



The Western Waterways Walk

A signature walk for the west

Proposal for the Victorian State Government budget 2024-25

Recommendation: Invest \$500,000 in Stage One development of the Western Waterways Walk, including \$70,000 to develop a Master Plan



Contact for Victoria Walks Inc.

Ben Rossiter

Executive Officer

8/225 Bourke St, Melbourne 3000

brossiter@victoriawalks.org.au

0425805578

The Western Waterways Walk is an opportunity to build on the under-recognised natural beauty of the area to create a landmark walk for Melbourne's west

The 2024-25 State Budget is an opportunity to invest in the health and well-being of people living in Melbourne's west by creating a signature walk for all.

The Western Waterways Walk would be a 22km high-quality, landmark walk that inspires residents of the west to use, love and appreciate opportunities at their doorstep.

[The proposed route](#) (see Appendix) can be walked currently, but has some limitations, including being subject to flooding at one point. The existing walk simply needs some polish, investment and rebranding to inspire people to be happier and healthier and share their activity on social media.

The walk will give residents of the west more opportunities for regular physical activity, social connections and a greater appreciation of local waterways, the natural environment and First Nations culture and heritage.

The walk would celebrate the waterways that lead into Port Phillip Bay and the unique natural beauty, flora and fauna of the area. It would use and build on existing assets alongside four creeks, extensive wetlands and two beach fronts.

Creation of a landmark walk in Melbourne's west would increase the potential to attract visitors and build community pride in the area.



Laverton Creek bridge and saltmarshes

Context

- Walking is the most accessible and popular active recreation and physical activity of Victorians.ⁱ
- When asked what would encourage them to walk more in their local area, 35% of Victorians said more or better paths in parks or along waterways.ⁱⁱ
- People with disability have much lower rates of participation in sport and recreation than the general population, but walking is their most popular physical activity.
- The Western Metro Region has large areas of concentrated disadvantage and lower scores of subjective wellbeing compared to Victoria generally.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Residents of Melbourne's west are less likely to meet recommended physical activity guidelines compared to the Victorian average.^{iv}
- Melbourne's west has high rates of diabetes and overweight or obese adults and young people.^v

About the Western Waterway Walk

- The Western Waterways Walk will connect both popular recreation spaces and hidden gems including Skeleton Creek, Truganina Park, Cherry Creek, Altona Coastal Park, Kororoit Creek, Paisley-Challis Wetlands, Jawbone Marine Sanctuary and Williamstown Beach.
- The route is already a fantastic 22 km walk that takes in creeks and wetlands that feed into Port Philip Bay. It will be enhanced into an iconic walk of regional significance and appeal.
- The creeks, waterways and coastal parks of the walk provide important habitats for birds and other species, including internationally recognised protected habitat for migratory birds.

- The walk takes in key sites and landmarks such as the Federation Steps that provide panoramic views to the city, the Dandenong Ranges and the You Yangs.
- The planned Hobsons Bay Wetland Centre will be a key asset supporting the walk experience.
- Altona is halfway along the walk and provides opportunities for walkers to stop, swim in warmer months, and/or seek refreshments from local businesses.
- The walk would be public transport accessible with multiple options for shorter walks, including some with all abilities access, and would be designed and activated to be welcoming to women and gender diverse people.

Investment

Investing \$70,000 in a masterplan and \$430,000 to start work on stage one of the project would establish the walk and help secure investment of other partners.

A high-level masterplan developed with public consultation and engagement would establish the overall plan for the project and the necessary works.

The additional investment would enable the following work:

- Create a recognisable brand and establish wayfinding signage to define the walk on the ground.
- Audit the walk for all abilities access to identify barriers and necessary infrastructure to ensure priority sections of the walk meet requirements for accessibility.
- Undertake a Gender Impact Assessment and identify issues that need to be addressed to ensure the walk is welcoming to women and gender diverse people and minimise concerns over personal safety.
- Engage Bunurong people represented by Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation to provide advice on Aboriginal culture and heritage to ensure the walk meets the needs and expectations of the Bunurong community and State priorities.
- Commence the provision of infrastructure in addition to that provided by partners, such as seats, interpretive signage, drinking fountains, shade and accessible parking. Design of infrastructure will connect it to place, reflect the natural environment and celebrate Bunurong culture, to resonate with visitors and the local community.
- In addition to stakeholders such as Melbourne Water and applicable councils, collaborate with agencies such as Visit Victoria and Victoria Walks to promote the walk more broadly.



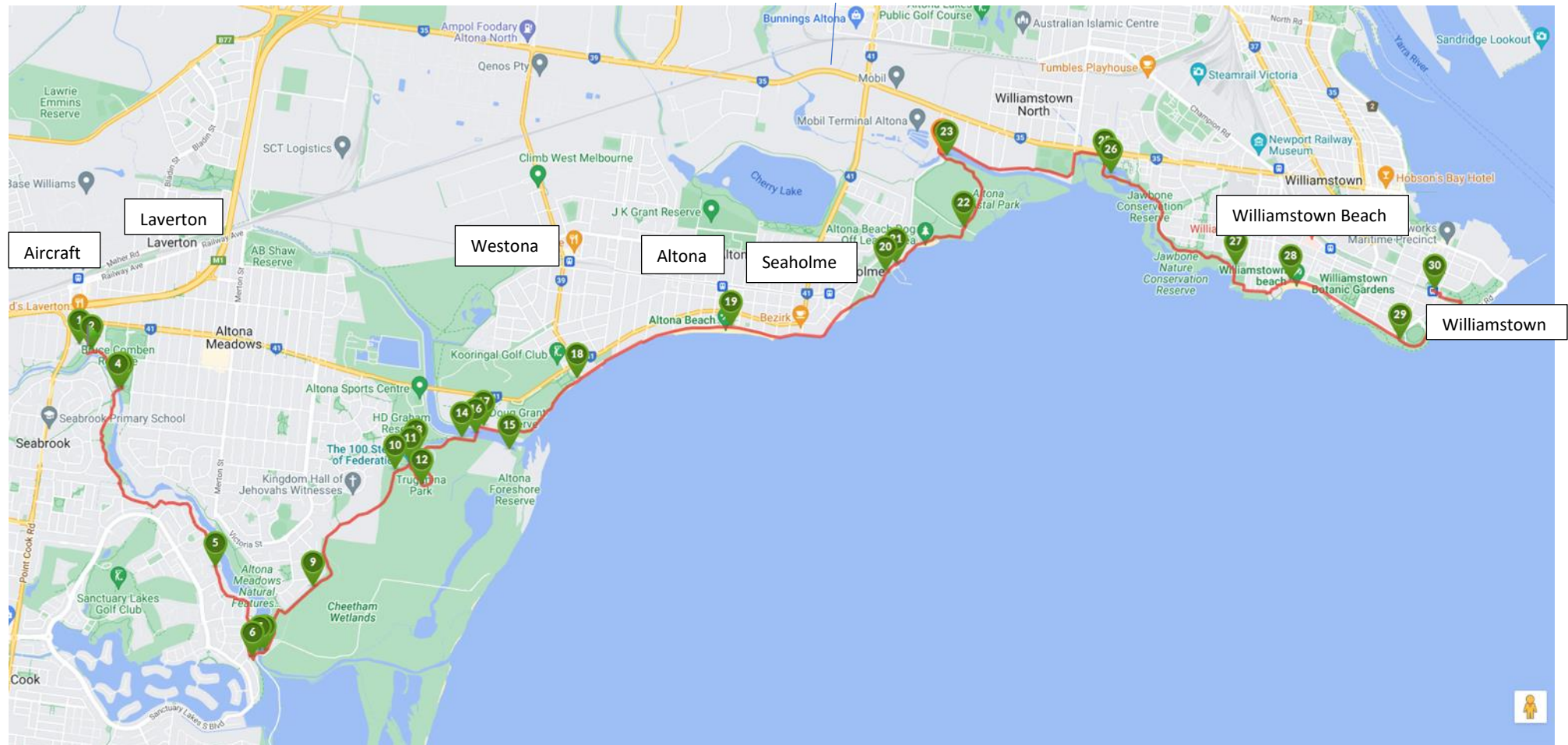
Skeleton Creek

Subsequent stages of the project would involve co-ordination of funding for improved infrastructure such as public toilets, boardwalks, path connections and a possible footbridge.

Partner agencies including Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, Hobsons Bay and Wyndham City Councils have agreed to establish a working group to progress the Western Waterways Walk. Now is the time to invest, provide the coordination and make it happen.

The appropriate Victorian Government agency would need to be identified to be the lead agency, possibly within the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions.

Appendix: Map and photos of the *Western Waterways Walk* with train stations



Note, the numbers are the points of interest of the current mapped walk from [Altona Meadows to Williamstown](#).

ⁱ <https://www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au/research/ausplay/results>

ⁱⁱ *Victorian Walking Survey 2021 (Panel Survey Report)*, Bartley Consulting Pty Ltd, (Nov 2021, prepared for Victoria Walks).

ⁱⁱⁱ *Economic, Social and Environmental Profile: Western Metro Region*, SGS Economics and Planning (April 2019, prepared for Infrastructure Victoria).

^{iv} <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/population-health-systems/victorian-population-health-survey-2017>

^v <https://www.vu.edu.au/mitchell-institute/australian-health-tracker-series/obesity-rate-depends-on-where-you-live>