

Friends of Damper Creek Conservation Reserve Inc., Mt Waverley

18 August 2021

The CEO and staff
Dr Andi Diamond
Monash City Council
PO Box 1
Glen Waverley 3150

Dear Dr Diamond

Response to Monash Health & Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025
prepared on behalf of the
Friends of Damper Creek Conservation Reserve Inc. (FoDCCR)

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the draft **Monash Health & Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025**.

The Friends of Damper Creek Conservation Reserve believe that the Reserve plays an important part in the health and wellbeing of the citizens of Monash. In particular, the existence of a bushland park with pleasant walking trails has been a critical factor in preserving the mental health of citizens during the COVID19 lockdowns. As a location for walking, jogging, observing nature or simply a cool place for quiet contemplation, the reserve has been a real asset to the community.

The history of the reserve is an example of cooperation between a community group, the Friends of Damper Creek Conservation Reserve, the City of Monash and Melbourne Water. As such it has cemented a relationship between the community group, municipal and state authorities. Volunteer activities include planting, weeding and liaison with the Bush crew and council staff. The "Friends" group maintains strong connections with other groups both within and outside the municipality and often hosts guest speakers at its monthly meetings.

The Reserve provides many opportunities for education in the use of indigenous plants, local history and management of water flow in an urban environment. It is a natural adjunct to Council programs such as *Green Shoots* and *Gardens for Wildlife*.

The Friends of Damper Creek Conservation Reserve wish to commend the City of Monash for their efforts in maintaining the Damper Creek Conservation Reserve and fostering the Friends' group in its activities and look forward to continuing the relationship.

Douglas Scott (President) on behalf of the Friends of Damper Creek Conservation Reserve Inc.

Addressing specific parts of the Plan:

The Friends of Damper Creek Conservation Reserve (FoDCCR) consider that their volunteering activities contribute to the Health and Wellbeing of the Monash community, as it focusses on the care, protection, enhancement, revegetation and activities in Damper Creek Reserve. Please find below what FoDCCR believe are important sections of the Health and Wellbeing draft (which have been highlighted) together with our extra comments, in particular:

Pillar One: - Active and Healthy - Healthy Lifestyles

1. Active Living

The Reserve provides a valuable space for passive recreation with numerous pathways for walking, jogging and dog walking. Exercise in a passive peaceful bushland environment allows the opportunity to counter obesity and stress.

5. Mental Health

The Reserve has been particularly appreciated during the Covid19 lockdowns with many users travelling from adjoining municipalities to experience its charms. The number of visitors to the Reserve has been dramatically increased since the beginning of 2020 when the first lockdowns commenced.

6. Strong connected families and resilient young people

The FoDCCR hosts community planting days and educational guest speakers. The Reserve provides opportunities for lifelong learning through the wildlife, biodiversity and the ecological communities it contains.

The Reserve is also ideal for unstructured, adventurous activities by youth with opportunities for exploration and nature study. Youth also have opportunities to engage with the community group FoDCCR through plantings and participation in FODCCR organization

The Reserve is located close to Mount Waverley Secondary College and other educational institutions and consequently provides an ideal opportunity for environmental education.

7. Age-friendly – all age groups benefit from access to quiet bushland spaces in the middle of suburbia.

8. Built spaces – FoDCCR are actively concerned about ongoing protections of Damper Creek Conservation Reserve (through the Monash Planning Scheme) from encroachment, overlooking and inappropriate developments on land abutting the Reserve. Within Damper Creek Reserve it is possible to observe the contrast between the built form and the natural environment, how they can complement each other and how they can be in conflict.

9. Open Spaces and Green spaces

Damper Creek is a celebrated example of bushland restoration. More than fifty years ago, what is now Damper Creek Conservation Reserve was the product of a history of mixed-use farming, a tangle of weeds and a dumping ground for garden and building waste and a highly degraded watercourse, mixed with small areas of remnant vegetation. Today the Reserve is a fine example of vision and cooperation between the “Friends” group, the Monash Council and Melbourne Water. The Reserve is used frequently for passive recreation, walking, jogging and quiet contemplation. The Park Road playground is a wonderful community facility which adjoins the Damper Creek bushland.

10. Climate change and Health

The Reserve provides a bushland experience in the middle of suburbia. The effect of the canopy on daytime temperatures is easily observed when walking in the Reserve.

FoDCCR are concerned about the continued loss of canopy trees in the City of Monash and encourage a focused and active program of monitoring, replacing and increasing the number of canopy trees (in gardens, reserves and nature strips). Trees counter the “heat island” effect due to climate change, by cleaning and cooling the air. Trees offer respite to residents by providing shade and coolness in the summer. Trees can save residents money on power bills. Not only do humans benefit from tree cover but very importantly fauna is provided with habitat and the City is provided with biodiversity gains.

Pillar Two

Engaged, Confident and Connected

11. Active Community Engagement, and
12. Creative Expression and Community events - – provided by FoDCCR via meetings with guest speakers, working bees, Community Planting Days and an End of Year bbq to thank volunteers.
13. Lifelong learning – for all age groups
14. Strengthening Neighborhoods and Communities. As outlined above FoDCCR’s activities bring the community together.
15. Accessible and Affordable.

Overall, environmental ‘Friends’ groups, and the bushland reserves they care for in Monash provide considerable health and wellbeing benefits to our community. Thank you for the opportunity to respond.

Douglas Scott, President, Friends of Damper Creek Conservation Reserve Inc.