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This project will measure the different ways the community values Melbourne's waterways, and how this influences their sense of place, beliefs about natural areas along waterways, normative beliefs about the condition of native vegetation that should exist around waterways and the social acceptability of Melbourne Waters' management around waterways.

Outcomes for waterway management: Development of tools that improve liveability and biodiversity conservation planning through greater understanding of the factors contributing to community appreciation and use of Melbourne Water land. Specifically, to clarify the role native vegetation plays in the 'sense of place' component of Melbourne Water's conceptual model of liveability, and the amenity value in the Healthy Waterways Strategy.

Details: The way people think about landscapes are important for their management. Researchers have identified several psychological constructs that shape the way people think about the environment, influence behaviour and drive judgements people make about management decisions. Values describe what is important to people, beliefs describe the things that people believe to be true and sense of place describes the beliefs, emotions and behaviours of people for a particular place (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2006; Lewicka, 2011; Teel & Manfredo, 2010). Recognising how and why people value different aspects of the environment can allow managers to act to minimise conflict between stakeholders and promote the social acceptability of management activities (Ives & Kendal, 2014).

Existing research on community perceptions of waterways and water sensitive urban design (WSUD) shows that different people can think quite differently about these assets (M. F. Dobbie, Brookes, & Brown, 2013; M. Dobbie & Green, 2013; Hoban & Kennedy, 2012; Kazemi, Beecham, & Gibbs, 2011). International research has shown that people can have positive attitudes to waterways, seeing it as beautiful, a place to experience nature, or that cleans water and improves property prices, but that some have negative attitudes based mainly on safety, such as fear of falling limbs, lack of surveillance, mosquitoes or dirty water (e.g. Lamb & Purcell, 2006; Wagner, 2008). People also behave in quite different ways along waterways, with nature-based recreational behaviours (e.g. enjoying scenery, seeing native animals and birds), social activities (e.g. picnics) and active recreation (e.g. walking, cycling) all common activities in Victoria (Victorian Government Department of Sustainability and Environment Melbourne, 2011).

Research has shown that native ecosystems and natural areas and their management are also perceived in different ways by the public based on their values. In particular, there are important differences between the response of people with strong intrinsic values who think nature is important for its own sake, and people with more human centred values who believe nature is important for

what it can do for people (Kendal, Ford, Anderson, & Farrar, 2015). A potentially productive strand of research in understanding the role native ecosystems can play for people in cities is sense of place, which describes the emotional, behavioural and cognitive relationship that people have with a particular landscape; native biodiversity is likely to play an important role in shaping people's sense of place, in the development of unique, local ecosystems, and understanding the role of natural places in urban areas (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2006).

One of the barriers to effectively incorporating human values into land and water policy and decision making is the different ways that managers and the general public think about values (Bentrupperbäumer, Day, & Reser, 2006). Studies have shown that managers tend to see values as things in the environment, such as biodiversity, natural resources and infrastructure. However, for the general public (and social scientists), values are a property of people – for example people value social justice, protecting the environment or personal wealth.

This project will explore the different ways that people think about Melbourne's waterways and how people's values shape their beliefs about natural areas, normative beliefs about the condition of native vegetation around waterways, sense of place and the social acceptability of management around waterways in Melbourne.

The objectives of this project are to:

- i) understand the ways the people value waterways in Melbourne,
- ii) understand peoples beliefs about natural areas along waterways,
- iii) understand peoples normative beliefs about the conditions of native vegetation that should exist around waterways,
- iv) understand peoples sense of place for Melbourne's waterways (i.e. place specific beliefs, emotions and behaviour), and
- v) understand how these relate to the social acceptability of management around Melbourne's waterways.



WATERWAY ECOSYSTEM
RESEARCH GROUP



