Appendix D
Consultation Report
Appendix D
Consultation Report

Contents

1. Introduction ........................................................................................................ 988
   1.1 About the Consultation Report ................................................................... 988
   1.2 Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan .................................. 988
   1.3 Stages of Development ............................................................................. 989

2. Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan consultation approach .... 990
   2.1 Consultation objectives ............................................................................. 991
   2.2 Forms of engagement ............................................................................... 991
      2.2.1 Technical contributions and advice from delivery partners, Government and peak bodies 991
      2.2.2 Testing outcomes and engaging with key stakeholders .................. 992
      2.2.3 Consulting with and informing the general public ......................... 992
   2.3 Meeting the requirements of Basin Plan .................................................... 992
      2.3.1 Section 10.07(1) .............................................................................. 992
      2.3.2 Section 10.26(2) .............................................................................. 993
      2.3.3 Section 10.52(2) and 10.53(1) .......................................................... 993
      2.3.4 Section 10.54 ................................................................................... 994

3. Development of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan ........ 996
   3.1 Preliminary Risk Assessment 2015–16 ....................................................... 996
   3.2 Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan Technical Advisory Group 998
   3.3 DELWP coordination (working) group ...................................................... 1001
      3.3.1 Stakeholder engagement ................................................................ 1002
      3.3.2 Continued Stakeholder engagement .............................................. 1002
   3.4 Finalising Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan ............... 1003

4. Traditional Owner engagement ........................................................................ 1005
   4.1 Working towards identifying Aboriginal objectives and outcomes for water 1005
   4.2 Traditional Owner groups in Victoria’s North and Murray water resource plan area 1006
      4.2.1 Link to Wimmera-Mallee water resource plan area ..................... 1006
   4.3 Traditional Owner engagement program .............................................. 1006
      4.3.1 Engagement for Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan 1006
4.3.2 Engagement with MLDRI N

4.3.3 Previous engagement for Water for Victoria

4.4 Engagement with Traditional Owner groups

4.4.1 Bangerang

4.4.2 Barapa Barapa

4.4.3 Dhudhuroa, Waywurru and Yaitmathang

4.4.4 Dja Dja Wurrung

4.4.5 First Peoples of the Millewa–Mallee

4.4.6 Tati Tati Wadi Wadi

4.4.7 Taungurung

4.4.8 Wadi Wadi

4.4.9 Wamba Wemba

4.4.10 Weki Weki

4.4.11 Yorta Yorta

5. Community consultation

5.1 Public consultation

5.2 Key themes from key stakeholders and the community

5.2.1.1 Impacts of implementing Basin Plan

5.2.1.2 Not recognising the irrigation community

5.2.1.3 Water security and the price of water

5.2.1.4 Confidence in environmental watering and Basin Plan outcomes

5.2.1.5 Other issues

Schedule 1 – Consultation summary provided by Taungurung Land & Waters Council

Schedule 2 – Extract from Wadi Wadi Consultation Report
List of images

Figure 1: Proposed community consultation methodology of Strategic Small Business Solutions ............................................. 1033
Figure 2: Smoking Ceremony – Swan Hill .................................................................................................................. 1040
Figure 3: Workshop Participants – Swan Hill ............................................................................................................. 1041
Figure 4: female MLDRIN delegates with a Traditional Owner ............................................................................... 1042
List of tables

Table 1: Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan: Stages of Delivery ........................................... 989
Table 2: Risk Assessment Advisory Panel members .......................................................................................... 996
Table 3: Advisory Panel workshop outcomes .................................................................................................... 997
Table 4: Members of the Technical Advisory Group ...................................................................................... 999
Table 5: Technical Advisory Group meetings .................................................................................................. 1000
Table 6: Water Quality Management Plan working group members .............................................................. 1002
Table 7: Public consultation meetings ............................................................................................................ 1017
1. Introduction

The Victorian Government consulted and worked with stakeholders, including the broader community and Traditional Owners, to develop the Water Resource Plan for Northern Victoria

1.1 About the Consultation Report

The Consultation Report outlines the consultation carried out for Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan, including:

- consultation for the risk assessment
- stakeholder engagement before the release of the draft plan in January 2019
- Traditional Owner engagement throughout the development of the draft and final plan
- community consultation during the formal public submission period
- how feedback in submissions was incorporated into the final Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan
- follow-up consultation before the final plan was given to the Murray–Darling Basin Authority.

The report includes some discussion about consultation carried out during 2015–16 for the development of Water for Victoria, specifically about the emerging Victorian Aboriginal Water Policy. This consultation is relevant as the Basin Plan requirements for water resource plans helped to drive development of the Victorian Aboriginal Water Policy that was finalised in October 2016.

1.2 Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan

Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan demonstrates how Victoria will meet the requirements identified in Chapter 10 of the Basin Plan for Victoria’s north and Murray region. This is done by bringing together existing arrangements from bulk water and environmental entitlements, groundwater management plans, sustainable water strategies and other legal instruments under the Victorian Water Act. The Plan also outlines and builds on the Victorian Government’s Aboriginal Water Policy.

As outlined in Chapter 2 of the Comprehensive Report, Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan covers three water resource plan areas - Victorian Murray, Northern Victoria and Goulburn-Murray. These water resource plan areas include the Victorian river systems connected to the Murray, including the Mitta Mitta, Kiewa, Ovens, Goulburn, Broken, Campaspe and Loddon rivers, and groundwater in the northern Victoria area.

It features internationally and nationally significant floodplain wetlands such as Hattah Lakes, Walpolla, Mulcra and Lindsay Islands and Barmah National Park, and wetlands in the Ovens, Broken, Goulburn, Campaspe and Loddon catchments. It supports the Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District, and the Sunraysia Irrigation District, and areas that source water from the River Murray or its tributaries.

For more information on Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan area refer to Chapter 2 of the Comprehensive Report.

Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan was prepared by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).
1.3 Stages of Development

Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan has been developed over four years, reflecting the extensive research and engagement required to ensure it meets the requirements of the Basin Plan. Table 1 below outlines the key stages of delivery for Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan.

Table 1: Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan: Stages of Delivery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Risk Assessment 2015–16 | Working group formed  
Advisory panel appointed  
Working group and advisory panel meetings held  
Consultation on the Risk Assessment with key stakeholders  
Preliminary risk assessment released to inform water resource plan  
Traditional Owner engagement commenced |
| Draft Water Resource Plan 2016–2019 | Coordination working group formed  
Technical Advisory Group appointed  
Stakeholder briefings began  
Traditional Owner engagement and capacity-building continued  
Aboriginal Waterway Assessments expression of interest process and implementation began  
Stakeholder briefings continued |
| Consultation with MDBA on technical requirements of Basin Plan in respect of northern Victoria 2018 - 2019 | Extensive liaison with the Murray-Darling Basin Authority regarding technical responses to Basin Plan requirements |
| Public consultation on draft water resource plan 2019 | Draft released for public comment and submissions process  
Consideration of all 43 written submissions and feedback provided during public meetings and targeted stakeholder meetings in finalisation of the Water Resource Plan |
| Final water resource plan 2019 | Submissions and public meeting feedback addressed  
Water Resource Plan finalised and submitted to the Murray-Darling Basin Authority |
2. Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan consultation approach

Victoria’s water resource plans propose that our state’s existing tools and instruments are the primary mechanism to deliver the Basin Plan requirements. Discussion and feedback in Victoria’s north tested this approach.

Water and how it is allocated and managed touches the lives of every person, including:

- people who live in towns
- Traditional Owners who have a deep connection with the landscape and commitment to Country
- industries depending on water sources and their workers who depend on continuing employment
- people who fish, boat and swim on lakes and river systems
- farmers who rely on water for their livelihood and to produce food
- people who advocate for the environment.

When preparing the approach to consultation on Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan, the extent of change required to Victoria’s framework under the plan and the potential impact those changes would represent to stakeholders across the region was considered.

Recognising the critical role of water in the lives of people in the region, development of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan included targeted stakeholder engagement with people representing local government and agriculture, water and catchment managers, Traditional Owners, environmental groups, recreation users as well as broader community consultation.

This approach:

- sought to make sure target audiences understood the role of the Water Resource Plan, including the timing of development of the Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan
- outlined changes being proposed under Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan
- sought to understand how Basin Plan implementation impacted northern Victoria
- clarified the scope of the Water Resource Plan and what could be influenced through Water Resource Plan development.

Ultimately, as a result of these considerations, Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan does not propose significant changes to Victoria’s water entitlement and management frameworks.

“Victoria has been traditionally and still is a good water manager.”

Loddon Valley GMW Water Services Committee meeting, Pyramid Hill
2.1 Consultation objectives

Consultation and engagement in northern Victoria was aimed at recognising and responding to the importance of water to the community.

Objectives of consultation included:

- providing opportunities for stakeholders to discuss and comment on key risks and themes
- making information available to the wider community to comment on areas of interest
- have water resource plans contribute to a better understanding of Victoria’s water entitlement and management framework by providing clear descriptions of the state’s instruments and how they relate to each other
- consistently explaining and applying the Victorian Government’s policy position on water management in consultation and communication materials
- making sure stakeholders and community members received information in time to consider it and respond.

A challenge to meeting these objectives was the complexity of Victoria’s water entitlement and management framework. This resulted in additional challenges such as the length of the document, which was necessary to meet Basin Plan requirements but could be prohibitive to the community being able to fully engage on the entirety of the document.

A further challenge to meeting the objectives was that Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan did not provide the strategic direction expected by many in the community in the face of increasing pressures on irrigators to manage agricultural production under the Basin Plan, and many stakeholders had difficulty in separating out issues related to the implementation of Basin Plan as a whole and the narrow scope of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan.

In response to these challenges, the release of the draft Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan was accompanied by:

- supporting materials that included a summary document and frequently asked questions and responses to help inform the public and clarify what the plan entailed
- public information sessions to provide an outline of what Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan included and to offer the community an opportunity to ask questions about the document.

In addition, this Consultation Report proposes to highlight the concerns identified by the community during public consultation, including those that were not within the scope of what Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan could address.

2.2 Forms of engagement

The consultation approach was developed to meet different stakeholder needs and can be broadly grouped into the following three categories.

2.2.1 Technical contributions and advice from delivery partners, Government and peak bodies

The first level of engagement involved consultation and collaboration with:

- key delivery partners of DELWP, which included relevant rural and urban water corporations, catchment management authorities and the Victorian Environmental Water Holder
- other sectors of the Victorian Government
• peak bodies including Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN), the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF), VicWater and the Goulburn Valley Environment Group
• the Commonwealth Government including the Murray–Darling Basin Authority and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office.

Engagement with the aforementioned stakeholders supported the review of Victoria’s water resource management framework and its application to Basin Plan requirements. It was important under this tier of engagement to collaborate with the identified stakeholders to:
• recognise and respond to change and risk in northern Victoria
• map water resource plan requirements across Victorian Government instruments and tools
• assess existing arrangements and determine whether and where change is required
• understand obligations and make sure they are met.

2.2.2 Testing outcomes and engaging with key stakeholders

Under this level of engagement, DELWP met with primary stakeholders to test proposed responses to Basin Plan requirements for water resource plans. The primary vehicle for undertaking this tier of engagement was the Technical Advisory Group established for the purposes of the project. The members of the Technical Advisory Group and the consultation undertaken with that Group is outlined in Part 5 of the Consultation Report.

Under this tier of engagement, it was important to:
• acknowledge current conditions and concerns
• build better understanding of different needs
• identify opportunities and gaps in Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan
• comment on risks and responses
• adjust approaches to meet expectations.

2.2.3 Consulting with and informing the general public

This level of engagement was the basis for public consultation on Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan. Public consultation was designed to provide information regarding the purpose of the Water Resource Plan and an opportunity for members of the community to contribute to the final approach and content.

Engaging with the community involved using a plain English approach, communicating the essence of complex water resource plans through a summary document, hosting public meetings across northern Victoria, sharing information via social media and the web to:
• give information on the purpose and content of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan and the relevance of the Basin Plan for Victoria’s northern region
• explain the Victorian water entitlement and management framework
• demonstrate and maintain the Victorian Government’s position on water management
• seek feedback from the community on areas of interest
• create forums for discussion and provide the opportunity for the general public to contribute.

2.3 Meeting the requirements of Basin Plan

2.3.1 Section 10.07(1)

Under section 10.07(1) of the Basin Plan, a water resource plan must contain a description of the consultation carried out. This requirement is satisfied by this Consultation Report, Appendix D to
Victoria’s North and Murray Comprehensive Report, which describes the consultation that occurred to develop the material contained in Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan before it was submitted to the MDBA for formal assessment and recommendation for accreditation.

**2.3.2 Section 10.26(2)**

Section 10.26(2) of the Basin Plan requires that a water resource plan be prepared having regard to the views of local communities, including bodies established by a Basin State, that express community views in relation to environmental watering.

The views of local communities identified during consultation on Water for Victoria, the Victorian Murray Long-Term Watering Plan, Northern Victoria Long-Term Watering Plan and during the development of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan were taken into account in preparation of this Plan and Comprehensive Report. How this requirement is satisfied is outlined by this report, which describes the consultation that occurred to develop the material contained in Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan.

The consultation described in this report is in addition to the consultation that informed Water for Victoria and Victoria’s Long-Term Watering Plans, which also informed the preparation of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan.

**2.3.3 Section 10.52(2) and 10.53(1)**

In responding to the requirements under Part 14 of Chapter 10 of the Basin Plan to identify the objectives and outcomes for water resource management of Traditional Owners in Victoria’s North and Murray water resource plan area, matters identified in sections 10.52 and 10.53 are required to be considered.

Section 10.52 of the Basin Plan requires Victoria to have regard to the following, as determined through consultation with relevant Indigenous organisations, including the Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations.

- the social, spiritual and cultural values of Indigenous people that relate to the water resources of the water resource plan area (Indigenous values); and
- the social, spiritual and cultural uses of the water resources of the water resource plan area by Indigenous people (Indigenous uses)

as determined through consultation with relevant Indigenous organisations, including the Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations.

Section 10.53 of the Basin Plan requires regard to be had to the views of the views of relevant Indigenous organisations in relation to the following matters:

a. Native Title rights, Native Title claims and Indigenous Land Use Agreements provided for by the Native Title Act 1993 in relation to the water resources of the water resource plan area
b. registered Aboriginal heritage relating to the water resources of the water resource plan area
c. inclusion of Indigenous representation in the preparation and implementation of the plan
d. Indigenous social, cultural, spiritual and customary objectives, and strategies for achieving these objectives
e. encouragement of active and informed participation of Indigenous peoples
f. risks to Indigenous values and Indigenous uses arising from the use and management of the water resources of the water resource plan area.

In developing Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan, relevant indigenous organisations was taken to include MLDRIN and peak bodies representing the views of Traditional Owner Nation Groups as identified in Chapter 8 of the Comprehensive Report and in Section 4 below. Where Traditional Owners were not represented by an established organisation, DELWP endeavoured to engage and consult on the matters outlined in sections 10.52 and 10.53 of the Basin Plan in a manner that provided that best opportunity for Traditional Owners to have their say.

To ensure that the matters in section 10.52 and 10.53 were considered, DELWP prepared a template that highlighted the key requirements of Basin Plan to inform discussions with Traditional Owners on the development of their respective objectives and outcomes for water resource management. Regardless of the requirements of Basin Plan, DELWP supported Traditional Owners in leading their own discussions. Therefore, the information provided about the matters listed in sections 10.52 and 10.53 of the Basin Plan may vary between Traditional Owner group.

While Basin Plan requires discussion and consideration of Native Title rights and claims and registered Aboriginal heritage relating to Victoria’s North and Murray water resource plan area, this plan is not a tool for progressing land disputes or claims for recognition under Victorian or Commonwealth legislative arrangements. Therefore, as outlined in Chapter 8 of the Comprehensive Report, Victoria’s North and Murray Comprehensive Report only discusses registered claims and agreements. Outside of formal claims, DELWP has asked Traditional Owners to discuss their objectives and outcomes with respect to ‘areas of interest’.

Risks to Indigenous values and uses of water were considered through Victoria’s risk assessment process (see Appendix B). Traditional Owner representatives were included on the Advisory Panel to provide feedback on how:

- Traditional Owner benefits and uses of water were described in the risk assessment
- Threats and causes of risk were identified in respect of Traditional Owner benefits and uses of water
- risks to Traditional Owner uses and values of water were described in the Risk Assessment.

For more information on the Risk Assessment see Chapter 5 of the Comprehensive Report and Section 1.4, Section 2, Section 3.2.3 and Section 3.3.3 of Appendix B for more detail on risks to Traditional Owner values and uses of water. The approach to engagement for each Traditional Owner group is outlined below at Section 2.

### 2.3.4 Section 10.54

A water resource plan must be prepared having regard to the views of Indigenous peoples with respect to cultural flows. Engagement in water resource management policy development provides a way for Traditional Owners to identify their existing and future needs for water and to develop pathways to support and improve their spiritual, cultural, environmental, social and economic conditions.

Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan was prepared having regard to the views of Indigenous peoples with respect to cultural flows. Cultural flows were also discussed as part of the consultation for Water for Victoria. These conversations revealed that cultural flows mean different things to different people and groups of Traditional Owners and, in some cases, the term ‘cultural flows’ is being used interchangeably with other terms, such as cultural outcomes from shared benefits.
Victoria is pursuing opportunities to further discuss cultural flows and understand the impact of these various views on water resource management. The pathways to achieving this will differ for each water resource (see also Section 8.6 of the Comprehensive Report for discussion of cultural flows).

The mid-2018 release of the National Cultural Flows Research Project findings provides an opportunity to engage further with Traditional Owners to share knowledge and discuss the findings and desires to progress this work further. DELWP is looking at opportunities to use the findings from the National Cultural Flows Research Project in implementing water resource plans as well as broader implementation of Victoria’s Aboriginal Water Policy.

Discussions with Traditional Owner groups during the development of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan have determined a clear interest in water entitlements and rights. DELWP provided information about water entitlements, the water market, how to access section 8A rights and specifics of Victoria’s entitlement system. Further discussion and policy development is required to progress the expressed interest in water entitlements and rights.

While Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan is not a vehicle for providing water entitlements, the Plan does not prevent this from happening in the future where water is available for purchase on the water market.

It is intended that the information provided and the capacity building that will continue beyond finalisation of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan will improve the ability of Traditional Owners to effectively engage in Victoria’s water sector to secure water required to meet their objectives in future. Similarly, Water for Victoria and Victoria’s water resource plans have improved understanding of Aboriginal values and uses of water to support Traditional Owner involvement in water resource management in future.
3. Development of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan

Victoria’s North and Murray Draft Water Resource Plan was prepared for public comment with contributions from technical and key stakeholders and through consultation with a technical advisory group, a DELWP coordination working group, a water quality working group and an engagement program with Traditional Owner groups.

3.1 Preliminary Risk Assessment 2015–16

Under Basin Plan, all Basin States are required to undertake a risk assessment to inform the development of water resource plans. Victoria prepared a single risk assessment across all of Victoria’s water resource plan areas in the Wimmera-Mallee and northern Victoria. The risk assessment report for Victoria’s North and Murray water resource plan area is provided at Appendix B.

The development of the risk assessment was informed by an advisory panel and an internal DELWP coordination (working) group. The risk assessment advisory panel included internal and external members and was established to review and provide high-level advice on outcomes of the risk analysis. This process was the first stage of consultation on water resource plans for Victoria.

The DELWP internal working group was made up of leaders in policy areas within DELWP, with skills and responsibilities in surface water policy, interception (farm dams and forestry), climate change, groundwater, water quality and drought. It provided preliminary review and contributions to the data, methods and project outcomes.

Table 2: Risk Assessment Advisory Panel members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Representative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DELWP</td>
<td>Chris McAuley (Chair)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DELWP</td>
<td>Amber Clark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DELWP</td>
<td>Adrian Spall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DELWP</td>
<td>Dr Grace Mitchell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority</td>
<td>Chris Norman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goulburn-Murray Water</td>
<td>Graeme Hannan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GWMWater</td>
<td>Andrew Barton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallee Catchment Management Authority</td>
<td>Jenny Collins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations</td>
<td>Will Mooney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations</td>
<td>Darren Perry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central Catchment Management Authority</td>
<td>Brad Drust</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Workshops were held for the advisory panel to provide high-level guidance and endorsement of the risk assessment process in workshop one and the risk assessment outcomes in workshop two. Minutes of both workshops were documented and circulated to all who attended.

Table 3: Advisory Panel workshop outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workshop one</td>
<td>Agreement and endorsement was sought from the advisory panel on:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 February 2016</td>
<td>• the context of the risk assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• the list of real, possible or perceived risks to be considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• an approach to assess the likelihood and consequence of each identified risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• any following work or processes for resolving identified issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop two</td>
<td>Issues discussed included:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 April 2016</td>
<td>• the draft application of the risk assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• the review, refinement (if necessary), and endorsement of the draft assessment of major risks to be addressed in each water resource plan - noting that further approval was required within DELWP before submission of the first draft to the MDBA for comment and release for stakeholder discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• determining a pathway to resolve anomalies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Main statements endorsed by the advisory panel at the completion of Workshop two, subject to comments being addressed, were:

• the risk-based approach was consistent with risk principles
• documentation of the work was appropriate and adequately detailed the process
• the scenarios were suitable for further consultation, with agreed clarifications
• the revised risk assessment method was fit for purpose
• the risk assessment outcomes were fit for purpose for consultation.
3.2 Engagement on Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan

3.2.1 Technical Advisory Group

A technical advisory group made up of key delivery partners and representative stakeholder groups was set up in September 2017 to inform and review content while the Water Resource Plan was developed. The group reflected community interests, highlighted water issues, took part in stakeholder and community consultation and steered the inclusion of wider stakeholder and community feedback into the final version.

The members of the Technical Advisory Group are provided in Table 4 below.

It should be noted that the inclusion of Aboriginal members in the Technical Advisory Group did not indicate that those members were speaking for all Traditional Owners represented by their organisation or Nation they individually identify with. Members were sought for the Technical Advisory Group for their individual expertise across the range of stakeholders relevant to Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan.

Technical Advisory Group membership was determined based on key stakeholders and delivery partners. Inclusion of Traditional Owner representation was reflective of the significant work program required to meet Traditional Owner engagement under Basin Plan. Given the ability to align Victoria’s existing framework to Basin Plan requirements, it was not considered necessary to include additional representation from other stakeholder groups as it was not anticipated that Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan would result in significant or meaningful changes to Victoria’s water resource management.

During public consultation, however, some irrigators expressed frustration about being represented by entities and not having an independent voice. It was identified that water corporations, catchment management authorities and the Victorian Farmers Federation was not considered sufficient representation for irrigators in the process. This advice has been
incorporated into the planning for future work.

Table 4: Members of the Technical Advisory Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barapa Barapa Traditional Owner</td>
<td>Water for Country Board member</td>
<td>Dixon Patten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coliban Water</td>
<td>Manager, Raw Water Supply</td>
<td>Steven Healy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation</td>
<td>Program Manager</td>
<td>Nathan Wong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goulburn-Murray Water</td>
<td>Head of Water Resources</td>
<td>Mark Bailey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goulburn Valley Environment Group</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>John Pettigrew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goulburn Valley Environment Group</td>
<td></td>
<td>Terry Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goulburn Valley Water</td>
<td>Manager, Planning, Strategy and Environment</td>
<td>Alan Tyson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goulburn Broken CMA</td>
<td>Manager, Sustainable Irrigation</td>
<td>Carl Walters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Murray Water</td>
<td>Entitlement Manager</td>
<td>Peter Ebner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallee CMA</td>
<td>Chief Executive</td>
<td>Jenny Collins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations</td>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
<td>Will Mooney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central CMA</td>
<td>Executive Manager, Program Delivery</td>
<td>Tim Shanahan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East CMA</td>
<td>Environmental Water Resource Officer</td>
<td>Catherine McInerney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East Water</td>
<td>Manager, Systems Optimisation</td>
<td>Jason Mullins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tati Tati Wadi Wadi Nation</td>
<td>Traditional Owner</td>
<td>Brendan Kennedy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorian Environmental Water Holder</td>
<td>Acting Manager, Planning &amp; Delivery</td>
<td>Caitlin Davis (delegate of Denis Flett)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorian Farmers Federation</td>
<td>Water Council, Chair</td>
<td>Richard Anderson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Technical Advisory Group met throughout the drafting of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan between September 2017 and March 2019 to:

- review working documents, including the draft Victoria’s North and Murray Comprehensive Report
- share its skills and expertise and represent local perspectives within the water resource plan area
- take part in and, at times, lead community and stakeholder consultation and give feedback on what issues would most likely interest stakeholders, and their preferred tools of engagement.
The group reconvened to guide the incorporation of feedback from public consultation into the final Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan before it was submitted to the Murray-Darling Basin Authority. An outline of the meetings held is provided in **Table 5** below.

**Table 5: Technical Advisory Group meetings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting Date</th>
<th>Matters raised</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 12 September 2017  | • Outline of Water Resource Plans and Victoria’s approach.  
• Role of the Technical Advisory Group, terms of reference and timelines.  
• Lessons learnt from the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan  
• Discussion regarding table of contents  
• Accreditation requirements  
• Water Resource Plan key focus areas |
| 6 December 2017    | • Technical Advisory Group terms of reference approved  
• Presentation on Long-Term Water Resource Assessments and discussion on how they relate to Water Resource Plans  
• Outline of Traditional Owner consultation engagement  
• Five Aboriginal Water Assessments conducted  
• Meetings on Country continuing  
• Process for forming the Water Resource Plan, the role of the Technical Advisory Group, timelines  
• Compliance and enforcement regimes  
• Murray-Darling Basin Authority feedback on the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan  
  Field visit: Reedy Lagoon, Gunbower with the Barapa Barapa Water for Country Steering Committee. |
| 28 February 2018   | • Update on the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan process  
• Discussion on the consultation approach for the Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan  
• Next steps |
| 21 May 2018        | • Progress update  
• Update on the Sustainable Diversion Limit adjustment amendments  
• Next steps  
  Field visit: Doctor’s Swamp tour - Environmental watering in a heavily regulated system |
### Meeting Date | Matters raised
--- | ---
**11 October 2018** | • MDBA update  
• Traditional Owner engagement update  
• Confirmation of Water Resource Plan name change from Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan to Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan  
• Presentation of the Tati Tati Wadi Wadi Aboriginal Waterway Assessment from Brendan Kennedy  
• Discussion on connectivity  
• CEWO update  
• Water quality presentation, State Environmental Protection Policy and water quality targets  
• Environmental watering update  
• Sustainable Diversion Limit update  
• Compliance compact steering committee and assessing Victoria’s compliance risk

**28 November 2018** | • Traditional Owner engagement update  
• Water quality update  
• Sustainable Diversion Limit update  
• Comprehensive report feedback  
• Environmental watering  
• Public consultation plan  
• Wentworth Group Paper  
• Delivery of draft comprehensive report

**27 March 2019** | • Outcomes of public consultation and overview of proposed changes to Comprehensive Report  
• Update on Traditional Owner engagement  
• Overview of MDBA preliminary assessment of draft  
• Discussion of remaining MDBA concerns regarding permitted take in unregulated systems, environmental watering and groundwater trade.

### 3.2.2 DELWP coordination (working) group

To support development of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan, an internal co-ordination working group was established within DELWP. The group was made up of representatives from each policy area contributing to the development of the Comprehensive Report and review of the formal responses to Basin Plan requirements.

This group met monthly to discuss the following:

- updates on the progress of work contributing to the development of the Comprehensive Report
- updates on work being undertaken through Basin-wide working groups coordinated by the MDBA
- discussion of project milestones to ensure delivery of the project
- discussion of key issues being raised by the MDBA that influence the development of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan and accompanying Comprehensive Report
- feedback from the Technical Advisory Group
- provision of preliminary review and contributions to data, methods and project outcomes.
3.2.3 Working Group for Water Quality Management Plan

A working group was also established to comment on and assist in the preparation of the Water Quality Management Plan (Appendix A). See Table 6.

Table 6: Water Quality Management Plan working group members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Representative</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mallee CMA</td>
<td>Jenny Collins</td>
<td>Chief Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Murray Water</td>
<td>Peter Ebner</td>
<td>Entitlement Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central CMA</td>
<td>Tim Shanahan</td>
<td>Executive Manager, Program Delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goulburn Broken CMA</td>
<td>Megan McFarlane</td>
<td>Program Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goulburn-Murray Water</td>
<td>Greg Smith</td>
<td>Manager Water Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East CMA</td>
<td>Catherine Mcinerney</td>
<td>Environmental Water Resource Officer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2.4 Target stakeholder briefings

Targeted stakeholder briefings were held throughout the preparation of the Water Resource Plan, and during public consultation, including but not limited to meetings with:

- Committee for Greater Shepparton
- Murray River Group of Councils
- Shepparton Irrigation Region Program Implementation Committee
- Mallee CMA Aboriginal Reference Group
- Environment Victoria Strategy Advisory Committee (Lower Murray Water)
- Customer Services Advisory Committee (Lower Murray Water)
- Water Service Committees (Goulburn-Murray Water)
- Goulburn Murray Irrigation District (GMID) Water Leadership Forum

During the course of developing the draft Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan, consultation at stakeholder forums included updating the working groups of the progress in developing the Plan and providing an outline of the proposed approach to plan development to comply with Basin Plan requirements.

The informative nature of engagement with stakeholder committees was aimed at understanding points of interest in Victoria’s water resource plans for the relevant stakeholders and on the basis that no regulatory or policy changes were required to meet the requirements of Basin Plan. It is understood that this does not necessarily equate to a lack of desire for existing policies and strategies to be re-evaluated in light of the impacts of Basin Plan implementation. This is discussed further in the summary at Section 5.3 of this Consultation Report.

Consultation with the customer service committees occurred following commencement of public consultation (discussed below in Section 5). DELWP received feedback during this process that engagement with water service committees should have commenced earlier and the views of the members of those committees should have been sought to inform the draft Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan and accompanying Comprehensive Report.
“We are sick of being talked to. You are worrying about the environment, but you have not seen the impacts on the community… we’ll have a real tragedy on our hands soon enough.”

Public meeting, Bendigo

3.2.4.1 Continued Stakeholder engagement

While key stakeholders were not heavily consulted in the development of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan, they are involved in development of regulatory arrangements, policies and strategies under the Victorian Water Act. Community and key stakeholder engagement in the development Victoria’s policies, strategies and operational arrangements is fundamental to ensuring Victoria’s reputation of effective water resource management remains.

Included in the range of documents that are developed in consultation with key stakeholders are:

- long term water resource assessments
- sustainable water strategies
- bulk entitlement amendments and new ones
- regional catchment strategies
- regional waterway strategies
- statutory management plans
- long term watering plans required by Basin Plan
- seasonal watering proposals for environmental water
- environmental water management plans
- regulatory amendments, where relevant, such as changes to the Water Act or regulations under that Act.

Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan is based the existing framework and the arrangements already in place under the Victorian Water Act. As the above documents are updated and reviewed, further engagement with key stakeholders and the community will occur.

3.3 Finalising Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan

The draft Victoria’s North and Murray Comprehensive Report was prepared based on feedback from delivery partners and key stakeholders through the Technical Advisory Group. Additionally, the Department engaged with the Murray-Darling Basin Authority to determine the best approach for responding to requirements detailed in Chapter 10 of the Basin Plan. The draft Victoria’s North and Murray Comprehensive Report was released for public consultation on 23 January 2019 for eight weeks of consultation.

In response to the feedback received from the community during public consultation, amendments were made to the Comprehensive Report to reflect the issues raised relating to the implementation of Basin Plan in general, rather than specifically to the draft Water Resource Plan. No significant changes have been made to the formal components of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan because of feedback received from the community during the public consultation phase. Changes made to the formal components of the Plan are a result of continued negotiations with the Murray-Darling Basin Authority.
Key changes to the Comprehensive Report include:

- streamlining content to improve readability following public feedback as to the density and repetitive nature of the document, including changes to the groundwater discussion in Chapter 4 which now covers connectivity matters previously addressed across multiple sections in the document
- additional information included in Chapter 3 relating to northern Victoria, the importance of irrigation to regional communities, the importance of the GMID and provide some of the historical context that explains the origins of irrigation in Victoria
- Updates to Chapter 5 to include more information about the changes in the assessment of inter-valley transfers and how it relates to the risks from changes in the timing and volume of demand. A case study highlighting risks to the Goulburn River was also included in the document in response to community feedback
- updates to the discussion of environmental watering requirements to better reflect Victoria’s water management framework and how environmental watering is supported in response to Community feedback and comments from the Murray-Darling Basin Authority
- updates to Chapter 8 in response to changes requested by Traditional Owner groups as they finalised their contributions
- updates to the discussion on groundwater trade to improve clarity about how sufficient hydraulic connectivity is assessed and the requirements of Basin Plan are met, largely to respond to MDBA concerns but also to address readability concerns raised by the community
- updates to Chapter 9 and Appendix C of the Comprehensive Report in response to feedback from the Murray-Darling Basin Authority regarding methods for determining limits on take from a watercourse (excluding basic rights) and addressing requirements to manage growth in use under all forms of take
- clarification in the Risk Assessment Report at Appendix B as to how timber harvesting was considered

Changes made to the document in response to public feedback are also identified in response to key themes discussed in Section 5.2 below where relevant.
4. **Traditional Owner engagement**

Engagement with Traditional Owners was a major focus during the development of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan. Knowledge and understanding of Traditional Owner water objectives and outcomes is a significant gap in Victoria’s water management arrangements. Underpinning the engagement with Traditional Owners was Victoria’s statewide Aboriginal Water Policy developed under Water for Victoria. DELWP sought to build on this policy initiative by engaging with Traditional Owners within Victoria’s North and Murray water resource plan area to link Victoria’s broader policy objectives with the requirements of Basin Plan.

The engagement approach DELWP has adopted responds to the needs, capacity and interests of each Traditional Owner group, while seeking to remain consistent with the principles and guidelines adopted by MLDRIN for the Basin Plan.

These include:

- Murray–Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) Part 14 Guidelines
- Convention on Biological Diversity Akwé: Kon Guidelines
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- MDBA Position Statement 14A: Aboriginal objectives and outcomes:
  - a planned approach to properly engaging Traditional Owners (e.g. adequate time, appropriate venues and resources)
  - identification and involvement of appropriate Traditional Owners
  - Traditional Owners are properly notified of the opportunity to be involved in the water resource planning process (e.g. print, phone, electronic and personal media and town meetings)
  - clear information about water resource planning processes and content is provided to Traditional Owners
  - use of appropriate tools and mechanisms for recording and understanding Aboriginal objectives and outcomes.

4.1 **Working towards identifying Aboriginal objectives and outcomes for water**

During the development of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan the Government sought to engage local Traditional Owner groups in accordance with Basin Plan requirements.

The Murray–Darling Basin Plan requires that Basin States identify objectives and outcomes of water based on Aboriginal values and uses of water and have regard to the views of Aboriginal organisations as listed in sections 10.53 and 10.54 of the Basin Plan.

Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan recognised that discussions to identify Aboriginal water objectives, and desired outcomes, required a collaborative approach tailored to meet the needs of individual Traditional Owner groups.

Engagement was mostly through meetings on Country and the provision of support to Traditional Owner groups where requested. This was to identify objectives and desired outcomes for water resources, support celebrating and sharing culture and traditional practices within
Traditional Owner groups, discuss economic development opportunities and build relationships and Traditional Owner organisational and community capacity.

Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan identified Victoria’s Aboriginal Water Policy announced in Water for Victoria as the framework to address the high and medium risks to Aboriginal water identified in the preliminary risk assessment (see Appendix B).

4.2 Traditional Owner groups in Victoria’s North and Murray water resource plan area

Traditional Owner groups in Victoria’s North and Murray water resource plan area include:

- Bangerang
- Barapa Barapa
- Dhudhuuroa, Waywurru and Yaitmathang represented through Dhudhuuroa Waywurru Nations Aboriginal Corporation
- Dja Dja Wurrung represented through Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation.
- The Ngintait, Nyeri, Nyeri and Latji Latji Nations represented by the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee Aboriginal Corporation.
- Tati Tati
- Taungurung represented through the Taungurung Land and Waters (Aboriginal Corporation)
- Wadi Wadi
- Wamba Wemba
- Weki Weki
- Yorta Yorta represented through the Yorta Yorta Nations Aboriginal Corporation.

4.2.1 Link to Wimmera-Mallee water resource plan area

Several Traditional Owner groups have interests in both the Wimmera-Mallee and Victoria’s North and Murray water resource plans, including Barapa Barapa, Dja Dja Wurrung, First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee, Tati Tati, Wadi Wadi, Wamba Wemba and Weki Weki.

When water managers and policy makers are reviewing Traditional Owners’ contributions, it is recommended they read the contributions in both the Wimmera-Mallee and Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plans to make sure they are considering all information on Traditional Owner values, uses, objectives and outcomes for water.

4.3 Traditional Owner engagement program

4.3.1 Engagement for Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan

Engagement with Traditional Owners for water resource plans was based on these guiding principles:

- engagement on water resource plans is directed by the requirements of the Commonwealth Government Murray-Darling Basin Plan 2012 and supported by the Victorian Government’s Aboriginal Water Policy
- the engagement approach is tailored to the needs of each Nation group, as advised by MLDRIN delegates wherever possible, and adhering to the key principles of inclusivity, self-determination and free, prior and informed consent
- DELWP takes responsibility for engaging with Traditional Owner groups within Victoria’s share of the Basin and commits to building relationships between the state and Nations through face-to-face engagement on Country, supported by MLDRIN delegates, peak Traditional Owner organisations and delivery partners as required
• feedback and information sharing from Traditional Owner groups is, when permitted, communicated to DELWP water senior managers to support integration of Traditional Owner requirements in policy and planning
• DELWP will endeavour to provide a clear narrative to talk through the issues and use plain English to explain the complexities of water resource management
• cross governmental border issues are managed sensibly, with Traditional Owner groups to decide where and when they want the opportunity for joint consultation or involvement between states.

Using these principles as a basis for engagement, DELWP worked with Traditional Owner groups to:

• develop engagement plans relevant to each group in consultation with the nominated MLDRIN delegates or appropriate key contact
• support and fund Nation meetings to provide wider opportunity for Nation members to discuss the Nation’s contribution to Victoria’s water resource plans
• include, where possible, water senior management and key policy officers in Nation meetings to demonstrate commitment to continued engagement with Traditional Owners and to make sure experts in water resource management were part of the conversation and were starting to build relationships with Traditional Owners
• support and fund extra meetings required to finalise and approve contributions of Traditional Owner Nations for inclusion in Victoria’s water resource plans
• capture Traditional Owners’ views in water resource plans through contributions for each Nation. The contributions were largely structured around a template that outlines matters relevant to addressing the requirements of Part 14 of Chapter 10 of the Basin Plan.

Tools utilised to support Traditional Owner engagement included funding of Aboriginal Water Officers, Aboriginal Waterway Assessments, workshops, Nation meetings, community gatherings and support to MLDRIN. Further detail regarding the tools utilised by each Traditional Owner group is outlined in Section 4.4 below and in Chapter 8 of the Comprehensive Report.

4.3.2 Engagement with MLDRIN

A key requirement of Basin Plan and the Commonwealth Water Act is to engage with the Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN) organisation to support Traditional Owner engagement. As identified above, MLDRIN have provided guidelines to support engagement by Basin states with Traditional Owners.

Additionally, DELWP has engaged extensively with MLDRIN while developing Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan, including:

• inclusion of a MLDRIN representative on the Technical Advisory Group to support and guide development of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan (see Section 3.2 above);
• entering into funding agreements to support MLDRIN’s work on building capacity within Traditional Owner groups across Victoria and to support development of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan
• funding MLDRIN to undertake Aboriginal Waterway Assessments in Victoria’s North and Murray water resource plan area to support development of Traditional Owner objectives and outcomes
• engaging with MLDRIN to discuss emerging issues arising from engagement and seek guidance on culturally sensitive issues
• consultation with MLDRIN on determining the most appropriate engagement strategy for meeting the requirements of Part 14 of the Basin Plan.
• consultation with MLDRIN in the development and funding of Aboriginal Water Officer positions across Victoria’s North and Murray water resource plan area.

4.3.3 Previous engagement for Water for Victoria

During 2016, DELWP met Traditional Owner groups about the formation of the Water for Victoria Aboriginal Water Policy. While this was not directly consultation about water resource plans, it had the relevant Basin Plan requirements in mind as the policy was being developed.

MLDRIN was engaged in the development of Water for Victoria and was a member of the Victorian Aboriginal Water Reference Group set up as part of the policy consultation.

DELWP’s Rural Water Programs Team presented to MLDRIN’s Board and full membership and provided updates on pilot projects that were informing the development of Victoria’s Aboriginal Water Policy, and on DELWP’s Aboriginal Inclusion Plan. DELWP had initial discussions with MLDRIN about establishing an Aboriginal Water Reference Group specially for water resource plans. In July 2016, Rural Water Programs proposed establishing an Aboriginal Working Group which would meet around six times a year.

Regular meetings were held with MLDRIN representatives and some presentations were given to the MLDRIN Board and delegates before the release of Water for Victoria, including but not limited to, meetings on 2 March, 13 April, 19–20 May, 5 July, 18 August and 2 October 2016. These covered subjects including involvement in the water resource plan risk assessment, approach to Traditional Owner engagement, Basin Plan requirements and development of the Aboriginal Water Policy. On 12 July 2016, DELWP presented to the Federation of Traditional Owners Natural Resource Management sub-committee on water resource plans and the development of Water for Victoria.

The release of Water for Victoria in October 2016 provided the opportunity to develop a statewide strategic advisory body to make sure Aboriginal water values and uses were incorporated into Victoria’s water planning and management. Funding was secured to establish the body and a two-day community meeting resolved to establish the Water for Country Project Control Group. The release of Water for Victoria enabled conversations with Traditional Owners to be framed by the new policy, to address long-standing shortcomings in Victoria’s water management arrangements and to help meet Basin Plan requirements for identifying Traditional Owner water objectives and outcomes.

4.4 Engagement with Traditional Owner groups

The discussion below summarises the engagement undertaken with each Traditional Owner group to support the development of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan. The full contribution from each group is included in Chapter 8 of the Comprehensive Report.

The completion of this Consultation Report does not represent the end of discussions with Traditional Owners and various meetings to discuss implementation of Victoria’s water resource plans are planned following the completion of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan. These meetings will not be documented here.

4.4.1 Bangerang

Traditional Owners identifying themselves as from the Bangerang Nation expressed an interest in engaging with Victoria regarding water resource plans in October 2018.

Water resource planning staff from Victoria and New South Wales were invited to the Aboriginal Waterways Assessment (AWA) in the Barmah Milliewa Forest facilitated by MLDRIN and funded by New South Wales Parks and Wildlife in early November 2018. Water Resource Plans were discussed with the group and information booklets were provided to Traditional Owners.

Independent Aboriginal consultants, Strategic Small Business Solutions (SSBS), were contracted by New South Wales Government agency DOI Water to conduct the engagement. The consultants facilitated the January 2019 workshop and co-ordinated one-on-one interviews with several Traditional Owners. The consultants presented their consultation report back to the group in early April 2019 for feedback.

### 4.4.2 Barapa Barapa

DELWP began discussions with the Barapa Barapa Water for Country Steering Committee in 2017, presenting to the committee on 26 October that year and meeting on Country several times to discuss the project and future aspirations.

On 13 November 2018 a Barapa Barapa Nation meeting was held to consider a draft contribution for Water Resource Plan, where it was decided to also contribute to the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan. The Barapa Barapa people said they had concern for the whole system, not just Barapa Barapa Country. At that meeting, Barapa Barapa MLDRIN delegate Uncle Neville Whyman expressed the need for some changes to the contribution.

A shortened draft of the Barapa Barapa objectives and outcomes was sent to MLDRIN delegate Sharnie Hamilton on 4 January 2019 and was approved for inclusion in Victoria’s Water Resource Plans. At subsequent meeting with Barapa Barapa representatives at Kerang in January 2019, the entire contribution was discussed and amended and approved it for inclusion in Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan and final Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan.

### 4.4.3 Dhudhuroa, Waywurru and Yaitmathang

There was a preliminary meeting between DELWP and the Chair and CEO of the Dhudhuroa Waywurru Nations Aboriginal Corporation in May 2018 to set out how to work together and what resourcing was required to facilitate engagement for the Water Resource Plan. A funding agreement was subsequently developed in June 2018 for the employment of an Aboriginal Water Officer and engagement activities to assist with work relating to the Water Resource Plan.

A three day on-Country camp took place in early October 2018, and as part of this DELWP ran a workshop on Water Resource Plans. Yaitmathang people were not present at the three-day camp. The Aboriginal Water Officers made contact through the Chair of the Yaitmathang Indigenous Lands Incorporated and co-ordinated for representatives to be interviewed in New South Wales.

At a follow up meeting with the Aboriginal Water Officers, it was agreed they would lead the development of a contribution for the Water Resource Plan, with DELWP staff to provide support and guidance as required.

An Aboriginal Waterways Assessment facilitated by MLDRIN was held in early February 2019. DELWP staff were invited and provided support during the week. A follow-up workshop was facilitated by MLDRIN on 16 March 2019 to promote inclusion of the findings in the final contribution as a case study.

A draft contribution for the Water Resource Plan was submitted in mid-December 2018. This draft however contained material that was not consistent with Victorian legislation and policy and therefore could not be included in the draft Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan, which was released for public consultation in January 2019.
A meeting was held in Melbourne at the end of January 2019 between Elders, the Aboriginal Water Officers and DELWP to discuss the issues with the proposed content and attempt to agree a way that a contribution from the group could be included in the final Water Resource Plan.

A final contribution submitted on 18 March 2019 continued to contain material outside the scope of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan. It was subsequently agreed that DELWP could modify the contribution so that it could be included in Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan. In lieu of the public consultation process, this version was circulated to all Traditional Owner groups in the water resource plan area for feedback over a one-week period in late March. No feedback was received.

This additional but necessary stage in the process meant that the contribution was not finalised in time to be included in Chapter 8 of the Comprehensive Report. However, as noted in Chapter 8, the contribution is included as Appendix F to the Comprehensive Report.

### 4.4.4 Dja Dja Wurrung

Meetings between DELWP and Dja Dja Wurrung agreed that Dja Dja Wurrung’s water aims were best met through an approach which enabled self-determination, using this structure:

- DELWP to fund Dja Dja Wurrung to conduct its engagement on water resource plans, keeping in close contact but not dictating methodology or approach
- DELWP to be available at Dja Dja Wurrung’s request to provide technical, policy or facilitation support
- Dja Dja Wurrung to establish an advisory group for water within its corporation to enable continuity, capacity building, self-determination and transition to outcomes
- Dja Dja Wurrung to have a representative on the Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan Technical Advisory Group.

A funding agreement between Dja Dja Wurrung and DELWP for water resource plans was signed on 13 December 2017. This resulted in a comprehensive and considered contribution to Victoria’s water resource plans that was directed and produced by Dja Dja Wurrung, with collaboration by DELWP as requested.

The approach was devised in response to the shortcomings of the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan engagement through 2016-2017, and Dja Dja Wurrung’s contribution to the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan has also been amended to reflect the revised approach.

Formation of the Kapa Gatjin (Knowing Water) Advisory Group was a highlight of Dja Dja Wurrung’s water engagement. The group has an agreed terms of reference and involves the facilitated participation of Dja Dja Wurrung members to talk firstly about aspirations for water resource plans, and water more generally now and for the future, including values and uses of water.

The Kapa Gatjin group first met 1 May 2018 at Tang Tang Swamp. Two further meetings of the Kapa Gatjin Advisory Group were scheduled for 2018, supported by the Dja Dja Wurrung water officer position.

According to Dja Dja Wurrung, Kapa Gatjin is not the first engagement point for the corporation. Any water-related issues are first to be communicated to the water policy officer, and/or the CEO of the corporation.

Dja Dja Wurrung Chief Executive Officer Rodney Carter is the MLDRIN delegate for Dja Dja Wurrung. The approach taken for the water resource plans contribution for Victoria is in full accordance with his requirements.
4.4.5 First Peoples of the Millewa–Mallee

DELWP met the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owners on 21 November 2017 and outlined a proposed presentation for a Board meeting of the First Peoples of the Millewa–Mallee Aboriginal Corporation. DELWP presented to the Board on water resource plans on 19 January 2018. At that meeting and at subsequent meetings of the First Peoples of the Millewa–Mallee Aboriginal Corporation (FPMMAC) Board, the FPMMAC Board endorsed DELWP and the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations to provide support to the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee. This was to help produce outcomes for both a First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee Country and Water Plan and contributions to the Victorian Government’s water resource plans.

The First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee’s preferred engagement is initially through their Board. Where MLDRIN delegates were accessible and appointed, they were engaged directly to approve and help lead the Nation meetings.

A meeting was held on Country with MLDRIN Ngintait delegate Uncle Norm Wilson on sites of importance to Ngintait. DELWP funded the April 2018 Ngintait Aboriginal Waterways Assessment and attended the assessment for several days.

The engagement approach for the Water Resource Plans included two residential community gatherings in 2018, incorporating visits on Country to discuss water priorities and issues. Mallee Catchment Management Authority employees assisted by explaining the current water management regime and challenges, and DELWP staff explained water policy issues. Places visited over the two residential gatherings were within the lodged Registered Aboriginal Party boundaries for the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee, which have now been approved by the State of Victoria.

Following the two community gatherings, it was discussed with MLDRIN delegates and the First Peoples’ Chair whether separate Nation meetings were the best approach to discuss and approve the objectives, desired outcomes and statements collated from the community gatherings. It was agreed that separate meetings would be held in November 2018 for Ngintait in Berri, Latji Latji in Mildura and Nyeri Nyeri in Mildura. The Nation meetings, facilitated and funded by DELWP, included handouts and were focussed on confirming the content each Nation wanted to see in their contribution.

Across the three separate meetings and associated discussions, there was strong consensus that the objectives, outcomes and statements reflected their own words from discussions on Country.

A draft contribution was prepared from the Nation meetings for the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan, and Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan. The draft was presented at a special board teleconference, then approved a week later in December 2018. This contribution replaced the initial contribution in the original submission of the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan and is included in Chapter 8 of the Comprehensive Report.

4.4.6 Tati Tati Wadi Wadi

Tati Tati representatives have identified themselves as Tati Tati Wadi Wadi for the purposes of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan. It is acknowledged that there was a separate consultation for the Wadi Wadi Nation as represented in the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan. A July meeting at Robinvale in 2018 concluded the people present wished to be identified as Tati Tati Wadi Wadi. In November 2018, the MLDRIN full gathering formally appointed delegates for the Wadi Wadi Nation, that were not part of the Tati Tati Wadi Wadi consultation. These delegates had, from September 2018 led consultation for their Nation.
DELWP started talking with Tati Tati in 2017, and a MLDRIN-facilitated Aboriginal Waterway Assessment was held from 11 to 13 July 2017. This was funded by DELWP, and a representative from DELWP’s water resource plan team attended for several days.

Soon after the Aboriginal Waterway Assessment it was agreed there was need for engagement with a broad group to explain the water resource plan process, what it meant for Tati Tati Wadi Wadi and to develop a contribution from the group. DELWP subsequently held a series of meetings with the group.

Early in 2018, DELWP entered into a funding agreement to facilitate workshops on water objectives, hold an inclusive gathering open to all people identifying with the group, conduct planning meetings and provide support for sign off.

In May 2018, DELWP and Tati Tati Wadi Wadi had a series of conversations about Lake Tyrrell, its water management regime, its water source and whether Tati Tati Wadi Wadi wished to also make a contribution to the Wimmera-Mallee Water Resource Plan.

Meetings between DELWP and Tati Tati Wadi Wadi were held on Country. These included workshops in July and August 2017, meetings in March and April 2018, and culminating in a Nation meeting on 29 October 2018 attracting around 30 participants at Nyah. Participants workshoped the objectives, statements and supporting text, which had been prepared based on previous meetings, and approved the contribution for inclusion in both of Victoria’s water resource plans.

4.4.7 Taungurung

Victoria’s Water Resource Plan team and Taungurung Land and Waters Council met in August 2017 and again early in 2018 to outline the best approach for Taungurung to contribute to Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan. It was agreed that consultation with Taungurung regarding water objectives, outcomes and other requirements as outlined in the Murray-Darling Basin Plan was best conducted by Taungurung, resourced through the employment of an Aboriginal Water Officer.

An Aboriginal Waterway Assessment facilitated by MLDRIN was held early October 2017. Staff from the Water Resource Plan team were invited and provided support during the week. Findings were to be included as a case study for the final Water Resource Plan.

A funding agreement for activities to meeting the Basin Plan requirements was developed and signed in June 2018, including for the employment of a Water Policy Officer who was recruited in July 2018.

It was agreed that the Taungurung Land and Waters Council would develop Taungurung’s contribution for the Water Resource Plan with support from the Water Policy Officer. DELWP staff and Taungurung Land and Waters Council staff agreed to check in frequently and DELWP provide support and guidance as required. This occurred through face to face meetings, meetings on Country, email and phone.

A draft contribution for the Water Resource Plan was signed off by the Board and submitted to DELWP in mid-December 2018. The submission was confirmed by the CEO in February 2019 to be included in the final Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan.

Schedule 1 provides an outline of the consultation undertaken by the Taungurung Land and Waters Council (TLAWC), which has been provided for inclusion by TLAWC. It has not been edited by DELWP other than to align formatting style.
4.4.8  Wadi Wadi

MLDRIN delegates were contacted initially by DELWP in August/September 2018 to discuss an engagement plan. After several meetings it was agreed:

• to run a Nation meeting over two days in Swan Hill on 11 and 12 October 2018
• to cover fuel, accommodation and travel costs to support participation
• to coordinate mailouts, RSVPs and payment for attendance through First Nations Legal and Research Services who have contact details of all Wadi Wadi members
• to invite representatives from relevant organisations, including the executive officer of MLDRIN and environmental watering manager from the Mallee CMA
• to carry out joint consultation with New South Wales Department of Industry (DOI Water).

This was the first time that New South Wales and Victorian Governments had delivered a joint consultation for water resource plans and agreed to adopt New South Wales’s approach to engagement. DOI Water contracted consultants, Strategic Small Business Solutions to conduct the engagement using the following process outlined below:

• phase 1: design and development – planning, development of consultation tools (question list and data use agreements) and participant identification (stakeholder list)
• phase 2: preparation - face-to-face interviews with Traditional Owners to share information, build relationships and guide planning of later workshops
• phase 3: consultation – inclusive workshops with the wider Wadi Wadi community to gather more contributions into the clauses of Part 14 on objectives and outcomes based on values and uses of water
• phase 4: analysis and review - data analysis and report writing, including face-to-face presentation of the draft report to Wadi Wadi Nation members who took part in face to face interviews.

An extract from the consultants final report is contained at Schedule 2 to this Appendix and details the consultation process undertaken with the Wadi Wadi. Final sign off of the report from Strategic Small Business Solutions which formed the basis of the contribution in Chapter 8 of the Comprehensive Report was provided by the 8 senior Traditional Owners who were involved in the one on one interviews.

The information in Chapter 8 and Appendix D of the Comprehensive report is the report provided by the consultants with immaterial changes relating to grammar and spelling.

There are a group of Traditional Owners who identified themselves as Tati Tati Wadi Wadi. They had a separate consultation and contribution for the purposes of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan.

4.4.9  Wamba Wemba

MLDRIN delegates were contacted initially in August/September 2018 to discuss an engagement plan. It was suggested to involve another representative (referred to as Nation organiser) in planning the engagement because of his knowledge of the area.

After several meetings and phone conversations with each person the following was agreed:

• to run a Nation meeting so that the engagement approach is inclusive
• to run separate meetings for New South Wales and Victoria and allow Traditional Owners to decide which meeting they would like to attend
• to run the meeting over a two-day period starting at midday on the first day and finishing at midday on the second day. This will allow people to travel in the morning and afternoon.
• on the first day, run a meeting at the Grain Shed in Swan Hill to share information and on the second day conduct a field trip to visit Lake Boga, Round Lake and Turtle Lagoon
• fuel, accommodation and travel costs to be covered by DELWP to support people’s participation
• to invite representatives from relevant organisations, including MLDRIN, North Central CMA and Mallee CMA
• First Nations Legal and Research Service to coordinate a mailout of invitations and information as they have up-to-date lists of Wamba Wemba members.

The Nation meeting, held on 30 and 31 October 2018, was attended by nine Traditional Owners, with one MLDRIN delegate unavailable to attend as it was held mid-week and was difficult to take time off work. Several DELWP staff as well as representatives from the Mallee and North Central Catchment Management Authorities also attended.

At the meeting it was agreed DELWP would prepare a draft contribution on behalf of Wamba Wemba. The draft was reviewed by the Nation organiser and MLDRIN delegates before being distributed to the Wamba Barapa Working Group on 11 December 2018. There were no content amendment suggestions to the draft contribution.

A Working Group meeting was planned for 23 January 2019, which presented an opportunity for further discussion and feedback about the draft contribution. This meeting was cancelled due to sorry business.

A second Nation meeting was held on 7 March 2019 in Swan Hill. DELWP staff and a MLDRIN representative also attended the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to review the draft contribution as a group and to make any revisions as agreed by the group. The revised version was reviewed by the Nation organiser and sent to the MLDRIN delegates before being distributed to the Wamba Barapa Working Group on 8 March 2019. There were no content amendment suggestions or objections to the report, so this version became the final contribution.

4.4.10 Weki Weki

MLDRIN delegates were contacted initially in October/November 2018 to discuss an engagement plan. It was suggested involving the Chair of the Weki Weki Aboriginal Corporation in planning the engagement.

After a meeting in Wodonga the following approach was agreed:
• run a Nation meeting so that the engagement approach is inclusive
• run the meeting at Tooleybuc, New South Wales, where there is easy access to a meeting room and accommodation
• run the meeting over an afternoon starting at midday and finishing at 5pm
• fuel, accommodation and travel costs to be covered by DELWP to support people’s participation
• the Chair of the Weki Weki Aboriginal Corporation contacted Weki Weki members through email, facebook and phone/texts to inform them about the meeting and to register their details with DELWP
• First Nations Legal and Research Services were able to auspice the payments before and after the Nation meeting to ensure quick payment.

The first meeting was held on 15 December 2018 at the Tooleybuc Sporting Club and was attended by 16 Traditional Owners as well as DELWP staff. The purpose of the first meeting was to provide an overview of the water resource planning process and invite Traditional Owners’
contribution. This was the first meeting between the Weki Weki and a Government agency and its significance was noted.

By the end of the first meeting, Weki Weki members expressed interest in developing a contribution and agreed to include a ‘placeholder’ in the draft report for the Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan. They resolved to meet again in January to prepare a contribution for the final Water Resource Plan.

The second meeting was held on 17 January 2019 at the Tooleybuc Sporting Club and was attended by 19 Traditional Owners, DELWP staff and a New South Wales representative from DOI Water, as requested by Weki Weki members. The New South Wales representative outlined the New South Wales process for Traditional Owner engagement and observed the meeting. The meeting was led by the Elders and there was an informal discussion about values and uses, objectives and outcomes, cultural flows and areas of interest. During the meeting, it was agreed that DELWP would develop a draft contribution based on the conversation and distribute it by email before the next meeting in February 2019.

The third meeting was held on 22 February 2019 at the Robinvale Golf Club. Positive feedback was received regarding the draft. The minutes of the meeting and the draft contribution were circulated to Weki Weki meeting attendees for any final comments, and as no further feedback was received, the final contribution was signed off by the Chair and Director of the Weki Weki Aboriginal Corporation as well as the MLDRIN delegates.

4.4.11 Yorta Yorta

There was a preliminary meeting with DELWP, Goulburn Broken CMA and the acting CEO of Yorta Yorta Nations Aboriginal Corporation (YYNAC) in November 2017. The purpose was to set out how to work together and what resourcing was required to facilitate the engagement for Water Resource Plans. The Acting CEO expressed an interest in recruiting for an Aboriginal Water Officer position.

A funding agreement was developed and signed by DELWP and YYNAC in January 2018 for the employment of an Aboriginal Water Officer to assist with activities related to meeting the Basin Plan requirements.

DELWP met with the CEO of YYNAC (who is also one of the MLDRIN delegates) in early 2018 where it was agreed to undertake an Aboriginal Waterways Assessment. A funding agreement was prepared and signed by MLDRIN in June 2018 to facilitate the AWA with Yorta Yorta.

At a follow up meeting in October 2018, the CEO highlighted that the Water Resource Plan was an opportunity to work towards an all of Country Plan and requested that the funding for the AWA be used to facilitate a community gathering instead. A variation of the funding agreement was developed in December 2018 to support this request.

It was agreed that the Aboriginal Water Officer would lead Yorta Yorta’s contribution for the Water Resource Plan. DELWP staff and the Water Policy Officer checked in regularly and DELWP provided support and direction as required.

A draft contribution for the Water Resource Plan was signed off by the acting CEO and submitted to DELWP in mid-December 2018. The Aboriginal Water Officer presented the draft report to the Council of Elders in February 2019 and invited their feedback. The final contribution was signed off by the CEO in March 2019 and submitted to be included in the Northern Victoria Water Resource Plan.
5. Community consultation

In January 2019, following three years of preliminary work, discussion and engagement with key stakeholders, Victoria released the draft Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan for public comment. The public consultation process with targeted and open consultation sessions helped stakeholders and communities to better understand Victoria’s implementation of the Basin Plan. It provided a vehicle for interested parties to have their voice heard through a formal, recorded and publicly accessible response.

The public consultation ran from 23 January to 18 March 2019 and included:

- public meetings
- targeted stakeholder briefings
- presentations at existing stakeholder forums
- online consultation through engagevic.gov.au and accompanying submissions process
- continued engagement with Country with Traditional Owner groups
- direct contact with stakeholders by email.

5.1 Public consultation

Engage Victoria is the Victorian Government’s Online Consultation platform. Through this platform the community can readily obtain information and documentation relevant to the public consultation in addition to having an online forum to share their ideas and opinions and provide feedback on the content.

DELWP engaged with the community through Engage Victoria in addition to:

- publishing advertisements in local newspapers regarding the commencement of public consultation and the time and location of public meetings
- emailing key stakeholders with the announcement of the release of the draft Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan Comprehensive Report for public consultation and relevant public meetings
- announcing public consultation and public meetings through social media, particularly Facebook of the regional DELWP offices
- utilising delivery partner communication channels to advise water corporation and catchment management authority customers of the public consultation and the time and location of public meetings
- utilising communication networks of the Technical Advisory Group

Feedback from public consultation indicated that DELWP needs to review its processes for advertising community engagement. It is recognised that improvements can be made in the process to ensure that communication with community is undertaken in a way that aligns with how community obtain information.

In addition, concerns were raised across all the public meetings and via written feedback as to the six-week duration of public consultation. This feedback resulted in three additional public meetings being held and a two-week extension to the consultation process.
“I don’t think you get how much stress the irrigation community is under…… I talk to people on the phone who are nearly in tears because they can’t pay their water bills. There is nothing in the [water resource] Plan that gives us a sense of optimism. We understand that there are things that are necessarily out of your control but we want some security……. Murray-Darling Basin Plan hasn’t really delivered what it was promised to……”

Loddon Valley GMW Water Services Committee

DELWP arranged eight public meetings across six locations at the beginning of February 2019. Following feedback from the community an additional three sessions were added to the schedule. In addition, public meetings were extended in duration to allow more time for discussion following public feedback about the length of the sessions. Table 7 provides a list of public meetings held during the public consultation period.

The public meetings were supplemented by presentations at key stakeholder meetings in addition to attendance at Goulburn-Murray Water - Water Services Committee meetings. It was noted at the these committee meetings that earlier engagement with the committees would have been welcomed by committee members. Committee members communicated a desire to work with Government on policy, noting they had local and on-the-ground knowledge that should be fundamental to policy development.

Table 7: Public consultation meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Meetings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 February 2019</td>
<td>Bendigo 6-7PM&lt;br&gt;Welcome to Country: Dja Dja Wurrung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mildura 12-1PM and 6-7PM&lt;br&gt;Welcome to Country: Latji Latji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yea 12-1PM&lt;br&gt;Welcome to Country: Taungurung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 February 2019</td>
<td>Wangaratta 12-130PM&lt;br&gt;Welcome to Country: Yorta Yorta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 February 2019</td>
<td>Shepparton 12-130PM and 6-730PM&lt;br&gt;Welcome to Country: Yorta Yorta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 February 2019</td>
<td>Kerang 12-130PM and 6-730PM&lt;br&gt;Welcome to Country: Barapa Barapa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 February 2019</td>
<td>Yea 12-2PM&lt;br&gt;Welcome to Country: Taungurung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 February 2019</td>
<td>Shepparton 12-2PM&lt;br&gt;Welcome to Country: Yorta Yorta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2 Key themes from key stakeholders and the community

During the public consultation period DELWP heard a consistent story from the community regarding the implementation of Basin Plan. Notably a significant proportion of the issues raised cannot be addressed through the implementation of Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan. The feedback is, however, relevant to determining DELWPs position in discussions with Basin states and the Commonwealth in the continued implementation of Basin Plan. It has also been translated to existing work programs for the implementation of Basin Plan or Water for Victoria actions.

The key themes identified by the community included:

• the impact Basin Plan implementation is having on farming communities and concerns about the additional 450GL water recovery
• the lack of recognition of consumptive users, most importantly not recognising irrigators as part of the environment
• the importance of water security to support continued food production for Victorians and the impacts of high water prices
• confidence in the environmental outcomes expected by Basin Plan, noting the Menindee fish deaths and deterioration of river banks as an example of adverse outcomes for the environment despite significant water recovery for the environment.

There was strong feedback about a lack of confidence in the Basin Plan and the ability of the Commonwealth to regulate Basin States effectively and deliver on environmental benefits.

5.2.11.1 Impacts of implementing Basin Plan

During public consultation members of the community raised concerns regarding implementation of Basin Plan. A common theme across all meetings held was an expectation that Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan would be a strategic water management plan for northern Victoria and a Government response to Basin Plan more generally. The public consultation meetings were an important tool for outlining the purpose and scope of water resource plans and the role of water resource plans within the Basin Plan framework.

“This is destroying Basin communities. It’s not about the water market, not about SDL adjustments….. the irrigation community is being destroyed. We are just seeing the destruction of our communities across the southern connected basin. This wouldn’t be so bad if we were getting good environmental outcomes.”

Public meeting, Kerang

Community concern regarding Basin Plan implementation can by summarised as relating to:

• socio-economic interests and the impending additional 450GL recovery
• deliverability and constraints management
• lack of climate change considerations
• concerns that the quality of the waterways are not improving, noting the recent fish deaths
• lack of Government taking responsibility for bad decision making
• concern about Australia sustaining a viable food bowl.
There was also some discussion about seeing the Darling and the Murray Rivers being discussed as separate systems so that responses can be developed that are specific and more suitable to those systems. How DELWP considered the Basin and its tributaries was a common theme from the community. This underpins some of the doubts the community has regarding how the Basin Plan was developed including that without proper consideration of the system, there is difficulty in assessing the treatments for and deterioration in the Basin.

“Maps presented shows root and branch, doesn’t focus in on the local creeks and areas. Many around Stanley are as dry as they have been for 50 years... The health of the system depends on the arteries as well as the main flows.”

Public meeting, Wangaratta

**Socio-economic impacts of recovering water under Basin Plan**

The socio-economic impacts felt by regional communities from ongoing water recovery is significant. It was clear there is growing angst in regional communities regarding the continued viability of irrigation in northern Victoria under Basin Plan. This was particularly linked to concerns regarding the additional 450GL recovery for the environment from the consumptive pool and recent announcement by the Commonwealth Labor Party that the cap on buy-backs would be lifted.

“What we have been seeing under delivery of Basin Plan is that a lot of the gains for the environment are at the expense of irrigators.”

Central Goulburn GMW Water Services Committee

Following the announcements from the Commonwealth on buy backs and concerns about how an additional 450GL could be recovered from the consumptive pool, irrigators across northern Victoria were calling for a commitment under Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan that water will not be recovered from the consumptive pool if there is an impact. The decline in the dairy industry across northern Victoria was a clear example for community members of the impact water recovery has had on regional Victoria. The community is looking for a clear policy or strategy from Victoria to respond to changes in its agricultural industry.

"We are not looking after the customer in all of this."

Public meeting, Kerang

The community also identified that there was a lack of clarity about where the water recovery is coming from and where the remaining water will come from including how Victoria’s share compares to the other Basin states. There were concerns raised about what would happen to Victorian communities if targets were not met in other Basin states.

“Unless things change the Goulburn irrigation district is dead and gone.”

Public meeting, Yea
Deliverability and constraints

When discussing the environmental benefits touted by the Basin Plan, members of the community raised significant concerns that Commonwealth and State Governments would be able to deliver on those environmental objectives.

Concerns were raised in meetings across northern Victoria regarding the Government’s ability to meet its environmental watering requirements with the water it already has, without having an impact on rivers and catchments or affecting delivery of irrigation entitlement. The ongoing condition of waterways in the Basin is a significant concern for community, noting the Menindee fish deaths as a clear example of what is happening under Basin Plan.

Inter-valley transfer risks were specifically raised. Discussion at public meetings identified how those risks had been identified in Victoria’s Risk Assessment (see Appendix B) and the outcomes of that risk assessment. It was discussed with community the change in the risk assessment since 2016 and the increased risk inter valley transfers now pose to Victoria. Concerns were raised in reference to the impacts on Victorian waterways due to high flows for the Goulburn River in particular. Because of public feedback, additional information has been included in Chapter 5 of the Comprehensive Report to explain the changes in the risk assessment and to highlight the risks and impacts on the Goulburn River.

The community also queried the progress made on lifting constraints in the system. Particular interest was shown in the Barmah Choke and the role of New South Wales. The ability to lift delivery constraints without flooding private land was also raised, particularly in Yea. It has been Victoria’s position for some time that flooding on private land would not occur without prior consent of the land owner. It was requested that Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan secure this position and also identify the risks to Basin Plan delivery that this position raises.

Lack of recognition of climate change

A common theme across northern Victoria was the impact of climate change on water availability and whether the modelling underpinning sustainable diversion limits should be revisited to assess the impacts of climate change. Discussion on whether this would mean an increase or decrease on recovery of water for the environment is not clear.

It was clear from discussions with the community that there are concerns about the impact of climate change on regional communities and how this was considered as a risk under the Plan.

“We are all aware of high-profile politicians saying that climate change doesn’t exist. The implications for the Basin will be horrendous. It will get worse not better. It’s frightening.”

Public meeting, Mildura

The community is seeing long-term decline in flows and there are growing concerns that assumptions are based on historical flows that are no longer being experienced by irrigators.

DELWP outlined for the community how climate change was considered in the Risk Assessment (see Appendix B) and what strategies are identified to address climate change risks in Victoria.

Government not seen to be taking responsibility

The community raised concern about the ability to effectively manage water resources in the Basin when Victoria is so dependent on other Basin States. Particularly, how the northern Basin

1020 | Appendix D  Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan
is being managed and how New South Wales and Queensland can be held accountable including, compliance and site-specific issues at Menindee.

“We are sick of being talked to. You are worrying about the environment, but you have not seen the impacts on the community..... we’ll have a real tragedy on our hands soon enough...... Menindee has been so badly managed, it’s a joke – the MDBA has failed. Watering the Gunbower forest 3 out of 5 years is just disgusting, the ground is so soft the trees are collapsing. We have always had droughts; the fish haven’t died before.”

Public meeting, Bendigo

The community is seeking honesty from Government as to the reasons for adverse impacts resulting from water resource management decisions. There was dissatisfaction in how the Menindee Lakes fish deaths was handled by the Commonwealth and New South Wales Governments. The messaging around the cause of the fish deaths in Menindee Lakes heightened concerns in the Victorian community that the northern Basin will not be appropriately managed.

Following recent inquiries into New South Wales and Basin Plan implementation, communities expressed growing concern that New South Wales and Queensland will not be held accountable to Basin Plan requirements and to meeting Basin Plan outcomes.

Given the interdependencies between the northern and southern Basin, Victorian communities are concerned that Victoria is not prepared for the impacts if Queensland and New South Wales fail to deliver on Basin Plan requirements.

5.2.11.2 Not recognising the irrigation community

It was apparent to the community that Basin Plan and consequently Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan had a strong focus on the environment. There was concern raised that irrigators were not represented in Basin Plan implementation to the same extent as the environment.

“Irrigators were not represented the same as environment.”

Rochester-Campaspe GMW Water Services Committee

DELWP noted that there was a focus under water resource plans as to how Victoria manages entitlements to meet environmental watering requirements. Furthermore, DELWP took on feedback from the community about how Chapter 3 of the Comprehensive Report could be improved to include more details about the history of the area and irrigated agriculture. DELWP made changes to the Comprehensive Report in response to this feedback.

The community provided feedback to DELWP in respect of its engagement strategy. Criticism was provided on the way in which DELWP engaged with the irrigation community in developing Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan. There was a strong preference to be included from the ground up in policy development. DELWP’s reasons to limit engagement with irrigators in the early stages of developing the plan stemmed from basing the Plan on Victoria’s existing regulatory arrangements and therefore a perceived lack of impact on the irrigation community.
It is recognised that the impacts on regional communities are far reaching and water resource plans do not provide a sufficient vehicle to highlight these impacts. This Consultation Report is an opportunity to highlight and recognise the concerns of regional communities in northern Victoria.

“The issue I have is that Basin Plan is about water for the environment and river health - we are part of the environment, our district is part of the environment. The impacts are going at 100 miles an hour. You tell us there is going to be this and going to be that, but the urgency is not there”

Public meeting, Kerang

In addition to concerns about involvement in development of the Plan, how irrigation is identified and depicted under Basin Plan and in the Comprehensive Report is of concern to some community members. There is a growing belief that irrigators are being identified as the enemies of the environment. A strong theme during consultation was that the positive environmental impacts of irrigation should be included in policy and operational decision making. There were numerous examples of how irrigation of land contributed to environmental benefits through creation of habitat for native animals and the “micro-economies farms sustain”.

“Irrigators are not interested in destroying our environment so our farm benefits. We want them both to survive.”

Loddon Valley GMW Water Services Committee, Pyramid Hill

The irrigation community also sought clarification about the importance of the food bowl and food production in northern Victoria. There is a growing sentiment that if things don’t improve soon, irrigation communities will fail in the near future. Irrigators are seeking a commitment from the Victorian Government as to how the agricultural industry will be protected alongside meeting environmental outcomes under Basin Plan.

“We are all looking for outcomes but irrigators are seeing the worst of the outcomes.”

Public meeting, Yea

5.2.11.3 Water security and the price of water

There are growing concerns about the continued viability of agriculture in northern Victoria due to the significant volumes of water recovered from the consumptive pool, the high prices of water and a decrease in water security across the system.

“Let’s put some confidence back in the industry. Let’s lower the price of water so that its more affordable and we can water our land.”

Public meeting, Kerang
There was a call for the Victorian Government to work on the issues that are facing Victorian irrigators before committing to further recovery under Basin Plan. There were a number of issues raised relating to the price of water, these included:

- concerns that the ability of non-water users (speculators) to trade in the market was interfering with the market and artificially increasing price
- concern that New South Wales irrigators entering the market is driving up the price of water.
- concerns that water management tools such as allocations, carryover and spillable accounts look after water investors more than end users of water
- concerns about the movement of water downstream and out of the GMID.

DELWP has undertaken to come and speak to the community about these issues and provide more information about how the water management tools benefit all uses and impact on the market.

"If water is going to be $500 per ML then the water needs to be available when I want it. ...Understand that GMW needs to deliver for all customers, if this isn’t fixed than the customers aren’t going to be there."

Public meeting, Kerang

Security in water allocations is also an increasing concern for the community. The perception is that the way in which water is allocated and the ability to have water delivered across the system is impacting on water security. Coupled with the price of water, irrigators are questioning the value of investing in growing crops or increasing herds on their land.

“The reality in Victoria is water in Eildon can only be used down to a third then there is recharge. It means we can have agriculture set up with some confidence in Victoria because of water security. The added thing is that production in agriculture builds the jobs in rural communities - this is at threat. $8bn of GDP comes out of the GMID and that is being put in jeopardy. ..... We seem to be throwing our water security away which is causing such angst.”

Public meeting, Yea

The impact of transmission losses on the reliability of water was also discussed. High prices and reduced security is impacting on investment decisions.

It was noted that there is low allocation on the Broken River. In Wangaratta it was identified that water users do not value water from the Broken system anymore. It was identified low allocations at the beginning of the water accounting period impacts on the ability to plan their season. Concerns were raised about the continued viability of the Broken River system.
“Not enough water to supply water to those on system... the Broken is broken”

Public meeting, Wangaratta

Community concerns also centred around how the Victorian Government is responding to the difficulties being faced by regional communities. It is felt that there is too much focus on the Murray and not enough on the rivers and creeks feeding into the Murray. This unbalanced focus is perceived to be causing adverse impacts and unbalanced outcomes across the system.

“One concern for our area is that as a result of all this water being returned to the environment is that it has caused the price of water to go up for all the customers represented by the committee. In that context we receive flyers back from the local catchment management authority as people are going bust and can’t continue farming they are receiving updates on the benefits to birdlife or fish in the area when they are trying to keep their head above water.”

Torrumberry GMW Water Services Committee

Irrigators in the community acknowledged the significant amount of work that has gone into improving systems but consider the stability of the region has been decreased since the introduction of Basin Plan. Many expressed concerns about the continued viability of regional communities as key agricultural industry is leaving northern Victoria. There was a significant amount of discussion regarding the closure of dairy farms across the region during the public consultation period. Irrigators warned of more to come if things aren’t improved.

“Stability of this area is key at a certain point the investment we have made in the area won’t be worth it….. We have been losing water for 12 years. Nothing has been done to mitigate the impact on our community. We are on a fine line. If something isn’t done soon we might lose this irrigation community. If we don’t do something soon we won’t be able to use the water we do have.”

Loddon Valley GMW Water Services Committee

"If dairy fails we all fail"

Loddon Valley GMW Water Services Committee
5.2.11.4 Confidence in environmental watering and Basin Plan outcomes

Across northern Victoria the community raised concern regarding the use and management of environmental water in the system. Of the issues raised by the community the concerns can be summarised as follows:

- the measure by which environmental flows in the Murray and connected rivers in the system were being determined, particularly noting that the regional communities were not seeing variance in flows that would otherwise be expected
- how decisions about environmental priorities and environmental watering priorities were determined and how the community could be involved in the planning and decision making
- concern regarding the use and management of environmental water in the system, noting that communities are seeing larger quantities of water being delivered and that these increased flows may be having an adverse impact on the bed and banks of the system
- confidence in achieving downstream environmental benefits that justify the impacts being felt by Victorian regional communities
- a desire for more transparency in the trade of environmental water to the consumptive pool.

Concerns were also raised that there was a view in the community that irrigators were getting a better deal that the environment. There was concern that despite the reports outlining that water needs to be recovered for the environment it was not translating into community views where support for protecting the environment through increased flows was not widely supported.

“I’ve had 40 years experience in Barmah and Barmah has been watered at the wrong time of the year with Moira grass plains overtaken with rush and red gums.”

Public meeting, Shepparton

Concern about environmental impacts from high flows

The community identified the environmental impacts current system operation was having on the environment and the ability for the system to meet environmental delivery needs.

"The amount of environmental water that needs to be delivered down the system - how do you manage getting the water down the river? ..... Environmental flows going down Goulburn is causing erosion, this can’t continue. ..... Speaking to people who live along the Murray they note that there are trees falling into the river so there are erosion issues there as well. The volumes of environmental water that you are talking about and the challenge to push it down the river - Barmah Choke is an example of this issue but of course erosion is also an issue."

Public meeting, Kerang
Delivery constraints are an issue for the environment and irrigators alike. The Basin States and the Commonwealth have recognised the risks to delivering on Basin Plan associated with resolution of constraints issues. DELWP is currently working with the Commonwealth to finalise a business case and secure funding for a constraints offset project for the Goulburn River. As was noted in the Productivity Commission report, progress on the constraints issue needs a transparent work program and Victoria has been leading the discussion to ensure there is transparency in the process.

“constraints management is a risk to Goulburn and should be explicitly listed in the water resource plan…. high flows through Goulburn, impact on environmental flows, water trading inter valley, .... the amount of water pushed through is providing huge environmental impacts and affect ability to deliver environmental flows at the optimum time”

Public meeting, Shepparton

A clear concern from the community was the impact of increased flows in the system and the increased risks of damage to the bed and banks and reduction in water quality. Amendments have been made to the Risk Assessment at Appendix B to the Comprehensive Report to reflect new information regarding how changes to the timing and volume of demand is impacting on Victoria’s ability to meet environmental watering objectives. How this was done has been described at Chapter 5.7 of the Comprehensive Report which now provides an explanation of the risks and a case study outlining how these risks are affecting the Goulburn River in response to community feedback.

Measuring environmental outcomes

In addition to the concerns raised by the community about how we are going to use the water recovered for the environment and linked to the concerns about how the Victorian and Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder will make decisions on the delivery and use of water for the environment, questions were raised about measuring outcomes.

“There are a lot of interest groups around that area and obviously watching environmental watering and wondering what the outcome is and who assesses that and who measures that.”

Torrumbarry GMW Water Services Committee

Under Basin Plan Victoria is required to report on an asset scale as to how it is meeting environmental watering outcomes. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority is required to report on how environmental watering across the Basin meets the targets that are set out in Schedule 7 of the Basin Plan.

In addition to Basin Plan reporting requirements Victoria undertakes a monitoring and evaluation program to determine the effectiveness of environmental watering. More recently DELWP prepared a Basin Plan Report Card to identify how water for the environment was delivered and used to meet Basin Plan requirements. The report card can be found at https://www.water.vic.gov.au/reportcard.
Feedback that the Water Resource Plan should include how the VEWH set environmental watering priorities and how these decisions consider the overlaps between consumptive and environmental deliveries. **Chapter 12** of the Comprehensive Report outlines how environmental watering priorities are determined in Victoria and how this aligns with Basin Plan. Changes have been made to **Chapter 12** to clarify the role of catchment management authorities and the Victorian Environmental Water Holder in the setting of environmental objectives and meeting environmental watering requirements. **Appendix E** to the Comprehensive Report provides an outline of priority environmental assets and how that aligns with Victoria’s environmental water management plans which can be found at [https://www.water.vic.gov.au/waterways-and-catchments/rivers-estuaries-and-waterways/environmental-water/environmental-water-management-plans](https://www.water.vic.gov.au/waterways-and-catchments/rivers-estuaries-and-waterways/environmental-water/environmental-water-management-plans).

### 5.2.11.5 Other Issues

In addition to the above key themes, discussion with community and at key stakeholder forums included questions on the following matters:

- the role of MLDRIN in the assessment of water resource plans and DELWP’s approach to engagement with MLDRIN
- questions about the submission and accreditation process more generally
- how DELWP was engaging with Traditional Owners
- discussions about Victoria’s framework and how various tools under the Victorian Water Act operate and will interact with Victoria’s North and Murray Water Resource Plan
- discussions about specific content of the plan, including how various risks were identified and articulated in the risk assessment including:
  - impacts of implementation of Basin Plan
  - risk relating to land use change and more specifically plantations and clearfell logging
- discussions about the use of fossil fuel and the environmental impact of pumping water around the system compared to the use of gravity fed systems
- Discussions about recreational water under Basin Plan and support of recreational water going forward in Victoria
- Bushfire impacts on catchments
- Impacts of any changes made to the allocation framework in New South Wales (or other States) and the risks this might have on Victoria, such as on incoming flows or trade

In the discussions around clearfell logging, including through written submissions, the impacts on water yield was identified. Community feedback identified that clear fell logging causes about 30 percent decrease in catchment yield. Concerns were raised as to why land users who manage plantations and use clear fell logging practices are not required to pay for water in the same way as irrigators, for example. As an example, community feedback identified clear fell logging in the Goulburn catchment upstream from Snobs Creek hatchery. Concerns were also raised about the water quality impacts of logging, particularly the increases in sediment.

“The effects of logging are diabolical and is an abuse of the environment. There is a compounding loss year on year and there is an urgent need to mitigate climate change. Who has the authority to tell VicForests to stop?”

Public meeting, Yea
While communities provided feedback on areas of the Water Resource Plan to improve, they also acknowledged the strengths of the Victorian water management system. There was a high degree of support of Victoria’s position on Basin matters including the 450 GL recovery, development of the socio-economic criteria, and support shown for regional communities. Communities were confident that Victoria’s compliance regime is effective and that in many ways, Victoria has been leading Basin Plan implementation. There was recognition and acceptance that Victoria’s existing water management system did not require major change to meet our obligations under the Basin Plan.
Schedule 1 – Consultation summary provided by Taungurung Land & Waters Council

The information provided by the Taungurung Land & Waters Council below has not been modified other than to change formatting to follow the style of DELWP documents.

Consultation undertaken by the Taungurung Land & Waters Council (TLAWC)

Background

The Northern Victoria Water Resources Plan (NWRP) comprises the full extent of Taungurung country. Taungurung Land & Waters Council (TLAWC) was recently funded by DELWP to develop its response to the NWRP, making our water goals and aspirations more detailed and explicit.

The work prepared, agreed and submitted by Taungurung Land & Waters Council (TLAWC), in a process agreed between the corporation and Victorian Government, enabled Taungurung to prepare its response to Victoria’s water resource plans, supported by Government when requested. By managing the consultation process and the decision-making, TLAWC secured its self-determination and autonomy.

Taungurung have strong cultural, spiritual and economic connections to their land, water, and resources (Country). As custodians of their Country, Taungurung have managed their land and waters sustainably over thousands of generations. We are now immersed in the process of gathering and protecting our values and the customary uses of water and increasing our participation in water management within the region. The process is an ongoing effort supported by DELWP and other Government agencies. It is essential that it continuously contributes to the Northern Water Resource Plan in the future.

Consultation process

Invitation

Taungurung Land & Waters Council (TLAWC) made an open invitation to all members to participate in the two consultation meetings. We were looking for a consensus about our goals and aspirations, but at the same time, we aimed for the consultation process to be genuinely representative, gathering all different positions and thoughts about Country and the water management in the region.

Table 1: Attendants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First consultation meeting</th>
<th>Second consultation meeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Monk</td>
<td>Michelle Monk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Troy Wilkinson</td>
<td>Troy Wilkinson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley Wilkinson</td>
<td>Ashley Wilkinson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
First consultation meeting | Second consultation meeting
--- | ---
Patricia Smith (Aunty Patsy and Board member) | Patricia Smith (Aunty Patsy and Board member)
Matthew Shanks (Board member) | Matthew Shanks (Board member)
Brad Letman (RSA negotiation group) | Brad Letman (RSA negotiation group)
Shane Monk | Shane Monk
Corrie Leathman | Corrie Leathman
Ronald Leathman | Ronald Leathman
Annette Sax

*Bernadette Franklin (Aunty Bernadette) and Angela Ten Buuren were unable to attend to meetings but they participated in the elaboration and review of the final NWRP response. Also, they are members of the Baan Ganalina and were part of the consultation by providing feedback and comments to the process and the development of the response.

**Matthew Shanks and Patricia Smith (Aunty Patsy) have been nominated as the new Taungurung’s MLDREN delegates. Official recognition of this nomination is pending due to internal process and procedures.

**Process phases**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process phase</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coordination meetings with DELWP representative to plan and receive information about the requirements of the consultation process and the proposed format of the NWRP response</td>
<td>(September 2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gathering and review of different sources of information, such as; Taungurung Buk Dadbagi (Country Plan) and the final report of the Aboriginal Waterways Assessment 2017</td>
<td>October 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization and open invitation of Taungurung members to participate in the process</td>
<td>October 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of a draft document and workshop agenda</td>
<td>October 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First consultation meeting: review and comment on the draft document, receive input from attendants. Formal creation of the water knowledge holder group Baan Ganalina</td>
<td>8 November 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent communications and collaboration with the Baan Ganalina</td>
<td>November 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second consultation meeting: review and approval of the final version of the NWRP response</td>
<td>28 November 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission of the final version of NWRP response to DELWP</td>
<td>6 December 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approval of the response and resubmission of NWRP response after observations were solved</td>
<td>14 December 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outcomes

Taungurung’s NWRP response was developed following the principles of true self-determination.

TLAWC has developed the principles and the preferred means of engagement. On July 2018, as part of the Aboriginal Water Grants Program funded through the water resource plan project by DELWP, TLAWC employed a Water Policy Officer to continue the collection of Taungurung values and uses of water, increase our participation in water management, build capacity within the corporation and contribute to the development of Taungurung water rights. TLAWC requests that the Water Policy Officer must be considered as the first contact for all waterways matters.

TLAWC has created the Baan Ganalina (Guardians of water), a water knowledge holder group which will support and advise the Water Policy Officer, assist in project development and implementation and plan and conduct cultural activities on waterways. It would be the role of the Water Policy Officer to inform the Water Knowledge Holder Group and prepare consultation processes if required for any future policy development, evaluation or endorsement.

TLAWC has started the process to update the Taungurung Buk Dadbagi and develop a Water Chapter.

Final thoughts

TLAWC expects that the State Government, its departments and agencies will willingly contribute to the progress of the objectives and aspirations about water management which are now explicit and systematized in the NWRP.

Taungurung feel confident that in adhering to the developed principles of engagement we can contribute to water management in the region in partnership with DELWP and other state agencies to achieve our water aspirations and objectives in line with the principles of self-determination.

As custodians of Traditional Ecological Knowledge, we request the protection of the intellectual property of the information shared in the NWRP, to ensure cultural and environmental knowledge is protected and managed according to the principles of true self-determination. All intellectual property rights of water knowledge and practices are vested upon TLAWC, who hold the right to keep the cultural and environmental knowledge confidential. The use or reference of this information for purposes other than informing the NWRP requires free, prior and informed consent obtained through appropriate consultation with Taungurung.

Finally, Taungurung acknowledge and praise the effort and commitment that DELWP representative has shown to initiate, promote, improve and expand the engagement with Traditional Owners. TLAWC recognizes that even though the input from Traditional Owners has been limited during recent years due to capacity and resourcing issues, DELWP is committed to working with us for a more meaningful contribution to the water management in Victoria.
Schedule 2 – Extract from Wadi Wadi Consultation Report

The content of the consultation report for Wadi Wadi engagement has not been altered other than to change formatting to follow the style of DELWP documents.

**Extract from the Strategic Small Business Solutions consultant report**

**Scope**

Independent Aboriginal consultants, Strategic Small Business Solutions (SSBS), were contracted by DOI Water to conduct the engagement to provide a sense of independence, and to safeguard cultural knowledge. The consultants were given this brief before the consultation process.

First Nations stakeholder consultants will:

- work with New South Wales’ DOI Water and Victoria’s DELWP and the Wadi Wadi Nation, which crosses the border of Victoria and New South Wales
- identify the importance of water to the Wadi Wadi Nation and seek information about the values placed on water and the Nation’s vision for the future in water sharing and management. They will work in a culturally appropriate manner with the appointed Wadi Wadi delegate(s) to meet with identified Traditional Owners of the Wadi Wadi Nation and gain informed and agreed consent, using the data use agreements provided by DOI Water.
- conduct face-to-face interviews with identified Wadi Wadi Nation Traditional Owners after obtaining written consent
- seek Traditional Owner support for the planned workshops on water resource plans and encourage active engagement and participation
- make sure SSBS support the workshop by promoting discussion around key issues and creating a comfortable atmosphere conducive to open and direct feedback from participants
- prepare an extensive consultation report for DOI Water and DELWP that provides authentic data gained with consent from Wadi Wadi Nation members about their values and objectives for water resource planning in their Nation
- provide the report to interviewees and seek approval of report content during return face-to-face visits
- present the final report to DOI Water and DELWP for publication.

**Methodology**

The methodology for this consultation is based on a Nation by Nation approach developed by Strategic Small Business Solutions on “principles for culturally appropriate Nation-based consultation”. These principles are supported by a commitment to the practice of Indigenous data sovereignty and the use of qualitative research practices, including participant-centred research and generic thematic analysis.

**Principles for culturally appropriate Nation-based consultation**

Strategic Small Business Solutions rely on their proven approach to culturally appropriate consultation. While this is the first time we have taken part in the new method of Nation-based consultation, our approach as shown here has proven to be culturally appropriate and successful.
Strategic Small Business Solutions propose the following community consultation methodology for culturally appropriate First Nations stakeholder engagement:

**Figure 1: Proposed community consultation methodology of Strategic Small Business Solutions**

**Nation-based approach**

The consultation methodology enables First Nations people to continue their traditional roles as custodians. A Nation-based approach, encouraged by the MDBA, Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations and MLDRIN, sustains the presence of individual Nations and allows them to contribute to water resource plans within the context of their cultural boundaries. With this approach, First Nations can assist government to make better decisions in water planning.

Governance structures of First Nations are complex and in their infancy in engaging with Government. The engagement approach taken was guided by the MDBA, Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations and MLDRIN and considered accepted cultural protocols. It relied heavily on the Wadi Wadi Nation organisers. MDBA states that ‘the term ‘Traditional Owners’ is used to refer to those with recognised cultural authority to speak for Country’ and guides states to identify appropriate Traditional Owners for consultation. The use of the Nation organiser as a guide relied on widely accepted cultural protocol and lore which determines that only internal representatives have the cultural authority to speak on a Nation’s internal governance structures, guide consultative processes and identify senior Traditional Owners.

**Indigenous data sovereignty**

Part of a culturally appropriate consultation framework acknowledges the rights of First Nations people over their own knowledge. The contract signed between Strategic Small Business Solutions and DOI Water included this definition of First Nations Cultural Knowledge:

> ‘Accumulated knowledge which encompasses spiritual relationships, relationships with the natural environment and the sustainable use of natural resources, and relationships between people, which are reflected in language, narratives, social organisation, values, beliefs, and cultural laws and customs’
Consultants are required to identify any First Nations cultural knowledge gathered during the consultation. This can only be used for specific purposes in the accreditation of water resource plans. Wadi Wadi participants read through data use agreements which made them aware of the purpose of the research and the use of their knowledge, and signed consent forms, giving them options for the recording and storage of their individual data.

Research methods

Our research methodology is aligned with the principles of Culturally Appropriate Nation-based consultation and the MDBA Part 14 Guidelines. Ethical considerations include the de-identification of data, the explanation of the purpose and scope and participant consent. These aligned with general considerations in the guidelines:

- prior, informed consent of the affected Indigenous and local communities
- ownership, protection and control of traditional knowledge
- the need for transparency.

New South Wales DOI Water supplied the data use agreements. The data use agreements are a sign to First Nations people that they and their knowledge are being treated with respect. The research process was expected to be directed by participants, with Traditional Owner face-to-face interviews shaping the research design. This two-pronged approach was recommended by the MDBA.

Data was collected from eight Wadi Wadi Nation-identified Traditional Owners during face-to-face interviews in the Traditional Owners’ chosen location. A two-day workshop was conducted and further data was collected from just under 50 participants in a pressure-free environment.

Carefully considered questions and prompts developed by the consultants encouraged open, narrative responses, in line with the principle of flexibility and MDBA guidelines to ‘use appropriate tools and mechanisms for recording and understanding Aboriginal objectives and outcomes.’ A qualitative data analysis of both interview and workshop data was used to ‘provide a fair-minded representation of information and knowledge gained through the consultation process,’ as guided by the MDBA.

Consultation process

The Consultation Process followed four phases.

- phase 1: design and development – planning, development of consultation tools (question list and data use agreements) and participant identification (stakeholder list)
- phase 2: preparation - face-to-face interviews with Traditional Owners to share information, build relationships and guide planning of later workshops
- phase 3: consultation – inclusive workshops with the wider Wadi Wadi community to gather more contributions into the clauses of Part 14 on objectives and outcomes based on values and uses of water
- phase 4: analysis and review - data analysis and report writing, including face-to-face presentation of the draft report to Wadi Wadi Nation members who took part in face to face interviews.

The MDBA Part 14 guidelines advise ‘a planned approach to properly engaging Traditional Owners, including identification and involvement of appropriate Traditional Owners’ (phase 1). They suggest that for genuine engagement in water resource planning, Traditional Owners be consulted for two specific purposes of information sharing/relationship building meetings (phase 2) and inclusive workshops (phase 3).
Phase 1: design and development

Phase 1 included development of a stakeholder list, a data use agreement and a question list for the face-to-face interviews.

Stakeholder list

The stakeholder list was a key document required in the early stages of the consultation. It guided Strategic Small Business Solutions and DOI Water to engage participants for interviews and workshops according to a priority of traditional Nation-based governance. Other regional stakeholders who don’t operate on a Nation-based model were also included.

The list clearly classified stakeholders into these different governance types, to overcome previous reliance on a few key stakeholders at the expense of others:

- Traditional Owners: groups or individuals under Nation-based governance
- external governance: those with non-traditional governance structures imposed from outside the Wadi Wadi Nation
- historically connected: those from other Nations who live on Wadi Wadi Country.

The Nation Organisers, with their cultural authority and internal knowledge of Wadi Wadi Nation governance, were essential to developing the stakeholder list in this Nation-based approach.

They provided Strategic Small Business Solutions with a list of Traditional Owners to make sure of inclusive representation of Wadi Wadi family groups and communities who do not always correspond to towns from a Western geographical perspective. These Traditional Owners are not necessarily associated with established lead agencies in the Aboriginal sector, but are recognised from grassroots governance structures as true cultural leaders by the Wadi Wadi community.

The stakeholder list was treated as a living document, with names being added throughout the consultation. All individuals on the list consented to share their details, either through the Nation organiser or Strategic Small Business Solutions. The list will be kept with DOI Water Aboriginal staff. As guided by the MDBA, ‘better practice would expand and update available knowledge and understanding about the relevant stakeholder groups that are linked with the Basin water resources in an area’.

The Nation organisers were integral to the consultation. Freely-given consent and a culturally appropriate introduction to the identified Wadi Wadi Nation Traditional Owners was essential to the success of the interviews, comfort level of the interviewees and gathering of highly useful data. Strategic Small Business Solutions believe the consultation process would not have been achieved productively without the Nation organisers’ contribution to the consultation project.

Data use agreements

Data use agreements allowed the Wadi Wadi Nation people, as a Nation and as individuals, to play a part in managing and controlling information they gave throughout the consultation.

Two different agreements were created for face-to-face interviews and workshops. These defined and explained:

- the purpose and scope of the consultation
- identity protection measures where data was de-identified and personal details stored securely
- data storage procedures, giving options for choice by participants
- data use where First Nations’ cultural knowledge was limited to use for water resource plan development and accreditation, water planning and internal education.
Strategic Small Business Solutions concluded that once the data use agreements for the face-to-face interviews had been carefully explained and reviewed with participants, there was no room for doubt in participants’ minds about the integrity, safety, ownership and use of the data once it had been shared freely with the consultants.

At first some participants appeared daunted by the data use agreements. However, they all agreed to sign them once they clearly understood that the signed agreements would protect their shared knowledge, and this relieved any anxiety.

The MDBA guidelines acknowledge that ‘it is an ongoing challenge for Aboriginal organisations to engage multiple and repeated times with governments for a range of purposes.’

The reasons why we have data use agreements are:

- to safeguard First Nation’ cultural knowledge
- that data gathered can only be used for the water resource plans, with participants consulted again for future water planning or approached to release the knowledge.

**Question list**

Strategic Small Business Solutions developed a question list in consultation with DOI Water. This was used for the face-to-face interviews to encourage conversation, shape interviews and ensure comprehensive coverage of information.

The list was useful as a guide, but was not always needed as interviews adopted a flexible, participant-controlled approach, and were often structured in a free-flow narrative style.

**Phase Two – preparation**

As the knowledge holders and heads of family groups within the contemporary cultural framework, senior Traditional Owners were invited to take part in interviews to share information, build relationships and shape the consultation by gathering feedback to guide the wider community workshops. Strategic Small Business Solutions did a series of face-to-face interviews with Traditional Owners in October 2018.

**Face-to-face interview participant data**

In total eight Traditional Owners were interviewed in phase two. The first interview was terminated after it was agreed by all meeting with the Traditional Owner in her home that she was far too unwell to trouble her on that day. Aunty was terribly disappointed to be unable to participate as she expressed that the issue of water sharing was extremely important to her and her family and people.

There was an even gender spread as shown in Table 1. It is important to note that good representation for culturally appropriate consultation is measured not by numbers, but by inclusiveness of family groups and communities. In total, these Traditional Owners represented seven different family groups, more than 5,000 different people and spoke for a broad range of communities and different areas of Wadi Wadi Nation Country. The Nation organisers were included as participants. Consultants travelled more than 1,200 kilometres across the Wadi Wadi Nation and beyond to different locations.
Table 3: Participant Data: Traditional Owner face-to-face interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>M/F</th>
<th>Governance</th>
<th>Families Represented*</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/10/2018</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Grassroots</td>
<td>Davies/Wise-Sabina</td>
<td>Koondrook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/10/2018</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Grassroots</td>
<td>Kennedy</td>
<td>Robinvale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/11/2018</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Grassroots</td>
<td>Kennedy</td>
<td>Robinvale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/10/2018</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Grassroots</td>
<td>Kennedy/Baxter</td>
<td>Robinvale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/10/2018</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Grassroots</td>
<td>Ingram</td>
<td>Swan Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/10/2018</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Grassroots</td>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>Balranald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/10/2018</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Grassroots</td>
<td>Firebrace</td>
<td>Echuca/Moama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/10/2018</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Grassroots</td>
<td>Firebrace/Morrison</td>
<td>Echuca/Moama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/10/2018</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Grassroots</td>
<td>Firebrace/Kennedy</td>
<td>Echuca/Moama</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Family groups represented do not necessarily correspond with surnames of participants.

Face-to-face interview participant identification process

Traditional Owners from these groups were invited to be participants, always with guidance from the Nation organisers:

- grassroots Traditional Owners on the stakeholder list, as provided by the Nation organiser
- further suggestions from interview participants, while on the ground
- Native Title applicants on the stakeholder list, as provided by Native Title Services.

Best practice culturally appropriate consultation dictates that the Nation organiser arrange with the Traditional Owner/s a time and location of their choice to meet the consultants Strategic Small Business Solutions. If the Traditional Owner/Owner’s were then comfortable, an interview was done once consent was confirmed via data use agreements. SSBS did find, as previously experienced, that in line with culturally appropriate consultation a need to be flexible around booked appointment times and travel plans made with individual Traditional Owners is required along with an ability to adapt quickly to changed circumstances and move forward.

Face-to-face interview process

So that the process could be as culturally appropriate as possible, Traditional Owners were encouraged to choose how they would like the interview conducted, including:

- choice of venues, including own homes, motels, cafes and community venues
- food brought to their home or in a cafe
- options for sharing feedback such as question and answer, walks on Country or photo documentaries
- recording options such as voice recording, note-taking, or both
- on Country trips.

Interviewees were given an information package that included the data use agreement, a consent form, the list of questions and a water resource plan information booklet/workshop notes. Nation organisers introduced all those present to the Traditional Owner/s, including an Aboriginal cultural officer from DOI Water who was at all but two of the interviews. Strategic Small Business Solutions asked Traditional Owner/s how they would prefer to be addressed,
thanked the Traditional Owner/s for their time, allowing us to talk to them on Country and paid their respects to Traditional Owner/s and Elders past, present and emerging. All present yarnd comfortably and the data use agreement was then provided and explained to the Traditional Owner/s who freely gave their consent to share knowledge in all cases was freely given. The consultants asked questions with the TO’s sharing their knowledge where and when able about Water Sharing and Planning, in their home, in a café, at Nation Organisers and Consultants accommodation and in one case on Country on the riverbank which included a much enjoyed and appreciated visit to the “family camp” which is where the Traditional Owner and his family had lived until 1965 when they were compelled to move into the town.

The consultants asked questions and the Traditional Owner/s shared their knowledge where and when they could about water sharing and planning. This took place in their home, in a café, at Nation Organisers’ and consultants’ accommodation, and in one case on Country on the riverbank, with a much enjoyed and appreciated visit to the ‘family camp’ where the Traditional Owner and his family had lived until 1965 when they were compelled to move into the town.

The ‘family camp’ visit was a rare opportunity to gather information about how significant the water/land connection is to First Nations people, and the time and spiritual journey taken for them to have recreated their ‘family camp’ is not to be taken lightly (see photos).

Over the course of the face to face interviews journey, it was evident that the more the Traditional Owner/s shared their stories, the more they wanted to, with the consultants receiving phone calls from Traditional Owner/s after the interviews with more knowledge the Traditional Owner/s wished to share. The Nation Organisers did a tremendous job of encouraging attendance at the workshop to be held the week after the Traditional Owner interviews. The interviews appeared to cement the relationships forged between the Nation Organisers, Traditional Owner/s and the consultants. Strategic Small Business Solutions concluded that the face-to-face interviews are integral to effective workshop attendance and participation, and the importance and valuable contributions of the Nation Organisers cannot be overstated.

*Face-to-face interviews feedback*

The feedback from the Traditional Owners in these interviews will provide a good basis for the workshops and for the overall structure of the findings in this Consultation Report. From these interviews, the following themes, were drawn out to guide the workshop discussions.

These themes from the interviews were drawn out to guide the workshop discussions:

- water represents ‘Life’
- grave concerns over present care of all waterways
- ‘special’ memories and spiritual and physical cultural connections to the waterways for living and ancestral First Nations people
- accessibility to the waterways
- First Nations management of the waterways
- a firm belief that there are First Nations solutions to present water issues
- financial assistance required to repair damaged waterways.

The Basin Plan, Chapter 10, Part 14 requires that the views of First Nations people on the values and uses of water and a range of other issues including cultural flows, protection of First Nations water values and uses, identified heritage and identification of risks arising from the use and management of water resources are identified for inclusion in the water resource plans. It also requires that First Nations are given the opportunity to actively take part in identifying their own objectives and outcomes.
The feedback gathered in the face-to-face interviews allowed for extensive analysis. The recurring themes that were identified provided the basis for drawing the Wadi Wadi Nation Workshop questions to First Nations participants by aligning to culturally appropriate protocols.

As the Wadi Wadi Nation consultation for Water Resource Planning is a collaborative project between New South Wales DOI Water and Victoria’s the Wadi Wadi workshops location and venue had been arranged with DELWP under the guidance of the Nation organisers to align with culturally appropriate consultation protocols.

All Traditional Owners we spoke with supported the chosen workshop location and venues.

**Phase 3 – consultation**

**Workshop participant data**

A two-day Wadi Wadi workshop was held in Swan Hill Victoria on Thursday 11th and Friday 12th October, 2018. As per MDBA guidelines, this workshop put forward the opportunity for the Wadi Wadi Traditional Owners, along with other Wadi Wadi members to have their voices heard on the values and objectives of water resource planning within their Nations boundaries.

There was a total of 28 participants who signed the attendance sheet including Wadi Wadi members of all ages. There were an estimated 15-20 First Nations people in attendance who signed the attendance sheet. Of the 28 signed in as attending the workshop, 16 signed the workshop participation agreements.

**Workshop logistics**

As previously mentioned, the workshop logistics in this instance were organised by DELWP and the Nation organisers prior to the collaborative agreement between New South Wales DOI Water and Victoria's DELWP and the engagement of the consultants (SSBS).

The amount of people attending the workshop was more than anticipated based on prior workshop attendance, however less than had indicated attendance to the Nation organisers and DELWP. It is noted that travel costs, at a per kilometre allowance for travel over 100km’s to attend and meal costs and accommodation costs were covered by DELWP.

The lunch on the day of the first workshop, followed by afternoon tea and a BBQ dinner were warmly received. The second day breakfast, morning tea and lunch were provided prior to closing the meeting.

This cost covering arrangement may have influenced the larger turnout than anticipated, based on prior workshop attendance, amount of Wadi Wadi Nation members who could travel to Swan Hill based on affordability and a wish to have their voices heard.

**Workshop process: day one**

All workshop participants and facilitators including consultants, DOI staff, DELWP staff and other organisational representatives met at the riverfront in Swan Hill on the banks of the Murray River as deemed most culturally appropriate by the Nation organisers and Wadi Wadi participants.
a smoking ceremony was performed and Welcome to Country followed
all workshop participants and facilitators then travelled to workshop venue, the Grain Shed
workshops lasted between four to five hours according to the following structure:
- lunch
- introductions and acknowledgment of Traditional Owner’s and Elders past, present and emerging, thanks for participants time and allowing the workshops on Country.
- overview of the two-day workshop
- water planning information session (DOI Water) and (DELWP)
- data use agreement and consent (SSBS)
- workshop 1
- close meeting

All workshop participants and facilitators returned to Swan Hill riverbank for a BBQ.

**Workshop process day two**

Participants and facilitators met at the Grain Shed for the commencement of the workshop:
- re-cap of previous day
- MILDRIN presentation
- morning tea
- workshop 2
- lunch
- adjourn to Swan Hill riverbank
- close meeting

**Data use agreement**

SSBS found that the workshop participant agreements were met with a degree of trepidation and mistrust. We conclude that due to the large volume of attendees seated at round tables with other family members, there were mixed views regarding signing any documents perceived to be for the Government and this promoted discussion about the agreement itself.
In comparison, the face to face interview data use agreements were signed without hesitation. Further clarification was sought in some instances and as previously mentioned 16 participants chose to sign the agreement. Other participants were willing to share knowledge whilst choosing not to sign an agreement. SSBS conclude that more time to address large numbers of workshop participants on an individual or small group basis would be helpful to allaying any concerns about the data use agreements.

**Feedback Sessions**

![Image credit: Andrew McMahon, SSBS](image.png)

Some factors to consider in the feedback sessions:

- keep it simple
- use 3-4 questions
- use prompts to encourage discussion
- use examples to start conversations use photos, and
- use large colour maps.

**Phase 4: analysis and review**

**Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis was used to identify recurring themes in the face to face interviews and the workshop participation feedback. Data was gathered in a formal, yet comfortable forum with house rules applied beforehand so that all felt free to express their views directly and when required forcibly, however always in a civilised and polite and respectful manner. Participants clearly felt comfortable to ask questions of Government representatives and pushback respectfully when the answer was unsatisfactory to them or required further clarification. From this direct approach, honest data was gathered for analysis and is presented in Chapter 11 of the Comprehensive Report.

**Review**

All face to face interviewees were asked how they would prefer to review the draft report. All wished to be contacted again to review the report on a face to face basis. Those with access to email will be emailed a draft copy before the visit to ensure time has been allowed for a satisfactory review of their input, that the report is culturally appropriate and to request any amendments they deem necessary be addressed.
Recommendations for future consultation process

The following recommendations are made for future culturally appropriate Nation-based consultation rounds in the water resource plan development process:

- the Nation organisers in the Wadi Wadi Nation were crucial to the success of the consultation. Their combined input and guidance proved invaluable and determined accessibility to First Nation Traditional Owners. SSBS recommend the Nation organisers be engaged as early as possible in the process to begin identification of Traditional Owners and to determine the Traditional Owner’s views on participating in the interview process.

- the importance of the Nation organiser (delegate) cannot be understated and that MILDRIN/NBAN play a more active role in determining the active status of the delegate prior to recommending the delegate to the Department. This may avoid a pressure situation on the delegate when contacted by consultants or the Department if they do not wish to be involved in the process.

- the project timeframes are reviewed to be more in line with more flexible culturally appropriate timelines, therefore allowing for availability for face to face interviews and travel arrangements to workshops.

- the DOI review the DELWP model for funding for workshop participants who are required to travel to attend workshops.

Figure 4: female MLDRIN delegates with a Traditional Owner

Image credit: Andrew McMahon, SSBS