

# GM2030 Annual Status Update



## INTRODUCTION

**Groundwater Management 2030 (GM2030) was launched in August 2022 and is the Victorian water sector's commitment to strong groundwater management that can adjust to meet opportunities and challenges as water use and industry transform in the future.**

Groundwater is a valuable natural resource that we must manage well now, and into the future for Victoria's communities.

GM2030 is a statement of priorities for the next six years for the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) and the rural water corporations Lower Murray Water, Goulburn-Murray Water, Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water and Southern Rural Water.

DEECA and the rural water corporations are working together to deliver all 13 priority areas by 2030. Working with water users, key stakeholders, Traditional Owners and the community is crucial to the success of GM2030.

We have had an important 18 months undertaking foundational technical work and establishing robust project planning and management arrangements. This has included building an understanding of the interdependencies between different priority areas and understanding issues of most concern to our stakeholders.



Energy,  
Environment  
and Climate Action



## Partnering with Traditional Owners

Victoria's Traditional Owners are an important part of GM2030, and we are inviting them to actively decide how they would like to partner with DEECA and the Rural Water Corporations to deliver GM2030's priority areas.

Embedding opportunities to build genuine partnerships with Traditional Owners is crucial to GM2030 and reflects DEECA's commitment to their participation in Water is Life – Traditional Owner Access to Water Roadmap.

Our engagement with Traditional Owners started at the project's inception in December 2022, when we wrote to Traditional Owners outlining opportunities to get involved. This communication included the identification of suitable land parcels to support Traditional Owner applications for groundwater licences for cultural needs. Decisions on groundwater licensing applications will follow the assessment stage.

While we want Traditional Owners to know about our project, understand the opportunities to partner with us, and shape its priorities, we are also mindful of the resourcing and engagement challenges facing some Traditional Owners. Our preferred approach is slow and meaningful.

Developing our cultural capability as we engage is a priority for those who work across GM2030, ensuring a safe, inclusive and culturally sensitive experience for Traditional Owners.

Our team has embraced opportunities to increase cultural awareness by joining Traditional Owners on Country to learn about their culture, history and connection to land and water including familiarising ourselves with Traditional Owner authored strategies for Country. In line with DEECA's Cultural Capability Framework and Cultural Safety Framework the GM2030 team commit to ensuring all staff have received the required education and training to ensure a healthy, mindful and appropriate engagement is embraced.



## Communications and Engagement

We continue to consult with our partners and stakeholders to raise awareness and understanding of GM2030 across Victoria and provide them with information on the opportunities for change and how they can have input.

When GM2030 was launched, our goal was to increase stakeholder and public awareness and understanding of GM2030 and how to participate and provide feedback and input on GM2030.

DEECA and the rural water corporations have done this by reaching out to existing groundwater customers, industry/environment groups and industry partners (such as urban water corporations and catchment management authorities) to increase awareness and understanding of GM2030.

As work on the GM2030 priority areas ramps-up, each of the priority area managers will be providing stakeholders with early, multiple, timely, and meaningful opportunities to provide input on GM2030.

We have initiated a regular statewide communications forum with rural water corporations to collaborate on communication and engagement opportunities.

This is an important forum for sharing information about how we are engaging and communicating with Traditional Owners, groundwater users and stakeholders across Victoria.

Anyone can get involved in GM2030 by emailing: [gm.2030@deeca.vic.gov.au](mailto:gm.2030@deeca.vic.gov.au).

# Outcome 1:

## An improved, shared understanding of groundwater and its uses for evidence-based management

### Priority Areas 1-4

#### Achievements

Our extensive four-year program of foundational technical work including research and data collation is approaching completion. Collecting groundwater data is an important step towards understanding groundwater availability and trends and how we use this important water source.

Using scientific and evidence-based methods to support any management decisions or proposals to change policy and operational arrangements as work progresses on GM2030 will help the community understand the reasons for change.

We have received feedback from our partners and key stakeholders and understand the issues associated with groundwater licensing and the protection of high-value groundwater-dependent-ecosystems. This feedback will help inform our future recommendations for improvement.

#### Coming up

Groundwater assessments, research and data collation will be finalised in 2025. This information will inform our work going forward on GM2030.

Work will commence to develop a 10-year monitoring strategy so that monitoring of groundwater availability and quality remains the best practice and provides value for money.



## Outcome 2:

### Modern tools in the state-wide framework for flexible and cost-effective groundwater management

#### Priority Areas 5-7

#### Achievements

A stocktake of groundwater information that is publicly available in Victoria across multiple digital platforms such as DEECA's website, the Victorian Water Register, and Rural Water Corporation websites to name a few, has commenced.

DEECA and the rural water corporations have commenced work on ensuring a shared understanding of how the groundwater management framework is applied across the state and identifying specific opportunities for improvement.

#### Coming up

Community consultation to seek the public's view on the gaps in groundwater information has been finalised and work has commenced to rewrite groundwater content on the DEECA website to be more aligned to user needs.



## Outcome 3:

### Streamlined and effective licensing, trade rules and controls on groundwater use that support changing water uses

#### Priority Areas 8-13

##### Achievements

We have commenced work on an extensive review of policies and licensing arrangements for extracting and using groundwater, as well as works licensing currently in place for the Water Act 1989, Section 51 (take and use) licensing and Section 67 (works). This review will streamline, clarify and distinguish between licensing guidance and rules. This will support licensing delegates to make robust decisions designed to manage long-term groundwater sustainability.

Southern Rural Water has completed community consultation to understand the barriers to groundwater trade in south west Victoria. This work is of particular interest to the community in that area and will assist them to better understand the groundwater market.

DEECA are implementing the Gippsland and South West Irrigation Development Guidelines after they were finalised and approved by key stakeholders. This work contributes to enabling and managing the use of saline groundwater in our regions.

Rural water corporations are continuing to address groundwater compliance and enforcement in-line with established processes and procedures. This includes assigning resources to areas with the greatest risk of non-compliance in routine annual planning.

Staff regulatory capabilities are being developed by providing the relevant compliance training and operational procedures for safe, efficient, and consistent work practices.

Suitable land parcels have been identified to support Traditional Owner applications for groundwater licences for cultural needs.

##### Coming up

Stakeholders and Traditional Owners will be engaged on the draft licensing guidelines for take and use licensing and works licensing.

A report will be delivered by DEECA and Southern Rural Water in December 2024 in the Southwest Limestone Area. It is hoped that DEECA and the rural water corporations can take learnings from the project and apply to other areas with similar characteristics.

DEECA, in partnership with key stakeholders, are reviewing the Victorian Mallee Irrigation Development Guidelines this year. Ongoing implementation of Northern, Gippsland and South West Irrigation Development Guidelines will continue.

As part of the implementing the Non-urban Water Metering Policy, DEECA are maintaining and replacing meters to ensure accurate water use measurement and accounting. Rural water corporations will continue targeted investment in telemetry devices for real time usage data.



## Next steps:

Now that our work on GM2030 in establishing good business practice and project management is complete, there will be several opportunities for engagement coming up where we will seek input from stakeholders.

We are keen to partner with Traditional Owners to discuss their place-based groundwater priorities so we can work together on issues relevant to Country and hear how Traditional Owners want to be involved in work that is important to them.

We will be reaching out to Traditional Owners and stakeholders to update them on our progress and to seek their input on the individual priority areas within GM2030.

## Get involved:

GM2030 provides an opportunity for you to influence groundwater management in Victoria. Indicate your interest by emailing us at: [gm.2030@deeca.vic.gov.au](mailto:gm.2030@deeca.vic.gov.au)

Further information on GM2030 can be found here: [www.water.vic.gov.au/water-sources/groundwater/groundwater-management-2030](http://www.water.vic.gov.au/water-sources/groundwater/groundwater-management-2030)