

Melton Botanic Garden

Master Plan Update

DRAFT REPORT

May 2025



INTRODUCTION

Melton Botanic Garden is one of the key areas of passive open space within the municipality. The 'Botanic Garden' is approximately 26 hectares in size and is located to the east of the Melton town centre, between Lakewood Boulevard and Collins Road. Ryans Creek flows through the Garden and feeds the large waterbody, referred to as Darlingsford Lake, which is located in the south of the garden. The southern boundary of the garden is bounded by the Western Freeway.

The idea to create the Melton Botanic Garden was instigated by the local State MP and a group of Melton residents. The intention was to develop a botanic garden that would become a drawcard and education facility for both the local community and visitors from the surrounding region.

The Botanic Garden was officially gazetted in February 2011. In accordance with the Botanic Gardens of Australia and New Zealand Collections and Planning Toolkit (2005) the Melton Botanic Garden was proposed to align with the following definition; *“gardens open to the public, which grow plants for public enjoyment, scientific, horticultural, conservation, or educational purposes, and which have local, national or international roles”*.

Town Centre Park was identified as the location for the future botanic garden and the Shire of Melton passed a motion at the Council Meeting of 24 October 2005 stating:

- Council supports the botanical gardens theme within the Town Centre Park subject to the Friends of Melton Botanic Garden (FMBG) group presenting to Council for approval a design and financial funding options available to sustain the initiative.

- Council officers continue discussions with the FMBG group in relation to future concept designs and dedicated space within Town Centre Park.

What the masterplan update does and does not do...

We are updating the existing the master plan. It is not a full-scale review involving re-evaluation of the master plan and production of a fully updated master plan. Our focus is on four main aspects:

- Reviewing the current master plan recommendations and identifying any deviations,
- Refining and evolving recommendations that could be more ambitious,
- Identifying recommendations that are considered to no longer be suitable, and
- Identifying gaps in master plan recommendations.

The updated Master Plan includes an updated high-level landscape plan representing the structure and functions of the Botanic Garden, as well as clear directions for what is intended, and actions to guide implementation.

For more complex areas of the Garden, such as the Garden Education Centre, additional detail may be shown or described to ensure that the planning intention is clear. Such recommendations will require more detailed planning and design as they progress toward implementation. These will be future projects and processes, some of which will have associated community engagement. The substantive recommendations of the current masterplan remain relevant and important and will be continued.

The masterplan does not:

- Identify maintenance responsibilities or standards of maintenance.
- Update the Memorandum of Understanding between the FMBG and Council

The process so far...

We have reviewed the existing master plan and various relevant plans, policies and strategies. We have also talked with relevant internal (Council) teams and visited and walked the Garden. This has informed a high level analysis and preliminary recommendations for the masterplan – as a draft for discussion.

A diagrammatic representation of the recommendations is provided in the following short report. We have identified the key recommendations of the current master plan that are supported to be carried forward and continued. Our aim is to prompt conversations about how the masterplan can guide the best possible outcomes for the Garden and the community that it serves.

Where to from here...

The review has been ongoing for some time and has involved the FMBG group as a key stakeholder of the Botanic Garden, having been the deliverer of the development of the gardens. The process from here will involve:

- Engagement with the broader community to understand their particular issues and needs and display of the illustrative masterplan.
- Request for submission from the public and stakeholders.
- Further masterplan revisions as appropriate in response to submissions.
- Referral to Council of the final updated masterplan.

LOCATION PLAN



STRATEGIC CONTEXT

01 Reserve Overview

Classification:	Botanic Garden
Hierarchy:	Regional Passive Recreation Open Space
Reserve area:	23 hectares

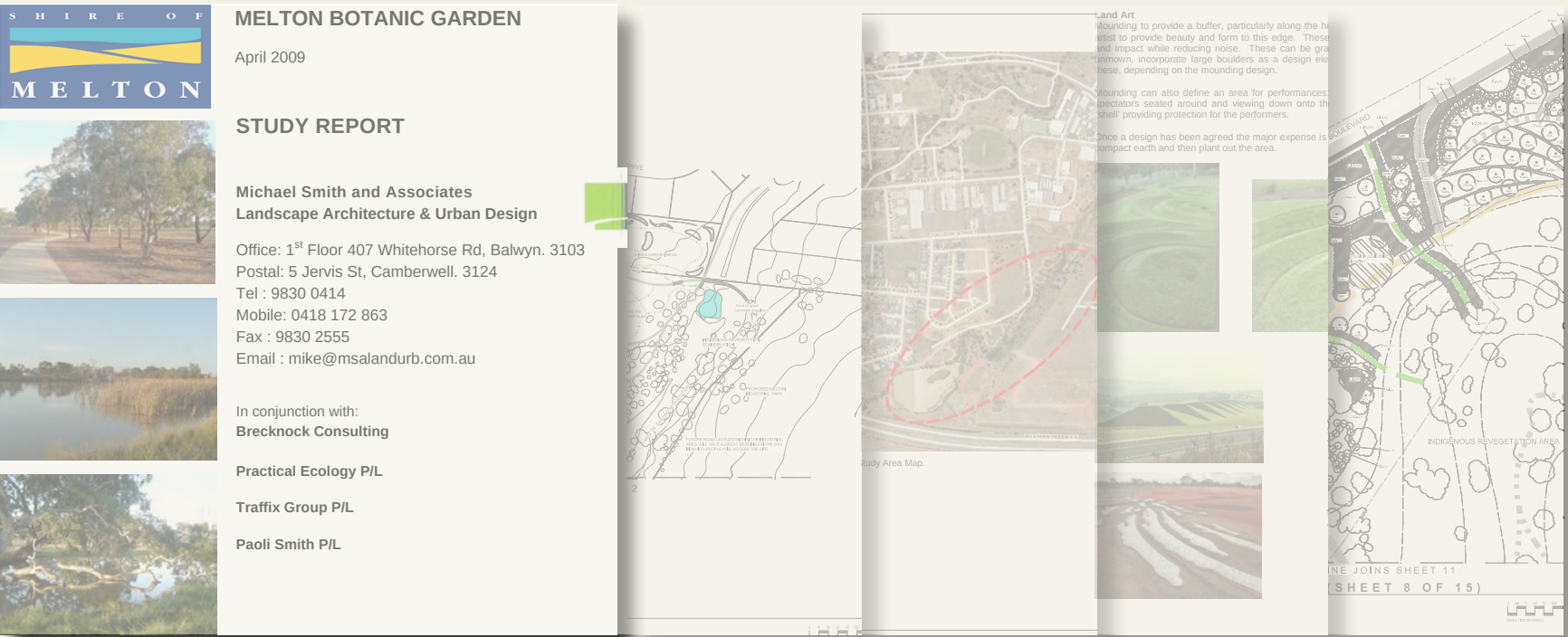
02 Existing Users

Formal activities:	Recording of plant collections in the Garden
	Garden tours
	Nursery
Informal activities:	Weddings
	Ceremonies
	Walking/running
	Playspace



03 Relevant strategic plans and policies

Melton Botanic Garden Masterplan
(Melton City Council, 2009)



Open Space Plan 2016-2026
(Melton City Council, 2016)



EXISTING CONDITIONS

The sensory garden is often used to support school tours for children with disabilities.



Depot and nursery.



There is an informal car park allowing for up to 16 cars.



The amphitheatre is used for weddings, ceremonies and gatherings.



The playspace was recently constructed and has a nature-based theme throughout.



The nominated location for the Future Melton Botanic Garden Centre.



There are 2 shelters with picnic facilities near the lake.



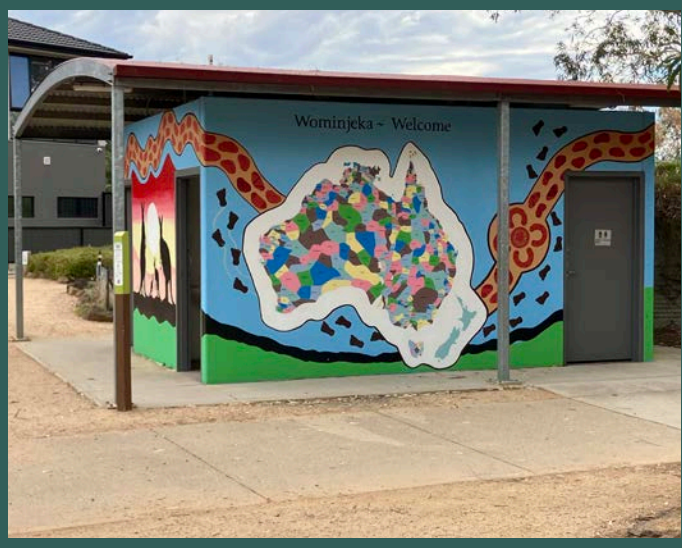
Boardwalk in good condition.



The Bird Sanctuary Island at Lake Darlingsford.



Public toilet in good condition.



2009 MASTER PLAN

KEY ANALYSIS POINTS

- 1

Primary Path Network
The construction of the formal paths are now being referred to as the primary path network or the Botanic Trail.
- 2

Secondary Path Network
This Master Plan identified a range of informal path connections that delineated themed garden areas.
- 3

Themed Gardens
The FMBG has constructed a range of themed planting beds and spaces throughout the Garden. The extensive collection of plants in these areas require specialised management and horticultural knowledge.
- 4

Public Toilets
The public toilets were delivered in 2012 and are centrally located along the Botanic Trail. The toilets were used as a canvas for a mural depicting the Map of Indigenous Australia.
- 5

Playspace
The playspace was constructed in 2023 as a result of a successful grant application from the Growing Victoria’s Botanic Garden fund. This was located near to the toilets and picnic area to create long stay social hub within the Garden.
- 6

Darlingsford Lake
The lake is the responsibility of Melbourne Water and has been routinely stocked with fish by Victorian Fisheries Authority. The development of the Melton Botanic Garden has resulted in a greater environmental focus on the lake and surrounds. Council is working with relevant authorities to reduce the reliance on the lake for fishing and is exploring alternative locations to support and promote such activities.

- 7

Timber Boardwalk and Viewing Deck
The boardwalk and viewing deck has not yet been constructed.
- 8

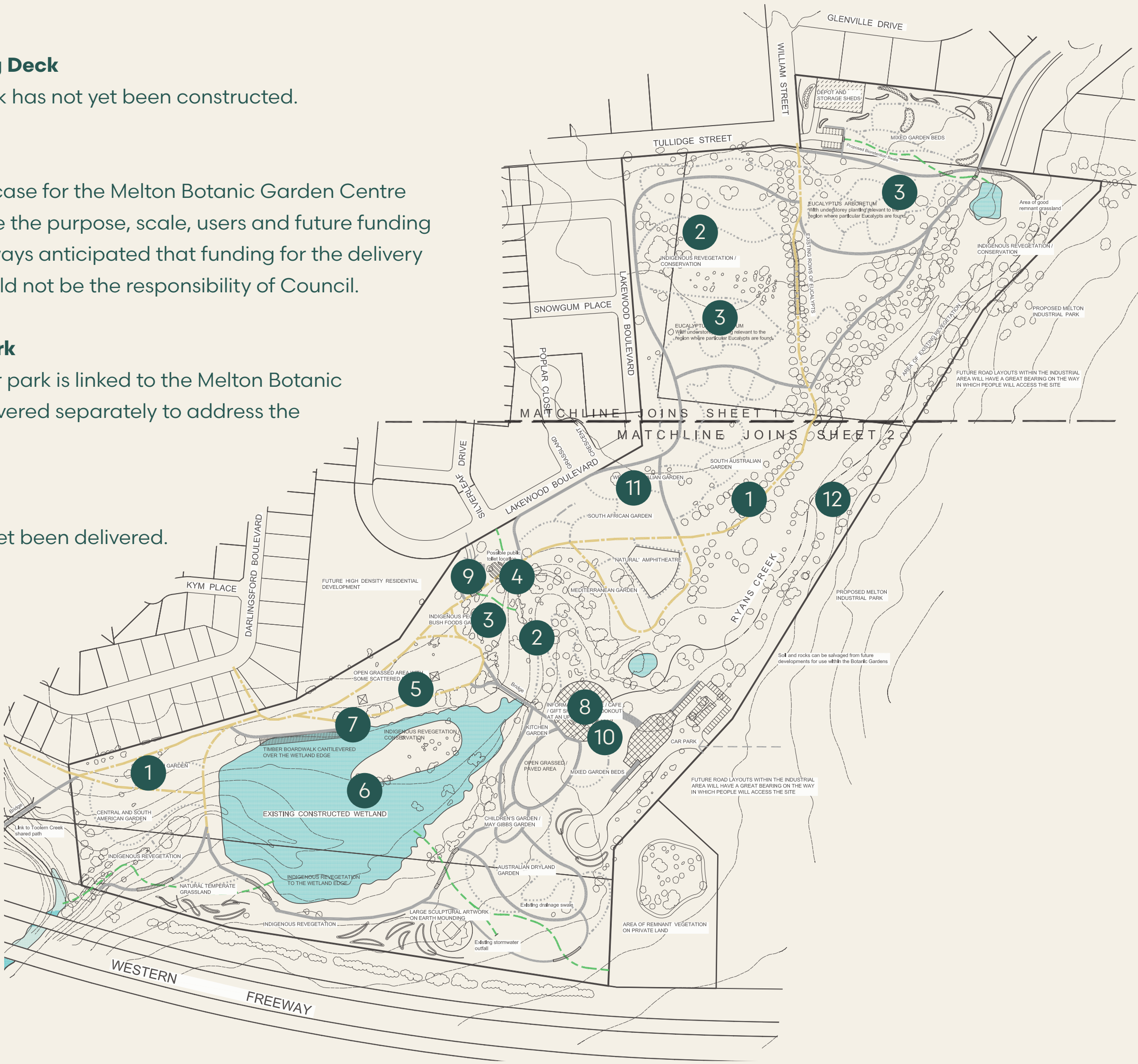
Melton Botanic Garden Centre
The development of a business case for the Melton Botanic Garden Centre was recommended to determine the purpose, scale, users and future funding sources for the centre. It was always anticipated that funding for the delivery and operation of the centre would not be the responsibility of Council.
- 9

Botanic Garden Centre Car Park
The delivery and scale of the car park is linked to the Melton Botanic Garden Centre and may be delivered separately to address the car parking shortfall.
- 10

Children’s Garden
The Children’s Garden has not yet been delivered.
- 11

Sculptural artwork
Sculptural elements have been removed from the Master Plan based on Council's updated Public Art Policy.
- 12

Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Plantation
A federal government initiative provided funding to the FMBG to plant 500 trees, resulting in plating of an avenue of trees along the Collins Road. This was not included on the 2009 Masterplan.



UPDATED MASTER PLAN

KEY ELEMENTS

- 1 Construct boardwalk and viewing deck along the northern edge of Lake Darlingsford to further enhance the playspace and rest area for visitors.
- 2 Construct Children’s Garden associated with the Melton Botanic Garden Centre in consultation with the FMBG.
- 3 Investigate car parking at the Garden Centre and Lake Darlingsford.

The following recommendations are not shown on the plan as final locations will be determined as part of detailed design.

- 4 Submit the Botanic Garden Centre business case and feasibility study to support future grant or partnership funding opportunities .
- 5 Allocate funding for the review and implementation of the Melton Botanic Garden Signage Development Plan.
- 6 Undertake lighting assessment as part of Lighting Strategy.
- 7 Install seating approximately every 250m along the primary shared path.



SUPPORTING THE FRIENDS OF MELTON BOTANIC GARDEN GROUP

- 1 Continue to support the FMBG in their endeavour to develop the Garden in line with the updated Master Plan.
- 2 Review the Memorandum of Understanding to determine roles and responsibilities associated with the management, development, refurbishment, maintenance and operation of the Melton Botanic Garden in conjunction with the FMBG.
- 3 Support the FMBG in the management and recording of the extensive collection of plants throughout the Garden.

