

Luisa Macmillan – Fostering a Ribbon of Magic

Luisa Macmillan's contributions to the Merri Creek are invaluable, spanning a number of decades and benefitting many. The Merri Creek and Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) would not be what it is today without Luisa's role in championing the values of the waterway, a '*ribbon of magic*', as one grateful community member termed it, and its significance to the community. Luisa's influence on the Merri Creek began with her appointment as Manager of MCMC, the coordinating body for the Merri Creek, in 2002. Since then, she has been instrumental in driving MCMC's work to advocate for the Creek, and delivering on-the-ground improvements and engagement activities that connect people to the Creek.

With an undergraduate honours degree in freshwater ecology and a Masters in Applied Science in the conservation assessment of rivers, Luisa's interest in ecology grounds her deep passion for the entire ecosystem of the Merri Creek. She takes a holistic approach in her work fostering the re-emergence of the Creek: its geographic space; as a living system; its pre- and post-colonisation history; and its natural and human-influenced processes of change.

The revitalisation of the Merri Creek from Harding Street bridge to AC Capp Reserve is a shining example of the regeneration that Luisa has helped facilitate on the Creek. As Luisa reflects, "*What was once a shallow channel overgrown with weeds is now a free-flowing stream bounded by an abundance of canopy trees, understory, restabilised banks, aquatic life and animals*". Tawny Frogmouths nest along this stretch, small birds - Grey Fantail, Brown Thornbill and sometimes Golden Whistler (pictured) - frequent the canopy and Dusky Moorhen, Black Duck and Chestnut Teal are found on the Creek itself. This is a small step towards Luisa's larger goal of continuous ecological restoration of the Merri Creek to develop and enrich its terrestrial biodiversity, and in turn support a rich aquatic biodiversity.

Luisa's vision for the Creek is that the '*ribbon of magic*' flows unimpeded from near its origin at Heathcote Junction, downstream to Dights Falls Abbotsford; a healthy waterway rich in ecology with a continuous shared user path for all to enjoy. "*Wetlands every 200m or so along the Creek will mitigate the polluting effects of urban stormwater; dazzling restored wetlands in the upper Merri around Wallan will be northern Melbourne's own 'mini-Kakadu'.*"

Luisa is especially proud of the MCMC's work supporting Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Elders to connect to Merri country, and its contributions to the establishment of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Narrap team ('narrap' meaning 'Country', for teams which undertake natural resource management activities on Country). The MCMC and Narrap crews work together resulting in beneficial two-way learnings.



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Ever modest, Luisa pays tribute to the vision of community volunteers such as Ann McGregor who saw the Merri's potential and shaped the vision from the late 1970s onwards, and the foundational MCMC staff (many of them women) who helped implement this vision. Luisa also acknowledges her work relies on collaboration with her MCMC team, the community, volunteers (especially the Friends of Merri Creek), local government and state agencies like Melbourne Water.

Community responses encourage and inspire Luisa in her work for the Merri:

"People are deeply, deeply appreciative of this kind of space as a respite from the demands, worries and noise from the rest of their life. [It's] a space for walking, for contemplation, for kids to play, for just appreciating the bird life and nature", she reflects.

"Melbourne Water would like to acknowledge and celebrate the contribution of Luisa Macmillan to the ongoing environmental protection and enhancement of the Merri Creek and her role in championing the values of the waterway and its significance to the community." Melbourne Water nomination of Luisa Macmillan.

Luisa Macmillan is Manager of the Merri Creek Management Committee ([MCMC](#)).

Acknowledgements

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