





December 2023

Acknowledgements

Council acknowledges and respects the Bunurong People of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of these municipal lands and waterways and their unique ability to care for Country.

First Nations people have an unbroken custodianship of the land and waterways that extends back thousands of years. Their knowledge, understanding and relationship with Country are fundamental to the health of the environment and the success of any strategy to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Council recognises the First Nations' vast spiritual and sustainable relationship with this landscape, honouring Elders past, present and emerging leaders whose wisdom enriches us all.

This strategy commits Council to genuinely partnering with and engaging meaningfully with First Nations communities and expert representatives to learn and collaborate, to protect and enhance our natural environment.







CONTENTS



Vision	4
Goals	5
What is Biodiversity?	6
Biodiversity in Hobsons Bay	7
Legislation and Strategy for Biodiversity protection	12
Importance of managing Biodiversity	13
Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan	16
Goal: Protect	17
Goal: Restore	18
Goal: Engage	19
Goal: Collaborate	20
Appendix	21



VISON

"Value and protect our unique biodiversity for current and future generations."

Amidst a highly urbanised and industrial area, the Hobsons Bay municipality harbours areas of significant biodiversity with unique ecological values. These range from internationally significant wetlands, critically endangered grasslands to interconnecting waterways and significant conservation reserves. Locally significant flora and fauna species exists within these ecosystems that contribute to the rich biodiversity of Hobsons Bay.

The vision highlights the appreciation of the distinct biodiversity found within Hobsons Bay, the importance of valuing its intrinsic worth and commitment to ongoing preservation for current and future communities. The goals outlined in the strategy provide the guiding framework for Council's actions throughout its implementation, aligning with the overarching vision to value and

protect our unique biodiversity. Council strives to create a sustainable and resilient environment that safeguards biodiversity and fosters deeper connections between our community and environment.

Hobsons Bay City Council is committed to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, providing a long-term strategic vision outlining key actions to be undertaken.





GOALS

PROTECT

- Safeguarding biodiversity in Hobsons Bay to ensure the protection of rare and threatened species and ecosystems.
- Planning for the long-term management and protection of ecosystems in their entirety to preserve remaining areas of significant biodiversity.

RESTORE

- Prioritise restoration to expand remnant vegetation in biodiversity corridors and in areas where threatened species occur.
- Enhance biodiversity within
 Hobsons Bay, employing adaptive management techniques, comprehensive restorations and rehabilitation initiatives to improve ecosystem resilience and habitat corridors.

ENGAGE

- Actively foster connections to deliver positive outcomes for our community and unique biodiversity.
- Involve community, encourage participation and raise awareness about the importance of biodiversity.

COLLABORATE

- Foster collaborative networks and partnerships to enhance effectiveness of landscape scale biodiversity management through shared responsibilities to ensure survival of species and ecosystems.
- Foster deeper collaboration with Traditional Owners to connect culture and biodiversity, acknowledging the interconnectedness and relationship between cultural heritage, traditional practices and ecosystem health.



WHAT IS BIODIVERSITY AND WHY IS BIODIVERSITY IMPORTANT?

Biodiversity encompasses all components of the living world. 'Bio' meaning life and 'Diversity' meaning variability, refers to the variety of all living organisms.

It includes the differing life forms from flora, fauna and micro-organisms to the complex and interconnected ecological processes. It incorporates the diversity of species and their genetic variation as well as the array of ecosystems and habitats within which they live. Biodiversity contributes to the stability and resilience of ecosystems providing the foundation to healthy functioning environments.

Biodiversity plays an important role in offering a large range of ecosystem services to the community. It provides the provision of food, water and natural resources necessary to sustain life, regulates ecological processes and offers cultural values. Improved health and wellbeing of both individuals and communities has been linked with rich biodiverse spaces, with research indicating time spent in biodiverse spaces results in positive short and long-term health benefits. As biodiversity supports the health of ecosystems, provides critical habitats for species, contributes to ecosystem services and enhances the overall resilience and well-being of community, it is essential to protect and enhance.

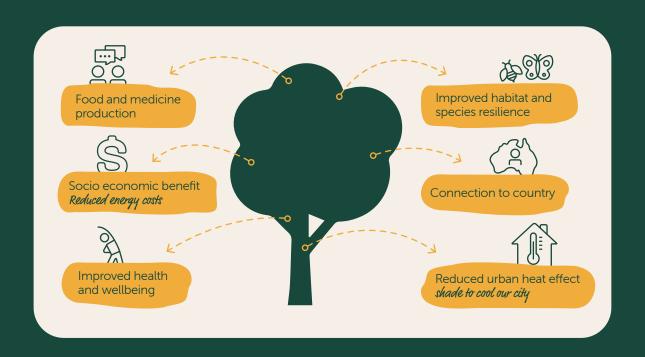


Figure 1. Benefits of biodiversity for ecosystem services

BIODIVERSITY IN HOBSONS BAY

Hobsons Bay is situated within the Port Phillip and Westernport Regional Catchment, on the shores of Port Phillip Bay and within the Victorian Volcanic Plains bioregion.

Hobsons Bay has a rich natural environment, that includes remnant native grasslands, five waterways, significant wetlands and foreshore areas. The combination of significant biodiverse areas within a highly developed landscape is unique for a metropolitan Council.

Council currently manages over 336 hectares of conservation area across 28 sites with considerable biodiversity values that encompass nationally and internationally significant ecosystems and species. Council also works closely with other government agencies who manage land within Hobsons Bay for its biodiversity value.

A map showing the location of biodiversity significant areas within Hobsons Bay is shown in *Figure 2* page 10.

Biodiversity corridors offer interconnected pathways to safeguard diverse ecosystems, promoting genetic resilience that enables species to adapt to environmental changes. These corridors allow movement between isolated populations providing food and shelter for both native and migratory fauna. The biodiversity corridors within Hobsons Bay contribute to increased genetic diversity and resilience for native species and connectivity across an urban environment

A map showing biodiversity corridors within Hobsons Bay is shown in *Figure 3* page 11.

The western volcanic plains grasslands are one of the most endangered ecosystems in Australia, classified as critically endangered under the

Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act) and threatened under Victoria's Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act (FFG). Holding high significance for both cultural and biological reasons, less than one per cent of this unique and vanishing ecosystem remain. These grasslands typically dominated by tussock grasses are floristically rich ecosystems that's support rare species such as the Stripped Legless Lizard and Spiny Rice Flower.

Our coastal ecosystems that contain mangroves, seagrasses and tidal marshes provide vital climate change adaption benefits by removing carbon from the atmosphere and mitigating the impacts of rising sea levels through erosion control. Acting as a carbon sink these blue carbon ecosystems sequester carbon from the atmosphere storing it in their biomass and soils.

Mangroves located in Altona Coastal Park, Sandy Point and Jawbone Reserve are amongst some of the most southerly located mangroves in the world. They provide crucial protection along coastlines and waterways from storm surges and flooding as well as shielded nurseries for fish.

Migratory shorebirds such as the Red-necked Stint and Curlew Sandpiper feed along the coastal areas during the summer months before returning to breeding grounds in Siberia and Alaska. These coastal wetlands are internationally recognised as significant biodiversity areas supporting numerous migratory species listed under international migratory bird conservation agreements.

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Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVC) modelled by the Victorian Government classify and describe the different vegetation types within Victoria. The primary vegetation types within Hobsons Bay are:

Plains Grasslands and Chenopod Shrublands

Found primarily in Laverton North Grasslands and Altona North, either side of the railway line, between Laverton Creek and Kororoit Creek.

Coastal Saltmarsh

Found primarily in Paisley Challis, Altona Coastal Park, Truganina Park, Truganina Swamp, Jawbone Flora and Fauna Reserve and Cheetham Wetlands.

Coastal Scrubs Grasslands and Woodlands

Found primarily around the Cheetham Wetlands, Laverton Creek, Sandy Point and Truganina Swamp.

Salt-tolerant and /or Succulent Shrublands

Found around Skeleton Creek, Laverton Creek, Kororoit Creek and Jawbone Nature Reserve and even a small amount along the Yarra River and Stony Creek.

Riparian Scrubs or Swampy Scrubs and Woodlands

Found primarily along Kororoit Creek, north of Kororoit Creek Road.

Wetlands

Found primarily in Truganina Park and Laverton Stormwater Harvesting and around Cherry Creek and Kororoit Creek between Millers Road and Kororoit Creek Road.







These diverse ecosystems of Hobsons Bay contain an abundance of flora and fauna including numerous threatened species requiring ongoing protection for survival. The presence of these threatened species highlights the ecological significance of the area.

Examples of threatened flora within Hobsons Bay include:

- Spiny Rice-flower (Pimelea spinescens subsp. Spinescens) Critically Endangered
- Sunshine Diuris (Diuris fragrantissima) Critically Endangered
- Emu-foot scurf pea (Cullen tenax) Endangered
- Coastal wirilda (Acacia uncifolia) Endangered

Examples of threatened fauna within Hobsons Bay include:

- Swift Parrot (Lathamus discolor) migratory Critically Endangered
- Eastern Curlew (Numenius madagascariensis) migratory Critically Endangered
- Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) migratory Vulnerable

- Golden Sun Moth (Synemon plana) Vulnerable
- Blue-billed Duck (Oxyura australis) Vulnerable
- Growling Grass Frog (Litoria raniformis) Vulnerable
- Striped legless lizard (Delma impar) Vulnerable



Figure 2. Areas with known significant biodiversity values within Hobsons Bay

LEGISLATION AND STRATEGYFOR BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION

Legislation and Strategy for Biodiversity Protection

Federal

Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 Ramsar Convention

Water Act 2007

Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019–2030

State

Environmental Protection Act 1970

- Planning and Environment Act 1987
- Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994
- Protecting Victoria's Environment Strategy – Biodiversity 2037
- Port Phillip and Western Port Regional Catchment Strategy
- Cultural Landscapes Strategy

Wildlife Act 1975

- Flora & Fauna Guarantee Act 1988

Climate Change Act 2017

Water is Life – Traditional Owner Access to Water Roadmap

Living Melbourne – Our Metropolitan Urban Forest

Local

Local Government Act 2000

The Biodiversity Strategy is Council's key strategic document to guide the preservation and enhancement of biodiversity in Hobsons Bay, along with existing strategies and projects with intentional biodiversity outcomes.

Hobsons Bay 2030 Community Vision

Council Plan 2021–25 and Municipal Planning Strategy

Biodiversity Strategy 2024-34

Urban Forest Strategy 2020

Open Space Strategy 2018-2028

Response to Climate Change Action Plan 2022–30

Coastal & Marine Management Plan 2021

Waste & Litter Strategy 2018-28

IMPORTANCE OF MANAGING BIODIVERSITY

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Community engagement

Fostering deeper relationships and empowering the wider community with knowledge and skills is pivotal for biodiversity protection and enhancement. Community engagement encourages involvement, increases awareness, collects local knowledge and promotes shared responsibility to preserve our biodiversity for current and future generations.

Hobsons Bay is fortunate to have an engaged community passionate about biodiversity protection, with nine dedicated community groups actively involved in ecosystem restoration and protection. These community groups have made significant contributions to biodiversity conservation in Hobsons Bay, collectively enhancing knowledge through information sessions and fauna surveys as well as habitat and ecosystem resilience through restoration and maintenance events.

Broadening municipal wide biodiversity engagement will lead to;

- Wider range of stakeholders engaged
- Stronger commitment to biodiversity protection
- Resilient connected biodiversity landscapes
- Targeted corridors for biodiversity enhancement
- Engaged private landowners and land managers for collaborative improvement.

Utilising the collective power of community participation to increase local knowledge, improve areas of significant biodiversity and gather valuable data on species will develop a culture of biodiversity stewardship.

Cultural connection and collaboration

Biodiversity is deeply intertwined with cultural identities and traditions. Recognising and fostering a deeper appreciation of the connection between Traditional Owners and biodiversity within Hobsons Bay allows for the preservation of cultural practices linked to biodiversity. Further developing relationships with the Traditional Owners will enable them to incorporate cultural practices and perspectives for a more holistic approach to biodiversity enhancement.



Pest species

There are several pest species that pose a risk to native flora, fauna and ecosystems within Hobsons Bay. Pest plants are extremely resilient, out-compete indigenous flora and spread easily via wind, water, machinery and through human and animal movement. Pest animals are highly mobile, have few natural predators and have high rates of reproduction, resulting in high population numbers and increased competition for food and shelter. They include foxes, cats, rabbits and Common Mynas. Hobsons Bay has an established Pest Animal Management Plan and incorporate adaptive management techniques to prioritise, reduce and mitigate the negative impacts of invasive pest species. Engaging external land managers and private landowners will broaden the reach and impact of pest species control measures for a comprehensive coordinated approach to protect biodiversity and ecological integrity. Collaboration at a municipal wide scale for pest species can effectively address challenges across the landscape.

To minimise the effect of domestic animals on the population of native fauna, stronger controls need to be implemented where there are known domestic animal issues affecting areas of significant biodiversity. Cats have contributed to the extinction of more than 20 Australian mammals. Responsible pet ownership, containment and education to best support the welfare of pets and native fauna will reduce disease spread, accidents and amount of killed wildlife.

Climate change

The global climate is changing and poses a significant threat to biodiversity both locally and internationally. Climate change risks that will impact biodiversity in Hobsons Bay include coastal flooding and sea level rise, heatwaves, intense rainfall events, an overall increase in temperature coinciding with an overall decrease in rainfall. Impacts within urban environments can be accelerated due to urban heat island effects. Council has a number of strategies and plans to mitigate impacts of climate change on biodiversity in addition to conservation management that focuses on specifically improving resilience and ecosystem health.









Protecting biodiversity and remnant vegetation

Industrial development and urban densification pose significant challenges and increased pressure on biodiversity and ecosystem connectivity. Fragmentation, habitat degradation and destruction of biodiversity increase pressure on species survival. Additionally soil compaction, introduction of pest species, pollution and increased artificial lighting detrimentally impact biodiversity as a result of development. Understanding and implementing measures to mitigate these impacts is critical to the ongoing survival of species and coexistence between urban and natural environments.

Hobsons Bay is a highly developed municipality with majority of remaining remnant grasslands that support critically endangered species located within undeveloped industrial areas. The biodiversity value of these grasslands is highly significant containing species of national, state and local significance. Protecting and properly managing the grasslands on these private properties is vital in safeguarding their existence for current and future generations. Hobsons Bay currently manages 12.06 hectares of plains grasslands. Since 2016 it is estimated that 172ha of high value plains grasslands have been cleared for developments with approximately 178.41 hectares of known plains grassland areas remaining on privately owned land. In response to the continued loss of plains grassland within privately owned land Council will seek to introduce new planning controls such as an Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO) into the Hobsons Bay Planning Scheme that will ensure biodiversity values are considered as part of the planning permit process.

This new control would exist alongside state and federal legislation to support the retention of high value grassland areas and enable stronger protections for biodiversity corridors and remaining critically endangered plains grassland habitat. A map showing the candidate ESO areas within Hobsons Bay is shown in *Figure 4* page 22.

An ESO is a tool used to protect areas of environmental importance. An ESO triggers a planning permit for development applications, land use change, vegetation removal and subdivision.

While federal and state legislation are essential for protecting native grasslands at a broader level, protecting native grasslands with local planning scheme controls such as an ESO can offer additional benefits by providing tailored protection, addressing site-specific concerns, involving the community and ensuring long-term conservation of these valuable ecosystems.

Under local, state and federal legislation an offset may be required as part of a permit to clear native vegetation. The offset is a site that is protected in perpetuity. It protects the same vegetation types or species that are being removed from the development site.

Offsets have the most value when:

- they are large enough to support the ongoing existence of the species found on the site
- the site connects to an existing area of biodiversity significance which improves connectivity
- they reduce the threats from neighbouring properties
- they support unique biodiversity that isn't currently protected
- the potential for restoration to increase biodiversity is high

Where these conditions can be met in Hobsons Bay it is preferable that the offset be located within the municipality. An offset policy that addresses these issues would provide greater direction over where and when an offset should be located.

BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

Council will deliver this strategy from 2024-34.

The actions support Council's vision to value and protect our unique biodiversity in Hobsons Bay.

Each action will be within Council's control, impactful, deliverable, and financially responsible, ensuring a focused and responsible approach to biodiversity preservation.

An internal steering group will meet regularly to implement actions, monitor progress, and evaluate impact, with progress reported on in the Hobsons Bay Annual Report.

At the five year mark of the strategy a full review will be conducted to assess progress and respond to emerging threats. If amendments to action plan are required to address opportunities and threats a report will be shared with Council.







Objective

- Prevent local extinction of indigenous flora, fauna and ecosystems.
- Retain remaining remnant grasslands and areas of significant biodiversity.
- Reduce light pollution impacts on areas with significant biodiversity.
- Strengthen the Planning Scheme to achieve better biodiversity outcomes.

Outcome

Council conservation reserves and areas of significant biodiversity have ongoing protection

	Action	Timeframe
1.1	Conduct an assessment of native grasslands and habitat value in industrial areas of Hobsons Bay where significant and critically endangered grasslands may remain.	2024
1.2	1.2 Strengthen protections for native grassland areas within the Hobsons Bay Planning Scheme 2024– by introducing an Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO) that triggers the requirement for a planning permit.	
1.3	Adopt the Hobsons Bay Native Vegetation Offset Guidelines to guide offsets in development applications.	2024
1.4	Commence parks enforcement activities to ensure biodiversity and trees are protected in accordance with legislative requirements.	ongoing
1.5	Conduct regular monitoring of biodiversity to ensure compliance with planning permit conditions and investigate instances of potential illegal native vegetation removal.	Commence 2024
1.6	Establish a mandatory reporting procedure to regularly monitor all offset sites within Hobsons Bay for compliance.	2024–25
1.7	Implement coastal protection measures to reduce erosion in coastal areas and significant biodiversity areas, in particular Sandy Point.	Commence 2025
1.8	Undertake an assessment into light pollution for biodiversity significant areas focusing on corridors and estuaries to determine extent of impact and sensitive lighting solutions.	2024–25
1.9	Ensure National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife are considered for all developments ongoing adjacent to significant biodiversity areas and incorporated into Council policy.	
1.10	Develop a procedure to ensure avoidance and minimisation of impacts from development occur to significant biodiversity areas.	2025
1.11	Advocate to Federal and State governments for establishment of protected areas for critically endangered ecosystems.	Ongoing



Objective

- Pest species threat is reduced in areas of significant biodiversity.
- Increased restoration plantings to create interconnected habitat corridors and expand remnant vegetation.
- Overall increase in biodiversity, ecosystems and habitats by 2027.

Outcome

There is a net increase in biodiversity, connective habitat and species resilience.

Pest species impact mitigated in areas of highest biodiversity value.

	Action	Timeframe
2.1	Implement the Pest Animal Management Plan and continue core pest species control across Council managed Conservation Reserves.	Ongoing
2.2	Implement stronger controls where there are known domestic animal issues affecting areas of significant biodiversity during the Domestic Animal Management Plan review that occurs at four-year intervals.	2024 – 2025
2.3	Develop a GIS layer of biodiversity values on public land.	Commence 2024
2.4	Undertake flora and fauna surveys to develop baseline data within Council to establish trends in species occurrence/abundance and understand ongoing conservation management.	Commence 2025
2.5	Conduct yearly ecological burns to improve biodiversity and ecosystem health.	Ongoing
2.6	Reinstate hydrological cycles of Gahnia filum habitat to assist long-term survival of the Altona Skipper Butterfly.	Commence 2024
2.7	Undertake yearly restoration plantings to safeguard and expand remnant vegetation and increase the health of protected areas.	Ongoing
2.8	Prioritise tree planting using locally indigenous species near biodiversity significant areas and corridors, including industrial and residential zones, following the guidelines outlined in the Urban Forest Strategy.	
2.9	Investigate opportunity to re-introduce fauna. Enhance fauna habitat by increasing rock and vegetation cover and installing fences for habitat and predator protections.	Commence 2027
2.10	Undertake landscape design and planting using indigenous flora for the Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre (HBWC) to connect people with nature and enhance local habitat.	Commence 2024



Objective

- A comprehensive review of conservation engagement activities in conducted to ensure maximum value for biodiversity and community.
- Habitat Gardens in Hobsons Bay program is expanded to establish ecosystem corridors in targeted areas.
- More community members value, understand and participate in biodiversity activities by 2027.
- A landscape wide monitoring program for Hobsons Bays fauna is developed and established.

Outcome

An empowered community that understands, values and actively participates in biodiversity enhancement, fostering a sense of responsibility and stewardship.

	Action	Timeframe
3.1	Assess and enhance existing conservation engagement programs to provide a diverse range of ongoing educational and hand-on experiences to promote active participation and deeper connection to biodiversity. Evaluate effectiveness and impact of conservation engagement activities in regard to biodiversity enhancement and community involvement.	2024-2025
3.2	Implement and promote community-led citizen science programs to actively engage residents and landowners in monitoring biodiversity and identifying emerging threats.	Commence 2025
3.3	Develop community guidelines for ethical nature-based experiences ensuring the protection of significant biodiversity.	2024 - 2025
3.4	Expand the municipal wide Habitat Gardens in Hobsons Bay program to targeted areas for greater ecosystem connectivity. Staged expansion to include significant biodiversity corridors and industrial areas.	Commence 2025
3.5	onstruct infrastructure and boardwalks in Altona Coastal Park and Truganina Park to Ongoing nultaneously minimise disturbance to biodiversity significant areas and enhancing accessibility visitors.	
3.6	Establish a municipal wide biodiversity corridor enhancement and protection program that incorporates all remaining significant ecosystems. Create an environmental and tourism asset for this corridor. "Embark on a Biodiversity Journey: Explore our vibrant coastlines, waterways and grasslands"	Commence 2026

COLLABORATE

Objective

- Collaborate with the Traditional Owners to connect culture and biodiversity.
- Traditional owners are empowered to engage in cultural land management practices.
- Increased contribution to protect biodiversity and connect ecosystems within privately owned areas by 2027.

Outcome

Collaboration with Traditional Owners in cultural land management practices that enhance biodiversity and cultural connections.

Collaboration with industry and private land managers to implement targeted landscapescale pest species control, increase connectivity through habitat corridors and enhance significant grasslands throughout the municipality.

	Action	Timeframe	
4.1	Collaborate with Traditional Owners to foster a deeper connection to Indigenous Cultural Heritage and biodiversity. Develop opportunities for integration of indigenous land management practices and cultural practices for biodiversity enhancement, implementing at least two joint initiatives per year.	Commence 2024	
4.2	Continue to support existing and emerging Friends of groups and other conservation groups that value and protect our biodiversity to strengthen stewardship for the environment.	Ongoing	
4.3	Provide support to industry and private landowners to implement landscape scale pest species control and habitat connectivity.	Commence 2025	
4.4	Develop an incentive program for industry and private landowners to encourage pest species control and habitat connectivity.	Commence 2024	
4.5	ngthen habitat in Hobsons Bay open space areas utilising indigenous plantings, prioritising Ongoing diversity corridors.		
4.6	Conduct educational programs for responsible domestic animal ownership and impact on wildlife with Councils Animal Management team.	Commence 2024	
4.7	Collaborate with Pollution Prevention Taskforce through Waterways of the West and Environment Protection Authority (EPA) to monitor and prevent pollutants entering significant biodiversity areas. Prioritise significant migratory and wading bird habitat to enhance pollution control measures.	nt Protection Authority (EPA) to monitor and prevent pollutants entering significant rareas. Prioritise significant migratory and wading bird habitat to enhance pollution	
4.8	Collaborate with Agriculture Victoria's Biosecurity team to manage existing and potential emerging species and establish procedures for containment.	Ongoing	
4.9	Support Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre through establishment, engagement and citizen science programs as the future environment education and research centre for the municipality.	Ongoing	

APPENDIX

Council's management of over 336 hectares of conservation areas across 28 sites is displayed in the table below highlighting the current commitment to preserving and enhancing biodiversity for the benefit of the local environment and community.

Altona Coastal Park55Altona Coastal Park - seagrass bed33Bladin St0.64Blue Bells Grassland0.26Carinza Ave1.78Cherry Lake ornamental pond bushland0.36Claredon Crt0.08Clement Reserve0.25Cyril Curtain Wetland0.34Doreen's Grassland3.25Doug Grant Foreshore0.9Emu-foot Grassland1Federation Trail0.92Horsburgh Drive Grassland4.38Kororoit Creek25.4Laverton Storm Water Harvesting wetland and grassland3.76Maidstone Street Grassland6.15Markham Way0.29McCormack Park0.31Newport Lakes33Paisley-Challis Wetlands7.79Rifle Range Reserve25.68Sandy Point2Sandy Spit25.16The Buffer Mounds and wetlands9.6The Spit1.62Truganina Explosives Reserve15.44Truganina Park79.57	Conservation Areas managed by Hobsons Bay	Size in hectares
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The Spit1.62Truganina Explosives Reserve15.44	Sandy Spit	25.16
Truganina Explosives Reserve 15.44	The Buffer Mounds and wetlands	9.6
	The Spit	1.62
Truganina Park 79.57	Truganina Explosives Reserve	15.44
	Truganina Park	79.57

"Value and protect our unique biodiversity for current and future generations."









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