SWAN RIVER TRUST

GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Department of **Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions**

Mandoon (Helena River) Locality Plan

March 2026

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and Swan River Trust acknowledge the Whadjuk Noongar people as the Traditional Owners of this land and their continued connection to land, sea and community.

We pay our respects to them, their cultures and to their Elders past and present.

Front page photo: ***Mandoon (Helena River)*** **- Francesca Flynn**

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Introduction

Photo: *Mandoon (Helena River)* - DBCA

The Mandoon (Helena River) Locality Plan

The Derbal Yirragan Djarlgarro (Swan Canning river system) is a complex and dynamic natural landscape. In addition to its fundamental ecological values and important floodplain function, it is valued for its landscape and scenic qualities, cultural and heritage significance, and focus for various recreation and tourism activities. While considering the river as this larger natural system, it is also acknowledged that its characteristics and identity change depending on the locality. To ensure the consideration and preservation of these unique attributes, locality plans have been developed for sections along the Swan Canning development control area (DCA).

The Mandoon (Helena River) Locality Plan (the Plan) contains locality-specific policy statements to ensure that land use, design and development approaches respond to the environmental, cultural, heritage and social values of the Mandoon (Helena River) section of the river system. The Plan also brings together 'on' and 'off' water considerations to direct appropriate protection, restoration and activation of the river and its foreshores.

The Plan has been developed to achieve the objectives and principles of the *Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act 2006* (SCRM Act) and is policy developed and published pursuant to the SCRM Act to support consistent and integrated planning, decision-making and management outcomes in relation to the river system. It is to be read in conjunction with *Corporate Policy Statement No. 52: Planning for Localities along the Swan Canning Development Control Area*. The Plan is supported by a separate Mandoon (Helena River) Action Plan that aims to guide planning and works in the locality. The actions should be delivered when opportunities present.

The extent of the Mandoon (Helena River) locality is identified in Figure 1 (next page) and includes land in the local governments of City of Kalamunda, City of Swan and Shire of Mundaring. The policy statements apply to land within, abutting and affecting (including ecologically and visually) the DCA and includes public and private land.

Policy Area

The Mandoon (Helena River) locality extends from the confluence with the Derbal Yirragan (Swan River) in Guildford to the Lower Helena Pumpback Dam (also known as Pipehead Dam).

GUILDFORD TOWN CENTRE

GREENMOUNT NATIONAL PARK

PERTH AIRPORT

PIPEHEAD DAM

Figure 1 –Mandoon (Helena River) Locality

Landscape Description

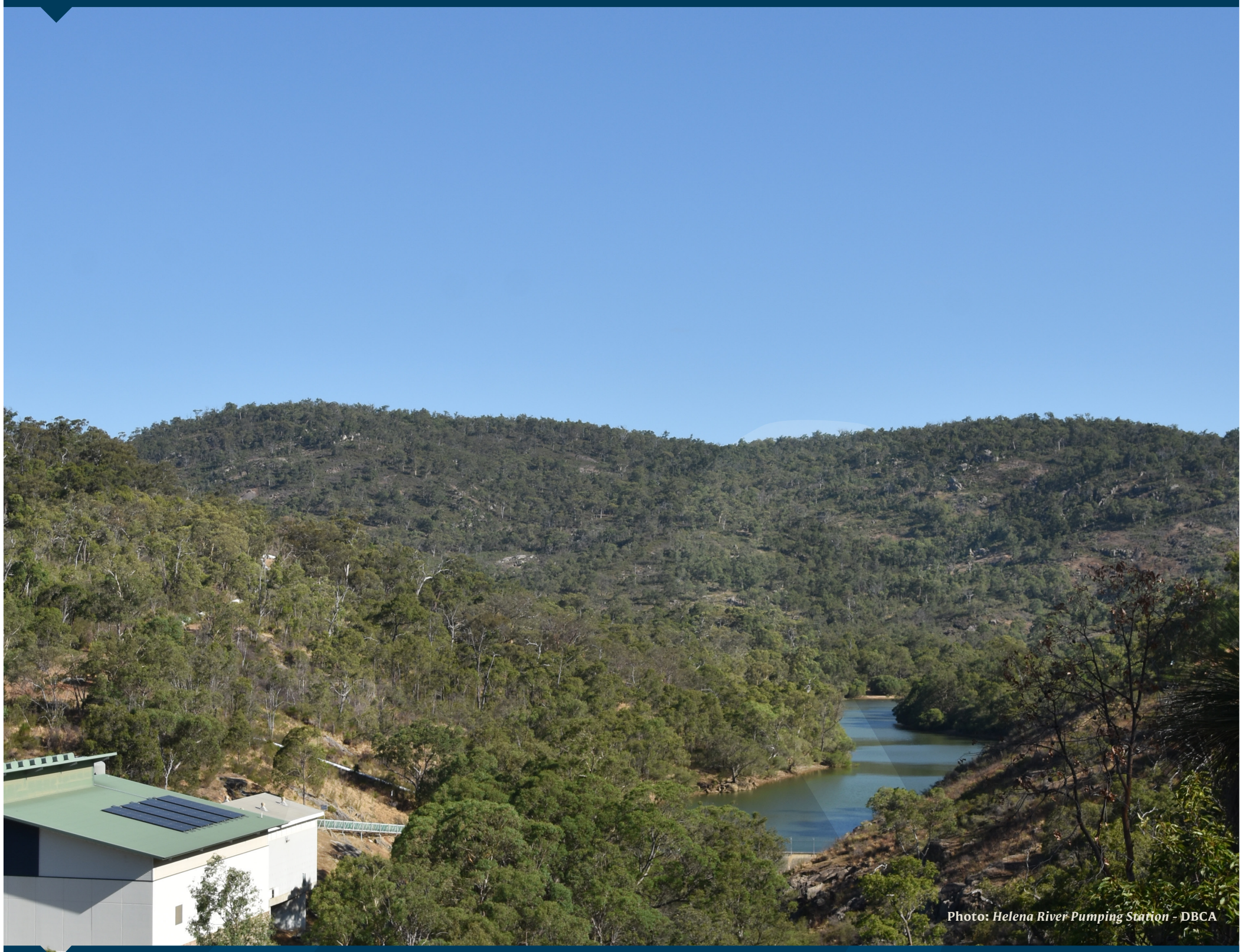

Photo: *Helena River Pumping Station* - DBCA

The Mandoon (Helena River) passes through a range of landforms, from the flat alluvial plain at its confluence with the Derbal Yirragan (Swan River) at Guildford, to the steeper ridges of the Darling Scarp and the undulating hills of the Darling Range. The valley has elevated views to the west across the coastal plain.

The downstream section of the river has a dominant built suburban landscape character, particularly at Guildford, Helena Valley, South Guildford, Woodbridge and Koongamia. The suburban area consists of a mixture of housing styles and ages, with Guildford and sections of Midland having nodes of older and heritage residences.

The Midland Railway Workshops are a cluster of late 19th century industrial red brick buildings that have been restored and repurposed. They are currently being transitioned to commercial, residential, educational, health and public open space land uses. The large warehouses dominate the flat landscape and there is no visual or public access connection from the Midland Workshops redevelopment area to the river.

Further upstream, the river has small reaches of rural landscape character at Helena Valley. The rural elements are typically rural living blocks with old orchards and horse agistments, rather than agricultural properties. Many properties extend to the river, which restrict public access.

The river is lined in some places by mature riparian vegetation that forms a vegetated corridor and is an important feature of the landscape, providing both a natural element and an attractive backdrop to the suburban and rural landscape characters in this locality. Close to the Lower Helena Pumpback Dam, the river is bordered by the Beelu National Park and Nyaania Creek Reserve. While much of the local riparian understorey located in the lower reaches of this locality has been historically cleared for grazing or urban land uses, there are now significant areas of revegetation, as well as substantial remnant stands of flooded gum, which provide important habitat values. Further upstream, more areas of local vegetation remain.

The river is a seasonally flowing system, with winter-spring flows filling the river channel and occasionally inundating the floodplain, and drying to a series of pools and exposed, dry riverbed in summer. The flow regime is modified due to two public water supply dams, Mundaring Weir and the Lower Helena Pumpback Dam, and flows are declining due to climate change. The upper reaches are sustained through summer by environmental water releases from the Lower Helena Pumpback Dam to maintain viable habitat for aquatic ecologies. The lower reaches are estuarine and tidal for approximately 2 km upstream of the confluence with the Derbal Yirragan (Swan River).

Locality-specific Policy Statements

The policy statements are locality-specific. They support achievement of the key principles and policies as outlined in *Corporate Policy Statement No. 52: Planning for Localities along the Swan Canning Development Control Area*.

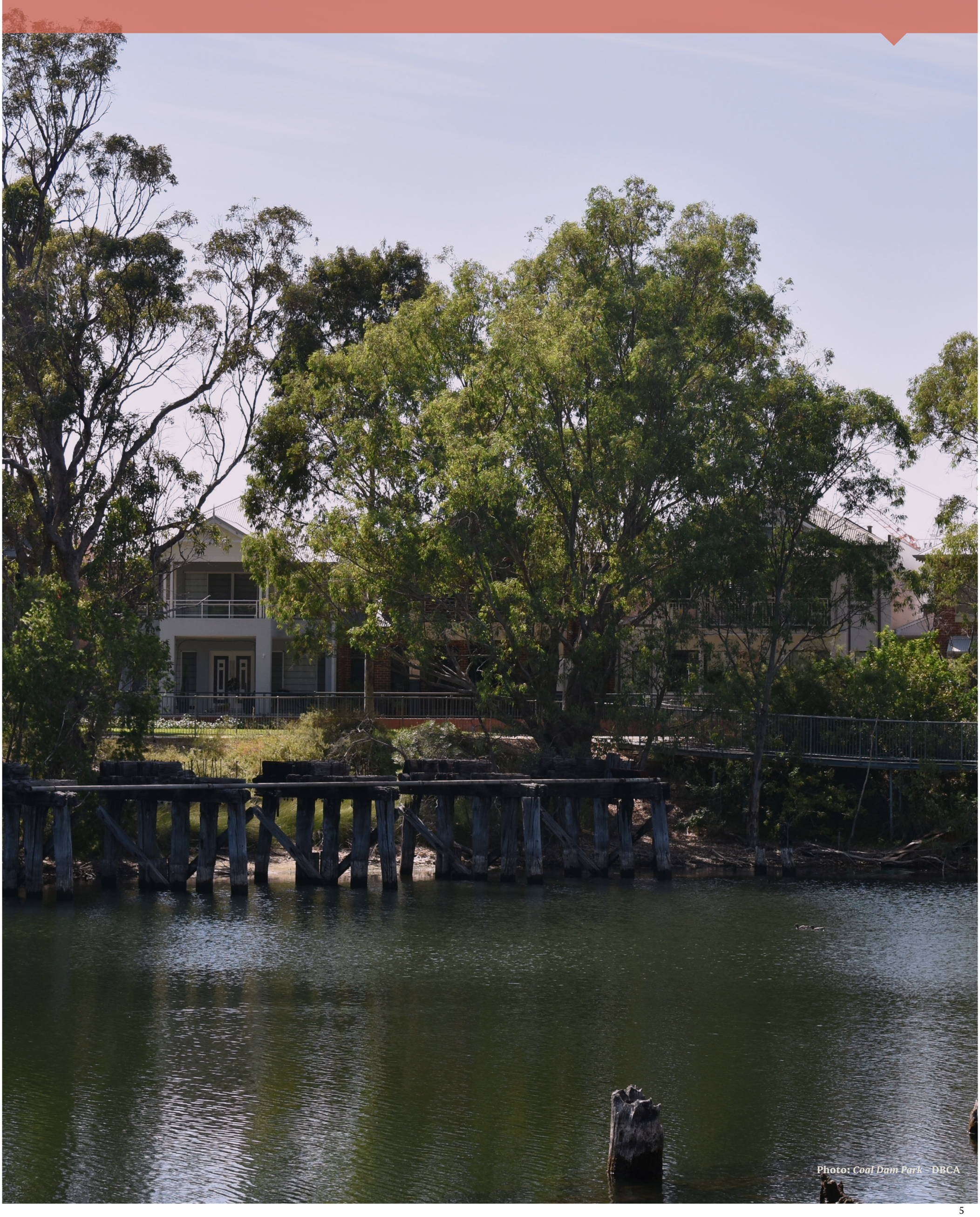

Photo: *Coal Dam Park* - DBCA

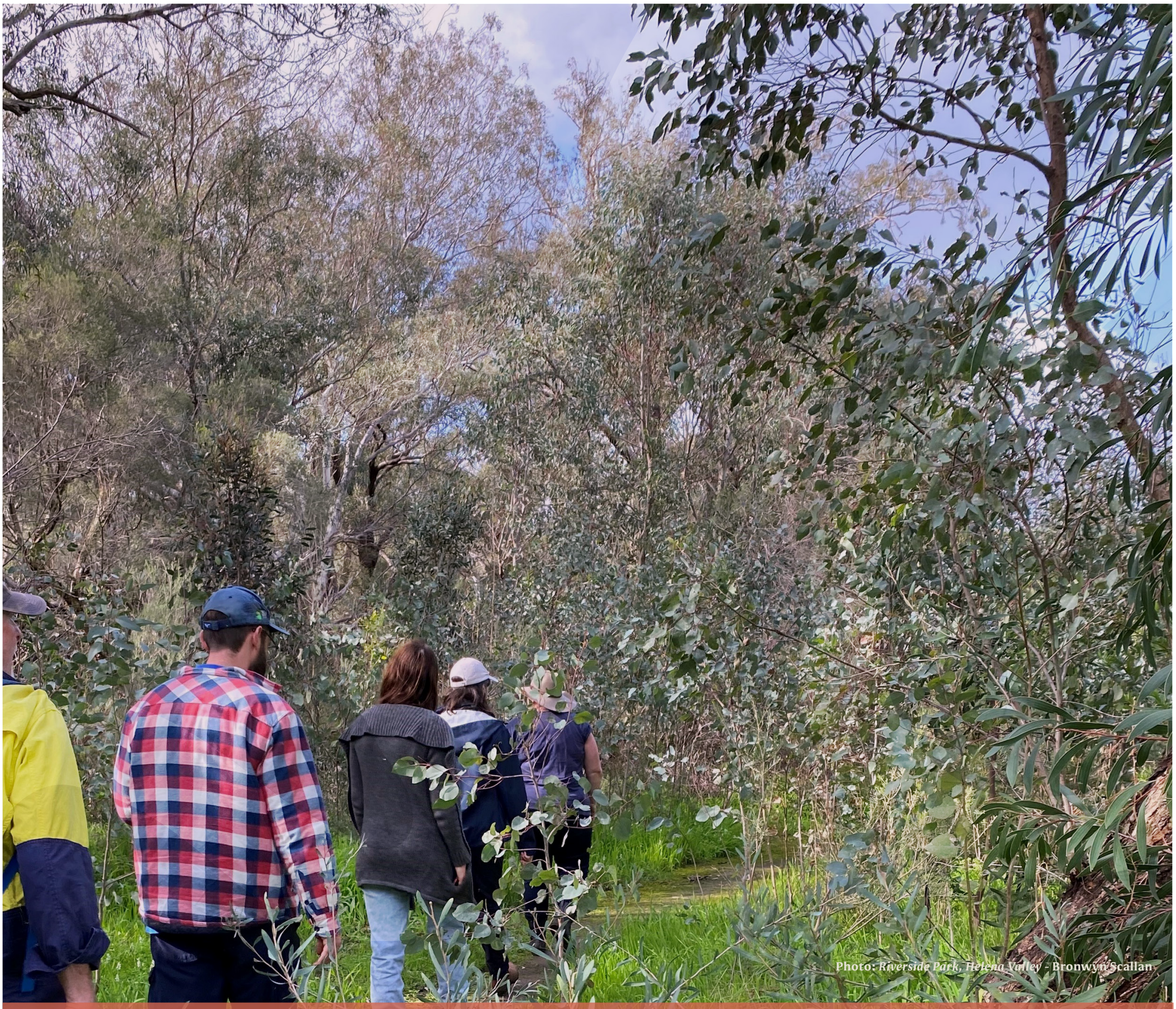

Photo: *Riverside Park, Helena Valley* - Bronwyn Scallan

Protect and restore the river system

7.1 Restore riverine biodiversity and protect vulnerable species, including Carter's freshwater mussels, quenda and threatened flora.

7.2 Protect foraging and roost sites for black cockatoos, including within the Mundaring-Kalamunda Important Bird Area.

7.3 Protect and restore areas of remnant Forrestfield, Guildford, Southern River and Swan vegetation complexes[1] associated with waterways.

7.4 Protect and maintain the natural function and form of the riparian landform elements, such as the alluvial terraces, floodway, embankments, riverbanks and channel.

7.5 Improve the quality of waterways and drainage lines, including for the purpose of ecological corridors. Increase the width of the riparian vegetation with local plant species, especially between the Mandoon (Helena River) / Derbal Yirragan (Swan River) confluence and Samson Street (Helena Valley).

7.6 Maintain and restore the foreshore to conserve its ecological values and protect riverbanks in their natural state. Where riverbank stabilisation is necessary in this locality, soft foreshore stabilisation approaches should be used.

Protect and restore foreshore vegetation

7.7 Protect existing riparian vegetation, including trees on the riverside of development, such as the local sub-species of *Eucalyptus rudis* located near Midland.

7.8 Restore local riparian vegetation, particularly where weeds and extensive historical understorey clearing have degraded the riparian floodplain vegetation. Rehabilitate areas of degraded vegetation condition, reinstate mid- and under-storey vegetation and remove significant weeds. Undertake succession planting.

7.9 Encourage the establishment of a minimum 30-metre-wide vegetated riverbank corridor on each side of the channel.

Establish and maintain foreshore reserves

7.10 Ensure that increases in density and subdivisions incorporate adequate foreshore and public open space reserves, including on tributaries of the Mandoon (Helena River), such as Kadina Brook, Wangalla Brook and Nyaania Creek. Incorporate a road interface between the private and public realm.

7.11 Locate new active recreation areas, such as formal playing fields and courts, outside of the FPM 1 in 100 (1%) annual exceedance probability floodway.

[1] Refer to the Swan River System Landscape Description for further information.

Photo: *Mandoon (Helena River)* - DBCA

Increase resilience to climate change

7.12 Direct clean stormwater runoff (that has been through water quality management systems located within the development footprint) from the urban zone to the river, where flood capacity within the river and its foreshore is sufficient, to address reduced flows due to climate change.

7.13 Consider the predicted future changes in salinity of the river and select local plant species accordingly for foreshore revegetation projects, particularly near the confluence with the Derbal Yirragan (Swan River).

Implement water sensitive design

7.14 Improve the quality of stormwater entering the foreshore. Implement water sensitive urban design, with the aim of incorporating at-source stormwater systems and overland flow through vegetated systems within the development footprint and within the catchment, instead of using end-of-pipe stormwater systems within the foreshore reserve.

7.15 Connect subdivisions of lots within 100 metres of the Mandoon (Helena River) to the reticulated sewerage system.

7.16 Connect development or land use changes on a lot that will increase wastewater loads to the reticulated sewerage network, where possible, or upgrade the on-site system to manage nutrient outputs.

7.17 Implement nutrient, pesticide and irrigation industry best practice for grassed areas in proximity to the river, particularly active playing surfaces and where depth to the groundwater is less than 1 metre, including the Kings Meadow Polo Ground. Establish buffers of local vegetation along the river's edge.

Minimise dredging and channel disturbance

7.18 Not support filling within the floodway or redirection of waterways, including for channel crossings. Culverts used for channel crossings are to provide for aquatic fauna passage.

7.19 Restrict construction of on-stream dams and other barriers, and prominent earthworks (including filling of the floodplain).

Retain and conserve cultural significance and heritage values

7.20 Retain and conserve elements of heritage significance that contribute to the landscape setting of the river, including places entered on the State Register of Heritage Places or in the Local Government Heritage List or Local Heritage Survey, particularly at Woodbridge, Guildford, Midland, and Bellevue.

7.21 Integrate Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal culture and heritage into the foreshore design narrative.

7.22 Use Whadjuk Noongar names across the locality, such as Mandoon (Helena River), with naming to be informed by appropriate Noongar knowledge holders.

Photo: *Helena River Bridge* - DBCA

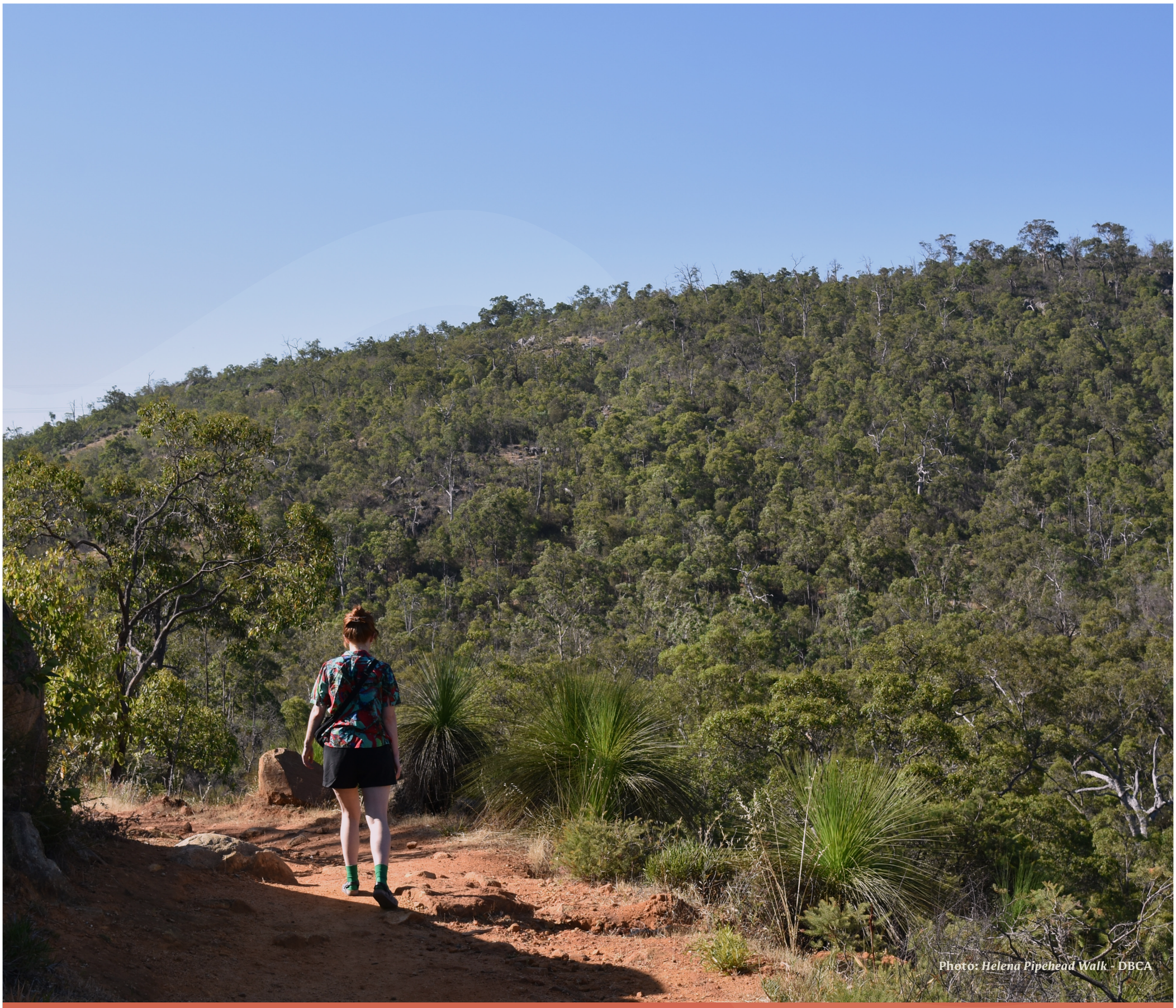

Photo: *Helena Pipehead Walk* - DBCA

Maintain the rivers and their foreshores as a community asset

7.23 Establish a continuous foreshore reserve throughout this locality through planning and decision making.

Maintain a sense of place

7.24 Recognise the importance of the river foreshore as a space for residents to access nature in the locality and for its conservation values.

7.25 Use local vegetation species within the foreshore reserve and within public open space and road reserves that abut the foreshore reserve to connect and contribute to the river landscape's sense of place.

7.26 Enhance connections to the river and foreshore from nearby community or activity centres nodes, such as through wayfinding. Particular attention should be given to Hill Street (Guildford) and/or Meadow Street (Guildford).

Secure public access to the rivers and their foreshores

7.27 Provide a safe and accessible public open space network. Universal access (wheelchair accessible) paths are to be provided where possible and appropriate, based on site conditions. Access paths may not be possible if construction would result in unacceptable ecological impacts due to fill requirements. Particular attention should be given to planning for and incorporating public access connections to residential streets that abut the foreshore and as part of river crossings.

7.28 Provide at-grade pathways within the floodplain, acknowledging that the pathways may be periodically inundated, or constructed as boardwalk structures. The design is to respond to the site and local context. A trail is preferred in some areas due to environmental sensitivities.

7.29 Provision of public access should not result in local vegetation clearing.

Establish linkages and ecological corridors

7.30 Connect foreshore reserves associated with tributaries, such as Kadina Brook and Wangalla Brook, and wetlands, such as Broz Park, with the Mandoon (Helena River) floodplain.

7.31 Establish and enhance ecological linkages along the Mandoon (Helena River) and between Bush Forever areas and Threatened and Priority Ecological Communities and wetlands and promote biodiversity and habitat complexity.

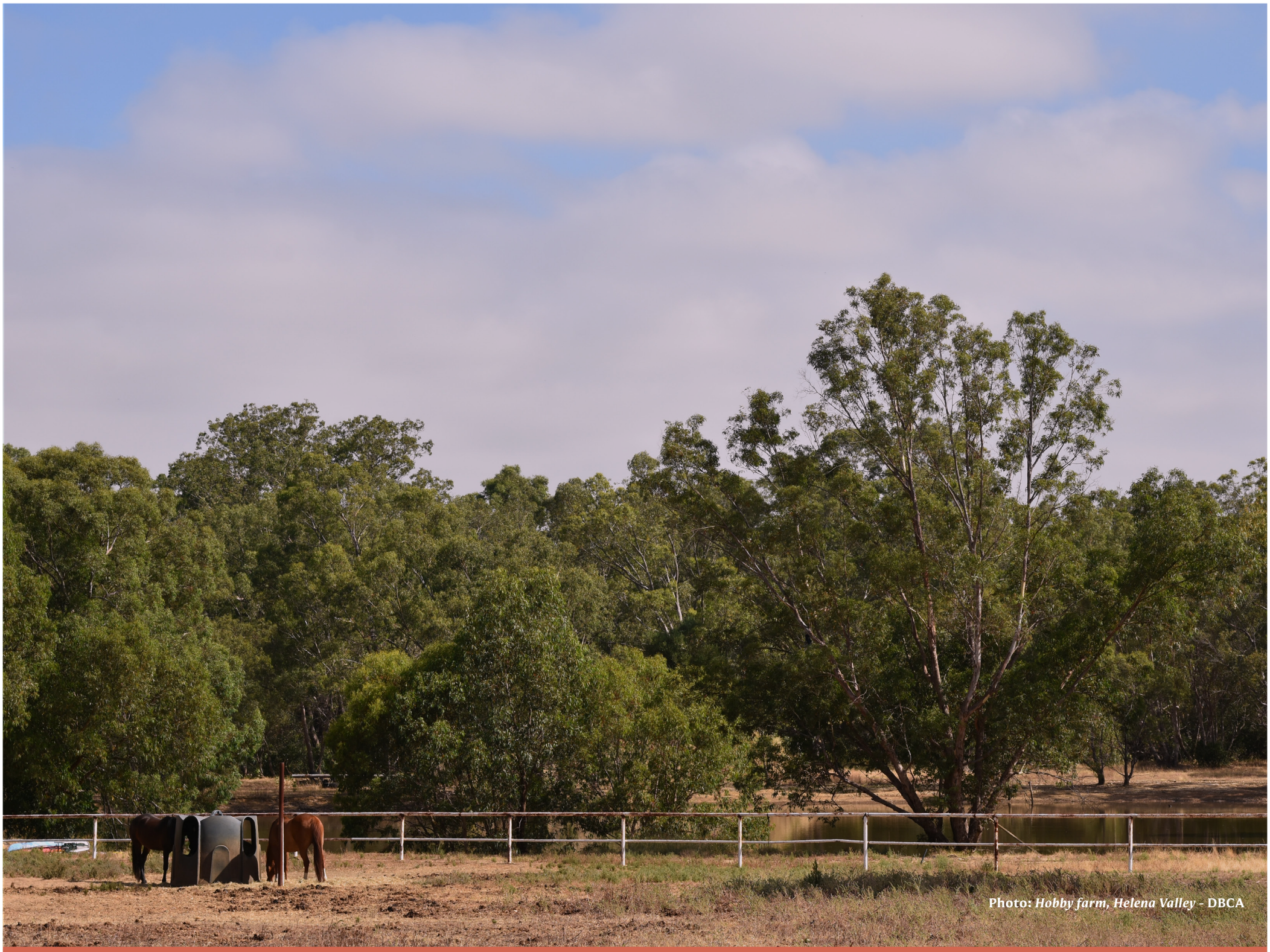

Photo: *Hobby farm, Helena Valley* - DBCA

Complement the river landscape through sensitive design and built form

7.32 Ensure that development complements landscape values, particularly at the confluence with the Derbal Yirragan (Swan River) and in the upper reaches of the valley. Ensure the river slopes and floodway are not visually or physically degraded.

7.33 Ensure that the private-public interface has high amenity when viewed from the foreshore reserve. Development should maintain and enhance the quality and setting of the foreshore, particularly where there is no road interface with the foreshore reserve.

7.34 Avoid subdivisions and development that would result in abrupt topographical changes. Additional setbacks within the development area may be required to provide a gradual transition.

7.35 Avoid constructing retaining walls along the interface/boundary between the foreshore reserve and public roads or private land. Retaining up to 900mm high may be accepted on constrained sites.

7.36 Design vehicle accessways or car parking that are located within the foreshore reserve to be at-grade, permeable and set back as much as possible from the river's edge or located outside of the FPM 1 in 100 (1%) annual exceedance probability floodway.

7.37 Locate and design new infrastructure to minimise habitat fragmentation, improve connectivity, protect wetlands and allow for the natural flow of floodwaters (including minimising filling in the floodplain).

Activate the foreshores

7.38 Improve public access to and within the foreshore reserve, with activation to be focused on passive or nature-based activities and temporary facilities or events. Temporary food trucks/café vans may be considered at Kings Meadow Polo Ground.

7.39 Provision of minor community amenities that can be inundated may be accepted within the floodway.

7.40 Consider small-scale community and food and beverage development outside of the floodway, where it can be demonstrated to have a community focus, enhances the natural character of the foreshore, and ideally delivers multiple benefits or services.

7.41 Undertake foreshore reserve planning to strategically guide proposed development in the foreshore. Encourage the establishment of park nodes with low-impact community amenities, such as nature-play and picnic facilities. In other areas, use should be passive, such as pathways, trails and interpretation.

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