Living Links
Business Plan
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Our vision is called Living Links. It is a plan for a web of living parks, wetlands, pathways and open spaces across the urban expanse of Melbourne’s south east, bringing environmental benefits and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

To bring this vision to reality, many people and organisations will be involved.

Living Links has been developed so that government, community organisations and businesses can work together to connect parks, conservation reserves, waterways, open spaces and the coastal foreshore.

We have a vision for Melbourne’s South East, and we want you to be a part of it.

David Buntine
Chair, Living Links Committee
Melbourne’s South East today

Living Links covers Melbourne’s South East – from St Kilda and Belgrave in the north to Frankston and Cranbourne in the south. Long ago, the area drained to a large coastal wetland, the Carrum Carrum Swamp, and was home for the Boonerwrung, Bunurong and Wurundjeri groups of the Kulin nation. But much has changed since then. White settlement and the ensuing urban engineering has reduced the once expansive swamp to a series of wetlands surrounded by residential, commercial and industrial development.

Today, the area is home to a diverse population of over one million people and is a dynamic hub of economic and recreational activity. It boasts some of the country’s finest tertiary education institutions, an array of high profile sporting and leisure facilities and an impressive range of career and business opportunities.

Significant commercial and industrial expansion in recent years has seen Melbourne’s South East become the vibrant business centre of Victoria and one of the strongest economic regions within Australia.

Extensive road and rail networks service the area and it contains Dandenong and Frankston for which major new public transport infrastructure is being developed. It is also home to Australia’s largest roadway, EastLink, connecting the South East with residential suburbs to the north, enabling further business opportunities and economic growth.

Thankfully, some of the important natural and cultural features of this area remain in place. The area still contains beaches, wetlands and national parks of regional, and international significance including foothill forests, meandering creeks, reedy wetlands and coastal foreshores. There are also highly productive and valuable agricultural and horticultural areas within the green wedge that remains in this area. Several local parks along the Dandenong Creek, including Jells Park, Shepherd’s Bush and the Bushy Park Wetlands are well connected providing a network of bicycle and walking paths.

Many of the other open space and natural features however, are disconnected and isolated from each other, sometimes trapped in the vast urban expanse. Braeside Park, Lysterfield Park, Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne and the Seaford-Edithvale Wetlands are all relatively isolated from one another. Rapid and extensive development continues to place significant pressure on these valuable and scenic natural features. For example, the waterways in the area are under increasing pressure from high levels of nitrogen, phosphorus, litter and excess loads of suspended solids generated from land clearance.

Living Links will progressively achieve over 100km of vegetation links and pathways.
Imagine...
A web of picturesque parks, open areas, beach tracks, tree-lined roadsides, wetlands and newly restored rivers and creeks...
a serene haven where you can experience a day-long bicycle journey or enjoy a stroll with family and friends...
...an urban ecosystem that will compete against the best in the world as a place to invest, work, live and visit...
This is the vision of Living Links.
The future – Living Links

Living Links is an ambitious, long term program. It is a coordinated approach to shape future natural, urban and industrial environments making them enjoyable, natural and ecologically sustainable.

Living Links will:

• Create corridors linking open space, conservation reserves, recreation facilities, isolated patches of native vegetation and sites of cultural significance;
• Transform some of the waterways in Melbourne’s South East from poor or very poor condition to moderate or good condition through riverside vegetation improvements;
• Provide havens where the community can enjoy natural, physical, social, cultural and educational experiences;
• Expand current walking and cycling trails along waterways, parks, coastal zones and public open spaces;
• Contribute to Melbourne’s South East being a world renowned place to invest, live, work and visit;
• Develop a shared plan and establish lasting partnerships between all levels of government, the local community and the business and industry sector;
• Bring together government and corporate investment to make major on-ground works happen;
• Increase the number of community groups and education institutions actively involved in restoration, protection and enhancement activities;
• Increase coordination amongst Local and State Government agencies, departments and authorities;
• Increase community participation in environmental monitoring, evaluation and reporting; and
• Increase private sector investment in restoration, protection and enhancement projects.
Implementation steps of Living Links

Living Links will be made up of hundreds of significant projects. The grand vision will be reached piece by piece over many years, progressively linking all of the projects together to create a valuable mosaic across the urban landscape. Central to the success of Living Links is a Master Plan that all of the partners can follow – a blueprint to ensure that everyone’s contributions link together. The development of the Master Plan is a crucial initial step for Living Links.

Living Links Master Plan
The Living Links Master Plan is a blueprint for a web of living corridors connecting parks, wetlands, pathways, open spaces, fragmented patches of native vegetation and sites of cultural significance. The corridors will be designed and managed for multiple purposes with an overall aim of sustaining and improving the landscape including its natural, cultural, recreational and social components.

The Master Plan will be completed in early 2010.

Immediate Living Links Projects
On-ground works will be established while the Master Plan is being developed. To provide immediate benefits to communities and the environment, eight Living Links projects were undertaken in 2007/08 and a further ten projects will be undertaken in 2008/09.

These projects establish or enhance native habitat, rehabilitate waterways or coastal zones and improve pedestrian and/or recreational links. They involve councils, government agencies, schools, community groups, environment groups, residents and businesses.

These projects are the first pieces of the larger, long-term links to be developed.
**Progressive Implementation**

Living Links projects will be undertaken year after year in line with the Master Plan.

Projects will be undertaken in appropriate sequence and will be coordinated between councils, government agencies, community groups and others.

Each project will bring immediate improvements and benefits, but will also be part of bringing the Living Links Master Plan to reality.

**Completed Living Links**

When the major links are completed, there will be a new, extensive network of environmental features and pathways for the community; a world class urban ecosystem across Melbourne’s South East.
Opportunities for public land managers and community groups

Living Links offers councils, government agencies and community groups the chance to work collectively to achieve a shared long-term vision. It is an opportunity to ensure that individual projects by various organisations, no matter how small, contribute to the desired bigger picture.

Why be involved in Living Links?

• Each organisation will play a key role in planning the links between natural, cultural, social and recreational assets throughout Melbourne’s South East.
• Living Links will enable coordination between various important organisations. It will improve relationships and communication between agencies, councils and groups responsible for the planning and development of the region’s natural, social, cultural and recreational features.
• Living Links will accelerate on-ground projects through innovative partnerships with the business and industry sector.
• Comprehensive marketing and promotion campaigns will attract considerable state, national and international attention and funding to the region – helping fund on-ground projects.
• Local projects will be placed in a bigger picture context making them attractive to State and Federal funding programs.
• The development and on-going maintenance of on-ground projects, community education programs and marketing campaigns will provide employment benefits for the region.
• Extensive community engagement activities will increase community participation and investment in local projects.
• Education programs designed and delivered by experts will increase the environmental and cultural knowledge of the community.
• Organisations will be able to promote their achievements through Living Links – in the region and across Victoria and Australia.
• Organisations will play a key role in establishing a blueprint for Living Links as a model that can be used interstate and overseas.
• Living Links helps organisations to leave a legacy for future generations.
Living Links is a timely response to the commercial expansion of Melbourne’s South East. It will provide significant opportunity to invest in the local environment.

Living Links is focused in an area with high natural, social, cultural and recreational values.

Living Links is ambitious and can implement works at the scale necessary to achieve long-term tangible community and environmental benefits. It is ready to undertake on ground work now.

Living Links provides expertise in the design and implementation of environmental projects, with quality assurance founded in science-based background research and planning through to on-ground service delivery.

Living Links provides links to the whole of community, uniting key expert agencies as well as social, recreational and cultural organisations, community groups and conservation groups.

Living Links is on Melbourne’s doorstep. It is local, visible and accessible, providing excellent opportunities to involve staff, clients and stakeholders in site tours and hands-on planting activities.

**Investor benefits**

Corporate investment in Living Links will:

- Deliver large-scale on-ground improvements to a region that boasts significant natural, cultural, social and recreational values;
- Deliver strong brand testimonials highlighting your company as a leader in supporting the environment through improvements in biodiversity, land, waterways and coastal zones and supporting the recreational and cultural connectivity of Melbourne’s south east;
- Voluntarily offset a portion of your company’s carbon emissions;
- Deliver a leading edge project as part of your Corporate Social Responsibility program – highlighting your corporate commitment to environmental, social, cultural and recreational initiatives;
- Provide community outreach opportunities for your company;
- Deliver tangible, on-ground results – with opportunities for your employees, stakeholders and clients to experience a part of this through tree planting activities;
- Deliver on your corporate reputation agenda through collaborative media and public relations activity. This would include brand and messaging exposure on all communications materials/channels (print, electronic, outdoor, event related) specifically related to your investment partnership; and
- Provide tax deductibility if funds are directed through Landcare Australia Limited.
Partnership Packages

Partnership packages will be tailored to meet the needs of individual organisations. For example:

• An organisation could invest in establishing an entire corridor;
• One off or long term partnerships are available; and
• The level of investment is flexible.

Following are examples of types of packages available.

Outcomes that can be achieved with a $10,000 partner

• Contribute to an on-ground project;
• Brand and messaging exposure on project website.

Outcomes that can be achieved with a $100,000 partner

• Establish a series of on-ground projects or a section of a corridor;
• Prominent acknowledgement of partner support on site signage;
• Opportunities to engage in tree planting activities;
• Collaborative media and public relations opportunities;
• Brand and messaging exposure on all project communications.

Outcomes that can be achieved with $1,000,000 partner

• Establish a series of on-ground projects or a number of corridors;
• Prominent acknowledgement of partner support on site signage in multiple locations;
• Opportunities to engage in tree planting activities or other customised events;
• Collaborative media and public relations opportunities;
• Brand and messaging exposure on all project communications and additional promotional material;
• Cross promotional opportunities with other partners;
• Invitations to all Living Links events such as bike and bus tours.

Outcomes that can be achieved with $1,000,000 partner
Delivering Living Links

Living Links is a multi-organisation initiative with strong consultative and administrative arrangements in place and robust governance practices.

Living Links Partners
It involves the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority, Melbourne Water, South East Water, Parks Victoria, City of Kingston, City of Whitehorse, City of Maroondah, City of Monash, Shire of Yarra Ranges, City of Casey, City of Greater Dandenong, Knox City Council, Bayside City Council and Frankston City Council as founding financial partners.

Living Links also has the support of Bushwalking Victoria, Landcare Australia, Bicycle Victoria, Gould Group, Wurundjeri Tribe Land Council, Victorian Boonerwrung Elders Land Council, Bunurong Land Council and the First Friends of Dandenong Creek.

The Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority hosts and manages the operations of Living Links on behalf of the partners.

Living Links Committee
The Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority has established a Living Links Committee. The Committee has a formal charter and operates under the policies and procedures of the Authority.

The Committee provides high level management and direction for the program. The Committee is responsible for ensuring Living Links is taking the right steps to achieve the vision and has professional administration, governance, financial management and program management.

The Committee is responsible for:
• Providing strategic support and direction for Living Links;
• Overseeing the development and implementation of the Living Links Business Plan;
• Fostering collaboration between other programs, agencies and the community;
• Identifying and nurturing potential corporate sponsors;
• Promoting Living Links to potential partners and the local community;
• Overseeing program finances, reporting and accountability; and;
• Overseeing the monitoring and evaluating of Living Links performance against strategic planning objectives.

Staffing
Living Links staff are employed by the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority on behalf of the program.

Financial Management
Living Links financial transactions are managed by the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority. Financial reports are prepared on a monthly basis and presented to Living Links Committee meetings.

Funds for Living Links projects are anticipated to come from a range of sources. Individual organisations such as councils and government agencies may undertake projects from within their own budgets. Specific government initiatives and programs (such as the Australian Government Caring for our Country program) will also provide funds directly to councils, community groups or others to undertake Living Links projects.

Tailored partnerships between the Living Links Committee and others (eg. corporate partners, philanthropists, Landcare Australia Limited, government programs) will also provide funding for Living Links projects. Revenue received in this way will be managed by the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority on behalf of the Living Links Committee.

The coordination of Living Links is funded by contributions from its founding partners and a modest proportion of any investment secured from other sources. This covers the staffing and the development and implementation of Living Links strategies, marketing, monitoring and reporting.

Accountability and transparency for financial management are achieved by:
• All Living Links revenue and expenditure being managed and reported upon by the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority;
• Full financial reports being provided to all meetings of the Living Links Committee and;
• An annual audit of all Living Links finances being undertaken and results made public and provided to all organisations involved in Living Links.

On-ground works
On-ground works are undertaken or managed by various responsible and highly capable partner organisations including councils, Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water and incorporated community groups, all of which are committed to the long term vision and have vested interests in ensuring high quality outcomes for all works.

Professionals with local experience and expertise are used to ensure the best site preparation, vegetation species selection, planting technique, pathway design and construction and project timing and management to ensure optimum results.

Example financial projection
Living Links is a long term program that will progressively achieve over 100 km of new vegetation links and pathways.

The coordination of Living Links costs approximately $200,000 per year and the physical construction of new vegetation links and pathways will cost approximately $350,000 per km.

Therefore, the establishment of 4km per year will cost in the order of $1.6 million per year, totalling $40 million over 25 years.

These funds will need to come from various sources for Living Links to be successful. Councils and governments will play an important role, but substantial partnerships with private sector organisations also need to be forged.
Recording the success of Living Links

The management and success of Living Links will be closely monitored and reported progressively on the Living Links website and via an annual Living Links Report Card.

The report card will show progress on:

- Completion of pre-determined corridors (percentage of corridor completion);
- Linkages between environmental, social, cultural and/or recreational assets;
- Location of on-ground works;
- Investment in on-ground works;
- Increase in the extent of native vegetation established;
- Rehabilitation of waterways;
- Local employment.

The report card will be provided to all individuals and organisations involved in Living Links, and promoted to the media.

Acknowledgements

The Living Links program and Business Plan has developed by the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority, Melbourne Water, South East Water, City of Kingston, Shire of Yarra Ranges, City of Whitehorse, City of Maroondah, City of Monash, City of Casey, City of Greater Dandenong, Knox City Council, Frankston City Council, Bayside City Council, Bushwalking Victoria, Landcare Australia Limited, Parks Victoria, Bicycle Victoria, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Gould Group, Wurundjeri Tribe Land Council, Victorian Boonerwrung Elders Land Council, Bunurong Land Council and the First Friends of Dandenong Creek. Financial assistance from the Australian Government has also been critical to the development of this plan.
Contact

To discuss your potential involvement in Living Links, contact the Living Links Coordinator at:
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For more information, go to the Living Links website at:
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