Greening the West

Melbourne Forum June 2011
What is it about?

- Evidence of health status of communities in the Western Suburbs + evidence of health improvements due to green environments
- Better understanding of threat of heat islands
- Victorian Government agenda for *Living Victoria Living Melbourne*
- Opportunities from alternative water sources
- Potential of truly integrated water management
In the Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition Plan for Water, the focus is on establishing “Victoria as a world leader in liveable cities and integrated water cycle management with a visionary plan to make our urban landscapes more sustainable and liveable.”

Principles include:

- wherever possible using water more than once
- cities becoming more self-sufficient in their water supply and in the process becoming more liveable and attractive places to live
- giving communities a say in planning decisions around water
- strong focus on alternative water sources
Relationship between mortality and extreme heat

Risk factors

Age >65 years, infants
Pre-existing illness
Unfit
Overweight
Some drugs e.g. anti-psychotics, diuretics
Living alone
Working or exercising outdoors
Type of housing
Availability of air–conditioning
Urban environment

All deaths* between 26 Jan and 1 Feb
Expected (mean of 2004-08) vs. Observed (2009)

*Deaths data from SDM and reports to SCO

Date
2004-08 mean deaths
2009 deaths
2009 Max temp (C)
Melbourne Urban Heat Island
Temperatures at 1 am on 23 March 2006
Heat and vulnerability

Daytime

Night time

Vulnerability index

Source: Loughnan, Nicholls and Tapper, 2009

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Vulnerability index
Another challenge – lifestyle diseases on the incline

- Sedentary lifestyles >50% of adults not active enough
- 8000 deaths per year and costs >$400M
- Physical inactivity ranked 2\textsuperscript{nd} to tobacco
- Small amount of exercise each day is enough to be healthy

- Correlation between the environment where people live and health status - people who live close to quality green space have lower prevalence disease
- Focus on passive recreation areas – streets and connecting corridors
Health benefits of quality public spaces

• Physical health cost benefit
• Lower – 1.8% x catchment population x $756.66
• Upper – 5.7% x catchment population x $756.66
• 10,000 population annual benefit of between $136,199 - $431,296 pa
• Mental health benefits
• Reduction in stress levels
• Improved healing
• Improved job satisfaction
• Increased social cohesion and reduced rates of violence
• Increased concentration/productivity
What the Dept of Health would like to see to reduce urban heat

- Retrofitting urban streets to utilise water sensitive urban design principles to increase greenery and shade trees (when opportunities arise)
- Collaboration to get the best sustainable result
- Health overlays to prioritise effort to protect the most vulnerable
- Integrated water strategies in strategic plans (Water Plans, LGA Health & Wellbeing Plans), which set targets for shade trees in urban communities
Water is a critical enabler of many environmental and social solutions

- Providing sufficient water to keep the city green, keeping temperature increase to a minimum
- A green urban environment improves physical & mental health of a community
- Vegetation can reduce airborne pollutants
What is CWW’s role?

• Enabler and facilitator
• Understand how it works
• Find out how others are doing it
• Work with Local and State Govt, community, developers and others to achieve it
• Urban habitat as a customer with its own servicing strategy
Dept of Health has overlays identifying areas of greatest health need

- 65+ years of age
- living alone (flats / units / apartments)
- economic disadvantage
- NESB
Priority Urban Area - Braybrook
Hawthorn
Hawthorn
Braybrook
Hawthorn
Integrated water management today
Integrated water management today
Who would pay?

• Possible sources of funding
  • Existing enviro contribution
  • Govt departments and industrial customers contribute for the value they get
  • Sponsorship opportunities for big business – why sponsor Telstra Dome when you can sponsor clean air in Brooklyn?

• Ongoing maintenance
  • Trees as an asset, not a liability
  • Need a plan with local government
Next steps

- CWW has $500k budget for this next year
- Critical we work out how to do it – shortly to develop strategy plan
- Need a steering committee
- Need some pilots
- Need to pull together all initiatives eg Vic Health asthma project
- Need to talk about it constantly
- Included it in MAC submission
- Website with open access (www.planbig.com.au) and blog
What do you think?