



# Lower Yarra River



Future Directions Plan & Recreation Guidelines

April 2001

# Foreword

The Yarra River is one of the major arteries of Melbourne's extensive open space network, changing character and form as it meanders through the eastern regions of the city. In recent years, the lower reaches of the river have become recognised as the commercial, residential and recreational hub of the city.

As a consequence, there has been considerable growth in activity for cultural, tourism and sporting events and water-based activities along its lower reaches. The existing and projected growth in demand by a variety of users in this area has highlighted the need for an overall management framework to guide water-based recreational activity.

Parks Victoria has responded by preparing a Future Directions Plan and Recreation Guidelines for the Lower Yarra River, reaching from Dights Falls to Port Phillip Bay. This plan provides a framework which will enable the competing demands of all users of the river to be safely balanced while maintaining the river's environmental values.

Melburnians are passionate about 'the Yarra' and have embraced the waterway as a vibrant part of our recreational and cultural focus. The cooperative spirit of the many management agencies, stakeholders and user groups consulted throughout this planning process demonstrates the desire to ensure a cohesive management approach to supporting this community interest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Stone', with a stylized, looping flourish at the end.

Mark Stone

Chief Executive  
Parks Victoria

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# Introduction

Called 'Birrarung' (thought to mean 'river of mists') in Aboriginal Dreamtime by Bundjil, the Lower Yarra River is recognised as Melbourne's shipping artery and the commercial, residential and recreational hub of the city.

As appreciation for the Lower Yarra River has grown, so have the popularity of venues on its banks and the use of the river itself for cultural, tourism and sporting events and activities. Surveys estimate that there were approximately 390,000 individual visits or uses of the Lower Yarra River in 1999, of which the majority was attributable to rowing and commercial operations. It is expected that this will grow to 590,000 by 2004. It is forecast that 76% of this growth will be in commercial visitation and that significant increases in private powerboat usage will occur as the development of the Docklands continues.

This projected growth in demand by a variety of existing and potential users highlights the need for an overall management framework to guide the future recreational use of the Lower Yarra. This framework will enable the competing demands of all users of the river to be safely balanced while maintaining its environmental and heritage values.

To guide the integrated management of water-based uses, Parks Victoria has prepared this Future Directions Plan and Recreation Guidelines for the Lower Yarra River. It covers the Lower Yarra River from Dights Falls to Port Phillip Bay (see Figure 1). While Parks Victoria has direct responsibility for the management of recreational activities on the river, other authorities have significant management responsibilities for the river and its environs. They, and their respective roles, are identified in Appendix 1.

To ensure a comprehensive overview of river use activities, the directions and guidelines in this plan cover total responsibility for the management of recreational uses and associated activities on the water itself. It does not address the use and development of land adjoining the river but establishes a framework for the coordinated interaction of water based uses.

Extensive consultation and agreement has been reached with responsible agencies towards the implementation of the plan's directions and guidelines. However, any actions affecting management responsibilities beyond Parks Victoria's jurisdiction, are recommendations only for consideration by the relevant authorities with the aim of providing a consistent approach to the management of activities on this stretch of the river to ensure its safe, efficient and enjoyable use by all users.

# 1 Future Management Directions

## Overall Future Direction

The Lower Yarra River is an integral part of an extensive park system for the central city area and provides:

- for a wide range of water-based sporting, event and recreation activities
- an important visual and landscape corridor
- a tourism focus for the city
- the main waterway access through Victoria's principal commercial port to and from Port Phillip Bay
- a main artery of the storm water catchment for a large portion of the metropolitan area.

The long-term strategy for the management of recreational users on the Lower Yarra River is:

*To manage the Lower Yarra River to ensure its safe, sustainable and equitable use for a wide range of recreation and tourism activities, including their impact on the environment, cultural heritage assets and commercial port operations, now and into the future.*

This will necessitate:

- balancing overall demands for the recreational, commercial, sporting and event use of the river
- ensuring equitable and sustainable access
- providing a safe and navigable waterway
- protecting environmental and heritage values
- providing and maintaining infrastructure for efficient access and use for appropriate activities
- fostering respect for the river by all users, and between varying user groups
- promoting the recreation and tourism potential of the river.

## Strategic Direction for Activities

Activities on the Lower Yarra River are considered in four categories:

- commercial operations
- private powered craft
- non-powered craft, including non powered commercial
- events

A description of the preferred future direction for each of these activities, together with broad management objectives to achieve this, is provided below.

### Commercial Operations

Commercial cruise and ferry services are an integral part of the image and appeal of Melbourne as a major domestic and international tourist destination. A diverse range of commercial cruise and ferry services providing permanent scheduled services, public and corporate tours and function and speciality services will be supported and enhanced to cater for all aspects of the growing market.

This support will include appropriate infrastructure to provide efficient connections between upstream and inner city destinations for commercial operations and the improved coordination of commercial services to ease competition and congestion for berths at strategic locations.

The broad objectives guiding commercial operations on the river are to:

- manage commercial berths at key destinations to provide equity of access and to provide optimal passenger throughput
- encourage commercial tours and ferry services that offer quality and diversity
- provide for longer-term licences and a fee structure which takes account of passenger carrying capacity and infrastructure requirements
- encourage shore-based infrastructure to provide suitable ticketing and passenger comfort facilities at major destinations
- improve management and licensing of designated routes as a mechanism to regulate the carrying capacity of the river
- encourage low wake commercial craft.

## Private Powered Craft

The popularity of the Lower Yarra River as a venue and destination for recreational power boating will continue to increase as redevelopment of the Docklands precinct proceeds. Additional power-boating activities arising from new marina developments will be encouraged in more open waters downstream of Charles Grimes Bridge, where emerging entertainment and residential developments are focused. A means to facilitate safer and more rapid transit to Port Phillip Bay is being addressed in a Traffic Management Plan being developed by the Department of Infrastructure, the Melbourne Port Corporation, the Victorian Channels Authority, the Marine Board of Victoria and Parks Victoria.

Private power boating from residential jetties upstream of Herring Island will continue, although movement between Charles Grimes Bridge and Swan Street Bridge will primarily be focused on transit movement. Restrictions will be imposed on permanent berthing, however limited access to casual berthing may be made available in this area.

The broad objectives guiding private powered craft operations on the river are to:

- facilitate mainly transit only movement of recreational boats and power boats assisting rowing shells between Charles Grimes Bridge and Swan Street Bridge
- provide casual berthing opportunities for recreational craft at key destination points downstream of Charles Grimes Bridge and upstream of Swan Street with possible limited casual berthing on the north bank between Flinders Street Station and Banana Alley
- support the development of appropriate infrastructure, such as signage, landings, roads and paths
- support the Traffic Management Plan investigations into the potential for increased speed limits downstream of the Bolte Bridge to encourage safe, efficient access to Port Phillip Bay
- encourage retention of existing speed limits upstream of Bolte Bridge

- pursue opportunities for low numbers of private power boats to launch from the Burnley ramp to facilitate access in less congested areas of the river
- continue prohibition of personal water craft (ie. jet skis) in all areas of the Lower Yarra River.

## Non-powered Craft

The role of the Lower Yarra River as a training and events corridor for water sports is renowned and will be protected and enhanced into the future. It will continue to provide an important venue for training and competition for a wide range of non-powered recreational craft. Opportunities for riverside infrastructure supporting such recreational pursuits (including clubhouses, boatsheds and stagings) are the responsibility of local government, the State government (where the Minister for Planning is the responsible authority under the Melbourne Planning Scheme) and the Docklands Authority.

The broad objectives guiding non-powered craft operations on the river are to:

- encourage rowing and other sporting activities upstream of Princes Bridge
- discourage rowing and other sporting activities downstream of Princes Bridge at peak commercial use times
- allow full river closures for a limited number of regattas
- provide special access management arrangements for commercial operators during partial regatta closures
- support the provision of appropriate infrastructure, such as signage, landings, roads and paths at preferred locations for river access points
- actively promote the education of river users with regard to safe use and access to the waterway and associated land based destinations.

### Special Events

The Lower Yarra River will remain a setting for a diverse range of special events that have come to exemplify the vibrancy and theatre of Melbourne as a special place to live and visit. Opportunity for the staging of existing annual events on the river and using the river as a water focus for an essentially land-based event, including Moomba, New Years Eve and the Melbourne Festival, will be maintained. The opportunity to conduct existing or additional special events in the Victoria Harbour/Docklands precinct will be supported.

The broad objectives guiding special events on the river are to:

- recognise special events as a key tourist and cultural feature of the Lower Yarra River
- implement river closures (excluding the Port Zone) to facilitate a limited number of special events of State significance
- ensure all stakeholders are informed of and are invited to provide input to the annual events program detailing river access and closures to facilitate effective management of river users during these periods
- encourage events at appropriate times in areas that have reduced impact on commercial activities and minimise disturbance to regular river users.

### Strategic Direction for the Environment

In June 1999, the Governor in Council declared the State Environment Protection Policy (SEPP) for the Yarra River and its catchment (*Waters of the Yarra Catchment*). All activities will be planned and operated in accordance with the SEPP provisions, including the *Yarra Catchment Action Plan*. Key environmental aspects that contribute to the character and quality of experience on the Lower Yarra River are water quality, bank stability and erosion, vegetation, noise and litter.

### Water Quality

The natural 'muddying' of the river begins as it passes through a lengthy clay belt near Yarra Glen. It may look off colour, but the Yarra's general health is improving and it is no longer considered the 'number one drain' for Melbourne.

Management practices along river frontages and protocols for commercial operators that minimise risks to water quality from their operations will be encouraged. Parks Victoria will also continue to cooperate with Melbourne Water and the Environment Protection Authority in providing an integrated response to the management of major spills in the waterway.

- in conjunction with the EPA, investigate opportunities for the provision of additional pump out facilities along the river eg Burnley, Docklands and Williamstown

### Bank Stability and Erosion

Excessive boat wash, high water flows following peak rainfall events and natural processes all contribute to bank erosion and stability problems in areas where there is not a hard urban edge to the river. Melbourne Water is the responsible authority for ensuring bank stability and monitoring and maintaining rock facings.

Upstream of Herring Island, the progressive reinstatement of bankside vegetation and provision of suitable structures at key locations to control access to the river will minimise minor bank erosion caused by uncontrolled human and animal access to steeply sloped and partially vegetated areas.

The broad objectives guiding bank stability and erosion on the river are to:

- minimise boat wash through speed/wake restrictions and the encouragement of low wake vessels
- support the responsible agencies/landowners in maintaining rock facings and vegetation to reduce erosion
- provide structures at key locations to facilitate and control riverbank access.

## Vegetation Management

Vegetation along the river provides shelter for wildlife and landscape interest for the river environment. Riverbank vegetation management is the responsibility of Melbourne Water and landowners. The maintenance of the variety and mix of vegetation, including the use of indigenous and non-indigenous species where appropriate, to enhance the varied values and character of different sections of the river will be supported and encouraged.

The broad objectives guiding vegetation management on the river are to:

- use vegetation to reinforce habitat and bank stability
- support planting programs to manage appropriate visitor/bank access
- control weeds and other inappropriate species that may trap litter or encourage bank encroachment.

## Noise

Powered craft using the waterway have the potential to create disturbance to other river users and adjoining land uses, particularly upstream of Herring Island where there is a significant number of waterfront residential properties. Craft left idling at moorings in main visitor activity areas, such as Southbank, may detract from the passive recreational experience through the emission of noise and fumes. The operation of commercial vessels mooring in high activity areas is to be managed to minimise unnecessary and excessive emissions.

The broad objectives guiding noise on the river are to:

- implement protocols for appropriate noise muffling devices for commercial craft at key destinations
- limit access to function boats and place restrictions on loud music on cruise boats upstream of Herring Island.

## Litter Management

Litter enters the river primarily from adjoining urban areas and, to a lesser extent, is also generated by river users. As a major recreation and tourism venue, litter not only impacts on environmental values but also compromises the visual amenity and perception of the river's health. As such, litter management needs to be a high priority for all adjoining land managers. Litter traps at major storm water points and litter booms on the surface of the river will continue to be used to detain litter. Major river activities, such as special events, will be managed by event organisers to avoid littering of the waterway.

The broad objectives guiding litter on the river is to:

- retain existing maintenance regimes for the control and removal of litter from the waterway
- ensure new river infrastructure is designed to minimise the entrapment of litter.



## 2 Recreation Guidelines for River Zones

To provide a management framework to achieve the overall objectives, the Lower Yarra River has been divided into five zones that describe identifiable existing and proposed primary uses along the length of the river. As such, the zones provide a physical framework for the establishment of guidelines to achieve the overall objectives described in the previous section in a balanced and safe manner. The zones are (see Figure 2):

- Port Zone
- Marina/Transit Zone
- Commercial Tourist Zone
- Active Recreation Tourism Zone
- Passive Recreation Zone

The zones provide a mechanism to:

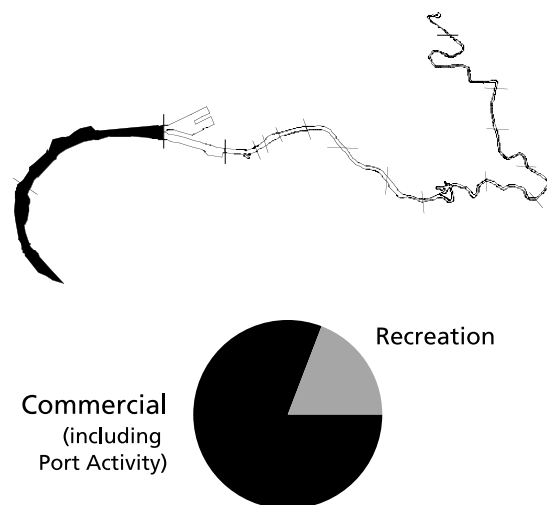
- manage a range of activities on the same stretch of waterway
- separate incompatible uses and activities
- minimise unnecessary congestion of the waterway
- regulate and limit types of activities on the river
- identify the key theme for different areas of the river.

This section presents the preferred role for each zone and a set of overall guidelines for its use and management. The pie charts provide a simple visual indicator of the proposed balance between different users given the role of the zone.

### Port Zone

*(Port Phillip Bay to Bolte Bridge)*

The port zone encompasses an active commercial port with a deep broad waterway. It has an industrial landscape, dominated by the backdrop of the Westgate Bridge. It provides a safe harbour in strong winds, is extensively used for land based fishing activities and is the transit corridor for access between Port Phillip Bay and the Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers.



The primary role of the zone is focused on commercial shipping and port activities for Melbourne. Significant growth in activities and the number of commercial shipping movements in the port is predicted over the next few decades, emphasising the need to regulate access and use within the zone and promote safety for all users.

Recreational boating access within this zone, particularly arising from the Pier 35 Marina Village, will therefore need to be managed with the aim of providing safe transit through a busy port area to the rivers, Docklands and Port Phillip Bay. This need is exacerbated by anticipated increases in recreational boating traffic and commercial operations crossing the zone from marina developments planned for the Docklands and Yarra Waters precincts.

Similarly, access for recreational fishing that occurs at the river mouth on Hobsons Bay needs to be conducted with an awareness of the port-related shipping traffic through this part of the river. Land-based fishing from the banks of the river is an important part of the overall character of the zone. However, fishing from boats within this zone will not be permitted due to safety issues arising from potential conflicts with larger shipping vessels.

Movement through the precinct by rowing crews, accompanied by powered vessels, in order to access the Maribyrnong River is appropriate but needs to be managed to ensure the safety of all river users. The use of the Port Zone by personal watercraft will continue to be prohibited to ensure the safety and convenience of general port users and the operators themselves who have no direct radio access in case of emergency.

Overall guidelines for the Port Zone are to:

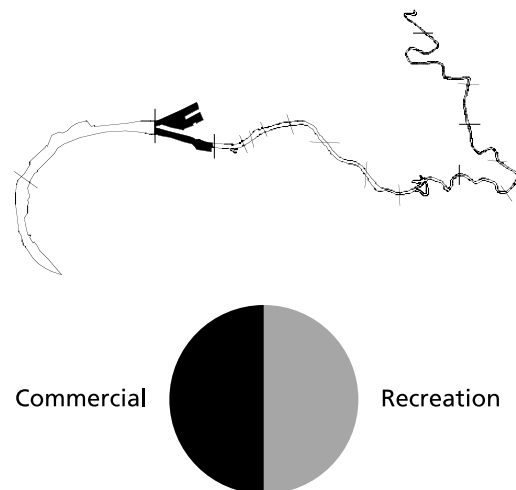
- discourage use by rowers and non-powered sporting craft – exceptions include access for yachts, and rowers in transit to Maribyrnong River accompanied by a powered vessel or other rowing activity being conducted under special permit
- strictly control special events to ensure they do not impact on port activities (including no closures) and manage them through arrangement with the Victorian Channels Authority
- investigate the potential through the Traffic Management Plan to increase speed limits as a means of facilitating more rapid, safe transit to the Bay for recreational craft
- manage wake controls to minimise the impact on the Pier 35 Marina
- establish and communicate protocols for recreational and commercial use to minimise conflict with port traffic, including no provision for casual or permanent berthing
- actively manage environmental issues, such as bank erosion and rubbish removal
- provide new landing at Westgate Park to service relocated punt

- develop designated low level landing 'rescue points' between the Bolte Bridge and Port Phillip Bay and ensure their use for emergency purposes only, not as informal berthing facilities.
- exclude boat based recreational fishing to ensure safe navigation of shipping vessels

## Marina /Transit Zone

*(Bolte Bridge to Charles Grimes Bridge)*

The marina/transit zone is a recreational waterway free of port commercial traffic that provides a gateway to the City. It is the focus of a major future development and entertainment centre with potential for significantly increased public access opportunities. It contains significant historic port infrastructure.



The zone's riverside environment is being redefined by new commercial and residential developments through the 'Docklands Project'. Up to one thousand marina berths as well as launching facilities may be provided as part of the proposed Victoria Harbour and Yarra Waters developments.

## Recreation Guidelines for River Zones

In the absence of port activity, the character of the zone is focusing more on the residential and entertainment developments, enhancing its role as gateway to the city.

The future role for the zone is one of accommodating safe and efficient access for commercial and recreational craft to riverside residential and entertainment nodes. This zone will also become a focus for special events and water-based festivals within Victoria Harbour as projects within Docklands develop.

The development of facilities in the Docklands precinct will generate new destination points for on-water traffic, requiring various commercial and recreational berths to be introduced. The precinct will provide a suitable location for new long-term commercial berths and a range of casual and permanent berths for recreational craft.

Given the inevitable increases in recreational craft arising from the new residential marina developments, the potential for congestion upstream of Charles Grimes Bridge will need to be managed to ensure safety and compatibility with well-established tourism and sporting uses.

This zone will also serve as the upstream termination point for larger commercial and recreational vessels that cannot negotiate the low clearance at Charles Grimes Bridge. As a consequence, consideration may need to be given to developing an interchange and transfer point, supported by casual berthing opportunities, within the Docklands precinct.

New river frontages throughout the Docklands precinct will improve opportunities for land-based fishing. Encouraging boat based recreational fishing within areas of Victoria Harbour will further increase recreational opportunities.

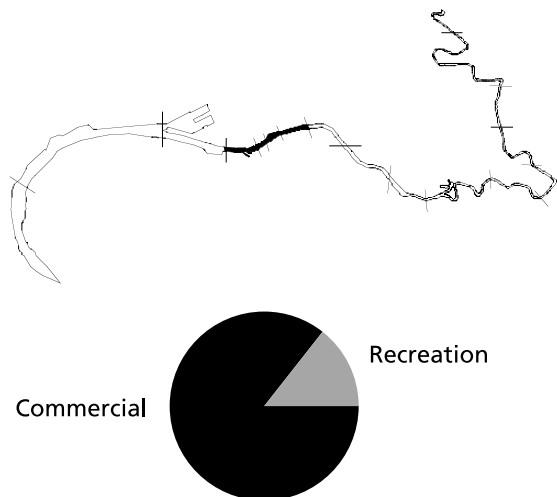
Overall guidelines for the Marina/Transit Zone are to:

- manage access to new developments along the river to maintain safe commercial and recreational boat access through the zone
- provide long-term berthing opportunities for commercial craft and a range of casual and permanent berths for recreational craft
- provide key commercial destination infrastructure at major development nodes
- investigate opportunities for casual berthing of non-commercial craft near key destinations within the Docklands
- manage potential congestion in the narrow upstream sections of the river by encouraging private boating activities to move downstream to Port Phillip Bay
- manage commercial and recreational craft to minimise noise and wake impacts on residential and commercial developments proposed in the precinct
- strategically locate safe emergency access points from the river along piled wharf structures
- discourage use of this zone by rowers and non-powered craft – exceptions include access for yachts, and rowers in transit to Maribyrnong River accompanied by a powered vessel and rowers operating under a special permit
- encourage the provision of servicing infrastructure for commercial and recreational craft, such as sewage pump-out and refuelling, in the development of new marinas and commercial stabling facilities
- support the use of Victoria Harbour as an event venue
- support boat based recreational fishing opportunities within areas of Victoria Harbour.

## Commercial Tourist Zone

*(Charles Grimes Bridge to Princes Bridge)*

The commercial tourist zone is the major tourist and entertainment focus of the Lower Yarra. It is the principle commercial boating destination and contains many historic sites and buildings (including the Princes Bridge itself, Queens Bridge and the Sandridge Railway Line Bridge). It provides the prime focus for the central city and for pedestrian access to waterfront experiences.



The primary role of this zone is to support and facilitate commercial tours and ferry services, providing opportunities for visitors to enjoy the major tourist and entertainment precincts on the north and south banks, the waterway setting itself, and access to bay destinations.

A safe and less congested waterway needs to be maintained to facilitate these services, supported by greater coordination of commercial operations, scheduled services and improved regulation of commercial berths. Rowing will therefore be discouraged from this area to reduce congestion and potential conflict with commercial operators. Shore-based tourism infrastructure will also be managed to ensure high standards in the presentation and performance of services. Improvements to destination infrastructure will assist in providing a safer and more functional river environment and visitor experience.

In further managing potential congestion and promoting the primary role of the zone for commercial services, private powerboats will be discouraged from using this zone as a destination. This will include the exclusion of berthing opportunities in this zone in any new hire/drive leases. The possible provision of short-term berthing on the north bank of the river between Flinders Street Station and Banana Alley will be investigated to accommodate genuine private water based visits to key attractions in this Zone. Otherwise, private powerboats should only traverse this Zone to enjoy the river experience and access berths upstream of Swan Street.

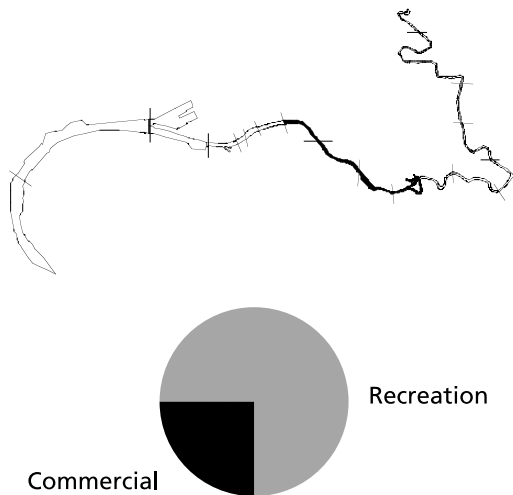
Overall guidelines for the Commercial Tourist Zone are to:

- provide infrastructure to support intensive tourist traffic on this section of the waterway at key destinations (eg. Southgate, Crown Entertainment Complex, Melbourne Exhibition Centre, Melbourne Aquarium, Federation Square)
- develop policies to ensure an efficient and equitable use of berthing facilities at priority destinations
- discourage non-powered craft during peak commercial operations periods
- manage consistent marketing and directional signage to ensure effective coordination of the land/water interface
- maintain the use of this section of the waterway for events and festivals, although strictly limited to reduce impact on river users
- promote primarily transit only access for private boats
- investigate the provision of limited berthing facilities for non-commercial craft on the north bank between Flinders Street Railway Station and Banana Alley to provide for venue visitors.
- develop improved landings and boarding facilities on both the north and south banks to provide safe access for commercial craft in high-use tourist areas
- improve emergency river access, including low-level landings and ladders.

## Active Recreation Tourism Zone

### *(Princes Bridge to Herring Island)*

The active recreation tourism zone provides extensive city vistas from a scenic waterway within a park and garden setting. It is a traditional venue for sport and entertainment events attracting many spectators along its banks. It is also a rowing activity centre providing training and competition areas, storage and club facilities. Many of its buildings have heritage and cultural value, including the Princes Walk Vaults, some of the rowing club sheds and the Morell Bridge. It contains many major destination points, including Herring Island, Como Park, Melbourne Park, the MCG and Olympic Park.



This zone is characterised by a mix of rowing, major event and commercial usage. A balanced and equitable approach in use of the waterway by the various users is required to ensure safe access. This will see the river used primarily during early morning periods as a venue for training before scheduled commercial services commence mid-morning. Commercial use will also be limited in the early evening to manage potential conflict with training.

Commercial berthing at Princes Wharf will become increasingly popular with the development of Federation Square and Riverside Park and will be managed to provide efficiency to commercial operations and minimal disturbance to sports training activities. Landings at Melbourne Park will continue to be in high demand during major events, promoting the role of the river as an alternative means of transport to major riverside destinations. Herring Island will remain a key destination and focal point for recreation and tourism experiences.

The zone also provides an attractive setting as a venue for a limited number of regattas.

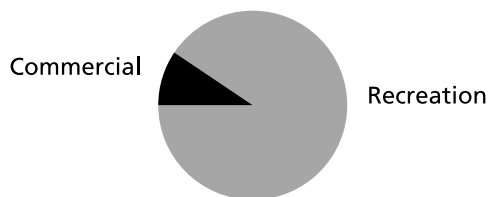
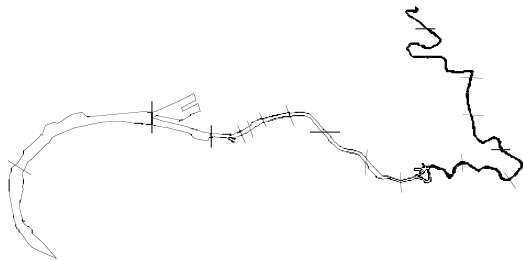
Overall guidelines for the Active Recreation Tourism Zone are to:

- retain its use as a training and competition venue for rowing and other sporting activities
- provide appropriate infrastructure for commercial ferry operations at key destinations (eg. Princes Wharf, Melbourne Park)
- maintain appropriate infrastructure for rowing at key destinations (eg. Jeffries Parade Boatsheds)
- limit access for commercial craft by time-zoning to provide priority use by rowers and other non-powered sporting activities at peak training and programmed competition times
- provide access for a limited number of events and regattas
- permit river closures only for approved sporting and entertainment events and events of State significance (eg. Moomba)
- develop or improve pick-up and drop-off points for commercial ferry vessels to provide access at key destinations, such as Herring Island and Como Park
- maintain access to berthing facilities for private recreational craft at Herring Island
- assess the feasibility (impact and risk assessment) of the use of the Burnley ramp to provide launching facilities for low numbers of private craft for access upstream
- maintain adequate channel depth and width to ensure a safe and navigable waterway
- provide berthing for recreational craft upstream of Swan Street.

## Passive Recreation Zone

*(Herring Island to Dights Falls)*

The passive recreation zone is characterised by a scenic and tranquil setting below residential and parkland environments. It presents clearly recognisable environmental qualities and a heritage landscape with historic locations and buildings. It currently has low to moderate pressures on its recreation values and provides excellent canoeing and kayaking opportunities.



The role of this zone is primarily focused on providing for recreation with occasional access by commercial operators. The zone will accommodate rowing and other non-powered watersports training activities, in addition to private power boating from residential berths and possibly Burnley. Access to the river by watersports users will need to be managed to minimise environmental disturbance.

Guidelines for the Passive Recreation Zone are to:

- encourage its use as a recreational waterway for private powered and non-powered boating activity
- retain existing permanent mooring and berthing facilities for powered craft, however, access downstream of Swan Street will be limited to transit purposes only
- manage river landscapes to promote the non-urban appeal of the precinct
- retain limited commercial boat operations
- maintain adequate channel depth and width to Clarke Street, Abbotsford to ensure a safe and navigable waterway.

# 3 Recreation Guidelines for River Users

## Management Zones and Primary Users

All activities on the Lower Yarra are required to comply with the provisions of various organisational statutes and by-laws (including the *Marine Act 1988*). While existing provisions will continue to apply, it is anticipated that this Future Directions Plan and Recreational Guidelines for the Lower Yarra River will be supported by all authorities and, where necessary, appropriate amendments to current legislation and licensing arrangements will follow.

The following table provides further operational details for how primary users may use each management zone of the river.

PRIMARY USERS	Port Zone	Transit/ Marina Zone	Commercial Tourist Zone	Active Recreation Tourism Zone	Passive Recreation Zone
<b>Commercial Operators</b>	Maintain a 30m buffer around the Pier 35 marina (except when approaching to berth).  Open access from Bolte Bridge for transit purposes.  Must initiate radio communication with Harbour Control when entering zone.	Zone within which commercial operators will be strongly encouraged.  New destination infrastructure to be provided.	Consideration to establishment of a vessel servicing /supply node on the north bank of the river.  No berthing permitted for hire/drive leasing.	Only allowed after 10.00am daily and restricted between 4.00pm and 6.30pm to reduce congestion during rowing training.	Restricted to scenic cruises, water taxis and ferry services. (No party cruises).
<b>Private Powered Craft</b>	Transit only (exception for berthing at Pier 35).	Boats waiting to enter marinas to maintain a clear waterway for transit traffic.	Limited casual or permanent berthing.  Consideration to be given to limited temporary berthing between Flinders Street Railway Station and Banana Alley.	No casual or permanent berthing between Princes Bridge and Swan Street.	Boats entering the waterway encouraged to travel upstream.
<b>Non-Powered Craft</b>	Rowers restricted with the exception of transit to Maribyrnong River for training and competition, when must be accompanied by a power boat.  Access for yachts permitted.	Rowers discouraged after 10.00am daily, except for purposes applicable to the Port Zone.  Access for yachts permitted.	As for Transit Marina Zone.  Rowers turning downstream of Princes Bridge must ensure minimal intrusion and time into the zone.	Priority use established before 10.00am and between 4.00pm and 6.30pm.	Locations for access will be developed and defined with local government.
<b>Special Events</b>	Only events of State significance where a port location is critical and impact on port operations is minimal. No river closures.	Focus for new special events and water-based festivals in Victoria Harbour.	Continue to be focus for designated special events.	Designated number of river closures will be permitted. Open river regattas conducted between 8.00am and midday.	Permit limited number of annual regattas requiring river closures.
<b>Recreational Fishing</b>	Bank only.	Bank and landings. Fishing from boats permitted in Victoria Harbour but no anchoring mid-channel.	Bank only.	Bank and landings.	Bank and landings. Fishing from boats permitted but no anchoring mid-channel.

## Berthing Strategy

A berthing strategy has been established to serve a range of commercial and non-commercial activities on the river (see Figure 3). The strategy outlines the location of berthing facilities along the river and the type of access permitted by varying river users. The aims and objectives of the strategy are to ensure:

- safe access to the river for visitors and river boat operators
- the type and location of berths is matched to the needs of the various services
- infrastructure meets the needs of visitors and river boat operators, consistent with the role and level of use at varying destinations.

In achieving safe access for all visitors, barrier free design principles should be applied where practical in the implementation of new infrastructure and the upgrade of existing. Increasing the use of floating pontoons provides one mechanism for achieving this objective.

Figure 3 shows several types of berths including public, shared commercial, scheduled commercial and permanent commercial berths. With the possible exception of limited casual berthing between Flinders Street Station and Banana Alley, public berths only occur downstream of Charles Grimes Bridge and upstream of Swan Street Bridge.

A key element of the strategy is to clarify berthing access within the busy Commercial Tourist Zone. The commercial operations addressed in the strategy include scenic cruises, ferry services, water taxis and function and corporate tours, as described below.

Extended **scenic cruises** touring upstream and downstream stretches of the river require prominent departure points in the central tourist precinct. These services have traditionally departed from Southgate and Princes Wharf and include speciality services. Current ticket booth arrangements will be explored to encourage provision of a more centralised ticket/information centre offering better services for visitors for these services and for ferry services (refer below)

**Ferry services** provide connections between key destinations and activity nodes along the river corridor. Major developments such as Crown Entertainment Complex and Melbourne Aquarium provide attractions on which the existing network of ferry services can be further developed. For example, the Docklands is a key location that will necessitate regular ferry services in the future. To support ferry services, berthing arrangements at Southgate will be reviewed to accommodate an increase in shared/scheduled berths with a reduction in permanent berths. This will be resolved as part of the Office of Regulation Reform (ORR) review of the regulatory framework for the river. Herring Island, as well as strategic destinations further upstream, should also form part of ferry services. In addition to existing operations, new destinations will provide further opportunities to expand current links between destinations along the river and around the Bay.

**Water taxis** will provide connections between strategic access points and around the central business district. In the future, water taxis may service demand from downstream markets generated by recent bayside development. It is critical that clearly defined destination points are provided for water taxis along the river in order to facilitate efficient drop-off and pick-up services.

**Function and corporate tours** depart in the evening from Southgate and secondary locations for extended services. Additional demand for this service will emerge in the Docklands precinct.



Within the strategy, key destinations along the river have been identified which will require high service levels to facilitate tourism and recreation on the river. These destinations are Victoria Harbour, Yarra Waters Marina, Docklands Interchange, Southgate, and Princes Wharf. These destinations occur at strategic locations that require comprehensive boarding and land-based infrastructure packages. This may typically comprise:

- permanent boarding facility (design guidelines as per the "Yarra River Ferry Landings- Embarkation Facilities Study", 1999)
- undercover waiting/queuing areas, including seating
- service information
- interpretative displays
- amenities
- explanatory signage
- lighting.

### Rowing Facilities

The existing rowing facilities will continue in their current location (see Figure 3). These include:

- Jeffries Parade Boathouses
- Wesley College Boathouse
- Powerhouse Boathouse
- St Kevins College Boathouse
- Scotch College Boathouse
- Strathcona Boat Launching
- Xavier College Boathouse/Hawthorn Rowing Club

Implementation of future landings and facilities will be supported upstream of Herring Island consistent with recommendations in "The Study of Rowing and Non-Commercial Recreational Boating Facilities on the Yarra River", October 1997.

### Canoe Launching

Canoes and kayaks gain access to the river from launches at:

- Dights Falls
- Clarke Street
- Riverside Walk

Launches at these locations will be maintained by the respective landowners.

### Commercial Boat Licensing

Parks Victoria currently administers a licensing system for commercial operations on the Lower Yarra River. Parks Victoria also controls the leasing of the majority of berths along the riverbank upstream of Charles Grimes Bridge. Increasing commercial activity on the river has drawn attention to the need for a review of the regulatory framework governing commercial operations on the Lower Yarra River. This section outlines Parks Victoria's aims and objectives that form the basis of such a review. The Office of Regulation Reform is undertaking this review in consultation with several strategic partners, including Parks Victoria.

In recognition of existing licence commitments, the new commercial operators licensing system will be implemented incrementally. The licensing system will aim to define the extent and type of commercial operators permitted within each zone and will respond to the vision and character of the waterway, infrastructure and other activities in the zone.

The aims of the commercial licensing system are to:

- establish a collaborative partnership between commercial operators and government
- encourage a diverse range of commercial ferry and cruise services
- promote a quality tourism experience for all river users
- minimise conflict with other river users and special events
- improve the industry's efficiency, presentation and performance.

Provisions under licence agreements will be made in order to provide equitable opportunities for a variety of commercial operators and to mitigate conflicts between other river uses.

Parks Victoria will assess and manage the number and type of commercial licences issued to ensure a safe operating environment, support customer access to a diverse range of quality services and promote a viable market environment. Consideration will be given to regulating river operations through prescribed routes, zones, timetables and berthing schedules to manage river congestion and equitable access to berths. Both long-term security in licensing arrangements and the flexibility to provide short term licensing to accommodate expanded services during peak events will be provided. Loading facilities at specified destinations to accommodate non-scheduled operations will be provided. Parks Victoria will also develop key performance indicators for operators, to be included as part of new licensing agreements.

The existing fee structure for commercial operators will also be reviewed to:

- reflect a fairer system linked to business size and capacity
- provide incentives for visitor service (ie. value added), year round service, low wake vessels, engine muffling devices and emission control devices
- ensure a return of income for use of public assets for commercial gain
- provide government with the ability to improve water-based infrastructure.

Key performance indicators will be used to set benchmark service levels for the industry, as well as gauge the effectiveness of the licensing system to ensure that it is delivering on overall aims and objectives. Licensing arrangements will be measured against compliance with license conditions and key performance in the areas of safety, quality and level of service and customer satisfaction.

# 4 Implementation

Parks Victoria is committed to the implementation of this strategy and will continue to coordinate and assist in the monitoring of recreational activity on the river to ensure its ongoing health, safety and vitality. The Future Directions Plan and Recreation Guidelines will provide the framework for the approval of future proposals for use of the Lower Yarra River. Its significance and key outcomes will be communicated through wide distribution and availability of the plan, the assembly of information packages targeted to specific private and commercial interests and the development and delivery of consistent facilities and messaging along the river.

Responsibility for the provision of services and facilities on the Lower Yarra River rests with a number of public and private organisations. Similarly, the control and regulation of those facilities and services and those that operate them is vested in a number of public bodies under varying pieces of legislation.

The State Government is currently undertaking a review of the Yarra River regulatory framework led by the Office of Regulation Reform with Parks Victoria, the Docklands Authority, the Marine Board of Victoria, the City of Melbourne and Tourism Victoria represented on the Interdepartmental Committee.

Parks Victoria will continue to be actively involved in such reviews and has established its implementation priorities as:

- the wide communication of the Future Directions Plan & Recreation Guidelines and its impacts to key groups and the community through the availability of the entire document and the preparation of targeted communication packages
- development of design criteria for "destination packages" initially focusing on berthing and boarding facilities, information, amenities and signage for key destinations such as Southgate, Como Park, Punt Road, Caroline Street and Melbourne Park
- development and implementation of an event policy
- implementation of the dredging strategy

- investigation of opportunities for limited casual berthing on the north bank between Flinders Street Station and Banana Alley
- conducting feasibility assessments for the Burnley Ramp in cooperation with relevant agencies
- preparation and implementation of a revised licensing framework based on the aims and objectives outlined and the outcomes of the Office of Regulation Reform review.

## Co-operative Partnerships

Effective and balanced management of recreation on the Lower Yarra River requires a cooperative partnership approach between the relevant management agencies and stakeholders. The main agencies and a description of their primary responsibilities in relation to management of recreation on the Lower Yarra River are set out in Appendix 1.

A strategically oriented forum focussed on the broad reaches of the river from Williamstown to Yarra Bend Park may be required to coordinate strategies and planning for the river. This could ultimately provide a coordinated and comprehensive forum for long term strategic planning along the river.

This plan forms the framework for Parks Victoria and other agencies to manage water-based activities on the Lower Yarra River. The dynamic nature of adjacent land based development, ongoing planning and major events such as the Commonwealth Games will nonetheless require regular review of the directions and implementation priorities. This will ensure the plan's continued relevance to changing needs and developments.

## Appendix 1 – Management Agencies for the Lower Yarra River

*Melbourne Port Corporation* is responsible for the planning and coordination of land in the Port of Melbourne in relation to berths and associated infrastructure adjoining the river, coordination of land-based recreational opportunities and matters of environmental management and risk within the port.

*Victorian Channels Authority* is responsible for commercial navigation channels and pollution response activities in relation to waterway use within the Port of Melbourne.

*Department of Infrastructure* is responsible for the sustainable development and use of land adjoining the Lower Yarra River on land use matters affecting recreation on the river, in particular the development of concentrated activity centres generating demand for water-based commercial services.

*Environment Protection Authority* is responsible for prosecuting potential breaches of environmental legislation and licensing discharges of pollutants to the environment, including the Yarra River in relation to any matters affecting the environmental condition of the Lower Yarra River. It also has primary carriage for ensuring that all proposals for the use of the river are consistent with the State Environment Protection Policy for the Yarra River and its catchment (Waters of the Yarra Catchment) declared by the Governor in Council in June 1999.

*Department of Natural Resources and Environment* is responsible for ensuring public land is managed for the benefit of the community in relation to matters affecting the river bed and any Crown land adjoining the river.

*Marine Board of Victoria* is responsible for marine safety and marine pollution events in relation to matters affecting operational and safety procedures on the waterway in the Lower Yarra River.

*Melbourne Water* is responsible for environmental management of waterways (including the bed and banks of the Lower Yarra River) and major drainage systems in relation to water quality, flood protection and floodplain management affecting the river.

*Docklands Authority* is responsible for the management and development of the Docklands area in relation any matters affecting land use, use of the waterway or the environment within this precinct.

*Local Governments* are responsible for enforcing local laws and managing use and development of land within their jurisdiction in relation to local planning, social development and service provision as affected by or affecting recreation on the Lower Yarra River.

## Appendix 2 – Consultation Process

The consultation process has involved canvassing the views of the river's current stakeholders, undertaking recreation research analysis and the preparation of a 'Values and Principles Discussion Paper' to invite comment on the views presented from users, stakeholders and agencies.

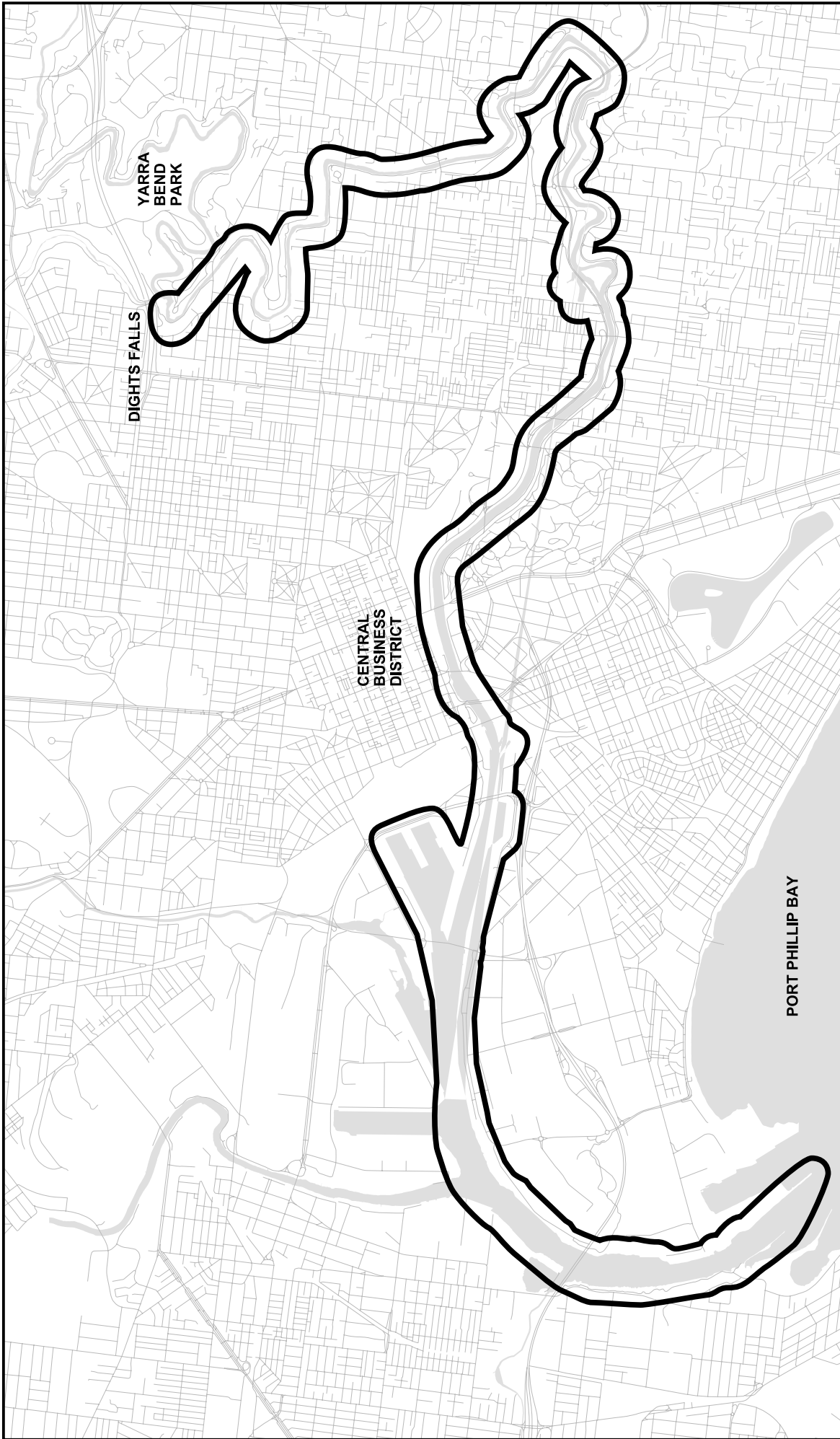
Responses to the discussion paper indicated widespread support for the further development of a coordinated strategic approach to the recreational usage of the Lower Yarra as proposed by Parks Victoria, particularly to address the:

- lack of clear integration for use and management of the river
- congestion stemming from increased usage by a range of river users
- lack of strategic guidance and policy for commercial operations on the river
- improved integration of destination points with riverbank facilities, including improved passenger terminal and boarding facilities
- image of the river as polluted
- impact of organisations seeking exclusive use of the river for special events
- function and maintenance of infrastructure
- awareness and communication of rules and regulations governing the waterway
- licensing arrangements to provide better incentives for investment.

Parks Victoria then produced a 'Draft Future Directions Plan and Recreation Guidelines' for the Lower Yarra River from Dights Falls to Port Phillip Bay. The document was made widely available and submissions from interested parties invited. As a result of this process, 21 formal submissions were received from individuals, commercial bodies and government agencies. The majority of submissions supported the Draft, while specific issues raised in the submissions have been the subject of further discussion and consultation with relevant agencies. This final document includes revisions made based on consideration of these issues.

### Appendix 3 – References

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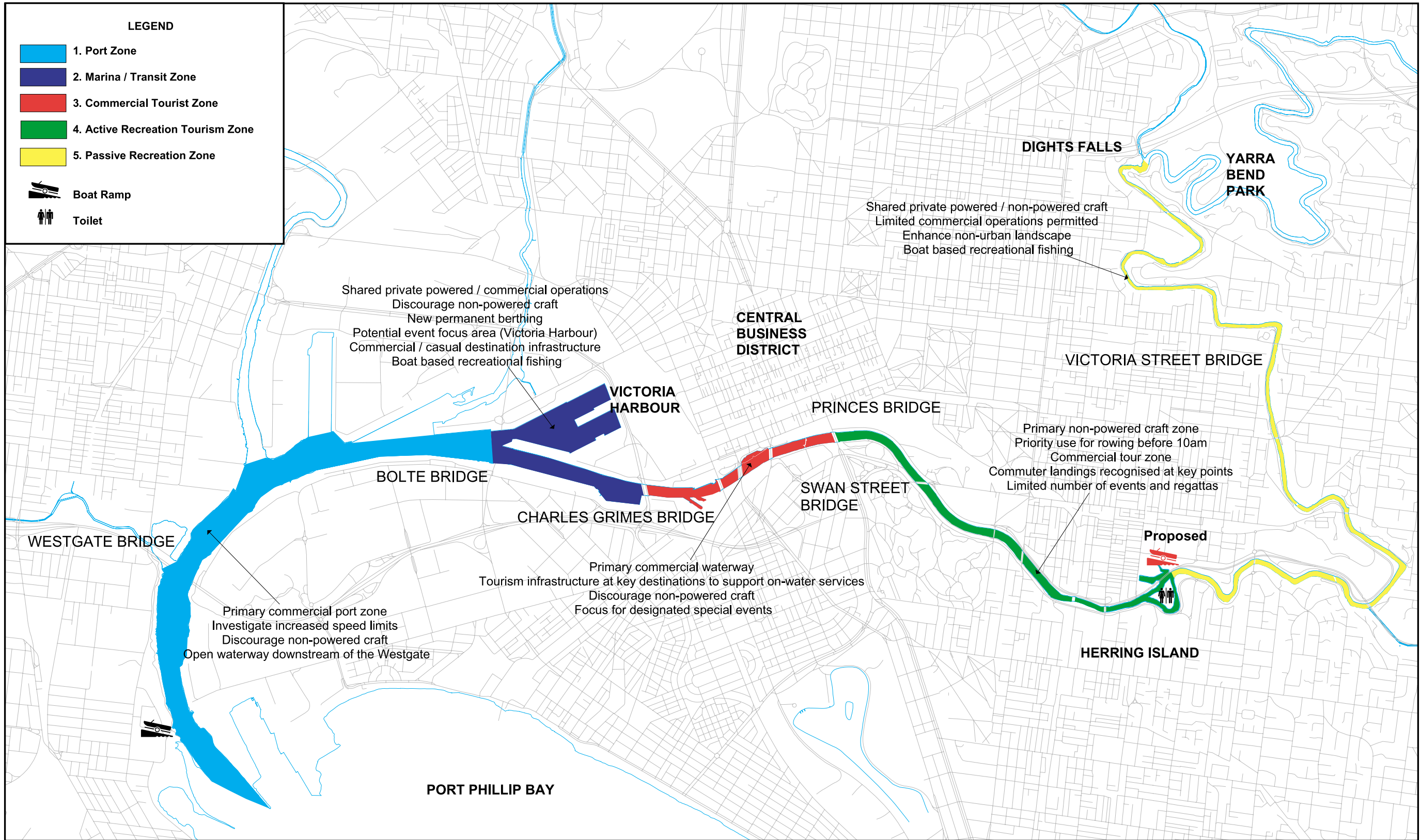


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**Lower Yarra River**  
 Future Directions Plan and Recreation Guidelines  
 Study Area

Figure 1



STATE DIGITAL MAPBASE USED WITH PERMISSION OF LAND INFORMATION GROUP  
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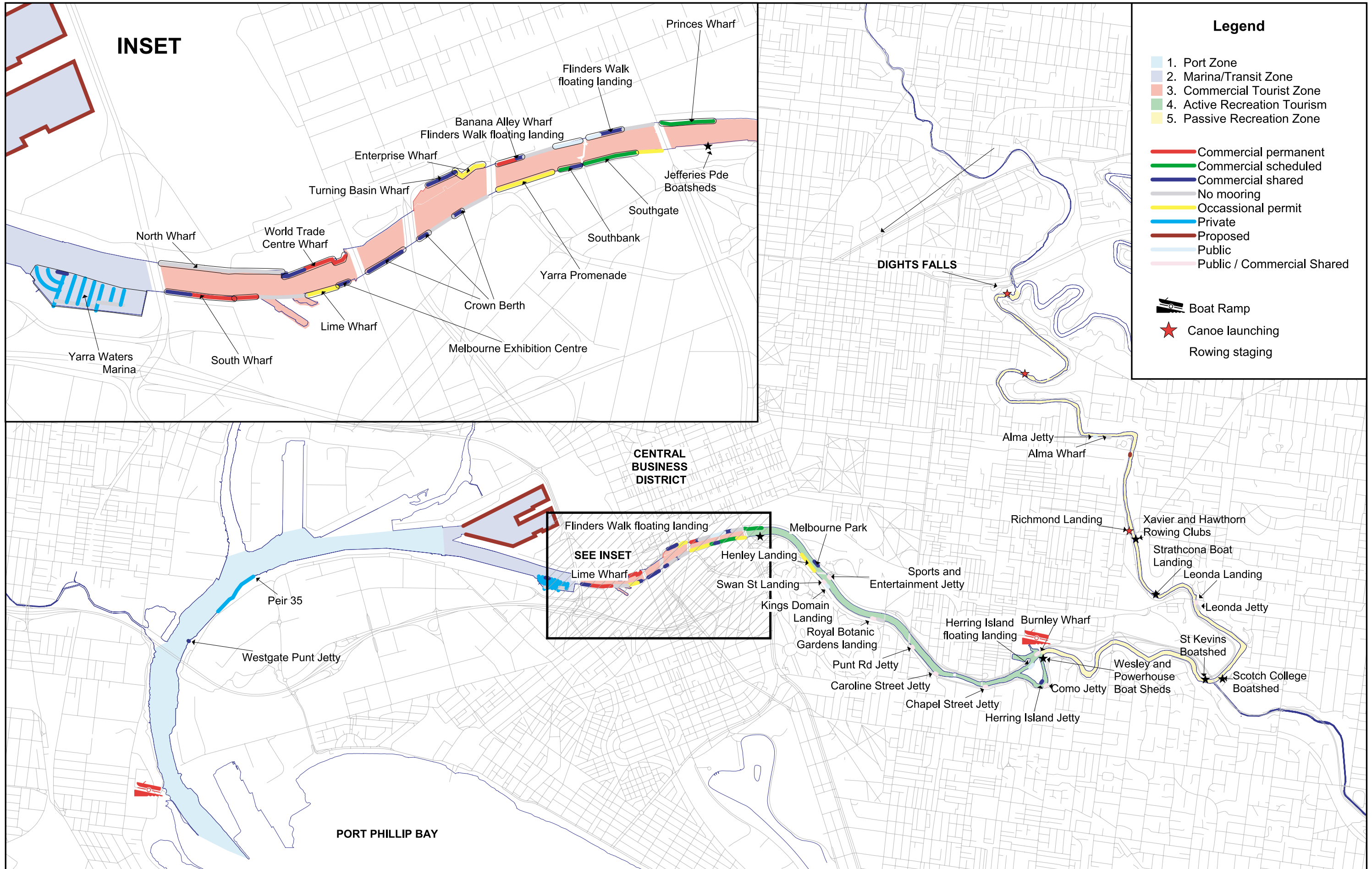
# Lower Yarra River

## Future Directions Plan and Recreation Guidelines

### Strategic Directions



Figure 2



STATE DIGITAL MAPBASE USED WITH PERMISSION OF LAND INFORMATION GROUP  
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Lower Yarra River  
 Future Directions and Recreation Guidelines  
 Berthing Strategy



Figure 3





For more information contact the Parks Victoria Information Centre on 13 1963, or visit [www.parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au)