Five Mile Creek Reserve Master Plan 2015
Introduction

Five Mile Creek is a public park of approximately five hectares, located at the confluence of Moonee Ponds Creek and Five Mile Creek, off Government Road in Essendon. The Reserve is defined in the Moonee Valley Open Space Strategy as a Regional Park, meaning that it is primarily for neighbourhood use but has broader regional catchment significance due to its location along the Moonee Ponds Linear Park. Its primary classification is ‘Waterway’, and secondary classifications are ‘Nature Conservation’ and ‘Linear’.

Five Mile Creek is a tributary of the Moonee Ponds Creek. The Five Mile Creek Catchment historically extended as far as the Essendon Airport as a sequence of vegetated water holes, however urbanisation has seen most of the Creek buried within piped stormwater drains. The construction of the Tullamarine freeway and its associated drainage system has also reduced the extents of the catchment.

Five Mile Creek Reserve has a rich history (including pre-European habitation) and an active Friends’ Group, which have helped to create a tranquil green open space around the two waterways. Meandering paths within the Five Mile Creek gully are framed by extensive vegetation, creating intimate ‘bushland’ spaces which are far removed from their urban surrounds.

While the Reserve is primarily informal in nature, it also contains a playspace and a picnic area. The Moonee Ponds Creek Trail also passes through the Reserve, and is used by a large number of recreational and commuter cyclists.

Five Mile Creek Reserve currently lacks a master plan or management plan. Moonee Valley City Council’s Open Space Strategy recommends to “prepare and implement a landscape Management Plan for this reserve in consultation with Melbourne Water, taking into consideration the environmental and recreational values of this area.”
History

Five Mile Creek has a long history, and prior to European settlement was inhabited by the indigenous Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation whose silcrete tools have been found along the creek embankments. They may have also hunted and sourced food from the areas in and around the creeks.

Following European colonisation, the Essendon and Pascoe Vale area was used as grazing land and became environmentally degraded, with creek banks largely denuded. Some areas of the Five Mile Creek catchment such as Napier Park escaped clearance, but the majority of the landscape was heavily altered by western agriculture. Lacking stabilising vegetation, and with increased run-off due to urbanisation, the embankments became heavily incised due to erosion.

In 1850, the Pascoe Vale National School was established on banks of Moonee Ponds Creek near the junction with Five Mile Creek. Now known as Essendon Primary School, it moved to a site in Raleigh Street, Essendon in 1863, and is the oldest such institution operating within Melbourne.

In the 20th century the upper reaches of Five Mile Creek were largely formalised within a bluestone channel to increase its drainage capacity. This would have resulted in the loss of almost all aquatic and riparian vegetation. The Moonee Ponds Creek was also substantially altered – large sections of the creek were straightened and channelised. A portion of the Moonee Ponds Creek which formerly passed through reserve was diverted to improve drainage and the original course filled. Much of Five Mile Creek was later diverted into underground pipes, including the sections within Salmon Reserve and the Magdala Drainage Easement.

The adjacent urban fabric is a mix of single dwelling houses and larger commercial and light industrial lots which are in the process of being converted to multi-residential apartment buildings. The southern part of the reserve is bordered by the large Lionsville Retirement village complex, which has been in operation since 1966.

The ‘Friends of Five Mile Creek’ community group has undertaken revegetation work in recent years to improve the environmental health of the creek corridor. A new play space was also recently installed within the reserve adjacent to the picnic & BBQ area to improve amenity.
Planning Overlays

Land Subject to Inundation Overlay
This overlay identifies land which is subject to a 1 in 100 year flood. This ensures that developments allow for the free passage of water and do not hinder flood levels or flow velocity.

Special Building Overlay
To ensure that development maintains the free passage and temporary storage of floodwaters, minimises flood damage, is compatible with the flood hazard and local drainage conditions and to ensure no significant rise in flood level or flow velocity.

Aboriginal Cultural Sensitivity Overlay
To ensure Aboriginal Heritage is protected in areas of cultural heritage sensitivity. Areas of cultural heritage sensitivity are registered Aboriginal cultural heritage places and landforms that are generally regarded as more likely to contain Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Incorporated Plan Overlay
To coordinate development along the creek to enable full enjoyment by the public. To reserve the natural features and remnant vegetation along the creek, its bank and surrounding environment and prevent further deterioration of the creek and its environs. To improve access to land adjacent to the creek and the creek itself, to enable the extension of the linear trail along the entire creek and developing cross links to other areas.
Existing conditions and opportunities

Land Ownership
Five Mile Creek Reserve is comprised of a number of parcels of land held under separate titles:

- Crown Land
- Council Land (multiple parcels)
- Melbourne Water
- Private holding associated with the underground gas main which passes through the reserve
- A large area in the centre of the open space is also classified as road reserve, although there is no formal roadway in this area

Opportunities
There is an opportunity to liaise with the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure to have the land currently owned by the Crown transferred to Moonee Valley City Council for public open space and to consolidate titles where possible to simplify management of the reserve.

Views
There is a lush, vegetated outlook from the west of the reserve across the Five Mile Creek gully to the east. There are also water views from the elevated section of the park above the confluence of the two creeks over the Moonee Ponds Creek to the south.

Opportunities
There are opportunities to create view points on the high ground at the west of the reserve. These could incorporate seats and potentially a lookout area with interpretive signage.

There is an opportunity to create a seating area overlooking the creek confluence to maximise the views across and along the waterway.
Existing conditions and opportunities

Vegetation
The west of Five Mile Creek Reserve consists of a densely vegetated creek corridor. The vegetation in this area is a mix of exotic species (including introduced weeds) and Australian native trees and plants. The centre of the park is dominated by a stand of established peppercorn trees, which, while being an introduced species, provide valuable shelter to the picnic area.

The northern and eastern areas of the reserve consist of mown grass areas with scattered eucalypts. A large area of dense planting covers a former landfill site.

Opportunities
There is an opportunity to strengthen the plantings throughout the park to screen adjacent properties, define spaces, provide more shade for users, habitat for local fauna and improve local biodiversity.

Weed management and revegetation within the creek corridor is a high priority and will assist in management of erosion. Succession planting will allow exotic trees to be gradually removed over time, without loss in canopy. Council has commissioned a Land Management Plan to guide the revegetation process.

The opportunity also exists for community groups to participate in planting within the reserve through organised planting days.

Topography
The central area of the reserve falls gently toward the Five Mile Creek gully in the west, and Moonee Ponds Creek to the east. The strip of land at the base of the Five Mile Creek gully is subject to inundation during very high rainfall events (1 in 100 year flood), as is the sharply defined, manmade channel of the Moonee Ponds Creek.

Opportunities
The elevated areas above the creek gully allow opportunities for path connections through to Pascoe Vale Road.

The steep and degraded access path at the end of Government Road could be better aligned along a less steep gradient to the east.

Any works within the areas subject to inundation would be subject to Melbourne Water approval.
Existing conditions and opportunities

Playspace
There is a single playspace within Five Mile Creek Reserve, which is located on the elevated flat ground to the central southern end of the reserve. The play space was installed in 2012, and is aimed at an intermediate age group (4-8 years old).

The location of the playspace is not ideal, given the proximity of steep drop-offs to the Moonee Ponds and Five Mile Creeks from the playspace. It is also necessary to cross the shared trail to reach the picnic area.

Opportunities
There is an opportunity to relocate the play space away from the edge of the creek to a safer, more central position within the park, where it could be better integrated with the picnic area. This would need to be done in conjunction with realignment of the shared trail. The relocated play space could also be enlarged to reflect the regional status of the park.

The play space strategy (2013) recommends incorporating natural elements such as logs and boulders into play spaces. The relocated play space should be redesigned to incorporate nature-based play, and will need to consider Universal Access requirements.

Barbeque/Picnic Area
The existing picnic area is located within the central southern end of the Reserve, directly adjacent to the shared trail. It comprises a barbeque and several picnic tables.

The overhanging peppercorn trees provide a degree of shelter from the sun and create a pleasant environment, however they also conceal potentially fast-moving cyclists approaching along the shared trail.

Some of the furniture items are in need of renewal or replacement.

Opportunities
More closely integrating the picnic area and play space would help reduce the existing conflict with cyclists using the adjacent shared trail. This could be achieved through realignment of the shared creek trail to the east and shifting of the picnic area to a more central location.

Some tables could be retained beneath the peppercorn trees for those park users not wishing to use the play space. A shade structure could also be provided for weather protection. Like the adjacent playspace, the picnic area will aspire to Universal Access standards.
Existing conditions and opportunities

Seating and other Park Amenities
There is minimal furniture in the Reserve. Existing furniture includes a drinking fountain, an electric barbeque, several picnic settings, a bench seat and a wheelie bin. There is no existing toilet block within the Reserve - the closest toilet facility is located within Cross Keys Reserve to the north, but this is currently closed and in need of refurbishment.

Opportunities
There is an opportunity to provide additional seating associated with the new paths within the Reserve and to take advantage of views across the creek valley.

Within the creek gully itself there are opportunities to create natural seating areas using boulders and other natural materials which will harmonise with the creek setting.

The Open Space Strategy indicates that public toilets may be considered appropriate for a Regional park, however it is not proposed to provide toilet facilities within Five Mile Creek Reserve at this time. It would be advantageous to investigate the feasibility of providing toilets at Cross Keys Reserve and listing these on site wayfinding signage.

Car Parking
The reserve has a designated car park at the end of Government Road. The car park is an unsealed gravel surface with capacity for approximately 13 cars. Parking within surrounding streets is also possible. The current car park may present a challenge for those with mobility issues, due to pot holes in its unsealed surface. It also lacks a designated pedestrian path.

Opportunities
There is an opportunity to improve the surface of the car park in its current location to improve the accessibility of the park.

This could be done while also providing a pedestrian footpath link directly to the east of the car park area, in line with the existing Government Road footpath. The detailed design of the car park would need to consider tree planting, passive filtration of car park run-off through a Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) treatment, and appropriate traffic management to ensure a shaded, low-speed environment.
Existing conditions and opportunities

Bicycle Circulation
The Moonee Ponds Shared Trail follows the top of the Moonee Ponds Creek embankment, and provides a valuable cycling link within Moonee Valley. However, cyclists moving at high speeds can sometimes cause conflict with users of the picnic area and playspace, and a greater distance between these facilities and the shared trail would be desirable.

The existing shared trail also passes around several sharp bends, with steep drops into the adjacent waterway.

Opportunities
A safety audit of the shared trail conducted by Council recommended provision of a small bridge across Five Mile Creek, to allow a greater separation between the shared trail, the picnic area and play space. This bridge could incorporate low-level lighting on timers, to improve safety for commuter cyclists in the evenings and early mornings. The construction of the bridge would also reduce the issue of blind corners. The safety audit also recommended standardising the width of the shared trail to three metres.

An additional action would involve providing a shared path connection to Government Road, to provide a link to the wider road network.

Pedestrian Circulation
There is currently limited pedestrian access via sealed paths through the Reserve. In addition to the shared trail, an existing path connects Government Road to the picnic area but this is unsealed and degraded. Mown maintenance access paths provide some amenity alongside the Creek. These become boggy in winter and some are very narrow or located on steep embankments. There is an existing laneway between Pascoe Vale Road and the Reserve, however this does not connect to any internal pathway.

Opportunities
There is an opportunity to provide a sealed pedestrian pathway around the west and north of the Reserve to allow connection from Government Road to Pascoe Vale Road. The opportunity also exists to improve the amenity of existing maintenance tracks, potentially through standardisation of width and provision of an improved surface while still maintaining a ‘natural’ appearance. Consideration must be given to access of the maintenance paths through provision of steps or ramps, and potential flooding of pathways within areas subject to inundation. There is also a need to reinforce areas of pathway which are currently subject to erosion and undermining.
Pets
Five Mile Creek Reserve is designated as a dog on-leash park by Moonee Valley City Council’s local laws. This means that dogs must be kept on leashes at all times. The closest dog off-leash park is Cross Keys Reserve which is located approximately 500m to the north.

Given the sensitive nature of this site, dog off-leash areas are not appropriate.

Opportunities
There is an opportunity to provide additional amenities such as dog drinking bowls, bins for dog waste disposal and wayfinding signage which will assist with navigation to dog off-leash parks and the local law requirements.
Interpretation and Signage
An existing plaque mounted on a bluestone boulder identifies the site of the former Strathmore Primary School. There is minimal wayfinding signage and no acknowledgement of the traditional Indigenous owners of the land.

Opportunities
There is an opportunity to acknowledge the Indigenous owners of the land, and to provide information about pre-European uses of the site. This could take the form of interpretive signage on site, or activities (indigenous walks and story-telling, etc)

Signage relating to the natural environment and the revegetation process would also help raise awareness of the different ways in which parks and gardens help make Moonee Valley a more sustainable city (eg. providing habitat for native fauna and helping to mitigate the urban heat island effect)

Wayfinding signage could be provided along the shared trail in order to help users better orient themselves and locate amenities within the park, toilets, and public transport in the area.

Underground Services
In addition to its role in conveying urban storm water to the bay, a number of hidden underground services are located beneath Five Mile Creek Reserve. These have the potential to affect the layout or location of surface elements, and include gas and sewer mains, which follow the alignment of Government Road and the Moonee Ponds Creek further south.

Constraint
It will be necessary to avoid construction which will impact on existing sewers and gas mains. This includes observing minimum offsets from existing services when locating structures such as park shelters. Additional proving of services may be required to confirm their location prior to construction works taking place.
A number of factors including erosion, weed infestation, and the stated desire of the community to maintain the natural quality of the parkland have led to commissioning of a Land Management Plan to assist in future management of the reserve.

Aims & Objectives
The Land Management Plan is intended to:
- Maintain and enhance existing natural features
- Revegetate selected areas
- Maintain and enhance existing cultural features

The more specific objectives of the plan are to:
- Further revegetation works within the reserve
- Guide staged removal of some exotic trees and replacement with indigenous trees
- Guide erosion control

Proposed Actions
The Land Management Plan proposes the following actions be implemented in stages over the coming ten years for best practice land management:

1. Undertake restoration work within the remnant native vegetation
2. Develop and enhance the native grass lawn
3. Preserve the natural landform of Five Mile Creek as far as practicable
4. Undertake complete weed control inside the revegetation and management zone
5. Undertake priority weed control outside the revegetation and management zone
6. Undertake revegetation works on sites as per the Landscape Master Plan
7. Retain selected mature exotic trees including the peppercorns surrounding the existing picnic area
8. Gradually replace selected exotic trees by planting long-lived indigenous trees including River Red Gum, Blackwood and Drooping Sheoak in suitable positions.

Further Information
Refer to Five Mile Creek Reserve, Essendon
Land Management Plan
Biosis 2015
Community consultation

Information Gathering
As part of the development of the Draft Five Mile Creek Reserve Master Plan, the local community were invited to an information gathering session on Saturday 15 November 2014. This was run by Moonee Valley City Council and was held at Five Mile Creek Reserve.

Local residents were encouraged to provide their ideas and comments about the park so that this information could be used to inform the master plan. As part of the invitation to the public session, feedback forms and reply paid envelopes were provided to all local residents within 500m of the park. Residents could send in or call in with their feedback throughout November and early December.

Feedback
The comments and issues that were gathered fell broadly under the following headings (in order of priority):

- Paths and Access
- Retaining the natural character of the park
- Managing waste in and around the waterway
- Removal of weed species
- More native / indigenous vegetation planting
- Providing better access to the water
- Providing Nature Play
- Enlarging / providing additional play equipment
- Improving management / maintenance of the park
- Planting more trees
- Providing more interpretive historical signage
- Managing erosion
- Integrating the picnic area and the playspace

Consultation on the Draft Master Plan
A second round of community consultation was held in April 2015 to gauge support for the Draft Master Plan. Feedback forms were again mailed out to residents within 500m of the reserve and a second information session was held on Saturday 18 April 2015.

The feedback gathered was supportive of the Draft Master Plan, with paths and access, water quality, revegetation and amenities again rating highly with residents.

This collected feedback was used to fine tune the Master Plan to best represent the community's aspirations for the future of Five Mile Creek Reserve.

Five Mile Creek Reserve Master Plan 2015
Future Works

- Car park to be re-graded, with a designated pedestrian footpath to allow access to the park, and a swale to treat run-off
- Shared trail widened to 3m with a connection to Government Rd via the car park
- New sealed pedestrian path connection to Pascoe Vale Road via existing laneway
- New pedestrian entry to Lionsville Complex
- Existing shared path section re-purposed as pedestrian path. Reinforce steep batters around culvert to minimise erosion and improve safety of pathway
- New elevated shared bridge across Five Mile Creek, to incorporate low-level safety lighting on timers
- Existing maintenance paths along the Five Mile Creek widened and re-graded as necessary to ensure accessibility, using natural materials (logs, boulders etc) to define the edges of the paths and retain mulch and leaf litter
- Provide defined path for storm water flows within the creek gully, a culvert and rocked ford to prevent wash-out of maintenance path
- Investigate treatment options within the reserve and across the Five Mile Creek catchment to reduce litter and improve water quality
- Upgraded picnic area, with new furniture, surfacing, and potential provision of a park shelter for shade. To integrate more closely with the relocated play space
- Play space relocated away from the sharp drop-offs along the creek, incorporating informal Nature Play area to the south, tree plantings for shade, and natural barriers to the south-east
- Look-out and seating at entry point to park. Wayfinding signage and a new fence and/or bollards are also to be provided on Pascoe Vale Road to highlight the park entry and prevent vehicles from blocking the laneway
- Interpretive signage relating to history of the site, including acknowledgment of traditional owners and their use of the land.
- Central wayfinding signage and cycle parking
- Informal Boulder Seating around Creek Corridor
- Revegetation and management throughout Creek gully. Plantings to retain views and sightlines.
- Tree planting to western boundary to screen adjacent properties
- New trees to create an avenue along the existing shared trail and to shade the picnic area and playspace
- Revegetation and Management Zone for revegetation, or management of existing vegetation and erosion as per Land Management Plan
- New Trees
- Existing trees to be managed as per Land Management Plan
- Native Grass Lawn
- Existing native grasses to be protected and managed as a natural feature and demonstration plot
- Existing informal mown maintenance trails to be retained, and widened or re-graded where required. Edge with logs and boulders
- Play Space
- Relocated play space for intermediate to young children
- Nature Play
- New ‘Nature Play’ area comprising boulders and logs, amongst tree and shrub planting
- Decking
- Timber/composite decking and bridges
- Boulders
- To provide Nature Play opportunities, informal seating, visual interest and habitat
- Existing Trees
- Existing trees to be managed as per Land Management Plan
- New Trees
- Existing vegetation and erosion as per Land Management Plan
- Proposed Picnic Setting
- Proposed Bench Seats
- Proposed Informal Boulder Seating Area
- Existing Underground Gas Main (no built works above this service)
- Existing Underground Sewer (no built works above this service)
Implementation

The Five Mile Creek Reserve Master Plan is intended to act as a guiding document to direct future capital and operational works within the reserve, as funds become available. Some of the proposals within the Master Plan are reliant upon other works taking place (eg. it would only be possible to relocate the play space if the shared path was also diverted via the proposed bridge). There are also possibilities for Council to partner with community groups to achieve some of the works within the Reserve, such as planting or upgrade of picnic facilities.

Short Term
Commissioning of a contamination survey to assess possible contamination on site
Commissioning of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan
Consolidate multiple Moonee Valley City Council Titles
Improved path connections to Pascoe Vale Road Laneway, Cochrane Court and a connection to the Lionsville complex
Carpark re-surfacing and provision of footpath
Shared path connection to Carpark
Erosion control - Reinforce and retain the Creek embankments and the eroding shared path
Improvements to creekside pathways including informal seating and widening/surface improvement
Investigate measures to improve the water quality within the Creek (potential litter trap / sedimentation pond)
Advocate to Melbourne Water to undertake planting works along the Moonee Ponds Creek
New Seating Opportunities (both formal bench seats and informal boulder seating)

Medium Term
New shared bridge across Five Mile Creek
Relocated and upgraded Playspace including Nature Play
Upgraded picnic area better integrated with the Playspace

Long Term
Shared Path Upgrade - widen to 3m and improve amenity
Provision of Historical Interpretive Signage
Provision of Wayfinding Signage
Investigate improved access to Five Mile Creek Reserve and an address along Pascoe Vale Road
Provision of look-out point

Ongoing
Tree Planting
Revegetation and Weed Management
Planting to manage erosion and stabilise slopes