

Nangana Landcare Network Inc.



Land needs Carers

Nature needs Stewards

Community needs Hope

February 2025

C411 COUNTRY

Natural Capital for
Generations

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Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Traditional owners of the Wurundjeri and Bunurong lands and pay respect to their elders, past and present. We are inspired by the social systems of their communities and their understanding of the ecological systems of these lands that have endured for thousands of years.

Executive Summary

C411 COUNTRY: Natural Capital for Generations is an initiative inspired by the Landcare Victoria New Futures project.

During 2024, Nangana Landcare Network has convened a New Futures Working Group from diverse sectors representing environmental, agricultural, and community interests to develop C411 COUNTRY: Natural Capital for Generations, a transformative project designed to integrate environmental restoration, economic sustainability, and social cohesion across 128,000 hectares of the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges. Guided by the UN Four Returns Framework, this project is committed to delivering measurable returns in nature restoration, sustainable livelihoods, community well-being, and long-term inspiration.

Nangana Landcare Network organized a multi-sector Vision Workshop to test our collaborative capacity which engendered great enthusiasm; and a Theory-U workshop, the change management process utilized by other UN Four Returns projects, which was equally well-received.

The Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges is rich in history and biodiversity. Home to historical landmarks such as Coranderrk, a vital Indigenous cultural site; Healesville Sanctuary, a conservation leader and tourist attraction; and the iconic Puffing Billy Railway. The region supports 77,000 residents and welcomes 4.5 million visitors annually. It is the last retreat of Victoria's faunal emblems, the Helmeted Honeyeater and the Leadbeater's Possum. It straddles the territories of the Bunurong and Wurundjeri Woiwurrung, Traditional Owners, whose enduring connection to the land, stewardship of the environment and cultural practices are integral to C411 COUNTRY's success.

The region is part of the Inner Melbourne Food Bowl, essential to Victoria's present and future food supply. Yet, it is increasingly at risk from urban encroachment, biodiversity loss, and climate-related threats like fire, storms, and floods.

C411 COUNTRY is positioning itself as a project which meets the national priorities of the Nature Repair Act, integrating conservation with long-term community and economic resilience. We hope to take advantage of the financial resources anticipated

in the emerging biodiversity market, and utilize other government and philanthropic opportunities.

The project is supported by key regional partners, including Zoos Victoria, Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, Yarra Ranges Council, Cardinia Council, and Daniela de Martino MP, Member for Monbulk. Nangana has relationships with Puffing Billy Railway, the Greater Melbourne Cemetery Trust, Eastern Dandenong Ranges Association, Echo Youth and Family Services and Agribusiness Yarra Valley. These partnerships bring invaluable expertise, resources, and local knowledge to ensure the project addresses the unique challenges and opportunities of the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges.

It is true to say that C411 COUNTRY could not have been envisaged without the imagination of the Landcare Victoria New Futures project. We now seek to co-create an ambitious twenty-year Strategic Plan, leveraging Landcare's experience in landscape restoration and community engagement, and the expertise of its partners Regen Farmers Mutual, The Landscape Finance Lab, ANU Sustainable Farms, and Natural Resources Conservation Trust.

Land needs Carers. Nature needs Stewards. Community needs Hope.

C411 COUNTRY embodies a commitment to meeting those needs to create a thriving and resilient region.

Working Group

Alan Clayton	President Nangana Landcare Network, former President, Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater
Jack Dingreve	Area Chief Ranger Gembrook - Dandenong Ranges and Yarra Ranges District, Parks Victoria
Julie Thompson	Treasurer, Nangana Landcare Network; Treasurer, Johns Hill Landcare Group; Convenor, Nangana Seedies
Marita Hanigan	Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater; Member of Board of Management, Wandoo Estate Aboriginal Corporation (Coranderrk)
Renee Nutbean	Sustainability Specialist, Puffing Billy Railway
Nicole Lane	CEO, Echo Youth and Family Services
Bronwyn Koll	Agribusiness Yarra Valley
John Wall	Proprietor Emersleigh Estate Winery, Chair of Eastern Dandenong Ranges Association
Jeff Latter	Principal, Treed Environs; Group Leader, Emerald Scouts; VP Johns Hill Landcare Group
Jenny Lyndon	President, Johns Hill Landcare Group; VP Secretary, Nangana Landcare Network

C411 COUNTRY

Our patch lies between the eastern edge of the metropolis of Melbourne and the western edge of the forests of Eastern Victoria, from the top of the Divide at Toolangi to the Urban Growth Boundary at Beaconsfield. It is named after the Healesville Koo Wee Rup Road that runs north south between the Maroondah Hwy at Healesville to the Princes Hwy at Pakenham through 128,000 hectares of farmland, bushland and small towns, including the town and parish of Nangana.



Healesville Koo-Wee-Rup Road

Photo: J. Lyndon

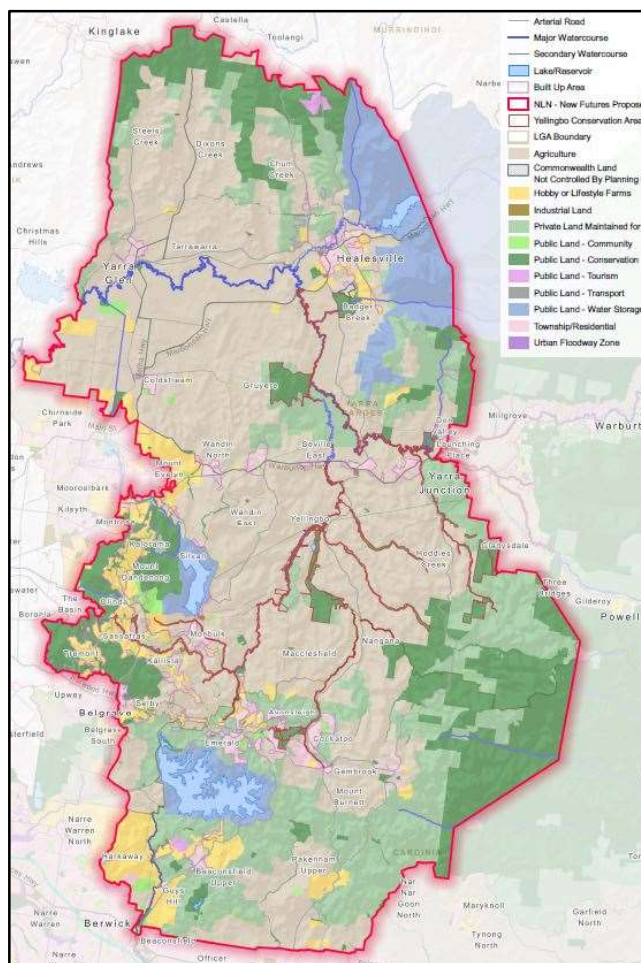
It crosses the boundary of the Yarra Ranges Council and the Shire of Cardinia; and the RAP boundary of the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung and the Bunurong peoples.

The perimeter of C411 COUNTRY was determined initially by Dr. Dan Harley, Zoos Victoria, Healesville, whose life's work is the preservation of the two Victoria state faunal emblems – both threatened species – the Helmeted Honeyeater (*Lichenostomus melanops cassidix*) and the Leadbeater's possum (*Gymnobelideus leadbeateri*); and Jeff Latter, Vice President of Johns Hill Landcare Group who has worked for more than thirty years as an environment bureaucrat, businessman and volunteer in the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges. The coherence of this landscape was the subject of considerable discussion between these two experts.

This area does not represent the full historical range of the Helmeted Honeyeater and the Leadbeater's Possum, but it provides sufficient restoration opportunities to ensure the survival of the faunal emblems of Victoria.

The draft map was taken to the Vision Workshop held in April 2024, and with minor alterations, adopted by the C411 COUNTRY Working Group. It is a significant part of the Regional Catchment – Melbourne Water – containing the Cardinia, Silvan and Maroondah Reservoirs; overlays Yarra4Life – 82,000 hectares of landscape in which interested groups collaborate with the support of Melbourne Water (including Nangana Landcare Network); and correlates with the Yarra Valley & Dandenong Ranges tourism map. It includes our working partners: Eastern Dandenong Ranges Association (business group); ECHO Youth and Family Services; Hills Arts Alliance; Puffing Billy Railway; Healesville Sanctuary; and, Agribusiness Yarra Valley.

The region collects and distributes most of Melbourne’s water; it is part of Melbourne’s Inner Food bowl; it is a wind power exclusion area crossed by transmission lines from the Latrobe Valley which supply power for the city of Melbourne; it is visited by 4.5 million people annually; and it has the highest per capita risk of storm, fire and flood of any Local Government area in Australia.



Location in Victoria

Map of C411 COUNTRY

Kindly produced by Yarra Ranges Council

Pillars of C411 COUNTRY

Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve

In the centre of C411 COUNTRY lies the Yellingbo Nature Conservation Area (YNCA), containing the last surviving population of wild Helmeted Honeyeaters. It is managed by Parks Victoria and is the home of the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater, whose indigenous nursery provides many of the plants used in revegetation. The discovery of Lowland Leadbeater's possums in the YNCA makes it even more significant for Victoria's faunal emblems. The 'Beyond Yellingbo' project for private landholder engagement in biolinks outside the reserve involved Johns Hill Landcare, Macclesfield Landcare and Monbulk Landcare in a very successful project. (Refer to separate Appendices – Stories – Beyond Yellingbo). It was also the genesis of Nangana Landcare Network.



Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve
Photo: S. Tardiff



Yellingbo Indigenous Nursery
Photo: J. Thompson

Coranderrk – Wandoon Estate Aboriginal Corporation

Adjoining the northern end of YNCA is **Coranderrk**, recognized by C411 COUNTRY as its spiritual centre. Established in the 1860s as a settlement for the Wurundjeri people and other Aboriginal groups displaced by European settlement, it became a centre for Aboriginal self-management, a thriving community and successful farm which, in its heyday, fed much of Melbourne.

Coranderrk's residents fought against efforts to control their lives. Their sustained resistance is often cited as among the first Indigenous campaigns for land rights and self-determination. Their vision and persistence were not always a match for the prevailing colonial powers - Coranderrk Aboriginal Station was closed in 1924.



Coranderrk Farm

Photo: State Library of Victoria



Coranderrk

Photo: Wandoon Estate Aboriginal Corp

In March 1998, part of the Coranderrk Aboriginal Station was returned to the Wurundjeri when the Indigenous Land Corporation purchased 119 hectares. It now run by the Wandoon Estate Aboriginal Corporation. Coranderrk was added to The Australian National Heritage List on 7 June 2011.

Healesville Sanctuary

Land originally leased in 1920, became the site of Healesville Sanctuary in 1934, and was placed under the management of the Zoos Victoria Gardens Board in 1978.

Zoos Victoria stands at the forefront of wildlife conservation in Australia, delivering more captive breeding and recovery programs than any other institution. Among its critical initiatives are the programs for the Helmeted Honeyeater (*Lichenostomus melanops*) and the Lowland Leadbeater's Possum (*Gymnobelideus leadbeateri*), two of Victoria's most threatened species. Through innovative, scientifically robust breeding techniques, Zoos Victoria plays a pivotal role in their breeding and rerelease into the wild.

Nangana Landcare Network's two Friends groups have had a long relationship with Zoos Victoria through Dr. Dan Harley, Dr. Arabella Eyre and their mutual efforts to save 'the Heho' and 'the Possum'. Zoos Victoria is a supporter of C411 COUNTRY.

These programs are part of Zoos Victoria's broader commitment to saving 27 critically endangered species. With an emphasis on scientific research, community engagement, and sustainable practices, Zoos Victoria is committed to a future where wildlife thrives, and future generations inherit a planet rich in biodiversity.



Helmeted Honeyeater

Photo: M.Serong



Leadbeater's Possum

Photo: S. Kuiter

Puffing Billy Railway

To the south, our third quintessential element of landscape history is the **Puffing Billy Railway**. It was one of four experimental low-cost narrow-gauge lines constructed in Victoria in the early 1900s to open up remote areas. The present line between Belgrave and Gembrook in the Dandenong Ranges outside Melbourne is the major part of the line which opened on 18 December 1900.



Carrying goods to Melbourne

Photo: Puffing Billy Railway



Enjoyed by tourists

Photo: Puffing Billy Railway

The Upper Ferntree Gully to Gembrook narrow gauge line was always a scenic attraction to the people of Melbourne, who began travelling on excursion trains for day trips and weekend holidays.

The train was the lifeline for people living in the hills. In addition to passengers, the train carried mail, parcels, newspapers, perishables, home supplies, farm requisites, livestock, and general goods away from Melbourne. On the return journey, the train carried timber and farm produce, especially potatoes grown in the Cockatoo-Gembrook area.

In 1953, a landslide blocked the track. This, combined with continued economic losses, resulted in the line being closed in 1954.

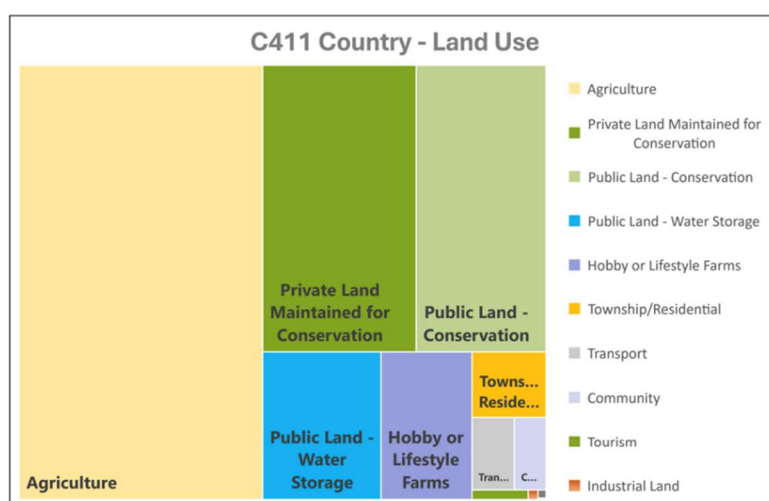
The present-day success of Puffing Billy has evolved from its rescue by determined members of the Puffing Billy Preservation Society. Volunteers with the blessings of the Victorian State Government and the assistance of the Citizens' Military Forces, bypassed the landslide and reopened the line from Belgrave to Menzies Creek in 1962, Emerald in 1965, Lakeside in 1975 and finally to Gembrook in October 1998.

It is now one of Victoria's top tourist attractions.

Land Use in C411 COUNTRY

C411 COUNTRY is characterized by a rich multiplicity of land uses, incorporating conservation, tourism, professional agriculture, lifestyle and hobby farms. The area's naturally impressive landscapes with towering forests and rolling hills contain protected areas where national parks and reserves, preserve biodiversity and provide recreational spaces. The fertile valleys support a thriving agricultural industry – orchards, viticulture, and horticulture. The region is a popular destination for tourism, with hiking trails, scenic drives, and boutique accommodations that draw visitors seeking a retreat from city life. The local population also enjoys a mix of suburban and semi-rural lifestyles.

The Dandenong Ranges and Yarra Valley's multiple land use opportunities cause pressures leading to the fragmentation of critical habitats and diminished biodiversity. This reduces the resilience of species to environmental changes, limits genetic diversity and exacerbates the impacts of invasive species. The cumulative effect of these land use tensions has created a landscape where ecological processes are disrupted and it is challenging to sustain a healthy and biodiverse environment. The landscape's fragmentation highlights the urgent need for integrated conservation strategies that balance human development with the preservation of vital ecosystems.



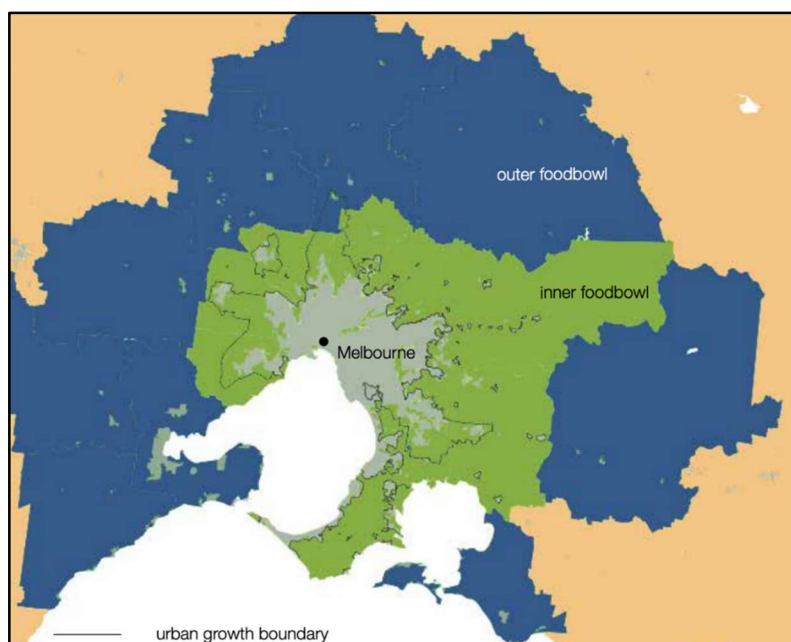
The Land Use diagram clearly shows the significant components of usage are agriculture, conservation across private and public tenure, water storage, and hobby or lifestyle farms. Overall, 75% of land is privately owned.

Diagram: J. Thompson based on data from Yarra Ranges Council

Agriculture

Melbourne's Inner Food Bowl

C411 COUNTRY is part of Melbourne's Inner Food Bowl. The region produces fresh fruit and vegetables, wine, meat, dairy products and olive oil. Similar to other areas in the food bowl, there are many pressures on agricultural land use and productivity. The retention of food and fibre production activities on viable agricultural land is at risk of diminishing due to urban expansion, increasing land values, decreasing size of landholdings, aging agricultural business owners, conflicts of interest with neighboring land uses, viability of production in an ever-changing marketplace, increases in cost of inputs, water insecurity and instability in extreme seasonal weather events.



Source: Roadmap for a Resilient and Sustainable Melbourne Foodbowl, Summary Briefing from Foodprint Melbourne, University of Melbourne, 2019

Protecting Agricultural Land

While the Green Wedge arrangements aim to preserve farmland, urban sprawl and subdivisions threaten food production. When farmers leave the industry, smaller land parcels are often used for lifestyle purposes rather than farming, reducing the region's productivity and creating challenges like:

- Soil erosion and poor soil health.
- Loss of natural vegetation.
- Pest and weed invasions.
- Conflicts between neighbouring land uses.

Small farms depend on intensive farming practices to remain viable, but this can strain the environment. Protecting and conserving agricultural land is essential for the region's future.

Advantages of the Region

Despite these challenges, C411 COUNTRY offers unique advantages for agriculture:

- Proximity to urban markets and services.
- A production season that complements other regions in Australia.
- Reliable water use and fertile soils.
- Local food supply for Melbourne consumers.

These strengths highlight the importance of maintaining food and fibre production in the area.

Addressing Water and Climate Challenges

Water availability is a critical issue. Expanding Melbourne's population increases demand for potable water, while agriculture must balance water use and quality. Strategies like wastewater reuse, stormwater management, and better water capture can help ensure reliable water supplies. Managing extreme weather events, including droughts and floods, is also vital for sustainable agriculture

Supporting Sustainable Farming

To ensure the future of agriculture in C411 COUNTRY, we must:

- Promote sustainable farming practices that integrate biodiversity.
- Encourage partnerships between farmers and organizations like Landcare.
- Support small landowners in using their land productively.
- Develop programs and resources to improve soil health, water management, and biodiversity.

Climate and Biodiversity Returns

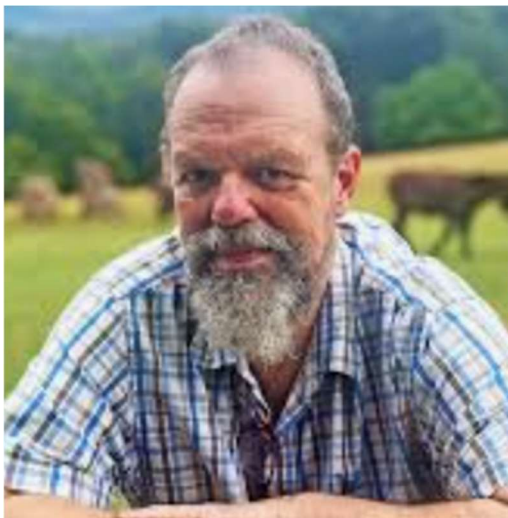
The size of landholdings, and types of land use, make it difficult for farmers to participate in new forms of financial return like carbon credits and biodiversity offsets. Intensive agriculture like orchards and horticulture, despite being a carbon sink, have yet to find a way to carbon markets.

Europe is undergoing a critical transition in agricultural policy, moving away from regulation and market interventions toward a system focused on rewards and incentives. C411 COUNTRY concurs with the EU President's statement " Only if farmers can live off their land, will they invest in more sustainable practices. And only if we achieve our climate and environmental goals together, will farmers be able to continue making a living. We need new financial tools, to compensate farmers for the extra costs of sustainability, and compensate them for taking care of the soil, land, water, and air. It

is time to reward those who serve our planet." (Ursula von der Leyen, Digital-Life-Design Conference 2024).

Meet the Local Farmers

A small market garden an hour from Melbourne in the Dandenong Ranges, Ramarro Farm grows a variety of vegetables for top Melbourne restaurants, fostering a unique dialogue between chefs and farmers that enhances both produce quality and culinary creativity. Some businesses in the Yarra Valley, like Humphris Nursery and Yarra Valley Cherries, are already leading the way in environmental practices such as water recycling, biodegradable materials, and carbon-neutral operations. These efforts set an example for integrating sustainability into agriculture.



We also have the self-confessed 'worst farmer in Monbulk', Professor Arnold Dix, who to be fair spends most of his valuable time solving complex problems in incidents across the globe. Arnold is a lawyer, scientist and author and currently Australia president of the International Tunneling and Underground Space Association. He is a valued member of the Beyond Yellingbo community.

Photo: ABC



Wild Ridge Farm is regenerating community, agriculture, forestry and land in Healesville.

Photo: Jenny Lyndon



Eastwind Rare Breeds Farm in Macclesfield promotes the sale of organically grown and free range meats, specifically the Large Black Pig, which is a grass grazer.

Photo: Christine Ross

The Role of Green Wedges

Under the Planning and Environmental Act 1987, Melbourne's green wedges protect non-urban areas essential for agriculture, biodiversity, and cultural heritage. These areas support food production, tourism, and conservation while hosting unique cultural and environmental assets.

C411 COUNTRY is actively involved in planning for the Cardinia and Yarra Ranges Green Wedges, ensuring that these areas continue to contribute to Victoria's food production and environmental resilience.

Building a Resilient Future

By addressing challenges and leveraging strengths, C411 COUNTRY can:

- Protect agricultural land
- Enhance local food security
- Promote sustainable practices
- Build a resilient agricultural sector that supports the community and the environment

With focused efforts and strong partnerships, C411 COUNTRY aims to enhance agriculture, enterprise and biodiversity.

Conservation & Biodiversity

First Nations

C411 COUNTRY includes two RAP's – Wurundjeri Woiwurring and Bunurong. Both Councils have active Reconciliation plans. Yarra Ranges Council was the first government organization, in 1987, to say 'sorry' to First Nations people.

In August 2024, Council achieved a significant milestone by participating in its first cultural burn on Council managed land. The burn took place at Spadonis Reserve, Yering, an area prone to flooding and the location of the Yering Billabongs Project. It was led by Council's Firestick Officer, Darren Wandin, and supported by Council's Bushlands team.



Photos: Yarra
Ranges Council

In December 2024, Kulin people and the broader Aboriginal community gathered to commemorate, remember and reflect on the century since the closure of Coranderrk Aboriginal Station in Healesville. "There has been tragedy, there has been triumph, there has been struggle and there has been success," Woi Wurring Elder and Wandoon Estate Aboriginal Corporation director Jacqui Wandin told National Indigenous Times.

Nangana Landcare Network and its partners are deeply committed to First Nations agency in landscape planning. We have met with the Bunurong Tarbuk Biik Manager, Shani Blyth; we have attended cultural training for both Wurundjeri and Bunurong; we respect both groups' deep, enduring connections to the landscapes, waterways, and ecosystems of the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges.

We also understand that First nations people are spread thin and we hope as the project progresses, we will all find sufficient resources for meaningful engagement.

Public Land

Public land across C411 COUNTRY is managed by the State Government Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water and the two Councils, Yarra Ranges and Cardinia.

DEECA

DEECA manages State Forests. It also collaborates with other agencies such as Zoos Victoria and the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority.

It supports and oversees the management of Crown land reserves by volunteer Committees of Management. There are so few resources available for management of these reserves, that the Cardinia Environment Coalition recently advised DEECA that it was returning several areas which it had managed for 24 years. There were a number of smaller Reserves but the three main ones were Bandicoot Corner in Bayles, Beaconsfield Nature Conservation Reserve (BNCR) and Guys Hill Reserve, all important for biodiversity. C411 COUNTRY contains a number of these reserves whose management could be efficiently aggregated for scaleable biodiversity outcomes.

VEAC

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) was established under the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*. The role of the Council is to conduct investigations, assessments and provide advice as requested by the Victorian Government relating to the protection and ecologically sustainable management of the environment and natural resources of public land.

This process was used by the Woori Yallock Creek Park Alliance in 2011 for the State Faunal Emblems Park propelled through VEAC by volunteers. The area was finally legislated in 2021 as a Landscape Conservation Area. It is now named Liwik Barring – Trail of the Ancestors and managed by government. Its story is told separately because it owes its existence to the vision and persistence of committed environmentalists. (Refer to separate Appendices – Stories – Liwik Barring Landscape Conservation Area). Further land accession remains to be done.

Parks Victoria

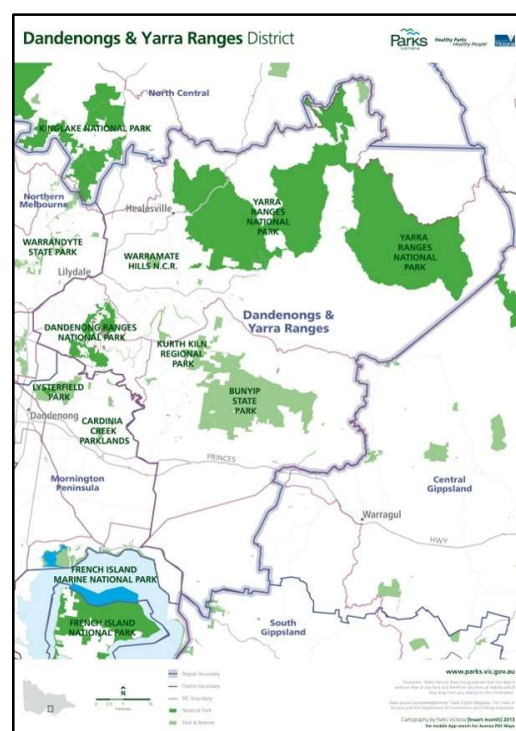
Parks Victoria is a statutory authority of the Victorian Government constituted under the *Parks Victoria Act 2018*. Parks Victoria works in partnership with Traditional Owners to manage parks and reserves in a culturally sensitive and ecologically appropriate way, and works in partnership with other organisations, community, Landcare and Friends groups, CMA's, private landowners, licensed tour operators, and research institutes.

C411 Country is located within the Dandenongs and Yarra Ranges District of Parks Victoria. Nangana Landcare Network has a strong relationship with the Area Chief Ranger, Gembrook, Jack Dinkgreve, who is a member of the Working Group. Parks Victoria has endorsed C411 COUNTRY.



Jack Dinkgreve, Area Chief Ranger

Photo: Jenny Lyndon



Land Managed by Council

Yarra Ranges has 201 parks and reserves, Cardinia has 77 reserves.

There are many properties which have been bought back by Councils and are now managed for conservation and recreation. The Bird Farm in Belgrave Heights is now Birdland Reserve, owned by Yarra Ranges Council and home of the Southern Dandenongs Plant Nursery. Pepisland in Emerald is owned by Cardinia Shire and also managed for conservation and recreation. Landcare groups have traditionally done a great deal of work in these reserves in collaboration with Council Bushland crews.



Photo: Parks Victoria

Private Land

Private Land Managed – or Returned for Conservation

Trust for Nature (TFN) has calculated that approximately 1.5% of C411 COUNTRY is covenanted. TFN also owns and manages two reserves within the area.

Every bit of land returned for conservation helps. In May 1992, a 41 hectare property was purchased by Trust for Nature with funding from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and to be added to the Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve—a seven per cent increase in the reserve's size. TFN purchased the property from beef farmer Bruce Logan, whose family has been in the Yellingbo area since 1933.

The incremental increase of the area of the Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve is the result of cooperative efforts between a number of groups including the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater, Trust for Nature, the State Government and Melbourne Water. The Judith Eardley Save Wildlife Association, Peter Hannaford and the late Jeanne Wilcox, facilitated the acquisition of three parcels of land that have been added to the Reserve. The third of these purchases, the 19.66 hectare Bilagal property was handed over in a ceremony at the property on Friday 1 June, 2018 and named the Jeanne Wilcox Reserve.

Covenanted Land exempt from Land Tax

From January 1 2024, land protected with a conservation covenant through Trust for Nature has been exempt from land tax which will provide an incentive for returning land to Nature.

Conservation by private property owners

Some private properties are protected by their owners. There has been little documentation of these private conservation efforts. Charlie Blomley has 26 hectares at Menzies Creek with approximately 11 hectares registered as Native Vegetation offset.



Charlie Blomley and Jeff Latter (member C411 Working Group) 2023

Photo: Jenny Lyndon

The challenge is finding corridors or biolinks to enhance its utility for birds and animals. The Beyond Yellingbo project addresses this, and has added a conservative 372 hectares of private properties along the Woori Yallock creek for habitat restoration. More biolinks are needed to join up these conservation areas.

Water Storage

Water storage is highly significant to C411 COUNTRY. It contains Cardina, Silvan and Maroondah Reservoirs. Cardinia and Silvan are off-stream reservoirs fed by other reservoirs and catchments. Maroondah is on-stream, fed by the Watts River catchment and Graceburn Creek.

The relatively high percentage of land allocated to water storage reflects a slight anomaly in the GIS maps – much of the land around the reservoirs is national park.

On 1 January 2022, the former Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (PPWCMA) integrated into Melbourne Water, and Melbourne Water became the new Catchment Management Authority (CMA) for the Port Phillip and Western Port region and assumed the management of the Regional Catchment Strategy.

Nangana Landcare Network is one of 120 Partner Organisations in the Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS). The Network is a member of Yarra4Life, supported by Melbourne Water. 'Beyond Yellingbo' is a listed project in the RCS.

Melbourne Water is a valued partner in many projects, small and large across C411 COUNTRY and endorses Nangana Landcare Network's submission for a Landcare Victoria New Futures pilot program.



Cardinia Reservoir

Photo: Parks Victoria

Tourism

The Yarra Ranges Tourism Destination Management Plan 2022-2032 – *Naturally Impressive* - is an outstanding piece of strategic planning.

The plan demonstrates wide consultation, thorough analysis of other available data, and thoughtful long-term strategies. It emphasizes the social licence for tourism; traditional owners and cultural heritage; and regenerative tourism.

The Destination Management Plan projects 9 million daytrips per annum by 2032, doubling the current 4.5 million; 11,500 jobs; and visitor spending of \$2.3 billion.

The Sustainable Development goals in the DMP include the SDG's in the Four Returns Framework.

C411 COUNTRY's initial Vision Workshop identified tourism - particularly agritourism and ecotourism - as significant future growth areas. We are inspired by the fact that one day people might pay for the experience of being an environmental volunteer!

In responding to the draft plan, Nangana Landcare Network pointed out that *Naturally Impressive* involves a lot of hard work! The environment of the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges is indeed a naturally impressive endowment, but generations of work from conservationists, scientists, and thousands of volunteers have gone into keeping it that way. Before us, traditional owners cared for country in a way which informs and inspires Landcarers. There is room for recognition and partnership.

Nangana Landcare Network's most significant tourism relationship is with Puffing Billy Railway which is represented on our Working Group. We have had many years arguing, hassling – and working together. It has become easier as sustainability and biodiversity have woven their way into corporate agendas everywhere, the relationship has prospered. In 2012, the Puffing Billy Trackside Management plan was delivered through a Southern Ranges Environment Alliance grant, but action lapsed for want of continuing resources. (Refer to separate Appendices – Projects – Puffing Billing).



We are confident that other similar tourism partnerships will emerge where appropriate and that the sector is very well served with Yarra Ranges Tourism Destination Management Plan.

Photo: Destination Management Plan

Community

77,000 people live in C411 COUNTRY – in either the Shire of Yarra Ranges or the Shire of Cardinia. Their reasons for living here are Nature, scenery and wildlife 50%; Community and belonging 56%; with Rural lifestyle and open space coming in third at 27% (an Extrapolation from ECHO Eastern Hills Community Survey 2023).

Networks of tiny villages and small towns are represented by Township groups like the Emerald Village Association, the Gembrook Community Group, Healesville Connect and MADCOW (Monbulk and District Community Opportunities Working Group).

There are many arts, music and theatre groups, local history groups, Men's Sheds, Service Clubs, Community support groups, Festivals and Events, markets, Toy Libraries University of the 3rd Age, (Yarra Ranges and Emerald), Scouts and Guides, Youth groups, Sports and Recreation clubs, Environment and Sustainability groups.



Lost Woods Market – Emerald



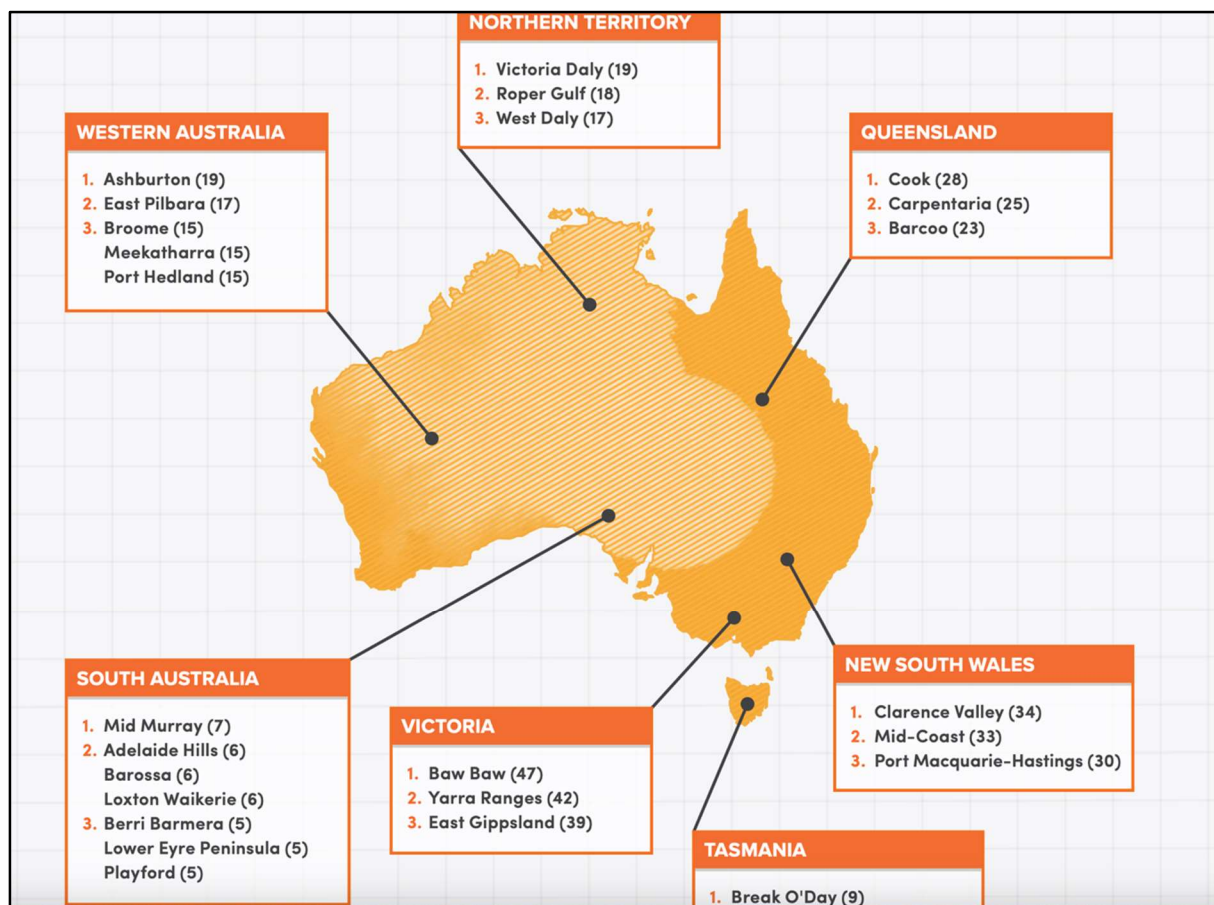
Wandin Silvan Field Days

Risks, Threats and Disasters

Disasters

C411 COUNTRY and its LGA's are the most risk prone areas in Australia per capita, according to 'Too Close to Home' – Emergency Leaders for Climate Action and Climate Council. (Baw Baw is the LGA with the highest risk, but has far fewer people).

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS MOST FREQUENTLY IMPACTED BY DISASTERS SINCE 2006/07 BY STATE AND TERRITORY



Source: Too Close to Home Emergency Leaders for Climate Action/Climate Council 2024

There are 26 CFA Rural Fire Brigades across in C411 COUNTRY and two large SES units in Emerald and Healesville. Emerald SES is in the top three busiest units in Victoria.

Emergency planning and recovery groups are ubiquitous: Monbulk Emergency Planning Group, Emerald and Surrounds Emergency Planning Group, Emerald and Cockatoo Recovery Group. Yarra Ranges Council supports place-based resilience planning to strategically strengthen and prepare the townships of Healesville, Yarra Junction, and Monbulk.

All landscape restoration projects must contend with the climate emergency, but for conservation connectivity in a highly disaster-prone area, it is existential. From the outset Nangana Landcare Network has recognized an intense dilemma for the New Futures project. On the one hand, people live here because they love the natural landscape, on the other hand it is perceived as hazardous and there are very real post-traumatic issues. Our experience with Beyond Yellingbo gives us hope that landholders, with help, can accommodate both biodiversity restoration and natural disaster risk management in their thinking.

We also believe, after our first Theory U workshop, that planning together can break down barriers and move us to a more eco-centric community disposition.

Climate Change

Shared threats from climate change, pest and invasive weeds in the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges are the best opportunity for collaboration between environmentalists and the agricultural community, fostering partnerships that can strengthen efforts to protect local ecosystems while ensuring sustainable farming practices for the future.

University of Melbourne, Roadmap for a Resilient and Sustainable Foodbowl, Summary Briefing from Foodprint Melbourne, 2019 provides this explanation of the impact of climate change on the Food Bowl.

The impacts of climate change on Australian agriculture are already being felt and climate change will continue to have a profound impact on agriculture in Victoria, including in Melbourne's food bowl. Climate projections indicate that over coming decades Australia will experience an increase in heatwaves, a decrease in rainfall during cool seasons and more time in drought (but also more extreme rainfall events). Long-term planning is needed to put infrastructure in place that will enable farms in Melbourne's food bowl to thrive under these conditions, including infrastructure to increase water reuse for food production.

Chemicals

Dieldrin, a pesticide banned in Victoria in 1987, remains a significant environmental issue in the Gembrook area, where it was once used to control native click beetles in potato crops. Dieldrin binds to soil particles and can persist for 30 to 50 years, with levels largely unchanged since its discovery. This contamination, affecting 97 properties, poses a unique challenge for local farmers, particularly potato growers, who also rely on livestock for rotational grazing. Cattle can absorb dieldrin, storing it in their fat, making them unsuitable for market unless agisted off-site for six to seven months for decontamination.

Potato farming in Gembrook, once a major agricultural activity, has been severely impacted by both dieldrin contamination and potato cyst nematode (PCN), an organism that reduces crop yields and increases costs. Since its discovery in 1992, the presence of PCN has led to interstate export bans, and only two of fifty potato growers are left.

The Councils' Green Wedge planning must consider these challenges in balancing agricultural viability and environmental sustainability. While crops like potatoes struggle due to contamination, other enterprises, such as vineyards, tree crops, and sheep farming, face fewer restrictions, providing potential alternatives for land use in the area.

Deer

In the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges, the rising deer population poses significant challenges to both agriculturalists and environmentalists. For farmers, deer damage crops, pasture, and fences, leading to economic losses. They feed on a variety of crops, including vegetables, vines, and fruit trees, damaging young plants and reducing yields. This grazing pressure also affects pasture health, reducing the quality and quantity of feed available for livestock. Farmers are often forced to invest in costly deterrents or repairs to protect their properties.

For environmentalists, deer are an invasive species that disrupt local ecosystems. They overgraze native vegetation, threatening biodiversity by reducing the availability of food and habitat for native wildlife. The destruction of sensitive areas like riparian zones and wetlands exacerbates soil erosion and reduces water quality. Deer also compete with native herbivores for food, further stressing fragile ecosystems. Fencing is required to ensure plantings have any chance of success.

Without effective management strategies, the growing deer population in the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges continues to strain both agriculture and conservation efforts, highlighting the urgent need for sustainable control measures.



Deer creating wallows in the Dandenong Ranges

Photo: VNPA

Weeds

Weeds are a significant environmental and agricultural challenge in the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges, threatening native biodiversity and agricultural productivity. In this region, invasive plants like *blackberry* (*Rubus fruticosus*), *gorse* (*Ulex europaeus*), and *wandering trad* (*Tradescantia fluminensis*) are particularly problematic. These weeds outcompete native species for resources, reducing plant diversity and altering habitats for local wildlife. This disruption of natural ecosystems can have long-term consequences, as native plants are vital for maintaining soil health, water filtration, and providing food and shelter for native animals.

In agricultural settings, weeds compete with crops for nutrients, water, and light, lowering crop yields and increasing the cost of production. Weeds can also harbour pests and diseases that affect both crops and livestock. For farmers, controlling these weeds requires significant effort and expense, often involving herbicides, manual removal, and other costly control methods.

The steep terrain and diverse landscapes of the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges make weed management particularly challenging. Additionally, climate change may exacerbate weed spread, allowing invasive species to flourish in new areas. Ongoing efforts by local councils, landowners, and conservation groups are vital for monitoring and managing these threats to both agriculture and the environment.

Monbulk Landcare and Community Weed Alliance of the Dandenong Ranges with leading CSIRO scientists, spent many years trialling the development of a biological control for wandering trad. (Refer to separate Appendices – Stories – *Tradescantia fluminensis* biocontrol). Nangana Landcare Network, with the support of Cardinia Shire, Yarra Ranges Council and Yarra4Life, has recently made an EOI through the National Establish Weed Priorities framework (NEWP) to have *Tradescantia fluminensis* declared a Weed of National Significance (WoNS)



Wandering Trad with signs of smut
Photo: J Thompson



Ubiquitous thistles
Photo: J. Thompson

Bounty of Strategic Plans

C411 COUNTRY is a part of a highly planned landscape to which people have brought much thought and creativity. A list of some of the relevant plans applying directly and indirectly to this landscape project is below. Nangana Landcare Network is a specific partner in many of them. They are all a part of C411 COUNTRY.

Not all the plans are well resourced – particularly environment plans despite the commitment to nature and biodiversity – and there is great opportunity for partnerships, collaboration and shared projects.

Government Land Agencies

Melbourne Water

- Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority Regional Catchment Strategy
<https://portphillipwesternport.rcs.vic.gov.au/prospectus/beyond-yellingbo/>
- Burndap Birrarung burndap umarkoo Yarra Strategic plan 2022-2032 - includes a fifty-year community vision
- Yarra4Life Strategic Plan 2023-2033

Yarra Ranges Council

- Nature Plan 2024 – 2034
- Liveable Climate Action Plan
- Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Economic Development Strategy
- Resilient Yarra Ranges
- Yarra Ranges Reconciliation Framework

Cardinia Council

- Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2019 –2029
- Liveability Plan 2021
- Biolink Plan 2023-2033
- Cardinia Reconciliation Action Plan

Specific Focus Plans

- Liwik Barring Landscape Conservation Area 10-year Plan
- Coranderrk Strategic plan 2018-2028
- Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Plan
- Leadbeater's Possum Recovery Plan
- Planning for Melbourne's Green Wedge 2024
- Beyond Yellingbo Engagement Plan 2022-2027
- Yarra Ranges Tourism Destination Management Plan 2023 - 2033
- Foodprint Melbourne – University of Melbourne 2019

Landcare and Conservation Groups

The Dandenong Ranges and Yarra Valley – C411 COUNTRY - is a beloved landscape which has had advocates for decades. The oldest group is the Save the Dandenongs League, formed in 1950.

There are many Landcare groups which currently belonging to three Networks – Yarra Ranges Landcare Network, Northern Yarra Landcare Network and Nangana Landcare Network.



Network Presidents at Launch of Nangana Landcare Network

From left:
Alan Clayton,
Nangana

Karen Garth,
Yarra Ranges

John Birse,
Northern Yarra

Photo: J. Lyndon

The Nangana Landcare Network formed in 2021 (See Our Story, 2023 J. Thompson)

The Network Incorporated in 2024.

Our member groups are Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater Incorporated (1989); Johns Hill Landcare Group Incorporated (2002), Friends of the Leadbeater's Possum Incorporated (2004), Monbulk Landcare (2010), Yarra Valley Equestrian Landcare (2010).

Most groups were formerly members of the Yarra Ranges Landcare Network. With increasing numbers of groups, an amicable division was organized in 2020.

SREA - Southern Region Environment Alliance – operated for a few years with Johns Hill Landcare Group, Southern Dandenongs Landcare and Friends Groups.

The Patch Landcare Group deactivated in 2017; attempts have been made to revive the Cardinia Hills and Ragwort Landcare Group; Macclesfield Landcare left Nangana Landcare Network in 2024 but remains engaged in the Beyond Yellingbo project.

An analysis of funds brought into this landscape by Landcare and environmental groups over 75 years would be possible with sufficient research, but is beyond current volunteer capacity. We can perhaps extrapolate from Friends of Emerald Lake Park which has had one organizer for 23 years. Sheila Hampson is an excellent record-keeper and has delivered more than \$1million in grants to this 52 hectare park over the last two decades. Since most grants require matching in-kind funding, it would be fair to say that represents at least \$2million value.

Across our region, many millions of dollars have been generated through private philanthropy, grants, local, State and Federal government support; thousands of volunteer hours have been contributed; extraordinary value has been added to the landscape.

And yet excellent projects fail for lack of continuous funding. Many groups are run virtually single-handedly by one passionate volunteer; committee positions are hard to fill; succession is an issue.

Land needs permanent care not sporadic intervention. Our dictum is:

Land needs Carers. Nature needs Stewards. Community needs Hope.

Despite the work of many groups over many years, the region has never created a self-sustaining organization which can operate at scale. One of the many aspirations of C411 COUNTRY through the Landcare Victoria New Futures opportunity, is to create a long-term, viable, large landscape project with enduring potential built with Landcare principles and values.

Exploring Outside the Silos

C411 COUNTRY is unique. It is peri-urban area with a comparatively high population; a fragmented landscape of farms, forests and parks; a recreation area with trails, walks, and gardens; a region of orchards, flowers, and nurseries. Grazing and animal husbandry are prevalent, lifestyle and hobby farms numerous, and there are an estimated 4500 horse owners. And it is home to the threatened faunal emblems of Victoria – Helmeted Honeyeater and Leadbeater's Possum.

Community organizations flourish across many fields, but there is no overarching conservation connectivity. Substantial awareness of the climate emergency, a palpable desire for sustainability, and wide-reaching concern about the future make it a propitious time to embark on a long-term, community-led, landscape-scale project.

Since the Landcare Victoria New Futures pilot was published, we have spent a year coming together to begin to integrate business, social and environmental groups in landscape planning. It has been a positive experience for everyone. "Why haven't we been doing this all along?" asked Nicole Lane, CEO of ECHO Youth and Family Services.

In March 2024, Nangana Landcare Network was invited to present the proposition to the Yarra Ranges Council Forum – all the councillors were receptive. Yarra Ranges Council endorses our bid.

In April 2024, we conducted an initial Vision workshop to test the hypothesis of cross-sectoral co-operation for a region which has had, as some politely put it, groups with differing priorities. The workshop was attended by representatives of agriculture and tourism; staff and elected members of Councils; emergency practitioners; Parks Victoria; business owners and associations. It engendered a surprising level of enthusiasm. The UN Four Returns framework has great potential in C411 COUNTRY.



The Vision Workshop participants at the Lakeside Visitor Centre – venue provided by Puffing Billy Railway. Workshop with Jane Stewart from Sustain-Ability International sponsored by Yarra Ranges Council.

In May 2024, when Daniela de Martino, MP, Member for Monbulk, launched the Nangana Landcare Network, she endorsed our New Futures bid.



From left:
Daniela de Martino, MP
Alan Clayton, President NLN

Photo: D. de Martino

In August 2024, we held our first Theory U workshop to test the proposition that this process would help create a unified vision and strategic plan from many different interests and perspective. This too was very successful with excellent feedback for the facilitator and the content.



**“Hope is a Verb With its
Sleeves Rolled Up”**

Theory U Workshop

From left:
Alan Clayton, President NLN
Lisa Barker, Heliotropia P/L
Jenny Lyndon VP NLN

Photo: J. Lyndon

Nurturing a New Future for C411 COUNTRY

Over the past year, the Nangana Landcare Network has carefully considered the future of C411 COUNTRY, working diligently to shape an initial vision and demonstrate that many groups can work together on this landscape. We are convinced that C411 COUNTRY has the potential to become a powerful, long-term, landscape-scale strategic initiative, attracting green investors and those committed to a sustainable future.

We would value Landcare Victoria helping us take the next bold steps in transforming C411 COUNTRY into a global example of sustainable living, while addressing the unique biodiversity and environmental challenges of our peri-urban region.

Our patch may be more complex and diverse than most, yet it presents a priceless opportunity to showcase the **UN Four Returns** principles in a peri-urban landscape. We believe that the intersection of natural, cultural, and economic assets makes this area ideal for innovation, climate-smart business, and sustainable tourism, while simultaneously ensuring that threatened native species, such as the Helmeted Honeyeater and Leadbeater's Possum, survive and thrive. Through C411 COUNTRY, we aim to provide the blueprint for a balance between biodiversity and socio-economic imperatives, not just for our region but for peri-urban environments everywhere.

We have built on our existing partnerships with Melbourne Water, Yarra Ranges Council and Cardinia Shire Council. These relationships strengthen our ability to drive this ambitious project forward and create lasting impact for the land and communities we serve. In the appendices we document some of our joint history and past projects which reflect our capacity for large-scale project development and implementation. There are several projects ready to go, including our flagship project 'Beyond Yellingbo'.

We are indebted to the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung and Bunurong peoples whose model of caring for country we strive to replicate. We also aim to emulate their heterarchical structures as far as is possible within the legal governance structures available to us.

C411 COUNTRY has selected **four C's – Community, Commerce, Conservation, and Culture** - to form the foundation for the project. Our vision for 2044, is one in which we are a thriving and connected landscape, a model for balancing the priorities of people and nature, and we are recognized for stewardship of the region's natural assets. We are also cognizant that the next twenty years will require more resilience than ever before, as we wear the damage of a tardy response to the climate emergency. Our project will support communities capable of facing future challenges.

The **11 Focus Areas** remain to be determined in the next stage of development using placemaking strategies to engage the community in the C411 COUNTRY initiative. Through a series of focus groups, residents and stakeholders will collaboratively explore

and prioritize key locations or issues that would benefit from targeted conservation and development efforts. This participatory approach not only fosters a strong sense of place and community ownership, but also ensures that the selected focal areas aligned with the collective vision and values of those who live and work in C411 COUNTRY.

At its core, C411 COUNTRY reflects the truth that "**Land needs Carers, Nature needs Stewards, and Community needs Hope.**" By investing in C411 COUNTRY, Landcare Victoria has the chance to support a project that will leave an enduring legacy, transforming this region into a living example of what is possible when people commit to healing landscapes and restoring nature for the benefit of future generations. This is more than an investment in land – it is an investment in natural capital that will continue to provide value for decades to come.

One Page Outline

C411 COUNTRY

Natural Capital for Generations

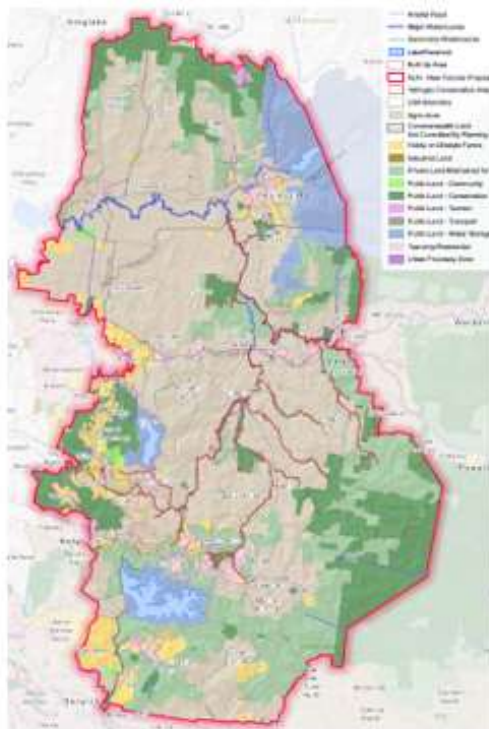


Our Vision

In 2044, we have thriving, biodiverse landscapes supporting capable and connected communities.

C411 COUNTRY is recognized for stewardship of its naturally impressive assets, climate-smart business, tourism and agriculture.

We are the model peri-urban region for balancing biodiversity with social, cultural and economic imperatives.



Nangana Landcare Network

C411 COUNTRY

Natural Capital for Generations

4 C's

Community ■ Commerce ■ Conservation ■ Culture

11 Focus Areas

Twenty Year Strategic Plan

128,000 hectares

Helmeted Honeyeater
Leadbeater's Possum

Wurundjeri Woiwurrung
Bunurong

Yarra Ranges Council
Cardinia Shire Council

Land needs Carers ■ Nature needs Stewards ■ Community needs Hope



The UN 4 Returns Framework connects ecology, community values, spirit and culture, commerce and long-term economic sustainability at landscape level. Government, business and communities co-create and deliver a vision for resilient landscapes.

Appendices – refer separate document