



Our rivers and waterways are precious, but they're under threat from pollution, climate change, and unsustainable water use. The Greens will restore the health of our rivers to a swimmable level, for our community and our environment.

Victoria's rivers, like the Yarra/Birrarung, have sustained people and nature for tens of thousands of years. Our waterways underpin the health of our environment and communities, attract millions of visitors each year, and are incredibly important for Victoria's Traditional Owners.

It was only 50 years ago that the people of Melbourne swam in the Yarra/Birrarung within the reaches of the CBD.

But Victoria's freshwater is coming under increasing pressure from climate change, pollution, and poor management. Our cities and towns spill pollution into our precious waterways, and industry and agricultural practices have at times failed to protect our environment properly.

With a strategic and coordinated approach, we can restore the Yarra/Birrarung and protect other major rivers in Victoria for our environment and our communities.

## OUR PLAN

The Greens' plan will make our rivers clean, healthy and swimmable again. We will:

- Set a goal of making the Yarra/Birrarung swimmable again, and fund a project to identify what needs to happen to make this possible. This might mean starting with investing in pools along the Yarra/Birrarung, while we determine how to make more areas of the Yarra, and ultimately the whole river, swimmable again.
- Bring other rivers – like the Maribyrnong, and tributaries like Moonee Ponds Creek and Merri

Creek – into an Act similar to the Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrong) Act

- Protect our riverbanks and water catchments by creating new National Parks along our rivers and in water catchments, and doubling money for riverbank restoration
- Legislate for minimum environmental waterflows
- Make big polluters take responsibility for their contaminated water.

## PLAN FOR A SWIMMABLE YARRA/BIRRARUNG

Rivers often bear the cumulative impacts of pollution and poor land management, spread over thousands of square kilometres.

Each river is one natural, living entity, and should be treated as such.

The Yarra River Action Plan is a step towards restoring the health of the Yarra, but it needs to go further. The Greens will add a new objective to this plan, to make the Yarra/Birrarung swimmable. We will direct the responsible authorities to work with the community and Traditional Owners towards this goal, and identify opportunities to increase community engagement with the river.

This will include assessing proposals such as the community-led Yarra Pools proposal, which aims to bring recreation and water-play to the lower Yarra through the construction of swimmable pools.

# CLEAN, SWIMMABLE RIVERS

## THE GREENS' PLAN TO RESTORE OUR WATERWAYS



We will also make the temporary Yarra River Planning Controls permanent, and establish a transparent timetable, to make sure this plan is fully implemented.

### MAKING SURE OTHER RIVERS ARE CLEAN AND HEALTHY

The Greens will also establish similar plans and legislation to protect major rivers in Victoria, including the Maribyrnong, Barwon, and Werribee Rivers. These plans will also include their tributaries, such as the Moonee Ponds Creek, Merri Creek, Darebin Creek and many, many others.

We will work with Traditional Owners to ensure that their sovereignty is respected, their heritage is protected and their knowledge informs the health of our rivers for years to come.

### HEALTHY, CLEAN WATER

Water quality in many of Victoria's rivers is incredibly poor; so poor, that it can even make those willing to test the waters ill.

Governments have consistently failed to provide sufficient water for our rivers. In general, a river can give up one third of its water for human use and remain healthy. Currently, the Yarra, Murray and Goulburn rivers give up more than half of their water in an average year.

Our riverbanks are also struggling under pressure from livestock grazing. When healthy, they act as natural filters for our rivers, keep rivers cool and prevent flood damage and erosion.

The Greens will reform the Water Act to ensure that our rivers have enough water for a clean and healthy environment.

We will double the current funding to restore our riverbanks and protect waterways from pollution.

We will also create the Murray River National Park to protect vital riverbanks and land along the Murray, and create the Great Forest National Park to protect Melbourne's water catchments from erosion and sedimentation caused by logging.

### STOP POLLUTING RUN-OFF

There is still a long way to go to stop industrial pollution entering our rivers and waterways. Polluted water flows into our rivers and groundwater from many sources, including pollution from the Yallourn coal power station.

The Greens will ensure that the Environment Protection Agency is given stronger powers to make polluters take responsibility for their contaminated water and deal with the cumulative effects of pollution, rather than just pouring it straight into our rivers and groundwater.

### HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

The Greens' plan for Swimmable Rivers will cost \$19.3 million over the forward estimates (plus an extra \$15m beyond the forwards), made up of:

- \$4.3 million to create new action plans for major rivers and tributaries, and add swimmability as an objective to the Yarra River Action Plan.
- \$15 million over the forward estimates for riverbank restoration between 2020 and 2022 (and a further \$15 million 2022-2024).
- The creation of the Murray River National Park and Great Forest National Park have been costed as part of the Save Our Parks and Protect Our Forests initiatives.