



# Northern Region Sustainable Water Strategy

## Fact Sheet 1

### About the Strategy

The Northern Region Sustainable Water Strategy sets out actions to provide greater water security to support the region's prosperity and growth in the face of reduced water availability.

These actions have been developed over eighteen months of intensive collaboration and consultation with the northern Victorian community.

They aim to protect key agricultural, environmental and urban values by:

- recognising and protecting existing entitlements to provide greater investment certainty
- enhancing markets, carryover and reserve policies to increase the ability of entitlement-holders to manage risks caused by variability of water supplies
- using water available for consumption and the environment more efficiently to get greater benefits from less volume
- delivering benefits from public investment in irrigation modernisation, on-farm programs, river and wetland health programs and environmental water purchase programs.

### The Strategy's area

The Northern Region includes Victoria's share of the River Murray, and its Victorian tributaries – the Kiewa, Ovens, Broken, Goulburn, Campaspe and Loddon River systems. Its current population of 529,000 is projected to increase to 781,000 within 50 years.

Rural water supplies are managed by Goulburn-Murray Water and Lower Murray Water and urban supplies are managed by North East Water, Goulburn Valley Water, Central Highlands Water, Coliban Water and Lower Murray Water.

The role as caretakers of river health is shared by the North East Catchment Management Authority, Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, North Central Catchment Management Authority and Mallee Catchment Authority.

### Who was involved

A **Consultative Committee** of regional stakeholders guided planning, helped shape technical work and contributed local expertise and perspective. Members included water corporations, catchment management authorities, local government, industry groups, the Victorian Farmers Federation, Environment Victoria and the Australian Conservation Foundation.

**Four working groups** supported the Committee, focusing on urban supply, the environment, allocations and licensing.

**Traditional Owner groups** whose concerns about future water management included the importance of health of Country and making sure Traditional Owners are actively involved in managing water.

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An **Independent Panel** considered public submissions, provided advice and made recommendations to the Government as the Strategy developed.

Members were Mrs. Christine Forster (chair), Professor John Langford, Mr Barry Steggall and the late Professor Peter Cullen.

### Public comment and submissions

Regional stakeholders hosted more than 75 briefings and meetings with local communities.

There were 135 and 177 submissions to the two public comment periods, with the majority focusing on proposals for:

- seasonal allocation
- amendment of carryover rules for water allocations
- urban access to water trading
- the Commonwealth's purchase of environmental water
- the proposed new Environmental Water Holder
- sleeper or inactive licences
- regional guidelines for unregulated systems
- domestic and stock water use, especially dams.

The set of principles that guided the Strategy included:

- shared responsibility and shared benefit
- recognising existing rights and entitlements
- allowing individuals to manage their own risk and exercise their choices
- being prepared without acting prematurely
- maximising efficiency and seeking multiple benefits
- maximising environmental outcomes
- socially responsible decision-making.

### What happens next

The actions identified will be implemented and monitored over the next seven to 10 years by the Department of Sustainability and Environment, rural and urban water corporations and catchment management authorities.

Sustainable water strategies are reviewed regularly to allow Government to adapt its management approach in line with community needs, water forecasts and environmental monitoring. The Northern Region Sustainable Water Strategy will be reviewed by 2019.

Figure 1.1 - The Northern Region Sustainable Water Strategy process

