



CRC for Water Sensitive Cities

Moonee Valley

Water Sensitive Cities Benchmarking

Location: Melbourne, Victoria



Case Study — Prepared by Cooperative Research Centre for Water Sensitive Cities, September 2019



Business
Cooperative Research Centres Programme

Insight

Early application of the Water Sensitive Cities (WSC) Index Tool to Moonee Valley City Council

Project description

The Moonee Valley City Council area is mostly residential and covers 43km² close to Melbourne's CBD. It was the first area to apply the WSC Index Tool beyond the trial phase. During a one-day workshop, Council and external stakeholders worked together through a facilitated three-step process to agree on the local government area's current status in meeting the seven goals of a water sensitive city. The end result was an assessment of Moonee Valley's current status, six new targets for Moonee Valley and a nine-point action plan to achieve its targets and transition to a water sensitive city.

The drivers

Securing a more Sustainable, Healthier Future for the Region, with a particular focus on improved water sustainability and increased water quality in surrounding ecosystems

- **Maintain status as a leading council in integrated water management** – Undertaking the Water Sensitive Cities benchmarking process made Moonee Valley City Council the first area to apply the WSC Index Tool beyond the trial phase.
- **Renewal of the Integrated Water Management Strategy** – With an ageing Integrated Water Management Strategy and desire to move towards a more integrated approach to planning across the organisation rather than producing detailed individual strategies, Council used the WSC Index Tool as an opportunity to understand its current water sensitive performance and guide future investments and planning as part of the Council's long term strategy, MV2040.



Artistic impression of implementation initiative #25 - Create the Maribyrnong River Cultural Precinct as a vibrant events destination (Aberfeldie)



What does this case study demonstrate?

Each case study has been selected to demonstrate specific solutions, benefits or enabling structures that support the creation of water sensitive cities. This case study focuses on:

Vision and narrative

Governance and policy

Evaluation frameworks

Leadership and influence

Water literacy and behaviour change

The innovations

Debut use of WSC Index Tool resulting in six targets for MV2040 Strategy

- First use of WSC Index Tool** – The WSC Index Tool and accompanying process had previously only been tested in trial phases. Moonee Valley City Council was the first council to use the tool and benchmark its local government area against seven water sensitive city goals and 34 corresponding indicators. The benchmarking process consisted of a stakeholder workshop with four elements:
 - Live polling** to gauge individuals' perspectives on the score for the indicator in question (bespoke web-based tool)
 - Interactive discussion** to uncover evidence and justification to inform the indicators' scores
 - Reaching consensus** among the participants on the final scores for each indicator.
 - Presenting results** to compare outcomes against WSC Index goals, Urban Water Transitions Framework, WSC outcomes and other regions.
- Six 2040 targets based on the results of the WSC Index Tool** – The outcomes of the benchmarking were directly used as part of a follow up project - the Green Blue Strategic Directions Plan. The WSC Index Tool scores were used to inform targets and actions in this plan. For example, a low score in vegetation cover recognised the need for a canopy target. Six measurable targets were set for the Council to improve water cycle management, ecosystem health and community equity and engagement:
 - Target 1:** 100% of sportsfields and priority parks are irrigated with alternative supply
 - Target 2:** Preserve the level of services of the existing drainage system
 - Target 3:** 30% canopy cover by year 2040
 - Target 4:** No net loss in biodiversity and a net increase in 'natural' vegetation
 - Target 5:** 100% of residents and workers are within 500 m of green space
 - Target 6:** 60% of our local community understand, appreciate and feel connected to water and vegetation.

- WSC targets informing Council-wide targets and actions** – The six WSC targets were used to inform strategic directions, targets and actions which are now adopted as part of Council's MV2040 Strategy:

Strategic direction 14: A city that is green and water-sensitive				
Target: We achieve 30% canopy cover by 2040 through enhancing our urban forest				
Objective 14.1 Enhance our urban forest	Objective 14.2 Create diverse and connected landscapes	Objective 14.3 Enhance our ecological values	Objective 14.4 Capture and reuse water to create cool spaces, reduce runoff to waterways and mitigate flood risk and enhance environmental values	Objective 14.5 Support our community to connect with nature
Strategic direction 16: A city that is cool and climate adapted			Target: Our city achieves climate resilience through supporting the community and planning a built environment that adapts to a changing climate	
Objective 16.1 Plan and build a climate resilient city	Objective 16.2 Create climate adapted green spaces	Objective 16.3 Foster community resilience to climate impacts		

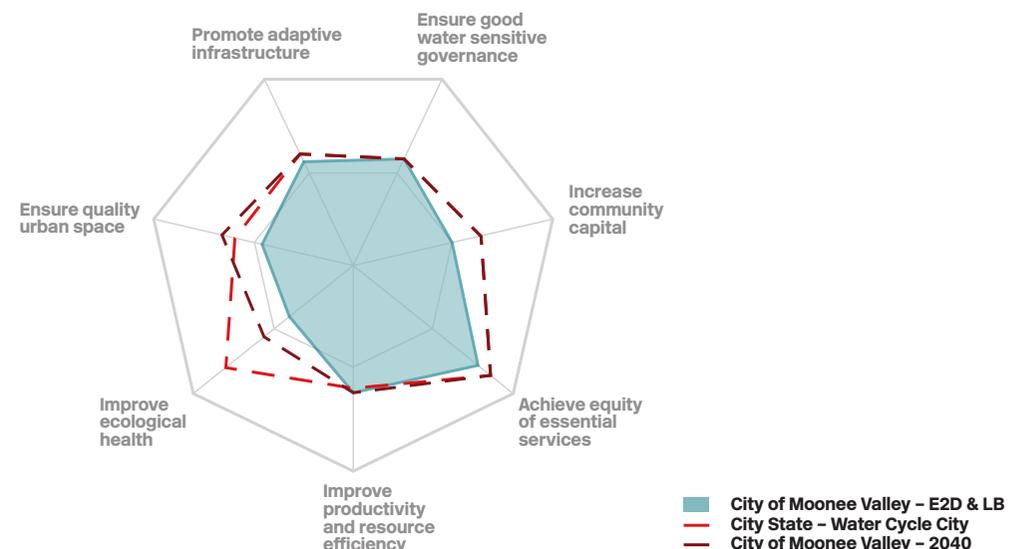
- Evaluation of targets in improving water sensitive performance** – Moonee Valley tested the effectiveness of its six targets by rerunning the tool to simulate the impact of achieving the targets on the WSC Index score. Doing this helped Moonee Valley understand how effective the targets would be in improving its future water sensitive performance.

The outcomes

 Cities providing ecosystem services	 Cities as water supply catchments	 Cities comprising water sensitive communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions for increased urban forest and ecological values – Actions are now included in MV2040 and focus on protection of existing vegetation and additional planting to increase urban canopy cover and resilience of ecological values. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions for alternative water supply – Actions are now included in MV2040 and include stormwater harvesting for sportsfields and passive irrigation of landscapes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased knowledge of Council employees regarding water sensitivity – Council staff reported increased understanding of the Council's water sensitive strengths, as well as a clearer understanding of where improvements could be made to strengthen governance arrangements and build community capital. • Actions for community engagement – Actions in MV2040 include engagement with the community to increase their connection with nature and improve their resilience to future climatic changes.

The lessons

- **Broader engagement is key for Integrated Water Management (IWM) -**
The Index process encouraged the project managers to go beyond the staff traditionally involved in Integrated Water Management. For the first time, people from social planning, community research and emergency response were engaged to inform how Moonee Valley is performing against the Index. This led to working closely with health and wellbeing officers on developing criteria for irrigation of passive open space. People from the Victorian Government Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Melbourne Water and City West Water came along to various sessions, which added enormous value. It would be interesting to also hear from other community service agencies like the State Emergency Service or even certain community members if the process was undertaken again as part of tracking implementation progress.
- **WSC scores create transparent link with Council strategies -** WSC Index Tool scores helped the stakeholders understand areas that required improvement. This builds confidence in the development of targets and actions which will assist the region in becoming a water sensitive city.



Business case

Costs	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$10,000–\$15,000 for the WSC Index process. • Additional costs for the development of actions and re-evaluation of the Index score. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement and education of broader integrated water management network • Strong evidence base for future action planning and investment priorities • Shared commitment and ownership of integrated water management actions • Process to test and track impact of planned actions on desired outcomes

Transferability

The WSC Index Tool is highly transferable to other areas across Australia and internationally. To benchmark other cities or regions, you will need a certified WSC facilitator to run the collaborative workshops and guide you through the benchmarking process. To date, the WSC Index Tool has been applied in Australia, Indonesia, China, Fiji and Myanmar. The tool is designed to be applied to cities and towns of varying biophysical, social and institutional contexts. It can also be applied at a range of scales, from large metropolitan cities (e.g. Sydney, New South Wales) to regional cities (e.g. Townsville, Queensland) to local government areas (e.g. City of Subiaco, Western Australia).

Project collaborators

- Moonee Valley City Council
- CRC for Water Sensitive Cities
- Various stakeholders including Victorian Government Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Melbourne Water, City West Water

Additional information

More information about Moonee Valley City Council's Water Sensitive Cities Benchmarking can be found at:

- [Water sensitive cities benchmarking and assessment: Mooney Valley City Council](#)
- [MV2040: our long-term plan](#)
- [Water Sensitive Cities Index](#)



Heinze Reserve in Essendon West neighbourhood