

Cardinia Creek Large-Scale Deer Management Plan (CCLSDMP)

Feral deer present a serious current and growing threat to water quality and the health of riparian vegetation along the Cardinia Creek and its tributaries. Mud wallows, riverbank damage, spreading of weeds, compaction and pugging of soils, selective browsing of certain mid-storey bushes, tree rubbing, siltation of the waterways are serious causes for concern.

Recent studies by Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria and CDMC within the Cardinia Creek catchment have begun to reveal the true magnitude of both the density of the deer population and the magnitude of environmental damage they are causing. Concerned by the escalating damage, Melbourne Water commissioned environmental consultancy company, Jacobs Group to develop the Cardinia Creek Large-Scale Deer Management Plan (The Plan). The focus of this project was to develop a deer management plan to protect priority riparian vegetation, connectivity between the waterways, and improve water condition and quality within the Cardinia Catchment. The area Jacobs have been asked to focus on is the Cardinia Creek and its tributaries, from north of Cardinia Reservoir, downstream to Brennan Reserve in Upper Beaconsfield.

Jacobs have facilitated several meetings with the key players in this area, including Cardinia Council, Parks Vic, DEECA, Cardinia Environment Coalition and CDMC. This has resulted in the collation of much information, some of it very new, allowing improved knowledge and mapping of areas of high deer concentration, conducting a literature review, further research and strategy development. A final draft of The Plan was completed in May 2023. This plan is currently under review by Melbourne Water, pending its final release.

Although it is not known what the final plan will include, it is fair to say that there is a strong desire by the various stakeholders to work for a more collaborative approach to deer control, possibly involving cross-tenure control efforts. Hopefully the final plan will be released in the coming months, and we hope that it will be backed by substantial funding.

The CDMC are pleased to be involved in this project and hope to play a continuing supportive role in the future.