



Responses by political parties¹ or candidates to 6 questions derived from Friends of Merri Creek Victorian Election Prospectus 2022:

Animal Justice Party

Do you:

1. Recognise the role this iconic parkland can play in the health and well-being of people and ecosystems.

Yes. The Animal Justice Party is committed to protecting, regenerating, expanding, rewilding and enhancing all ecological systems - including forests, grasslands, freshwater and marine habitats; in part by reserving at least 50% of the planet for nature. We and the Party believe that we must also adapt to climate change by welcoming nature back into our suburbs and making our towns and cities cooler with better designs, less concrete and more green spaces. Implementing biodiversity-sensitive urban design (BSUD) creates settlements that support the local ecosystem rather than replace it, which means cities are cooler and emit less heat, people are happier and more active, and species become more resilient to a changing climate and landscape. A key objective of the Animal Justice Party is to declare a climate emergency and biodiversity emergency at every level of government as the first step towards systemic change and climate justice.

2. Agree on the importance of providing access to the natural World in an urban setting through linked wildlife refuges and parkland from Wallan to Dights Falls.

Yes. The Animal Justice Party recognises that our species is just one member of a wider Earth community and supports taking direct steps to reduce the ecological impact of human populations. We also support creating human settlements in harmony with wildlife and nature through biodiversity-sensitive urban design (BSUD), transport and infrastructure, while stopping urban sprawl. We therefore support proactive measures to protect species and their habitats and to reduce or mitigate human impacts, by tackling the drivers of biodiversity loss and ecosystem decline - including unsustainable human population growth and development. The Party is also committed to regrowing greenbelts between human settlements and wildlife habitat and ceasing urban sprawl which forces surviving wildlife into urban areas. We recognise the inherent value of other animals and their right to continue living in our towns and cities. The Animal Justice Party supports maximal preservation of native bird habitat, including in residential areas. Our Education Policy seeks to implement programs that increase and support positive interactions between students and wildlife and expand opportunities for human-animal interaction in ways that benefit both.

3. Support declaration of the wallan wallan and marram baba regional parks, with boundaries as outlined in the DELWP feasibility study

Yes. The animal justice party supports a declaration of the wallan wallan and marram baba regional parks as part of its commitment to protecting, expanding, rewilding and enhancing all ecological

¹ Parties listed in alphabetical order

systems including forests, grasslands, freshwater, and marine habitats. We also support taking proactive measures, including provision of financial incentives, to restore and preserve functional ecosystems through rewilding and ensure that adequate and secure funding is provided to government agencies in all jurisdictions to properly enforce wildlife protection laws and take proactive, effective, and prompt measures to protect threatened species and ecological communities.

4. Support creating a MAC to coordinate planning and actions along the Creek and parklands

Yes. A key objective of the Animal Justice Party's Environmental Law Policy is to legally recognise the inherent rights of nature, including the right to survive and be restored - and pursue the most appropriate means of protecting these rights. This could include supporting the establishment of a Ministerial Advisory Council to develop an action plan for coordinated implementation by state government agencies. The Party is also committed to increasing citizen participation in environmental decisions, especially community groups and environmental protection organisations including FoMC, and enshrine their ability to litigate on behalf of nature.

5. Support the completion of the Merri shared trail

Yes. The Animal Justice Party recognises that Australia needs a national shift away from road transport and toward other more environmentally-friendly modes, including all forms of rail and mass transit, together with walking and cycling. This shift needs to be concurrent with changes in urban and inter-city planning and development, with the wellbeing of other animals and people factored into the design. The AJP wants to broaden the focus in health policy from just treating disease to also improving health and believes that the biggest gains in health, longevity and economy are to be gained by improving people's knowledge and access to healthy diet and exercise opportunities and would see the completion of the Merri shared trail as supporting these objectives. One of the key objectives of the Animal Justice Party's Land Transport policy is to reduce inner-city traffic by reallocating road and car park space for native habitats, cyclists, pedestrians and social connectivity and connections with nature.

6. Support measures, with specific funding, to improve water quality for Merri Creek and downstream, as identified in the FoMC Prospectus

Yes. One of the key objectives of the Animal Justice Party is to develop water management policies that are responsive to climate change, and prioritise other animals, the environment, and people over commercial interests. The Party supports increasing the number of protected water systems, as these systems are important for biodiversity. We want to promote and support water-sensitive urban design (WSUD) and biodiversity-sensitive urban design (BSUD), the use of recycled water, constructed wetlands and phytoremediation (treatment of waste water with plants), as well as waterway clean-ups. The Party also seeks to invest in further development of biodegradable products and work toward the banning of harmful plastics to reduce plastic contamination in our waterways.

See the Party's Policies on The Climate Emergency, Land Clearing, Land Transport, Urban Animals, Human Population and Planning, Invertebrates, Environmental Law, Water Management, Introduced Animals, Native Birds, Platypus, Wildlife Protection, Health, 1080, and our position statement on First Nations for further information about the Animal Justice Party's key objectives as it relates to The Merri Merri Parklands: A Prospectus for the State Election 2022.

Details of these policies can be found at the following link
https://www.animaljusticeparty.org/our_policies

Liberal Victoria

Amanda Paliouras, Liberal candidate for Preston

Merri Creek is part of our historical and cultural heritage, not only for First Nations peoples but migrants who arrived in Australia and many Australians living in the North, and exploring our beautiful landscape, unique flora and our beautiful animals, insects etc.

If elected into Preston, I would definitely want to assist further as an official MP with some leverage, to protect our environment for future generations.

Reason Party

Fiona Patten and Reason formally support and endorse each of the proposals as outlined in the prospectus.

Socialist Alliance

Do you:

1. Recognise the role this iconic parkland can play in the health and well-being of people and ecosystems.

Socialist Alliance is very enthusiastic about there being a regional park along the Merri Creek and its tributaries.

This is urgent because the developers are always trying to persuade councils to encroach on the buffer zones for the creek and with the expanding of Melbourne's urban growth boundary, there are extra development pressures along Merri Creek. If the area along the Merri Creek is developed, it will be very hard to get it back again.

The best way of preserving the area along the creek is by making it a designated regional park.

2. Agree on the importance of providing access to the natural World in an urban setting through linked wildlife refuges and parkland from Wallan to Dights Falls.

We agree about the importance of maintaining wildlife habitat and parkland in urban areas. There is an extraordinary amount of wildlife that lives in urban areas and every time that trees are cut down for various projects, the wildlife gets dislodged and often don't survive.

Preservation of the areas along the creek is a way of maintaining permanent habitat which isn't limited to small patches. Preserving a continuous length of habitat with a regional park along the length of the Merri Creek would enable wildlife to have a bigger range of food sources.

3. Support declaration of the wallan wallan and marram baba regional parks, with boundaries as outlined in the DELWP feasibility study

Yes. Socialist Alliance supports this.

4. Support creating a MAC to coordinate planning and actions along the Creek and parklands

Yes. We support a Ministerial Advisory Council and an action plan to coordinate the management of the area along the creek. This is especially important given the number of local councils involved and the pressure from developers.

5. Support the completion of the Merri shared trail

Yes. We support the completion of the Merri shared trail to give more people access to enjoy the environment of the Merri Creek, and also to provide better transport options of people from the outskirts of Melbourne to the inner city.

6. Support measures, with specific funding, to improve water quality for Merri Creek and downstream, as identified in the FoMC Prospectus

We support the proposals for the improvement of water quality, especially the toxicant treatment traps on stormwater drains from industrial area. The frequent toxic fires in the north, some of which have been close to Merri Creek, make this a pressing issue.

The Greens Victoria

Do you:

1. Recognise the role this iconic parkland can play in the health and well-being of people and ecosystems.

Support.

The Greens absolutely recognise the importance of the Merri Creek and Merri Merri parklands for the local surrounding communities and as an important area of urban biodiversity.

2. Agree on the importance of providing access to the natural World in an urban setting through linked wildlife refuges and parkland from Wallan to Dights Falls.

Support.

The Greens agree on the importance of being able to access nature in urban environments and the critical role of urban parklands and greenspace for community wellbeing and functioning ecosystems within an urban setting.

The Greens also agree that it is vital for urban parks and greenspace to be connected to enable wildlife to move around our urban landscapes. Urban creeks such as the Merri are vital natural corridors that need to be protected and restored.

The Greens comprehensive nature policy for the 2022 Victorian election can be found at: <https://greens.org.au/vic/platform/environment> and includes funding as part of a \$1 billion per year Zero Extinction Fund that includes restoring urban biodiversity in cities and towns with healthy swimmable rivers, bee and bird corridors and biodiverse urban forests and green spaces.

3. Support declaration of the wallan wallan and marram baba regional parks, with boundaries as outlined in the DELWP feasibility study

Support.

The Greens have long advocated for increasing protected areas across Victoria in all forms of parks and support wallan wallan and marram baba being declared regional parks.

Our Greens comprehensive nature policy for the 2022 Victorian election can be found at: <https://greens.org.au/vic/platform/environment> and includes a commitment to double funding for national and other parks to ensure they are well managed for issues like pests and weeds and have excellent facilities for the community to enjoy.

The Greens support the \$8.7 million per annum funding request outlined in the Friends of Merri Creek Prospectus, which would be paid from our Zero Extinction Fund.

4. Support creating a MAC to coordinate planning and actions along the Creek and parklands

Support.

5. Support the completion of the Merri shared trail

Support.

The Greens have developed a detailed plan for upgrading bike and pedestrian infrastructure in Melbourne and regional Victoria. We'll be releasing the details of this policy shortly, and within it we support the \$20 million required for the completion of the Merri shared trail.

6. Support measures, with specific funding, to improve water quality for Merri Creek and downstream, as identified in the FoMC Prospectus.

Support.

The Greens recognise that water is vital for life and Victoria needs to do more to improve water quality and increase water for the environment.

Funding for the activities requested in the Prospectus would come from our Zero Extinction Fund.

The Greens environmental policy platform also includes a ban on more single-use plastics, including coffee cups, free plastic bags, excess packaging on fruit and veg, take away containers and fruit stickers. Microbeads are being banned nationally.

Further information about our policy commitments to reduce plastic pollution can be found at: <https://greens.org.au/vic/platform/environment#waste-and-recycling>

Victorian Labor

Media release, 11 November 2022

The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment & Climate Action, Minister for Solar Homes

PROTECTING WATERWAYS SO OUR WILDLIFE CAN THRIVE

<https://www.danandrews.com.au/news/protecting-waterways-so-our-wildlife-can-thrive>

Victoria's natural environment is precious and needs to be protected from overdevelopment. From our green wedge in the suburbs to our pristine waterways – our environment is a major tourism drawcard, allows us to spend time outdoors with our loved ones and is home to our beautiful, local wildlife.

It's why we're delivering 6,500 hectares of new parkland across Melbourne – that's 3,200 MCGs worth of open space – as part of our \$315 million Suburban Parks Program.

We're planting 500,000 new trees in our western suburbs too – so families can enjoy a cooler, cleaner environment in their community.

And we've delivered great new open spaces along train lines where dangerous and congested level crossings once were. Instead of tracks, communities now have space with exercise equipment, greenery and play areas for kids.

But our environment must be protected from overdevelopment, so we'll do more.

A re-elected Andrews Labor Government will introduce planning controls on 12 key rivers and creeks in Melbourne to create wildlife corridors, protect waterways and restore the natural environment.

It'll mean Edgars Creek, Darebin Creek, Gardiners Creek, Jacksons Creek, Koonung Creek, Kororoit Creek, the Maribyrnong River, Cherry Creek, Merri Creek, Moonee Ponds Creek, Steele Creek and Stony Creek are safeguarded from any future inappropriate development – protecting these creeks from inappropriate development for local wildlife, families and communities for generations to come.

We'll also establish a \$10 million *Green Links* fund to support revegetation along our creeks, rivers, and waterways – so local councils and community groups can plant trees, help revegetate our waterways and protect our wildlife.

More than 1,800 species of native plants and 600 species of native animals live in our state's waterways. From our beloved platypus to countless birds, frogs and insects – our precious biodiversity needs them to survive and thrive.

Labor has made record investments in our biodiversity – to make our rivers healthier, protect precious native habitat and help secure the future of our waterways – and the Victorian businesses and jobs that rely on them.

We've already been delivering the *Waterways of the West Action Plan*, informed by a 50-year Community Vision, which highlights local aspirations to protect much-loved waterways in the west. In 2021, Labor made permanent planning changes to protect the Yarra River and its surrounding lands from Richmond to Warrandyte.

Statement on Merri Creek by Kat Theophanous MP, candidate for Northcote:

Our community is fortunate to be bordered by three waterways, each bringing its own unique environmental, social and wellbeing value to our community.

These are living, beathing, flowing ecosystems that must be protected.

As the Member for Northcote, I have continuously fought for greater protection and investment in the Yarra River, Darebin Creek and Merri Creek – and the wildlife that make their home here.

My family are blessed to live very close to the Merri Creek and I know how valued and vital this beautiful waterway is to our community.

It is a place where families can come together, connect with nature and is home to many unique and sensitive biodiversity values.

I have been honoured to meet and work with Friends of Merri Creek and the Merri Creek Management Committee and am immensely grateful for their support, insight and expertise.

I support their vision for the future – including ensuring there are better governance and planning arrangements in place to protect the Merri Creek and that there is an update of the Merri Creek and Environs Strategy 2009-2014.

A re-elected Andrews Labor Government has committed to introducing planning controls on the Merri and Darebin Creeks which will safeguard our creeks from inappropriate development, create wildlife corridors, protect the waterways and restore the natural environment.

Labor will also establish a \$10 million Green Links Fund to support revegetation along our creeks, rivers, and waterways – so local councils and community groups can plant trees, help revegetate our waterways and protect our wildlife.

The Andrews Labor Government has already begun planning the marram baba Merri Creek Regional Parklands with Minister D'Ambrosio launching the consultation and engagement with the community in July this year.

A Future Directions Plan is being drafted for release in early 2023. At 2,778 hectares of open space, this will be one of the largest conservation parks in Greater Melbourne. I support this work.

Labor is also working to deliver better connectivity and bridge the missing links in the Capital City Trail and Merri Creek Trail Strategic Cycling Corridor. Our \$1.2 million investment will allow planning to get underway and explore best options for the community.

The Merri Merri Parkland Prospectus is a detailed and thoughtful proposal to advance the restoration of a continuous biodiverse, open-space corridor through Melbourne's northern suburbs for people and wildlife.

Labor's commitments give certainty to the future of the Merri Creek, and provide tangible investment in its wellbeing for generations to come.

I'm pleased to support this work and if re-elected, I will continue to work collaboratively with FoMC, MCMC, local residents, my federal Labor partners and the many local councils along the Merri to maximise opportunities to improve the health of our waterways, improve community access and protect biodiversity.
