



# Sheils Reserve Transformation Project: A Socio-Ecological Study

## Background

Sheils Reserve in Brunswick West, Victoria, is being transformed from an informal green space into a park with play and recreation opportunities for residents and habitat for local wildlife.

This project is funded by Moreland City Council.

A multidisciplinary team from RMIT University are conducting a longitudinal socio-ecological study that aims to determine the impact of the Sheils Reserve

Transformation project on residents, with a focus on social, health and wellbeing outcomes as well as biodiversity benefits. The project began in January 2018 and is expected to conclude in 2021.

Social and ecological baseline surveys were completed during 2018-2020 to understand the impact of this greening transformation on residents' health and wellbeing, plus insect and bird biodiversity. Selected results are provided overleaf.



Sheils Reserve before the transformation

## The Location

- 8 kilometres north of central Melbourne
- Population is about 162,600 (ABS, 2016)
- Average of 3 people per household (ABS, 2016)
- Over 30% of people born overseas (ABS, 2016)



## Ecological Findings – Insects

Insects were surveyed during the study period of March 2018 to May 2020 through a combination of direct observation and sweep-netting.

### Baseline surveys

A total of **41 insects** were observed via sweep-netting before the greening took place. These include species of ants, beetles, flies, heteropteran bugs, jumping plant lice, leafhoppers, parasitoid wasps and planthoppers. The most common species was the minute brown scavenger beetle.

### After surveys

Results of the after surveys are still being processed. It has been confirmed, however, that planting hop goodenia (*Goodenia ovata*) in Sheils Reserve as part of the transformation has attracted blue-banded bees to the site.



A blue banded bee *Amegilla cingulata*

## Social Findings

16 face-to-face interviews were conducted with **19 residents** between March and August 2019, before the site transformation took place. Follow-up interviews with residents are planned from 2021.



Planting day at Sheils Reserve

### Pre-greening perceptions: 'A sad place' with 'a lovely view'

Most residents had negative perceptions of Sheils Reserve before the greening took place. It was regarded as 'a wasteland', 'an empty lot' and 'a sad place'.

Many residents felt a key feature of the reserve was its view. 'Facing west... getting a **big sky** view and **sunsets** is the best part'. It was primarily used by residents for dog walking or as a shortcut through the neighbourhood.

### Post-greening expectations: 'A biodiverse meeting spot'

Most residents found the prospect of the Sheils Reserve greening improvements '**very exciting**' and that it will be an '**amazing addition** to nature in Brunswick'.

Through the transformation, residents hoped for a place to encourage a **sense of community**, increased access to **nature** and **biodiversity**, park amenities for **equitable access**, and the creation of somewhere **interesting** and **enjoyable** for children and adults to meet and socialise.