

At the Edge: A Platform for Presence on Jacksons Creek Bik Wurrdha

An Ideas Competition for Students and Emerging Landscape Architects
Led by Open House Melbourne through the Open Nature program

Introduction

Open Nature, an initiative of Open House Melbourne invites students and emerging landscape architects (up to five years post-graduation) to participate in an ideas competition for a conceptual platform at the Jacksons Creek Biik Wurrdha Regional Parklands.

Entrants are invited to propose visionary, sensitive, and grounded ideas that consider the ecological, cultural, and experiential potential of a small-scale intervention within this significant conservation landscape.

This is a conceptual design ideas competition only. There is no intent for construction.

Register below by Sunday 9 November to receive your anonymous submission identification number.

Design Challenge: A Platform for Presence

Jacksons Creek Biik Wurrdha is not waiting to be designed, it is already speaking. A living cultural landscape of basalt escarpments, grassland remnants, and sacred Wurundjeri places, this Country holds time in its soils and songlines in its curves. The call is not to build, but to listen.

This competition invites students and emerging landscape architects to imagine a design intervention not as a structure to be seen, but as a means to see differently.

What if the platform was an invitation to slow down, to listen to wind through kangaroo grass, to witness the passage of seasons across the plains? What if it offered not just views, but new vantage points on responsibility, reciprocity, and respect?

This is a site of immense cultural and ecological significance. Any intervention especially within a national conservation reserve must tread lightly. Grand architectural gestures are not the aim. Instead, we ask you to explore how a conceptual platform or design intervention can become a threshold: between past and future, human and more-than-human, seeing and sensing.

- Can a platform become a portal to Country?
- A frame for sky and memory?
- A quiet prompt for action, care, and custodianship?

This is not a brief for a viewing deck, it is a brief for a profoundly relational encounter.

Design a platform for presence.

Site Context

Jacksons Creek Biik Wurrdha is a future Regional Parkland in Melbourne's north-west. The landscape is shaped by volcanic basalt plains, creek corridors, and critically endangered native grasslands. It is also a living cultural landscape, rich with Wurundjeri significance and ongoing custodianship.

The site for the intervention is located within a national conversation reserve, requiring careful, minimal-impact proposals. Due to access and conservation limitations, submissions should be conceptual and light-touch in nature.

Native grasslands can be found within the design competition's site boundary. Entries should carefully consider these native grasslands.

Entrants should approach this opportunity as an encounter with Country, rather than an imposition on it.

Competition Type

1. Ideas competition only, no commitment to construction
2. Open and anonymous
3. Targeted at students and early-career professionals (≤ 5 years post-graduation)
4. Multidisciplinary collaborations encouraged

Eligibility

Open to:

- Students currently enrolled in a landscape architecture or allied design course
- Emerging practitioners (up to 5 years post-graduation)
- Individual or team entries (multidisciplinary collaborations encouraged)
- Each team must be led by a landscape architecture student or graduate (from a recognised landscape architecture program). Additional team members can consist of students or graduates (up to five years post-graduation) in a related discipline.

Site Materials + Key References

Entrants will be provided with:

1. Jacksons Creek Biik Wurrdha Regional Parklands Plan 2022
2. Cultural Values Study
3. Parks Victoria Planning Overlays and Site Information
4. Site Access Protocols
5. Site Aerial Image—high resolution
6. Design Site Boundary + Contours (DWG)
7. Design Site Boundary (PDF)
8. Precinct Structure Plan Documents 1/2 and 2/2
9. Site Images
10. A video introduction to the site for those unable to attend in person—*to be provided*

Site Access

Two optional guided site visits will be offered in **mid-August (dates + times to be announced)**. Attendance is encouraged but not required. A recorded site tour video will also be made available. Safety protocols must be followed at all times.

Design Intentions

Designs should:

- Be informed by and responsive to Wurundjeri cultural values and Country
- Reflect light-touch, low-impact approaches to intervention
- Consider views, landform, and experience from a human and more-than-human perspective
- Include elements that enhance habitat or biodiversity (e.g. Gardens for Wildlife inspiration)
- Evoke stewardship, wonder, and responsibility
- Respond to seasonal shifts and elemental forces
- Align with the Parklands Plan vision

Key Dates

Brief Launch— Monday 21 July 2025

Site Tours—Mid-August 2025 (dates + times to be announced)

Submission Questions Due—Friday 22 August

We invite competition and submission questions from registrants up until this date. FAQs will be published by Friday 29 August.

Registration Deadline—11.59pm Sunday 9 November

Submission Deadline—11.59pm Sunday 16 November 2025

Jury Review—24 November 2025

Shortlisting—Late November 2025

Public Announcement—Early 2026

Submission Requirements

All submissions must be anonymous and include:

- 1 x A1 PDF presentation board (landscape orientation)
- 1-page written design statement (max 500 words)
- *Optional:* 2-minute video or animation
- Finalists must be able to provide print-ready files on request

Competition Conditions

Anonymity:

—Submissions will be reviewed anonymously. No identifying details should appear on design boards.

Copyright:

—Entrants retain full copyright of their work. No design may be used or reproduced without prior consent.

Right to Publish:

—By entering, participants grant Open House Melbourne the right to publish, exhibit, and promote their work with attribution.

Conflict of Interest:

—All entrants, organisers, and jury members must disclose any real or perceived conflict of interest.

Disqualification:

—Submissions not complying with these conditions may be disqualified.

Submission implies acceptance of these conditions.

Judging Criteria

- Sensitivity to Country and cultural values
- Integration of biodiversity/habitat and ecological responsiveness
- Light-touch, poetic, and conceptual clarity
- Quality of communication, storytelling, and drawing
- Alignment with The Parklands Plan and Cultural Values Study
- Suitability for exhibition and public engagement

Jury

Jury Chair and members:

- Anna O’Sullivan: Registered Landscape Architect FFLA
- Alex Lee: Registered Landscape Architect, Spiire
- Nick Loschiavo: Registered Landscape Architect, Parks Victoria

Professional Advisor

The competition will be supported by a Professional Adviser to ensure a fair and transparent process. The Professional Adviser will oversee eligibility, anonymity, and alignment with the competition brief.

Tania Davidge, Open House Melbourne

Announcements + Recognition

Shortlisted entries and winners will be publicly announced through Open House Melbourne channels in early 2026. Selected works will be included in a digital exhibition.

