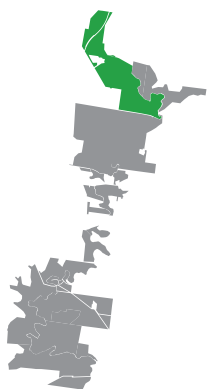


3.9 Park areas and sites

To better describe more specific Site Recommendations (refer Section 3.10), the study area has been divided into four Park Areas (PA) each of which contain Visitor Sites as follows:



PA1: Park Area 1 - North

Visitor sites:

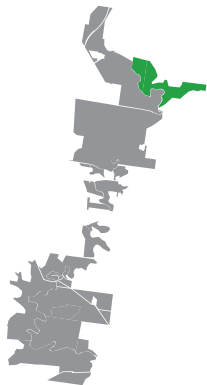
- Mayfield
- Carome Homestead
- Wiltonvale



PA4: Park Area 4 - South

Visitor sites:

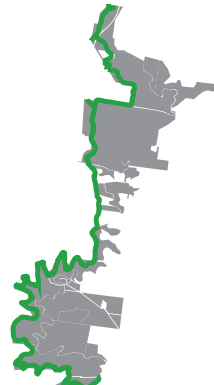
- Middle Gorge
- Blossum Park Spurs
- Yellow Gum Recreation Area
- Janefield North
- Tanunda Wetlands
- University Hill
- Janefield South



PA2: Park Area 2 - Yarrambat

Visitor sites:

- Yarrambat



PRT: Plenty River Trail

The main trail is a major Visitor Site that traverses PA1, PA3 and PA4; therefore, recommendations for the PRT are described within each relevant Park Area.

For an overall map of the proposed Plenty River Trail Please refer to figure 6 on page 20.



PA3: Park Area 3 - Hawkstowe

Visitor sites:

- Morang Wetlands
- Smugglers / Purvis Gully
- Hawkstowe Picnic Area
- Red Gum Picnic Area
- Nioka Bush Camp
- Farm Vigano / Bushmans Way

3.10 Plenty Gorge Park Master Plan

3.10.1 Park Area 1 - North

The North Park Area (PA1) contains three sites:

- Mayfield
- Carome Homestead
- Wiltonvale

The Mayfield site is well located on Bridge Inn Road at the northern extremity of the park. The setting is predominantly rough pastures on land formerly utilised for farming. The future Mernda Town Centre and proposed Mernda Railway Station are located adjacent to this area of the park and should be considered in any planning for this park area.

Access is limited to pedestrians and bicycles.

The Plenty River Shared trail has been constructed from Bridge Inn Road to Carome Homestead, including a river crossing within the park. A second section has been constructed at Wiltonvale.

Carome Homestead is managed by a Committee of Management.

The Plenty River is relatively accessible and visible in this area of the park.

Wiltonvale provides access to open space for new communities west of the park and a sense of retreat from the busy Plenty Road.

Key visitor Offer:

Recreation (refer to Section 3.6.2)

- Trails - walking / jogging / cycling
- Wildlife
- Dogs on lead

Landscape experience (Refer to Section 3.6.1)

- Space - an open pasture setting creates the sense of space.
- Interaction - conservation activities.
- Stories - Remnant native vegetation communities such as plains grassy woodlands including river red gums provide a strong visual character.
- Stories - Rich pre and post settlement heritage is evident.
- Discovery.
- Views / outlook.

Issues

- Lack of facilities.
- Constrained area adjacent to Bridge Inn Road limits the capacity for large gatherings.
- No vehicular access, except to Carome.
- Poorly signed access to Carome Homestead from adjacent areas as well as inside the park.
- Lack of pedestrian connections within the park.
- Lack of orientation / interpretation.

Opportunities

- Potential for the Mayfield site to be the main northern gateway into the park for the local communities of Mernda and Doreen.
- Provision of car park to support the trail head of the Plenty River Trail.
- Interpretation of natural history.
- Encourage community gatherings by the provision of facilities.
- Creation of connections with local neighbourhoods and the proposed Mernda Railway Station and Town Centre.
- Improve shared use trail connections.
- Provision of park orientation interpretation boards at trail head.
- Utilise the views of the river at Wiltonvale.
- The large open area at Wiltonvale has the potential to cater for large gatherings.
- A high concentration of Aboriginal cultural heritage sites exist in the north, as do a number of European heritage sites, offering the potential for interpretation as appropriate.

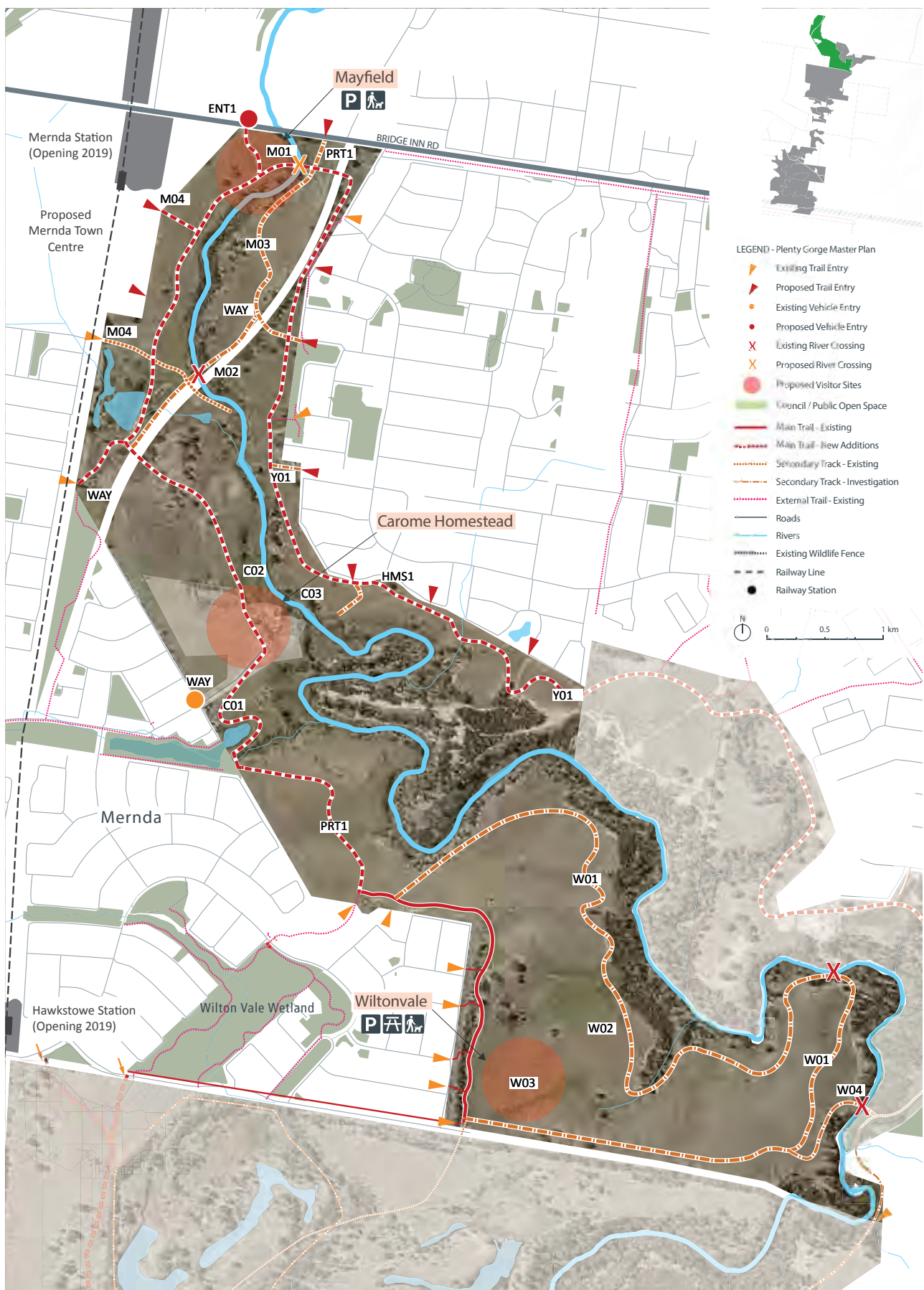


Figure 8: Park Area 1: North

Site: Mayfield

Objective: **Upgrade** the site as it is currently underutilised and has potential to become a future northern gateway into the park for the communities of Mernda and Doreen. Refer to Figure 8, p.33.

Visitor Experiences**Recommendations****Priority**

M01	Prepare a precinct plan to consider future facilities that supports this area as a trail head and northern gateway to the park, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • signage • vehicle access and car parking for park and Plenty River Trail (PRT) users • pedestrian and cycle access / connection • open space provision • planting and revegetation areas • integration with Mernda Railway Station, Mernda Town Centre, Mernda and Doreen residential neighbourhoods 	Low
M02	Negotiate and implement works to establish a river crossing utilising the existing Melbourne Water pipe track and flume bridge	High
M03	Develop new secondary trail to the east of the Plenty River, creating a northern shared trail loop and connection to Yarrambat.	Medium
M04	Establish formal connection between the existing Plenty River Trail and the future Mernda Railway station.	Low
WAY	Provide interpretation of heritage sites, potentially as a heritage trail.	Medium
ENT1	Provide new vehicular entry at Bridge Inn Road, associated with any future facilities at this site.	Low

Site: Carome Homestead

Objective: **Upgrade** the setting around Carome Homestead to improve amenity and access for visitors to the homestead which is managed under a Committee of Management agreement. The lease for the homestead sits wholly within the park boundary, therefore visitor access and trail, connections must be integrated and coordinated with the Committee of Management. Refer to Figure 8, p.33.

Visitor Experiences**Recommendations****Priority**

C01	Establish trail connections from PRT to the local residential path network and to Carome Homestead, in collaboration with the CoM.	Medium
C02	Undertake a planting program outside the lease area to improve arrival, visual amenity and sense of place for the homestead.	Medium
C03	Provide park amenity outside the lease area such as shelters / decks to allow for wildlife viewing and interaction with the river environment.	Low
WAY	Improve existing vehicular entrance to Carome Homestead, with improved signage at Plenty Road, as well as directional signage within the park.	Medium
HMS1	As part of the vegetation management strategy, develop a planting program for any land parcels added to the park.	Medium

Site: Wiltonvale

Objective: **Upgrade** Wiltonvale by improving trail access and connecting PRT to Carome Homestead. This large site has potential as a visitor node. Refer to Figure 8, p.31.

Visitor Experiences**Recommendations****Priority**

W01	Construct secondary trail loop to access river environs (in accordance with Plenty River Trail project documentation).	Medium
W02	Undertake planting program to define broad park spaces between Wiltonvale and the Plenty River.	Low
W03	Investigate the potential for a visitor node at Wiltonvale to allow for large groups of visitors, events and recreation activities.	Low
W04	Investigate opportunity for a footbridge crossing over Plenty River, to connect Wiltonvale trails to Yarrambat. Only one bridge is required, therefore most appropriate location to be confirmed.	Low
PRT1	Construct new section of Plenty River Trail from Wiltonvale to Carome Homestead (in accordance with the Plenty River Trail project documentation).	High

3.10 Plenty Gorge Park Master Plan

3.10.2 Park Area 2 - Yarrambat

The Yarrambat Park Area (PA2) contains one site:

- Yarrambat

The Yarrambat site is located in the park's north east with access from Yan Yean Road. It offers open space for the new residential communities in Doreen. Yarrambat means 'High Hill' and offers views and large open spaces ideal for family gatherings, picnics, ball games or kite flying. There are existing picnic facilities and car parking.

Key Visitor Offer

Recreation: (refer to Section 3.6.2)

- Social activity
- Sports
- Walking
- Dogs on lead
- Cycling

Landscape experience: (Refer to Section 3.6.1)

- Space
- Views / outlook
- Stories - there are pre-settlement cultural heritage sites at Yarrambat.
- Discovery

Issues

- Assets are aging and have a low level of use.
- No connections to other areas of the park, so visitors are not able to explore the rest of Plenty Gorge Park from this site.

Anti-social behaviour, possibly associated with the isolated nature of this site.

- No directional or park information signage.
- Lack of a defined purpose.
- Undefined visual and landscape character.

Opportunities

- Improve connections with the local communities of Yarrambat, Doreen and Mernda.
- Improve trail connections to Council's Yarrambat Park and other areas of Plenty Gorge Park.
- Determine a defined purpose for the site such as fitness / active sports.
- Retain sensitive habitat areas.

Site: Yarrambat

Objective: **Maintain** the existing parkland facilities and improve connections to the adjoining Yarrambat Park and surrounding communities of Doreen and Yarrambat. Explore compatible alternative uses which encourage increased use of the site. Refer to Figure 9.

Visitor Experiences



Recommendations		Priority
Y01	Construct a shared trail to connect the Mayfield site to Yarrambat	High
Y02	Collaborate with VicRoads and Councils to improve safe public and vehicle access into Yarrambat Park, including potential alternative access from Jorgensen Ave.	Low
Y03	Work with Nillumbik Council to improve connections with Yarrambat Park facilities.	Medium
HMS2	As part of the vegetation management strategy, develop a planting program for any land parcels added to the park.	Medium



Figure 9: Park Area 2: Yarrambat

3.10 Plenty Gorge Park Master Plan

3.10.3 Park Area 3 - Hawkstowe

The Hawkstowe Park Area (PA3) contains a number of diverse sites:

- Morang Wetlands
- Smugglers / Purvis Gully
- Hawkstowe Picnic Area and Le Page Homestead
- Red Gum Picnic Area
- Nioka Bush Camp
- Farm Vigano

Morang Wetlands has very high conservation values which should be protected. Existing trails provide access through the area to suitable viewing points.

Smugglers / Purvis Gully site has high conservation values, with forest vegetation communities on a landform of steep slopes, rocky escarpments, spurs, gullies and river flats. It also features cultural heritage sites.

The Hawkstowe site is currently the main park focus with the historic Le Page Homestead, sheltered picnic facilities, walking trails and car parking. The Nioka Bush Camp provides group bush camping close to Melbourne, mainly for education based activities.

Red Gum Picnic site offers a small play space and car park and adjoins the future Whittlesea Council recreation reserve and sports fields.

Farm Vigano along with Carome are managed under Committee of Management (CoM) agreements and sit within the park boundary. Their experiential contribution is significant and part of the site history. Visitor access and trail connections must be integrated and coordinated with the CoM.

Key Visitor Offer

Recreation: (Refer to Section 3.6.2)

- Trails - walking / jogging / cycling
- Social activity
- Nature based sports
- Wildlife
- Cultural activity
- Camping
- Dogs on lead

Landscape experience: (Refer to Section 3.6.1)

- Space
- Isolation
- Discovery
- Interaction
- Views / outlook
- Stories

Issues

- Lack of directional and interpretive signage.
- Lack of connections to other areas of the park.
- Managing high visitor numbers as well as protecting natural biodiversity and sensitive environments.
- Lack of shade at picnic facilities, especially Red Gum Picnic Area.
- Accessibility to facilities from car parks.
- Topography at Le Page Homestead limits the provision of car parking.
- 'Tired' facilities.
- Anti social behaviour associated with the public toilets at Red Gum Picnic Area.
- Limited access into the Smugglers / Purvis Gully area.
- Managing access into environmentally sensitive areas.

Opportunities

- Shared-use trail connections to the north and south.
- Park connections with proposed Hawkstowe Station.
- Sites such as Hawkstowe Picnic Area currently have a profile with visitors and host a range of activities.
- Improve connections to other areas, including river crossings to draw visitors from this site further into the park.
- The proposed Council Park sports fields adjacent to Redgum Picnic Area, provide the opportunity for the co-location of visitor facilities such as public toilets.
- Nioka Bush camp offers a unique opportunity for camping in a bush environment in close proximity to the local urban context.
- The open area at Le Page Homestead provides the opportunity for group experiences, such as community events and festivals.
- Morang Wetlands is an environmentally sensitive area with many rare and threatened species, providing opportunities for interpretation, as well as further enhancement of the habitats present.
- The Smugglers / Purvis Gully area combines high biodiversity with a number of heritage features providing opportunities for interpretation, potentially as part of an environmental and heritage walking trail.
- Viewing would be enhanced by the provision of look out areas associated with walking trails.
- Investigate the viability of a permanent orienteering course.



Figure 10: Park Area 3 - Hawkstowe

Site: Morang Wetlands

Objective: **Maintain** current visitor experience as nature based, with a focus on preservation of significant biodiversity. To protect significant habitat values, dogs are not permitted. Refer to Figure 10, p.39.

Visitor Experiences



Recommendations

Priority

MW01	Update and implement the <i>Morang Wetlands Development Plan</i> (1999). Retain existing management trails for nature observation and bird viewing, and prohibit cyclists on secondary trails within Morang Wetlands.	Medium
MW02	Develop infrastructure to support nature observation such as shelters / bird hides, seats and signage according to the <i>Morang Wetlands Development Plan</i> .	Low
MW03	Develop planting program for western park boundary, adjacent to the proposed rail alignment, to screen rail line and boundary fence from within the park and to enhance habitat.	Medium
PRT2	Construct Plenty River Trail (in accordance with Plenty River Trail project documentation), along with signage highlighting biodiversity values and providing clear directions to destinations.	High
WAY	As part of the Wayfinding and Interpretation Strategy, provide interpretation of the natural values associated with Morang Wetlands. Also, provide directional information at the Wiltonvale Road entry of the Plenty River Trail.	High

Site: Smugglers / Purvis Gully

Objective: **Upgrade** existing spaces to enhance existing low-key usage such as walking and nature observation. Refer to Figure 10, p.37.

Visitor Experiences



Recommendations

Priority

S01	Provide secondary walking trail to connect Yarrambat Park, Smugglers / Purvis Gully and the existing ford crossing (NB02) of Plenty River near Nioka Bush Camp.	Medium
S02	Provide for better public use of, and connections to, the ford (NB03) at Gordons Road once land ownership permits.	Low

Site: Hawkstowe Picnic Area and Le Page Homestead

Objective: **Upgrade** to be the primary visitor focus in the central area of Plenty Gorge Park, with enhanced provision for community events and festivals, and large social gatherings with a focus on heritage interpretation, cultural activities and passive recreation. Utilise the opportunity to draw visitors to Hawkstowe Picnic Area further into the park. Refer to Figure 10, p.39.

Visitor Experiences**Recommendations****Priority**

H01	Investigate the preferred location and layout and implement a permanent orienteering course.	High
H02a	Prepare an updated site plan for Hawkstowe, including picnic facilities, event infrastructure, playground, signage, planting, access, trails, parking and paving existing road and car park. Planning to coincide with Council sports field planning.	High
H02b	Implement agreed site plan for Hawkstowe.	High
H03	Undertake planting program to protect and enhance existing bushland and habitat areas, and to mitigate any adverse impacts from events and community activities.	Medium
ENT2	Relocate main Hawkstowe entrance to existing Le Page Homestead exit location, including 75m of new road, planting to screen the depot, and signage / directions from Gordons Road.	High
WAY	As part of the Wayfinding and Interpretation Strategy, develop interpretive signage system to explain local heritage associated with the site, as well as directions to other features of the broader park.	High

Site: Red Gum Picnic Area

Objective: **Downgrade** site in response to upgrade of Hawkstowe site and the development of a future recreation reserve and sporting fields by City of Whittlesea. Refer to Figure 10, p.39.

Visitor Experiences



Recommendations

Priority

RG01	Remove playground, car park and toilet block once the future recreation reserve is developed by the City of Whittlesea.	Low
RG02	Investigate the potential for a fenced dog off-lead area near the existing Red Gum Picnic Area. Consider Council's existing and proposed facilities within close proximity.	Medium
PRT2	Develop the Plenty River Trail (in accordance with the Plenty River Trail project documentation), including trail head facilities such as signage and park information at main entry from Gordons Road.	High
ENT3	Improve existing park entry and vehicle circulation to Red Gum Picnic area, to coincide with Council's future sports field planning and shared trail entrance / access road.	Medium

Site: Nioka Bush Camp

Objective: **Upgrade** site to continue to provide bush camping experience in an urban context for groups such as Traditional Owners, schools and Scouts.

Visitor Experiences



Recommendations

Priority

NB01	Review site use and opportunities for increased use by groups (e.g. Scouts and Wurundjeri). Upgrade facilities and buildings including site circulation, all abilities access and interpretation and wayfinding as required.	High
NB02	Provide integrated path connection to camp ford river crossing and to Smugglers walking trails.	Medium
NB03	Provide better trails and connections for river crossing at Gordons Road once land ownership permits.	Medium

Site: Farm Vigano / Bushmans Way

Objective: **Upgrade** site to enhance interface between Plenty Gorge Park and to connect residential neighbourhood with Plenty River Trail. Refer to Figure 10, p.39.

Visitor Experiences



Recommendations

Priority

FV01	Provide secondary trail loop along gorge escarpment from south of Highview Drive to Farm Vigano car park providing access to Plenty River Trail and opportunities to view over Plenty Gorge.	Medium
FV02	Undertake planting program to extend indigenous tree canopy and character towards Bushmans Way, to provide shade and enhanced visual amenity.	Low
PRT2	Complete section of Plenty River Trail from Farm Vigano to Middle Gorge.	High
WAY	As part of the Wayfinding and Interpretation Strategy, provide directional signage at Bushmans Way playground.	High

3.10 Plenty Gorge Park Master Plan

3.10.4 Park Area 4 - South

The South Park Area (PA4) incorporates the sites:

- Middle Gorge
- Blossom Park Spurs
- Yellow Gum Recreation Area
- Janefield North
- Tanunda Wetlands
- University Hill
- Janefield South

Middle Gorge connects the park's north and south and offers dramatic landforms and extensive forest vegetation. Gorge Road provides access across Plenty River, with opportunities to view and access the gorge.

The Blossom Park Spurs are a series of dramatic landforms separating numerous creek gullies that flow into Plenty River. The small open spaces at the end of each spur offer spectacular views over the gorge.

Yellow Gum Recreation Area is easily accessed from Yan Yean Road and is the main visitor area on the park's eastern edge. It is popular for Blue lake, lookouts, picnic areas and trail based activities.

Janefield North is a large area of remnant regenerating vegetation with significant habitat values and is popular for nature based activities.

Tanunda Wetlands has significant habitat values that must be protected.

University Hill provides important open space for adjoining residential communities.

Janefield South offers valuable habitat, including a mix of open grassland and forested bushland along the river. The gorge is not as steep in this section and the area is popular for trail based activities.

Key Visitor Offer

Recreation (refer to Section 3.6.2)

- Trails - walking / jogging / cycling
- Social Activity
- Nature based sports
- Wildlife
- Dogs on lead

Landscape Experience (Refer to Section 3.6.1)

- Space
- Isolation
- Discovery
- Interaction
- Views / outlook
- Stories

Issues

- Proximity of local residential developments encroaching on the park.
- Limited connecting trails.
- Risk and hazard management issues associated with quarry walls, diving / jumping into Blue Lake, rope swings.
- Managing mountain bike trails and sensitive vegetation communities and erosion.
- Limited access to some areas.
- Limited river crossings.
- Lack of facilities in areas with connection to the local residential and commercial areas such as Janefield.

Opportunities

- Gorge Road provides access across Plenty River, with opportunities for viewing and accessing the gorge.
- Investigate potential to strengthen the nature based sports offer, potential for rock climbing.
- Existing car park at Gorge Road provides the opportunity for provision of visitor facilities.
- Yellow Gum Recreation Area is currently the main visitor site on the east of the park, with potential for improved visitor facilities.
- Provide a shared trail connection to the Plenty River Trail in the north
- Protect, enhance and interpret high biodiversity values in areas such as Tanunda Wetlands, Janefield North and South.
- A high concentration of Aboriginal cultural heritage sites exist in the south, as do a number of European heritage sites, offering the potential for interpretation as appropriate.

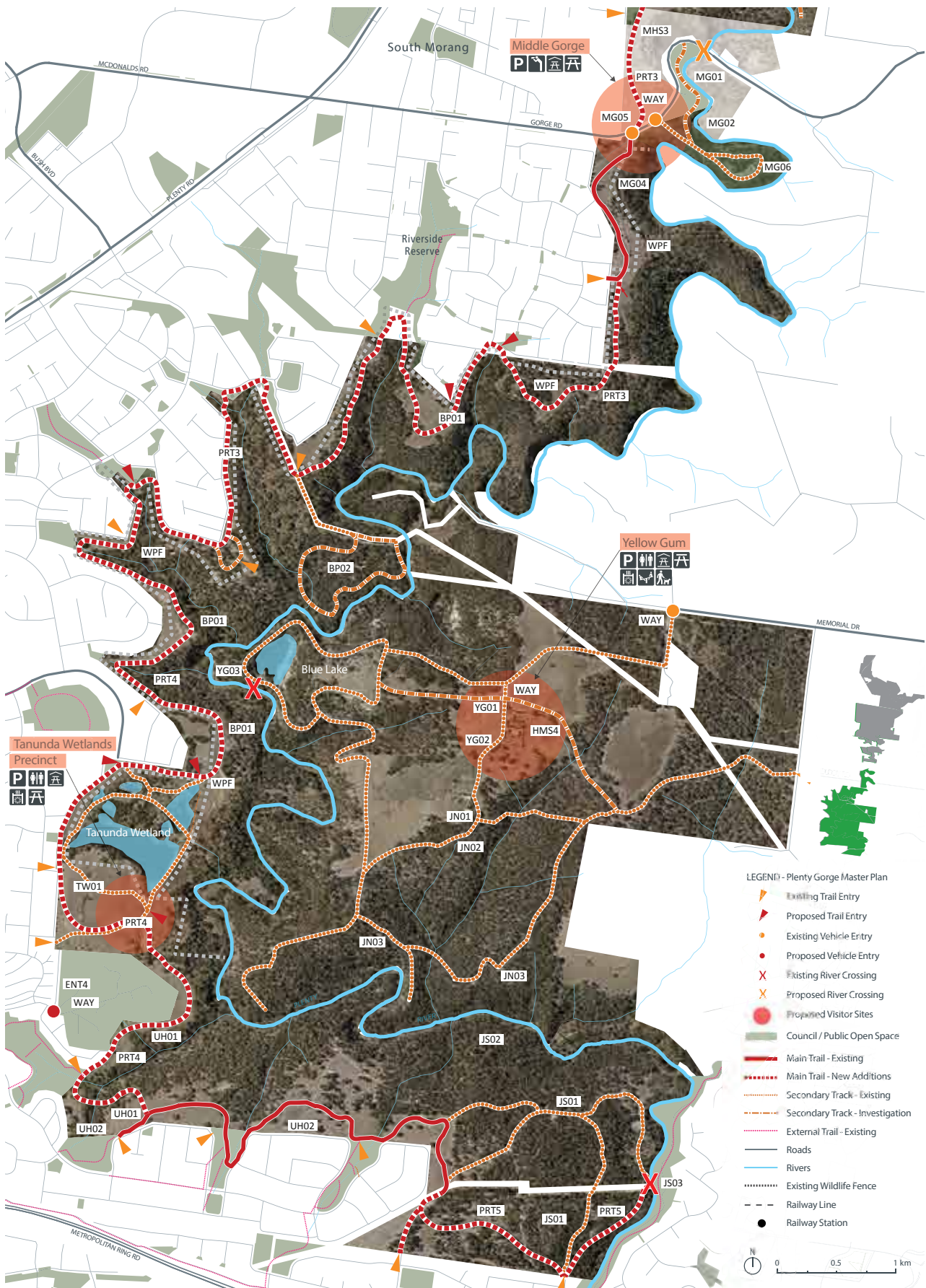


Figure 11: Park Area 4 - South

Site: Middle Gorge

Objective: **Upgrade** Middle Gorge as a point of entry into the Plenty Gorge, both to the north and to the south, and as a highly accessible destination in its own right. Maximise opportunities for great views of the gorge. Refer to Figure 11, p.45.

Visitor Experiences**Recommendations****Priority**

MG01	Implement a new trail to interact with and view the river, and provide connections to the Council owned car park.	Medium
MG02	Develop visitor amenities associated with the existing Middle Gorge car park and gorge walk. Provide trail head facilities to enhance this location as a key point of access for the Plenty River Trail. Provide picnic shelters, trail signage, seating. Enhance existing lookout and investigate a further lookout over the gorge along the lower trail walk. Extend indigenous tree planting to visually integrate the car park and visitor amenities with surrounding park character.	High
MG03	Complete acquisition and transfer of land north of Gorge Road to form a part of the park. Improve visitor access and use of this area, including completion of the PRT and investigation of facilities required to provide potential rock climbing.	High
MG04	Undertake a planting program to extend tree canopy between gorge escarpment and Teatree Drive to improve visual amenity, provide shade for park users and form passive park spaces suitable for dog on-lead walking. Provide seats at appropriate locations along existing trail.	Medium
MG05a	Undertake detailed investigation and design of grade separated Plenty River Trail crossing of Gorge Road and ensure integration with car park upgrade (MG02) and northern site plan (MG03).	High
MG05b	Implement works for a grade separation of Plenty River Trail crossing over Gorge Road.	High
MG06	Develop a planting program within transmission line easements, in collaboration with the service provider, with a view to enhancing visual character and visitor amenity.	Medium
WPF	Review the existing wildlife protection fence and gate locations, to allow suitable visitor access into significant areas of the park, whilst continuing to protect wildlife from attack by cats and dogs.	Medium
PRT3	Construct the Plenty River Trail (in accordance with the Plenty River trail documentation), along with signage providing clear directions to destinations.	High
HMS3	As part of the Vegetation Management Strategy, develop a planting plan for land added to the park.	Medium
WAY	Improve signage and wayfinding at existing car park entry	High

Site: Blossom Park Spurs

Objective: **Upgrade** to provide access to Plenty River Trail and to enhance amenity for local park users to take advantage of gorge and gully views.
Refer to Figure 11, p.45.

Visitor Experiences**Recommendations****Priority**

BP01	Construct trail link and lookout platform, as per Plenty River Trail project documentation.	Medium
BP02	Undertake detailed design of secondary trail loop along Stockdale Way, in accordance with the Plenty River Trail Project documentation.	Medium
WPF	Review the existing wildlife protection fence and gate locations, to allow suitable visitor access into significant areas of the park, whilst continuing to protect wildlife from attack by cats and dogs.	Medium
PRT3	Complete sections of the Plenty River Trail in accordance with the Plenty River Trail project documentation, including retaining walls, drainage and elevated boardwalks over gullies as required. Negotiate with adjoining land owners (council and Melbourne Water) to link PRT to existing trails and open spaces.	High

Site: University Hill

Objective: Minor **upgrade** to the site to provide enhanced facilities associated with local community use and to act as an introduction to the broader Plenty Gorge Park. Refer to Figure 11, p.43.

Visitor Experiences**Recommendations****Priority**

UH01	Provide local seating opportunities at key points along existing Plenty River Trail, in order to take advantage of river views and the shade of the indigenous tree canopy.	Low
UH02	Undertake a planting program to enhance existing tree canopy and extend low level vegetation towards the residential edge.	Medium
PRT4	Complete sections of the Plenty River Trail in accordance with the Plenty River Trail project documentation.	High

Site: Yellow Gum Recreation Area

Objective: **Downgrade** the existing picnic area at Blue Lake. **Develop** the primary visitor site at the former private property at Goldsworthy Lane. This site is to be developed cater for large groups and community events, and as a focus for nature based recreation pursuits such as mountain biking, trail running and orienteering, nature observation and sight seeing. Refer to Figure 11, p.45.

Visitor Experiences



Recommendations

Priority

YG01a	Prepare a site plan for the new Yellow Gum Recreation Area visitor site, with a view to enhancing visitor amenities and trail head for mountain biking activity. The site plan should consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• vehicle access and car parking• picnic shelters and seating• all abilities access trails to facilities and to allow engagement with the natural landscape• provision of toilet facilities• enhanced local loop trail around Blue lake• enhanced signage• additional vegetation to provide enhanced tree canopy for shade and shelter• at Blue Lake, remove parking, toilets, barbecues, picnic shelters and some tables.	High
YG01b	Implement the site plan for Yellow Gum (YG01a).	High
YG02	Develop a permanent orienteering course in collaboration with the peak orienteering body.	High
YG03a	Investigate the feasibility of providing a high level pedestrian bridge to cross Plenty River south of Blue Lake Park. The bridge would provide a strategic link between Tanunda Wetlands and Yellow Gum / Blue Lake, connecting with the Plenty River Trail. The bridge would be a high visitor attraction, offering an engagement with the unique environment of Plenty Gorge Park.	Medium
YG03b	Implement bridge based on findings of investigation (YG03a).	Medium
WAY	Improve signage and wayfinding for the park entry.	High
HMS4	As part of the vegetation management strategy, develop a planting program for land added to the park.	Medium

Site: Tanunda Wetlands

Objective: **Upgrade** site as an entrance into Plenty Gorge Park from the south west, providing for low level passive recreation activity, park information, connection into the Plenty River Trail and protection of significant habitat areas. Refer to Figure 11, p.45.

Visitor Experiences



Recommendations

Priority

TW01a	Review and update the <i>Tanunda Wetlands Development Plan</i> (2000) as primarily a passive recreation area including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• access and parking• picnic areas• nature based play• viewing into wetlands and gorge• tracks for walking / jogging• serve as a trail head and connection to the Plenty River Trail	High
TW01b	Implement the <i>Tanunda Wetlands Development Plan</i> .	Medium
TW02	Undertake planting program to edges of wetland area to moderate view to Wildlife Protection Fence, direct views to wetland and integrate residential interface with Plenty Gorge Park.	Medium
WPF	Review the existing wildlife protection fence and gate locations, to allow suitable visitor access into significant areas of the park, whilst continuing to protect wildlife from attack by cats and dogs.	Medium
PRT4	Complete sections of the Plenty River Trail in accordance with the Plenty River Trail project documentation.	High
ENT4	Provide a new park entry for Tanunda precinct.	Medium
WAY	Improve signage and wayfinding for park entry.	High

Site: Janefield South

Objective: **Maintain** existing area and provide for low impact continuation of existing local activity and low-level bushwalking.

Visitor Experiences



Recommendations

Priority

JS01	Provide secondary loop trails from Plenty River Trail to provide local walking opportunity within existing woodland (in accordance with Plenty River Trail Project).	Medium
JS02a	As per recommendation JN02, liaise with mountain bike groups to develop and implement a sustainable trail plan focused in Janefield North and minimise environmental and cultural impacts in Janefield South.	High
JS02b	Implement trail plan and related facilities.	High
PRT5	Complete sections of the Plenty River Trail in accordance with the Plenty River Trail project documentation.	High

Site: Janefield North

Objective: **Upgrade** site to provide additional opportunities for enhanced nature based recreation, including controlled mountain bike riding, nature observation and bush walking. Refer to Figure 11, p.45.

Visitor Experiences**Recommendations****Priority**

JN01	Provide designated walking trails, connecting to the new visitor site and trail head facilities at Yellow Gum Recreation Area, for exploration of bush areas and viewing into Plenty Gorge. Alignment of trails subject to detailed biodiversity investigation to ensure protection of significant habitat areas.	Medium
JN02a	Liaise with mountain bike groups to develop a sustainable trail plan which rationalises current informal networks and includes necessary facilities, access, signage and environmental and cultural heritage assessments to minimise impact on significant values. (refer to Figure 12)	High
JN02b	Implement trails and related facilities as per the trail plan (JN02a).	High
JN03	Define key opportunities for views into and over Plenty Gorge and provide appropriate look out structures, seating and interpretive information regarding environmental sensitivity and biodiversity significance.	Low

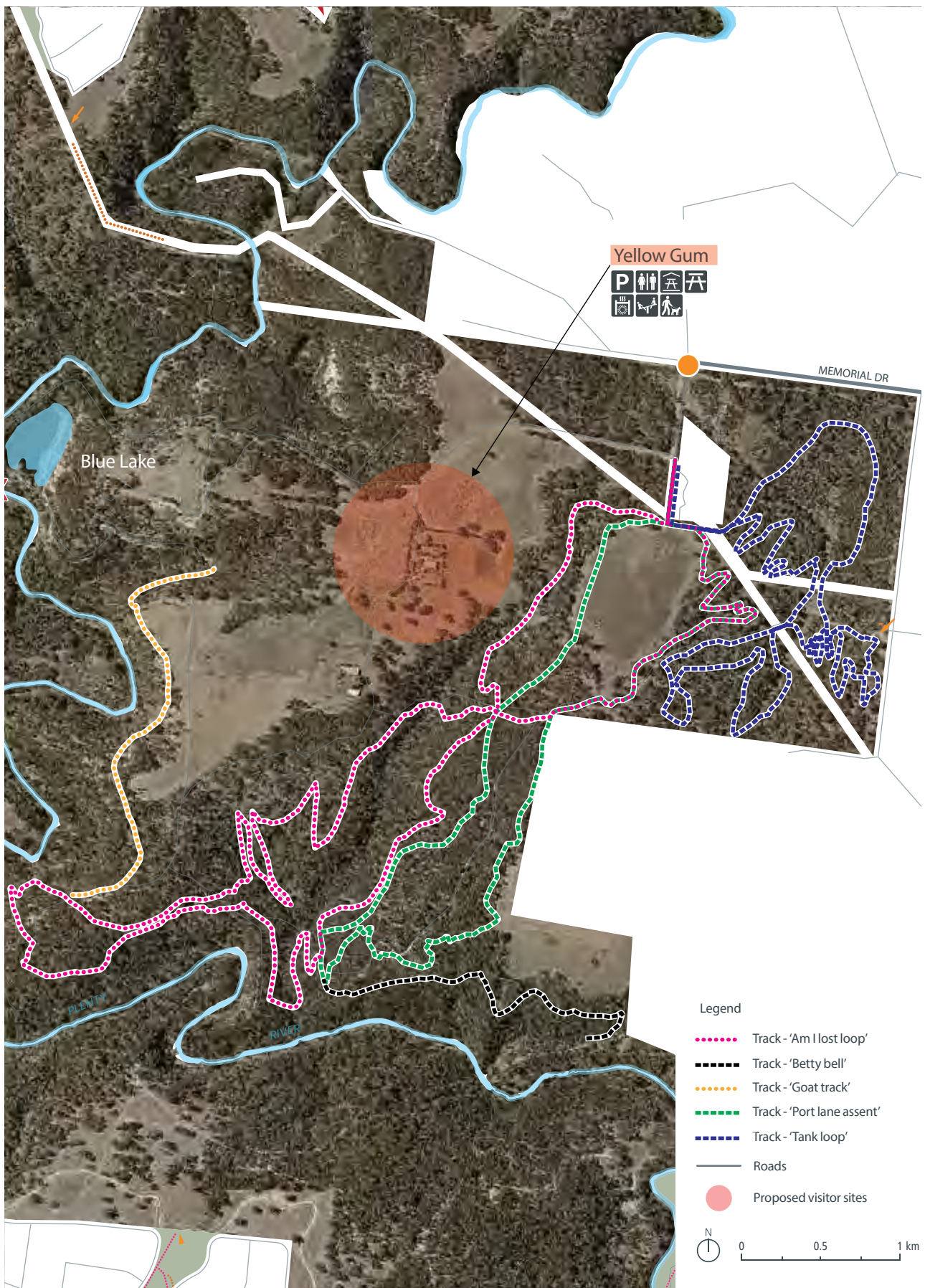


Figure 12: Mountain bike track formalisation proposal



4.0 Implementation

Implementation methodology

This chapter outlines the implementation strategy and governance framework necessary to support delivery of the master plan's 25-year vision and strategic directions, developed through community consultation.

The master plan proposes adaptation and activation of the site to meet the changing needs of north eastern metropolitan corridor growing population.

It describes the broad process to be followed for prioritisation of works, sustainability of the park into the future and key criteria against which management decisions can be made. The construction of new infrastructure and facilities shall follow best practice, provide flexibility, support a diversity of different complementary uses and provide resilience and sustainability into the future.

Due to the complexity of functions and operations at Plenty Gorge Park, actions will be implemented incrementally over time and as new opportunities arise, visitation and demands change and as funding is made available to support implementation of the associated capital works program.

The master plan is comprised of several integrated and complementary projects that implemented in a coordinated fashion, will deliver the vision for Plenty Gorge Park. The projects are divided into categories based on their function, timing, priority and the level of funding required.

All general and specific site recommendations should be considered for the future of the park and life of the master plan. However, based on community and stakeholder feedback this section proposes Priority Recommendations (identified as high priority in mapping in Section 3.10) including indicative high-level cost appraisal, time frames, and investment benefits. There are also suggestions for 'immediate opportunities' that are feasible to implement in the short-term and that are low cost.

The progressive development of a park such as Plenty Gorge is above the normal operations and role of Parks Victoria. The following recommendations exclude ongoing maintenance and management. The plan will be used to garner interest for further and progressive establishment activities that may be staged over time and that are subject to available funding and resources.

Priority	Code	Recommendation	Timing	Actions
1	PRT	Plenty River Trail Completion	Short / Medium	Construct the remaining trail segments in accordance with PRT project documentation.
2	JN02a/b JS02a/b	Janefield North and Janefield South Mountain Bike Trail Plan and Works	Short	Liaise with mountain bike groups to develop and implement a sustainable trail plan which rationalises current informal networks and includes necessary facilities, access, signage and environmental and cultural heritage assessments to minimise impact on significant values.
3	MG05a	Middle Gorge - Gorge Road grade separation	Medium	Negotiate safe access across Gorge Road from the north and south sections of the park.
4	Y01	Yarrambat - Shared Trail Completion	Medium	Provide critical gap in the east-west trail connection in the north Connect proposed Mernda Station and Town Centre to Yarrambat and communities in east
5	JS03	Janefield South - Existing Maroondah pipe track bridge	Short	Negotiate for crossing along existing Maroondah pipe bridge. Investigate, design and implement works.
6	M02	Mayfield - Existing Flume Bridge Crossing	Medium	Negotiate with Melbourne Water to use the existing pipe track / flume bridge for pedestrian crossing. Investigate, design and implement works.
7	WAY	Wayfinding and Interpretation Strategy	Short	Develop and implement a strategy that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • signage methods and consistent material use • wayfinding points and park directions • interpretation of site values • collaboration with Wurundjeri for content • use of technology and digital methods • on-going marketing, education and promotion.
8	YG01a YG01b	Yellow Gum - Prepare and implement a new Yellow Gum visitor site development plan	Short / Medium	Plan and design new visitor site off Goldsworthy Lane including entrance, paving road from Memorial Drive signage, trails/links, picnic tables/shelters, BBQs, seating and toilets. Remove existing Blue Lake facilities including parking, toilets, shelters and BBQ's.
9	H02a	Hawkstowe - Update facilities at Hawkstowe Picnic Area	Short/Medium	Plan to improve picnic facilities, event infrastructure, playground, signage, planting, access, trails, parking and paving existing road and car park.
10	ENT2	Entry - New Hawkstowe Entry	Short / Medium	Relocate main entry to current Le Page Homestead exit. Remove existing gravel road and construct 75m of new gravel road as entry. Include screening planting, and signage / directions from Gordons Road.
11	PAR	Community Participation Program	Short / Medium	Develop and implement a program that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direction and guidance from Parks Victoria's Learning in Nature Strategy • programs/activities in the park that connect community and youth with nature • ongoing education opportunities and marketing/promotion of park values
12	H01 YG02	Hawkstowe and Yellow Gum - Permanent orienteering courses	Short	Develop and implement a program that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate orienteering as ideal recreation activity in the park • Support local groups • Encourage visitor engagement & park use
13	NB01	Nioka Bush Camp	Short / Medium	Establish agreements for increased use by groups. Upgrade facilities as required, including kitchen, painting, floors, windows, gutterings, drainage and all-abilities access.
14	TW01a	Tanunda Wetlands Update Precinct Plan (Sept 2000)	Medium / Long	Update precinct plan to include parking, PRT access, trails, nature based play, picnic facilities, view points and entrance from University Hill.
15	MG02	Middle Gorge Improvements (south of Gorge Road)	Medium / Long	Update 1996 Development Plan and implement works including PRT connections, enhanced entrance, lower trail extensions, picnic tables/shelters, seating, signage and new lookout.
16	HMS	Habitat Management Strategy	Medium / Long	Develop and implement a strategy that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reveg of altered landscapes and impacts of overgrazing. • fire management, weed and pest control. • priorities, timeframes, monitoring and resources required.
17	MG03	Middle Gorge - Land north of Gorge Road	Short / Medium	Upon completion of land acquisition north of Gorge Road and investigate and design facilities and access required for activities such as rock climbing.

Master plan project priority recommendation table

Cost planning

Preliminary cost planning for key initiatives and proposed capital investments has been undertaken. The aim of preliminary cost planning is to provide an estimate of the magnitude of likely costs of implementation, to support the long-term strategic intent of the master plan.

Ongoing operational and park management costs have been excluded, but are an important part of the sustainable function of Plenty Gorge Park. These costs are difficult to estimate and will be dynamic as implementation of the master plan progresses.

Following completion of the master plan, business case(s) will be required to accurately define the capital investment, operational and full life-cycle costs for specific initiatives.

The master plan is comprised of several integrated and complementary projects, that implemented in a coordinated fashion, will deliver the shared community vision for Plenty Gorge Park. Several priority recommendations (outlined below) and a number of low cost 'immediate priorities' that are feasible to implement in the short-term, are detailed in mapping in Section 3.10.

Governance

Plenty Gorge Park is managed by Parks Victoria under the Parks Victoria Act, current legislation and government policy. The Parks Victoria Board reports through the Department of Environment Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change (the Minister). Annual reporting, business planning and prioritisation is undertaken as an organisation with funds allocated to park management and operations on an annual basis through the State budget.

A capability-based management model with the requisite skills and expertise including a combination Parks Victoria staff directly involved on-site, supported by technical and professional staff, will support implementation of the master plan. Management decisions regarding investment, prioritisation and partnerships will be made in accordance with government policy and to meet the future needs of Melbourne.

The master plan is a key reference document to support decision making, providing a clear strategic vision and parameters for its successful implementation.

Partnerships

Successful delivery of the master plan will depend on partnerships with external organisations, community and stakeholder groups and the private sector to deliver the full spectrum of opportunities.

Future partnerships and commercial agreements associated with occupancy at Plenty Gorge Park will be subject to legislation and government policy. This will be managed through development under existing agreements, through direct negotiations, or by competitive Expression of Interest processes.

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6.0 Appendices

Appendix A: Planning context

Plenty Gorge Park forms part of the existing network of metropolitan parks within Melbourne. This network supports and contributes significantly to Melbourne's liveability.

"Open space is not only for recreation and conservation of environmental and cultural values; it is the foundation of urban liveability. It underpins many social, ecological and economic benefits that are essential to the healthy functioning of the urban environment." (Parks Victoria 2002)

Parks Victoria's *Healthy Parks, Healthy People* philosophy recognises that time spent in nature improves people's health, reduces stress and promotes physical well being.

Metropolitan parks express this philosophy by providing people with opportunities to connect to nature and recreate within typically large scale natural landscapes that are generally not available to them in smaller parks in the local open space network. Metropolitan parks are essential to supporting recreation, gathering, relaxation and adventure based experiences within natural or semi-natural settings, enabling escape from the built environment. In addition, parks can provide habitat for endangered fauna and flora species and can contribute to positive community health. Parks also play an important role in climate change adaptation, mitigation and urban heat island effect. Furthermore parks offer protection and interpretation of cultural heritage and landscape values.

In providing recreation opportunities for urban communities in semi-natural, large scale settings, metropolitan parks are provided in response to development, to meet the needs of growing communities, in a manner distinct from council managed local and district parks.

Relevant planning documents

Parks Victoria released *Linking People and Spaces: a Strategy for Melbourne's Open Space Network* in 2002 (Parks Victoria, 2002). The purpose of the document was to ensure that the supply of open space will be appropriate and sufficient to cater for the needs of a growing and changing urban population.

Linking People and Spaces acknowledges the role that regional open space has in recreation, conservation, liveability, health and well-being and the economy. It also contains some specific actions in relation to Plenty Gorge Park:

- Monitor and evaluate further development demand for and use of recreational venues within Plenty Gorge Parklands.
- Investigate opportunities to expand nature-based trails.
- Protect open space that supports significant flora and fauna species, including. Plenty Gorge Parklands.
- Protect, restore and increase the cover of depleted vegetation communities, including Plains Grassy Woodland, Herb-Rich Woodland, Native Grassland and Box Ironbark Forest within the existing open space network. Examples include Plenty Gorge Parklands.
- The development of a shared trail along the Plenty River to Yan Yean Reservoir, including through Plenty Gorge Park was also a key recommendation of *Linking People and Spaces*.

The Draft City of Whittlesea *Open Space Strategy* 2015 also includes references to Plenty Gorge Park. The proposed Plenty River Trail is included within proposed off-road shared trail network for the municipality providing improved connectivity and accessibility. The strategy recommends continued advocacy to Parks Victoria to provide the shared Plenty River Trail.

Other recommendations include improvements of the interfaces between council managed open space and Plenty Gorge Park to improve facilities that might take advantage of views and / or access over and into Plenty Gorge Park.

A master plan was previously prepared for Plenty Gorge Park in 1994 by Melbourne Parks and Waterways. This plan was prepared with an range of clearly stated objectives:

1. conservation
2. recreation
3. management
4. community involvement.

In responding to these objectives, the 1994 master plan defines a number of key nodes and trails within the park:

1. The Northern Recreation Nodes: Yarrambat - Wiltonvale / Hawkstowe - Carome
2. Yellow Gum Bush Park
3. The Gorge
4. Janefield Bushland
5. Morang Wetlands
6. Plenty River Trail
7. Eastern Park Trail

These nodes and trails have been progressively developed by Melbourne Parks and Waterways and Parks Victoria in ensuing years and remain as fundamentally appropriate elements of Plenty Gorge Park today.

In this regard the updated master plan does not seek to re-work the overall structure outlined in the 1994 plan, but rather to refine it in response to the current urban context.

Appendix B: Geology

The Plenty River defines a particularly significant geomorphological feature - the confluence of two distinct and vast bioregions - the Highlands (Southern Fall) and the Victorian Volcanic Plain. The distinct nature of these landforms is clearly visible within Plenty Gorge Park and is demonstrated by the distinctly different landform to the east and west of the Plenty River. In broad terms, the landform to the east of the river comprises two physiographical units - the Kinglake Plateau and the Nillumbik Surface. The landform to the west comprises the Newer and Older Volcanic Lava Plain. The resultant terrain to the east of the river is rolling with clearly defined hills and valleys, whilst that to the west is characteristically flat to gently undulating. Refer to Figure 12.

The Plenty River itself demonstrates a diverse form as it interacts with this geomorphology. In the northern reaches of the park, the river traverses the hard basalt geology of the Volcanic Plain. The strength of the basalt has resisted the downcutting action of the river, which therefore flows through a relatively shallow and reasonably accessible valley. Upon reaching less resistant Silurian geology, two kilometres downstream of Mernda, the River valley becomes a deep and steep-sided gorge rendering the waterway inaccessible for much of its journey through the park.

The river remains the distinguishing feature of the landscape within the park. This unique physiography has led to the dramatic landforms including a number of locations where the escarpments provide vantage points along the waterway and over the surrounding plain, providing long views to the west and south.

In line with the physiography of the region, the park area demonstrates some diversity in geology and soil type, broadly characterised by basaltic soils to the west and north of the river, and siltstone and mudstone to the east, with alluvial soils, sand and gravels within the river valley.

This geology has led to mining and quarrying of basalt aggregates, sands, clay and shale and even gold within the park boundaries. These activities have left a number of features which remain as elements of the park, such as Blue Lake.

Implications for the Master Plan

- The shallow nature of the river valley in the northern areas of the park provides the opportunity for interaction with the waterway and the opportunity for additional experience and understanding of the natural landscape.
- The deeply incised nature of the river valley downstream of Doreen, and particularly south of Gorge Road, provides opportunities for dramatic views.
- The dramatic landforms in the southern half of the park are attractive to a range of “adventure” sports such as rock climbing, orienteering and mountain bike riding.
- These landforms also introduce a potential for risk to personal safety and so introduce an element of risk management.
- There is an opportunity for interpretation and education regarding the geomorphology of Plenty Gorge, and the distinct nature of the bioregions to its east and west.



Site geology. Source: Vanessa Bluett

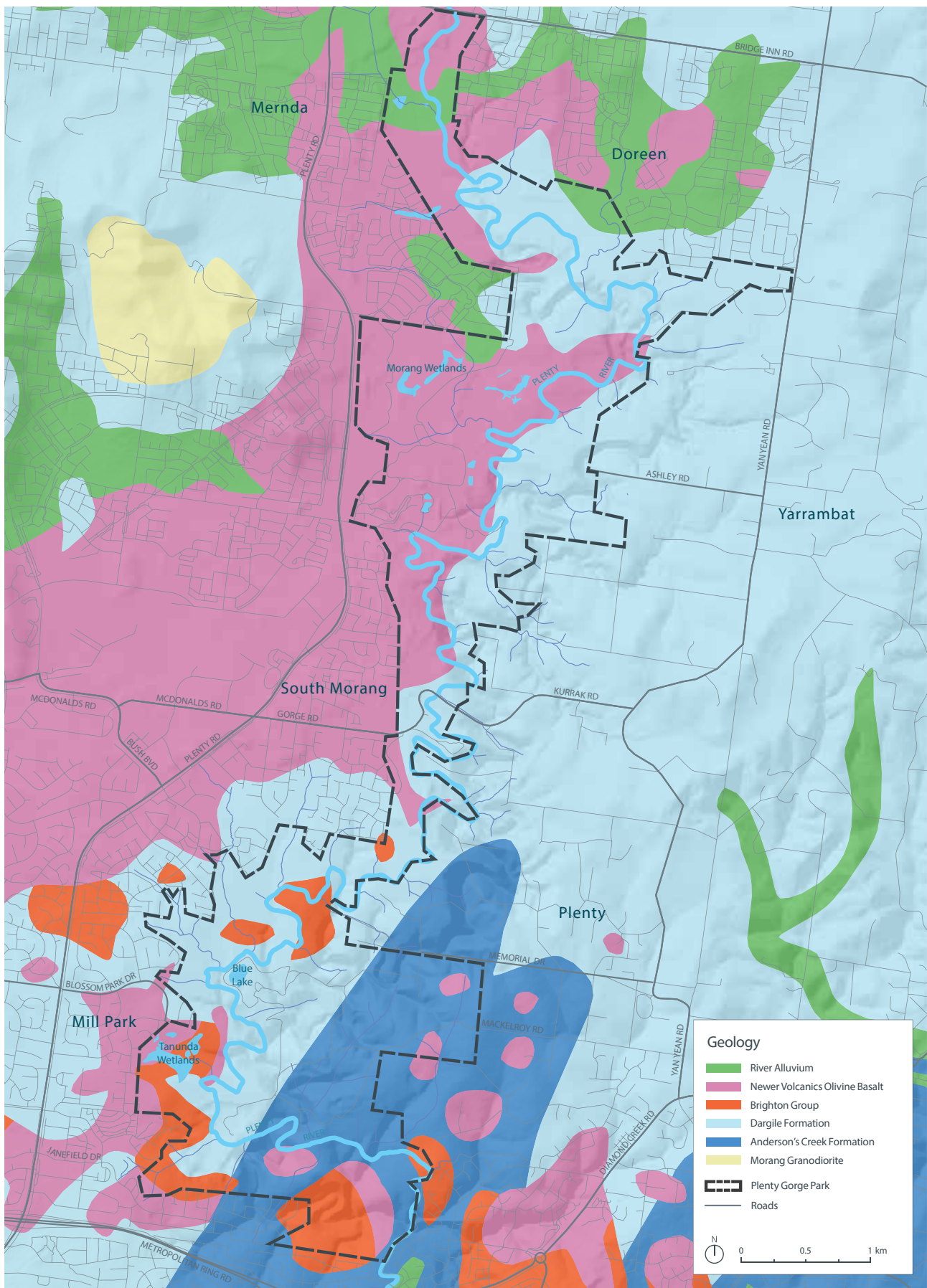


Figure 13: Geological Survey Victoria 2015. Source: State of Victoria, DEDJTR

Appendix C: Flora

The geomorphology of the Plenty Gorge has created an area with a number of different landforms (twelve distinct character types) which support a corresponding diversity in plant communities, refer to Figure 13.

Plenty Gorge Park has the greatest diversity of habitats of all parks in the Greater Melbourne area and is recognised as one of Melbourne's most important refuge for threatened species (Parks Victoria 2010).

The park supports a variety of Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) such as escarpment shrubland, creek line grassy woodland, creek line herb-rich woodland, floodplain riparian woodland, swampy riparian complex, riparian scrub, plains grassy wetland, box ironbark forest, plains grassy woodland, and valley grassy forest.

Of the 631 native flora species recorded in the park, there are a number listed as vulnerable or endangered species. This includes 4 species listed under the national Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC), 2 species under the state Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act (FFG), and 20 recorded as Victorian Rare and Threatened (VROT) species (Parks Victoria 2010).

Vegetation influences landscape character and visitor experience. The diversity of communities present provides significant educational value, but also presents management challenges in terms of balancing protection and enhancement with recreation activity.

Implications for the Master Plan

- With increased urban development in Melbourne's north, areas contributing to local and regional biodiversity have decreased and fragmented, placing potentially greater emphasis and importance on remaining areas such as Plenty Gorge Park.
- Plenty Gorge Park has an important role to play in the ongoing protection of significant species.
- Intensification of urban development and visitor access puts pressure on ecological values.
- There are opportunities for interpretation and community education associated with the unique biodiversity of Plenty Gorge Park, providing an additional layer of interest and meaning for visitors.
- There is a need for planning to address issues impacting biodiversity including location of trails, invasive plant species, kangaroo populations, stormwater runoff, rubbish dumping etc.
- Ongoing revegetation across the park presents opportunity to protect biodiversity values and enhance habitat corridors within the region. It also creates the opportunity to enhance the visitor experience through improved landscape character.



Mernda Wetlands. Source: Vanessa Bluett

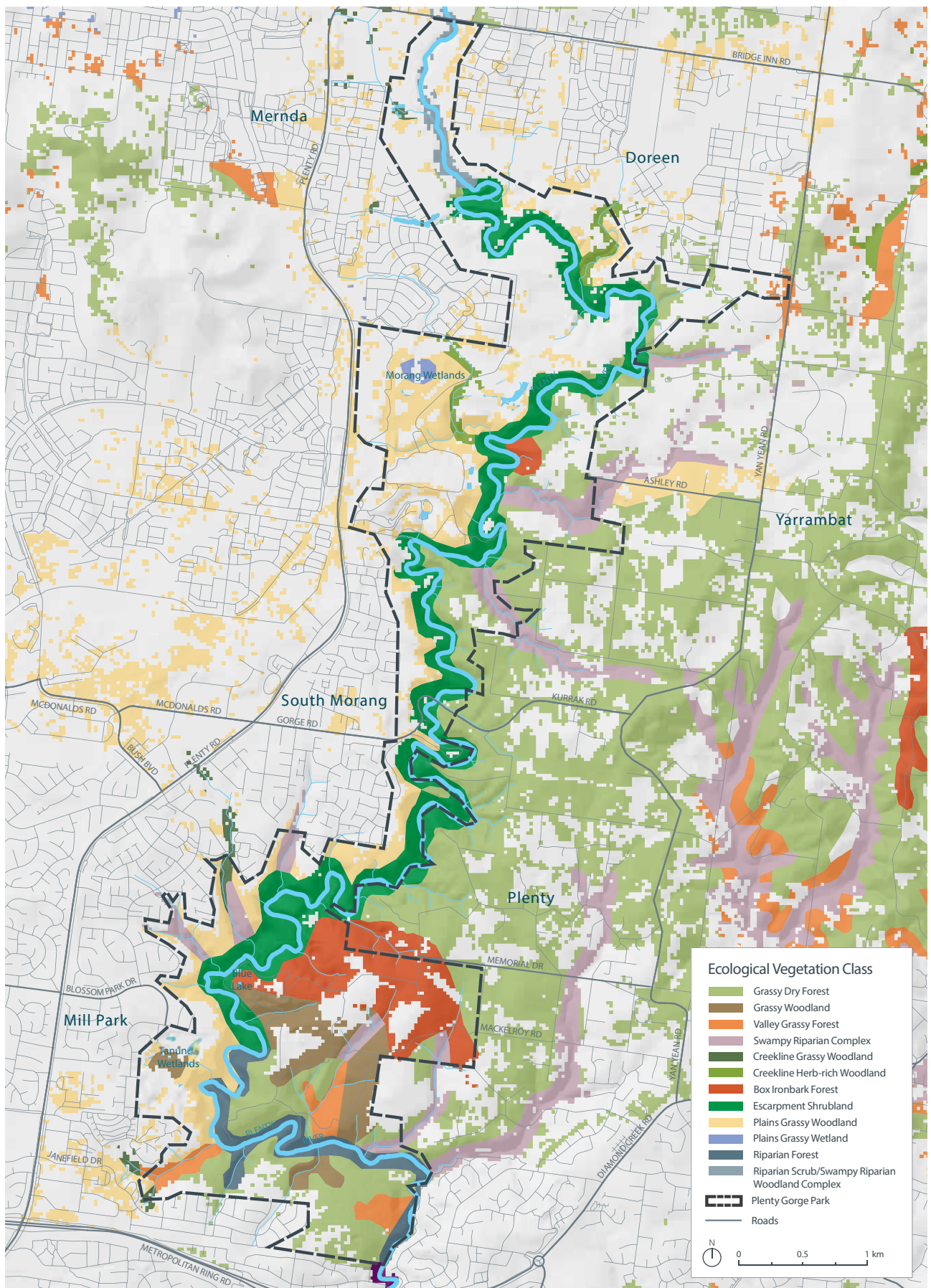


Figure 14: Ecological Vegetation Class 2005. Source: State of Victoria, DELWP Biodiversity Mapping

Appendix D: Fauna

Plenty Gorge Park has the greatest diversity of habitats of all parks in the Greater Melbourne area and is recognised as one of Melbourne's most important refuge for threatened species (Parks Victoria 2010).

Extensive research has revealed high fauna diversity in the park, reflective of the range of habitats and overlapping geological regions (refer to Figure 14).

Of the 262 native fauna species recorded in the park, several are listed as vulnerable or endangered species. This includes 11 species listed under the international migratory bird agreement (JAMBA / CAMBA), 4 species under the national Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC), 19 under the state Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act (FFG), and 39 recorded as Victorian Rare and Threatened (VROT) species (Parks Victoria 2010).

Protection high habitat value areas has been a key management focus for Plenty Gorge Park. One of the elements of this focus has been the construction and maintenance of a wildlife protection fence in the southern portion of the park. The purpose of this fence is to limit intrusion of pest animals in order to protect native fauna, as well as inhibit the spread of domestic weeds by reducing human access to sensitive areas.

While the fence has been effective in these measures, the further growth and intensification of residential development has seen a number of key locations where the fence has been repeatedly damaged. Management of access into areas of high conservation value has been proposed as a tool to protect sensitive areas.

Implications for the Master Plan

- Vandalism to the existing wildlife fence is on-going in a number of key areas, suggesting a need to investigate alternative approaches to protection of sensitive areas.
- Managing the pressures of ongoing development around the park and the subsequent impacts upon the viability of some species due to habitat degradation and the loss of habitat corridors.
- The ongoing management of areas of high habitat value is required, including determining which areas, if any, should be considered for restricted access in order to preserve their habitat values and to protect rare or threatened species.



Park wildlife. Source: Vanessa Bluett

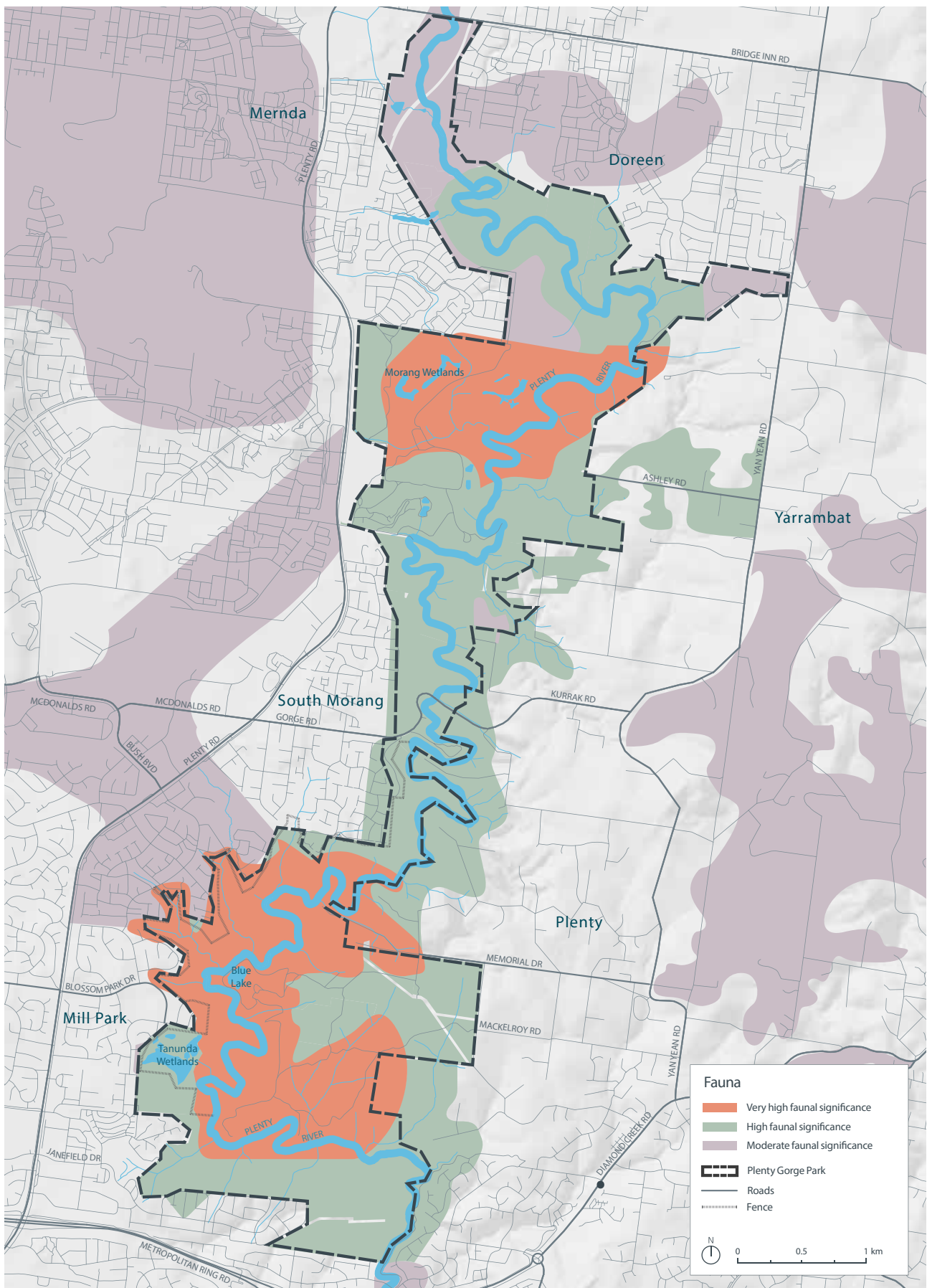


Figure 15: Areas of faunal significance and existing wildlife protection fence

Appendix E: Indigenous Heritage

The Plenty Valley is part of the territory of the Wurundjeri-willam, a clan of the Woiwurung language group. Published and unpublished accounts of early European settlers provide some insight into the economy, settlement patterns and culture of the Aboriginal people in the area.

It is likely that the local Wurundjeri people lived according to a seasonal economy, moving to higher country during the winter months to avoid flooded river flats. Spring, and summer would have seen a return to the floodplains and swamp lands.

Plenty Gorge would have been significant to indigenous communities as ‘a resource-rich environment at the interface of the open woodland of the basaltic plain to the west, and the forested undulating sedimentary terrain of the eastern side. The Plenty River and its gorge would also have been the source of raw materials, food and perennial fresh water’ (Ellender 1991).

Plenty Gorge Park contains evidence of early human occupation of the region in many sites along the river and the gorge. There is evidence of Aboriginal activity in the area including scar trees and stone artefacts, indicating the presence of camp sites in a significant, resource rich environment cared for by the Wurunderi people. Culturally scarred trees, found mostly on large, old River Red Gums, are generally located on the basalt plain above the break of slope.

The scatters of stone artefacts indicate the presence of old campsites. All the big campsites found in the park were closely associated with the gorge, with the highest density above, but close to the break of slope.

Implications for the Master Plan

- Opportunity for Wurundjeri to express their connection to Country and share their knowledge and stories, as key players in interpretation, education and event opportunities on site.
- Clarifying the appropriateness of interpreting indigenous cultural heritage, in engagement with the Wurundjeri.
- Opportunity for Wurundjeri to be involved in ongoing park planning and management to ensure protection of natural and cultural assets.
- Support for ongoing investigations to identify additional sites within the park.
- Recognising that all of Plenty Gorge Park has cultural sensitivity, the Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (OAAV) principles should therefore be applied when considering all future detailed design and or implementation works.



Plenty River. Source: Bill Pitt

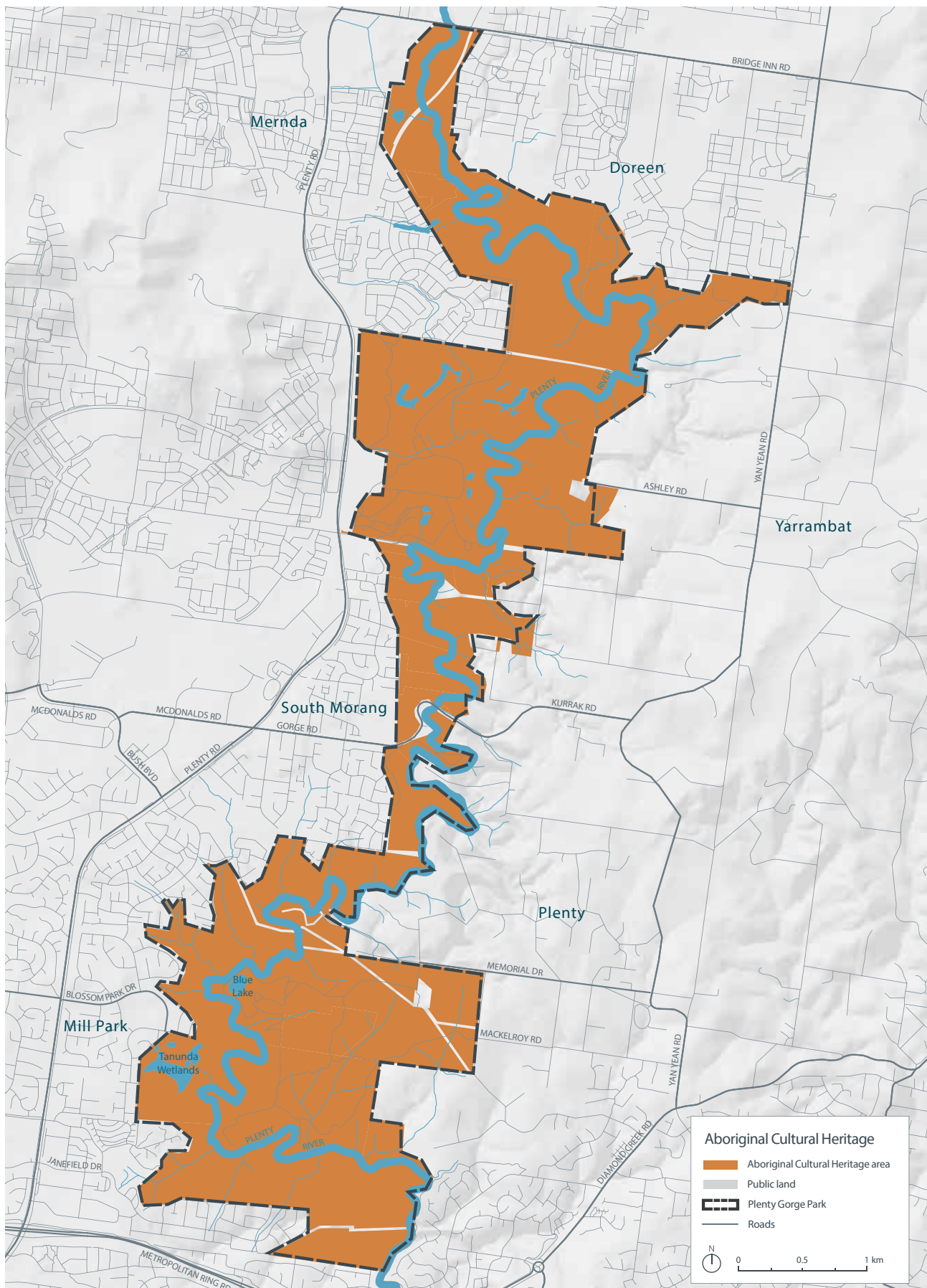


Figure 16: Areas of Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity. Source: Parks Victoria

Appendix F: European Heritage

The earliest European settlement in the area of Plenty Gorge Park dates back to the late 1830s, with the settlement of pastoral squatters utilised large tracts of land for sheep and cattle.

Subsequent land practices including gold mining, the construction of Yan Yean Reservoir, agriculture including wheat production and fruit orchards, and quarrying have had a significant impact on the landscape.

A number of remnant buildings and structures reflecting early European use of the area remain within the park. Refer to Figure 16.

These include Carome Homestead (1864), which has been renovated for use as a restaurant, LePage Homestead (1850's), which has been renovated and is utilised by various community groups, Farm Vigano, the Mayfield aqueduct, and former mill buildings and quarries (Hicks (1998), Ellender (1991).

These buildings and structures play an important role in interpreting the impacts and effects of colonisation in the area.

Implications for the Master Plan

- Identifying the detailed role of remnant European cultural heritage structures and sites in response to community engagement.
- Protecting and restoring remnants, artefacts and structures, where appropriate, in order to tell the story of the use and development of the Plenty Valley corridor. Investigate partnerships with Heritage Victoria and local heritage groups.
- Utilising significant remnant structures as part of the character and theme of Plenty Gorge Park.



Carome Homestead. Source: Matthew Kneale

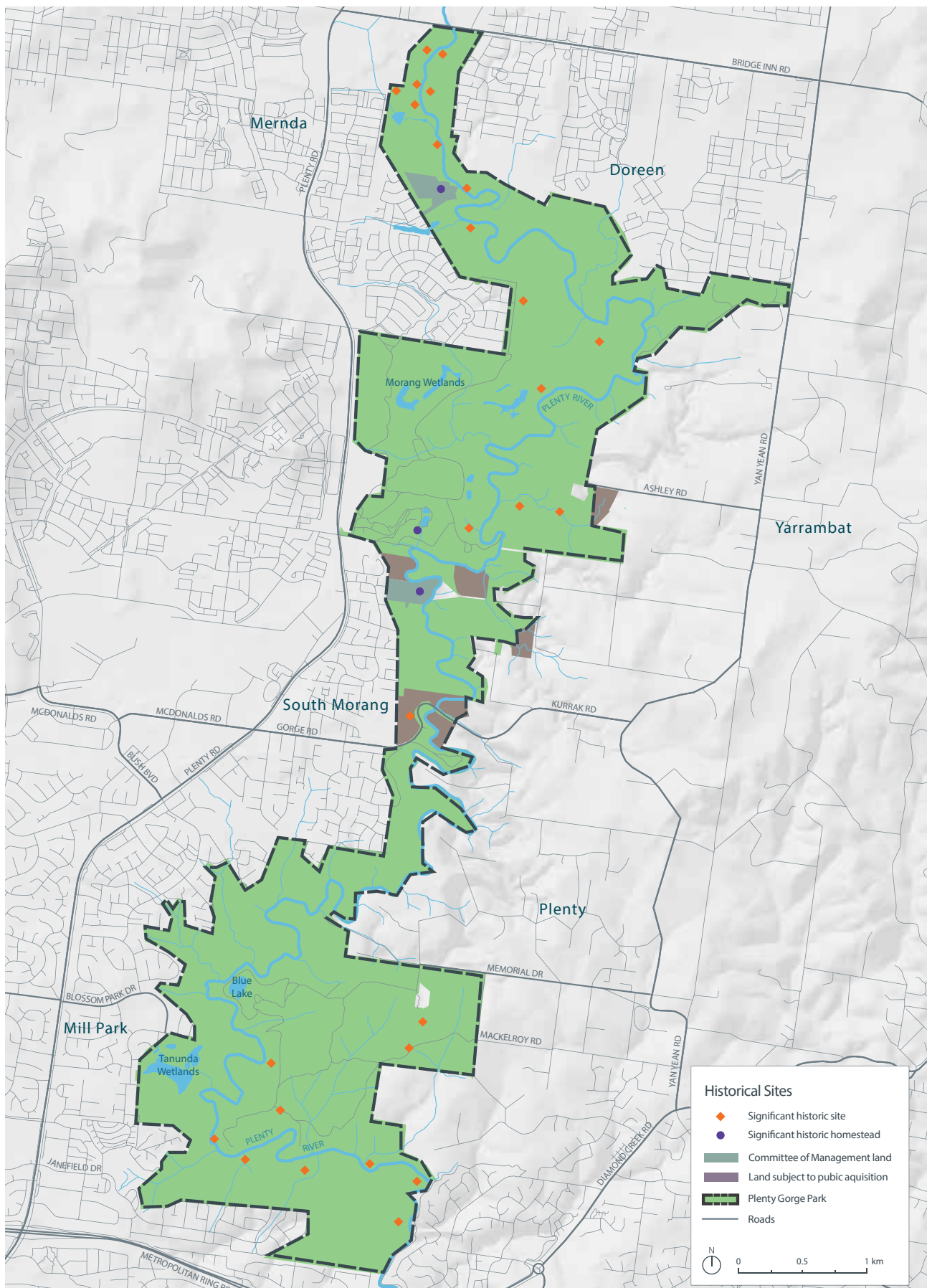


Figure 17: Sites of post-contact historic significance. Source: Parks Victoria

