

## W17 Social Values: Revisiting social values in the Healthy Waterways Strategy - from conceptual framework to evaluation

### Objective(s)

This project aims to strengthen the conceptualization of key social values that are identified within the Healthy Waterways Strategy (HWS), and which are assessed through the Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) Framework.

### Why this research is important

Melbourne Water makes significant investments in a variety of programs on the basis that these improve the social values of waterways. These investments range from major works and maintenance along waterways, through to community participation and capacity building. Further understanding of how communities perceive and experience these social values, and the ways in which specific management actions may deliver or compromise these values, would provide a more solid evidence base from which to select, justify and evaluate these investments.

The Mid-term review of the HWS recommended the development of new indicators for social values. In preparation for the next Strategy, there is an opportunity to review, test and refine the conceptual model. The research would then enable the review of the performance objectives related to key social values for the next HWS and provide direction on alternatives for evaluating the progress towards targets.

### Contribution to Key Research Areas

Liveability, Community Engagement and Social Research: **i) Refining our conceptual models and developing tools to support investment in waterway works for recreation and amenity; ii) Defining public health and wellbeing benefits of waterway, stormwater and urban cooling programs to support investment decisions; and iii) Understanding demographics, preferences, values and water awareness of our customers to inform waterway works planning and delivery.**

### Achievements to date

- Scoping review of social science literature on modelling and assessing social values for blue-green spaces.
- Commenced walk-along interviews to investigate the diversity of community experiences and perceptions of waterways.

- Walk-along interviews. All interviews completed, fully transcribed and thematically analysed in NVivo.
- Half-day workshop for Melbourne Water staff. To collectively assess and review the HWS social values conceptual model, producing agreed revisions to the core structure and elements.
- Large-scale community survey (1000+ participants). To empirically test the revised social values conceptual model.

### Key outputs for Year 3\*

- Technical report on evidence for model revisions.
- Journal publication on the literature review.
- Journal publication on the results of the walk-along interviews (community perceptions, experiences and well-being outcomes related to the key social values of waterways).
- Preliminary analysis of results of the broad community survey.

### Expected benefits

- Improved representation of social values within the HWS
- Improved foundation for decision-making on investment in and design of assets, services and programs that support social values, with clear connections to the model in the HWS
- Greater adaptability of monitoring and evaluation across a variety of contexts within the business, with clear connections to the model in the HWS

### For more information

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\* Of the current Waterways Partnership. This project is in only its **second year**.