

An aerial photograph of a landscape. In the foreground, there is a dense forest of trees with brownish foliage. Beyond the forest, a large area of bright green, rolling hills or fields is visible. A winding road or path cuts through the green area. In the background, more hills and mountains are visible under a blue sky with some clouds.

VICTORIAN CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES'
ACTIONS & ACHIEVEMENTS REPORT

2019-20



WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRADITIONAL OWNERS
OF THE COUNTRY ON WHICH WE WORK
AND PAY OUR RESPECTS TO THEIR ELDERS
PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.

FRONT COVER: AERIAL IMAGE OF GENOA,
EAST GIPPSLAND, FOLLOWING 2020 BUSHFIRES.

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FOREWORD



Victoria's Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) continue to make a positive impact in our regional communities.

The 2019-20 Victorian Catchment Management Authorities' Action and Achievements Report details how their considerable achievements, which now span over 23 years, have made a clear difference to the health of the rivers and landscapes that we love and use.

These ten CMAs continue to deliver exceptional outcomes, delivering healthy, sustainable and productive land, water and biodiversity for the people that rely on them. These results are achieved through activities and programs that are community-based, regionally-focused and collaborative.

It has been a challenging year for all as we have faced the impacts of drought, bushfires and coronavirus (COVID-19). Through all of it, Victoria's CMAs have been a vital lifeline for our regional communities. Whether supporting landholders with recovery efforts or assisting Landcare groups to move activities online, CMAs have remained adaptive and innovative.

Partnerships between CMAs and other government agencies, Traditional Owner groups and Aboriginal Victorians,

landowners and volunteer groups are integral for managing our catchments to benefit our environment, our community and our economy. Last year, Victoria's CMAs established and maintained 1,464 partnerships across Victoria, which resulted in 3,508 hectares of revegetation, 140,580 hectares of weed control and 829,072 hectares of pest animal control. CMAs also educated and engaged close to 70,000 people in field days, workshops and events, with many moved online to keep the conversations flowing during restrictions.

The CMAs' 19 Our Catchments, Our Communities projects completed their final year in 2019-20. It is wonderful to see the outcomes of the planning, investment, and on-ground activities of Water for Victoria and its record \$222 million investment resulting in healthy waterways and catchments supported by engaged communities.

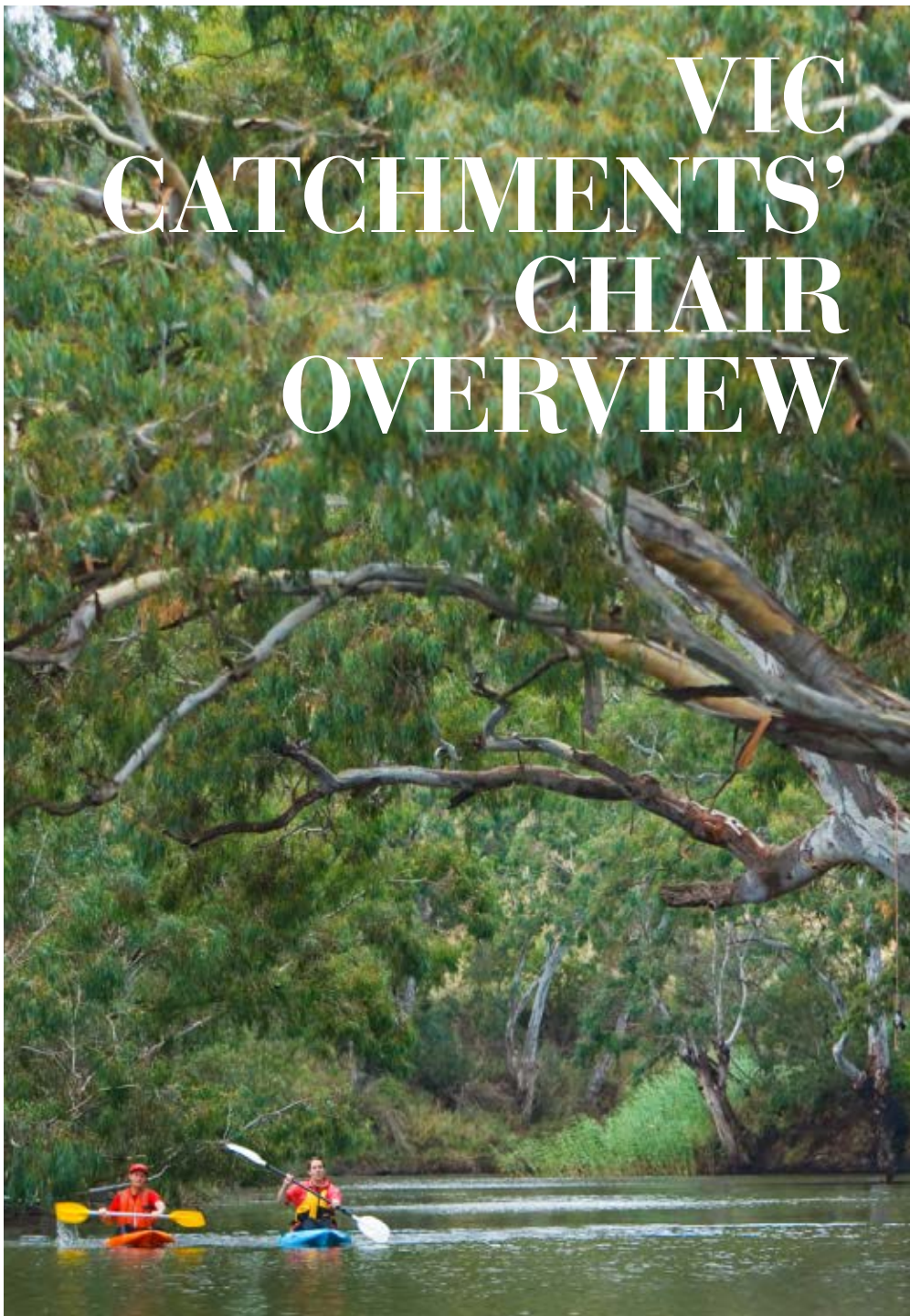
Integrated catchment management responds to what is important to communities. It involves many partners working together collaboratively to plan and deliver outcomes for our catchments. There have been some great collaborations between CMAs and Traditional Owner groups to incorporate aspirations for Country into planning, work to achieve shared benefits and support the right for self-determination of Aboriginal Victorians.

Case studies highlight the work the CMAs are undertaking to realise Victoria's directions for water, biodiversity and climate change to meet current environmental needs and address emerging challenges.

Thank you to the CMAs and the community volunteers who work tirelessly on improving our catchments and waterways.

Hon Lisa Neville, MP, Minister for Water

VIC CATCHMENTS' CHAIR OVERVIEW



For over two decades, Victoria's 10 Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) have delivered land, water and biodiversity programs that not only enhance and protect our environment, but support thriving communities. 2019-20 was a year like no other, challenging Victorian communities in ways they have never been before, and CMAs stepped up to face these challenges.

As 2019-20 began, Victoria continued to face dry conditions as a result of prolonged below average rainfall. By November 2019, bushfires of exceptional size and impact burnt across the East Gippsland and North East regions. Just as communities were able to begin the long recovery process, the world was faced with coronavirus (COVID-19).

Throughout these challenges, Victoria's CMAs have shown their reliability, leadership and innovation. They've provided immediate support to communities and individuals, worked with partners to develop creative solutions to difficult problems and supported the Victorian Government to keep the state moving and keep people working.

2019-20 saw us move into the final year of the \$22 million Our Catchments, Our Communities initiative, part of the \$222 million Water for Victoria plan. Over the last four years, Victoria's CMAs have

worked with local communities and Traditional Owners to create lasting integrated catchment management outcomes. We are extremely proud of what has been achieved to date and look forward to the next phase of this initiative.

The CMAs partnership with the Australian Government through the Regional Land Partnerships program has also delivered strong outcomes. 2019-20 was the second year for the 26 projects funded by the National Landcare Program and they achieved a combined 425 hectares of revegetation, 378,091 hectares of pest plant and animal control and 27,084 hectares of agricultural practice change.

Genuine Traditional Owner engagement has been critical to the successful delivery of CMA projects. CMAs have a demonstrated ability to collaborate meaningfully with Aboriginal Victorians, with several examples outlined in this report. It's important to note that we don't just talk the talk - 3 per cent of our workforce is Aboriginal, compared to 1 per cent in the broader Victorian public sector.

The resilient partnerships between CMAs, communities and Traditional Owners will continue to be enhanced over the next 12 to 18 months as the CMAs renew the Regional Catchment Strategies. These strategies are the guiding framework for the management of land, water and biodiversity in each region of Victoria. The knowledge, advice and input of stakeholders will be critical to successful planning.

Most importantly, as we head towards 2021, all these efforts help build the resilience of our communities, so they remain vibrant and productive in the face of new challenges.

Sharyon Peart, Chair, VicCatchments

CMA CHAIRS

EACH CMA HAS A MINISTERIALLY-APPOINTED BOARD OF LOCAL PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE FOR SETTING STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR REGIONAL LAND, BIODIVERSITY AND WATER MANAGEMENT, AND MONITORING AND EVALUATING ITS PERFORMANCE.



CORANGAMITE
ALICE KNIGHT



EAST
GIPPSLAND
EWAN WALLER



GLENELG
HOPKINS
ANTONY FORD



GOULBURN
BROKEN
HELEN REYNOLDS



MALLEE
SHARYON PEART



NORTH
CENTRAL
JULIE MILLER MARKOFF



NORTH EAST
LEANNE MULCAHY



PORT PHILLIP &
WESTERNPORT
TANIA FOSTER



WEST
GIPPSLAND
PETER JENNINGS OAM



WIMMERA
PETER HILBIG

CMA REGIONS

VICTORIA'S INTEGRATED CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK IS WORKING TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE OUR RIVERS AND LANDSCAPES WHILE SUPPORTING PRODUCTIVITY FROM OUR LAND AND WATER RESOURCES.

NORTH CENTRAL

The North Central region covers 30,000 square kilometres (13% of the state). It is home to 250,000 people, is valued for its internationally recognised environmental assets and supports a diverse agriculture sector.

MALLEE

The Mallee region covers almost 40,000 square kilometres making it the largest catchment area in Victoria. It runs along the Murray River from Nyah to the South Australian border and south through vast dryland cropping areas and public reserves.

WIMMERA

The Wimmera region covers 30,000 square kilometres straddling the Wimmera River. Agriculture is the dominant land use, economic driver and employment sector. A quarter of the 50,000 people who live in the region depend directly on agriculture for their income.

GLENELG HOPKINS

The Glenelg-Hopkins region covers 26,000 square kilometres and is characterised by flat volcanic plains in the south, with the Grampians, Dundas Tablelands and Central Highlands dominant in the north. With 80% of the region cleared for agriculture, it is one of the most productive farming areas in Australia.

CORANGAMITE

The Corangamite region extends across 13,000 square kilometres of which 78% is in private ownership. The region has rich and diverse landscapes ranging from expansive volcanic plains to coastal environments and the Otway Ranges.

GOULBURN BROKEN

The Goulburn Broken region covers over 24,000 square kilometres of which two thirds is under private ownership. It extends north from the outskirts of Melbourne to the Murray River. It yields 11% of the Murray Darling Basin's water despite making up only 2% of its area.

NORTH EAST

The North East region extends across 19,000 square kilometres between the Murray River in the north, Victorian Alps in the south and the Warby Ranges in the west. The region is home to 100,000 people, provides 38% of the Murray Darling Basin's water and is 55% public land.

EAST GIPPSLAND

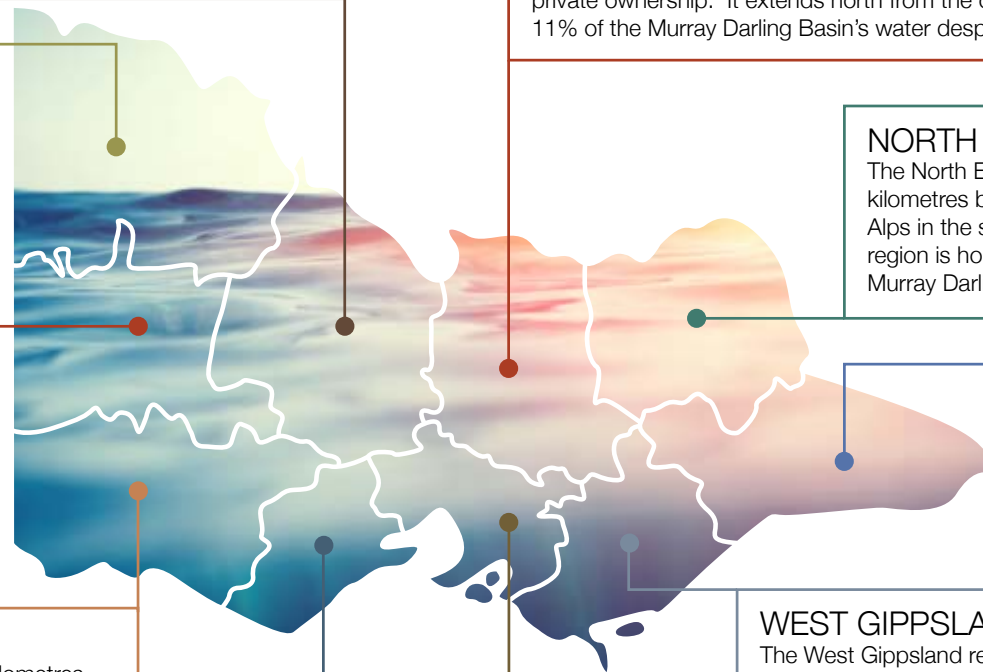
The East Gippsland region covers 22,000 square kilometres and is approximately 80% publicly-owned land mainly as significant State forests, national and coastal parks.

WEST GIPPSLAND

The West Gippsland region covers 18,000 square kilometres from Warragul to the Gippsland Lakes and from the Great Dividing Range to Wilsons Promontory. It provides the majority of Victoria's electricity, 60% of Melbourne's water storage and 20% of Australia's milk production.

PORT PHILLIP & WESTERNPORT

Spanning 13,000 square kilometres that feed into Port Phillip Bay and Western Port, this region has a resident population of over 5 million whilst also boasting some of Victoria's most productive farming lands and spectacular parks that are home to all four State flora and fauna



PARTNERSHIPS

MANY INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS CONTRIBUTE TO THE HEALTH OF OUR RIVERS AND LANDSCAPES. PARTNERSHIPS ARE VITAL TO EFFECTIVELY SUSTAIN OUR ENVIRONMENT, UNDERPIN OUR ECONOMY AND PROVIDE A RANGE OF SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL BENEFITS FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Local communities make a significant contribution to catchment management. Many community members volunteer their time to participate in activities such as planting days, clean up days, Landcare and monitoring programs such as Waterwatch and EstuaryWatch.

COMMUNITY GROUPS & VOLUNTEERS

Significant contributions are made by volunteers and organised community groups including Landcare, conservation management networks, 'Friends of' groups and committees of management.

VICTORIAN AND AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

A range of government agencies and statutory bodies implement strategies, policies and programs for the management of landscapes and resources. They provide investment to deliver and support vital on-ground action.

TRADITIONAL OWNERS & ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

Aboriginal people have a strong and continuing connection with the land. Traditional Owners have important cultural obligations to manage traditional lands and waterways. Their ecological knowledge, experience and practices are incorporated into the planning and management of natural resources.

AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES

Agricultural industry groups support extensive networks of land managers through research, development and extension programs. Supporting best practice, agricultural industry is vital for the networks and access to improve natural resources.

VICTORIA'S CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES

Each CMA has a Ministerially-appointed Board of local people. Board members are appointed for their skills and experience to address challenges and benefit the regional environment and economy. CMAs have established partnerships with many organisations and community sectors.

WATER CORPORATIONS

Victoria's 19 water corporations lead urban and rural water supply, sewerage disposal and treatment, recycled water and drainage services. They deliver water to entitlement holders including working with the Victorian Environmental Water Holder and CMAs to deliver environmental water.

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.

LANDOWNERS

CMAs work with landowners and managers to support sustainable management of their land. Thousands of landowners across Victoria make a significant contribution to protecting and improving the health of natural assets, ecosystems and significant places.

UNIVERSITIES & RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

Universities and other institutions undertake research and produce information to improve understanding of natural systems and support adaptive management approaches to enable continued improvement.

FOR TWO DECADES, VICTORIA'S CMAS HAVE EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY DELIVERED LAND, WATER AND BIODIVERSITY PROGRAMS THAT NOT ONLY PROTECT AND ENHANCE LANDSCAPES, LIVELIHOODS AND LIFESTYLES, BUT SUPPORT THRIVING COMMUNITIES.



SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Genuine engagement with regional communities is at the heart of all CMA work. In 2019-20, Victoria's CMAs worked with over 50,000 landholders and almost 70,000 people participated in events held by CMAs and their partners. CMAs also have strong online engagement, with a combined social media following of over 70,000.

LANDCARE SUPPORT

CMAs proudly lead the Victorian Government's support for Landcare including the provision of grants, training opportunities, planning assistance and networking. The partnerships between Landcare and CMAs are deep and crucial for the protection of Victoria's environments (see page 20).

PRODUCTIVE AGRICULTURE

CMAs support agricultural industries to be productive and profitable. CMAs have partnerships and projects with the dairy, beef, sheep, grains, fruit, vegetable, wine, equine, apiary and other industries improving production and efficiency, boosting farmer profit and supporting the long-term future of agriculture.

ABORIGINAL PARTICIPATION

CMAs are proud to work hand-in-hand with Aboriginal organisations and communities on a daily basis. CMAs provide a model for others to follow, having direct partnerships with Indigenous organisations and steering funding into Indigenous projects. The Victorian CMAs Aboriginal Participation Guidelines promote engagement and work with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to manage, improve the health of their lands and waters (see page 21).

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

CMAs play a critical role in building community resilience to cope with and recover from natural disasters. Victoria's eastern and northern regions experienced unprecedented bushfire events in the 2019-20 summer, amplified by prolonged drought conditions in the years prior. CMAs are supporting local communities with bushfire recovery, particularly around agriculture and landscape restoration (see page 18). CMAs are also leading Drought Employment Programs in the west (see page 19) of the state and flood recovery programs in the north east (see page 51).

REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT

CMAs are significant employers, with a total of 394 people directly employed by these regional organisations (see page 22). The vast majority of CMA revenue goes out to projects involving landholders, contractors and partner organisations, generating significant employment and economic activity.

LEVERAGE & CO-INVESTMENT

CMAs add value to government investment and bring multiple funding sources together to deliver integrated on-ground works. In 2019-20, Victorian Government funding through Victoria's CMAs was complemented by more than \$40 million of funding from other sources, including the Australian Government. It is estimated that for every \$1 of government funding spent on the ground, the community contributes more than \$5 of in-kind and financial support through activities such as Landcare and volunteering.



VICTORIA'S CMAS ENABLE REGIONAL COMMUNITIES, ORGANISATIONS AND GOVERNMENTS TO PLAN AND WORK TOGETHER IN NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT. THROUGHOUT 2019-20, CMAS WERE DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND STRATEGIES AND WERE AN IMPORTANT CONDUIT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY.

SUPPORTING GOVERNMENT

GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP

As Victorian Government statutory authorities, CMAs apply the highest standards of governance to ensure taxpayer monies are managed and expended responsibly and to achieve optimum outcomes. The finances of each CMA are audited by the Victorian Auditor General's Office each year and reported upon in Annual Reports tabled in Parliament and made publicly available.

REGIONAL CATCHMENT STRATEGIES

The 10 Regional Catchment Strategies covering Victoria are key documents that integrate Victorian Government and Australian Government policies and strategies with local community knowledge and priorities. They are the regional roadmaps for healthy and sustainable catchments. CMAs coordinate their development and implementation in collaboration with their regional communities and use them to provide strategic guidance to government.

VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT

As agencies of the Victorian Government, CMAs play a key role in implementing statewide environmental and agricultural strategies and initiatives. 2019-20 was the final year for the Our Catchments, Our Communities initiative, which saw CMAs successfully deliver 19 major projects benefitting Victoria's catchments and communities as part of the rollout of Water for Victoria (see page 15).

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

The Australian Government is a significant investor in environmental and agricultural work in Victoria. CMAs have forged a strong and effective partnership with the Australian Government, and between 2018 and 2023, it will invest \$97.5 million dollars into Victoria as

part of its Regional Land Partnerships program (see page 16). The program supports vital on-ground environmental and agricultural projects that offer benefits to our environment, farms and communities.

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

In a Victorian first, CMAs (with funding from the Australian Government) have undertaken regional climate change adaptation planning. The result is a Natural Resource Management Climate website, nrmclimate.vic.gov.au, which provides a common platform to access climate change adaptation planning for natural resource management across Victoria.

MARINE & COASTAL PLANNING

CMAs are assisting with the implementation of the new Marine and Coastal Act and preparing for an increased role in strategic planning, advice on coastal erosion risk and monitoring. CMAs also continue to support implementation of the Victorian Coastal Strategy with various coast enhancement projects in partnership with community groups and others.

MURRAY DARLING BASIN PLAN

CMAs are important contributors to the Basin Plan by implementing Sustainable Diversion Limits projects and on-farm irrigation efficiency works, developing a constraints management strategy for the Goulburn River and engaging northern Victoria communities to better understand the implications and opportunities of the plan.

2019-20 HIGHLIGHTS



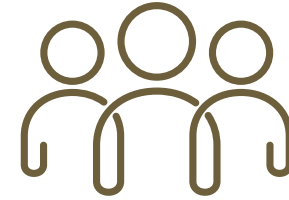
969,652ha
of pest plant &
animal control

THAT'S AN AREA 5 TIMES THE SIZE OF PORT PHILLIP BAY

3,508ha
of vegetation
planted



AN AREA OVER 92 TIMES THE SIZE OF
MELBOURNE'S ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS



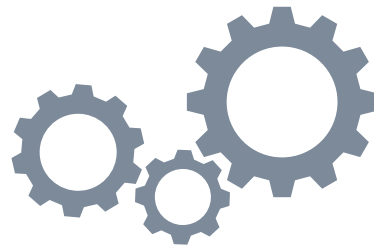
67,281 event participants

THAT'S 1,294 PEOPLE PARTICIPATING IN CMA LED AND
SUPPORTED EVENTS EVERY WEEK



568km
of fencing

THAT'S ABOUT THE
DISTANCE OF A ROAD
TRIP FROM GEELONG
TO MALLACOOTA



1,464 partnerships
established or maintained

THAT'S AN AVERAGE OF 146 COLLABORATIVE
ARRANGEMENTS AT EACH CMA



27,084ha
of improved
agricultural
practices

THAT'S AN AREA 44 TIMES
THE SIZE OF MELBOURNE'S
CITY CENTRE



2,901
publications

INCLUDING SOCIAL MEDIA
CONTENT REACHING THE
CMAs' 50,000 FOLLOWERS

2019-20 OUTPUTS

● CMAs are at the front-line of natural resource management and side-by-side with regional communities.

● CMAs convert revenue to action, spending more than 80% of their revenue on direct service delivery.

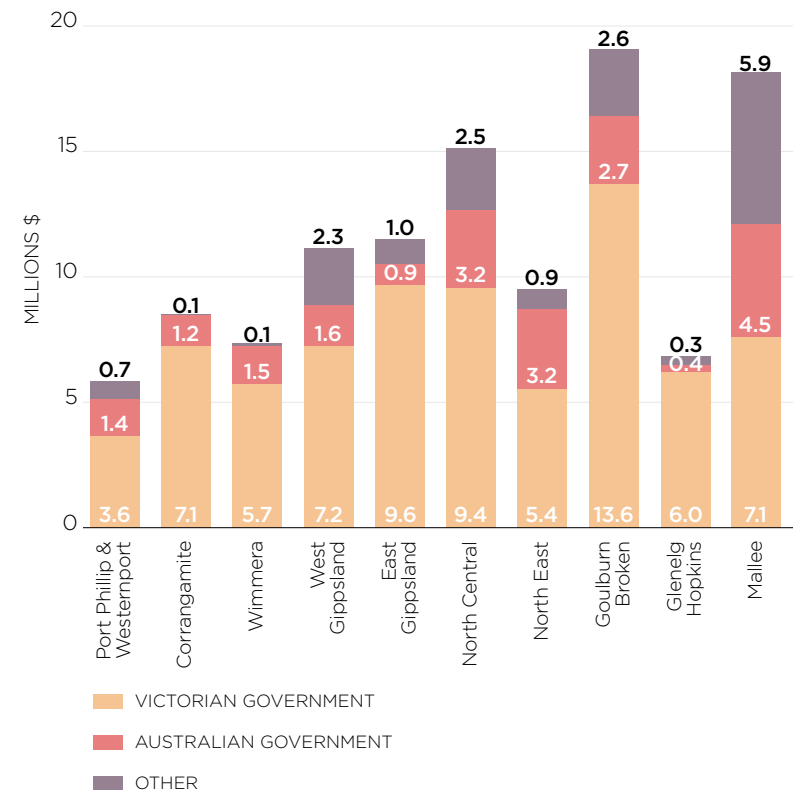
● CMAs get it done in project delivery including:

- 140,580 hectares of weed control (188% of the target)
- 829,072 hectares of pest animal control (120% of the target)
- 143 hectares of ecological fire practice (145% of the target)
- 3,946 hectares of livestock grazing control (145% of the target)
- 294 water regimes (117% of the target)
- 9,695 planning approvals and advices (117% of the target)

OUTPUT	TARGET	ACTUAL			TOTAL
		STATE	FED	OTHER	
1. STRUCTURAL WORKS					
1.1 Channel (km)	96	139			139
1.2 Water storage (no.)	136	150	6	47	203
1.3 Pump (no.)	16	13			13
1.4 Irrigation structure (ha)	1,500	714		332	1,046
1.5 Waterway structure (no.)	298	393	4	28	425
1.6 Terrestrial structure (no.)	4	7			7
1.7 Terrestrial feature (no.)	51	167	43		210
1.8 Monitoring structure (no.)	171	221	4	21	246
1.9 Fence (km)	354	511	35	22	568
1.10 Visitor facility (no.)	123	124			124
1.11 Road (km)	47	31			31
1.12 Crossing (no.)	6	36			36
2. ENVIRONMENTAL WORKS					
2.1 Vegetation (ha)	2,000	2,830	425	253	3,508
2.2 Weed control (ha)	126,451	121,209	18,963	408	140,580
2.3 Pest animal control (ha)	618,362	469,247	359,128	17	829,072
2.4 Over-abundant wildlife control (ha)	1,500		667		667
2.5 Threatened species response (no.)	14	1	28		29
2.6 Emergency species response (no.)			1		1
2.7 Soil treatment (ha.)	4	4			4
2.8 Earth works (no.)	23	73	6	3	82
2.9 Rubbish removal (ha)	0	161			161
3. MANAGEMENT SERVICES					
3.1 Grazing (ha)	2,712	3,659	272	14	3,946
3.2 Agricultural practices (ha)	20,125		27,084		27,084
3.3 Water (no.)	252	222	72		294
3.4 Fire regime (no.)	75	138	5		143
4. PLANNING AND REGULATION					
4.1 Approval and advice (no.)	8,298	9,352	21	322	9,695
4.2 Management agreement (no.)	831	448	226	34	708
4.3 Assessment (no.)	5,649	5,132	1,299	85	6,516
4.4 Engagement event (no. participants)	31,205	51,144	14,294	1,843	67,281
4.5 Partnership (no.)	1,262	1,370	81	13	1,464
4.6 Plan (no.)	877	471	191	14	676
4.7 Publication (no.)	1,635	1,798	964	139	2,901
4.8 Information management system (no.)	52	47	5		52

INVESTMENT

DURING 2019-20 THE FOLLOWING INVESTMENT WAS MADE THROUGH VICTORIA'S CMAs:





STATEWIDE CASE STUDIES

THESE CASE STUDIES ILLUSTRATE THE CMAS'
COMBINED ACHIEVEMENTS ACROSS A NUMBER
OF PRIORITY AREAS IN 2019-20.

INTEGRATED CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT



- 1 Landholder John Boyd and WGCMA staff at a completed Providence Ponds and Perry River project site (WGCMA)
- 2 Local community members learning about weaving techniques by Seven Creeks in the Strathbogies (GBCMA)
- 3 Novice bird enthusiasts at a bird discovery walk at Tirhatuan Park in Dandenong North (PPWCMA)



"After recent bushfires and drought, having the weeds and willows removed is going to make it a better habitat for the fish and for the future of our community."

Cindy Gardner, Omeo Angling Club

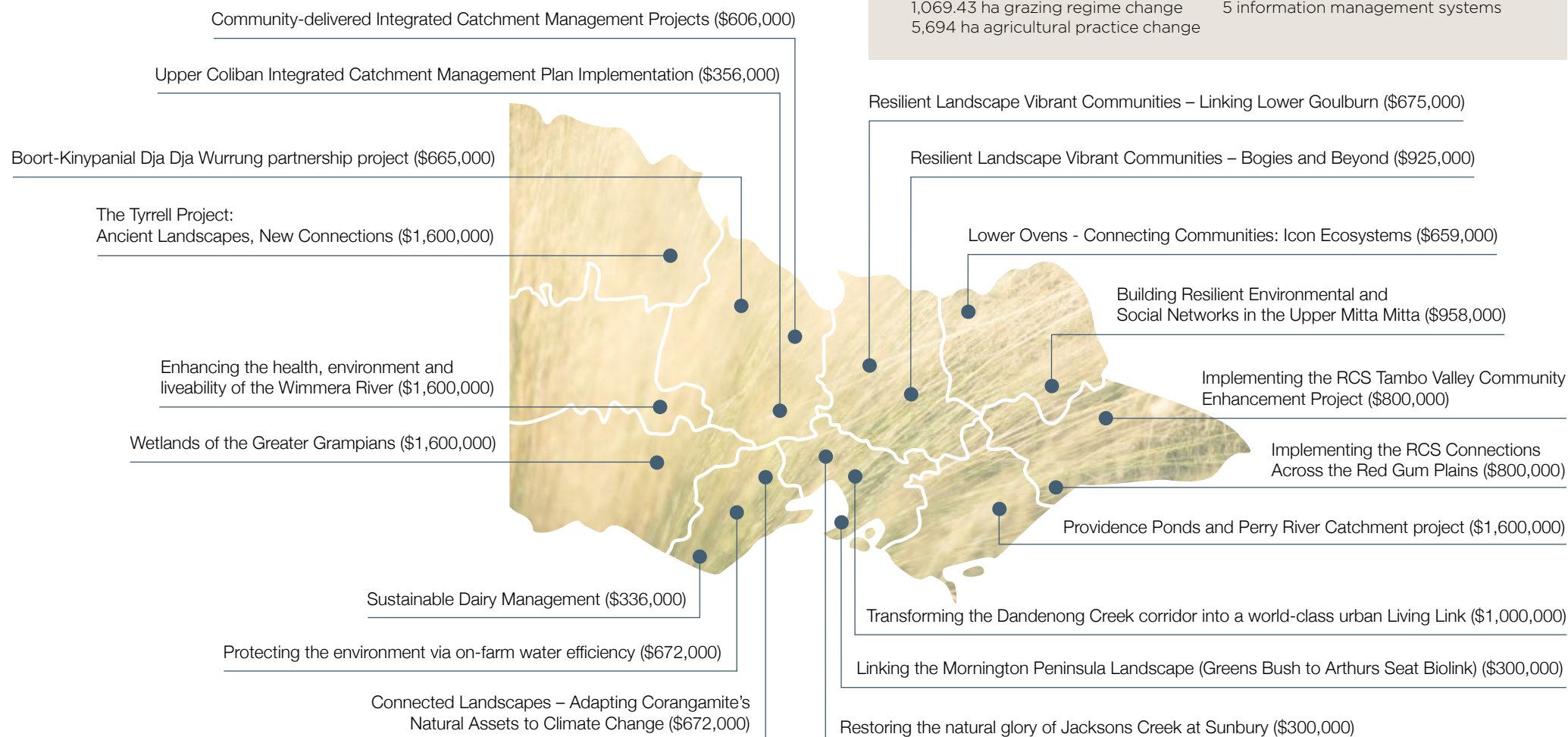
In 2016, the Victorian Government Water for Victoria Plan made a record investment of over \$222 million to improve the health of waterways and catchments and ensure Victorians have rivers and landscapes that they love and use.

As part of this, the \$22 million Our Catchments, Our Communities initiative focused on integrated catchment management, including \$16 million over four years to deliver 19 major on-ground projects.

These projects, which were completed in 2020, highlighted the significant benefits that can be achieved in catchment management through collaboration and integration. Each project featured partnerships between local communities, regional organisations, community groups and landholders and produced lasting on-ground improvements and community outcomes, including:

- **Strengthening community engagement in regional planning and implementation.** As a result of Glenelg Hopkins CMA's Wetlands of the Greater Grampians project, the wider community around Walker Swamp has begun to take an active role in catchment management. Community members are actively participating in citizen science activities and seeking information about how their rivers are managed.
- **Strengthening the diversity of community representation in integrated catchment management.** Through community engagement as part of the Healthy Coliban Catchment project, Trentham Golf Club came on board to assist North Central CMA and Malmesbury District Landcare Group to control noxious weeds along the Coliban River. Their participation helped to make it more accessible and they gained a new appreciation for the landscapes surrounding their local course.
- **Increasing community interest in environmental stewardship.** As a result of the Tyrrell Project, Mallee CMA has enhanced visitors' recreational opportunities at Uttiwillock Wetland while supporting environmental improvements. The ongoing efforts of Nullawil Landcare and the local community have successfully demonstrated the ecological significance of the site, resulting in an environmental water allocation awarded by the VEWB for Autumn 2020.
- **Improving access to regional environmental attractions.** As part of the Upper Mitta project, North East CMA worked with landholders, Omeo Golf Club and Omeo Angling Club to improve the riparian habitat along a socially and ecologically significant reach of the Livingstone Creek. Their collaborative efforts to control willow and other works have improved access and use.
- **Protecting sites of cultural significance.** As part of the Bogies and Beyond project, the Taungurung Caring for Country team worked with Goulburn Broken CMA to restore Silver Banksia on Sandy Creek in the Lake Nillahcootie area. One of the last remaining wild stands of Silver Banksia in the north-east, this population of 25 surviving trees has been untouched for many years and links back to populations once abundant throughout the area.

OUR CATCHMENTS, OUR COMMUNITIES PROJECTS



OUTPUTS 2016-20

55 visitor facilities	244.06 ha rubbish removal
16.7 km roads and trails	16 ML water delivered
12 stock troughs	136.85 ha ecological fire regime
14 waterway structures	53 approvals and advice
104 terrestrial features	193 management agreements
156.27 km of fencing and bollards	466 assessments
1,188.4 ha native vegetation	21,672 event participants
11,123.76 ha weed control	735 partnerships
117,112.3 ha pest animal control	138 plans
7.67 ha earth works	425 publications
1,069.43 ha grazing regime change	5 information management systems
5,694 ha agricultural practice change	

NATIONAL LANDCARE PROGRAM



- 1** Port Phillip & Westernport CMA's Kacie Melfi with Great HeHo Escape project partners at a revegetation site in Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve (Annette Ruzicka)
- 2** Dairy farmer, Liz Jordan, and GHCA's Richard Murphy on Liz' farm, one of the Soils4Farms demonstration sites (GHCA)
- 3** Plains Wanderer at a covenanted property (D.Baker-Gabb)

"Since covenanting Dea's Grassland and Browns Paddock [to protect Plains Wanderer habitat] I'm over the moon ... I love getting out there and seeing the results"

Andy McGillivray, North Central landholder and covenantor

There are very strong partnerships in place between the CMAs and the Australian Government that have attracted major investment into Victoria. The CMAs are part of a nation-wide network of 56 organisations through which a major component of the National Landcare Program – the Regional Land Partnerships program – is delivered.

2019-20 was the second year of these projects and already they have achieved significant outcomes. Project outcomes are being achieved thanks to CMAs strategically engaging and funding relevant agencies, groups, institutions, Traditional Owners, land managers and landowners in a cooperative, coordinated approach.

- The Great HeHo Escape project delivered by Port Phillip & Westernport CMA has supported the recovery of the Helmeted Honeyeater and lowland Leadbeater's Possum by delivering a hydrology restoration plan for Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve and a video to support landholders to undertake habitat restoration on their properties.
- The Plains Wanderer project delivered by North Central CMA in partnership with Trust for Nature is supporting the recovery of the Plains Wanderer by working with private landholders to permanently protect 118 hectares of prime habitat as well as undertake 71 hectares of revegetation, 67 hectares of weed control and 958 hectares of pest control.

- The Soils4Farms project delivered by Glenelg Hopkins CMA supported farmers to adopt sustainable farming practices by delivering 16 on-farm workshops and field days, supporting four soil health webinars developing 31 publications and funding nine farm businesses to complete Dairy Australia's Fert\$mart Nutrient Management Program.
- The Corner Inlet Connections project delivered by West Gippsland CMA protecting the environmental values of this Ramsar-listed wetland by undertaking 144 hectares of fox baiting with Parks Victoria, stabilising two sites affected by hillslope and gully erosion, undertaking revegetation across 10 hectares and installing 6 kilometres of fencing.

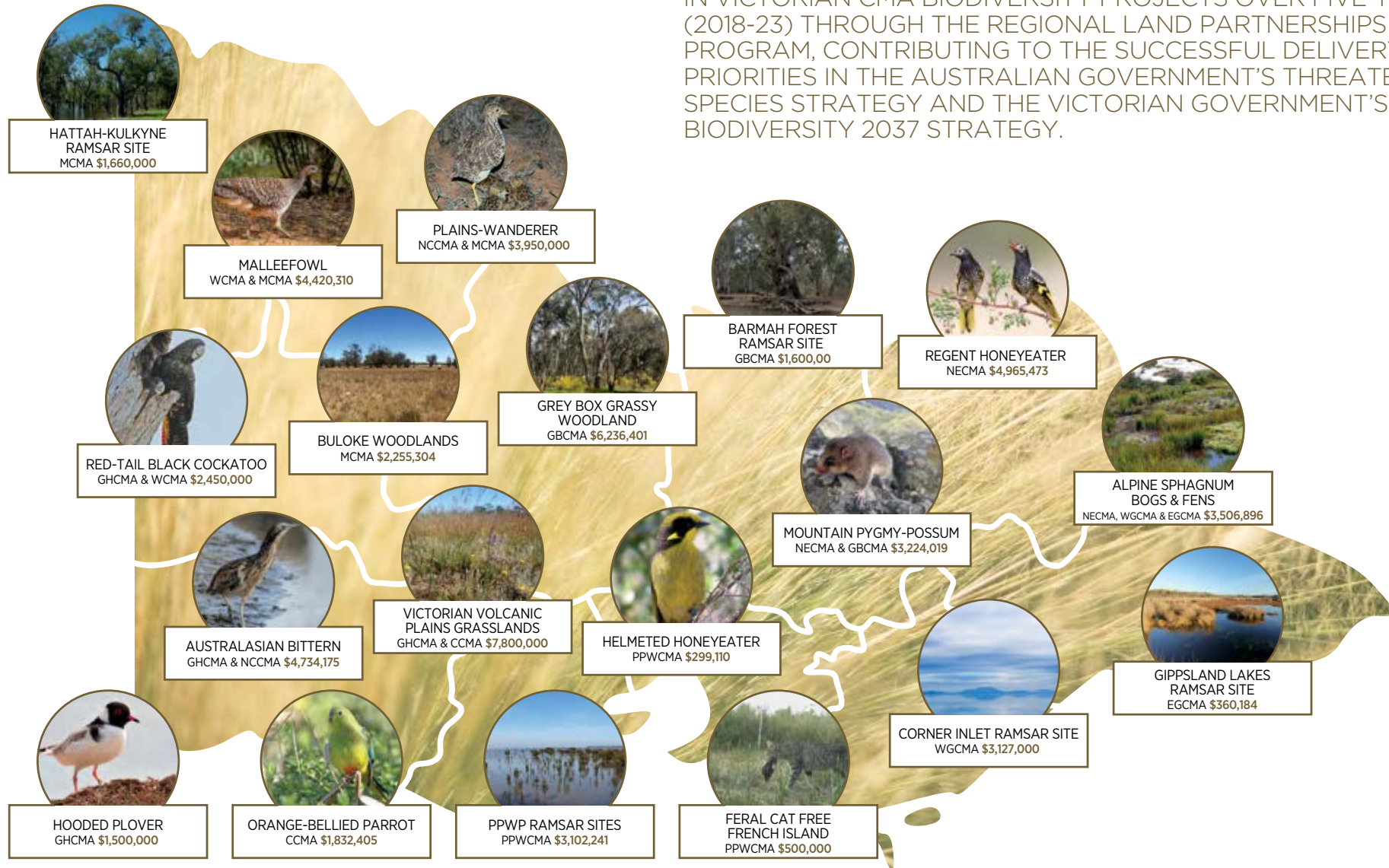


OUTPUTS 2019-20

425 ha revegetation
18,963 ha weed control
359,128 ha pest animal control
35 km fencing
27,084 ha agricultural practice change
1,299 assessments
14,294 event participants

PROTECTING OUR BIODIVERSITY

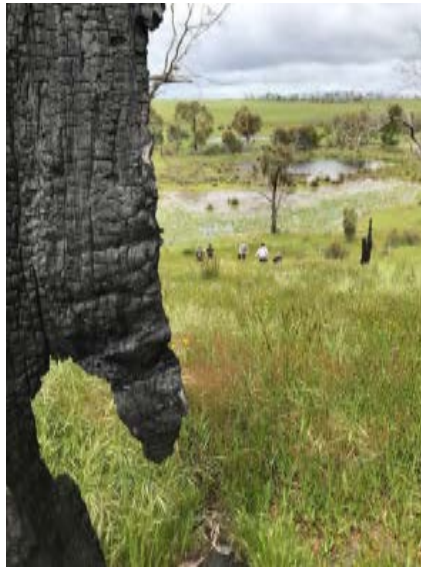
THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS INVESTED OVER \$57 MILLION IN VICTORIAN CMA BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS OVER FIVE YEARS (2018-23) THROUGH THE REGIONAL LAND PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM, CONTRIBUTING TO THE SUCCESSFUL DELIVERY OF PRIORITIES IN THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S THREATENED SPECIES STRATEGY AND THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT'S BIODIVERSITY 2037 STRATEGY.



BUSHFIRE AND EMERGENCY RECOVERY



1 Betty Russell in front of the Yellow-bellied glider habitat on her Scotts Creek property (Gene Gardiner/CCMA)



2 The remnant vegetation on this fire affected property in Elaine flourished after the site was fenced off, and gained an extra boost through the support of Damascus College Year 10 students at a planting day in 2019 (Leigh Catchment Group)



3 Buchanan post bushfires in the summer of 2019-20 (EGCMA)

“After all the past work that’s been put in, I’m so happy to see it looking healthy again ... the funding is a great help, as things have been a bit tough.”

Betty Russell, Scotts Creek resident

In the wake of fires, floods and other natural disasters, Victoria’s CMAs regularly take a lead role in recovery projects, partnering with other government organisations, Landcare and the community to rehabilitate the landscape and support communities. This work can be short or long-term and is often adapted to meet the shifting needs of landholders and the environment.

SCOTSBURN AND ST PATRICK’S DAY FIRE RECOVERY

In December 2015, the Scotsburn area in south west Victoria experienced a significant wildfire. With Victorian Government funding, Corangamite CMA partnered with the Leigh Catchment Group for the Scotsburn Phoenix Project and volunteers planted over 16,000 indigenous plants across the fire-affected area.

Three years later, on St Patrick’s Day 2018, four fires destroyed more than 14,600 hectares and soil erosion and biodiversity loss threatened to impact water quality. Corangamite CMA partnered with Heytesbury District Landcare Network to undertake rehabilitation activities and conduct water quality monitoring.

Grants were also provided to affected landowners for repairs, revegetation and monitoring. Landholder, Betty Russell, replanted six hectares of Yellow-bellied Glider habitat on her property, which was first planted by Betty and her late husband Bert in the 1980s.

NORTH EAST FLOOD RECOVERY

In 2016, and again in 2018, major flood events impacted numerous waterway systems across the North East region. Work needed to be undertaken to help to stabilise and rehabilitate damaged waterway reaches and provide habitat for impacted aquatic species.

With funding from the Australian Government and Victorian Government, North East CMA was able to support the community to deliver flood recovery works across 79 sites. These works included bank stabilisation achieved through timber revetment works and establishing native vegetation and stock exclusion fencing.

EAST GIPPSLAND SUMMER BUSHFIRE RECOVERY

In the 2019-20 summer devastating fires burnt across the East Gippsland and North East regions. 56 per cent of East Gippsland was burnt and the fires impacted many waterways.

East Gippsland CMA’s immediate response to bushfire recovery was to work closely with affected landholders and the community. With Australian Government and Victorian Government funding, fences were repaired, debris was removed from waterways and community events were held to provide support to community members.

East Gippsland CMA continues to work closely with landholders, partners and communities to not only complete the ongoing restoration works, but to adapt and create long-term resilience.

DROUGHT EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM



- 1 Soil stabilising works and road access works carried out by Mallee CMA DEP crews (MCMA)
- 2 Gippsland DEP crew members Trevor Maxwell, Cath McInnes, Merran Merry and Elaine Wellans (EGCMA)
- 3 Goulburn Murray Irrigation District DEP crew member Doug Brown carrying out weed control (GBCMA)

“Keeping people living, working and spending in communities helps the long-term viability of regional economies and the [Drought Employment Program] crews’ efforts to improve public and community spaces lifts local spirits and doesn’t go unnoticed.”

John Fitzgibbon, Millewa Pioneer Village Committee Member



Victoria’s CMAs have always been on the front foot when it comes to providing practical support for their communities during the tough times and, over the years, they have successfully run numerous employment programs for regional and rural people affected by fire, flood and drought.

The key to this success is the CMAs’ well-established partnerships with landholders, community groups, Traditional Owners, local government, water authorities and other government agencies. These relationships allow CMAs to quickly plan, identify and deliver projects that protect and improve the environment while providing income and training to agriculture sector workers affected by natural disasters.

In late 2019, the Victorian Government-funded Drought Employment Program (DEP), which had been providing support for drought-affected workers across Central and East Gippsland (East Gippsland, West Gippsland and North East CMAs), was extended to the Millewa region (Mallee CMA) and the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District (Goulburn Broken and North Central CMAs).

The program was designed to be flexible - participants generally work in small teams two to four days a week and carry out activities including weed control, fencing, revegetation and maintenance and repair of public and community infrastructure.

This approach helps participants earn a regular income until the situation improves on their farm or at their workplace.

“We needed money to survive and we weren’t able to make a living from leasing the farm. So far this has been a great experience for me, just getting a job gave me hope straight away,” Goulburn Murray Irrigation District DEP participant and Shepparton orchardist Sophie Stefcropoulos said.

Training is provided on topics including first aid and safe chemical and equipment use. Some participants have been supported to obtain various vehicle and machinery licences or complete administration and financial literacy courses. Upskilling or gaining new skills opens up new or alternate career opportunities, with many past and current employment program participants finding ongoing work with agencies or councils they came in contact with during their time with DEP.

Participants say they also greatly value the social interaction that comes with being part of a DEP crew. “It really lifted me out of a real funk,” Gippsland Omeo DEP participant Sue Lofthouse said. Bairnsdale crew member Ben O’Dougherty agreed, “It’s taken a lot of pressure off people (and) they get to meet other farmers”.



OUTPUTS 2019-20

53 partners
94 people employed
51 ha revegetation
151 km fencing
5,074 ha weed control
500 ha pest animal control
39 sites maintained & upgraded

COMMUNITIES CARING FOR LANDSCAPES



1 Landcare facilitators in the Port Phillip and Western Port region at an On Country training event (PPWCMA)

2 Avon Landcare Group at a community planting day (WGCMA)



OUTPUTS 2019-20

500+ Landcare groups
54 Landcare networks
29,663 members/volunteers
159,863 volunteer hours
\$6.6 million value of volunteer contribution

FUNDING

In 2019-20, the Victorian Government invested more than \$9 million in Landcare through the Victorian Landcare Program.

Output figures based on 2019-20 Landcare Group Health Survey results, compiled from 322 participating Landcare and community NRM groups.

“We value the truly collaborative relationship we have developed with Wimmera CMA ... it has enabled us to be flexible and resilient in challenging times ... it's actually hard to imagine we would have achieved everything we have without such collaboration.”

Ange Turrell, Jallukar Landcare Group Deputy Chair and Project Officer

In partnership with Victoria's CMAs, Landcare and other environmental volunteer groups and networks receive support through the Victorian Landcare Program to undertake environmental protection and sustainable land management activities. The Victorian Landcare Program includes three main components:

- Support via the Victorian Landcare Team, made up of 5 DELWP staff and 10 Regional Landcare Coordinators based at CMAs
- The Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program which funds 78 part-time Landcare facilitators across Victoria
- The annual Victorian Landcare Grants program which provides funding for Landcare projects, and activities, as well as start-up and support funding for groups and networks.

Victoria is home to approximately 600 Landcare groups and 64 Landcare networks, as well as over 500 other community-based natural resource management groups. Victoria's CMAs are proud to be the lead government organisations supporting and assisting the Landcare movement. With funding from the Victorian Landcare Program, CMAs provide strategic support and leadership for Landcare. In 2019-20 this included:

- Delivering the Victorian Landcare Grants program which provided \$2.88 million for 208 projects and 313 support grants. An additional \$1 million in grants was added to the original funding

commitment for 2019-20 due to the exceptionally high number of quality applications.

- Coordinating training and development opportunities for Landcare facilitators and volunteers, such as North East CMA training local Landcare groups to conduct site assessments for fire-affected landholders to assist their recovery efforts.
- Additional events and forums designed to enhance networks and share information amongst the Landcare movement, such as Port Phillip & Westernport CMA hosting an On Country training event for facilitators with Wadawurrung in November 2019.
- Development of an annual Landcare report card in each region that summarises the activities and 'health' of Landcare to demonstrate and promote the value that Landcare provides for the Victorian community and environment.
- Supporting Landcare networks and Landcare facilitators to actively engage in the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program review as the four-year funding phase came to an end.
- Supporting Landcare groups and networks to recover from the impact coronavirus (COVID-19) has had on their work, including reimagining the format of Landcare support activities to ensure that they can still be delivered and delivering training opportunities that focus on resilience and new skill development.

ABORIGINAL PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT



1 Taungurung work crew members Darren Detez and Jack Hyatt protecting and improving a remnant population of Silver Banksia in the Lake Nillahcootie area (GBCMA)

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

Victoria's CMAs work closely with Traditional Owners and have partnership agreements with many Registered Aboriginal Parties and Aboriginal organisations, including:

- Barapa Barapa Nation
- Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
- Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
- Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation
- Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation
- Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation
- Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owner Aboriginal Corporation
- Martang Pty Ltd
- Taungurung Land and Waters Council
- Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation
- Wamba Wamba Nation
- Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation
- Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation

“Working in the management of our land gives us that connection and is a great way to bring back Taungurung people to Country ... giving our mob a chance to work on Country is a great way of helping them heal.”

Shane Monk, Taungurung Land and Waters Council

Victoria's CMAs work closely with local Aboriginal organisations and communities and are champions for increasing Traditional Owner participation in natural resource management and helping to close the gap.

Victoria's CMAs recognise the unique relationship with Country and the knowledge that Aboriginal Australians have and seek out opportunities for this knowledge to be utilised through project work and employment.

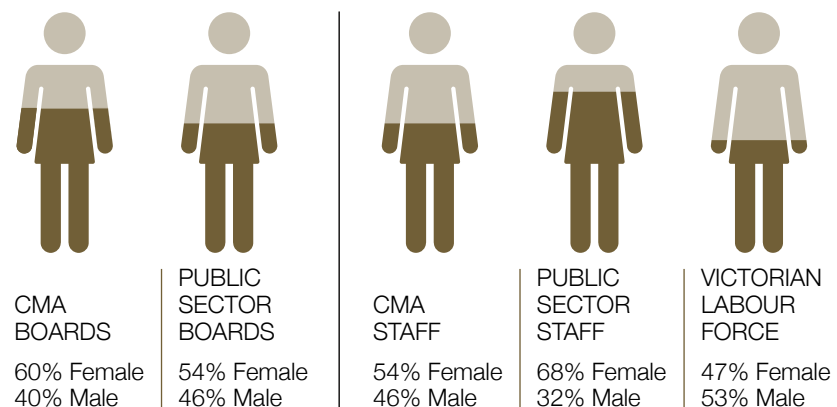
Examples of actions and outcomes over recent years include:

- Engaging Aboriginal organisations and groups to undertake projects. An example is the Port Phillip & Westernport CMA engaging the Wurundjeri Narrap Rangers to undertake weed control as part of the Restoring Jacksons Creek project, Deepening Connections project and Protecting and Connecting Species in Melbourne's West project.
- Conducting training and capacity building activities to increase understanding of and connection to local Aboriginal culture. An example is the cultural awareness days at Heywood and Lake Condah delivered by Gunditj Mirring TOAC for Glenelg Hopkins CMA staff and internal CMA cultural inductions for staff covering the organisation's cultural protocols and cultural heritage procedures.
- Coordination of training activities to increase the skills of Aboriginal people. An example is North Central CMA providing mentoring and school-based learning opportunities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and Traditional Owner groups to facilitate employment on Country.
- Creating and maintaining mutually beneficial and meaningful partnership agreements and MOUs between CMAs and Registered Aboriginal Parties.
- Maintaining a high representation of Aboriginal people in Victoria's CMAs, with 3 per cent of employees with Aboriginal heritage, compared to 1 per cent in the broader Victorian public sector.
- Grants and/or planning support to help the management of Aboriginal owned or managed properties and business enterprises.
- Development of a Social Procurement Strategy by each CMA, enabling CMAs to use their buying power to deliver social, economic and environmental outcomes that support Aboriginal business and benefit Aboriginal communities.
- The ongoing implementation of the actions outlined in each CMA's Indigenous Participation Plan.

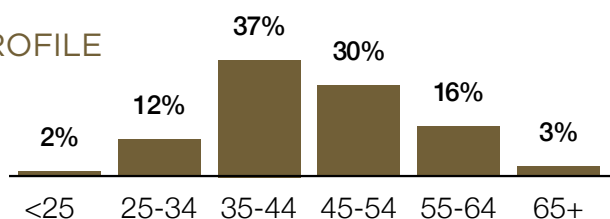
Importantly, the growing participation of Aboriginal organisations and people in natural resource management is also helping achieve social and economic benefits. CMAs are involved in activities that are improving education, employment, health, culture, heritage, language, recognition and harmony.

GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

GENDER



STAFF AGE PROFILE



Victoria's CMAs are embracing and bringing to life the Victorian Government's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

CMAs have always acknowledged and welcomed the unique perspectives of all employees and fostered a culture of inclusion where everyone feels valued and respected.

CMAs have established safe and equitable workplaces, conducted cultural awareness activities, increased female representation in the workforce, introduced opportunities for flexible working arrangements and increased the representation of Aboriginal people.

Victorian CMA workforce data now highlights these advances. There is excellent gender balance in CMAs. At the Board level, 60 per cent of CMA Board members in 2019-20 were female, including six female chairs.

At the staff level, a total of 394 employees are comprised of 216 females (54 per cent) and 184 males (46 per cent).

3 per cent of the Victorian CMA staff have Aboriginal heritage, clearly above the 1 per cent employed in the Victorian public sector. CMAs also actively pursue opportunities to engage Aboriginal businesses and contractors through their social procurement strategies.

CMAs have a healthy age profile amongst employees, with 50 per cent of staff 35 years of age or younger and 19 per cent that are 55 or older. The healthy gender and age profiles of CMA staff are at least partly due to CMAs supporting flexible working arrangements.

CMAs remain committed to being model employers and active leaders within regional communities for diversity and inclusion. Each CMA has an active Diversity and Inclusion Plan that sets a pathway for further improvement in the years ahead.

DIVERSITY & EDUCATION	VIC CMAS	PUBLIC SECTOR	VIC WIDE
FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS	55%	62%	(Data not available)
PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY	2%	3%	9% (Labour force)
ABORIGINAL EMPLOYEES	3%	1%	0.8% (population)
LGBTQI	4%	4%	3% (population)
BORN OVERSEAS	7%	17%	33% (Labour force)

Comparative data is sourced from 'The State of the public sector in Victoria 2018-19' published by the Victorian Public Sector Commission, January 2020. CMA data from 2019 People Matter Survey and 2019-20 Annual Reports. Please note that gender non-binary data is not reported as it was not collected in the 2019 People Matter Survey.

REGIONAL ACTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

THIS SECTION PRESENTS THE SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS AND KEY OUTPUTS DELIVERED BY EACH CMA IN 2019-20. CASE STUDIES FROM EACH REGION PROVIDE A SNAPSHOT OF THESE OUTPUTS IN ACTION, HIGHLIGHTING THE BROAD RANGE OF WORK BEING UNDERTAKEN IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY AND DEMONSTRATING THE TANGIBLE ON-GROUND IMPACTS ON CMA PROJECTS, PROGRAMS AND STRATEGIES.



CORANGAMITE

TWELVE APOSTLES (SARAH MARTIN)



CORANGAMITE

KEY EVENTS AND INSIGHTS

- The Corangamite CMA Community Engagement Network was formed, providing a forum for information exchange to strengthen community understanding of the Corangamite CMA's role in the region. It will also help the CMA identify community needs, issues and barriers to participation in natural resources management, and provide a valuable community perspective into our strategies, plans and projects.
- The Barwon River Parklands is a significant partnership initiative looking to increase public access to the unique environmental, cultural, and recreational values of the Moorabool River, Barwon River through Geelong and Lower Barwon wetlands and estuary. The 2020 business case investigation determined that funds should be invested to develop a master plan and engage a program team to identify a range of site-specific infrastructure and cultural, environmental and community projects, providing a direct stimulus to the local economy, and community activation opportunities whilst delivering an internationally significant series of open spaces and access to nature.
- Corangamite CMA engaged Professor Allan Curtis to conduct a survey of landholders with properties larger than 10 hectares across the Corangamite region. The survey looked at landholder profiles, types of land use and trends among other issues. The report provides valuable information regarding land use trends as well as landowner attitudes, aspirations and intentions which will inform future planning for the Corangamite CMA, its partners and stakeholders.
- Corangamite CMA worked in partnership with private landholders, Landcare and public land managers to deliver on-ground actions at 92 sites in the region. These projects have seen works such as fencing, off-stream water infrastructure, weed control and revegetation occur on over 166 kilometres of waterway frontage and 860 hectares of riparian vegetation, including removal of willows along 24 kilometres of this frontage.



OUTPUT	TARGET	ACTUAL			TOTAL
		STATE	FED	OTHER	
1. STRUCTURAL WORKS					
1.1 Channel (km)	73	121			121
1.2 Water storage (no.)	4	10			10
1.3 Pump (no.)	4	6			6
1.5 Waterway structure (no.)	19	38			38
1.6 Terrestrial structure (no.)	1	0			0
1.8 Monitoring structure (no.)	38	62		12	74
1.9 Fence (km)	38	76	0		76
1.10 Visitor facility (no.)	79	57			57
1.11 Road (km)	32	13			13
1.12 Crossing (no.)	0	28			28
2. ENVIRONMENTAL WORKS					
2.1 Vegetation (ha)	159	535	10		545
2.2 Weed control (ha)	2,126	3,501	52		3,553
2.3 Pest animal control (ha)	300	1,331			1331
2.4 Over-abundant wildlife (no.)	1,001	0			0
2.5 Threatened species response (no.)	4	1			1
2.8 Earth works (km)	4	29			29
2.9 Rubbish removal (ha)	0.4	159			159
3. MANAGEMENT SERVICES					
3.1 Grazing (ha)	1,203	1,129			1,129
3.2 Agricultural practices (ha)	1,615	0	1,615		0
3.3 Water (no.)	27	56			56
3.4 Fire regime (no.)	65	0			0
4. PLANNING AND REGULATION					
4.1 Approval and advice (no.)	1,622	1,494		230	1,724
4.2 Management agreement (no.)	64	71	22		93
4.3 Assessment (no.)	568	454	51		505
4.4 Engagement event (no. participants)	4,768	9,448	111		9,559
4.5 Partnership (no.)	432	496			496
4.6 Plan (no.)	50	43	2		45
4.7 Publication (no.)	172	114	46		160
4.8 Information management system (no.)	11	12			12



LOCATIONS

Lower Barwon River and wetlands,
Greater Geelong

OUTPUTS 2019-20

4 waterway structures
7 assessments
40 engagement events
16 partnerships

PARTNERS

Parks Victoria,
Department of Land, Water,
Environment and Planning,
Arthur Rylah Institute
Wadawurrung Traditional Owners
Aboriginal Corporation

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Corangamite Waterway
Strategy 2014-22

FUNDING

Victorian Government
(Water for Victoria)

IMPROVING FISH AND FLOWS IN THE LOWER BARWON WETLANDS

“The lower Barwon wetlands are like a nursery for native fish, and these new fishways will allow them to move freely between the Barwon River and the wetlands to breed, feed and grow.”

Tim Marsden, Fish Biologist

The Ramsar-listed lower Barwon wetlands is a complex of fresh and saline lakes and wetlands 10 kilometres south of Geelong, Victoria's largest regional city. Prior to European arrival the area was an important source of food, fibre and artefacts for Traditional Owners, the Wadawurrung.

After European occupation a series of weirs and regulators were installed in the wetlands to prevent saltwater entering the lower Barwon River and to mitigate flood risks to the city of Geelong. For decades, the infrastructure was an impassable barrier for migratory fish, including Short-finned eels and the threatened Australian grayling.

A 2016 regional fish barrier prioritisation study identified the lower Barwon wetlands complex as one of the highest priorities for removal of instream fish barriers. This led to \$2.1 million in funding being provided by the Victorian Government to upgrade the wetland's water infrastructure, with the aim of helping threatened fish migration and improving management of water for the environment.

In 2019, the Corangamite CMA oversaw the planning and construction of a new vertical slot fishway at Reedy Lake. The fishway was completed in April 2020 with immediate results; fish were observed the next day making their way through the

precisely constructed system of pools and riffles. A nearby 'elver ramp' with climbing substrate allows Short-finned eels to migrate upstream.

An upgrade of the water regulator at Reedy Lake will also enable more efficient delivery of the Lower Barwon Environmental Entitlement, which manages water levels in the wetlands to improve the diversity of vegetation for birds, fish, frogs and other wildlife.

Near Reedy Lake, a decades-old tidal barrage weir on the lower Barwon River has been completely refurbished and a new, additional fishway and elver ramp has been installed.

These works will have immediate and long-lasting benefits for fish, plants, birds and other wildlife in the wetlands and lower Barwon River, and will help improve fishing and recreational opportunities in the Barwon River through Geelong for decades to come.

- 1** CCMA's Water Infrastructure Manager, Denis Lovric with local MP, Darren Cheeseman (Sarah Martin)
- 2** First flows in the new fishway at the Barwon River tidal barrage (Tim Marsden)
- 3** Native fish like the Tupong can now move between the Barwon River and the wetlands to complete their life cycle (Sarah Martin)



LOCATIONS

Bellarine Peninsula

OUTPUTS 2019-20

12 engagement events
3 communication materials
13 flora and fauna surveys
20 site assessments
9 site management plans
3 agreements
615 ha improved land management practices
1 monitoring regime

PARTNERS

Arthur Rylah Institute, Birdlife Australia, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Parks Victoria, Zoos Victoria, Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Corangamite Regional Catchment Strategy 2013-19
Corangamite Waterway Strategy 2014-22

FUNDING

Australian Government
(National Landcare Program)

MANAGING PESTS TO HELP ORANGE-BELLIED PARROTS

“The Orange-bellied Parrot is an iconic, but sadly now rare, species of the Corangamite region. The Corangamite CMA’s on-ground work to improve coastal habitat is helping boost the chances of survival for these critically endangered birds.”

Alice Knight, Chair, Corangamite CMA

Each year in autumn, the wild population of around 100 migratory Orange-bellied Parrot make the 500 kilometre trip from their summer breeding grounds in Tasmania to over-winter in coastal saltmarsh in South Australia and southern Victoria, including the Bellarine Peninsula and Greater Geelong area. The Orange-bellied Parrot is one of only three migratory parrot species in the world and is critically endangered.

In 2019, through funding from the National Landcare Program, Corangamite CMA worked with Parks Victoria to improve over 230 hectares of coastal saltmarsh habitat across eight sites, including Lake Connewarre, Swan Bay, the Karaaf and Bancoora wetlands and Avalon Coastal Reserve.

This work is part of a multi-agency, decades-long effort to save the species, by managing pests and weeds in the parrots’ winter-feeding grounds along the Greater Geelong and Bellarine coast.

The on-ground works focused on managing foxes, cats, rabbits and weeds to reduce the risk of predation and improve growing conditions for the native plants and seeds that make up the parrot’s preferred diet.

An additional component of this project involves awareness raising, and in June 2019 a community of practice was

established, where community and agency stakeholders came together to discuss ideas for Orange-bellied Parrot conservation in the region.

The next three-year phase of this \$1.8 million project will focus on direct works such as fencing and grazing management, as well as support for planning, investigations and monitoring to address key threats.

Corangamite CMA will also work with the Orange-bellied Parrot National Recovery Team, which includes the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Zoos Victoria, Parks Victoria and Birdlife Australia, to support releases of captive-bred birds and tracking of wild birds.

There are encouraging signs that the many years of work by the National Recovery Team is starting to pay dividends. In exciting news for birders everywhere, a captive-bred, wild-released juvenile Orange-bellied Parrot was sighted in April 2020, feeding on coastal saltmarsh in the northern Bellarine Peninsula.

- 1 Community of Practice meeting at Lake Murnaghurt (Sarah Martin)
- 2 Orange-bellied Parrot (Chris Tzaros)
- 3 Coastal saltmarsh on the Bellarine Peninsula (Saul Vermeeren)

EAST GIPPSLAND

WALLABY AT MALLACOOTA AIRPORT AFTER BUSHFIRES (EGCMA)



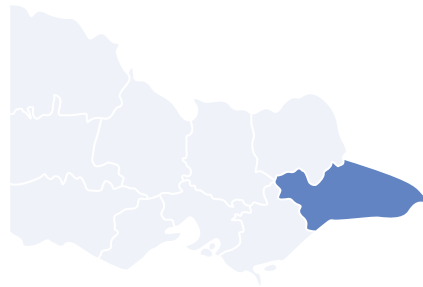
EAST GIPPSLAND

KEY EVENTS AND INSIGHTS

- The community support and response provided by the East Gippsland CMA, during and immediately after drought, bushfires over summer and during the coronavirus pandemic, was well received by communities. The East Gippsland CMA continues to provide support to our communities affected.
- Bushfire recovery efforts are well underway. Replaced fencing programs are well advanced. Planning for weed and pest control is underway. One on one support is being provided to all community partners affected by the fire event. East Gippsland CMA is involved in local and regional recovery efforts with all agencies.
- The partnership between the East Gippsland CMA and Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation has been strengthened, with greater participation from Aboriginal people in planning, leadership, decision making in regional NRM programs.
- Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation is participating fully in the development of future waterway programs, such as Gippsland Lakes "Room to Move" and the flagship Mitchell River Rehabilitation. Important cultural priorities are being identified as part of these processes.
- The East Gippsland CEO's forum and Gippsland Environment Agencies forum underpin the implementation of the East Gippsland Catchment Partnership Agreement. Both of these forums are represented by agency leaders who are working together on common priorities set each year.
- The ongoing commitment to controlling willows across East Gippsland has been a major achievement for East Gippsland CMA. More than three quarters of our waterways across the region are free of willows and continue to be maintained at this level. The follow up in catchments that were burnt will be important into the future.

OUTPUT	TARGET	ACTUAL			TOTAL
		STATE	FED	OTHER	
1. STRUCTURAL WORKS					
1.2 Water storage (no.)	9	15			15
1.5 Waterway structure (no.)	1	0			0
1.8 Monitoring structure (no.)	6	3			3
1.9 Fence (km)	13	25			25
1.10 Visitor facility (no.)	13	15			15
2. ENVIRONMENTAL WORKS					
2.1 Vegetation (ha)	109	129			129
2.2 Weed control (ha)	1,731	2,154	80		2,234
2.3 Pest animal control (ha)	10,801	15,030	2,700		17,730
2.8 Earth works (km)	2	2			2
3. MANAGEMENT SERVICES					
3.1 Grazing (ha)	22	55			55
4. PLANNING AND REGULATION					
4.1 Approval and advice (no.)	402	372			372
4.2 Management agreement (no.)	15	6	6		12
4.3 Assessment (no.)	492	448	63		511
4.4 Engagement event (no. participants)	1,416	1,704	32		1,736
4.5 Partnership (no.)	182	267			267
4.6 Plan (no.)	4	7			7
4.7 Publication (no.)	117	113	32		145
4.8 Information management system (no.)	1	1			1





LOCATIONS

East Gippsland Region

OUTPUTS 2019-20

99 assessments
42 km fencing
4 off-stream watering systems replaced
42 ha debris removal
5 management agreements
200 event participants

PARTNERS

Landholders, Department of Land, Water, Environment and Planning, Gunaikurnai Land and Water Aboriginal Corporation, Parks Victoria, Agriculture Victoria, Bushfire Recovery Victoria, East Gippsland Water, local contractors.

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

East Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy
Draft Natural Environment Recovery Sub-Plan

FUNDING

Victorian Government
(Biodiversity Bushfire Recovery Grants)

SUMMER BUSHFIRE RECOVERY

“With over half of our catchment burnt, many people in East Gippsland have been affected. We are focused on helping our community recover and create long-term resilience across our landscape.”

Ewan Waller, Chair, East Gippsland CMA

The bushfires that started on 21 November 2019 and continued throughout the 2019-20 summer, burnt across the East Gippsland and North East regions. The fires were exceptional in size and impact. Over 1 million hectares (56 per cent) of East Gippsland was burnt. These fires impacted many waterways, including rivers in the far east, the upper Snowy, Tambo, Nicholson and upper Mitchell catchments.

These summer bushfires followed the drought and heavily impacted people on the land. East Gippslanders are used to challenging environmental conditions; some landholders have witnessed their properties burning two or three times throughout their lifetime, but this summer produced some of the most challenging times they have ever been through.

East Gippsland CMA's immediate response to bushfire recovery was to work closely with affected landholders and the community. Initially, this included controlling stock by repairing fencing, removing debris loads built up in waterways following heavy rainfall and running community events to listen to and support community members whose lives and livelihoods were impacted. These community events were simple - a BBQ in a local park or a boat ride on a local waterway inviting anyone who wanted to come along. These events weren't designed to inform, they were designed to listen. East Gippsland CMA staff, whose own properties and lives were also affected, listened to people and offered

support where needed.

The medium-term response has included further repairs to riparian fencing, replacing off-stream watering systems, continued debris removal from waterways, controlling weed outbreaks and hosting more community events. This stage included building on existing landholder partnerships as well creating new partnerships with landholders affected by the fires.

East Gippsland CMA continues to work closely with landholders, partners and communities to deliver an integrated and coordinated approach to the bushfire recovery effort across East Gippsland. The recovery program includes working with partners and the community to not only recover but to adapt and create long-term resilience across East Gippsland's landscapes.

- 1 The Buchan River after the 2019-20 bushfires (EGCMA).
- 2 Local contractor, Lachie Barnes reconstructing burnt fences in Wangarabell (EGCMA).
- 3 Community boat trip held post-fires with Arthur Rylah Institute and EGCMA to discuss the effects in the Mallacoota catchment (EGCMA).



LOCATIONS

Aquatic habitats within the Gippsland Lakes

OUTPUTS 2019-20

56 ecological assessment
130 engagement event participants
2 information management databases

PARTNERS

Friends of Beware Reef, Gippsland Lakes
Coordinating Committee, Agriculture
Victoria, RMIT, Parks Victoria

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site
Management Plan

FUNDING

Victorian Government
(Gippsland Lakes Community Grants)



FRIENDS OF BEWARE REEF – WHAT LIES BENEATH

“There is such a bustling, dynamic world under the water that people simply aren’t aware of. Through this project, we hope to be able to catalogue and share the images we’ve captured. We are confident that they will not simply inform and educate people, but also fundamentally change the way they think about the Gippsland Lakes”.

Don Love, President, Friends of Beware Reef

The Friends of Beware Reef is a volunteer diving group that have been photographing the amazing underwater world of the Gippsland Lakes over the last three years. The group has covered large areas of the Gippsland Lakes and their work offers a better understanding of the dynamic and challenging nature of the environment that lies below the water’s surface.

The group is currently developing a photo database of marine fish and invertebrates living amongst seagrass beds, rock structures and diverse habitats within the Gippsland Lakes. The group has also played a key role in detecting and removing Northern Pacific Seastar, a highly invasive species, from several sites within the lakes.

In 2019-20, the group received a \$32,000 grant as part of the Gippsland Lakes Community Grants Program to support this valuable work.

The group has conducted more than 230 dives at more than 80 sites since 2016, ranging from Sperm Whale Head in the west through to Lakes Entrance in the east. In 2019-20, they undertook 56 assessments of the Gippsland Lakes and engaged 130 volunteers and community members in their work.

The group is very passionate about the work they do and group president, Don Love, said the Gippsland Lakes are an unknown treasure.

“The Gippsland Lakes are a dynamic and wonderful environment that for many is literally on their doorstep.

“The photographs and mapping we have been able to do is simply amazing. People are often amazed when they see the photos of things like the Giant Spider Crab, colourful sea slugs (Nudibranchs) and Pipefish; they assume the pictures are from Queensland or some other tropical setting, rather than the Gippsland Lakes.

“I hope the work we’ve been doing will help people realise just how special the Gippsland Lakes are, and also, perhaps not to take them so much for granted.”

- 1** Volunteers Rob Timmers (left), Phil Horner (back) & Alan Wilkins (right) (Don Love)
- 2** A curious Gloomy Octopus in the Gippsland Lakes (Friends of Beware Reef)
- 3** Juvenile Seahorse in the Gippsland Lakes (Friends of Beware Reef)

GLENELG HOPKINS

CULTURAL BURNING, HURDLE SWAMP, CASTERTON (GHCMA)



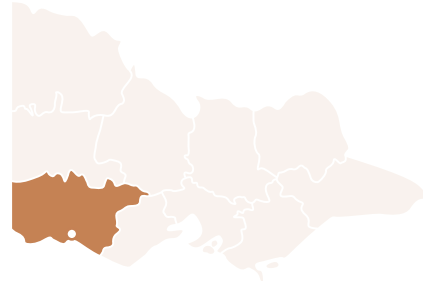
GLENELG HOPKINS

KEY EVENTS AND INSIGHTS

- Glenelg Hopkins CMA continues to have strong partnerships with Traditional Owner groups across the region. A significant focus for the 2019-20 year was traditional burns with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation to improve and protect listed habitat such as grasslands in the Victorian Volcanic Plains, and with Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owner Aboriginal Corporation (Gunditj Mirring TOAC) to improve habitat for listed species such as the Red-tailed Black Cockatoo and Australasian Bittern. Glenelg Hopkins CMA's partnership with Gunditj Mirring TOAC has continued to support their management of the World Heritage listed Budj Bim Cultural Landscape. Glenelg Hopkins CMA has also collaborated with Traditional Owner groups including Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation and Barengi Gadjin Land Council on the renewal of the Glenelg Hopkins Regional Catchment Strategy and future investment proposals that support their interest in land, water and sea management.
- In February 2020, Glenelg Hopkins CMA, in partnership with the Grasslands Society of Southern Australia and Meat & Livestock Australia, held a 'Front Foot Farming - Carbon Farming for the Future' forum in Hamilton. Targeting a cohort of proactive farmers, the one-day conference addressed the latest science and market information relating to carbon trading, carbon offsets, on farm emission management and emissions auditing.
- In November 2019, Glenelg Hopkins CMA was awarded a River Basin Management Society Award in the Most Outstanding Waterway Management Project category for the Merri Alliance and Merri River Urban Waterway Restoration project. This hugely successful project was delivered with 10 local community groups and organisations and has shown what can be achieved when organisations come together to transform a river. One of these partners, Nature Glenelg Trust, also received the Community Award for its Walkers Swamp Project, of which Glenelg Hopkins CMA was a partner.
- A highlight for the Glenelg Hopkins CMA's environmental water program was the completion of the Warrock Fishway on the Glenelg River. A fish barrier near Warrock on the Glenelg River stood as the last major impediment to fish movement downstream of Rocklands Reservoir. Removing this barrier has opened fish passage to an additional 170 kilometres of the Glenelg River plus tributaries, helping a range of endemic migratory fish species such as the Tupong, Shortfinned Eel, Lamprey and Estuary Perch.



OUTPUT	TARGET	ACTUAL			TOTAL
		STATE	FED	OTHER	
1. STRUCTURAL WORKS					
1.2 Water storage (no.)	27	8	3		11
1.3 Pump (no.)	2	2			2
1.5 Waterway structure (no.)	9	7	3		10
1.6 Terrestrial structure (no.)	2	6			6
1.7 Terrestrial feature (no.)	7		17		17
1.8 Monitoring structure (no.)	49	80			80
1.9 Fence (km)	80	70	1		71
1.10 Visitor facility (no.)	0	1			1
1.12 Crossing (no.)	1	1			1
2. ENVIRONMENTAL WORKS					
2.1 Vegetation (ha)	510	357	0		357
2.2 Weed control (ha)	1,892	1,486	527		2,013
2.3 Pest animal control (ha)	33,050	33,242	3,435		36,677
2.5 Threatened species response (no.)	8		26		26
2.6 Emergency species response (no.)	0		1		1
2.7 Soil treatment (ha)	4	4			4
2.8 Earth works (no.)	8	5	3		8
3. MANAGEMENT SERVICES					
3.1 Grazing (ha)	365	449			449
3.2 Agricultural practices (ha)	110		720		720
3.3 Water (no.)	53	14	70		84
3.4 Fire regime (no.)	4	0	5		5
4. PLANNING AND REGULATION					
4.1 Approval and advice (no.)	355	344	16		360
4.2 Management agreement (no.)	219	76	48		124
4.3 Assessment (no.)	784	195	542		737
4.4 Engagement event (no. participants)	2,388	1,845	2,694	150	4,689
4.5 Partnership (no.)	56	44	3		47
4.6 Plan (no.)	27	13	23		36
4.7 Publication (no.)	240	217	234		451
4.8 Information management system (no.)	7	8			8



LOCATIONS

Merri River, Warrnambool

OUTPUTS 2019-20

685 event participants
15.9 ha of revegetation
9.6 ha of woody weed control
14.4 ha of non-woody weed control
114 waterway structures
2 visitor facilities

PARTNERS

Fishcare Victoria, OzFish Unlimited, MAD for the Merri, Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, Friends of Wollaston Bridge, Warrnambool Coastcare Landcare Network, Warrnambool City Council, Friends of Platypus Park, Wannon Water, Glenelg Hopkins CMA

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Regional Riparian Action Plan
North of the Merri Structure Plan
Warrnambool 2040 Community Plan

FUNDING

Victorian Government
(Our Catchments, Our Communities)
Funds for Fish crowdfunding campaign
Local business donations

MERRI RIVER URBAN WATERWAY RESTORATION

“The success of the Merri Alliance is that it brings together so many partners and organisations, community groups and users of the river under the one umbrella to achieve a common goal.”

Anthony Ford, Chair, Glenelg Hopkins CMA

The Merri River through Warrnambool is a significant natural asset and is benefitting from a coordinated and concerted approach to improving its environmental and recreational values. Planning and works have focused on improvements within urban growth footprints to reverse damage caused by large-scale clearing of native vegetation along the banks.

With significant changes in land-use along the Merri River, partners realised there is much to be gained by working collaboratively and leveraging towards a common vision and work plan for the Merri River. In 2016, the Merri Alliance was formed, a collective of 10 local community groups and organisations with strong interest to come together to accelerate on-ground environmental works for the Merri River and capitalise on Warrnambool's growth.

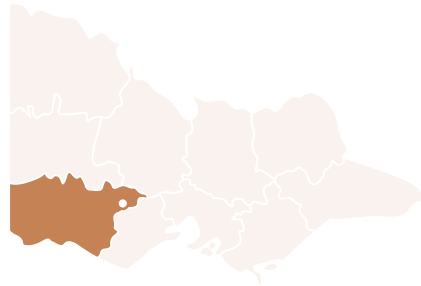
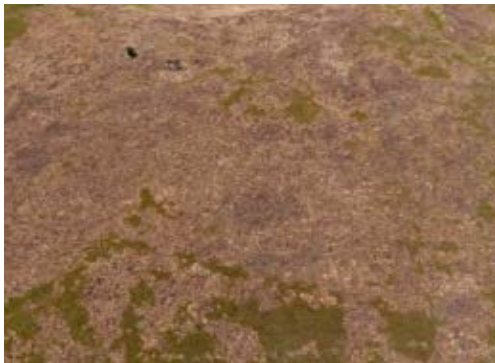
The Alliance, driven by Glenelg Hopkins CMA, capitalises on the cumulative impact of all interest groups working together being much greater than the individual impact of each organisation. It has significantly transformed the Merri River landscape from a largely weed-infested and highly grazed frontage to a green, recreational corridor and an ecologically healthier river.

A total of 1,220 people have participated across 50 engagement events thus far, including fishing clinics, school education programs and tree planting days. To date 25 hectares of weeds, including willows and poplars have been removed from 7.3 kilometres of the river and replaced with 18,700 native plants. A total of 114 habitat structures and two fishing platforms have been created to boost native fish populations and improve angler access. Instream monitoring has also shown that habitat has boosted Black bream populations by 89 per cent.

While organisations can deliver their projects independently, there are strong lines of communication via the Alliance that look for opportunities to value add to each other's projects. The Merri Alliance is built on a culture of generosity and enthusiasm, which has proved to be a model for success.

The project and the Merri Alliance were recognised for their achievements in late 2019 when they won the national River Basin Management Society (RBMS) Award for Most Outstanding Waterway Project.

- 1 RBMS Award being accepted by GHCA Chair, Tony Ford, MAD for the Merri's Karen Wales, and GHCA CEO, Adam Bester (GHCA)
- 2 After a successful community tree planting event (Chris Wilson)
- 3 Environmental activities co-existing with urban development (GHCA)



LOCATIONS

Skipton Common

OUTPUTS 2019-20

15 ha treated
1 Traditional Owner organisation engaged
20 event participants

PARTNERS

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, Ballarat Environment Network, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Country Fire Authority

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Glenelg Hopkins Regional Catchment Strategy
Wadawurrung Country Plan

FUNDING

Australian Government (National Landcare Program)

WIYN (FIRE) FOR COUNTRY

“This [cultural burning] is about putting fire spirit back and healing Country. We call fire Wiyn in our language and Wiyn Murrupp is our fire spirit. For us putting fire back into our Country is really important. Hopefully we will see more of this in the future.”

Tammy Gilson, Wadawurrung Traditional Owner

Aboriginal cultural burning has been a fundamental part of looking after Country for thousands of years. Over recent years, Glenelg Hopkins CMA has been partnering with Traditional Owner Groups and other agencies to integrate this practice more broadly into land management practices across the catchment.

In November 2019, Glenelg Hopkins CMA worked with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation to coordinate a successful grassland burn at Skipton Common. Around 15 hectares of natural temperate grassland was burnt as part of the Victorian Volcanic Plains Recovery project, funded through the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

The natural temperate grassland of the Victorian Volcanic Plains is a critically-endangered ecosystem, and Skipton Common is home to the critically-endangered Spiny Rice-flower. A major threat to both the ecosystem and the shrub is inappropriate fire regimes. Regular cool-season burns favour the Spiny Rice-flower and the diversity of the system overall, by burning back tall grasses which otherwise shade out the rice-flower and other small species. Much of the Spiny Rice-flower's biomass is underground so it bounces back quickly after the cool burns. Representatives from Wadawurrung

Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation led the burn and started the fire in the traditional way with handfuls of grass tied together forming torches. Moving into the wind they lit up the grass as they walked, creating numerous fire fronts which slowly fanned out across the landscape.

Burns such as this have significant cultural and social benefits. Wadawurrung Traditional Owner, Tammy Gilson, conducted a smoking ceremony as part of a Welcome to Country for everyone who attended the burn, highlighting the essential benefits of fire for healing people and Country.

The slow, low-intensity, cool burn resulted in a patchy mosaic of burnt and unburnt areas across the site. The burnt areas were cool to touch moments after the fire front passed. These areas allow sun penetration and new growth for the small shrub species, unburnt areas continue to provide cover for small animals, and carrying higher fuel loads, will be more likely to burn next time.

- 1 Wadawurrung Traditional Owner, Tammy Gilson, igniting the fire (GHCMA)
- 2 Monitoring the burn while in progress (GHCMA)
- 3 Drone image of the burnt area (GHCMA)

GOULBURN BROKEN

FISHING AT LAKE EILDON (DARREN WEDA)



GOULBURN BROKEN

KEY EVENTS AND INSIGHTS

- Thanks to a collaborative effort between the community, agencies and Yorta Yorta, water for the environment was delivered to Loch Garry north of Shepparton for the first time in April. While only half of the proposed 1,000 megalitres could be delivered due to the closure of the irrigation network, the water provided cultural and environmental benefits at this popular recreational site.
- Goulburn Broken CMA's projects funded through the Australian Government's National Landcare Program once again met or exceeded their annual targets. Highlights included working with Taungurung Land and Waters Council to carry out 1,000 hectares of cat and fox control at Mt Buller to protect threatened mountain pygmy possums; From the Ground Up project staff and partners delivering virtual farm walks and online workshops covering climate change, soil health, pollinators and sustainable agricultural practices; and The Linking Landscapes and Communities project delivered 56 hectares of revegetation and 1,225 hectares pest plant and animal control.
- As part of the Victorian Government's Drought Employment Program 24 crew members in six teams contributed over 7,800 labour hours towards natural resource management projects across the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District, inspecting and treating more than 2,100 hectares of public land for noxious weeds and planting or maintaining just under 200 hectares of indigenous flora species.
- Goulburn Broken CMA's Floodplain Management Team processed a record 1,100 applications for development, land-use and other works; 117 whole farm plans covering 15,000 hectares were completed; and the Cornella Creek Catchment drainage course declaration was approved and obstructions removed as part of works to return more natural and improved drainage flows in irrigation areas.
- Whroo Goldfields Conservation Management Network celebrated building and installing more than 1,100 nest boxes for Gliders and Phascogales, work its members have been doing since 2009.
- Working with the Arthur Rylah Institute and anglers, a population of threatened Macquarie perch stranded in Hollands Creek was relocated to the Broken River after dry conditions during much of 2019 meant there were very low or no flows in sections of the creek.

OUTPUT	TARGET	ACTUAL			TOTAL
		STATE	FED	OTHER	
1. STRUCTURAL WORKS					
1.1 Channel (km)	22	17			17
1.2 Water storage (no.)	13	22			22
1.4 Irrigation structure (ha)	1,000	210			210
1.5 Waterway structure (no.)	235	259			259
1.7 Terrestrial feature (no.)	0	75			75
1.8 Monitoring structure (no.)	20	23			23
1.9 Fence (km)	48	52	5		56
1.10 Visitor facility (no.)	5	2			2
2. ENVIRONMENTAL WORKS					
2.1 Vegetation (ha)	330	567	68		634
2.2 Weed control (ha)	3,865	4,937	1,324		6,261
2.3 Pest animal control (ha)	95,740	31,293	81,329		112,621
2.8 Earth works (no.)	1	0			0
3. MANAGEMENT SERVICES					
3.1 Grazing (ha)	292	559	100		660
3.3 Water (no.)	30	33			33
4. PLANNING AND REGULATION					
4.1 Approval and advice (no.)	857	1,214			1,214
4.2 Management agreement (no.)	60	46	44		90
4.3 Assessment (no.)	1,368	1,501	163		1,664
4.4 Engagement event (no. participants)	10,277	14,099	1,199		15,298
4.5 Partnership (no.)	125	151			151
4.6 Plan (no.)	90	128	45		173
4.7 Publication (no.)	337	275	104	0	379
4.8 Information management system (no.)	1	0			0





LOCATIONS

Horseshoe Lagoon, near Trawool

OUTPUTS 2019-20

1 written report
1 water wetland
1 engagement event
2 flora assessments
2 fauna assessments
1 monitoring event

PARTNERS

Taungurung Land and Waters Council,
Parks Victoria, Goulburn Murray Water,
Victorian Environmental Water Holder
(VEWH), landholders

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Regional strategies
Goulburn Broken Regional Catchment
Strategy
Goulburn Broken Regional Waterway
Strategy

FUNDING

Victorian Government
(Water for Victoria)

CELEBRATING HORSESHOE LAGOON'S CULTURAL VALUES

"This is a women's place and for me to bring my grandchildren to sing and create ceremony, it's like revival for our ancestors. It just feels as though it's brimming with life, now."

Aunty Patsy, Taungurung Elder

Horseshoe Lagoon is site of great cultural significance to the Taungurung people. The wetland is also important to many local landholders, who value the cultural, aesthetic, recreational and environmental values it provides.

Taungurung people and local landholders were involved in the development of the Horseshoe Lagoon Environmental Water Management Plan, which saw 121 megalitres of water for the environment delivered to the site for the first time during July and August 2019.

The wetland provides significant habitat for rare and threatened species such as Pied Cormorant, Azure Kingfisher, and Eastern Great Egret. The response to the water was almost instant, with a range of wetland planting, including Giant Rush, Water Ribbon, Water Pepped Knotweed and the nationally-threatened River Swamp Wallaby-grass, as well as 50 different species of waterbirds, turtles, wallabies, kangaroos and water rats, recorded during follow-up monitoring.

In September 2019, the environmental water delivery was celebrated by Taungurung people, local landowners and agencies involved in co-ordinating the water delivery. The celebration included a smoking ceremony and traditional songs and dances performed by Taungurung women of all ages.

Speaking at the event, VEWB commissioner Rueben Berg said Horseshoe Lagoon was a great example of the shared benefits of water for the environment.

"It is also a fantastic demonstration of what can be achieved when Traditional Owners, government agencies and local landowners work together to protect something they all agree is important," he said.

- 1 Horseshoe Lagoon with water (GBCMA)
- 2 Young Taungurung dancers during the celebration event (GBCMA)
- 3 Celebrating the first delivery of water for the environment to Horseshoe Lagoon (GBCMA)



LOCATIONS

Mt Major, Dookie

OUTPUTS 2019-20

4 engagement events
6 ha weed control

PARTNERS

Greater Shepparton City Council
University of Melbourne
Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation
Shields and Nichols families

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Goulburn Broken Regional Catchment Strategy

FUNDING

Australian Government
(Building Our Future and National Landcare Program)

WALKING WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE STONE

“This unique visitor experience highlights the distinctive landscape features of the region whilst providing magnificent views across the Goulburn Valley.”

Helen Reynolds, Chair, Goulburn Broken CMA

The picturesque Mulana nin iyoga (spirit of stone in Yorta Yorta language) walking track at Mt Major provides breath-taking views of the Dookie region’s landscape.

In 2019-20, through funding from the National Landcare Program, interpretive signage was developed to complement the Mulana nin iyoga walking experience. The signs detail how the unique geology of the Dookie region provided stone resources that were highly prized by Yorta Yorta people for making tools as well as the importance of the area’s rocky outcrops and springs as water sources to the Traditional Owners and, later, European settlers. Other signs describe the surrounding landscape and its rich agricultural history.

The importance of protecting the area’s remnant vegetation and native wildlife, which has been heavily depleted by land clearing and competition from pest plants and animals, is also highlighted with descriptions detailing the natural and cultural values of a range of species such as Lightwood Wattle, Yellowbox and Grassy woodlands, and wallabies and birds.

The project has opened the north side of the Mount Major Reserve to the public, which was previously land locked. Weed control and revegetation works have been undertaken at the start of the 4.6 kilometre return walk.

As one of the few vantage points in a mostly flat landscape, Mulana nin iyoga provides a wonderful opportunity for locals and visitors to connect with nature and history.

- 1** Start of the Mulana nin iyoga walking trail (GBCMA)
- 2** One of the signs and a fabulous view (GBCMA)
- 3** The walking trail (GBCMA)

MALLEE

MURRAY RIVER AT NANGILOC (MCMA)

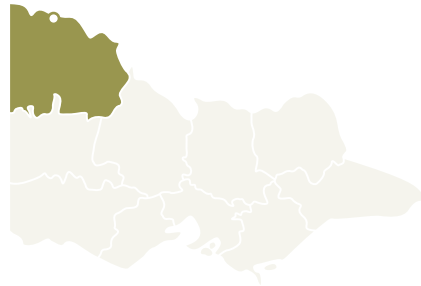


MALLEE

KEY EVENTS AND INSIGHTS

- Over 390,000 hectares of targeted environmental works were undertaken in 2019-20 to protect the region's priority natural, cultural and productive landscapes. Effective partnerships with our community are integral to the success of these on-ground activities, with 118 individual funding grants provided to community groups (31) and private land managers (87).
- Integral to all Mallee CMA natural resource management processes is the protection and management of cultural heritage values. In 2019-20, this was supported through 98 cultural heritage assessments at proposed works sites and two cultural heritage management plans being lodged with Aboriginal Victoria. Aboriginal Waterway Assessments were also undertaken at key sites in partnership with Traditional Owners.
- Recreational values provided by the region's priority waterways were also enhanced through community-driven projects which identified, prioritised and implemented works to improve opportunities for bushwalking, cycling, canoeing, camping and recreational angling.
- Community engagement and capacity building approaches continue to be well supported. In 2019-20, this resulted in some 6,004 stakeholders participating in 588 individual events. Evaluation of these activities identified that 66 per cent of surveyed participants rated the overall delivery of events as 'excellent' and a further 30 per cent as 'good'.
- Materials produced to promote the region, NRM programs and involvement opportunities continued to reach a large and diverse audience. The Mallee CMA Facebook page for example has an average daily reach of 1,291 people in 2019-20, with three posts reaching over 15,000 people.
- Planning for delivery partnerships and engagement activities continues to be informed and enhanced by advice received from regional stakeholders through established forums such as the Salinity Accountability Advisory Committee, Aboriginal Reference Group, Land and Water Community Advisory Committee, Catchment Partnership Committees, Ramsar Coordinating Committee and the Mallee Floodplain Management Strategy Implementation Committee.

OUTPUT	TARGET	ACTUAL			TOTAL
		STATE	FED	OTHER	
1. STRUCTURAL WORKS					
1.1 Channel (km)	1	1			1
1.4 Irrigation structure (ha)	367	267		332	599
1.5 Waterway structure (no.)		9			9
1.6 Terrestrial structure (no.)	1	1			1
1.7 Terrestrial feature (no.)	3	33			33
1.8 Monitoring structure (no.)	33	23	2	9	34
1.9 Fence (km)	27	32			32
1.10 Visitor facility (no.)	12	25			25
1.11 Road (km)	15	18			18
1.12 Crossing (no.)	5	6			6
2. ENVIRONMENTAL WORKS					
2.1 Vegetation (ha)	491	254	186		440
2.2 Weed control (ha)	109,263	96,292	14,046		110,338
2.3 Pest animal control (ha)	277,896	245,443	41,239		286,682
3. MANAGEMENT SERVICES					
3.3 Water (no.)	45	33			33
4. PLANNING AND REGULATION					
4.1 Approval and advice (no.)	331	241		82	323
4.2 Management agreement (no.)	118	77	32	19	128
4.3 Assessment (no.)	540	428	70	30	528
4.4 Engagement event (no. participants)	4,794	4,008	1,605	391	6,004
4.5 Partnership (no.)	154	144	23	1	168
4.6 Plan (no.)	123	87	22	12	121
4.7 Publication (no.)	410	341	72	26	439
4.8 Information management system (no.)	19	14	2		16



LOCATIONS

Merbein Common

OUTPUTS 2019-20

61 event participants
7 publications
1 approval and advice
3 partnerships
1 plan

PARTNERS

Parks Victoria, First People of the Millewa Mallee Aboriginal Corporation, Friends of Merbein Common, Yelta Landcare Group, OzFish Sunraysia, Mildura 4WD Club

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Mallee Regional Catchment Strategy
Mallee Waterway Strategy
Regional Riparian Action Plan

FUNDING

Victorian Government
(Water for Victoria)

MERBEIN COMMON FLAGSHIP WATERWAY

“A shared sense of ownership between our community, stakeholders and Traditional Owners has ultimately been the reason that this project has been so successful, bringing a sweeping transformation to a degraded landscape that can now thrive and be enjoyed by future generations.”

Sharyon Peart, Mallee CMA Board Chair

Merbein Common, one of Victoria's Flagship Waterway sites, has been transformed through the delivery of a huge program of community-led environmental works over the past four years.

Encompassing 1,000 hectares of Murray River floodplain reserve, the site supports significant environmental, social and cultural heritage values, including 196 fauna and 88 flora species listed under international agreements, and Commonwealth and State legislation.

Suffering from vegetation disturbance and erosion damage as a result of widespread recreational impacts, the site is now flourishing and is a popular destination for locals and tourists alike. Change which has been achieved through the completion of several major on-ground works projects including canoe launches, boat ramps, walking tracks, all weather access tracks, camping and viewing areas, revegetation and fencing of sensitive areas, and associated information signage.

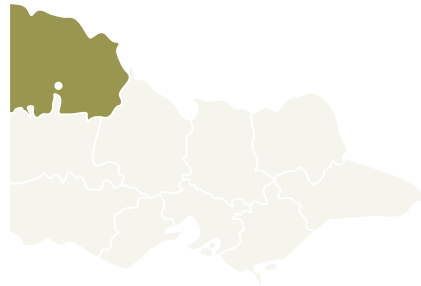
Implementing these works across such a culturally significant site did present some challenges which often required innovative and consultative approaches to ensure planned works did not impact on the values that they were ultimately seeking to protect. A key example of this was the design and application of 'cultural' bollards which are secured by a heavy concrete base, rather than the traditional bollards which require ground disturbance to install.

These cultural bollards have enabled a new approach to protecting significant sites, without risking further damage through their installation.

Ongoing involvement of the land manager (Parks Victoria), local community, and Indigenous stakeholders in the planning, prioritisation and implementation of works was key to the project's success. This collaborative approach has also strengthened the community's sense of ownership and connection to the site.

Stage one of this project was completed in 2019-20, with planning for Stage 2 well underway to build on the outcomes achieved to date and ensure the long term protection of the site.

- 1 Official opening of Merbein Common – Stage 1 (MCMA)
- 2 Making use of new tracks at Merbein Common (MCMA)
- 3 Cultural Bollards installed at Merbein Common (MCMA)



LOCATIONS

Berrook State Forest, Bronzewing State Forest and Yapeet State Forest

OUTPUTS 2019-20

10,814 ha weed control
19,537 ha pest animal control
1 management agreement
8 assessments
275 events participants
3 plans
5 publications

PARTNERS

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Greening Australia, National Malleefowl Recovery Group, Victorian Malleefowl Recovery Group

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Mallee Regional Catchment Strategy

FUNDING

Australian Government
(National Landcare Program)

RECONNECTING ISOLATED MALLEEFOWL

“Creating linkages in fragmented habitat is critical to ensuring the long term future of Malleefowl in the Mallee. Long-term investment has enabled strategic planning and delivery of projects to add value to past works; now and into the future.”

Sharyon Peart, Mallee CMA Board Chair

Habitat fragmentation is one of the biggest threats facing Malleefowl in the Mallee region, with a lack of connectivity between small to medium remnants and large tracts of public land effectively isolating some populations. These isolated Malleefowl populations are vulnerable to local extinction; with grazing pressure, weed invasion, fire events, drought impacts and predation just some of the risks they face which increase as the size and connectivity of their habitat decreases.

To tackle this, Mallee stakeholders are combining their knowledge and on-ground delivery efforts to ensure investment in Malleefowl protection is targeted toward activities and locations that provide the greatest returns.

Through funding from the Australian Government’s National Landcare Program, Mallee CMA is working with Greening Australia, the Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning (DELWP), and the National Malleefowl Recovery Group to establish three vital vegetation corridors and reconnect priority Malleefowl habitat. These linkages help to reduce the isolation of fragmented populations, an important step in increasing the viability of Malleefowl populations in the region.

In 2019-20 this has included 101 hectares of revegetation, at Berrook, Bronzewing and Yapeet State Forests using a combination of direct seeding and tube stock planting and building on 83 hectares of plantings at these sites in 2018-19.

Particular care was taken with the choice of planting methods to optimise plant establishment in relation to the critical issue of soil moisture in our dry climatic conditions. To optimise survival rates, the tube stock has been regularly watered, and protected from pest animal (rabbit and goat) grazing and weed competition through targeted control programs.

The sites have been continually monitored to assess survival rates, with field inspections showing a high survival rate amongst tube stock, and evidence of the direct seeding germinating.

Further revegetation and ongoing maintenance of these corridors is planned over the next three years to ensure that they can play an important role in improving habitat and landscape connectivity for the endangered Malleefowl in the Victorian Mallee.

1 Aerial view of Malleefowl Corridor (MCMA)

2 Malleefowl (DELWP)

3 Malleefowl Corridor as of March 2020 (MCMA)



NORTH CENTRAL

CULTURAL EVENT AT BOORT (NORTH CENTRAL CMA)

NORTH CENTRAL

KEY EVENTS AND INSIGHTS

- The Caring for the Campaspe project delivered more than 13 kilometres of fencing; 22 hectares of weed control; 38 hectares of revegetation; installed 15 off-stream watering facilities; engaged and connected with 280 participants at various field days and meetings; and produced nine publications showcasing project achievements. These works contributed to impressive results achieved over the past eight years with 52 per cent of the entire river protected with fencing and 75 per cent of crack willow infestations controlled in the project area.
- Coordinated the delivery of 57,700 megalitres of water for the environment to 14 wetlands and waterways. These environmental and consumptive flows contributed to the environmental, social and recreational values of wetlands and waterways across the region, and contributed to the socioeconomic wellbeing of local communities.
- The Kyneton Offsets integrated catchment management project (funded by Coliban Water and delivered by North Central CMA) built on the outcomes of the Caring for the Campaspe project by delivering extensive catchment improvement works along the Campaspe River upstream of Kyneton. This included 12 kilometres of river fencing, 56 hectares of willow control and 15 hectares of revegetation delivered by local contractors, including Djandak (business arm of Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation).
- Funded through the Victorian Government's Boosting Recreational Water Use Initiative and the Murray Darling Basin Authority, the North Central CMA partnered with Campaspe Shire to build the first all abilities fishing platform and kayak launch along the Campaspe River at Rochester.
- The Native Fish Recovery Plan continues to work towards restoring native fish populations in the Gunbower and lower Loddon region. Achievements include 35 hectares of riparian revegetation; 9.8 kilometres of riparian protection and enhancement and securing \$15 million funding for fishways and irrigation screens in the project area.
- North Central CMA's Reconciliation Action Plan provides a clear and practical pathway towards the organisation's vision of walking alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as partners, caring for the region's catchments together. Achievements include mentoring opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and Traditional Owner groups to facilitate employment on Country; Aboriginal membership on a number of CMA committees; Boort Land Water and Fire, and Wanyarram Dhelk projects developed and delivered in partnership with Dja Dja Wurrung to meet Country Plan objectives.

OUTPUT	TARGET	ACTUAL			TOTAL
		STATE	FED	OTHER	
1. STRUCTURAL WORKS					
1.2 Water storage (no.)	28	31		35	66
1.3 Pump (no.)	10	5			5
1.5 Waterway structure (no.)	23	1	1	22	24
1.7 Terrestrial feature (no.)	0	47			47
1.8 Monitoring structure (no.)	0		2		2
1.9 Fence (km)	56	41	7	12	60
2. ENVIRONMENTAL WORKS					
2.1 Vegetation (ha)	141	565	144	12	721
2.2 Weed control (ha)	300	2,006	68	86	2,160
2.3 Pest animal control (ha)	12,198	16,736	1,003		17,739
2.5 Threatened species response (no.)	2		0		0
2.8 Earth works (no.)	2		3		3
3. MANAGEMENT SERVICES					
3.1 Grazing (ha)	45	80		14	94
3.2 Agricultural practices (ha)	18,400		26,364		26,364
3.3 Water (no.)	61	49	2		51
3.4 Fire (no.)	0	132			132
4. PLANNING AND REGULATION					
4.1 Approval and advice (no.)	2,607	3,287		4	3,291
4.2 Management agreement (no.)	61	25	10		35
4.3 Assessment (no.)	1,193	1,132	110	2	1,244
4.4 Engagement event (no. participants)	2,079	4,627	769	25	5,421
4.5 Partnership (no.)	72	35			35
4.6 Plan (no.)	453	60	11		71
4.7 Publication (no.)	69	151	21		172
4.8 Information management system (no.)	4	4			4





LOCATIONS

Coliban River and tributaries upstream of Malmesbury Reservoir

OUTPUTS 2019-20

15 km fencing
22 ha revegetation
8 ha weeds control
5 off-stream water troughs installed

PARTNERS

Coliban Water, Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, Department of Land, Water, Environment and Planning, Hepburn Shire, Macedon Ranges Shire, Goulburn Murray Water, Landcare groups

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

North Central Regional Catchment Strategy
North Central Waterway Strategy
Regional Landcare Support Plan
North Central Waterwatch Support Plan

FUNDING

Victorian Government
Coliban Water

A HEALTHY COLIBAN CATCHMENT

“The project is one of the most robust and integrated approaches to catchment management undertaken to date in Victoria”

Julie Miller Markoff, Chair, North Central CMA

North Central CMA is leading the project in partnership with Coliban Water, Dja Dja Wurrung, Landcare, North Central Waterwatch and partner agencies. Project works aim to protect the highly valued waterways and future water supplies for communities while boosting habitat connectivity and building cultural and lifestyle value across the catchment.

The Upper Coliban catchment is home to the Dja Dja Wurrung Traditional Owners and is culturally rich with several significant sites within the catchment. The North Central CMA and Coliban Water continue to work with Dja Dja Wurrung to help contribute to aspirations outlined in their Country Plan ‘Dhelkunya Dja’.

The catchment also provides raw drinking water for more than 130,000 people which includes the towns of Bendigo, Kyneton and Castlemaine and is appreciated by the community for its environmental, social, cultural and economic values.

In recent times, threats from existing and future developments, uncontrolled livestock access to streams and impacts from a changing climate have resulted in a decline in the catchment’s health. Without a long-term vision and action plan the catchment will degrade further which will have a detrimental impact on future water supplies and the environmental and cultural values that make the area unique and sought after.

On-ground works to date, guided by a Community Reference Group, include fencing to control stock accessing the river. Stock effluent can contain disease-causing microorganisms known as pathogens. If the effluent contaminates drinking water sources, and the required level of water treatment is not applied, pathogens can cause serious outbreaks of human and stock disease. Off-stream watering points are being installed in areas where stock no longer have access to the waterway with weed control and revegetation along the riparian zone complementing the stock exclusion works.

The Macedon Ranges and Hepburn Shire council areas are an attractive place to live. On-ground works together with potential planning scheme overlays to protect the catchment from the known risks of current and future developments.

Completed works and those planned over the next few years will go a long way in protecting the catchment and deliver positive environmental, social, economic and cultural lasting outcomes for the catchment and for the community.

1 Coliban River (NCCMA)

2 Fencing Coliban River (NCCMA)



REIMAGINING BENDIGO CREEK

“We have an obligation to our neighbours downstream, as well as ourselves, to keep Bendigo Creek clean and ensure the water in it remains healthy.”

Julie Miller Markoff, Chair, North Central CMA



LOCATIONS

Bendigo Creek

OUTPUTS 2019-20

10 River Detective schools
350 school children engaged
15 sites monitored along Bendigo Creek

PARTNERS

City of Greater Bendigo, Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, Parks Victoria, Coliban Water, Environment Protection Authority, Goulburn Murray Water, local community

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

North Central Regional Catchment Strategy

FUNDING

Victorian Government
(Water for Victoria)



Bendigo Creek has a long, rich and varied history. Valued by Traditional Owners for thousands of years as a place of beauty and a source of food and — in modern times — as the lifeblood of an emerging and thriving regional city.

During the gold rush of the 1800s, Bendigo Creek was fundamentally used as a drain to direct the vast amounts of sludge away from town. The values and function of the creek have vastly improved since this time and the City of Greater Bendigo's Reimagining Bendigo Creek plan marks a turning point in history. The start of renewal, understanding and connection to create a healthier, more inclusive more connected and more beautiful creek.

An integrated catchment management approach between the City of Greater Bendigo and partners including Dja Dja Wurrung and North Central CMA has culminated in the CMA supporting the Reimagining Bendigo Creek project with a focus on sharing knowledge, citizen science and waterway health.

An army of citizen scientists is monitoring the health of Bendigo Creek to analyse how planned remediation works and development will impact water quality and help North Centre CMA and City of Greater Bendigo better manage the health of the creek as it changes over coming years.

Local Waterwatch volunteers and students from 10 local schools are involved in the River Detectives program and are regularly monitoring at least 15 sites, testing for pH levels, salinity, reactive phosphorous, turbidity, dissolved oxygen and waterbugs.

A highlight over the past year was the launch of 'Litter Trackers', a first for regional Victoria. North Central CMA engaged school students through its River Detectives program and partnered with the City of Greater Bendigo and RMIT to raise awareness about litter, how it enters the creek and where it goes.

Inside the bottles were GPS trackers that were thrown into the creek in an attempt to map exactly where they end up and what happens to rubbish when it enters the creek.

The Victorian Government is supporting community partnerships over the next four years through Waterwatch and other citizen science initiatives to address local waterway priorities.

- 1 Bendigo Creek (NCCMA)
- 2 Testing water quality at Bendigo Creek (NCCMA)
- 3 Extracting a litter tracker from Bendigo Creek (NCCMA)



NORTH EAST

THE CATHEDRAL, MT BUFFALO NATIONAL PARK (NATALIE ORD)

NORTH EAST

KEY EVENTS AND INSIGHTS

- After more than 430,000 hectares of land in north east Victoria (22 per cent of the catchment) was affected by bushfires in December 2019 and January 2020, North East CMA has commenced a \$3 million Bushfire Recovery Program, working with communities to restore sites of prior CMA investment by undertaking fencing, revegetation, weed control and bank stabilisation works.
- A four-year Water for Victoria landholder grants project to improve the health of the region's waterways was completed in 2019-20. The 85 kilometres of fencing installed as part of the project has excluded 609 hectares from stock grazing. In addition, 49 water troughs keep stock out of streams; 526 hectares of revegetation works will improve river biodiversity; and 175 landholders have signed up to manage land along waterways.
- 35,736 hectares of threat control, including cat, fox, deer and weed control, was undertaken including 17,000 hectares across the Mount Hotham Alpine Resort and Alpine National Park to protect the Mountain Pygmy-possum from predation.
- Through the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and in partnership with Trust for Nature, North East CMA worked with 24 landholders to protect and enhance more than 1,000 hectares of habitat on private land to benefit the Regent Honeyeater.
- Under the North East Regional Floodplain Management Strategy, work was undertaken at 41 sites to reduce threats to assets including road and bridge embankments, footpaths, stabilisation of systems, formal levees, and emergency access tracks.
- In partnership with the Murray Local Land Services, North East Water, DELWP Hume, Parks Victoria, the Murray Darling Basin Authority and regional universities, North East CMA hosted the 7th National Natural Resource Management (NRM) Knowledge conference for more than 275 delegates in November 2019 in Wodonga.
- North East CMA partnered with the Taungurung Land and Waters Council, the Yorta Yorta Nations Aboriginal Corporation, the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, the Duduroa Dhargal Aboriginal Corporation, and the Alpine First Nations Alliance (made up of Dhudhuroa, Waywurru and Jaithmathang people) to commence the renewal of the North East Regional Catchment Strategy.



**NORTH EAST
CATCHMENT
MANAGEMENT
AUTHORITY**

OUTPUT	TARGET	ACTUAL			TOTAL
		STATE	FED	OTHER	
1. STRUCTURAL WORKS					
1.2 Water storage (no.)	17	41			41
1.5 Waterway structure (no.)	3	65		5	70
1.7 Terrestrial feature (no.)	41	12	26		38
1.8 Monitoring structure (no.)	12	17			17
1.9 Fence (km)	30	54			54
1.10 Visitor facility (no.)	5	11			11
2. ENVIRONMENTAL WORKS					
2.1 Vegetation (ha)	183	261		3	264
2.2 Weed control (ha)	1,035	2,226	403	281	2,910
2.3 Pest animal control (ha)	23,060	11	135,736		135,747
2.4 Over-abundant wildlife (no.)	500		667		667
2.5 Threatened species response (no.)	0		2		2
2.8 Earth works (no.)	4	34		2	36
3. MANAGEMENT SERVICES					
3.1 Grazing (ha)	221	230			230
3.3 Water (no.)	3	3			3
4. PLANNING AND REGULATION					
4.1 Approval and advice (no.)	442	511	0		511
4.2 Management agreement (no.)	86	36	31	4	71
4.3 Assessment (no.)	163	301	43	24	368
4.4 Engagement event (no. participants)	2,189	4,540	2,845		7,385
4.5 Partnership (no.)	82	101	49	3	153
4.6 Plan (no.)	24	15	2		17
4.7 Publication (no.)	152	286	68	1	355
4.8 Information management system (no.)	3	7	1		8



LOCATIONS

King River

OUTPUTS 2019-20

1 water reach
1 partnership

PARTNERS

Victorian Environmental Water Holder,
Goulburn Murray Water, Taungurung
Land and Waters Council

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

North East CMA Aboriginal
Participation Plan
Victoria's North and Murray Water
Resource Plan

FUNDING

Victorian Government
(Water for Victoria)

TAUNGURUNG ENVIRONMENTAL WATER RELEASE

“The rivers are the veins of the Country; if you take too much water from them Country will get sick. Taungurung has a responsibility and we are only doing the right thing for Country by bringing water back to the river... we achieve even more if we continue working together.”

Shane Monk, Taungurung Man

Taungurung Land and Waters Council via Baan Ganalina (Guardians of water, Taungurung water knowledge holder group) and the North East CMA worked with the Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEWH) and Goulburn Murray Water to release water for the environment during 2019-20.

The King River catchment was recently incorporated into the Taungurung Registered Aboriginal Party area. This water project provided a great start to North East CMA's working relationship with the Traditional Owners by providing some positive environmental and cultural outcomes on the ground.

An Aboriginal Water Assessment was undertaken by Baan Ganalina supported by North East CMA on the King River prior to the first release of water in September 2019, allowing connection with Country and a better understanding of the ecology, management and history of the King River.

In early 2020, the North East CMA assisted Taungurung Land and Waters Council to again transfer their entitlement of 39 megalitres to VEW, which was released from Lake William Hovell in conjunction with the Ovens entitlement held in Lake William Hovell of 50 megalitres, making a total of 89ML. This release boosted flows from 85 megalitres per day up to 140 megalitres per day between 29 and 31 March. This was equivalent to just under a 10cm rise in water level in the King River below Lake William Hovell.

This release was aimed at increasing variability in the flow pattern and inundating new habitat and food sources for aquatic biota. This release was made when there was a natural rainfall event occurring to simulate the natural boost to flow from rainfall, which was otherwise held back by Lake William Hovell.

This water release is contributing to healing Country by providing a boost to the health and productivity of the waterway. This flow provided a small variation in the water level of the King River downstream of Lake William Hovell, which inundated new habitat for water bugs and fish, allowing them to move more freely and find new sources of food.

1 & 2 Taungurung and North East CMA representatives at King River (NECMA)



LOCATIONS

Kiewa River, Lower and Upper Ovens River, King River, Upper Murray River and Lower Mitta Mitta River, Burgoinee Creek

OUTPUTS 2019-20

63 sites rehabilitated
9 management agreements
14 km fencing
24 ha revegetation
12 ha weed control
12 ha grazing
48 event participants

PARTNERS

Parks Victoria, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Indigo Shire Council, Rural City of Wangaratta, Towong Shire Council, Alpine Shire Council

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

North East Regional Catchment Strategy

FUNDING

Australian Government (Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery)
Victorian Government

NORTH EAST FLOOD RECOVERY

“The Flood Response and Recovery Program has been a major achievement for North East CMA, successfully steering a coordinated approach with the community and stakeholders facing a shared challenge after the floods.”

Leanne Mulcahy, Chair, North East CMA

In 2016, a major flood event impacted the Kiewa, Lower and Upper Ovens, King, Upper Murray and Lower Mitta Mitta waterway systems. As a result, work needed to be undertaken to help to stabilise and rehabilitate damaged waterway reaches and provide habitat for impacted aquatic species

The Australian Government and Victorian Government, through the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements, made available \$4.8 million to undertake recovery and repair work to essential public infrastructure.

Of the 420 sites originally assessed, 63 projects were approved and works were undertaken over two years to stabilise bridges, roads, culverts and other sites to repair essential public assets.

A further 16 high-risk sites received an additional \$2.6 million from the Victorian Government to undertake structural works, fencing and revegetation in partnership with landholders to further protect riparian areas into the future.

Throughout the program, 4,000 timber piles were installed to stabilise river and stream systems, with more than 2,000 piles being installed on the Little Snowy Creek alone. Approximately 34,900 tonnes of rock were also placed to stabilise banks.

The program has seen North East CMA develop great partnerships with Parks Victoria, Goulburn Murray Water and the Rural City of Wangaratta, who donated a large amount of timber used for bank stabilisation and the creation of vital fish habitat in our rivers.

The investment and project work was spread across five local government areas, as outlined in the table below.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA	NO. SITES	\$ INVESTMENT structural works
WODONGA	1	\$12,410
TOWONG	20	\$1,240,000
INDIGO	8	\$110,000
WANGARATTA	26	\$1,680,000
ALPINE	24	\$996,980

1 McNamara's Bridge Benambra-Corryong Road before works (NECMA)

2 McNamara's Bridge Benambra-Corryong Road after works (NECMA)



PORT PHILLIP & WESTERNPORT

PORT PHILLIP WESTERN SHORELINE RAMSAR SITE (PPWCMA)

PORT PHILLIP & WESTERNPORT

KEY EVENTS AND INSIGHTS

- Port Phillip & Westernport CMA delivered \$428,672 of funding to 115 Landcare and community environmental groups through the Victorian Landcare Grants 2019-20. The high level of demand for grants in Port Phillip and Western Port region (more than \$1 million in applications) led to the Victorian Government allocating an additional \$300,000, allowing a broader range of activities to benefit more communities.
- Port Phillip & Westernport CMA's partnerships with the region's Traditional Owners continued to be strengthened. Partnership agreements were maintained with all three Registered Aboriginal Parties, six formal partnership meetings were held in 2019-20 and \$72,870 from Port Phillip & Westernport CMA projects was used to procure the services of Aboriginal organisations and businesses.
- Port Phillip & Westernport CMA secured \$1.2 million in funding through the Victorian Government's Working for Victoria initiative to simultaneously create jobs and deliver environmental and agricultural benefits. The equivalent of 51 FTE positions will be employed throughout 2020-21 to deliver a farmer-led agricultural education program for schools on-ground environmental and agricultural services, and project work to support the protection of threatened species on French Island.
- 2019-20 was year two of projects funded by the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and the fourth and final year of projects funded by the Victorian Government's Our Catchments, Our Communities initiative. Achievements included:
 - Delivering a hydrology restoration plan and a video to support landholders to undertake habitat restoration to support the Helmeted Honeyeater recovery.
 - Installing the 'Spreading the Message' Aboriginal art installation in Dandenong North.
 - Delivering 67,677 hectares of pest plant and animal control across Werribee Gorge State Park, Lerderderg State Park, Brisbane Ranges National Park and surrounding private properties.
 - Undertaking pest animal control across 25,789 hectares of the Western Port and Port Phillip Bay (western shoreline) Ramsar sites.
- In 2019-20, Victoria's CMAs began the process to renew their 10 Regional Catchment Strategies (RCS). Port Phillip & Westernport CMA championed this process, providing significant input into the Victorian Catchment Management Council's guidelines for the renewal of all Victorian RCSs and supporting the other CMAs to transition their strategies to an online format.

OUTPUT	TARGET	ACTUAL			TOTAL
		STATE	FED	OTHER	
1. STRUCTURAL WORKS					
1.9 Fence (km)	1	1.5			1.5
1.10 Visitor facility (no.)	9	8			8
2. ENVIRONMENTAL WORKS					
2.1 Vegetation (ha)	5	45	0.5	219	264
2.2 Weed control (ha)	4,219	2,760	1,660	8	4,428
2.3 Pest animal control (ha)	66,146	53,837	19,552	17	73,405
2.9 Rubbish removal (ha)	0	2			0
4. PLANNING AND REGULATION					
4.2 Management agreement (no.)	2	25			25
4.3 Assessment (no.)	146	60	110		170
4.4 Engagement event (no. participants)	1,332	3,325	2,486	1,142	6,953
4.5 Partnership (no.)	71	53	6	8	67
4.6 Plan (no.)	44	3	38	2	43
4.7 Publication (no.)	73	179	385	112	676
4.8 Information management system (no.)	2	2			2



LOCATION

Western Port catchment

OUTPUTS 2019-20

65 events
1,169 event participants
99 assessments
10 publications

PARTNERS

Western Port Catchment Landcare Network, Bass Coast Landcare Network, South Gippsland Landcare Network, Mornington Peninsula Shire, Agriculture Victoria, Melbourne Water

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Port Phillip and Western Port Regional Catchment Strategy

FUNDING

Australian Government
(National Landcare Program)

SMART FARMING FOR WESTERN PORT

“Every week I left [the GrazFert program] feeling more enthused and inspired ... I think all farmers need this kind of learning and course work, and it is part of the solution for us to face the world’s problems.”

Robin, Gippsland Farmer

Since 2018, this five-year project being delivered by the Western Port Catchment Landcare Network (WPCLN) with the support of the Port Phillip & Westernport CMA through funding from the National Landcare Program has aimed to increase awareness and adoption of land management practices that improve and protect the condition of soil, biodiversity and vegetation by farmers in the Western Port catchment.

The project has a strong focus on peer to peer learning and support through discussion groups and field events. While coronavirus (COVID-19) prevented many physical events from occurring in the second half of 2019-20, all project deliverables were still able to be met as delivery methods were adapted to ensure farmers continued to be engaged and supported.

Farmer discussion groups moved online, and a videographer was engaged to film virtual farm walks. The success of these efforts reinforced the importance of keeping farmers engaged with each other to share learnings and experiences.

Towards the end of 2019-20, a YouTube video series on Regenerative Agriculture hosted by soil scientist Declan McDonald was also released and has had an overwhelmingly positive response from a wide demographic.

In 2019-20, the project engaged 1,169 people in 65 events (physical and online). This included eight field days, seven on-farm demonstration sites, two GrazFert programs delivered with 25 farming families trained and 48 farmer discussion groups sessions (including 14 online virtual farm walks).

Total participation in the project to date is 2,841 people at 128 separate events involving 1,112 unique individuals.

- 1 Soil Scientist Declan McDonald being filmed for the regenerative agriculture video series (WPCLN)
- 2 Farmer discussion group looking at new pasture species with soil scientist Damien Adcock (WPCLN)
- 3 Farmer Discussion group inspects a lucerne crop (WPCLN)



RESTORING THE NATURAL GLORY OF JACKSONS CREEK

“The collaboration with the PPWCMA has revitalised the Friends of Emu Bottom Wetlands Reserve. It has allowed us to recruit new members ... the project has had an effect more profound than just the healthy number of trees we have planted.”

Christina Cheers, President, Jacksons Creek Eco Network

LOCATION

Sunbury

OUTPUTS 2019-20

8.5 ha pest animal control
39.5 ha weed control
265 event participants
5 publications

PARTNERS

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Melbourne Water, Salesian College Sunbury, Hume City Council, Friends of Emu Bottom Wetland Reserve, Jacksons Creek Eco Network, Villawood Properties, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Port Phillip and Western Port Regional Catchment Strategy

FUNDING

Victorian Government
(Our Catchments, Our Communities)



The Jacksons Creek corridor in Sunbury is home to local populations of Platypus, Growling Grass Frog and migratory Swift Parrot, but it is also home to a growing local community. Urban growth and development in Sunbury-Diggers Rest are proceeding at a very rapid pace and in recent years the population has reached 35,000. Further development in this growth corridor is expected to house 71,000 people within the next 5 to 10 years.

Jacksons Creek runs through the centre of this corridor and supports the community with natural amenity, a sense of being not far from nature and general liveability. Since 2017, the Restoring the Natural Glory of Jacksons Creek project has worked to bring government, community and businesses together to achieve a shared vision to build resilience into the remnant native vegetation.

The focus has been on establishing a substantial corridor of native vegetation along 10.5 kilometres of Jacksons Creek between the Emu Bottom Wetlands Reserve and Salesian College.

Project work in 2019-20 commenced with students from Salesian College Sunbury planting close to 1,000 trees and shrubs along the banks of Jacksons Creek, as well as clients from disability service, Distinctive Options, working with Port Phillip & Westernport CMA and the Friends of Emu Bottom Wetlands Reserve to plant.

In addition to this, work by contractors led to 10,500 trees being planting in 2019-19. Pest animal control across 8.5 hectares was also undertaken to minimise the risks to all these plantings. Timed across the year to suit the target weeds, pest plant control also totalled 39.5 hectares in new areas as well as maintenance of areas completed in earlier project years.

The Wurundjeri Narrap Rangers were engaged to extend the project's weed control efforts into a previously unmanaged area of the creek line. A significant addition to the project was the use of a rubber tracked excavator with mulcher to obliterate some of the oldest largest boxthorn ever seen along the banks of Jacksons Creek.

The project, extended with funding from Melbourne Water, will conclude in 2020-21 with a final year of weed control and planting.

- 1 Volunteers from Distinctive Options lend a hand (PPWCMA)
- 2 Wurundjeri Narrap Rangers ripping Boxthorn (PPWCMA)
3. A Wedge-Tailed Eagle surveys a direct seeding site (Habitat Land Management)

WEST GIPPSLAND

STUDENTS FROM ELLINBANK PRIMARY SCHOOL (WGCMCA)



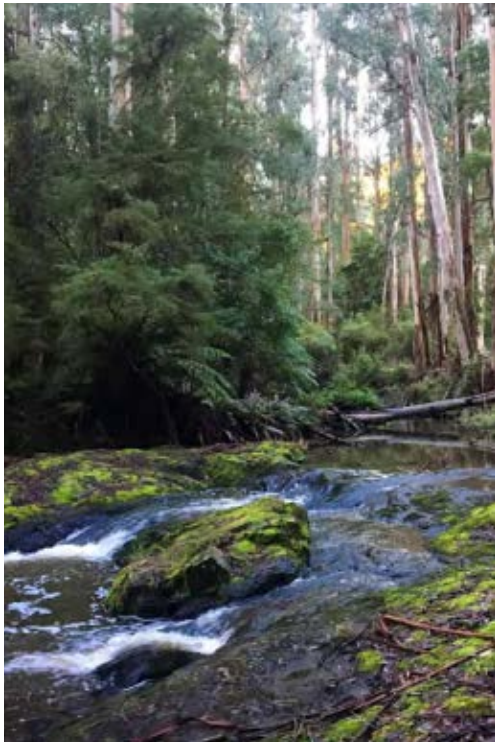
WEST GIPPSLAND

KEY EVENTS AND INSIGHTS

- In 2019-20, West Gippsland CMA fenced more than 40 kilometres of priority waterways, completed nearly 90 hectares of revegetation, removed willows over more than 70 hectares, completed over 2,440 hectares of weed control and stabilised riverbeds and banks at 24 sites.
- 27,868 gigalitres of water for the environment was released into the Thomson, Macalister and Latrobe rivers. This water is critical for native plants and animals and the flows can move sediment and nutrients through rivers, connect habitats and improve water quality. This year, there was a confirmed sighting of an Australasian Bittern at Sale Common for the first time since 1992. In the preceding three months, West Gippsland CMA had been providing the Common with additional inflows, which resulted in a range of species flourishing and breeding.
- The Sustainable Irrigation Program delivered 34 new or updated irrigation farm plans, which will impact almost 2,500 hectares of land in the Macalister Irrigation District and 22 on-farm irrigation efficiency projects covering an area of 236 hectares, providing estimated water savings of over 1,950 megalitres each year.
- To help Landcarers understand Aboriginal cultural heritage, West Gippsland CMA developed a Cultural Heritage Information Pack in consultation with Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation and Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation. It is the first of its kind in Victoria, and these packs will be used in conjunction with On Country presentations to educate the Landcare members in the region.
- More than 100 Golden Bell Frog tadpoles were found in early 2020 at new wetland sites constructed in partnership with Greening Australia and local landholders. The project to construct the wetlands aims to improve the vegetation and health of the fringing wetlands of the Gippsland Lakes and provide much-needed habitat for birds, frogs, and other freshwater species.
- The CORE 4 program was delivered in the Macalister Irrigation District to reduce nutrient flow to the Ramsar-listed Gippsland Lakes. \$800,000 was allocated to 60 on-ground projects covering more than 10,000 hectares, almost 20 per cent of the Macalister Irrigation District. These projects are expected to not only save local farmers money in unnecessary fertiliser application, but save 19,200 kilograms of phosphorus and 104,000 kilograms of nitrogen from flowing into the Gippsland Lakes each year.
- After completing the Thomson River Fishway last year, allowing for low flows around Horseshoe Bend Tunnel, fish surveys found higher numbers of migratory fish above the fishway than previously surveyed, which is an early indication of the success of the project.



OUTPUT	TARGET	ACTUAL			TOTAL
		STATE	FED	OTHER	
1. STRUCTURAL WORKS					
1.2 Water storage (no.)	38	23	3	12	38
1.4 Irrigation structure (ha)	133	237			237
1.5 Waterway structure (no.)	2	1		1	2
1.8 Monitoring structure (no.)	13	13			13
1.9 Fence (km)	34	21	10	10	42
2. ENVIRONMENTAL WORKS					
2.1 Vegetation (ha)	71	50	17	20	87
2.2 Weed control (ha)	493	1,730	680	33	2,442
2.3 Pest animal control (ha)	55,305	68,558	6,239		74,797
2.8 Earth works (no.)	2	0.8	0.3	1.3	2.4
3. MANAGEMENT SERVICES					
3.3 Water (no.)	20	20			20
4. PLANNING AND REGULATION					
4.1 Approval and advice (no.)	1,361	1,628	5	6	1,639
4.2 Management agreement (no.)	63	22	30	11	63
4.3 Assessment (no.)	391	518	144	29	691
4.4 Engagement event (no. participants)	1,307	2,576	928	135	3,639
4.5 Partnership (no.)	50	55		1	56
4.6 Plan (no.)	57	44	45		89
4.7 Publication (no.)	56	115	2		117
4.8 Information management system (no.)	4	3	2		5



TARGETING WILLOWS AT THEIR SOURCE



LOCATIONS

Agnes River, Franklin River, Macalister River, Avon River, Morwell River, Middle Creek and the Latrobe River.

OUTPUTS 2019-20

266.5 ha weed control
1 willow status assessment
5 participants
1 partnership

PARTNERS

Parks Victoria, DELWP Gippsland, Hancock Victoria Plantations, Yarram Yarram Landcare Network, South Gippsland Landcare Network

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

West Gippsland Regional Waterway Strategy

FUNDING

Victorian Government
(Regional Riparian Action Plan)

“We’re proud of this program, which will save time and money in the long run. Our actions now will improve these rivers into the future.”

Peter Jennings OAM, Chair, West Gippsland CMA

The far upper reaches of the Franklin and Agnes rivers in South Gippsland are inaccessible to most, but these pristine waterways have been the focus of a new program aimed at tackling willow infestations.

Ridding our headwaters of willows means the riverbanks downstream are better protected from reinfestation.

According to West Gippsland CMA’s Project Delivery Team Leader, Matt Bowler, willows are extremely invasive.

“They can change stream and river courses, choke up the middle of waterways and take over from native vegetation.

“If the stream and river courses is changed and the river choked up, there is less habitat available for native animals and reduces the biodiversity of waterways.”

West Gippsland CMA’s headwaters program aims to remove willows high in the catchment so that they can’t re-establish downstream.

Over the last 20 years West Gippsland CMA has worked closely with farmers on the lower reaches of the Agnes and Franklin rivers to remove the willows, fence the rivers off from stock and plant trees to create a buffer.

The willows headwater program focuses on the upper part of the catchment, complementing the works done downstream by removing willows and helping prevent reinfestation.

twigs. It is much more expensive to remove large clumps of willows downstream then fence and revegetate that area than to remove the upstream willows before they wreak havoc, becoming a downstream problem.

“The logistics of working in the headwaters can be challenging. Two experienced outdoor contractors walk the rivers wearing specialist safety and work gear looking for willows.

“When they spot a willow, they use a small axe to put a series of cuts around the plant just under the bark and apply herbicide into these axe cuts. They also mark the point on a GPS.”

“Their safety is managed by a third person who stays in radio contact with the duo. It’s fairly isolated country we’re working in so it’s important that we’ve got our safety procedures right. Contractors are walking up long distances in the rivers; it is tiring, physical work.”

Similar works have been done in the headwaters of the Macalister River, Avon River, Morwell River, Middle Creek and the Latrobe River.

1 Walking the Franklin River to treat willows (WGCMa)

2 High up in the Franklin River where willow work begins (WGCMa)

Willows can spread via small branches and



LOCATIONS

Clydebank Morass, Avon River

OUTPUTS 2019-20

4.5 km fencing
0.68 km armouring
5.2 ha wetland enhancement
86 ha wetland protection
2 landholder agreements

PARTNERS

Greening Australia, Agriculture Victoria, landholders

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Gippsland Lakes Priorities Plan
Regional Catchment Strategy

FUNDING

Victorian Government
(Gippsland Lakes Coordinating Committee)

PARTNERSHIP PROJECT SEES FROG POPULATION BOOM

“Our partnership with Greening Australia, Agriculture Victoria and local landholders is seeing endangered frog numbers bucking the trend and increasing ... this is amazing and important work.”

Peter Jennings OAM, Chair, West Gippsland CMA

In partnership with Greening Australia and local landholders, West Gippsland CMA has been undertaking a project to construct the wetlands at Clydebank Morass Wildlife Reserve on the Avon River.

The project aims to improve the vegetation and health of the fringing wetland lakes and provide much-needed habitat for birds, frogs, and other freshwater species.

Recent frog surveys show there are only an estimated 400 Golden Bell Frogs and 80 Growling Grass Frogs left in the system.

West Gippsland CMA has been working with Greening Australia and landholders to construct new wetlands and reinstate 100 hectares of wetlands, which may have been drained or used for grazing in the past.

More than 100 Golden Bell Frog tadpoles have been found recently at new wetland sites constructed as part of the project. West Gippsland CEO, Martin Fuller, said they were thrilled with the news.

“Both the Golden Bell Frog and Growling Grass Frog populations have been observed with their young. Even better than this – we’ve seen the tadpoles making their full metamorphosis to frogs and leaving the water.

“It shows not only that the work we are doing is making a real difference, but that it is possible to restore sites and if we

make the habitat right, endangered and vulnerable species like these frogs will return.

“It has been a particularly tough season in Gippsland with drought and fire in the landscape, so to make this discovery has been particularly heartening.”

Farmers and landholders involved with the program have been proud to be involved. Their enthusiasm and passion for what we are trying to achieve, as well as practical site management, has helped this program be so successful. Most have been monitoring the wetlands themselves and reporting frog calls for expert analysis.

- 1 Golden Bell Frogs have been breeding at constructed wetlands on the Avon River (WGCMA)
- 2 Martin Potts from Greening Australia at the fringing wetlands of the Gippsland Lakes (WGCMA)

WIMMERA

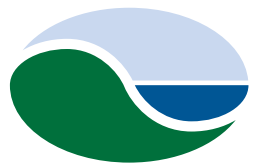
MITRE ROCK, MITRE LAKE (WCMA)



WIMMERA

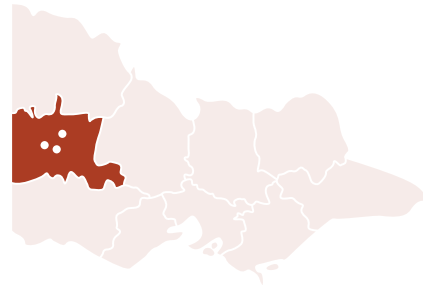
KEY EVENTS AND INSIGHTS

- Wimmera CMA ran a social research project to determine baseline community floodplain knowledge. The information gathered supports the Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Plan for the Wimmera Floodplain Management Strategy. The process is repeatable to enable future assessment of the effectiveness of the strategy's delivery - "to build a flood resilient community".
- Research into the economic benefits generated by waterways in the Wimmera Southern Mallee entered its fourth and final year. Year three estimated \$33.683 million was contributed to the local economy and a total physical and mental health benefit of \$5.3 million.
- The last four years of Environmental Contribution – Tranche 4 funded projects are almost complete with 98% of funding spent and only two project outputs to be completed.
- Our fragile platypus population on the MacKenzie River has continued to expand. Years of environmental watering is starting to pay significant dividends.
- Wimmera CMA continued to support Traditional Owner staff to undertake professional development, for example, we supported our Catchment Officer's successful application under the Aboriginal Leadership category of the 2020 Our Catchments Our Communities Leadership Development Grants.
- It was pleasing to be able to support John Pye's win in the Individual Land carer Award at the 2019 Victorian Landcare Awards at Government House in Melbourne on 30 August 2019. Jallukar Landcare Group also received recognition as winners of the Environment Volunteer Award.
- Wimmera CMA continues to advocate and supply evidence for funding to supply water via the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline for drought refugees in the lower Wimmera River.
- We continue to provide leadership and champion Integrated Water Management via our Strategic Water Group who have developed a Strategic Directions Statement for Integrated Water Management (IWM) including reaching agreement on priority IWM projects for the region.
- 11 rock chutes were constructed across two sites in the Upper Wimmera Catchment to mitigate erosion, reduce sediment movement and deliver on the outcomes of the Wimmera Flagship Waterways program.



Wimmera CMA

OUTPUT	TARGET	ACTUAL			TOTAL
		STATE	FED	OTHER	
1. STRUCTURAL WORKS					
1.5 Waterway structure (no.)	6	13			13
1.9 Fence (km)	26	138	12		150
1.10 Visitor facility (no.)	0	5			5
1.11 Road (km)	0	0.67			1
1.12 Crossing (no.)	0	1			1
2. ENVIRONMENTAL WORKS					
2.1 Vegetation (ha)	0	68			68
2.2 Weed control (ha)	1,527	4,117	123		4,241
2.3 Pest animal control (ha)	43,866	4,447	67,895		72,342
2.8 Earth works (no.)	0	2			2
3. MANAGEMENT SERVICES					
3.1 Grazing (ha)	564	1,157	172		1,329
3.3 Water (no.)	13	14			14
3.4 Fire regime (no.)	6	6			6
4. PLANNING AND REGULATION					
4.1 Approval and advice (no.)	321	261			261
4.2 Management agreement (no.)	5	64	3		67
4.3 Assessment (no.)	4	95	3		98
4.4 Engagement event (no. participants)	655	4,972	1,625		6,597
4.5 Partnership (no.)	38	24			24
4.6 Plan (no.)	5	71	3		74
4.7 Publication (no.)	9	7			7



LOCATIONS

Little Desert National Park
Nurcoung Nature Conservation Reserve
Arapiles Tooan State Park

OUTPUTS 2019-20

72 ha weed control
67,916 ha pest animal control
72 ha grazing regime change
1 management agreement
4 partnerships

PARTNERS

National Malleefowl Recovery Group,
Parks Victoria, Victorian Malleefowl
Recovery Group, Trust for Nature,
Greening Australia

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Wimmera Regional Catchment Strategy

FUNDING

Australian Government
(National Landcare Program)

PROTECTING WIMMERA MALLEEFOWL

“Monitoring in the Wimmera shows that overall, the Malleefowl population is relatively stable. This indicates that the integrated habitat and threat management program we are implementing is effectively managing this nationally-vulnerable species locally.”

Peter Hilbig, Chair, Wimmera CMA

The nationally-vulnerable Malleefowl is a unique and iconic bird that personifies Mallee landscapes. In partnership with seeing land managers, environmental groups and community volunteers work together, Wimmera CMA is working to improve the trajectory of the regions Malleefowl population.

‘Protecting our Malleefowl’ is delivered by Wimmera CMA through funding from the National Landcare Program and aims to conserve Malleefowl by addressing the key threats to the species, including predation, habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation.

The project helps deliver a range of threat abatement works, including an invasive predator control project across more than 100,000 hectares. Malleefowl chicks are particularly susceptible to fox and cat predation because they receive no parental care. As soon as they hatch and emerge from the nest, the chicks disperse and must fend for themselves.

The project is also participating in the National Malleefowl Recovery Group’s Adaptive Experimental Management Program, a nationwide research experiment to better understanding what impact foxes have on Malleefowl

populations. This is achieved by monitoring Malleefowl and fox populations at numerous sites across Australia and comparing sites where fox baiting is occurring with sites with no fox control.

The Victorian Malleefowl Recovery Group has been monitoring Wimmera’s local Malleefowl population for around 20 years and the results for 2019-20 revealed some exciting findings:

- Volunteers visited 165 mounds across 10 sites including four new mounds, and of those, 34 showed signs of active breeding, an increase from the previous year.
- Researchers estimate that 70 breeding pairs live in the Wimmera and the results indicate the population is stable.
- There is evidence of an increase in breeding over the past 20 years, and that the Wimmera’s breeding population is also relatively stable.

- 1 The Malleefowl is a large ground-dwelling bird with strong feet and a short bill (David Watson)
- 2 Malleefowl chick (Graeme Creek)
- 3 Malleefowl breeding mound (Graeme Creek)



LOCATIONS

MacKenzie River, Grampians, Zumsteins, Wartook

OUTPUTS 2019-20

3 partnerships
30 event participants
2 workshops
1 assessment

PARTNERS

Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEWH), Department of Land, Water, Environment and Planning, Laharum Landcare Group, Laharum Primary School

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Wimmera Waterway Strategy
Wimmera Regional Catchment Strategy
VEWH Seasonal Watering Plan 2019-20

FUNDING

Victoria Government
(Water for Victoria)

PLATYPUS ON THE MOVE

“The only platypus population we know still exists in the Wimmera is this fragile group in the MacKenzie River. We’re keen to enlist the help of our community to keep an eye out for these elusive creatures.”

Peter Hilbig, Chair, Wimmera CMA

In September 2019, Wimmera CMA’s waterway managers were pleased to recapture a 12-year-old male platypus near Wartook Pottery, 10 kilometres from where he was previously found in 2010. The find inspired hope for the fragile population which Wimmera CMA has been monitoring for the past decade as part of its environmental flows program.

Wildlife ecologist, Josh Griffiths from cesar, who has been monitoring the only-known population in the Wimmera, last caught the male in the MacKenzie River at Zumsteins in 2010. He estimates it was around three years old at the time.

“It’s fantastic to recapture him and know that he has survived the past nine years. Also exciting is the fact that I haven’t caught anything this far downstream of Zumsteins since I started surveying for the CMA 10 years ago.

“This capture backs up eDNA results from the past four years which have indicated they are in this section of the river. This demonstrates that environmental water releases have provided the opportunity for them to move further downstream.”

The Wimmera community has become attached to its platypus population, and Josh has a family tree to help keep track of who is who.

In total, Wimmera CMA’s 2019 spring surveys captured three platypuses; the 12-year-old male which the community

named ‘Candles’ after local identity Brian Dunn, a two year old male on the first night, Kevin, and a second two year old male on the third night, Rupert.

As part of the live surveys, Laharum Primary School and Laharum Landcare Group were involved in a hands-on citizen science session. Wimmera CMA chief executive David Brennan says it was impressive how much the students knew about platypus.

“Having our young people so engaged and passionate about their local wildlife is fantastic as we rely on the community to help us keep track of this population by having them report their sightings.”

The live captures back up evidence from eDNA sampling, which analyses water for cellular traces of wildlife, that platypuses remain in the waterway and are moving further downstream. June 2020 eDNA results further confirm this.

- 1 Laharum Primary School students taking part in spring platypus surveys (WCMA)
- 2 WCMA’s Ben Holmes with the two year old male platypus the community named Kevin after it was discovered in the MacKenzie River in September 2019 (WCMA)
- 3 Wildlife ecologist Josh Griffiths collects data from a platypus discovered in spring surveys (WCMA)

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