

Overview of Victoria's Catchment Management Framework

Fact Sheet 1

March 2016

Integrated Catchment Management

Integrated catchment management is the coordinated management of land, water and biodiversity resources based on catchment areas. It incorporates environmental, economic and social considerations. This approach seeks to ensure the long-term viability of natural resource systems and human needs across current and future generations.

Integrated catchment management requires a partnership between Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs), regional communities and other management partners. It aims to:

- maintain or improve the quality of water resources and the condition of waterways
- prevent or reverse land degradation
- conserve, protect and build the resilience of natural ecosystems
- minimise damage to public and private assets from flooding and erosion
- minimise the economic and environmental impacts of pest plants and animals
- provide a holistic approach to achieve multiple catchment management objectives.

Legislative Framework

The *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (CaLP Act) establishes the framework for the integrated management and protection of catchments in Victoria and encourages community participation in the management of land, water and biodiversity resources.

The catchment management framework includes 10 catchment and land protection regions (Figure 1), each reflecting the unique biophysical qualities of its area. In

each region, a CMA is responsible for the integrated planning and coordination of land, water and biodiversity management, in conjunction with local communities.

The CaLP Act establishes a catchment and land protection advisory system consisting of the Victorian Catchment Management Council (VCMC), and the CMAs and their Boards.

Victorian Catchment Management Council

The VCMC is the government's key advisory body on catchment management and the condition of land and water resources. The Council's functions include:

- advising the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water, and any other Minister, on matters and priorities relating to catchment management, the condition of land and water resources, and priorities for research and investigation
- encouraging the cooperation of people and bodies involved in land and water resource management
- promote community awareness and understanding of issues relating to catchment management
- reporting annually on the operation of the CaLP Act and every five years on the condition and management of Victoria's land and water resources (next due in 2017).

Catchment Management Authorities

Victoria's 10 CMAs provide government with a strategic view for catchment management in each region through Regional Catchment Strategies (RCSs).

The CaLP Act and part 10 of the *Water Act 1989* (Water Act) govern the CMAs' activities. The main statutory functions of CMAs under the CaLP Act include:

Figure 1: Victoria's 10 Catchment and Land Protection Regions.

Source: 'A year of catchment management in Victoria Overview 2010/11'

Photographs courtesy of (clockwise): Mallee CMA, North Central CMA, Mark Turner, Goulburn Broken CMA, North East CMA, East Gippsland CMA, West Gippsland CMA, Port Phillip and Westernport CMA, Corangamite CMA, Penny Croucamp and David Fletcher.



- preparing RCSs and Special Area Plans, and coordinating and monitoring their implementation
- promoting the cooperation of people and bodies involved in the management of land and water resources in the region
- advising Ministers on regional priorities and the condition of land and water resources.

The Water Act designates nine CMAs and Melbourne Water (Port Phillip and Westernport region) as waterway management authorities, and outlines their functions and powers in relation to waterway management, floodplain management and regional drainage. The authorities have the lead role in developing and delivering regional programs for waterway management.

Regional Catchment Strategies

RCSs are the primary integrated strategic planning mechanism for the management of land, water and biodiversity resources in each region.

RCSs are prepared by CMAs in consultation with catchment communities and partners, and are approved by the Minister responsible for administering

the CaLP Act. The RCSs must meet the requirements of the CaLP Act and be developed in accordance with guidelines established by the VCMC.

The RCSs identify:

- the region's land, water and biodiversity resources and how they are used
- the nature, causes, extent and severity of land degradation of catchments
- a long-term vision for the region
- regionally significant land, water and biodiversity assets and landscapes
- 20-year condition objectives
- a program of management measures for the life of the strategy (i.e. six years).

RCSs seek to integrate community values and regional priorities with State and Federal legislation and policies and program priorities.

CMAs are responsible for the coordination of the RCSs, including the ongoing review and monitoring of their implementation, and identification of priority activities and work programs. RCSs are often implemented

through regional sub-strategies and action plans that are thematic, issue and/or landscape based.

Current RCSs were approved in 2013 and 2014:

- [Corangamite](#)
- [East Gippsland](#)
- [Glenelg Hopkins](#)
- [Goulburn Broken](#)
- [Mallee](#)
- [North Central](#)
- [North East](#)
- [Port Phillip and Westernport](#)
- [West Gippsland](#)
- [Wimmera](#)

Special Area Plans

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

Catchment Management Partners

Catchment management focuses on integration, cooperation and coordination between the people and organisations in a region. The following is a general list of partners contributing to catchment management.

Aboriginal communities

Aboriginal people have deep cultural, social, environmental, spiritual and economic connections to Country, including land and waterways and their resources. The significant rights and interests of Aboriginal people according to their traditional laws are recognised through federal native title legislation and Victorian Traditional Owner settlement agreements.

Aboriginal communities contribute to catchment management through land management; statements of aspirations and priorities in Country Plans developed by Traditional Owner Corporations; input into planning, programs and projects; sharing of traditional knowledge; and identification and protection of cultural values.

Traditional Owner Corporations hold significant rights to the land and have cultural obligations to manage traditional lands and waters. They are equal partners in ensuring catchment health. In many cases, Traditional Owners' rights over Crown land and waterways are recognised in settlement agreements (covering more than 40 parks and reserves) and governance

arrangements to ensure their perspectives, knowledge and interests are valued.

Traditional Owner Land Management Boards set the strategic direction and develop joint management plans for 'appointed' Crown land, parks and reserves in a Traditional Owner group's recognised country. Management plans are developed in partnership with the Secretary of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and implemented with the land manager (usually Parks Victoria). In some cases, these parks and reserves have been transferred in 'Aboriginal title' to the Traditional Owner group on the condition that they are jointly managed with the State through the Traditional Owner Land Management Boards.

Agricultural industry groups

Agricultural industry groups provide information and support to extensive networks of land managers on best practice management techniques through research, development and extension activities.

Australian Government

The Department of the Environment designs and implements the Australian Government's policies and programs to protect and conserve the environment, water and heritage, and promote climate action.

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources develops and implements policies and programs to ensure Australia's agricultural, fisheries, food and forestry industries remain competitive, profitable and sustainable.

Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability

The Commissioner's role is to:

- report on the condition of Victoria's natural environment
- encourage decision making that facilitates ecologically sustainable development
- enhance knowledge and understanding of issues relating to ecologically sustainable development and the environment
- encourage Victorian and local governments to adopt sound environmental practices and procedures.

The Commissioner prepares the five-yearly State of the Environment Report for Victoria, undertakes annual strategic audits of the environmental management

systems of Victorian Government agencies and public authorities, and works with and consults all sectors of the Victorian community.

Committees of management

Appointed under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*, committees of management manage, improve and control allocated Crown land reserves. In Victoria, about 1,500 reserves are managed by 1,200 voluntary committees of management and 2,800 reserves are managed by municipal councils as committees of management.

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

The department manages Victoria's natural and built environments to create and maintain liveable, inclusive and sustainable communities. It assists Ministers of the environment, climate change and water, planning and local infrastructure portfolios to manage their responsibilities under legislation through policies and programs, investment and regulation, governance, administration of government agencies including Catchment Management Authorities, and integrated place-based service delivery in regions. In partnership with government agencies the department manages public land, forests, water resources, catchments and waterways, infrastructure, responds to the impacts of climate change, undertakes fire, flood and emergency management, biodiversity research and works closely with local communities, land managers and groups such as Landcare.

Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources

The department aims to sustainably increase Victoria's economy and employment by working with the private and public sectors to foster innovation, productivity, investment and trade. The department includes the agriculture, forest industries, fisheries, biosecurity, regional development and tourism portfolios.

Environment Protection Authority Victoria

The Environment Protection Authority's role is to protect air, water and land from pollution, control industrial noise and minimise waste generation. Its functions include conducting environmental impact assessments, preparing statutory policies for environmental protection, publishing guidelines for

managing environmental impacts, and providing strategic advice to the Ministers.

Landcare

Landcare is community-based leadership in action, working to protect, restore and manage catchments. In Victoria, there are about 630 Landcare groups and 63 Landcare networks that facilitate and coordinate actions on private and public land to achieve sustainable land management and environmental outcomes. They develop local priorities, organise community activities, and source support and funding from federal, state and local governments, Catchment Management Authorities, private businesses, non-profit organisations and individuals. Their key activities include planning, on-ground projects, monitoring, building partnerships, community capacity building and engagement, sharing stories and skills, and celebrating success.

Local communities

Local communities make a significant contribution to catchment management in Victoria. This includes:

- individual landholders, who are required to manage their land in line with the CaLP Act
- Coastcare groups that work to protect and manage coastal and marine environments
- 'Friends of' and environment groups that help a particular conservation reserve, or a species of native plant or animal
- conservation management networks that assist landholders and land managers in managing remnant vegetation.

Local Government

Victoria's 79 local councils are significant contributors to catchment management through the regulation of land use and development; public land management; strategic planning including environmental strategies and urban stormwater plans; and support to landholders and community groups in the form of incentives, rebates, grants and community capacity building and education opportunities.

Melbourne Water

Melbourne Water provides a range of services, including water supply, supply and treatment of drinking and recycled water, and sewage disposal and

treatment. Under the *Water Act 1989*, Melbourne Water has waterway, floodplain, drainage and environmental water reserve management functions for the Port Phillip and Westernport region.

Murray–Darling Basin Authority

The Murray–Darling Basin Authority is an independent, expertise-based statutory agency responsible for planning and management of both surface and ground water across the Basin. Its role includes:

- preparing, implementing and reviewing the integrated Murray–Darling Basin Plan
- measuring, monitoring and recording the quality and quantity of water resources
- supporting, encouraging and conducting research and investigations
- developing equitable and sustainable use of water resources
- operating the River Murray system and delivering water to users in a fair and efficient way
- disseminating information
- engaging and educating the community.

Non-government organisations

A range of non-government, not-for-profit and philanthropic organisations contribute to catchment management through advocacy, community engagement, planning, monitoring, on-ground works, education and management. Examples include Victorian National Parks Association, Greening Australia, Environment Victoria, Conservation Volunteers Australia and Bush Heritage Australia.

Parks Victoria

Parks Victoria is a statutory authority created by the *Parks Victoria Act 1998* that manages the state's network of national, state, regional and metropolitan parks, other conservation reserves and many significant cultural assets. It provides services for the management of waterways and land for conservation, recreation, leisure, tourism or water transport, and for the management of land used for public purposes.

Regional Coastal Boards

Regional Coastal Boards:

- develop Coastal Action Plans

- provide advice on coastal development
- prepare guidelines for coastal planning and management
- facilitate the implementation of the Victorian Coastal Strategy, coastal action plans and guidelines
- facilitate awareness and involvement in strategies, plans and guidelines
- encourage the co-operation of those involved in planning and management.

Trust for Nature

Trust for Nature is established under the *Victorian Conservation Trust Act 1972* to provide statewide private land conservation services to the community, government and landowners. These services include land protection through conservation covenants, engagement, education, stewardship and environmental markets, conservation reserves, and the Revolving Fund.

Universities and research institutions

Universities and research institutions provide assistance in filling information gaps and guidance on the most appropriate natural resource management tools, methods or approaches to use. They also provide scientific evidence about the condition of natural assets.

Victorian Coastal Council

The Victorian Coastal Council is appointed under the *Coastal Management Act 1995* as the peak body for the strategic planning and management of coasts. It prepares and coordinates the implementation of the Victorian Coastal Strategy; facilitates Regional Coastal Boards; monitors the development and implementation of Coastal Action Plans; publishes guidelines for planning and management; and encourages cooperation in the planning, management and use of the coast.

Victorian Environmental Assessment Council

Under the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Council's role is to conduct investigations that are requested by the government relating to the protection and ecologically sustainable management of the environment and natural resources of public land.

Victorian Environmental Water Holder

The Victorian Environmental Water Holder is appointed under the *Water Act 1989* to manage environmental water entitlements. It works with the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, CMAs and Water Corporations to ensure water entitlements are used to achieve environmental outcomes.

Victorian Farmers Federation

The Victorian Farmers Federation is a lobby group dedicated to the interests of farmers. It represents 10,000 members who live and work on more than 6,000 businesses.

Water corporations

Victoria's state-owned water sector is made up of 19 water corporations constituted under the *Water Act 1989*. Their services include urban and rural water supply, sewerage and trade waste disposal and treatment, recycled water and drainage services. Four of the water corporations provide rural water services, including water delivery for irrigation and domestic and stock purposes, drainage and salinity mitigation services.

As storage and resource managers, the corporations deliver water to entitlement holders. They work with the Victorian Environmental Water Holder and CMAs to deliver environmental water according to agreed regional watering proposals.

