

# Victorian Catchment Management Council

## Fact Sheet 3

March 2016

### Legislative Framework

The Victorian Catchment Management Council (VCMC) is the government's key advisory body on catchment management and the condition of land and water resources. It is established under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (CaLP Act).

The VCMC has a statewide focus and long-term vision: 'Victoria will have healthy rivers flowing through ecologically sustainable and productive catchments'.

The functions, powers and duties of the VCMC are set out in the CaLP Act and the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (FFG Act) as follows:

#### **Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994**

- Advise government on a range of statewide issues relating to catchment management, the condition of land and water resources, priorities for catchment management and priorities for research and investigation needs.
- Encourage the cooperation of persons and bodies involved in the management of land and water resources.
- Promote community awareness and understanding of issues relating to catchment management.
- Provide advice to the Minister before any recommendation for the declaration or revocation of a declaration of any pest plant or animal. This advice must include an assessment of the extent and severity of impact, suggested management, an estimate of the cost of these measures and how it might be funded.
- Establish guidelines for the preparation of Regional Catchment Strategies and Special Area Plans.

#### **Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988**

- The VCMC may comment on the final recommendations of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Scientific Advisory Committee for listing a species under the FFG Act.
- In preparing or amending an Action Statement, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning Secretary must consider any management advice given by the VCMC.

The VCMC must also comply with a range of other acts, including the *Public Administration Act 2004*, which includes governance principles and the duties of Chairs and members of public bodies in the public sector.

### Structure

The VCMC membership is determined by the CaLP Act and is designed to ensure that independent advice is provided, with a broad understanding and experience in the management of land and water resources.

#### **The Council**

The VCMC consists of not more than 10 members who are appointed for up to three years by the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Minister. The VCMC reports directly to the Minister through its Chair.

The statutory criteria that apply to membership are:

- The need for the composition of the VCMC to reflect the major land and water uses in the State, including rural, urban, private and public uses.
- The need for VCMC members between them to have experience and knowledge of land protection, water resource management, primary industry, environment protection and conservation and local government.
- One member is to be a nominee of the DELWP Secretary.

## Committees

Under the CaLP Act, the VCMC may, from its members, appoint any committees that it considers necessary to carry out its functions effectively.

## Staff

The executive officer and staff are employees of DELWP and provide executive support for the VCMC. The staff play a crucial role in liaising with government departments and agencies and other catchment-focused organisations, such as Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs), local government and water corporations.

## Links with other Organisations

The VCMC maintains close relationships with all 10 CMAs, but has no supervisory or audit role.

The VCMC is a member of the CMA Chairs Forum, the CMA Chief Executive Officers Forum and the Victorian Catchment Management Forum. It also participates in the National Natural Resource Management Chairs Forum, a forum for the Chairs of Australia's 56 regional organisations. These forums provide opportunities for the VCMC to build networks, share knowledge and information and receive briefings on strategic direction for integrated catchment management policies and programs.

The VCMC also participates in relevant working groups and project management groups. The membership of these groups is assessed on a case-by-case basis to ensure that participation aligns with the functions and duties under the CaLP Act.

## Accountability Instruments and Processes

### Strategic plan

The VCMC works on an annually reviewed strategic plan. The strategic plan for 2012-2015 had its foundations in the recommendations provided in the Catchment Condition and Management Report, tabled in Parliament in December 2012, with additional key activities occurring as required.

### Annual reporting

The VCMC must provide an annual report to the Minister on the operation of the CaLP Act and the

carrying out of its functions. The Minister must table the report in Parliament.

Every five years, the annual report must include an assessment of the condition and management of land and water resources in Victoria. The October 2012 Catchment Condition and Management Report is the fourth such VCMC report (the next is due in 2017). The VCMC is also required to demonstrate compliance with the *Financial Management Act 1994* by reporting on their operations after each financial year.

## Regional Catchment Strategies

Under the CaLP Act, CMAs must prepare Regional Catchment Strategies (RCSs) in accordance with guidelines established by the VCMC. These strategies include how catchments in a region are to be managed, identify how and by whom the strategy will be implemented, identify state procedures for monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of actions and measures, and plan for reviewing the strategy.

RCSs provide a vision for each region, with 20-year objectives for land, water and biodiversity assets, and coast and marine assets where relevant, with a six-year program of measures for the life of the strategy.

## Special Area Plans

Under the CaLP Act, Special Area Plans must be prepared in accordance with guidelines established by the VCMC.

A Special Area Plan is a statutory planning management tool approved by the Minister to deal with land management issues in a specific area. Land can be declared a special area either as a special water supply area or for any other purpose identified by a CMA.

Further information about the VCMC can be found at [www.vcmc.vic.gov.au](http://www.vcmc.vic.gov.au).

