

Theme 5: the beginning

- First seeds:
 - Alternative community engagement models
 - Making incentives matter
- Dry season:
 - Students
 - Funding



Program development

- Seed funding emerged...
- ...and a program was born



Self-generating

- The program is ripening
- Seeds of the future soon to be cast
- What will we need?





Community participation in waterway protection and restoration

3 July 2017

Dr Stephanie Lavau
University of Melbourne

Research team



Stephanie Lavau (project leader)



Adeline Stuart-Watt (research assistant)



Rachel Mainprize (student researcher)



Dave Kendall (co-supervisor for Rachel)



Maddy Sbeghen (student researcher)



Cynthia Zhang (student researcher)

Community participation in waterway protection and restoration

Pilot research project:

- Engaging communities with catchment thinking in an urban environment (Stephanie and Adeline)

Student research projects:

- Community perceptions of ephemeral waterways in Melbourne's north-west (Rachel, co-supervised by Stephanie and Dave)
- Improving community engagement through volunteer work on waterways (Maddy and Cynthia, supervised by Stephanie)

Engaging communities with catchment thinking in an urban environment

Research objectives:

- To investigate the ways in which urban residents experience and manage water in the home and their neighbourhood
- To investigate community understandings of what it might mean to live in a 'water sensitive city'
- To identify strategies for making built environments more 'legible' and 'liveable' for residents as an urban catchment

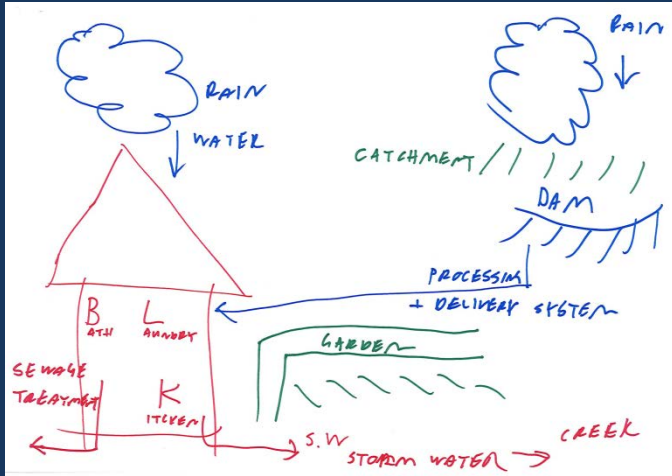
Study site: City of Moreland



Engaging communities with catchment thinking in an urban environment

- conducting 6 – 8 focus groups with residents of the City of Moreland, as 'friendship groups' (e.g. Climate Action Moreland; Merri Walkers; Friends of Edgars Creek; Brunswick Student Collective; Residents associations)
- purposive sampling strategy to access a diversity of community perceptions and experiences
- data in the form of:
 - audio recording of the focus group discussion
 - drawings and maps created in the focus group
- pilot focus group conducted on 27 June; preliminary results...

Being 'mindful' of water



Proximity & visibility:

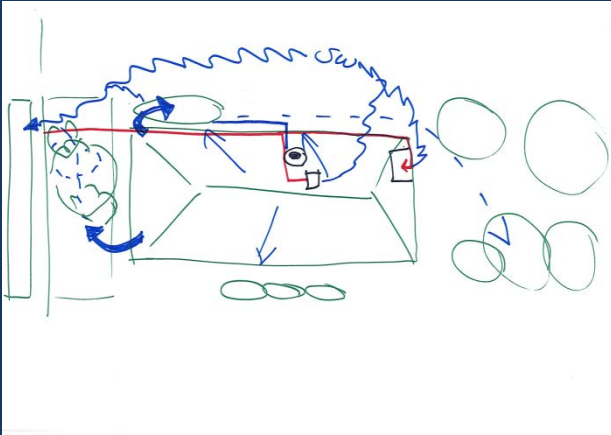
P2: "In my backyard I have a stormwater drain. Because it's close to my house I've had to be extra careful... say I'm washing my bike or whatever, I don't want that going down there. So the stormwater is closer to me, and I've got to be more mindful of that. And I'm not sure a lot of people would be... Because it's right there in my home, I pay attention."

Effort & burden:

P3: "It's treating something with respect, being mindful, abstemious... Clean water is such a precious thing and we treat it as if it's not in today's society. If people actually had to carry the water that they use, a lot of people would be using a lot less water."

P1: "I wonder how many of us used to go bushwalking when we did have to carry water, and that made us very aware. It was the heaviest thing we had to carry."

Stormwater as a local asset



P4: "I'm a little bit selfish with the stormwater that we collect and I try and use as much of it as I can on the block, when we've got water, and keep a bank of it in the soil."

P1: "It's thinking of stormwater as an asset rather than as something to get rid of... maybe it's like leaves from trees are called litter, and are swept up and disposed of, rather than utilised as an asset through composting."

P3: "What falls on my property is used on the property."



Responsibility in the neighbourhood

P4: “In the vicinity of my home ... when we go for walks we pick up rubbish and put it in the bin... That’s about caring for the waterways, and we have a huge litter problem in Moreland... When I walk down beyond Moreland, it’s much less common for me to pick up a coffee cup and put it in the bin.”

P3: “One of things is reporting leaks. Oh the tarmac’s wet there. It’s a month later and the tarmac’s still wet. Actually I really need to call that one in. Leak watch.”



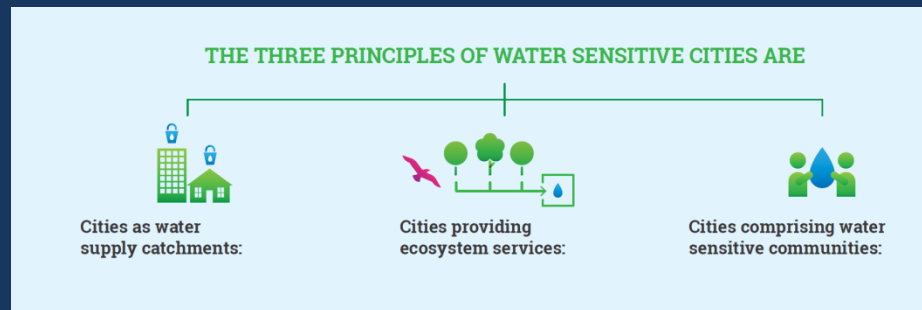
P4: “To consider myself a good citizen is to be someone who has a custodial role in the broader environment in which we live. So picking up rubbish, doing clean up days, water monitoring, for me is integral to being a good citizen.”

P3: “I agree...To be a proper citizen it’s actually important to engage and give something back and be involved.”

P2: “Thinking back to the millennium drought, there was a big thing about water policy, should we pipe water from the country to the suburban sprawl. So for me as a citizen how I engage is by voting.”

What might it mean to be a water sensitive city?

P4: “I would like it to mean water to sustain green infrastructure so that we have cool cities, green cities, but for water to also be tangible in an urban landscape, for it not to be something that is shipped in from a catchment and then piped away to a sewerage treatment plant... that people have the chance to observe and experience the joy of having water in the landscape.”



Source: Moreland City Council (2014) *Watermap 2020*

P3: “...rather than the you turn on the tap and it comes from nowhere and goes to nowhere, as if it’s nothing.”

P1: “...to be responsible members of community rather than to be isolated. I’d hate to say, ‘please don’t be a Wally with water’ without knowing there’s a lot of conversation filtering down, so that I’m not the only one, and I’m not going to make an enemy of Wally.”

Community perceptions of waterways in Melbourne's north-west

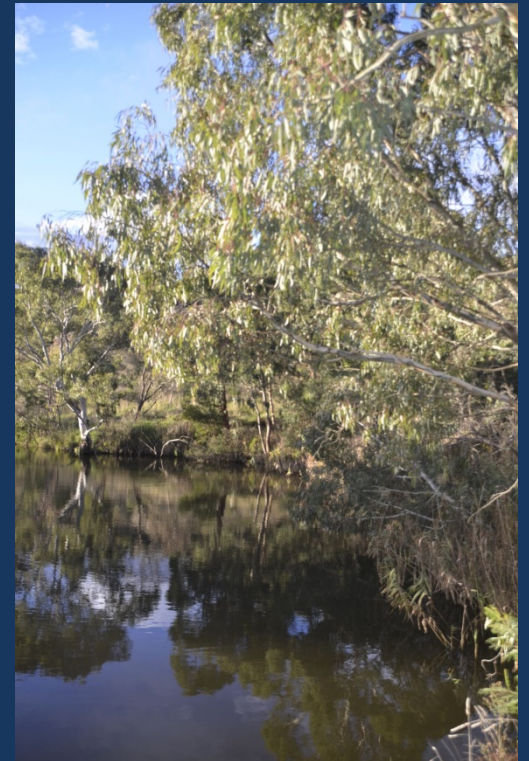
Research objectives:

- To investigate the range of community perceptions of the value and health of their local waterways
- To identify social and cultural influences on these perceptions of waterways
- To investigate community perceptions of the management of these waterways

Research method: 6-8 focus groups

Study site: Sunbury area

Fieldwork commencing this month



Improving community engagement through volunteer work on waterways

Research objectives:

- To investigate motivations for volunteering, and how these might change through their experience
- To investigate the ways in which volunteers understand the benefits of their work for waterway management, and more broadly
- To identify factors that support and constrain volunteer participation in these programs
- To identify strategies for enhancing the quality of community engagement through volunteer activities

Research method: semi-structured interviews with current/lapsed volunteers (e.g. Waterwatch programs; Melbourne Water Regional Bird Monitoring project; community representatives in decision-making processes)

Awaiting ethical approval; fieldwork to commence in August, through to April

Future plans

- Project: Measuring social benefits of river restoration and waterway improvement works
- Research grant: ARC Linkage grant
- Engagement grant: Port Phillip Bay Fund
- Strategic thinking on future directions for Theme 5: Community engagement

The researchers thank the project team, MWRPP, and Melbourne Water staff for their guidance, knowledge and enthusiasm.