodiversity though hard to see threats (pollution, loss of genetic diversity through fragmentation.</p>
	<p>Human Induced Threats: introduction of pest plant and animal species (including domestic animals). Humans also changing landscapes to reduce natural impacts on</p>

	their lives, (e.g., flood mitigation) leading to an increase in hard non permeable surfaces and therefore decline in overall soil health.
Barriers	Legislation and support: Practitioners being restricted by weak biodiversity legislation locally and federally resulting in minimal supports for biodiversity and poor outcomes.
	Resourcing: Typically, environmental managers and teams are under resourced to provide effective biodiversity management.
	Value: lack of broader population value for biodiversity leads impacts on natural space. This takes the form in increased rubbish, weed escapees, domestic animals and human vs conservation conflict.
Opportunities	Advocacy: developing a cross organisation biodiversity advocacy campaign to have a unified position for positive biodiversity management over a large scale.
	Big Picture: Develop large scale projects with other agencies for broader biodiversity projects. Use existing cross organisational plans and strategies as leverage (e.g., Yarra Strategic Plan).
	Funding: pooling resources to apply for external funding opportunities. Also leveraging work others are doing to advocate for more internal funding in individual departments.
	Networking: having ongoing networking opportunities to knowledge share and form plans for advocacy, big picture thinking and funding opportunities.

Table 5 – The main themes summarised emerging from internal and external stakeholder engagement sessions.

6. Recommendations

Considering the results drawn from the consultation phase, this report recommends the following key considerations when developing the Biodiversity Strategy.

- Identify gaps between the current Biodiversity Plan and consultation feedback to ensure the new Biodiversity Strategy is addressing the findings in this report.
- Consider feedback from the consultation process and new emerging themes to integrate into and updated Biodiversity Strategy.
- Develop actions in the Biodiversity Strategy to minimise the threats to biodiversity that have been identified through the consultation period.
- Develop actions in the Biodiversity Strategy to outline how the community can meaningfully engage with nature in accordance with opportunities identified through the consultation period.