

Our Catchments, Our Communities Mid-term Progress Report

Our Catchments, Our Communities Strategy on track at mid-term



Our Catchments, Our Communities

We're delivering Our Catchments, Our Communities in partnership with Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs). It is the first state-wide strategy for integrated catchment management in Victoria.

The strategy confirms the Victorian Government's commitment to managing our catchments to benefit our environment, our community, and our economy. It focuses on how we manage our natural resources by ensuring catchment management partners work better together. It complements Victoria's directions for biodiversity and climate change and supports implementation of Chapter 3 of Water for Victoria.

Vision: Healthy, sustainable and productive land, water and biodiversity maintained through integrated catchment management that is strongly community based, regionally focused and collaborative.

The Victorian Government provided \$22 million over 2016-19 for CMAs, their regional partners and communities to deliver 19 integrated catchment management projects across Victoria. At the start of the program our targets were to achieve 170 partnerships delivering 19,101 hectares of improved catchment health and resilience.

Mid-term Progress

Midway through the delivery of the Our Catchments, Our Communities Strategy 9/10 actions towards the 5 goals are completed or on track.

A key achievement is the signing of 175 formal partnership agreements with landholders, community groups and agencies. These strengthened partnerships will improve the effectiveness, efficiency and accountability for implementing Regional Catchment Strategies (RCS).

Significantly, over 43,500 hectares of environmental works and management services to improve the health and resilience of catchments have been delivered, to date, including native vegetation planting, weed and pest control, and improved management practices on agricultural land.

The strategy is divided into 5 goals with multiple actions. Key successes and overall progress at the mid-term are listed below. These successes have been achieved with a range of support from programs and partners.

Key Successes:

Goal 1 – Effective Community Engagement in Catchment Management

- *Community Engagement and Partnerships Framework for Victorian's Catchment Management Authorities* was reviewed and revised in 2017.

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- CMAs engaged with 189,000 people during 2016–2018 compared to 121,500 people in 2014–2016 through hundreds of events such as field days, seminars and farm visits
- All Registered Aboriginal Parties have been engaged by CMAs with 22 Traditional Owner and Aboriginal groups involved in *Our Catchments, Our Communities* projects. \$620,000 has been invested directly to Aboriginal groups and people across Victoria by CMAs.

Goal 2 – Better Connections between state, regional and local planning

- All CMAs have participated in State-wide policy development processes within the current cycle (e.g. *Water for Victoria, Biodiversity 2037, Victoria's Climate Change Adaptation Plan*).
- A state level framework describing land, water and biodiversity outcomes and measures has been drafted and agreed to be developed further and adopted for RCS guidelines.

Goal 3 – Strengthened implementation of Regional Catchment Strategies

- \$11.8 million provided through *Our Catchments, Our Communities* toward the implementation of RCS, with additional \$3.5 million provided by partners.
- Strong community and partner support for the regional flexibility that RCS funding provides.















Goal 4 – Clearer Roles, strengthened accountability and coordination

- Ten Catchment Partnership Agreements across Victoria with 135 signatories and 87 non-signatory partners.
- Over 200 partners from across Victoria attended the Catchments Summit in 2017 and 2018

Goal 5 – Improved monitoring, evaluation and reporting

- Annual reporting by CMAs has been based on the Framework for Catchment Condition and Management Reporting.
- Direct support of the virtual trial into Catchment Carbon Offsets Pilot Project to help meet the zero-net emission target for Victorian water authorities by 2030.

Summary of Progress

Action	Progress
1.1: Strengthen the diversity and equity of community representation in the catchment and land protection advisory system	
1.2: Strengthen community engagement in regional planning and implementation	
2.1: Ensure alignment between state, regional and local plans that impact on land, water, biodiversity and Regional Catchment Strategies	
2.2: Incorporate key improvements for integrated catchment management in the next round of Regional Catchment Strategies*	
3.1: Implement an investment framework that supports coordination and accountability for the delivery of Regional Catchment Management authorities.	
3.2: Improve regional investment processes to strengthen the engagement of regional partners in priority setting, allocation of funds and leveraging.	
4.1: Improve accountability of catchment management partners	
4.2: Strengthen coordination between key catchment management partners	
5.1: Improve state and regional catchment reporting	
5.2: Ensure the evidence base, including research and development and monitoring, evaluation and reporting, supports, informs planning and adaptive management	
Complete	
On track	
Still to be achieved	
Not started	

*Action 2.2 – The RCS guidelines to be released in 2019 provide direction for the development of the next round of RCSs in 2020.

Next Steps

In the coming decades, we know that catchment health will be under pressure from climate change, intensifying land use, and natural disasters. Improving catchment health and resilience is a critical task. Our mid-term progress demonstrates how investment in strong partnerships in integrated catchment management is a cost-effective solution to achieve long term health and resilience of catchments across Victoria.

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