

Project Summary

Project 5.4

Sub-project 1: Engaging communities with 'catchment thinking' in an urban context

Concerns for climate change, a rapidly growing population, river health, and urban expansion have in recent years re-shaped urban water management in Melbourne. Melbourne Water's commitment to integrated water management represents a shift away from a narrow focus on water security, towards broader concerns with the relationship between water, urban planning, environmental health, and liveability.

This pilot research project explores the potential for improving urban residents' understandings of the city as a catchment, in order to drive practices in households and neighbourhoods that support healthier urban waterways. The project will identify strategies for rethinking community engagement in the context of the vision for Melbourne as a water sensitive city.

Aim

This research focuses on the City of Moreland as a municipality that is active in urban water management, and which has high levels of population growth and urban densification.

The project addresses the following objectives through a study of City of Moreland residents:

- 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.

Research Methods

The research project consists of a series of six focus groups with residents of the City of Moreland, recruited through existing community networks and groups. A purposive sampling strategy has been used to access a diversity of community perceptions and experiences, by including participants of differing household arrangement, home type, neighbourhood, age, ethnicity, and type and intensity of engagement with environmental and water issues.

During the focus groups, discussion is facilitated through a combination of activities and questions. Data is collected in the form of:

- Audio recordings of the focus group discussions, which are then transcribed

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- Notes taken by the facilitators
- Individually produced drawings
- Collectively annotated maps.

All data is uploaded into nVivo and manually coded through an iterative process, to identify themes and patterns.

Progress to date

Focus groups have been conducted with the following groups based in the City of Moreland:

- A climate activist group
- A university student group
- A community gardening group
- A waterways volunteer group
- A neighbourhood walking group
- A seniors group.

The audio recordings of these focus groups (approx. 10 hours in total) have been fully transcribed and reviewed. These transcripts have been uploaded into nVivo (software for qualitative data analysis), along with observation notes, maps and drawings from the focus groups. The first stage of the iterative coding process is currently underway, with the analysis to be presented in November.

Project team

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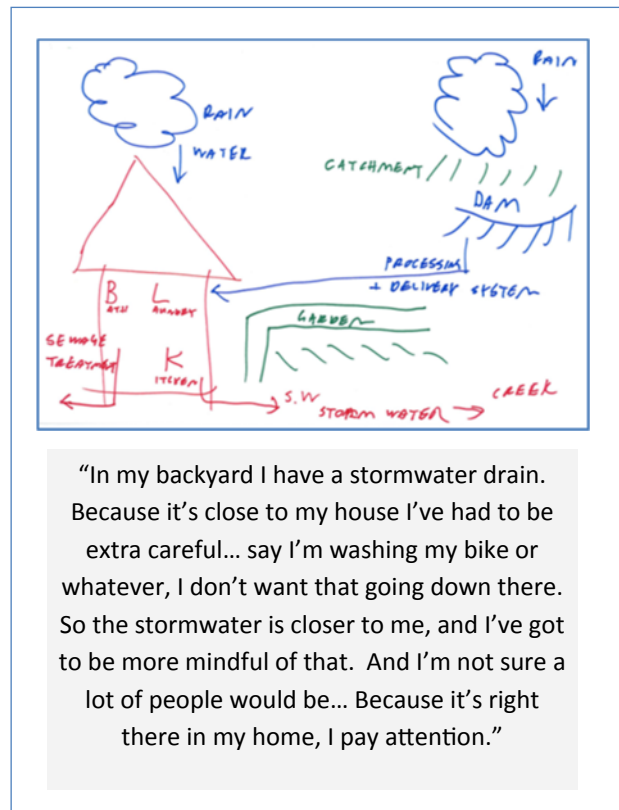


Figure 1. Drawing and excerpt of discussion from a focus group