

Appendix B. Developing the Strategy

The Water Act describes the requirements of a Sustainable Water Strategy, including its contents, how a consultative committee and panel should be appointed and their responsibilities, and public consultation.

Consultative committee

The Minister for Water appointed a consultative committee of regional stakeholders to guide and oversee the Strategy's development. The consultative committee spent 15 days together over eight meetings between February 2021 and April with members opting in on a voluntary basis to a further

two meetings to refine the Strategy. Its deliberations provided regional perspectives on the Strategy's development.

The consultative committee was chaired by Christine Forster. Appointed members included representatives of RAPs, urban and rural water corporations, CMAs in the Central and Gippsland Region, the Victorian Environmental Water Holder and the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (**Table B.1**). The Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation was also invited to join the consultative committee but decided to participate in waterway management and planning through other processes.

Table B.1: Consultative committee members who helped develop the Strategy

Organisation	Name
Independent chair	Christine Forster AM
Traditional Owner Corporations	
Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (January–September 2021)	Dr Rohan Henry
Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (October 2021–present)	Sean Sexton
Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation	Lisa Hocking
Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (January–August 2021)	Michael Cook
Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (January 2022–present)	Greg Robinson
Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation	Jordan Smith
Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (January–September 2021)	Karmen Jobling

Organisation	Name
Water corporations	
Barwon Water	Tracey Slatter
Central Highlands Water	Jeff Haydon
Greater Western Water (previously Western Water)	Jeff Rigby
Greater Western Water (previously City West Water)	Maree Lang
Yarra Valley Water	Tiffany White
South East Water	Lara Olsen
Melbourne Water	Nerina Di Lorenzo
South Gippsland Water	Phillippe du Plessis
Westernport Water (January–July 2021)	Peter Quigley
Westernport Water (August 2021–present)	Dona Tantirimudalige
Gippsland Water	Sarah Cumming
East Gippsland Water	Lara Caplygin
Southern Rural Water	Cameron Fitzgerald
Wannon Water	Andrew Jeffers
CMAs and Victorian Environmental Water Holder	
Corangamite CMA	Helen Watts
West Gippsland CMA	Eleisha Keogh
East Gippsland CMA	Bec Hemming
Port Phillip and Westernport CMA (January–December 2021)	David Buntine
Victorian Environmental Water Holder	Paulo Lay
Government departments	
Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions	Beth Jones

Independent panel

The Minister for Water appointed an independent panel for the Strategy. It was important to seek independent review and advice on the Strategy, given the significance of the work. The panel considered comments made on the discussion draft of the Strategy during public consultation and reported its findings to the Minister, who considered the findings before finalisation of the Strategy.






The independent panel was chaired by Sally Farrier. The appointed panel members were:






- Dr Rohan Henry
- Rob Spence
- Joan Liley.

Contents of a sustainable water strategy

The legislative requirements for the contents of a Sustainable water strategy are summarised in [Table B.2](#). The policies and actions in this Strategy meet these requirements.

Table B.2: Summary of legislative requirements of sustainable water strategies under Victoria’s Water Act

Requirement (not in any priority order)	Link to Strategy objective	Strategy chapter
Identify threats to the reliability of supply and quality of water for both environmental and consumptive uses in the region.		<p>Chapter 1. Our reality</p> <p>(see the discussion draft (DELWP 2021b) for additional detail)</p>
Identify ways to improve and set priorities for improving reliability of supply and quality of water, including managing demand for water and investing in infrastructure for the supply of recycled water.		<p>Chapter 2. Using water efficiently</p> <p>Chapter 7. Water for agriculture</p>
Identify ways to improve and set priorities for improving the maintenance of the Environmental Water Reserve in accordance with the Environmental Water Reserve objective.		<p>Chapter 8. Healthy waterways for all</p>
Identify ways to increase and set priorities for increasing the volume of water in the Environmental Water Reserve to improve the environmental values and health of water ecosystems.		<p>Chapter 8. Healthy waterways for all</p>
Include an implementation plan, setting out timelines or targets for implementing key actions identified by the strategy.		<p>Appendix E. Implementation plan</p>

Requirement (not in any priority order)	Link to Strategy objective	Strategy chapter objective
Consider opportunities to provide for Aboriginal cultural values and uses of waterways, as well as for the social and recreational uses and values of waterways, in the region to which the strategy applies.	 	<p>Chapter 6. Water justice for Traditional Owners</p> <p>Chapter 4. Sharing water for multiple benefits</p>
Take into account any determination of Native Title in relation to the region to which the strategy applies.		<p>Chapter 6. Water justice for Traditional Owners</p>
Take into account the long-term water resource assessment findings that relate to the region.		<p>Appendix C. Long-term water resource assessment</p>
Take into account principles of environment protection		<p>Throughout the strategy. See below for inclusion in the decision-making criteria.</p>
Give notice that an existing Sustainable Water Strategy has been revoked or amended.	-	<p>Chapter 1. Our reality</p>

Decisions on policies and actions for the Strategy require consideration of many values, costs, benefits and risks. Clear criteria are needed when assessing different options against the provisions of the Water Act and the objectives of the Strategy. The consultative committee adopted the following criteria to guide its decision-making:

- contributes to the strategic planning of the use of water resources in the region, as required under the Water Act
- enables proactive planning for an uncertain future and preparations for a drying climate
- protects the integrity of existing water rights and entitlements (including the restoration of Traditional Owner custodial water rights) or defines and minimises, mitigates or offsets any material impacts and requires compensation by the beneficiary
- maximises the ability of entitlement holders to exercise choice and manage their own risk
- prioritises Traditional Owner outcomes
- protects or enhances ecological values of waterways and, when considered with other actions, maximises environmental and healthy Country outcomes
- takes a precautionary approach to managing water resources
- justifies the costs for affected groups – for current and future generations
- reflects the range of community values identified through the Strategy's consultation process

The final policies and actions included in the Strategy are consistent with these criteria.

An example of how the Strategy has taken into account the precautionary principle is the inclusion of a policy to maintain strong caps on extraction for river water and groundwater (**Policy 4-1**) and actions that return water to the environment to protect against environmental degradation (**Chapter 8**). In addition to being clear that we cannot take additional water from rivers or aquifers to meet our growing water needs across the region, the Strategy is clear that the transition towards more manufactured water supplies will contribute to meeting the significant volumes of environmental water recovery targets identified over the next decade. As river water is recovered via substitution so that additional environmental entitlements can be issued, this will have the effect of reducing the caps on extraction for consumptive purposes over time. To provide additional context on the long-term challenge of balancing environmental and consumptive uses across the region, the full environmental deficit in each of the regulated rivers has also been published, to make it clear that additional water will be required for the environment over the long term beyond the 10 year targets committed to in this Strategy.

Interdependencies with other strategies and plans

The long-term plans set out in sustainable water strategies complement and align with other plans, assessments, strategies and planning frameworks:

- *Water for Victoria* (DELWP 2016b) is the state's water plan, setting the long-term direction for managing Victoria's water resources. This Strategy follows the direction set in *Water for Victoria*, including policies and actions specific to the region.
- The *urban water strategies* and this Strategy align, with the urban water strategies including local solutions to meet urban water needs and this Strategy including regional solutions for all uses and values in the region. Metropolitan water corporations collaborate on a combined strategy for Melbourne known as the GMUWSS which identifies the preferred supply options for Melbourne.
- *Long-term water resource assessments* are required every 15 years and determine whether water availability has changed for farming, cities and towns and the environment. The assessment also determines whether there have been changes in waterway health. This Strategy responds to the findings of the *Long-term water resource assessment for southern Victoria* (DELWP 2020a).

- *Victorian Waterway Management Strategy* (DELWP 2013) provides detailed policy for managing Victoria's waterways, aiming to maintain or improve the condition of our waterways and providing direction for regional decision-making, investment and management of waterways, as well as specifying the roles and responsibilities of management agencies.
- *Regional waterway management strategies* are single planning documents for river, estuary and wetland management in a region that follow the management approach outlined in the Victorian waterway management strategy (DEPI 2013). In consultation with communities, they use an evidence-based approach to review and change management objectives for waterways, which in turn inform the water recovery targets in this Strategy.
- *IWM forums* are planning collaborations that consider all elements of the water cycle, including waterways and bays, wastewater management, potable and alternative water supplies, stormwater management and water treatment. This Strategy identifies ways to overcome barriers and facilitate IWM on a regional scale.
- The *Climate change water cycle adaptation action plan 2022–2026* (DELWP 2022a) is helping the water sector to build resilience to our changing climate in the delivery of water, wastewater, drainage and flooding services. This Strategy compliments and aligns with the Adaptation Action Plan and has been an important vehicle to deliver on some of its actions.
- The *regional economic development strategies* identify strategic directions to further drive growth and prosperity in regional Victoria, which is a driving force behind our state's economic growth and prosperity. Sustainable water management will contribute to the strategic directions for the Barwon, Central Highlands and Gippsland regions (RDV 2022a, RDV 2022b and RDV 2022c).

This Strategy is also part of Victoria's commitment to the National Water Initiative to carry out open, statutory-based water planning. The Productivity Commission provides regular assessments of the progress of the Australian, state and territory governments towards achieving the objectives and outcomes of the National Water Initiative.

Infrastructure Victoria, an independent advisory body, made a number of relevant recommendations in their infrastructure strategy (Infrastructure Victoria 2021). The policies and actions in this Strategy are consistent with their recommendations.