



Recognising recreational values

Progress report

WATER FOR VICTORIA
2016–2020



VICTORIA
State Government

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of cultural and traditional practices.

We are committed to genuinely partner, and meaningfully engage, with Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the broader protection of Country and its waterways in the 21st century and beyond.



Mirring - Country, by Thomas Day.

MINISTERIAL FOREWORD



*In 2016, the Victorian Government released *Water for Victoria*, our strategic plan for managing water to support a healthy environment, prosperous economy and thriving communities.*

Our commitment to **enhancing the recreational values** of water is a theme of *Water for Victoria*. This commitment was further enhanced by legislation through the *Water and Catchment Legislation Amendment Act 2019*. Recreational values and Aboriginal cultural values are now embedded into the planning and management of our water resources.

We are using this commitment and understanding to inform how we can manage water to benefit all water users. Healthy waterways and catchments support the wellbeing of Victorians who enjoy the recreational benefits our rivers and streams provide. Realising shared benefits in managing our water storages and in planning water for the environment will help future challenges such as population growth and changing water demands.

We will continue to consider these values in the way we manage water. The Victorian Government is working in partnership with water and land managers, the water sector and communities to maximise opportunities for recreational activities on and around our waterways and water storages.

This progress report highlights some of the many achievements of these partnerships. They have facilitated the recreational use of our water resources across the state, strengthened Victorians' connection to nature and highlighted the importance of considering recreational values in planning and decision-making processes into the future.

The report also sets the direction for further work to improve recreational outcomes across Victoria's waterways and water storages.

It is delightful to see that we are making real progress with actions to benefit Victorian's health and quality of life through recreation and the strategic use of our beautiful and diverse water assets.

We look forward to continuing our work together to understand and incorporate recreational values in how we manage Victoria's water resources into the future.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Neville', with a long, sweeping underline.

The Hon. Lisa Neville MP
Minister for Water

INTRODUCTION

Victoria's dams, lakes, wetlands, rivers and streams provide bountiful recreational opportunities to Victorians. Activities such as fishing, camping and boating are favourites for many Victorians. The health, social and economic benefits of recreation are significant, and highly valued by the community.

Water for Victoria acknowledges the significant recreational values of our water resources and articulates three actions to help achieve tangible recreational benefits for Victorians.



Action 7.1

Include recreational values in water and waterway planning.



Action 7.2

Help communities understand how to achieve their recreational objectives.



Action 7.3

Support recreation at water storages through infrastructure and better information.

The need to consider recreational values in how we manage water and waterways is clear. New legislation has been introduced to enshrine recreational values of water into law for the first time across Victoria, embedding recreational values into the decision-making of water managers.

Recreational users need good information about how they can input into planning and decision-making processes so they can understand how they can achieve their objectives and have their voices heard.

Infrastructure is also essential to supporting use. Something as simple as toilet facilities, to boat ramps, pontoons, access tracks and walking trails, picnic settings and barbeques – these things make a tangible difference to how people can use public areas. This in turn supports the wellbeing of local communities and visitors alike.

This report highlights the achievements over the last four years, of a \$4.7 million investment to enhance recreational opportunities at Victoria's water storages, lakes, rivers and streams. This includes the flagship \$3.2 million Boosting Recreational Water Use Initiative that commenced in 2018. In addition, the program has leveraged significant co-investment and in-kind contributions from partner organisations. The program has delivered a diverse range of projects to improve recreational access to waterways across rural and regional Victoria as well as at popular sites in Melbourne.

If you would like further information about how you can input into planning for water-based recreation in your area please contact your local Water Corporation or Catchment Management Authority, details on which can be found at water.vic.gov.au

*RIGHT: Canoeing on Lake Eildon.
Courtesy Parks Victoria.*



VALUING RECREATION AT WATERWAYS AROUND VICTORIA



**"Look at the raft I made!
It even floats."**

6 yo Xavier enjoying a warm day in the cool waters of the upper Goulburn River.



"I love taking the boat out to go fishing with Dad. It is so exciting when I catch a fish!"

9 year old Vera from central Victoria with her catch of the day.



"That feeling of freedom when you are racing along with wind in your sail is incomparable."

Jane in her trailer sailer on the Gippsland Lakes.

Locations of projects featured in this report

- 1 New access to the Campaspe River at Rochester
- 2 Bringing water back to Green Lake
- 3 Donald weir pool upgrade
- 4 Lake Eppalock upgrades: Kimbolton foreshore and Randells Cove
- 5 Lake Eildon facility upgrades
- 6 Dartmouth Pondage access
- 7 Increasing opportunities for recreation on the Wimmera River
- 8 Sharing the benefits of water at Toolondo
- 9 Opening Victorian water storages to recreational fishing
- 10 Improving recreational access to the Maribyrnong River
- 11 Merri River urban restoration project
- 12 Cultural and recreational outcomes on the Glenelg River
- 13 Moonee Ponds Creek improvement project
- 14 Blue Rock Lake all-abilities adventure playground
- 15 Enhancing access to the Barwon River through Geelong



NEW ACCESS TO THE CAMPASPE RIVER AT ROCHESTER

The new fishing platform and kayak launch facility at the Rochester Riverside Holiday Park is the first along the Campaspe River.



The new fishing platform and kayak launch facility at the Rochester Riverside Holiday Park is the first along the Campaspe River. The river is a popular native fishery for anglers and one of ten Flagship Waterways in Victoria.

The North Central Catchment Management Authority worked closely with the local community and Campaspe Shire to locate and design the facility. The all abilities design of the platform will mean everyone, regardless of age or ability, will be able to visit Rochester and get right down and connect physically with a healthy river, go fishing for Murray cod, see platypus and feel the joy of floating in a kayak beneath the river red gums.

The platform will be open to the public in Spring 2020 once other works to upgrade the holiday park are complete.





"They have done a wonderful job constructing this onsite. The weather has been pretty ordinary... but the finish is superb. It will be open to the public and all visitors to the Rochester Riverside Holiday Park. Can't wait for that. This is going to be a wonderful asset."

Bruce, Manager of Rochester Riverside Caravan Park

LEFT: Fishing platform and kayak launching facility at Rochester Riverside Holiday Park. Courtesy North Central Catchment Management Authority.

2

BRINGING WATER BACK TO GREEN LAKE

Rejuvenation works at Green Lake, near Ouyen, mean Western Victorians can once again enjoy one of the region's favourite recreation sites for years to come.

The community led Bringing Water Back to Green Lake project was undertaken in 2018 to improve seepage issues that caused the lake to frequently dry out, making it unsuitable for any water use or as a tourist destination. Prior to these works, almost all water delivered into the lake through the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline system was lost through seepage. The \$2 million project involved removing topsoil from the lakebed to provide access to sub-surface soils which were then compacted to form a solid, impervious clay layer at the base of the lake. This was a very welcome improvement to the lake, restoring Green Lake as a valued community retreat and important visitor destination.



TOP: Boats in the harbour at Green Lake.
BELOW: Green Lake from above.
Courtesy Buloke Shire Council.

The project was delivered by Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water, with support from the Department of Land, Environment, Water and Planning and Buloke Shire on behalf of the Green Lake Committee of Management.

"Green Lake is a beautiful and popular feature of Buloke Shire. It's fantastic to see water being returned to the lake to benefit the Sea Lake community and visitors."

Member for Northern Victoria Mark Gepp.



3

DONALD WEIR POOL UPGRADE

The Donald community can now enjoy better swimming, fishing and other recreational activities at the iconic Donald weir pool thanks to this upgrade project.

In 2016, the Victorian Government announced \$170,000 for the Donald weir pool project to build infrastructure to provide water supply to the weir pool and to complete works on the weir to ensure it has the structural integrity to hold water for years to come.

The weir has now been upgraded and the weir pool is connected to the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline water supply. These works provide the opportunity to supply water to the Donald weir pool, when natural flows in the Richardson River result in low weir pool water levels. The pipeline connection works involved the installation of a 400-metre pipeline, linking the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline to an existing 1,000 metre stormwater pipeline, delivering water into the weir pool.

The project was built on the significant existing work undertaken by the local community in the region.

First water delivery to Donald weir pool took place in March 2018 after construction works were completed in June 2017.



Floating wetlands along the perimeter of the Weir Pool have been installed by Wimmera CMA to help prevent bank erosion and ensure the integrity of the site in the longer term. Courtesy Wimmera Catchment Management Authority.



4

LAKE EPPALOCK UPGRADES: KIMBOLTON FORESHORE AND RANDALLS COVE

Lake Eppalock is highly valued for boating, water skiing, sailing, canoeing, fishing and swimming.

The Lake Eppalock Advisory Group was established by the Minister for Water in September 2015, in response to community concerns about low lake levels impacting recreation.

A collaboration between the Advisory Group, the community and government, has resulted in \$880,000 worth of recreational initiatives being undertaken at Lake Eppalock designed to enhance the visitor experience at the popular destination.

In 2018 works were undertaken to improve the Kimbolton foreshore by upgrading the carpark, installing solar lighting and upgrading the boat ramp with pre-launch preparation zones for vessels and improved signage.

In 2019 Randalls Cove also received major rejuvenation works with a new toilet block, new shelter, paving and equal access double BBQ installed at the location, along with upgrades to existing shelters. These will be welcome new amenities to Randalls Cove which is Lake Eppalock's busiest passive recreational destination and receives approximately 11,000 vehicles in a summer month.



New picnic shelter, Kimbolton Foreshore Reserve.



New toilet block, Kimbolton Foreshore Reserve.

*RIGHT: Water skiing at Lake Eppalock.
Courtesy of Goulburn Murray Water.*



5

LAKE EILDON FACILITY UPGRADES

Three important recreational sites at Lake Eildon have been upgraded, improving boat launching and visitor facilities at Victoria's most visited inland storage.

Improvements include the widening of the Alliance boat ramp to dual lanes, the replacement of the aging Jerusalem Creek toilet block and the upgrade of the facilities at Hutchinson's Rd. This included the formalisation of vehicle and boat trailer parking as well as subsurface drainage installation. The upgrades will reduce congestion during peak summer periods and were earmarked as priorities in the Lake Eildon Recreational Boating Facilities Improvement Plan.

This project was delivered by Goulburn Murray Water in partnership with VFA, Murrindindi and Mansfield Shire councils.



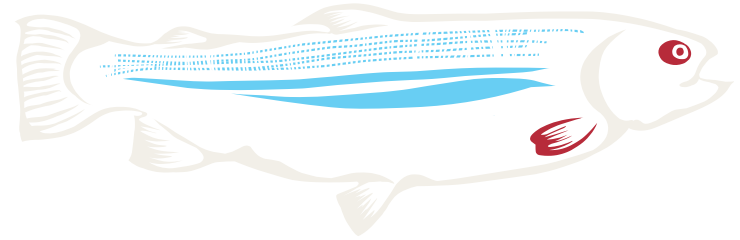


“Lake Eildon is Goulburn-Murray Water’s most visited storage and is hugely popular among the boating and fishing community. These upgrades will attract further visitors and ensure the lake is able to be enjoyed by a range of recreational users for years to come.”

GMW General Manager of Water Storage Services, Martina Cusack

LEFT: Alliance Boat Ramp at Lake Eildon.
Courtesy Goulburn Murray Water

6



DARTMOUTH PONDAGE ACCESS

In May 2018 Dartmouth Pondage in northeast Victoria was re-opened to fishing for the first time since 2013.

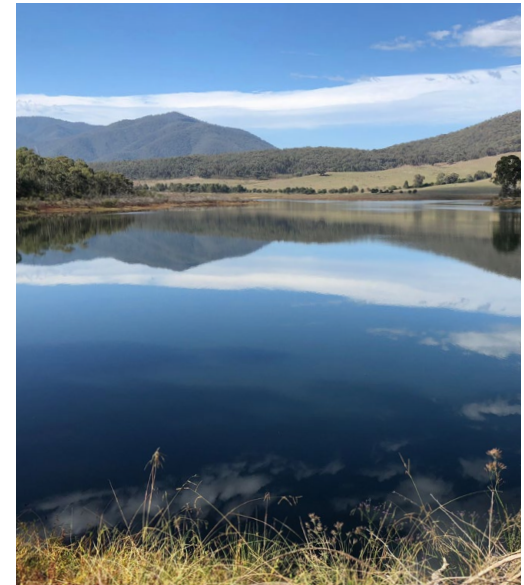
The new access arrangements were facilitated through the collaboration of DELWP, the Victorian Fisheries Authority, Goulburn-Murray Water, the Murray Darling Basin Authority and the hydro-electric generator AGL.

The fishing area provides convenient shore-based fishing opportunities for locals and visitors during daylight hours and is stocked annually with Brown and Rainbow Trout.

Dartmouth Pondage (or Lake Banimboola as it is formally known) is a key recreation and tourism asset for the remote Dartmouth community, drawing thousands of recreational fishers, photographers, birdwatchers and walkers to the region each year.



*Local identity John Scales stocking a 3KG Brown trout into the pondage amid media attention.
Courtesy Victorian Fisheries Authority.*



*Dartmouth Pondage is a regulating storage for the Dartmouth Dam Power Station.
Courtesy VRFish.*

7

INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES FOR RECREATION ON THE WIMMERA RIVER

Wimmera CMA, in partnership with local councils and community groups, has installed multiple recreational facilities along the Wimmera River creating greater opportunities for the local community to enjoy this iconic waterway.

The project saw the construction of two new shelters, canoe launching facilities, walking tracks and seating at multiple locations along the Horsham weir pool. The new infrastructure was designed to be accessed by all abilities and has significantly improved the visitor experience along the river whilst creating a sense of connection to nature.

A new rowing pontoon installed in Dimboola allows users to access the river at a variety of water levels improving the safety and experience for users. The pontoon replaces an ageing launching ramp that had become unsafe and threatened the Dimboola Rowing Club's ability to host their 132nd annual regatta in 2019.



TOP: Dimboola Rowing Club pontoon.
BELOW: Canoe launching facility at Horsham Weir Pool.
Courtesy Wimmera Catchment Management Authority.

An analysis showed that in 2016-17 the Horsham and Dimboola weir pools contributed over \$1.26 million to the local economy with over 119,000 users. The works complement other projects being undertaken along the river designed to promote its social and recreational values whilst protecting its strong cultural and environmental values.

"The pontoon is a fantastic piece of waterway infrastructure and is sure to be popular with visiting rowers when they arrive for the regatta. It will also be popular with a myriad of other users as well, with the deck also a great spot from which to cast a line or to just dangle your feet in the water."

Hindmarsh Shire Mayor Cr Ron Ismay

8

SHARING THE BENEFITS OF WATER AT TOOLONDO

At Toolondo Reservoir, south of Horsham, increased inflows have been boosting this prime trout fishing destination. This began in 2017, when a review of management rules at the Rocklands Reservoir enabled the transfer of water to Toolondo when storage levels were sufficiently high. Since these rule changes, more than 10,000 megalitres of water have been transferred into Toolondo Reservoir, resulting in reduced water temperatures in the reservoir in which trout are more likely to thrive. The new arrangements are drawing more recreational fishers to the lake, resulting in a boost to the local tourism industry and jobs in the region.



*RIGHT: Toolondo Reservoir.
Courtesy Tessa Paproth*



OPENING VICTORIAN WATER STORAGES TO RECREATIONAL FISHING

In 2019, six lakes in central Victoria were opened to recreational fishers in canoes, kayaks and boats with electric motors to provide more on-water access for recreation.

On-water access is now available at Upper Coliban, Malmsbury, Lauriston, Barkers Creek and Tullaroop reservoirs, and Hepburn Lagoon.

Works to improve physical access and site amenity has also been undertaken at a number of these water storages. At Tulleroop Reservoir a gravel boat ramp, boating safety signage and trailer parking was installed while at Upper Coliban Reservoir a new boat ramp and additional carparking has been constructed.

Barkers Creek Reservoir has also received upgrades to carparking and boat launching with new walking tracks and toilet facilities to be installed in upcoming months. Operational rules are in place at these sites to protect the integrity of the water quality in these storages, some of which provide drinking water for surrounding communities. This work was made possible by collaboration between the storage managers Coliban Water and Goulburn Murray Water with support from Marine Safety Victoria, the Victorian Fisheries Authority, Better Boating Victoria and Victoria's recreational fishing community.

"The reservoirs are the main drinking water source for much of central Victoria, so these improvements to on-water access are a fantastic opportunity to support recreation and fishing as well as protecting water quality for the towns Coliban Water supplies. Through our strategic plan, Strategy 2030, we are committed to promoting healthy and active communities through green spaces and recreational water access, so it's great to see this project come to fruition."

**Damian Wells, Managing Director
Coliban Water.**



Tullaroop Reservoir from above. Courtesy Victorian Fisheries Authority.

IMPROVING RECREATIONAL ACCESS TO THE MARIBYRNONG RIVER

The Maribyrnong River, a favourite among locals and Melburnians, now has even more facilities for recreational boaters following the development of a 30m floating pontoon on the river's edge at Footscray Park.

The floating pontoon will encourage recreational fishing and boating and features a lower level platform suited for use by paddle craft. There is seating for visitors to enjoy views of the river, Footscray Park and surrounds.

The project also includes two new sheltered picnic and barbecue spaces along the river edge in Footscray Park, and improved path connections to the Maribyrnong River Trail.

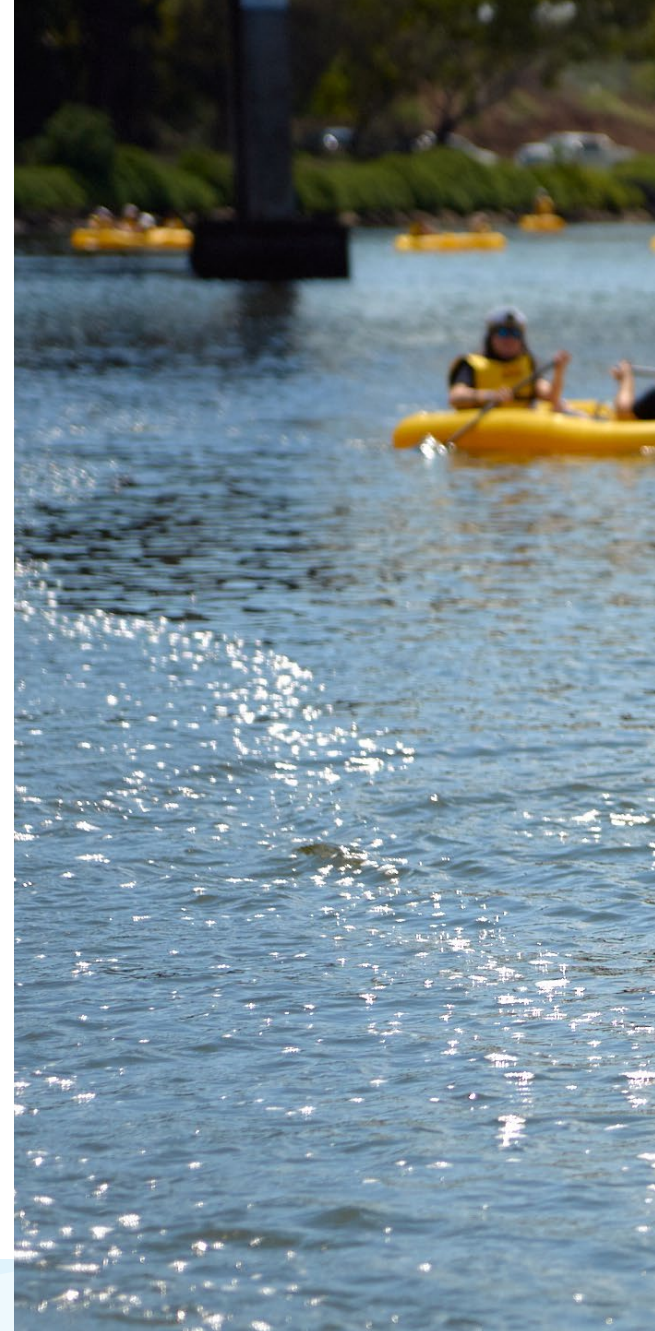
The project was delivered in partnership with Melbourne Water with Maribyrnong City Council carrying out the installation works.

"The pontoon will be a popular addition to the Maribyrnong River and allow more people to appreciate the unsung beauty of this iconic waterway. Melbourne's waterways are loved by recreational users and local communities for the opportunities they provide to exercise, relax, socialise and connect with nature."

Melbourne Water's Manager North West Regional Services, Emily Phillips



RIGHT: Inflatable Regatta.
Courtesy event organisers.





MERRI RIVER URBAN RESTORATION PROJECT

The Merri River flows through the large regional town of Warrnambool and is used by residents and visitors for many recreational activities, including fishing, kayaking, rowing, walking and cycling. This section of river through town is a popular fishing location for estuary perch, bream and trout.



Mulching at Merri River Estuary. Courtesy Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority.

As part of the restoration of the river, Glenelg Hopkins CMA has been working with landholders and community groups in Warrnambool since 2015 to improve the ecological health of the Merri River and create recreational spaces. Several funding avenues have supported these works including state and local government sources, recreational fishing grants, a crowdfunding campaign, local business donations and a large contingent of in-kind support from community groups and private landholders.

To date the Merri River Restoration Project has worked across seventeen urban sites totaling 7300 m of riverbank improved. On-ground works have focused on clearing vast sections of dense infestations of woody weeds from 15 ha and revegetating areas with 18 700 native plants. Seven community groups, four government agencies, nine private landholders and four land developers have been involved in the planning and delivery of riparian works across the project area.

Aligning with project partners and leveraging in-kind support has directly and indirectly influenced a total of 685 people participating across 25 engagement events, including fishing clinics, school educations programs and tree planting days. This project has leveraged over \$1,500,000 in spending, cash donations and other grants including the installation of 129 habitat structures and two fishing platforms to boost native fish populations and improve angler access.

By partnering with key stakeholders, it is expected that over time the Merri River Restoration project will improve biodiversity and overall river health, boosting local fish and bird populations through the river's lower urban reaches.

"It's wonderful to see all the work that has been done. We'll be able to take the grandkids down to the river and go fishing like we used to."

Warrnambool Resident

RIGHT: Celebrating the delivery of riparian works at Merri Creek. Courtesy: Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority.



CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL OUTCOMES ON THE GLENELG RIVER

The Glenelg River is a significant feature in the cultural landscape of south-western Victoria. It continues to be an important place for traditional owners, who have inhabited the area for thousands of years, using the rich resources available along the river and associated habitats.



As such, Glenelg Hopkins CMA has considered how the timing and alignment of environmental flows could be modified to support the values of traditional owners and maximise benefits for the community.

Since 2017, environmental flows have been released in the Glenelg system to coincide with the Johnny Mullahg cricket match between the Gunditj Murring and Barengi Gadjin traditional owners. This has helped to improve water quality in swimming holes for recreational users as well as amenity for traditional owners and visitors attending the cricket event, an important annual cultural event held on the river.



Community members enjoying the Glenelg River as part of celebrations during the Johnny Mullahg cricket weekend. Courtesy Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority.

MOONEE PONDS CREEK IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Melbourne Water, on behalf of the Chain of Ponds Collaboration, received funding to improve recreational access to Moonee Ponds Creek in Brunswick West and Essendon.



A collaboration between Moreland City Council, Moonee Valley City Council, Melbourne Water, Moonee Valley Bicycle User Group and Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek saw a concept plan developed for the site featuring a new pedestrian and cycle bridge, improved path network, resting areas and revegetation. The project will improve access, enhance passive recreation, support local connection to nature and offer respite from urban heat. As well as linking Brunswick West to Essendon, the bridge also creates a new commuter route aligning with the proposed State Government Draft Strategic Cycling Corridor network in this area.

The project is jointly funded by Moreland City Council, Moonee Valley City Council and DELWP and is on track to be complete by May 2021.



Moonee Ponds Creek concept plan for Brunswick West/Essendon. Developed by Thompson Berrill Landscape Design Pty Ltd on behalf of Chain of Ponds Collaboration.

BLUE ROCK LAKE ALL-ABILITIES ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND

A new all-abilities adventure playground has been constructed at Southern Rural Water's popular Blue Rock Lake recreation area.

The project provides an exciting and inclusive space for play and learning and aims to attract visitors of all abilities to Blue Rock Lake, particularly children with disabilities. Southern Rural Water and Baw Baw Shire Council have partnered to deliver the project. Blue Rock Lake is already a popular destination, particularly for fishing and boating, and the all-abilities playground is expected to attract a wider variety of visitors to this great natural asset.



"This project will benefit the Willow Grove community and visitors to Baw Baw Shire for years to come. Blue Rock Lake is one of the most popular fishing spots in our region and will now become an even better destination year-round. It will be the perfect place for visitors to stop for a break on their way to explore the Walhalla and Mountain Rivers region and wider Gippsland, or stay for a day of fishing, boating or kayaking on the lake."

Mayor Danny Goss, Baw Baw Shire

Children enjoying the new play equipment at Blue Rock Lake. Images used with permission.



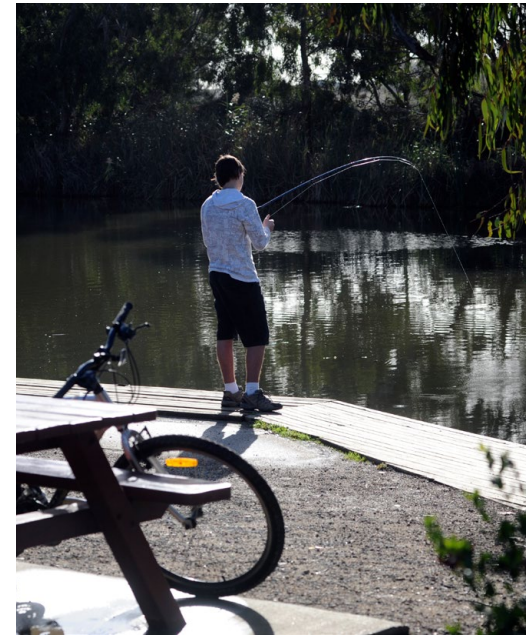
ENHANCING ACCESS TO THE BARWON RIVER THROUGH GEELONG

The Barwon River in Geelong is a beautiful natural asset for the city and is a hub for community sport and recreation, including rowing, water-skiing, canoeing and fishing. Works are now underway at multiple sites along the Barwon River to install multi-use water-access platforms to better connect the community with the River.

By April 2020, upgrades to the landings at Geelong Canoe Club and Corio Bay Rowing Club will make launching at both locations safer and more accessible in all river conditions. The platform at Wal Whiteside Walk will also be replaced so it will provide motorboat mooring, kayak launching, improved access, and also cater for recreational fishing, with a dedicated land-based fishing area.

These works will follow on from enhancements to the Yollinko Wetland Walk completed in August 2019 which saw the installation of kick rails, anti-slip mesh and additional seating overlooking the river.

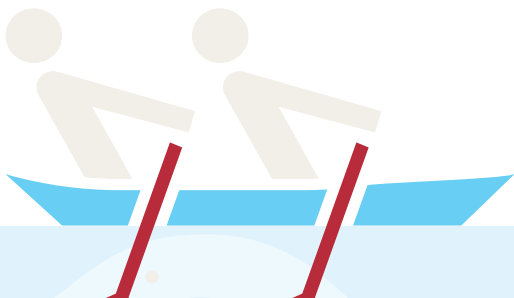
Corangamite CMA, DELWP, City of Greater Geelong and the VFA have contributed funding to this project.



ABOVE: Fishing on the Barwon River.

RIGHT: Rowing is popular on the Barwon River.

Courtesy Corangamite Catchment Management Authority.





WHERE TO NEXT?

This report shares highlights of the Recreational Values Program over the past four years. We will continue to work with communities around Victoria to understand and support the health, social and economic benefits of water-based recreation.

The Victorian Government is committed to prioritising works and projects that maximise opportunities for recreational activities on and around our waterways. Water Corporations and Catchment Management Authorities are working with their local communities in fulfilling their obligation to consider recreational values in how they deliver their functions.

There is much opportunity to further enhance recreational opportunities for communities across Victoria. Working together we can understand community values, recognise opportunities and tackle complex challenges innovatively and collaboratively. The social, health and economic benefits of recreation can be immense for both individuals and communities. We can all benefit from working together to maximise opportunities for water-based recreation and getting the most from our valuable water resources.

*RIGHT: Lake Narracan.
Courtesy J Strickland.*





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