# Yarra River litter response

This document is supported by Yarra Riverkeeper, Parks Victoria, City of Melbourne Council, Melbourne Water, Port Phillip Ecocentre and Development Victoria. Litter comes from all over Melbourne and to combat such a large problem, many groups do their part to clean our rivers and bays.

## The 50 year community vision

Our Yarra River, Birrarung is a thriving river for our thriving city. It provides a unique place of transition, both spiritually and physically. Here the river and its treasured banks and backdrops are Melbourne’s meeting place; an inclusive and iconic place for connection, celebration, recreation and learning. Our love for its vast and expanding green spaces and clean waters provide a healthy habitat for all – and exert from the Yarra River 50-year Community Vision, Melbourne Water.

## What can you do?

* Put your rubbish in a bin or take your rubbish with you if no bin is available
* Keep a bag in your car to collect rubbish
* Put your cigarette butt in a butt bin, or an ordinary litter bin
* Buy less packaging and use reusable containers

## Microplastic boat trawls (Yarra Riverkeeper and Port Phillip Ecocentre)

More than two billion microplastics flow from the Maribyrnong and Yarra rivers every year. 1,934,208,000 microplastics from the Yarra and 521,395,200 microplastics from the Maribyrnong. The Port Phillip EcoCentre captured and counted 45,000 microplastics. It is a not-for-profit, environmental group, providing a base for affiliate groups involved in activities that promote biodiversity, environmental sustainability and community action. The EcoCentre also has a Port Phillip Baykeeper who cares for the bay, as the riverkeeper does for the Yarra. The EcoCentre has completed 5.5 years of microplastic research.

## Yarra River litter: key issues and challenges

Key issues and challenges of the Yarra River’s litter include public awareness, organizational cooperation, existing collection methods, stopping litter at the source and the complexity of the litter problem. City of Melbourne has 450 solar smart bins, 2000 public litter bins, 500 cigarette bins and 230 recycling bins.

## Litter totals collected by City of Melbourne per month from 2019 to 2020, measured in meters cubed.

There are three different measurements: Yarra’s Edge, Harbour Esplanade and total litter totals. Spanning from June 2019 to June 2020, the highest amount of litter collected was recorded in April 2020 with a result of about 55. The largest amount of rubbish is collected in autumn and early winter, with the least amount of rubbish collected in August 2019, about two meters cubed in total.

## SeaBins

In the Marina, the Seabin acts as a floating garbage bin skimming the surface of the water by pumping water into the device. The Seabin V5 can intercept floating debris, macro and microplastics and even micro fibers with an additional filter. City of Melbourne collects and average of 31000 pieces of litter from the Yarra’s Edge Marina and Harbour Esplanade every month.

## Soy Sauce Fish

YRKA’s soy sauce reduction plan was created to help businesses understand the impacts of littered soy fish.

## City of Melbourne Waterway Unit

The City of Melbourne Waterway unit carries out responsibilities across Docklands. Responsibilities include allocation and licensing of berths for vessels, direct management of Melbourne City and Yarra’s Edge Marina, day to day operations of the waterways, contract management and marina leases management.

## Most littered (Macro) items

In reference to the YRKA River and flows project, the most littered macro items are polystyrene, plastic packaging, drink bottles, cigarettes, and tennis balls

## Governance

The lower Yarra River is governed by a number of government departments and authorities. Melbourne Water, Development Victoria, City of Melbourne Council and Parks Victoria all share responsibility for coordinating waterways development, provision of infrastructure and the improvement of recreation, leisure, tourism and water transport.

## The Yarra Riverkeeper Association

The Yarra Riverkeeper Association is looking for the biggest sources of polystyrene pollution. Retailers, construction, recyclers and manufacturers are being audited.

## RMIT University

RMIT University’s bottle tracking found that 80% of floating litter gets trapped in reedbeds.

## 16 Traps on the river

The Bandalong litter traps have been on the Yarra River for over 20 years! They are a fantastic defense against litter once it reaches our creeks and rivers.

## Gross Pollutant Traps

City of Melbourne maintain 70 gross pollutant traps, removing 13 tone of silt, rubbish and leaf matter monthly.

## Litter

CleanWater has reported that 36,500kg of waste was vacuumed from the river banks in a time span of two years.

## 3.3 million

3.3 million dollars are spent per year removing litter from our waterways.

## Melbourne Water

Melbourne water manages water supply catchments, supplying affordable and high-quality water. They also treat and supply drinking and recycled water, remove and treat most of Melbourne’s sewage, manage waterways, collect litter and help to create outstanding natural community spaces. 13 olympic swimming pools of silt has been cleaned from the storm water system from 2019-2020 and 0.6 olympic swimming pools of litter has been cleaned from Melbourne’s drains.

## The Yarra Catchment

The Yarra Catchment covers 4,046 Km2, The Yarra is 242km long and it is home to one third of Victorians and spans eight municipalities.

## Parks Victoria Waterways

Parks Victoria clean and maintain 20 litter traps of the Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers, assisting in keeping our rivers clean. When you leave rubbish in our streets, you send rubbish to our river and the bay. 5.5 shipping containers of litter are collected annually.

## ‘Parks Victoria litter traps collected’ from January to December in 2020.

The highest amount of rubbish was collected in May with a litter volume of almost 30 meters cubed. The bar chart holds the shape of a wave, with this being the peak. February, September, October and December had 10 or below litter collected and April, May, June and November had 20 and above litter collected, with the remainder lying in between.

## Yarra RiverKeeper

The Yarra Riverkeeper Association advocates for the River: for green spaces, for water quality, for biodiversity, for the birds, animals, insects and reptiles along the river, for good planning decisions, for the tributaries, for the parklands, for appropriate recreation; and for an understanding of our river and its role in the life of city of Melbourne

## Yarra River Blitz’s

Yarra River Blitz’s connect the community with the river to kayak walk and pick up litter. 4 tonnes equivalent to an empty shipping container of rubbish was removed during the Yarra River Blitz in February 2020.