

# Overview of Waterway Management in Victoria

## Fact Sheet 6

March 2016

### Victorian Waterway Management Strategy

The Victorian Waterway Management Strategy (VWMS) provides the framework for government, in partnership with the community, to maintain or improve the condition of rivers, estuaries and wetlands. The framework is based on regional planning processes and decision making, within the broader system of integrated catchment management in Victoria.

The vision for Victoria's waterways is:

'Victoria's rivers, estuaries and wetlands are healthy and well-managed; supporting environmental, social, cultural and economic values that are able to be enjoyed by all communities.'

The strategy addresses the obligations for waterway management expressed in the Victorian *Water Act 1989* (Water Act) and *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (CaLP Act), as well as other relevant legislation and international agreements.

### Management Objective

The strategy aims to maintain or improve the environmental condition of waterways to support environmental, social, cultural and economic values.

### Management approach

The management approach for waterways is implemented through the Victorian Waterway Management Program. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning is responsible for oversight of the program and for establishing the state policy framework for waterway management.

The program's regional implementation is led by the waterway managers (the Catchment Management Authorities, and Melbourne Water in the Port Phillip and Westernport region). This program is an eight-year adaptive management cycle (except for Melbourne Water, which operates on a five-year cycle). This cycle is outlined in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Adaptive management cycle of the Victorian Waterway Management Program.

The approach for managing waterways involves:

- recognising the importance of waterways with formal international, national and state significance
- implementing and maintaining on-ground works and managing environmental water in priority waterways
- fostering strong community partnerships
- using regulation (legislation and statutory processes).

## Guiding principles

The management approach is guided by the following principles:

- partnership approach
- community involvement
- integrated catchment management
- appropriate tools to improve waterway condition
- value for money
- Regional Waterway Strategies (RWS) to facilitate regional decision making
- evidence-based decision making
- adaptive management.

## Targets

Aspirational targets are included for long-term resource condition outcomes (8+ years) and management outcomes (1–8 years). Targets for outputs are developed as part of the RWSs.

The long-term resource condition outcome targets are to maintain or improve the condition of:

- priority river reaches
- high-value wetlands
- high-value estuaries.

## Management issues

Policy directions and specific actions for more effective and efficient management of waterways are provided in the VWMS for the following issues:

- recreational use of waterways
- environmental water management
- riparian management
- water quality
- the river channel
- wetlands
- estuaries
- waterways in urban areas

- extreme events of flood and bushfire
- invasive species management in waterways.

## Regional Planning

### Catchment and waterway management

The 10 Victorian catchment management regions each have a Catchment Management Authority (CMA) to coordinate integrated management of land, water and biodiversity. CMAs have specific responsibilities for waterway management under the Water Act, except in the Port Phillip and Westernport region where Melbourne Water has the waterway management responsibilities. Collectively, the nine CMAs and Melbourne Water are referred to as the waterway managers.

The waterway managers have the lead role in developing and delivering regional programs for waterway management, in particular developing a RWS and associated action plans.

### Regional Waterway Strategies

The RWSs, required under the Water Act, provide a single planning document for river, estuary and wetland management for each of the 10 regions. They drive the implementation of the statewide management approach developed in the VWMS, and align with the objectives for waterways described in the Regional Catchment Strategies.

The RWSs identify high-value waterways and priority management activities over an eight-year period (five-year period for Melbourne Water). They are based on a transparent, regional priority-setting process and have been developed in close consultation with key partners, including regional agencies and boards, Traditional Owners and the regional community.

This process ensures that investment in on-ground works and environmental water management is targeted at priority waterways to achieve the greatest community gain.

The strategies build on the success of the previous regional river health strategies by expanding their scope to include wetlands and estuaries (where applicable). They also comprehensively integrate priorities for environmental water management with other waterway management activities.

The RWSs include a regional work program of management activities for priority waterways. They guide investment into multi-year projects and annual work programs.

Current RWSs can be found here:

- [Corangamite](#)
- [East Gippsland](#)
- [Glenelg Hopkins](#)
- [Goulburn Broken](#)
- [Mallee](#)
- [Melbourne Water](#)
- [North Central](#)
- [North East](#)
- [West Gippsland](#)
- [Wimmera](#)

## Management Arrangements

### Investment

Funding for waterway management in Victoria comes from four principal sources:

- the Victorian Government
- the waterways charge in the Port Phillip and Westernport region
- the Australian Government
- the Murray–Darling Basin Authority.

Other funds are sourced from local government, industry and philanthropic trusts, and contributions from local community groups and individuals.

### Resource condition assessment

Resource condition assessment across the state is vital to understand the broader patterns and changes in the condition of waterways and provide information to assess the success of the Victorian Waterway Management Program. Statewide monitoring of resource condition uses three specifically developed Indices of Condition:

- the Index of Stream Condition (ISC)
- the Index of Wetland Condition (IWC)
- the pilot Index of Estuary Condition (IEC).

### Intervention monitoring

Knowledge about the relationships between outputs, management outcomes and long-term resource condition outcomes is communicated in program logic models.

In some cases, this knowledge is incomplete or uncertain. Intervention monitoring focuses on collecting data about the short and long-term effects of management activities, which will improve our program logic models. This information feeds back

into intervention planning and is a vital component of the adaptive management approach.

### Reporting

Reporting is an important tool to provide accountability for investors in waterway management and to deliver information to stakeholders and the community.

Annual management reporting focuses on the outputs achieved in each region for the financial year. Resource condition reporting provides information on the condition of waterways through the Indices of Condition.

Statewide reporting of the targets outlined in the VWMS will be done through the 'Report Card' series.

### Key partners in waterway management

The following state agencies, statutory bodies and other regional bodies are key partners with roles and responsibilities in Victorian waterway management.

- CMAs and Melbourne Water
- Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability
- Committees of management
- Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
- Essential Services Commission
- Environment Protection Authority Victoria
- Gippsland Lakes Coordinating Committee
- Local government
- Marine Safety Act waterway managers
- Murray-Darling Basin Authority
- Parks Victoria
- Regional Coastal Boards
- Traditional Owner Land Management Boards
- Transport Safety Victoria
- Victorian Catchment Management Council
- Victorian Coastal Council
- Victorian Environment Assessment Council
- Victorian Environmental Water Holder
- Water corporations

