

# Frankston to Mornington Parklands

DRAFT: Future Directions Plan



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## Acknowledgement of Country

The Frankston to Mornington Parklands are located on the traditional Country of the Bunurong people. We pay respects to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge the deep spiritual connection to Country held by traditional custodians and support this in ongoing parkland planning.

# 1 Introduction

The Victorian Government is investing \$315 million in the Suburban Parks Program (SPP) to create more than 6,500 hectares of new and upgraded parks and trails across greater Melbourne. Investment in park planning and infrastructure in regional parks will ensure future generations have access to high quality, connected, open green spaces.

In 2018, the Andrews Government committed to planning work to connect more than 1,800 hectares of parks and reserves for locals to enjoy between Seaford Wetlands and Mornington. The planning investigates how best to link Seaford Wetlands, the Pines Flora and Fauna Reserve (FFR), Studio Park, Dame Elisabeth Arboretum, Cruden Farm, Langwarrin FFR, Baxter Park, Sages Cottage Farm, Moorooduc Quarry FFR and Devilbend Natural Features Reserve. The Peninsula Link Trail is a significant active transport route that connects these parks and reserves, which are collectively referred to as the 'core parks'. The plan also considers interactions with and opportunities to link the core parks with other open spaces in Mornington Peninsula Shire, Frankston City and the wider region.

The Future Directions Plan (the plan), delivered as part of the SPP, guides investment to improve connections between the open spaces in the parklands, and create an accessible open space network for local and regional visitors. Implementation of the actions in the plan is subject to further investigation and investment. DELWP will continue to work with the parkland partnership group to identify opportunities for planning, lead agencies and investment opportunities to implement the actions in the future.

Located on the traditional Country of the Bunurong people, the plan also recognises and embeds the rights of Bunurong to be involved in the management of their own lands.

The Plan is guided by a Future Directions Statement that was developed through a consultation process with local land managers:

*The Frankston to Mornington Parklands is a chain of connected, shared open spaces that protect and enhance the abundant natural, cultural and recreational values of the area and provide a range of immersive experiences for residents and visitors to enjoy.*



**Figure 1.** Devilbend Natural Features Reserve looking south-east from Graydens Road car park

## 1.1 Purpose of the plan

Melbourne's extensive network of public open space consists of regional and local parks, gardens, laneways, civic areas, promenades, bays and foreshores, waterways and trails. Connected open spaces provide places for the community to connect with nature, exercise, socialise and play, and are important habitats for local flora and fauna. Connecting open spaces at the local and landscape scales enhances their ability to provide immersive experiences and to ensure the network is shared equitably by everyone as a community asset. Prioritising pedestrian and cyclist connections also supports social connectedness and greater opportunities for recreation and exercise, as well as helping to reduce congestion and spending on infrastructure and vehicle operating costs. Biodiversity outcomes are also enhanced through connections between fragments of native vegetation and natural habitat.

For the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BLCAC) the purpose of the plan is to enable the exploration of the questions: What are the Bunurong Aboriginal cultural values and their meanings within this project area? And how can these values be articulated with outcomes for Bunurong people?

The purpose of the plan is to create a connected and accessible network of open spaces encompassing 10 existing parks and reserves within the Mornington Peninsula Shire and Frankston City Council local government areas. The plan identifies opportunities to optimise and grow the network of parks and reserves, trails and waterway corridors to improve connections, protect biodiversity, and enable people to enjoy a more expansive and richer open space experience.

There were two stages in the development of the plan that were developed in close consultation with stakeholders:

- Identification of new or enhanced connections between the 10 core parks (to meet the objectives of the Suburban Parks Program).
- Identification of other opportunities to enhance linkages and connections to other open spaces in the local areas and the wider region. This builds upon the existing understanding of the 10 core parks to adopt a landscape-scale approach to considering the current and future needs of the open space network.

Both stages of the plan development considered physical, cultural and biodiversity links, with the overarching objectives of improved biodiversity, community and cultural connections, health and wellbeing and increased climate resilience.

Whilst the plan prioritises connectivity between the 10 core parks and their connection to the trail, it does not consider potential opportunities within these parks to enhance circulation, park maintenance, amenity etc. Each park will have a specific management plan that sets out the purpose, role and key uses of the park and future development. It is expected that actions outlined in this strategy may prompt a review of the park management plans to reflect potential opportunities in light of improved connections to the wider network of open space.

## 1.2 Engagement overview

The plan has been developed in close collaboration with Frankston City Council, Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, Parks Victoria, the Department of Transport, former Port Phillip and Westernport CMA, Melbourne Water and the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, who together form the Parkland Partnership Group (PPG). The first phase of engagement (May–Sept 2021) with the stakeholders aimed to identify information on strategies and plans that intersect and relate to the parklands and support the development of the plan's goals and strategic direction. An online workshop (June 2021) between the stakeholders helped to define the project's terms of reference, a draft Future Directions Statement for the parklands and focus areas for detailed analysis.

The detailed analysis was discussed with the stakeholder group in a second workshop (Nov 2021) to refine the Future Directions Statement and assess opportunities for linking the parklands at a site, local and regional scale. Individual meetings (Sep–Oct 2021) were also held with the stakeholders to discuss specific strategies and

actions relevant to land managed by each project partner. Workshops were held in March and April 2022 to refine and prioritise parkland planning actions for inclusion in the plan.

Alongside this engagement, Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation were engaged by DELWP to undertake Cultural Values Mapping report for Frankston to Mornington Parklands to collate record, document and map cultural values and traditional knowledge of the parklands area. This information has informed the development of the Future Directions Plan.

Engagement with the community is scheduled to take place in May–June 2022 to seek feedback on the draft Frankston to Mornington Parklands Plan. The final plan will be released in August 2022.

## 2 The parklands

The Frankston to Mornington Parklands are situated on Bunurong Country.

The Parklands are located on Bunurong Country. Bunurong Country is a sentient being that Bunurong people belong to. Country needs to be cared for and nurtured, and in turn it can care for and nurture the people that belong to it. In turn however, if it is neglected, so too become its people. Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation invite the current and future communities of this region to join them in caring for their Country and becoming part of these places.

The Parklands were first identified as the 'Frankston Parklands' in *Melbourne 2030*, the 2002 strategic plan for growth and development in metropolitan Melbourne and reinforced as a priority in the *Open Space for Everyone* strategy. The Frankston Parklands were an amalgamation of several opportunities and actions identified in the Parks Victoria *Linking People and Spaces* strategy (2002). The intent was to form a continuous network of open space links and trails between existing parks and reserves around the coastal urban environment, from Carrum to Mornington in the northern peninsula. Several Council-led projects have been developed such as the Peninsula Trail missing links projects and the planned connection from Moorooduc to Mornington. However, in 2018 the Victorian Government renewed their attention on the delivery of the connected parklands through the Suburban Parks Program and the delivery of this plan.

### 2.1 The parklands

Frankston to Mornington Parklands is centred around the regional active transport route provided by the Peninsula Link Trail as a north-south spine, linking 10 diverse parks and reserves, from a local sports ground, to a popular sculpture park, and a variety of regional flora and fauna reserves, that together create a network of parks that service the coastal communities of the northern Mornington Peninsula along Port Phillip Bay.

The parks and reserves that make up the parklands sit along the alignment proposed in *Melbourne 2030* and cover more than 1,800 hectares, stretching from Seaford to Tuerong. The area is linked to the wider Metropolitan region via the Eastlink Trail (from Dandenong to Ringwood) and the Bay Trail (from Seaford to Port Melbourne).

As one of south-east Melbourne's longest continuous shared-user paths, the Peninsula Link Trail is a valuable existing asset that can be leveraged to deliver greater access to high quality open space within the Frankston, Mornington, and Langwarrin communities. Currently the trail connects the CBD to the peninsula, connecting to the existing Dandenong Creek Trail in the north and ending at the Moorooduc Tourist Train adjacent to the Mount Eliza Regional Park to the south. Along this route the trail takes in wetlands, parklands and natural bushlands, passing through parks of all shapes and sizes, which contribute a range of open space opportunities to users from both the local area and across the city.

Ten parks have been identified as preliminary nodes in the creation of an extended parkland system between Frankston and Mornington. These parks are Seaford Wetlands, the Pines FFR, Studio Park, Dame Elisabeth Arboretum, Cruden Farm, Langwarrin FFR, Baxter Park, Sages Cottage Farm, Moorooduc Quarry and Devilbend Natural Features Reserve (Figure 2).





Figure 2. The Parklands

### A diverse set of parks

There is a diversity of uses and functions across the 10 core parks. These can be broadly classified into predominately passive recreation and ecological usage, tourism and civic usage, or sports and play usage (Figure 3). The parks predominately with passive and ecological functions include areas of remnant bushland, support important vegetation communities and provide habitat for a wide range of native animals and plants including threatened and vulnerable species.

Tourism and civic functions provided by several of the parks include pay-to-visit gardens providing opportunities for dining, functions, and historic tours (e.g., Cruden Farm, Sages Cottage Farm).

Baxter Park provides a diverse range of activities, ranging from sports and play, walking trails in the nature reserve in the north to organised sports, horse riding and a dog-free roam area.



**Figure 3.** Classification of core parks by their primary function

### Visitation to the core parks

An analysis of mobile phone event data within the area surrounding the parklands was undertaken across 22 months to understand the way in which people use and move around the open space network. These dates cover a range when several COVID-19 lockdowns impeded movement through the city, however the values still give an indication of the extent of visitation relative to each park.

The analysis found that visitation is uneven across the parklands. This reflects several factors:

1. The degree and quality of connection and ease of access to the core parks
2. The reservation purpose of the park – Baxter Park provides a wide range of active sport and other facilities and is heavily used by the community. In contrast, Cruden Farm (which is comparable in total area) is privately-owned, with only a proportion of the property only to the public during relatively restricted opening hours.
3. The impact of COVID-19 restrictions during periods of lockdowns in 2021 and 2022. Devilbend Natural Features Reserve is more than 5 kilometres from major population centres, so had a very limited visitor catchment during the strictest periods of lockdown. The relatively low visitor numbers for Devilbend are also likely to reflect the lack of direct, safe off-road cycle paths or public transport connections to the park.

These metrics support decision-making on how best to connect the parklands and manage recreation and environmental values. For example, there are opportunities to consider the type of activities undertaken at each park, both now and into the future, to optimise visitor numbers and activities across the open space network and at different times of the day and year. There are clear imbalances between open space and visitor numbers at peak times and a need to manage visitor pressures through distribution/opportunities and access across the network through careful planning and implementation. These considerations will be more important as population and visitor numbers grow over the next 20 years.

**Table 1. Visitor analysis – total number of visitors to each core park between August 2019 and May 2021**

<b>Park name</b>	<b>Total visits to the park</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>
Seaford Wetlands <sup>1</sup>		158
The Pines Flora & Fauna Reserve	90,343	240
Studio Park	9,797	8
Dame Elisabeth Arboretum	674	1
Cruden Farm	9,974	53
Langwarrin Flora & Fauna Reserve	20,886	214
Baxter Park	91,267	59
Sages Cottage Farm	5,843	13
Moorooduc Quarry Flora & Fauna Reserve	3,914	27
Devilbend Natural Features Reserve	18,981	1005 <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Seaford Wetlands Rejuvenation Project is a separate project funded through DELWP Suburban Parks Program and led by Frankston City Council'

<sup>2</sup> An additional 33 ha area designated water supply reserve within reserve boundary that is managed by Melbourne Water.

### 3 Context

This section provides an overview of the context of the plan. It includes an overview of Bunurong values, a summary of the strategic context and key drivers for the plan.

The Aboriginal cultural values of the Bunurong people have been assessed and recorded during this process. Bunurong people define their Aboriginal cultural values as follows:

Aboriginal cultural values are about things that really matter within a culture like connections and making meanings. Aboriginal cultural values are about respect to the old people and defending what the old people would want, through both traditional and contemporary Bunurong perspectives (Dan Turnbull, BLCAC).

During this assessment, key themes relating to their values were expressed by Bunurong Elders including:

- People – all people are important in Bunurong Country, but we need to respect, understand and recognise the past to move forward.
- Place – within Bunurong Country, there are places of significance that are important for connecting community. These places have both tangible and intangible dimensions. Within this theme there was also a discussion of pre-colonial travel routes within the project area.

Country – Bunurong Country is a sentient being that requires caring for. The Bunurong Elders welcome the broader community to join them in caring for Country and becoming stewards of the environment.

Throughout the history of the Bunurong people, there has been significant upheaval that has resulted in the dislocation of Bunurong people from their homelands. The events of the colonial era (kidnapping, killing and disease) have meant that Bunurong people were often disconnected from some aspects of their classical culture. During interviews with the Bunurong Elders it became apparent that the rejuvenation of various cultural practices is of considerable significance to Bunurong people, as are the values of unity and community. As an extension of this, several recommended actions are included below:

- BLCAC elders would like to note that they do not condone the destruction of any part of their Country and the avoidance to any negative impacts on their Country should be the priority for any project.
- BLCAC biocultural knowledge is used within this project area, for instance in any future educational/interpretative material.
- BLCAC artists be used regarding design and artwork within the activity area.
- BLCAC elders are interested in the connectivity between these spaces as having potential as a teaching and gathering tool for the area.
- The establishment of gathering places in specific parks to both enhance them and to incorporate cross-cultural training events.
- BLCAC elders would like to see that any revegetation works involve BLCAC species of significance and (potential) training and employment for BLCAC staff (NRM team).
- BLCAC elders have also noted the limitations of this form of high-level report and request that as the detailed planning for each park or open area progresses that further detailed cultural values assessments take place.
- BLCAC also note that where possible (in the case of public land in particular), in the long term BLCAC would like this land returned. In the meantime, while BLCAC builds capacity, various other land managers may continue to assist in caring for Bunurong Country.
- BLCAC would also like to emphasise that the procedural rights of Bunurong people through the BLCAC should have priority as rightsholders over the rights of stakeholders within these spaces.
- BLCAC would also like to see Bunurong naming and language incorporated throughout the broader project area.



Lakeisha Clayton, Bunurong, Mununjali and Muthi Muthi woman. Today Lakeshia lives in Point Cook and works for the Bunurong Land Council as part of the heritage unit. *“When I was painting this piece, I thought of people gathering around water in the landscape, and how water creates and divides our Country.”* Lakeisha Clayton, March 2022.

### 3.1 Strategic context for the parkland plan

Parks, waterways and open spaces are important to all of us. They are where families create memories and where we connect with nature and each other. Green and open spaces provide habitat for our native plants and animals, support healthy rivers and creeks, and help us tackle climate change.

The importance of open space to the community and the environment is reflected in *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050*, the Victorian Government’s plan to manage growth in the city and suburbs to the year 2050. It seeks to integrate long-term land use, infrastructure and transport planning, and, in doing so, meet the city’s future environmental, population, housing and employment needs. It sets a policy direction to strengthen the integrated metropolitan open space network (Policy 6.4.2) and sets the foundation for the development of *Open Space for Everyone*, the new metropolitan open space strategy.

*Open Space for Everyone* provides a strategic framework (Figure 4) and vision for open space across Metropolitan Melbourne that guides the planning of the Frankston to Mornington Parklands. The vision for open space is:

*‘Melbourne is a city in nature with a flourishing and valued network of public open space that is shared and accessible by everyone.’*

This vision is supported by strategic directions that aim to:

- Create a network connected at the local and landscape scales to better protect biodiversity
- Reduce the fragmentation of habitat and enable people to enjoy a more expansive and richer open space experience
- Deliver open space that creates a city in nature and that enhances the enjoyment of nature, connections with others, appreciation of quality design and amenity of a cooler greener city as part of everyday life
- Equitable access to the parks network shared by everyone as a community asset we can all access, enjoy and benefit from, regardless of age, gender, ability or location.

*Plan Melbourne* also identifies a need for residents to be able to live locally, through the creation of *20-minute neighbourhoods*, which are accessible, safe and attractive local areas where people can access most of their everyday needs within a 20-minute walk, cycle or local public transport trip. Research by the Heart Foundation (cited in *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050*) indicates living locally will make Melbourne healthier and more inclusive.

The Frankston to Mornington Parklands Future Directions Plan is a regional response to the strategic direction set out in *Open Space for Everyone*, and ultimately *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050*.



Figure 4. Melbourne metropolitan open space strategic framework (from Open Space for Everyone)

## 3.2 Key drivers for the plan

The plan has been developed to improve liveability and help protect biodiversity across the region. The following sections outline the key drivers that have shaped the plan.

### Inequity in access to open space

Open space is a key contributor to Melbourne's liveability, but its distribution is not equal across the Melbourne metropolitan area<sup>3</sup>. The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) found that the provision of open space varied significantly for the local government areas across the city, ranging from 14 m<sup>2</sup> to 107 m<sup>2</sup> of public open space per person<sup>4</sup>. A person's location, age, gender and ability among other attributes, can limit their access to Melbourne's open space network.

The historic growth and geographic context of the northern Mornington Peninsula has created an open space network that is patchy and disjointed. The VEAC study found that Frankston City and Mornington Shire provide approximately 58 m<sup>2</sup> and 49 m<sup>2</sup> of open space per resident respectively, which is reasonably close to the metropolitan average of 59 m<sup>2</sup><sup>5</sup>. However, several areas, including Mount Eliza, Frankston South, Frankston Central and Langwarrin, have very limited access to open space. In some of these areas more than 60% of residents do not have easy access to open space (defined as open space within 400 m walking distance).

A detailed analysis of open space accessibility (as distinct from provision of open space) by Mosaic Insights found that some locations within the region have very limited access to open space within easy walking distance of their home<sup>6</sup>. For example, in Sandhurst less than 20% of people have access to public open space within 400 metres of their home. Access in areas such as Mount Eliza is constrained by topography as well as a lack of connectivity to open spaces, with more than half of residents in certain areas unable to reach public open space within 400 metres of their home. Areas of Somerville, Tyabb and Hastings, bordered by the urban growth boundary, do not have sufficient public open space within their localities, leaving many residents with poor access to public open space.

### Population growth and increased density

Melbourne's population is forecast to grow from 5 million people in 2018 to 9 million in 2056<sup>7</sup>. This will create increased demand for housing, with almost 1.9 million new dwellings needed. Increasing population will increase the demand for open space, and increased housing density is likely to reduce the provision of private open space, leading to a greater role for public parks and reserves. In the absence of investment in the open space network the provision of open space will decrease and inequity in access will worsen.

Between 2016 and 2041, the population for Frankston City is forecast to increase by 17%<sup>8</sup> and – for the same time period – the population for Mornington Peninsula Shire is forecast to increase by 13%<sup>9</sup>. Housing (and population) densities are forecast to increase in both municipalities to accommodate the growth in population. Additionally, the catchment for the parklands includes the rapidly growing south-east growth corridor, which is forecast to eventually accommodate 230,000 additional residents<sup>10</sup>. The visitor analysis described in Section 2.1 showed that 11% of all visitors to the core parks live in the City of Casey (Figure 5). Similarly, the Mornington Peninsula experiences a tourism surge each summer as visitors are drawn to the wineries, beaches, and other local attractions. This has been made more accessible with the construction of EastLink and Peninsula Link.

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<sup>3</sup> In 2011, the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) completed a metropolitan Melbourne investigation study

<sup>4</sup> Victorian Environmental Assessment Council, 2011, Metropolitan Melbourne Investigation: Final Report

<sup>5</sup> Victorian Environmental Assessment Council, 2011, Metropolitan Melbourne Investigation: Final Report

<sup>6</sup> Mosaic Insights, 2020, Activating schools and golf courses to increase open space provision, <https://mosaicinsights.com.au/allowing-public-access-to-schools-and-golf-courses-could-deliver-30-million-of-health-and-community-benefits/>

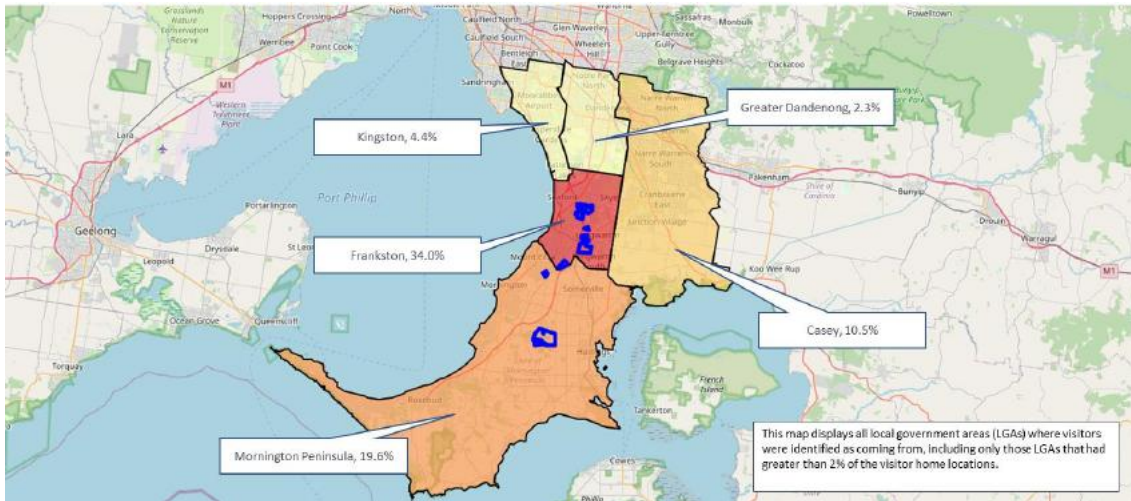
<sup>7</sup> Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning 2019 Victoria in Future, 2019

<sup>8</sup> <https://forecast.id.com.au/frankston/population-summary>

<sup>9</sup> <https://forecast.id.com.au/mornington-peninsula/population-summary>

<sup>10</sup> Growth Areas Authority (now Victorian Planning Authority), 2012, Growth Corridor Plans: Managing Melbourne's Growth





**Figure 5.** Approximate home location (LGA) of visitors to the core parks during the period of analysis

The south-east growth corridor incorporates land historically outside the urban growth boundary to be developed over the next 20 to 40 years to accommodate a rapidly growing population (the population of Casey is forecast to grow by 41% between 2022 and 2041<sup>11</sup>). Demand for open space within the northern peninsula is likely to grow in the short-term as newly established areas take time to build their own integrated open space networks. In the long-term, demand will also increase as people seek alternative formal and informal recreational opportunities to those provided by their local open space networks. The capacity of trail heads and car parks for visitors from outside the local area and increased traffic along roads connecting the growth area and the parklands need to be considered.

Population growth and increased pressure on open spaces (and other community infrastructure) is not evenly distributed. Some areas, such as the Frankston Metropolitan Activity Centre (MAC), are expected to double their population by 2041, with other areas experiencing only slight population increases (or even decreases in some cases). Beyond the Frankston MAC, areas in the northern part of the study area and along the coastline are expected to see the largest growth within the northern peninsula<sup>12</sup>.

Beyond population growth, shifting demographics will influence the demand for certain types of activities and functions within the parklands. Both the Mornington and Frankston populations will age over the next 20 years, with a 19% and 31% increase in retirement age population respectively. Open space accessibility, design and provision must consider and address universal design and different perspectives of safety to accommodate and provide for all members of the community.

### Community health and wellbeing

Open space is important for increasing active living, tackling climate change and improving physical health and mental wellbeing<sup>13</sup>. Though the overall quality of life, health and wellbeing in Victoria is very good by national and international standards, the health status varies across the state. Access to open space can help lessen inequality through spaces that are equally accessible to all. The Coronavirus (COVID-19) State of Emergency has further highlighted the crucial importance of access to safe, green and blue open space as part of a broader public health. It has reinforced the benefit the community gains from having easy access to open space that they can easily walk or cycle to close to their homes.

The percentage of adults engaging in sufficient levels of physical activity is below the Victorian average in both Frankston and Mornington and residents are experiencing higher levels of psychological distress<sup>14</sup>. The

<sup>11</sup> <https://forecast.id.com.au>

<sup>12</sup> <https://forecast.id.com.au>

<sup>13</sup> Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2019 – 2023

<sup>14</sup> Public Health Information Development Unit <https://phidu.torrens.edu.au/about-phidu>

community health and wellbeing plans for Frankston<sup>15</sup> and Mornington<sup>16</sup> both identify access to public open space as key to enhancing mental, social and physical health of their communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed how and when people are active. The pandemic made clear the importance of nature and open space in creating a robust community that can cope with societal lockdowns and be active despite closures of gyms and restrictions on organized sports. In the northern peninsula, and generally across Australia, the pandemic saw accelerated demand for adventure sports, recreational cycling and walking loops. Cycling as a pastime has become increasingly popular over the past two decades<sup>17</sup>, with a noticeable uptick during the COVID-19 pandemic as people sought opportunities to access nature within the limitations of lockdown requirements. This has prompted both Frankston and Mornington Peninsula Councils to consider how to accommodate the growing popularity of cycling sports including mountain biking, trail riding and BMX. The Mornington Peninsula Shire is developing a Recreational Facilities for Mountain Bike and BMX Strategy<sup>18</sup>.

These changes in lifestyle and recreational habits will have implications for access to open space and the types of facilities and experiences that are offered in the open space network. It will also require planning of open space networks to provide multifunctional uses that support a wider range of activities to meet current and future demand.

### Healthy biodiversity

The northern peninsula sits within the Gippsland Plain bioregion, and Western Port Biosphere Reserve. While much of the land has been heavily modified to enable agricultural and urban development and activity over the past half-century, there still exists significant natural values and a diversity of indigenous flora and fauna. These biodiversity and natural values are concentrated within the parks and open spaces of the area, including the many waterways and foreshore areas of Port Phillip and Westernport. This abundant, biodiverse landscape provides areas for the local community and visitors to enjoy nature, relax and find peace within the urban environment.

Public land managers maintain and enhance the ecological values and biodiversity of land throughout the area included in the plan. Management is guided by strategies such as the Victorian Government's *Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037*<sup>19</sup>, Parks Victoria's *Nature Conservation Strategy*<sup>20</sup>, Mornington Peninsula Shire's *Biodiversity Conservation Plan*<sup>21</sup> and Frankston City Council's *Biodiversity Action Plan*<sup>22</sup>.

Biodiversity supports ecosystem processes like stormwater filtration, pollination, nutrient cycling, pest regulation, soil health, seed dispersal and carbon sequestration. Where only fragments of native vegetation and natural habitat remain, our parks, gardens, waterways and urban forests support our remnant biodiversity. Ecosystem biodiversity is particularly effective where we can keep fragments (as large as possible) connected with wildlife links and blue-green corridors. As greenfield urban development expands, we lose biodiversity and fragment the remaining native vegetation.

Vegetation clearing and other human impacts on land and waterways since the expansion of the city along the peninsula has led to habitat fragmentation and degradation. Despite this, the Frankston and Mornington council areas still retain important biodiversity values and support a range of ecosystems and species. Many of the biodiversity features in the northern peninsula are found within the parklands, which continue to provide habitat for significant flora and fauna including Langwarrin Flora and Fauna Reserve, the Ramsar-listed Seaford Wetlands and Pines Flora and Fauna Reserve.

Improving connectivity between the parklands can support biodiversity by providing stepping-stones between fragmented vegetation patches and establishing new diverse urban ecosystems. These open spaces are currently a haven for some of the peninsula's most valuable wildlife. The 10 core parklands are home to species

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<sup>15</sup> Frankston Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021

<sup>16</sup> Mornington Shire's Our Health and Wellbeing Plan

<sup>17</sup> Transport for Victoria, 2017, Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018-28: Increasing cycling for transport

<sup>18</sup> Mornington Peninsula Shire 2021, Recreational Facilities for Mountain Bike and BMX Strategy ([shape.mornpen.vic.gov.au/mountain-bike-and-bmx-strategy](https://shape.mornpen.vic.gov.au/mountain-bike-and-bmx-strategy))

<sup>19</sup> DELWP, 2017, Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037

<sup>20</sup> Parks Victoria, 2021, Nature Conservation Strategy for parks and reserves managed by Parks Victoria

<sup>21</sup> Ecology Australia, 2019, *Mornington Peninsula Shire Biodiversity Conservation Plan*

<sup>22</sup> Frankston City Council, 2021, *Biodiversity Action Plan 2021–2036*

such as the Southern Brown Bandicoot, the Short-beaked Echidna, and the endangered Growling Grass Frog. A well-connected system of open spaces enhances the resilience of local ecosystems and provides critical habitat for native flora and fauna.

### **Climate change, resilience and sustainability**

Melbourne is expected to become hotter and drier and experience extreme rainfall events and more frequent and intense heatwaves through climate change<sup>23</sup>. Though all Metropolitan Melbourne will experience climate change, areas in the north, west and south-east of have a particularly high vulnerability to heat. Hotter and drier areas will be at higher risk of heat stress and heat-related illness.

Parks play an important role in increasing resilience and adaptability to these events. Increasing the amount of green space through linkages and supporting the ecological functions of the parklands can aid in lowering urban temperatures. Irrigation, healthy waterways, water bodies, canopy shade and evapotranspiration from trees and other vegetation provide a cooling effect that moderates the Urban Heat Island (UHI), enhances human comfort and reduces energy demand. This cooling can provide relief from heat stress, which can be particularly crucial for hotter areas as well as for the more vulnerable members of the population.

Similarly, during rainfall events green spaces and green surfaces slow and filter the run-off events, which helps improve water quality, and reduce storm water run-off, flooding, and waterway pollutants<sup>24</sup>. Not only does this help to protect our communities from local flood events, but these spaces can also reduce the need for costly stormwater treatment by retaining or slowing the flow of precipitation reaching the ground and diverting it to stormwater harvesting facilities<sup>25</sup>.

### **Economic benefits**

Open space can have economic benefits for communities and individuals within Metropolitan Melbourne. Melbourne's parks, gardens and waterways are central to efforts to attract visitors to Melbourne, who will spend an estimated \$25 billion by 2027<sup>26</sup>. Open space can sustain and drive employment across a diverse set of industries, including environment and land management, tourism, recreation and many others. Close proximity to appealing open spaces can increase property value and provide millions of dollars of amenity value.

High quality open spaces are one of Melbourne's most well-known attributes and are consistently ranked as a central driver for visitors to the city from interstate and overseas. At a regional level, parks, gardens and waterways attract visitors from the local community and further afield, delivering economic benefits through:

- Increased expenditure by visitors
- Rising property values
- Job creation
- Transport and health care savings
- Carbon sequestration
- Avoided pollution (including carbon and stormwater pollution).

A 2019 study undertaken for DELWP conservatively estimated the economic benefits of just four benefits of open space in the City of Moreland would equate to nearly \$100 million a year (Natural Capital Economics, 2019).

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<sup>23</sup> Greater Melbourne Climate Projections 2019

<sup>24</sup> Davern et al., 2016

<sup>25</sup> CSIRO, 2005

<sup>26</sup> Destination Melbourne

## 4 The parklands plan

The parklands plan has three elements:

- The Future Directions Statement
- The strategic framework
- Actions

### 4.1 Future directions for the parklands

The plan provides a framework to make informed decisions on how to optimise and grow the network of parks and reserves, trails and waterway corridors to improve physical connections, protect biodiversity, and enable people to enjoy a more expansive and richer open space experience.

In collaboration with core public land managers in the area, a Future Directions Statement was developed that envisages the following:

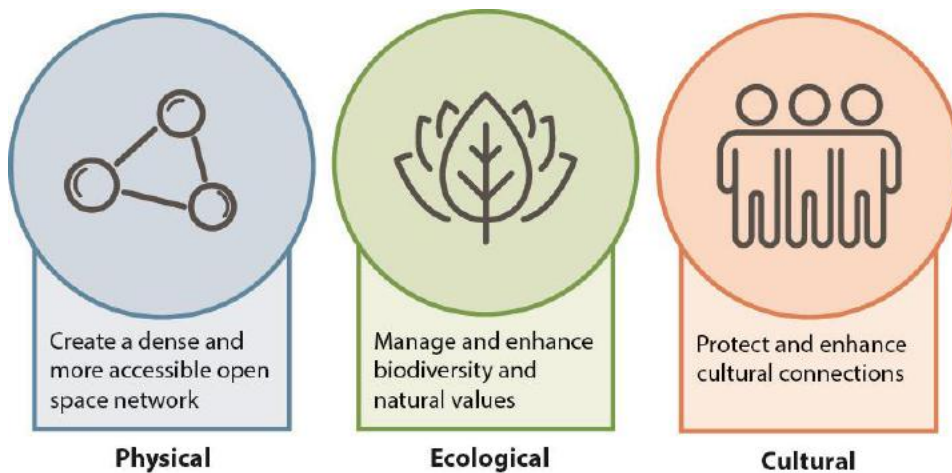
*'The Frankston to Mornington Parklands is a chain of connected, shared open spaces that protect and enhance the abundant natural, cultural and recreational values of the area and provide a range of immersive experiences for residents and visitors to enjoy.'*

Increased connectivity between the parklands will provide much needed access to open space in a rapidly growing area through the development of new links and bridging of gaps within the existing network. Residents will be able to more easily access the open spaces that provide them with opportunities for recreation, socialisation, and connection with nature. They will be able to move between the core parks without being dependent on private cars to do so. The connected parklands will enhance the existing biodiversity values and increase the resilience of the local flora and fauna. Additional tree canopy cover will also provide urban cooling effects for the community and native wildlife in the face of increasing temperatures.

The future direction of the parklands has been framed around three connective elements: physical, ecological, and cultural connectivity. The following section outlines this strategic framework and how it applies to the parklands, their local connectivity, and their regional connectivity. This framework is used to guide the actions of the plan to deliver on the vision for the parklands.

### 4.2 The strategic framework

The plan is underpinned by connectivity across the cultural, ecological and physical elements of the parklands. These three *connective elements* form the basic organising framework for informing the strategic direction of the plan (Figure 6).

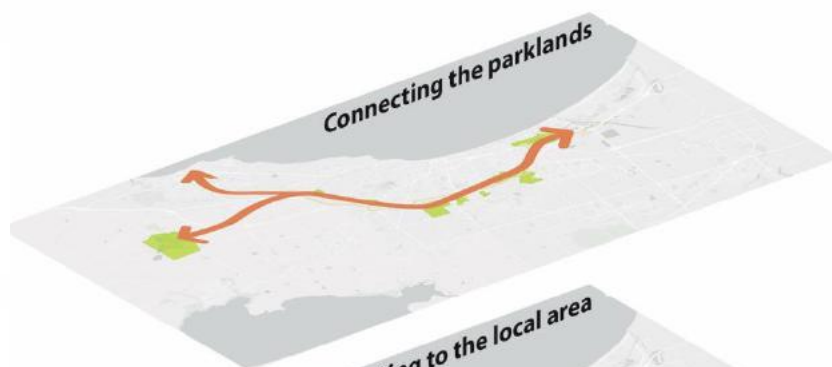


**Figure 6.** *The three connective elements considered in the plan.*

The translation of these connective elements into actions for informing the development of the parklands is framed through three *scales*, which are illustrated conceptually below in Figure 7.

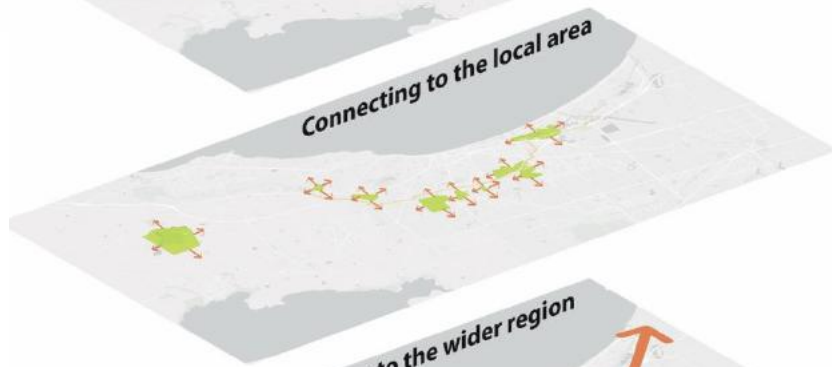
**Connecting the core parks**

These actions are focused on connectivity between the 10 core parklands and their connection to the Peninsula Link Trail



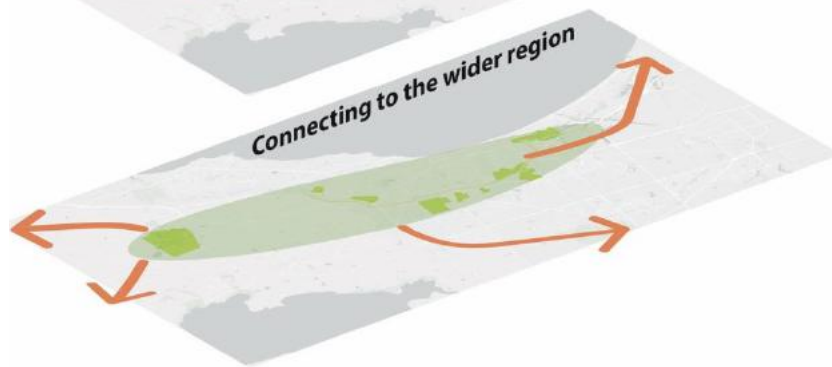
**Connecting to the local area**

These actions are focused on opportunities to provide greater connectivity between the core parklands and the local community. This also includes the connection with other existing open spaces outside of the core parks within the Frankston City and Mornington Peninsula Shire local government areas.



**Connecting to the wider region**

These actions are focused on opportunities for enhancing the regional connectivity between the core parklands and the wider adjacent regions and greater Melbourne.



**Figure 7.** *Three spatial scales of connections across the parklands*

### 4.3 Actions

Actions have been developed and prioritised by the Partnership Group using the strategic framework. Actions have been further grouped based on whether there is an **existing** connection in place (that requires improvement or enhancement), **proposed** in strategic planning documents, or have been nominated as a **potential** future link during the development of this plan. The plan identifies and prioritises actions, however implementation of the actions is subject to either further investigation or investment. Given the uncertainty around the timing of future investment, priority ratings been specified for actions rather than time frames. The Partnership Group will continue to work collaboratively to identify opportunities to implement the actions in the future.

The actions have been developed and prioritised by the Partnership Group in a process that:

- Understands the role and type of visitor experience at each of the core parks (both current and planned by the land manager). For example, does the site provide a short or long stay experience, is it currently serving a local or regional visitor base (and could/should this change), are there opportunities for public / private activities that will generate economic activities
- Considers if there are significant values (e.g. ecological or cultural) at the site that mean the site does not have the capacity to absorb increased visitor numbers
- Examines opportunities to improve visitor experience and address the drivers at the three scales represented by the lenses.

The actions have been drawn from workshops and consultation with stakeholders, and draw on relevant existing strategies and plans developed by the agencies. Community consultation in mid-2022 will invite feedback on the draft plan and these actions. The actions are provided in this section as tables and maps. More detailed information on the actions is provided in Appendix A.

### Actions for connecting the core parks

Actions for connecting the parklands are about building on the Peninsula Link Trail as a central spine to enhance connectivity between the parklands for pedestrians and cyclists. These actions aim to improve the overall experience of the users of the Peninsula Link Trail, improve pedestrian and cyclist connections between the Peninsula Link Trail and the core parks, and identify new opportunities for shorter loop trails between parks. The actions are listed in the table below and maps on the following pages. More detail on the actions is provided in Appendix A.

**Table 2. Actions for connecting the core parks**

Action number	Action title
1	<p>Improve access and safety for cyclists and pedestrians between the Peninsula Link Trail and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cruden Farm (McClelland Drive Crossing)</li> <li>- Dame Elisabeth Arboretum (McClelland Drive Crossing)</li> <li>- Baxter Park (Frankston - Flinders Road)</li> <li>- Sages Cottage Farm (Sages Road)</li> <li>- Moorooduc Quarry FFR (improve condition of existing pathways)</li> <li>- Langwarrin FFR (McClelland Drive Crossing)</li> <li>- The Pines FFR (Ballarto Road crossing to Boggy Creek Trail)</li> <li>- Devilbend Natural Features Reserve (new connection along Peninsula Link Reserve)</li> </ul>
2	Design and install wayfinding and access information for core parks and places of interest along the Peninsula Link Trail, including at trailheads, public transport and other trail access points (link to core park Action 6)
3	Increase tree canopy and enhance ecological connectivity along the existing trail and future connections, sensitive to needs of the space and the safety of users. Maple Street Reserve and Boggy Creek Trail as a high priority.
4	Extend the Peninsula Link Trail to Mornington town centre and foreshore via the old railway line, include links to adjacent parks.
5	<p>Investigate and implement new connections between the core parks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An ecological link along Tamarisk creek south from The Pines FFR to Studio Park</li> <li>- A loop trail between Baxter Park and Moorooduc Quarry FFR</li> </ul>
6	Provide Bunurong Aboriginal cultural heritage and historic heritage values interpretation signage along the Peninsula Link Trail, as part of a broader wayfinding strategy.
7	Investigate options for cultural hubs / gathering places in the Pines FFR, Seaford Wetlands, Langwarrin FFR and Devilbend Natural Features Reserve

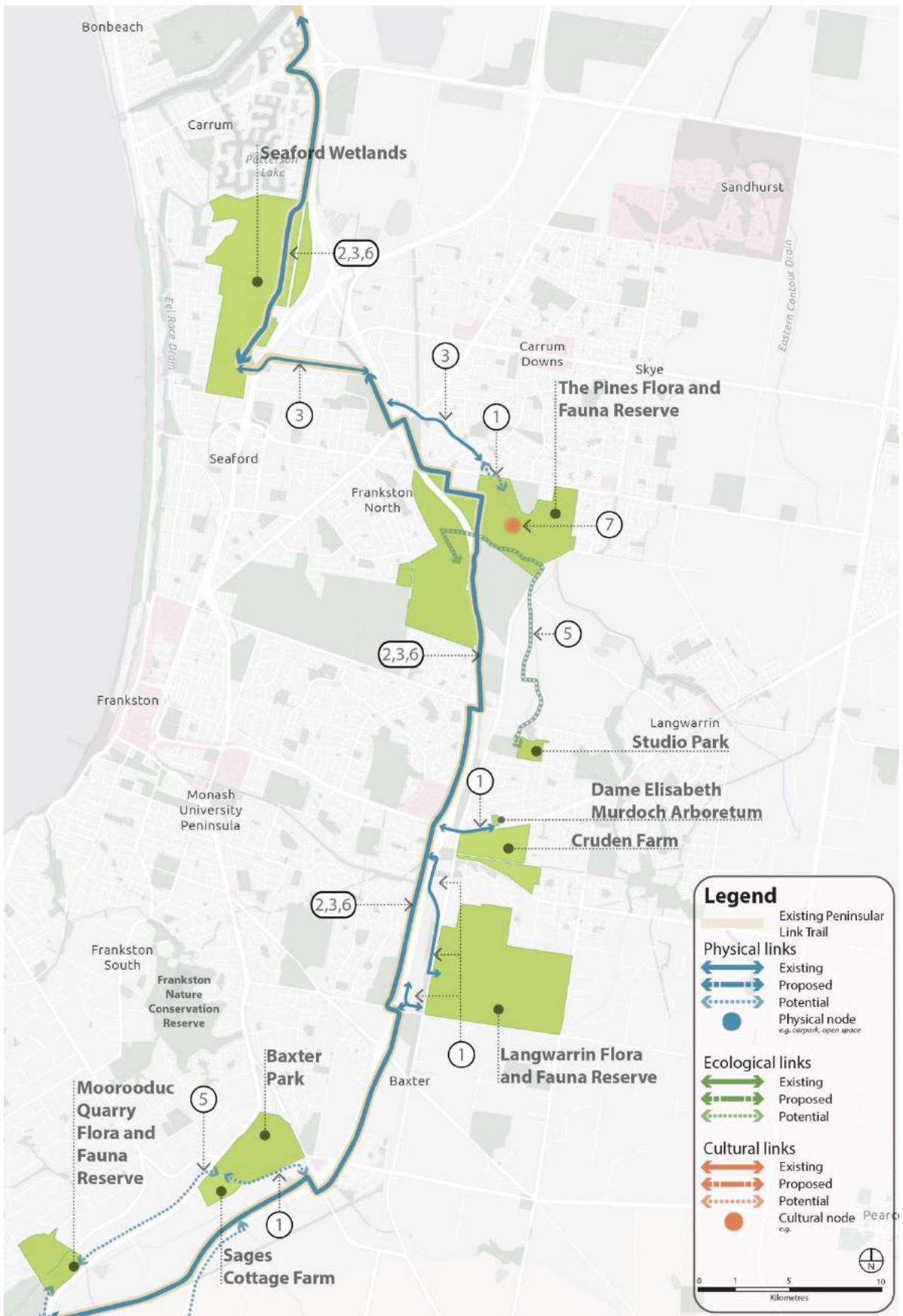


Figure 8. Actions connecting the core parks



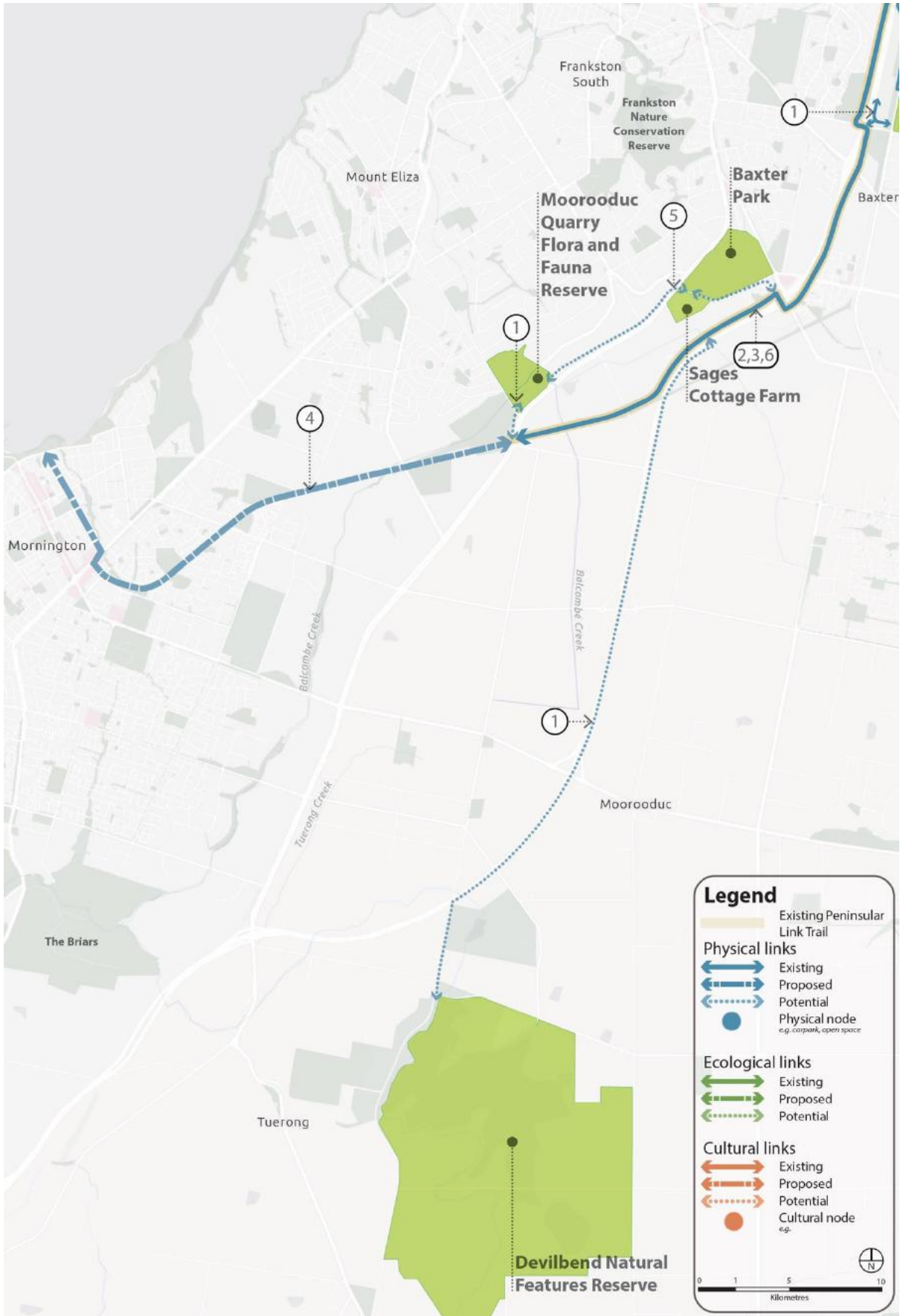


Figure 9. Actions connecting the core parks

### Actions for regional connections

Connecting to the wider region is about expanding the cultural, ecological and physical catchments of the 10 core parks to the surrounding region. The actions aim to create ecological corridors to areas of ecological significance within the region, expand trail networks to connect with adjacent communities such as Western Port Bay to the east, and identify future opportunities for expanding open space. The actions are listed in the table below and maps on the following page. More detail on the actions is provided in Appendix A.

**Table 3. Actions to connect the parklands and the wider region**

Action number	Action title
1	Investigate options to enhance regional connections to the parklands through new and improved and increased car parking. Trailheads can either be within or well connected to core parks.
2	Create and enhance ecological connections between Devilbend Creek, Tuerong Creek and Balcombe Creek.
3	Construct an off-road shared use path along Boggy Creek linking The Pines FFR to Langwarrin.
4	Investigate the future use and feasibility of quarries post closure in the wider region as potential open space.
5	Extend biodiversity corridors to connect Baxter Park with Frankston Nature Conservation Reserve and Sweetwater Creek.
6	Investigate opportunities for an extended off-road shared use path between Mordialloc and Frankston.
7	Investigate the feasibility of revegetation and ecological restoration to improve ecological connections between Pines FFR, Langwarrin FFR and Cranbourne Botanical Gardens.
8	Create a cross-peninsula trail from Mornington to Hastings via Devilbend Natural Features Reserve. This may connect to the Peninsula Link Trail, and form part of a regional trail strategy.
9	Explore cultural and physical links to the Briars from the extended Peninsula Link Trail (Core Park Action 4), through Dallas Brooks and Civic Reserve.

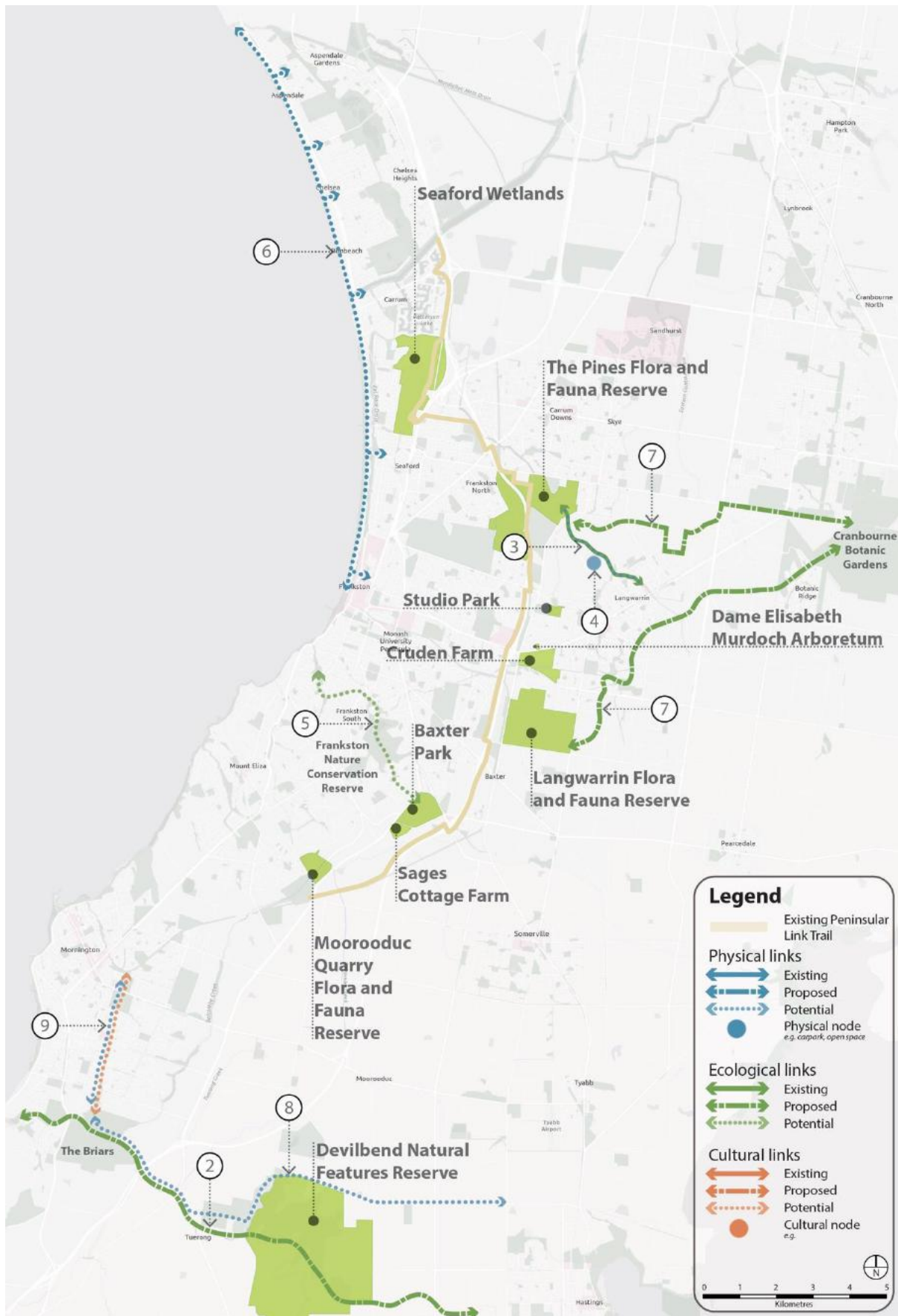


Figure 10. Actions connecting the wider region

### Actions for local connections

These actions aim to facilitate opportunities to connect with the physical, environmental, and cultural assets around the parks. The actions are primarily shaped around expanding biodiversity links with other local assets and expanding access to other neighbourhood parks from the Peninsula Link Trail. The primary focus of the Plan is to improve connectivity of the core parks, so although these actions have a lower priority than the core park and regional actions in the context of this plan, they are still important and should be considered for implementation. The actions are listed in the table below and maps on the following pages. More detail on the actions is provided in Appendix A.

**Table 4. Actions for connecting to the local area**

Action number	Action title
1	Investigate the viability of a shared use path along Stotts Lane connecting Baxter Park with growing residential areas in Frankston.
2	Implement new pedestrian bridge over Eel Race Drain connecting Kingston with Seaford Wetlands (using Palm Beach Drive).
3	Investigate an ecological link between Boggy Creek and the Seaford Wetlands to promote environmental values.
4	Establish a shared use path between Seaford Station and Seaford Wetlands. Seaford Wetlands Rejuvenation Project is a separate project funded through DELWP Suburban Parks Program and led by Frankston City Council.
5	Fill gaps and connect biodiversity corridors between Kananook Creek and Seaford Wetlands.
6	Explore options for improving access from Frankston North to the Pines FFR and Peninsula Link Trail.
7	Enhance physical and ecological connections between Devilbend Natural Features Reserve and adjacent Woods Bushland reserve.
8	Enhance ecological connectivity along Devilbend Creek to Devilbend Natural Features Reserve to protect Growling Grass Frog and other biodiversity values.
9	Assess options for providing a loop trail between Moorooduc Quarry FFR trails and Mt Eliza Regional Park using existing trails and service roads.
10	Improve pedestrian and cycling access between Frankston South and Langwarrin FFR via a shared use path on Robinson Road.
11	Explore options for increased connectivity between Langwarrin FFR and Langwarrin via Aldershot Road.
12	Investigate the opportunity to provide a shared use path along Boggy Creek to link Langwarrin activity centre and Langwarrin FFR.
13	Enhance parking opportunities outside of Langwarrin FFR to enable safe access for park visitation.
14	Investigate options for enhancing Baxter Trail to increase tree canopy and connections to the Frankston Metropolitan Activity Centre and the Leawarra and Baxter train stations.

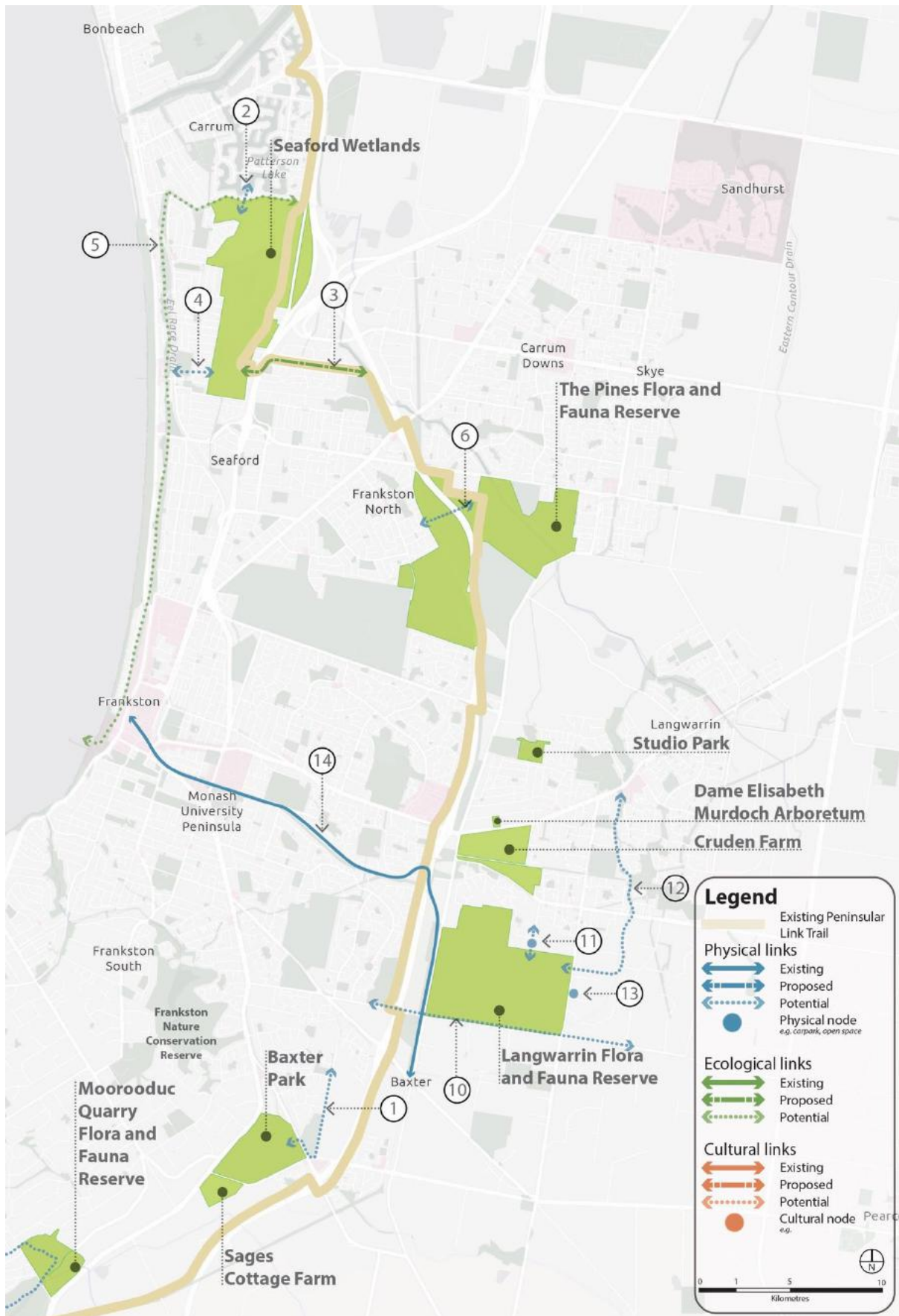


Figure 11. Actions connecting to the local area

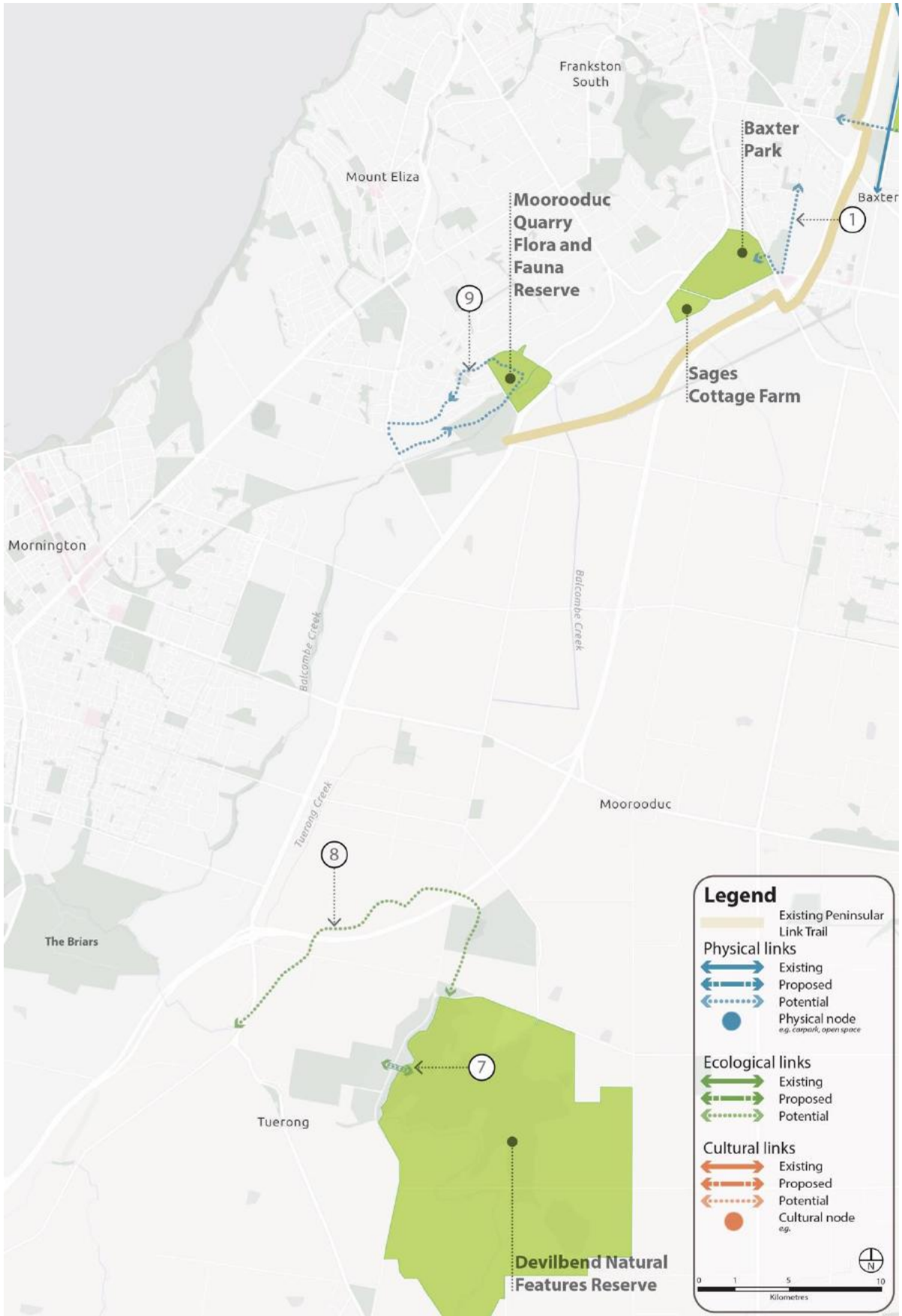


Figure 12. Actions connecting to the local area

## Appendix A. Detailed parkland planning actions

**Table 5. Detail on actions for connecting the core parks**

Action number	Action title	Link status	Related park	Link type	Priority
1	<p>Improve access and safety for cyclists and pedestrians between the Peninsula Link Trail and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cruden Farm (McClelland Drive Crossing)</li> <li>- Dame Elisabeth Arboretum (McClelland Drive Crossing)</li> <li>- Baxter Park (Frankston - Flinders Road)</li> <li>- Sages Cottage Farm (Sages Road)</li> <li>- Moorooduc Quarry FFR (Improve condition of existing pathways)</li> <li>- Langwarrin FFR (McClelland Drive Crossing)</li> <li>- The Pines FFR (Ballarto Road crossing to Boggy Creek Trail)</li> <li>- Devilbend Natural Features Reserve (new connection along Peninsula Link Reserve)</li> </ul>	Varied	All	Physical	High
2	Design and install wayfinding and access information for core parks and places of interest along the Peninsula Link Trail, including at trailheads, public transport and other trail access points (link to core park Action 6)	Existing	All	Physical	Very High
3	Increase tree canopy and enhance ecological connectivity along the existing trail and future connections, sensitive to needs of the space and the safety of users. Maple Street Reserve and Boggy Creek Trail as a high priority.	Existing	All	Physical/Ecological	Very High
4	Extend the Peninsula Link Trail to Mornington town centre and foreshore via the old railway line, include links to adjacent parks.	Proposed	Moorooduc Quarry FFR	Physical	High
5	<p>Investigate and implement new connections between the core parks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An ecological link along Tamarisk creek south from the Pines FFR to Studio Park</li> <li>- A loop trail between Baxter Park and Moorooduc Quarry FFR</li> </ul>	Potential	Studio Park, the Pines FFR, Baxter Park, Moorooduc Quarry FFR.	Physical/Ecological	High
6	Provide Bunurong Aboriginal cultural heritage and historic heritage values interpretation signage along the Peninsula Link Trail, as part of a broader wayfinding strategy.	Potential	All	Cultural	High
7	Investigate options for a cultural hub / gathering place within the Pines FFR, Seaford Wetlands, Langwarrin FFR and Devilbend Natural Features Reserve.	Potential	The Pines FFR, Seaford Wetlands, Langwarrin FFR, Devilbend Natural Features Reserve	Cultural	High



**Table 6. Detail on actions for connecting the parklands to the wider region**

Action number	Action title	Link status	Related park	Link type	Priority
1	Investigate options to enhance regional connections to the Parklands through new and improved and increased car parking. Trailheads can either be within or well connected to core parks.	Potential	All	Physical	Very high
2	Create and enhance ecological connections between Devilbend Creek, Tuerong Creek and Balcombe Creek.	Proposed	Other	Ecological	High
3	Construct an off-road shared use path along Boggy Creek linking the Pines FFR to Langwarrin.	Proposed	The Pines FFR	Physical/Ecological	High
4	Investigate the future use and feasibility of quarries post closure in the wider region as potential open space.	Potential	Other	Physical	High
5	Extend biodiversity corridors to connect Baxter Park with Frankston Nature Conservation Reserve and Sweetwater Creek.	Potential	Baxter Park	Ecological	Medium
6	Investigate opportunities for an extended off-road shared use path between Mordialloc and Frankston.	Proposed	Other	Physical	Medium
7	Investigate the feasibility of revegetation and ecological restoration to improve ecological connections between the Pines FFR, Langwarrin FFR and Cranbourne Botanical Gardens.	Proposed	The Pines FFR, Langwarrin FFR, other	Ecological	Medium
8	Create a cross-peninsula trail from Mornington to Hastings via Devilbend Natural Features Reserve. This may connect to the Peninsula Link Trail, and form part of a regional trail strategy.	Potential	Devilbend Natural Features Reserve	Physical	Medium
9	Explore cultural and physical links to the Briars from the extended Peninsula Link Trail (Core Park Action 4), through Dallas Brooks and Civic Reserve.	Potential	Other	Physical/Cultural	Medium

**Table 7. Detail on actions for connecting the parklands to the local area**

Action number	Action	Link status	Related park	Link type	Priority
1	Investigate the viability of a shared use path along Stotts Lane connecting Baxter Park with growing residential areas in Frankston.	Potential	Baxter Park	Physical	Medium
2	Implement new pedestrian bridge over Eel Race Drain connecting Kingston with Seaford Wetlands (using Palm Beach Drive).	Proposed	Seaford Wetlands	Physical	Medium
3	Investigate an ecological link between Boggy Creek and the Seaford Wetlands to promote environmental values.	Proposed	Seaford Wetlands	Ecological	Medium
4	Establish a shared use path between Seaford Station and Seaford Wetlands. Establish a shared use path between Seaford Station and Seaford Wetlands. Seaford Wetlands Rejuvenation Project is a separate project funded through DELWP Suburban Parks Program and led by Frankston City Council.	Proposed	Seaford Wetlands	Physical	Medium
5	Fill gaps and connect biodiversity corridors between Kananook Creek and Seaford Wetlands.	Potential	Seaford Wetlands	Ecological	Medium
6	Explore options for improving access from Frankston North to the Pines FFR and Peninsula Link Trail.	Potential	The Pines FFR	Physical	Medium
7	Enhance physical and ecological connections between Devilbend Natural Features Reserve and adjacent Woods Bushland reserve.	Potential	Devilbend Natural Features Reserve	Ecological	Medium
8	Enhance ecological connectivity along Devilbend Creek to Devilbend Natural Features Reserve to protect Growling Grass Frog and other biodiversity values.	Existing	Devilbend Natural Features Reserve	Ecological	Medium
9	Assess options for providing a loop trail between Moorooduc Quarry FFR trails and Mt Eliza Regional Park using existing trails and service roads.	Potential	Baxter Park/Moorooduc Quarry FFR	Physical	Low
10	Improve pedestrian and cycling access between Frankston South and Langwarrin FFR via a shared use path on Robinson Road.	Potential	Langwarrin FFR	Physical	Low
11	Explore options for increased connectivity between Langwarrin FFR and Langwarrin via Aldershot Road.	Potential	Langwarrin FFR	Physical	Low
12	Investigate the opportunity to provide a shared use path along Boggy Creek to link Langwarrin activity centre and Langwarrin FFR.	Proposed	Langwarrin FFR	Physical	Low
13	Enhance parking opportunities outside of Langwarrin FFR to enable safe access for park visitation.	Potential	Langwarrin FFR	Physical	Low
14	Investigate options for enhancing Baxter Trail to increase tree canopy and connections to the Frankston Metropolitan Activity Centre and the Leawarra and Baxter train stations.	Existing	Langwarrin FFR	Physical	Low