



WEST GIPPSLAND CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

Annual Report

2023-24





*As a leader in Natural Resource Management
we will inspire and facilitate partnerships and
action to achieve improved catchment health.*

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Traditional Owners of the region, the Gunaikurnai, the Bunurong, the Boonwurrung and the Wurundjeri peoples, their rich culture and spiritual connection to Country. We also acknowledge the responsibility of First Peoples to care for Country and pay respects to Elders, past, present and emerging.

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Cover: Corner Inlet. Inset: GLaWAC smoking ceremony. This page: Caspian Tern



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Report overview

Responsible Body Declaration

In accordance with the *Financial Management Act 1994*, I am pleased to present the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority's Annual Report for the year ending 30 June 2024.



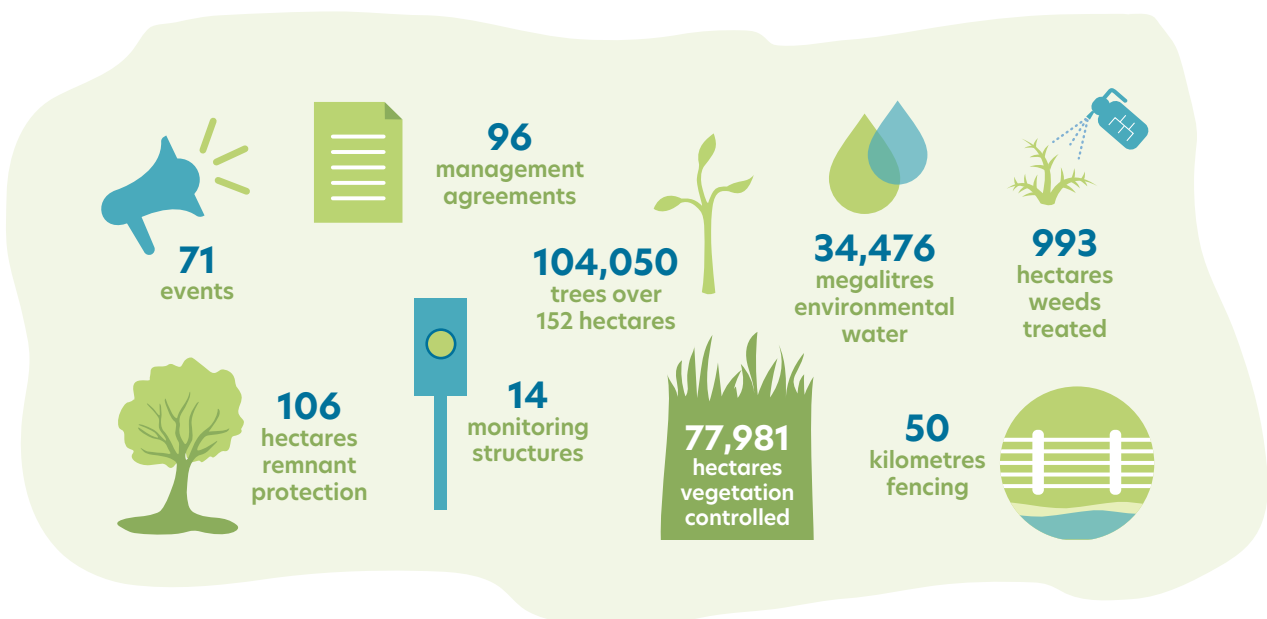
Mikaela Power

Chairperson
West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority
26 August 2024

2023-24 Highlights

Delivering Water for Victoria priorities

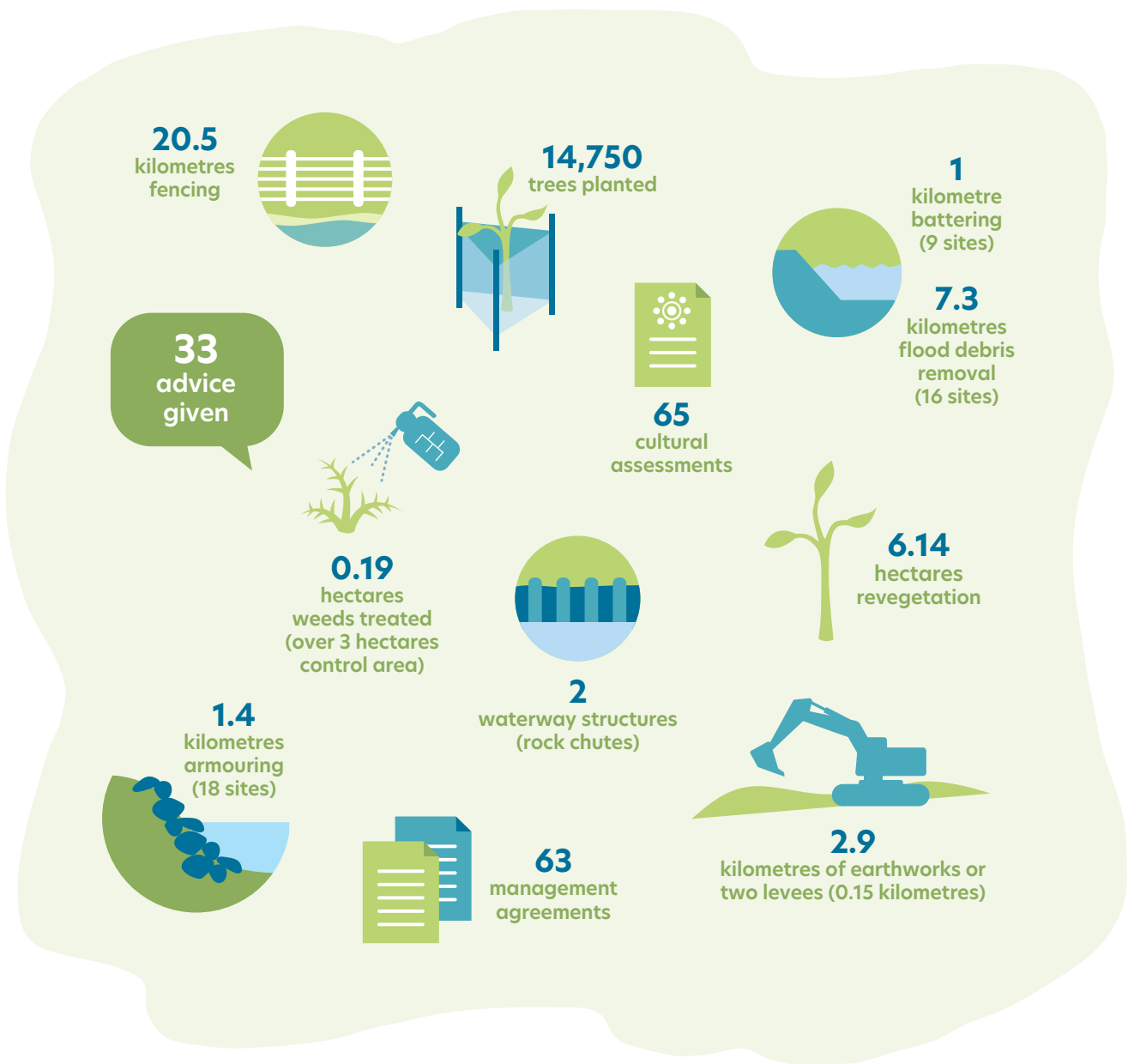
We are extremely proud of our work to deliver on the priorities in Water for Victoria. We have made significant progress again this year:



This work will help reduce the amount of sediment and nutrients entering rivers and streams. In addition, we have continued our partnerships with Landcare groups, Traditional Owners and recreational angling groups.

June 2021 flood and storm recovery response

In June 2021, there was widespread storm damage across Gippsland and flooding in a number of catchments. The storm damage caused widespread power outages impacting many in our community, including our staff, and tested our ability to work remotely in an emergency. The recovery program is now complete. Across the last three years, we have assessed damage and undertaken repair works across the catchment via a comprehensive flood recovery program and completed the following:





Regional Landcare and community events

As part of the Victorian Landcare Grants, successful Landcare and community events were held throughout the year focusing on different projects and audiences. In 2023-24 this included:



Sustainable Irrigation Program

The Lake Wellington Land and Water Management Plan was finalised in 2019 and provides a 10 year vision for sustainable irrigation and water management in the Lake Wellington catchment.

This year, the Sustainable Irrigation Program delivered:

- 33 new or updated irrigation farm plans, which will impact over 2,806 hectares of land in the Macalister Irrigation District
- 22 irrigation efficiency projects (7 spray and 15 surface irrigation) covering an area of 805 hectares.

This provided estimated water savings of over 1,535 megalitres each year. A further 7 re-use systems totalled water savings of 523 megalitres

The program also processed 27 referrals from Southern Rural Water triggering the Irrigation Development Guidelines in accordance with statutory requirements.


More information about the success of the four-year SIP program can be found on page 34 of this report.

Panel of Regional Delivery Partners

West Gippsland CMA was appointed to Australian Government's Regional Panel of Regional Delivery Partners of Environmental Protection, Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management Services.

As part of this, the CMA was contracted to deliver a number of projects including:

- Corner Inlet Connections
- Toward Zero Extinctions: targeted effort to protect the Eastern Hooded Plover in West Gippsland
- A Sustainable Agriculture Project



In addition to these projects, the program supports the Sustainable Agricultural Facilitator (SAF) position and our Indigenous Partnership Program.

In 2023-24, Corner Inlet Connections commenced delivery, however all other projects are still in the planning phase. As such, outputs in 2023-24 were limited. Through this program, we continue the important partnership with Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BLCAC) and Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) and support involvement in the projects.

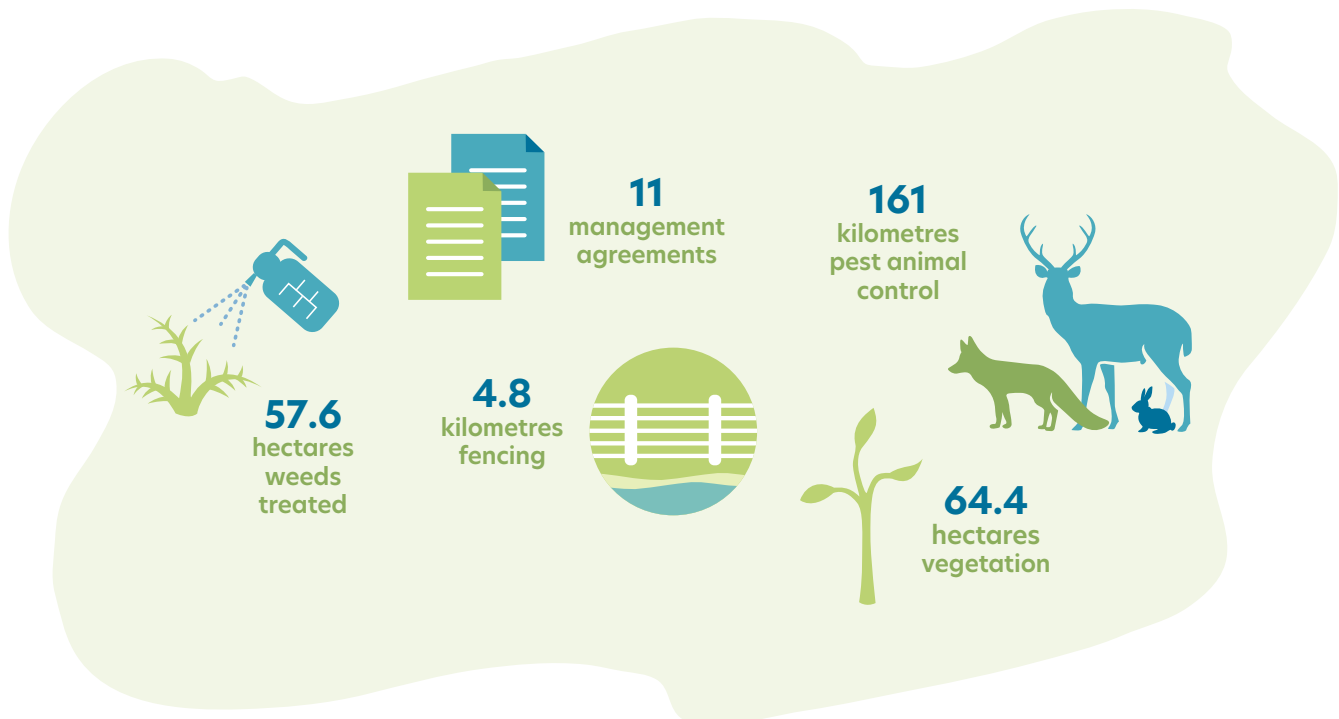
Water for the environment

Water for the environment plays an important role in improving the health of rivers and wetlands in Gippsland. This year, due to the higher-than-average rainfall and high river flows, a total of 34.5 gigalitres of water for the environment was released into the Carran Carran (Thomson), Wirn wirndook Yeerung (Macalister) and Durt'Yowan (Latrobe) rivers. This water is critical for native plants, fish, and other animals. These flows can move sediment and nutrients through rivers, connect habitats and improve water quality.

Powlett River/Kugerungmome Partnerships Project

During 2023-24 the Powlett River/Kugerungmome Partnerships Project continued. In partnership with Bass Coast Landcare Network, Trust for Nature, Parks Victoria, BLCAC and BirdLife Australia, we undertook fox control and riparian vegetation protection and enhancement.

During 2023-24 works completed included:





Challenges

Climate change

Climate change and variability is having clear and ongoing impact on our catchments and natural systems. It is a key challenge and one that will drive and influence our organisation's priorities and activities. We will continue to embed and consolidate planning and impact scenario thinking into the work we do. This will be particularly relevant to coastal inundation, extreme events and water availability.

To help understand and better prepare for the impacts of climate change on the natural environment, we developed a Regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) Climate Change Strategy and also undertook planning to understand the risk and potential impact of extreme weather events on Threatened Species and Communities, Ramsar sites and agriculture assets in collaboration with our partner organisations through funding from the Australian Government.

At a statewide level, Victorian CMAs continued to collectively fund a Climate Change Coordinator to provide support for CMAs, facilitate joint projects, enhance knowledge exchange, and provide coordinated input into policy and program design at State and Federal levels. The Sustainable Agriculture Facilitator role (funded by the Australian Government) continued with an increasing focus on climate smart approaches to agriculture including drought in partnership with Food and Fibre Gippsland.

Victorian CMA Climate Change forums were held quarterly. They provided an opportunity for updates and presentations on relevant projects to ensure CMAs were across current Climate Change information and to facilitate networking opportunities across the CMAs and with other relevant organisations.

During 2023-24, significant progress was made to improve the understanding of opportunities and challenges of co-benefits and co-investments related to carbon offsets in the water sector. This is a relatively new and evolving space and overlaps with the natural capital and biodiversity markets.

A statewide project officer supported the work of the Climate Change Coordinator and also worked on Blue and Teal carbon opportunities. Strong links to the Blue Carbon Lab continued, focusing on integrating efforts in supporting delivery of Regional Catchment Strategies, Biodiversity 2037, and the Natural Environment Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan.

Changing demographics and visitation

Demographics in the region continue to change with an increase in absentee farmers, ageing landowners and urban-based farmers. The impact of COVID-19 on demographics is still being played out with anecdotal evidence that it may be driving an increase in tree- and sea-changers. This means we need to continue to evolve our approaches to engage landholders and support best practices to protect and improve the region's land and water resources. This also creates opportunities to recruit new people to assist in protecting, enhancing and acting as advocates for the region's natural assets.



Rural land use

Increased population growth and urbanisation of rural land continues as people move away from the city to the coast and countryside. This not only changes the demographics of the area but also shows increasing changes in rural land use.

Volunteer uncertainty

The changing demographics of an ageing population may produce more, or fewer, volunteers and the region will need to meet these recruitment and retention challenges in the coming years. The role of Landcare and WaterWatch needs to be understood in this context as they offer the potential to evolve to meet contemporary and innovative approaches to participating in NRM. The impact of COVID-19 on volunteerism needs to be understood and may influence future participation rates.

Increased expectations

There continues to be an increase in demand and expectations from individuals and communities wanting to undertake catchment improvement works. Whilst this enthusiasm and willingness is positive, having sufficient resources to support this demand is a challenge.

Industry transition

Industry transition continues to gain momentum. The closure of the Hazelwood power station, along with an evolving timber, gas and renewables industry, will present unique challenges in relation to land and water management in the coming years. The region is also experiencing an increase in large scale corporate-owned agricultural enterprises (e.g. horticultural and dairy sectors). Whilst there has been an upturn in milk production, farmers are taking a conservative approach to operating their businesses and prioritising stability over expansion as labour and weather challenges continue. This may affect some landholder's ability to engage in environmental restoration activities. Through established relationships and linkages, the West Gippsland CMA is well-positioned to assist in this transition.



Above: Monitoring Spartina control works in Corner Inlet

Key initiatives and projects

We plan and implement initiatives around two key planning and delivery frameworks; our strategic focus is guided by a Board-endorsed five-year Strategic Plan. Supporting and activating this is our Corporate Plan that provides an annual depiction of programs, initiatives, and projects developed and funded by both the Victorian and Australian governments. These all contribute to the Corporate Plan objectives specifically relating to NRM - to manage the region under a 'whole of catchment' model and improve the region's priority landscapes. Key documents such as the Regional Catchment Strategy and the Regional Waterway Strategy support government policy and legislation and help guide funding.

All of these documents are available on our website wgcm.vic.gov.au

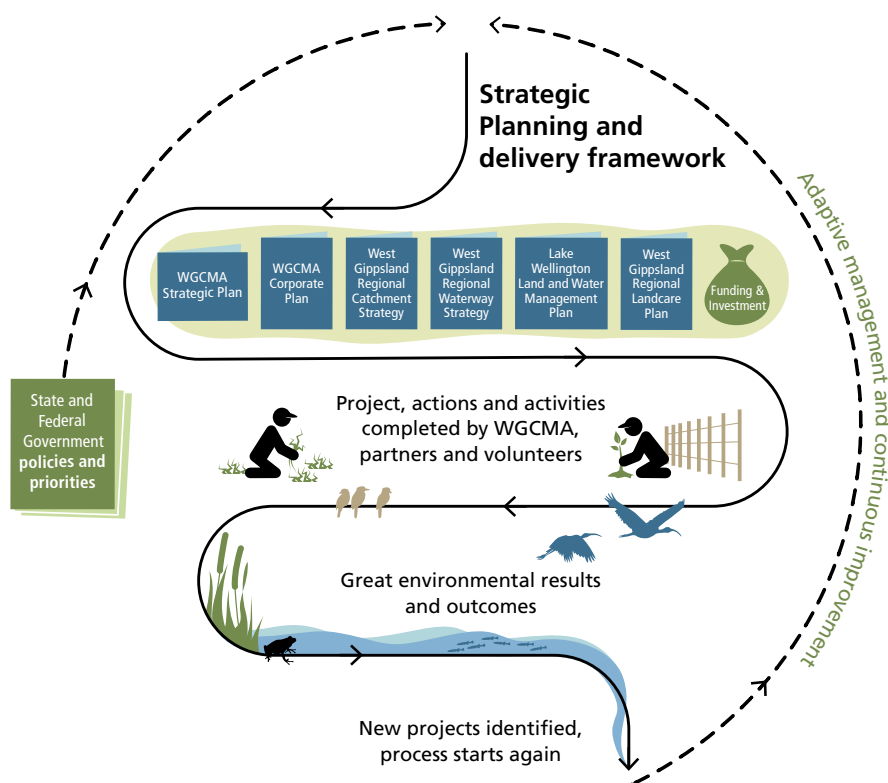


Table 1 is a summary of the key initiatives and projects delivered in 2023-24.

This year, we delivered year three of the Victorian Water Program Investment (EC5) funding agreement. The percentage complete for these projects is based upon the annual progress toward the overall four-year program.

EC5 delivers state and regional priorities such as Water for Victoria, the Regional Catchment Strategy, Regional Waterway Strategy and Our Catchments, Our Communities.

This was the first year of the suite of regional delivery projects funded by the Australian Government's under the Regional Delivery Partners Panel (RDP). Three key projects include the Corner Inlet Connections, Toward Zero Extinctions: Eastern Hooded Plover protection and the Sustainable Agriculture Project. In addition to these projects, the funding also supported the Sustainable Agricultural Facilitator position, our Indigenous Partnership Program as part of Regional Capacity Services.

Table 1: Key projects delivered in 2023-24

Funding source	Project Name	Percentage complete
Australian Government funding	Corner Inlet Connections (5-year project)	20
	Toward Zero Extinctions: targeted effort to protect the Eastern Hooded Plover in West Gippsland (5-year project)	5
	Sustainable Agriculture (5-year project)	5
	Regional Capacity Services (5-year Project)	20
	Sustainable Agricultural Facilitator (5-year project)	20
Victorian Water Program Investment Framework (EC5)	WGCMA Statutory Functions – Floodplain and waterway protection	100 (complete)
	Caretaker of Waterway Health	100 (complete)
	Flagship Waterway – Corner Inlet	100 (complete)
	Flagship Waterway – Mid Thomson River	100 (complete)
	Protecting Pristine Headwaters of the Victorian Alps and Strzelecki Ranges	100 (complete)
	WGCMA Strategic Floodplain Management Implementation	100 (complete)
	Estuaries and Inlets of the Bunurong to the Mullungdung Coast	100 (complete)
	Corner Inlet Ramsar Coordination	100 (complete)
	West Gippsland Our Catchments, Our Communities	100 (complete)
	Managing Environmental Water – Delivery and Community Engagement	100 (complete)
	Environmental Water – Long Term Planning	100 (complete)
	Sustainable Irrigation in WGCMA	100 (complete)
Other state-based funding	Regional Landcare Coordination in West Gippsland	50
	Victorian Landcare Grants in West Gippsland 2023-24	80
	Improving visitor access and experience in the Lower Thomson and Latrobe Wetlands	100 (complete)



Table 2: Outputs achieved in 2023-24

Category	Output	Unit of Measure	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18
Structural works	Water storage	Number	14	12	-	14	39	29	29
	Irrigation infrastructure	Hectares	767	47.83	27.16	604	236	552	638
	Waterway structure	Number	7	5	5	2	2	-	1
	Terrestrial structure	Number	0	0	-	-	0	-	3
	Monitoring structure	Number	14	155	43	11	13	13	13
	Road	Kilometres	4	0	1	4	-	-	-
	Fence	Kilometres	73	54.71	27.18	23	42	69	91
Environmental works	Vegetation	Hectares	305.24	170.33	55.19	103	151	198	292
	Weed control	Hectares	1,404	2,160	1,247	732	2,442	1,444	1,334
	Pest animal control	Hectares	691	1,221	42,784	43,461	74,797	6,869	17,445
	Earthworks	Hectares	22.4	9.36	32.19	1	72	72	2
Management services	Agricultural Practices	Number	1	30	1	-	-	-	-
	Water regimes	Number	10	8	8	12	20	21	21
Planning and regulation	Approval and advice	Number	1507	1,266	1,585	1,312	1,639	1,345	872
	Management agreement	Number	96	73	75	10	63	53	55
	Assessment	Number	748	756	751	581	691	568	474
	Engagement event	Participants	1,909	3,127	2,182	2,762	3,639	5,169	2,360
	Partnership	Number	48	44	43	37	56	53	36
	Plan	Number	56	78	76	50	89	149	129
	Publication	Number	144	175	171	125	117	118	122
	Information management system	Number	2	2	2	-	3	3	3

Summary of financial results

The financial performance for the 2023-24 financial year was a net deficit of \$672k.

At \$12.6M, total income from transactions was \$326k higher than 2022-23. This is largely attributed to an increase in interest income due to an increase in deposits held. This income figure is lower than the Corporate Plan budgeted revenue of \$15.2M for 2023-24 due to the deferral of income received in advance.

At \$13.3M, total expenses from transactions were higher than the previous year by \$216k. Whilst there was movement between expense categories as a result of the different projects undertaken in each year, expenditure was largely on par with that in the prior year. The Corporate Plan budgeted the expenditure for 2023-24 at \$20.6M, with the variance largely attributable to delays to projects caused by unfavourable weather conditions.

Total assets increased by \$2.1M, from \$24.56M at 30 June 2023 to \$26.7M at 30 June 2024, due to an increase in cash and deposits held as a result of funding received in advance.

Total liabilities increased by \$2.8M over this period, due to an increase in contract liabilities relating to funding received in advance.

Table 3: Five-year financial summary

Five-year financial summary	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Income from government	10,158	10,316	15,559	9,323	8,763
Total income from transactions	12,581	12,255	16,680	10,898	11,083
Total expenses from transactions	13,334	13,118	11,428	10,515	12,456
Net result from transactions	(753)	(862)	5,252	383	(1,373)
Net result for the period	(672)	(639)	5,411	430	(1,309)
Net cash flow from operating activities	2,856	4,333	5,938	867	(904)
Total assets	26,708	24,567	20,102	15,194	14,889
Total liabilities	10,263	7,488	2,383	2,886	3,110



Chair and CEO report

The past year has been a busy but fulfilling time for the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (CMA).

It concludes our current program of work being delivered under the fifth tranche of the Environmental Contribution Levy (EC5). Throughout this Annual Report you will read about the significant achievements we have coordinated on behalf of the region, many of which are the result of the EC5 investment provided by the Victorian Government.

The end of year also marks the conclusion of various programs we have delivered under the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

Reflecting on the progress made to protect and enhance the region's natural environment, the predominant feeling is one of gratitude and satisfaction underpinned by a deep desire to amplify our efforts into the future.

We are thankful for the opportunity to invest government funding into the work we and our regional partners undertake to make West Gippsland a better place. As the vision for West Gippsland's Regional Catchment Strategy succinctly states: *Catchment Health – Gippsland's Wealth*.

We are conscious of, and acknowledge, the financial contribution urban-based citizens make in paying the levy through their water bills. We will continue to maximise the value of this contribution by protecting and rehabilitating West Gippsland's waterways for all Victorians to enjoy.


During 2023-24 we focused our efforts on delivering initiatives supported by both the Victorian and Australian Governments such as works in Corner Inlet, on the flagship Agnes and Carran Carran (Thomson) rivers, partnering for Alpine Peatlands and delivering sustainable irrigation programs.

West Gippsland CMA completed its 27th year as a stable, mature, and efficient organisation in one of Australia's most diverse natural resource regions. Together with our partners, we continued to achieve meaningful results for the environment. An efficient and adaptive approach has allowed us to quickly plan and implement programs that improve and protect the region's wonderful natural assets.

Governance and support

A key to success as an organisation has been a commitment to our organisational Strategic Plan (2019-2024) which is regularly reviewed and used annually to set directions and monitor our progress. **This year we were able to deliver 95% of the activities approved in the annual action plan.** During the year we set about a process to renew this strategy, and we commence the year ahead with fresh focus driven by a new plan that was developed as a partnership between the Board, management and staff.

A consequence of having worked in the region for over 26 years is the establishment of strong and trusted relationships with local people and organisations. This approach helps ensure future generations and the environment benefit from the region's many natural resources. While not a new concept, the need for integrated catchment management remains important, particularly in the face of climate change, disaster, and regional transition. It is our charter, and we are determined to facilitate and coordinate our efforts well into the future.



We are committed to nurturing a partnership-focused culture to achieve lasting results and remain conscious of the need to be nimble and adaptive. Partnerships this year have again increased, and they range from community groups and government agencies through to industry and commercial partners.

Leading our efforts is a diverse, skills-based and experienced Board with extensive links to the community. This ensures we are in touch with regional and local community needs, while meeting our statutory obligations and helping government to deliver its policies and programs.

We are now two years into the term of the West Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) endorsed in 2022. This is a web-based 'living' strategy and this has amplified our ability to collaborate on its use with partners and community. Its strong locality focus has been well received and ensures it continues to be effective in guiding efforts to protect and improve the region's wonderful natural resources and features.

westgippsland.rcs.vic.gov.au

Operating environment

Thankfully we progressed through the year without any catastrophic events and were able to complete our extensive flood recovery program resulting from the 2021 flood event in the region. Subsequent rain events in 2023 underline the likelihood that variable and impactful climatic events are an ongoing item that we will need to plan for and respond to.

Our experience from the aggregation of ongoing high rainfall events continues to underline the importance of planning and flood overlays. We are committed to working with Local Government to update these critical planning instruments.

While variable climatic conditions are challenging, we continue to work with the community and individual landholders to create options to ensure environmental benefits from wet years are realised and the natural systems are resilient and protected during drier times.

Transition focus

The West Gippsland region is undergoing a considerable shift in the energy industry. Where we can, we are assisting and providing advice on the water and catchment element. Given the potential impact on the region's natural assets, we continue to work with government to understand the consequences as well as manage any changes that do arise and may impact on waterways and coasts.

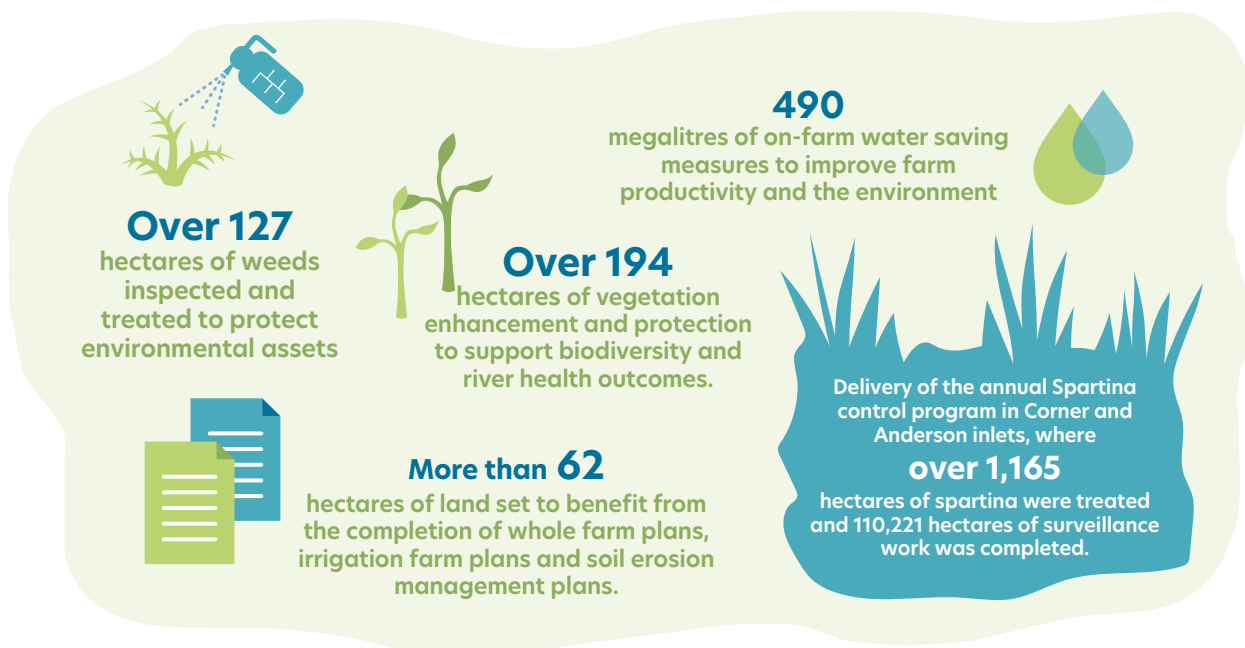
Delivering results

This year, Victorian Government funding helped to deliver a range of important projects. We also embraced opportunities to deliver programs for the Australian Government as Regional Delivery Partners. These programs augment our long-term focus on Corner Inlet, the Alpine Peatlands and Aboriginal partnerships. Central to these projects, and demonstrating our partnership commitment culture, is the delivery of many activities by Landcare and other partner organisations.

Progress in delivering the Regional Waterway Strategy is also well advanced. We are proud of our role in delivering on this statewide commitment of \$222 million over four years for waterway health and integrated catchment management. We are now ramping up efforts to help with the delivery of funds committed through the Environmental Contribution Level Tranche 5 (EC5).



Notable outputs delivered throughout the year include:



A key function for the CMA is supplying statutory services and advice. In the last financial year, we processed 904 planning permit referrals and requests for flood advice. In addition, we provide support and assistance to ensure appropriate permitting and planning is undertaken to protect waterways and floodplains in the region.

Mature partnerships


At the core of our successes are the well established partnerships we enjoy with key groups that manage, protect and enhance the region's precious natural resource base.

Gippsland Environmental Agencies (GEA) forum continued to meet and work together in the region as a formal and peak coordinating and knowledge exchange entity. The GEA forum enables agencies to discuss opportunities for strategic collaboration and priority setting. Areas of focus include progressing women in leadership roles, coordinating delivery of initiatives, as well as nurturing Aboriginal partnerships.

We were proud to complete our first year in chairing the forum and coordinating the support of a shared Executive Officer. The establishment of the role is evidence of an incredibly strong suite of relationships across the environmental agencies and supports the "pick up the phone" culture that exists amongst the organisations' senior leaders. Supported by a number of Working Groups represented by all partners, we remain committed to working towards shared objectives and mutual opportunities that meet our goals.

During the year we were pleased to be able to support the Victorian Government's Road Map for Traditional Owner Access to Water - Water Is Life. With strong regional partnerships in place with Traditional Owners and a history of working together, Water Is Life will add further support for the journey we are on.

At the end of the 2023-24 year, we welcomed Russell Dow to the Board as an Aboriginal Delegate. Russell and fellow Board member Brian Stevens are GunaiKurnai Traditional Owners and we have greatly benefited from the wisdom and counsel they provide. We also look forward to welcoming a Youth Associate Director to the Board in 2024-25 with a process underway to achieve this ambition.



Board diversity is crucial. Through the appointment process and initiatives championed by government, we are in a better position to understand local needs and diverse perspectives. Collectively it helps us to be well positioned to assist government to deliver its programs.

At a state level, it is satisfying to work with all other CMAs effectively. Having nine CMAs and Melbourne Water working together in a coordinated and focused manner continues to drive many efficiencies through shared knowledge and action. In addition, it creates staff and Board development opportunities that are adding to a mature, stable and action orientated industry. A highlight is working collectively under the banner of Vic Catchments. During the year the fruits of this partnership were harvested in winning the Nature Positive category in the 35th National Banksia Sustainability Awards. The awards celebrate trailblazers in environmental and social sustainability.

Looking forward

The next 12 months will be challenging as we work with government and our partners to activate and deliver programs supported by EC6 and as Regional Delivery Partners for the Australian Government.

As a consequence of ongoing and sustained effort, we will build resilience into the natural systems which is vital given the impacts of climate variability and regional change.

We remain energised by the chance to continue to roll out of the Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) and the delivery of key state policies related to catchment management, water and biodiversity.

Efforts to improve waterway connectivity are a strong focus in the region. With fishways at Horseshoe Bend, modern environmental watering infrastructure in the lower Latrobe wetlands and a fishway scheduled for construction, the future is bright. The Carran Carran (Thomson) and Wirn wirndook Yeerung (Macalister) rivers, Lower Latrobe (Durt'Yowan) Wetlands and the Gippsland Lakes all benefit from these environmental infrastructure projects. They optimise the Environmental Water Entitlements and drive partnerships to improve these iconic waterways for everyone. We are passionate about extending these efforts throughout the region to better connect the systems. We look forward to working with government to act on this ambition.

We remain committed to helping the government deliver on policy while maintaining our high standards in project delivery and sound governance at all levels of the organisation.

Finally, we would like to thank all those we work with, including Traditional Owners, community, partner organisations, staff and Board for their dedication in delivering the many positive outcomes we have achieved over the past twelve months. We look forward to working with you all on the challenges and opportunities ahead.



Mikaela Power

Chair

26 August 2024



Martin Fuller

CEO

26 August 2024



About the West Gippsland region

The region at a glance

Total land area	19,639 km ²
Population	200,000 approx.
Tenure	46% Public land and 54% Private land
River Basins	Latrobe, Thomson and South Gippsland
Traditional Owners	Gunaikurnai, Bunurong, Boonwurrung and Wurundjeri Peoples
Largest contributors to the regional economy	Construction, mining, manufacturing, forestry, agriculture, fishing, food-related and utilities sectors
Largest employment sectors	Healthcare, social assistance and retail trade
Wetlands of international importance	Gippsland Lakes and Corner Inlet Ramsar Sites
The region provides	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 23% of Australia's milk production• most of Victoria's electricity and gas (offshore)• about 60% of Melbourne's water.

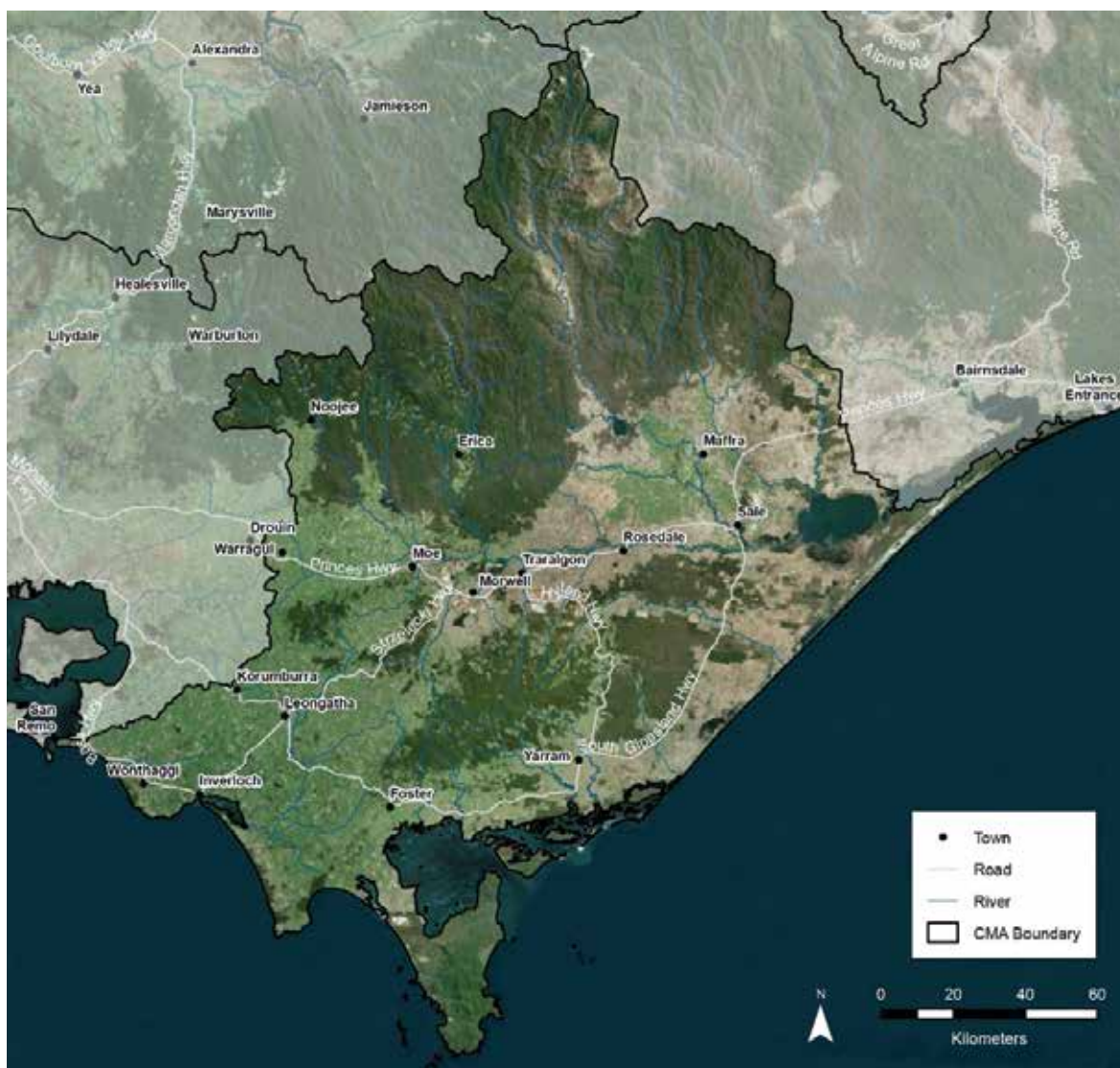


Figure 1: West Gippsland region

The West Gippsland region and the environment we work in

The West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority region extends across west, south and central Gippsland, from Warragul and San Remo in the west to the Gippsland Lakes in the east, and from the Great Dividing Range in the north to Wilsons Promontory in the south. The region extends into marine waters out to three nautical miles, which marks the state of Victoria's jurisdictional limit.

The region covers an area of 19,639 square kilometres (including marine environment) and accounts for almost eight percent of Victoria's total land area with a population of more than 200,000 people. Unlike regions with a single major city, the West Gippsland population is dispersed between several regional centres in the vicinity of the Princes, South Gippsland, Strzelecki, Hyland and Bass Highways. The region includes parts of seven municipalities: all of Latrobe City; substantial parts of Wellington, Baw Baw and South Gippsland shires; a well-populated portion of Bass Coast shire; and sparsely populated areas of Mansfield and East Gippsland shires.



The region is expected to experience population growth of approximately 20% by 2036, particularly the western part of the region with its proximity to the peri urban fringe of Melbourne. However, the population is also expected to continue to age and decline in most rural areas of the catchment. This is being accompanied by a continuing shift of services into the larger regional centres.

The Gunaikurnai peoples and the Kulin peoples are the traditional custodians of the Country covered by this region. Gunaikurnai Country extends east from the coast near Wilson's Promontory, up to Mount Baw Baw and across a large part of East Gippsland. Tribes of the Gunaikurnai include the Brataualung in South Gippsland, the Brabralung and Brayakaulung in Central Gippsland, and the Tatungalung around the Gippsland Lakes. Kulin Country extends westwards from Gunaikurnai Country and includes Bunurong in the southwest and the Wurundjeri and Taungurung in the hills to the north.

The West Gippsland region is rich in natural resources and supplies water, electricity, gas, oil, saw logs, pulpwood, agricultural products, and tourism opportunities to people both within and beyond the region's boundaries. The estimated Gross Regional product of the region is more than \$2.5 billion and Total Regional Output, including production of intermediate goods and services, is estimated at over \$9 billion. Major sectors, as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, include manufacturing, electricity, gas and water, agriculture, forestry and fishing, and property and business services. The agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors and the electricity, gas and water sectors are important employers in our region.

Dairying accounts for half of the agricultural production and beef another quarter. Wool, lamb, horticultural produce, and a variety of other enterprises make up the remainder. The region provides a significant proportion of the state's electricity and gas, including water for Melbourne, and has provided two thirds of Australia's total oil production. Private plantation and public forestry industries and tourism are also significant.

A major long-term industry transition is also underway in the Latrobe Valley with the closure of the Hazelwood mine and power plant, and the potential closure of the coal-fired power stations Yallourn in 2028 and Loy Yang in 2048. This transition is expected to have a large impact on the local economy affecting local jobs and businesses.



Above: Durt'Yowan (Latrobe River)



Annual catchment condition and management reporting

This section of the Annual Report provides an assessment of the condition and management of the region's environment and a reflection on the likely impact of annual scale actions, events, and observed change within the previous year, and over the previous six years. A key purpose of monitoring changes in the operating context is to help identify opportunities for adapting and changing the way we manage the environment.

The report is structured in line with the statewide outcome framework that links the regional outcomes sought by catchment communities, to the high-level policy outcomes of the Victorian and Australian Governments. These are outlined in each Regional Catchment Strategy (rcc.vic.gov.au).

In 2023-24 reporting has a focus on assessing the CMA's contribution to the management of land and water resources. Reporting on condition indicators will be undertaken as part of the mid-term and final reviews of the Regional Catchment Strategies.

How to interpret this report

The assessment is based on a set of statewide indicators outlined in the RCS outcomes framework, augmented with regionally specific indicators that have been selected based on criteria including availability and quality of data, and the linkages back to regional and policy outcomes.

Three types of indicators make up catchment condition and management reporting, these are: contextual, management, and condition.

- **Contextual** indicators help to identify how external environmental factors may have influenced program delivery.
- The **management** assessment for each theme assesses the delivery of CMA programs and activities. Reporting on management and contextual indicators is undertaken annually.
- Reporting on **condition** indicators is undertaken less frequently, reflecting the timeframes to observe changes in the natural environment and the availability of the supporting data. The 2023-24 Annual Report includes a summary rating for catchment condition building on previous years' assessments.



As much as possible the reporting format attempts to provide a transparent path between the evidence and the assessment. It is not a definitive assessment but an assessment at a point in time, based on the best available evidence.




Data supporting the Catchment Condition ratings can be found in Appendix 2.

Management rating	Description
Above expectations	Delivery of activities and programs associated with this indicator is assessed as above expectations for the 12-month period (i.e. majority of activities delivered /targets met or exceeded)
Satisfactory	Delivery of activities and programs associated with this indicator is assessed as satisfactory for the 12-month period (i.e. targets for some activities were not achieved or the majority were almost achieved)
Below expectations	Delivery of activities and programs associated with this indicator is assessed as below expectations for the 12-month period (i.e. some critical activities/ targets not delivered, or the majority of activities/targets not delivered)
Not applicable	A management rating is not applicable for this indicator
Unknown	The rating for this indicator is not known and or assessable

**Management - where appropriate, a management rating is provided that is based on the delivery of planned activities and targets relevant to the theme.*

Condition rating	Description
Good	The condition is classified as good
Moderate	The condition is classified as moderate
Poor	The condition is classified as poor
Not applicable	A condition rating is not applicable for this indicator

**Condition - where appropriate, a condition rating is provided that is based on the is the current state of the theme. A condition rating is based on assessments of the assets and pressures represented by the theme. The assessment is based on available science and expert advice as well as evidence gained during the preceding year.*

6 Year Condition Trend	Description
 Positive	The condition is moving in a positive direction over the short to medium term pending ongoing management and environmental impacts.
 Neutral	The condition is in a neutral state over the short to medium term and is considered stable pending ongoing management and environmental impacts.
 Concerned	The condition is cause for concern over the short to medium term, and will continue to decline pending ongoing management and environmental impacts.

#The 6 Year trend reflects change in condition over the short to medium term. The trend is assessed against the direction required to contribute to the achievement of regional outcomes.



Table 4: 2023-24 Regional catchment condition and management summary

(Data supporting the Catchment Condition ratings can be found in Appendix 2). Management activities linked to these assessments are presented in the program highlights below).

Theme	Condition Rating	Trend	Management Rating	Summary Comment
Water	Good	→	Satisfactory	<p>Overall, the condition of water in the region has been assessed as good. In 2023-24, the region experienced above average rainfall and increased river inflows.</p> <p>There have been variable climatic conditions over the past five years and the region has experienced no major fire or drought events in 2023-24. There was a key focus on flood recovery works carrying on from 2021-22. Drier conditions in the second half of the year led to good progress with new riparian protection works. All EC5 projects have been successfully delivered with all outputs met or exceeded.</p>
Land	Moderate	→	Satisfactory	<p>Overall, the condition of land across the West Gippsland region has been assessed as moderate. This year was a wetter than average year, with an increase in soil water availability being observed. No areas of the region were drought declared. No major fires or pest outbreaks. The region has experienced variable climatic conditions over the past five years. An increase in area covered by landholder agreements and management plans. Anecdotal evidence of increased population and range of pest animals (particularly deer) across the region. The continuing trend of changes in land use towards large scale horticulture and urban expansion (increased runoff). Major EC5 Programs focused on Land outcomes – Sustainable Irrigation Program and Our Catchments Our Communities successfully delivered with all outputs met or exceeded.</p>
Biodiversity	Moderate	→	Satisfactory	<p>Overall, the condition of biodiversity in the region has been assessed as moderate. Small gains were made due to revegetation and vegetation protection programs.</p> <p>Small losses due to urban development, primarily around regional centres. No major fires, drought or pest outbreaks during 2023-24. Implementation of targeted pest, plant and animal programs by a range of partners. Anecdotal evidence of increasing numbers and range of pest animals, i.e. deer.</p> <p>Anecdotal evidence of climate change impacts (e.g. species composition changes and geographic spread).</p> <p>Aquatic fauna surveys conducted in 2021-22 recorded the presence of threatened species in the east of the region.</p> <p>Landscape-scale initiatives focused on the Bunurong Coast, and Alpine Peatland communities throughout the past five years. Improved regional planning through the Biodiversity Response Planning process (rollout of Biodiversity 2037) leading to the development of improved coordination over the last five years. However, the delayed roll out of the Australian Government program has led to limited progress with some projects.</p>



Table 4: 2023-24 Regional catchment condition and management summary *continued...*

Theme	Condition Rating	Trend	Management Rating	Summary Comment
Coast & Marine	Moderate	→	Satisfactory	<p>Overall, the condition of coasts and marine environments in the West Gippsland region have been assessed as moderate.</p> <p>No major fire events impacting the coast throughout the year.</p> <p>Programs aimed at protecting and enhancing the coast and marine environments such as Corner Inlet Connections, Lake Wellington Integrated NRM project, and Spartina control program were successfully delivered over the past five years.</p> <p>Improved estuary closure management resulting in no coastal urban inundation Continuing urban expansion and increasing runoff, particularly in coastal areas. The ongoing dynamic coastline at Inverloch has been experiencing significant erosion in recent years, impacting on public access, amenity, and built assets. Designation of the Yallock-Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park along 40 kilometres of coastline, from San Remo to Inverloch, will improve the connectivity and management of existing protected areas.</p>
Community	Moderate	→	Satisfactory	<p>Overall, condition within the community theme in the West Gippsland region has been assessed as moderate.</p> <p>There is a strong regional partnership between West Gippsland CMA and Landcare networks and well organised and coordinated Landcare network and groups.</p> <p>Cultural Heritage training and positive partnership with Traditional Owner groups.</p> <p>In person engagement post COVID has seen an increase to pre-covid numbers at events and the community reconnecting to deliver NRM outcomes.</p>
Integrated Catchment Management	N/A	N/A	N/A	Incorporated into the Community theme.



Management of land and water resources

Climate

Climate change can impact on the natural environment in many ways and intensify existing threatening processes. Less average annual rainfall, higher rates of evaporation, and reduced surface water runoff will result in rivers, estuaries, and wetlands receiving less water and changes in river flow regimes. More frequent intense rainfall events can cause increased flooding, soil erosion, and reduced water quality. Coastal environments can become inundated or more saline as the result of sea level rise. Storm surge can erode coastal areas and damage vegetation communities.

The impact of climate change on plants and animals is difficult to predict with any certainty, as changes will occur from individuals to ecosystems. Existing threats to native vegetation and habitat will be amplified, including weed invasion, fragmentation, drought, and intense bushfires. Therefore, it is useful to consider the region's climatic conditions and the occurrence of any extreme events when providing an analysis of catchment condition.

Information presented in this report has been sourced from Australia's Environment Explorer, developed by the Australian National University (<http://www.ausenv.online>) and is provided in Appendix 2. **The appendix provides a summary of the climatic conditions in West Gippsland during 2023-24.**

Rainfall

The average precipitation recorded for the region from 2000-2023 is 846 millimetres per year. Research conducted by the Australian National University indicates that the total annual rainfall observed in the West Gippsland region in 2023 was just under 1,000 millimetres, which is above the long-term recorded average. Regionwide annual rainfall has been highly variable as seen in the decile ranges.

Maximum temperature and number of hot days

The maximum temperature observed since the year 2000 and the number of days above 35°C were below average in 2023.

Frost and snow

An above average number of frost days (below zero) and slightly lower than average percentage snow cover was observed in 2023.

The Victorian CMAs continued to collectively fund a Climate Change Coordinator to provide support for CMAs, facilitate joint projects, enhance knowledge exchange, and provide coordinated input into policy and program design at State and Federal levels.

Victorian CMA Climate Change forums were held quarterly. They provided an opportunity for updates and presentations on relevant projects to ensure CMAs were across current climate change information and to facilitate networking opportunities across the CMAs and with other relevant organisations.

\$1.8 million was secured from DEECA for a Victorian CMA Water Cycle Adaptation Action Program. A program coordinator was appointed and the program will run for 2.5 years, creating an exciting opportunity for CMAs to re-focus on climate change adaptation and build capacity and capability.

Further progress was made to improve the understanding of opportunities and challenges of co-benefits and co-investments related to carbon offsets in the water sector.



Water theme

The condition of rivers, wetlands, estuaries and groundwater

Waterways in the West Gippsland region are of high environmental, social, economic, and cultural value. They provide important habitat for a range of plants and animals including places of refuge in times of drought. Our waterways support community values which include the supply of water for industrial, agricultural and domestic use, and recreational pursuits such as kayaking, bird watching, and fishing. The Gunaikurnai, Bunurong and Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri Peoples have a strong cultural connection to waterways across the region.

Over 1,500 wetlands larger than one hectare are in our region. Together they total more than 44,000 hectares. We have several significant wetlands and wetland complexes, including two internationally important Ramsar sites (Corner Inlet and Gippsland Lakes) and 11 sites listed as nationally important under the *Directory of Important Wetlands Australia*.

Estuaries located along the region's coastline include brackish mouths of rivers and streams that flow into the ocean or a large embayment (Corner Inlet), coastal barrier lagoons (Jack Smith Lake, Gippsland Lakes), and inlets (Anderson and Shallow inlets).

The environmental condition of waterways is dependent upon on a range of factors and to help inform the regional condition assessment included:

- Index of Stream Condition
- Index of Wetland Condition
- Index of Estuary Condition
- Extent of riparian land protected
- River inflow
- Inundation
- Wetland extent
- Groundwater.

2023-24 Program highlights

A range of activities delivered by the community and agencies contribute to habitat improvement and long-term improvements in the condition of waterways. Activities such as fencing and troughs for off-stream watering, revegetation and weed control, all support improved riparian and aquatic habitat and waterway condition. The table below provides a summary of waterway and habitat improvement activities that were supported by West Gippsland CMA in partnership with community and other stakeholders, between 2018-19 and 2023-24 in riparian areas and waterways.



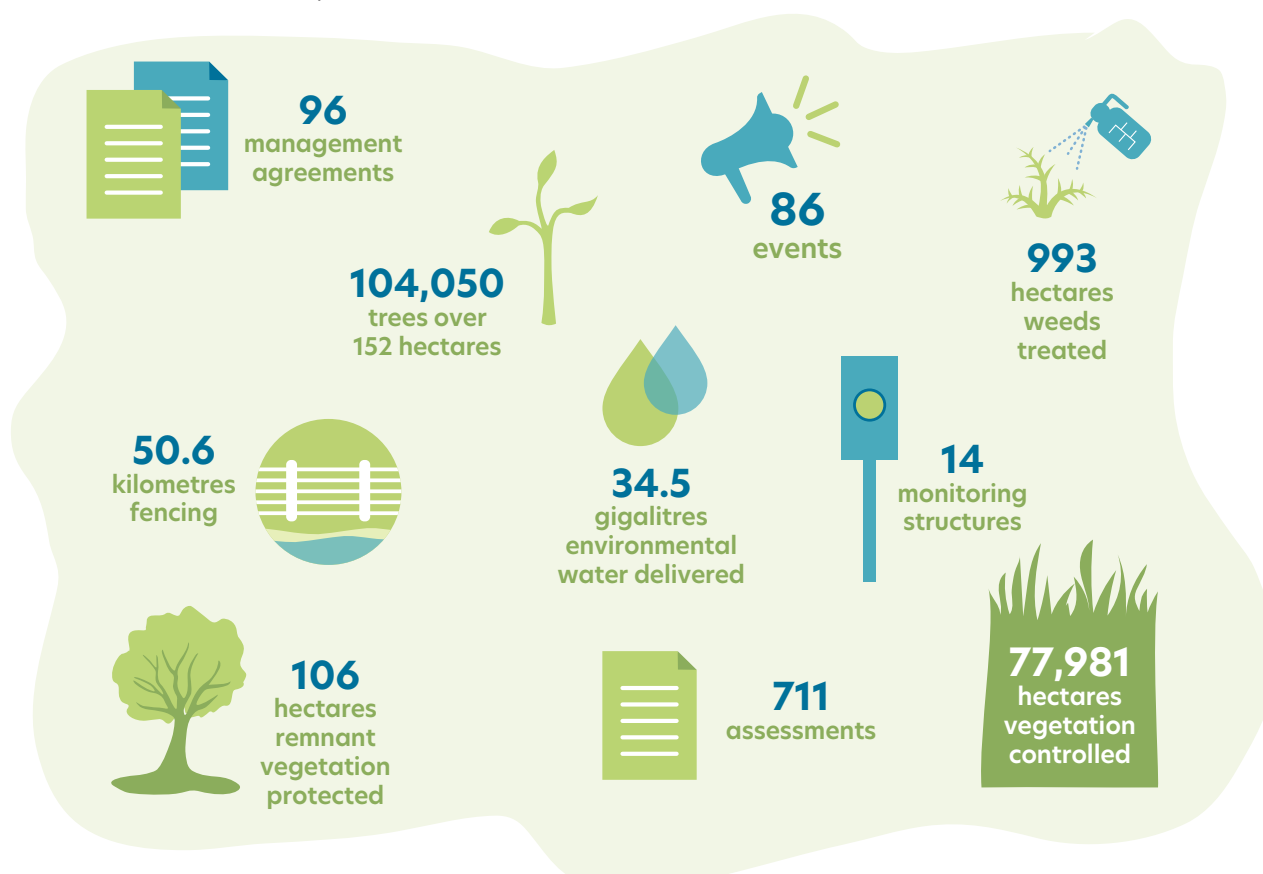
Table 5: Waterway and habitat improvement activities summary*

Output	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
1. Structural works								
1.2 Water storage	8	21	17	11	0	0	5	7
1.9 Fence (km)	37	43	46	21	4	25	34	51
2. Environmental works								
2.1 Vegetation (hectares)	242	160	255	76	69	44	104	152
2.2 Weed control (hectares) Area treated	436	230	149	123	81	59	230	993
2.2 Weed control (hectares) Area controlled	1,094	726	4,070	3,414	3,888	548	7,193	77,981*
2.8 Earth works (no)	5	2	11	22	1	46	71	46
4. Planning and regulation								
4.2 Management agreements (no.)	36	54	47	60	10	70	64	96

*figure includes the *Spartina* control program in Corner, Shallow and Andersons inlets which previous years have not. Control technique involves the use of a helicopter and covers large areas across these landscapes.

Delivering Water for Victoria priorities

This year's annual regional waterway program, our core waterway health program, delivered key programs aligned to the Water for Victoria priorities in waterways across the catchment. A summary of these is listed below.





Community partnership projects

We delivered a number of community-led partnership projects including:

- A tree planting day on the Wirn wirndook Yeerung (Macalister River) near Licola with the Australian Trout Foundation and Glenfalloch Station. Twenty volunteers from the Sale and Bairnsdale Fly-fishing Clubs and the community planted over 1,200 native trees and shrubs along a part of the river that connects to many kilometres of restored riparian zone.
- Fencing and revegetation of three gullies and one riparian area in partnership with the Fish Creek Landcare Group. The gullies adjoin the reach of Fish Creek that was rehabilitated through this project last year.
- A tree planting day along the Agnes River Gorge with the Corner Inlet Landcare Group. 1,000 trees were planted by 15 volunteers in an area of the gorge that is being enhanced as a public walking trail from the renowned Agnes Falls Reserve to the Great Southern Rail Trail.
- A canoe-based tour of eight kilometres of the lower Tarwin River and estuary in partnership with the Tarwin Lower Landcare Group. Participants inspected past riparian rehabilitation works and discussed potential future projects. Discussions focussed on strategic planning for the Tarwin catchment, a future revegetation project with mangroves on eroded shorelines of Anderson Inlet and associated rehabilitation of riparian areas along the Tarwin River Estuary.

We also completed maintenance and enhancement of community partnership projects from previous years. This included weed control and/or supplementary revegetation. The partners and projects involved were: Maffra & District Landcare Network (Newry Creek and associated wetlands); Fish Creek Landcare Group (Fish Creek); Bass Coast Landcare Network (Foster Creek); Yarram Yarram Landcare Network (Golden and Reedy creeks); Corner Inlet Landcare Group (Stockyard Creek); Mardan-Mirboo North Landcare Group (Berrys Creek) and Latrobe City Council/Latrobe Landcare Network (Sandbanks Reserve).

Flagship waterways – Corner Inlet and Thomson/Rainbow Creek

West Gippsland has two Flagship Waterways – Corner Inlet (Agnes) and Carran Carran (Thomson)/ Rainbow Creek between Cowwarr Weir and Wirn wirndook Yeerung (Macalister River) confluence.

The Corner Inlet (Agnes River) project aims to fence off and revegetate 100% of the main stem. The Thomson/Rainbow Creek project aims to complete two key objectives: a natural riparian corridor from the Gippsland Lakes to the Alps and address future avulsion risks of Rainbow Creek.

In 2023-24, the Corner Inlet (Agnes) signed management agreements with 11 landholders, completed 45 hectares of weed control, planted 53,300 trees over an area of almost 91 hectares and fenced 15.6 kilometres of the river. The project is delivered in partnership with Corner Inlet Landcare Group, Greening Australia and GLaWAC.

In 2023-24, the Thomson/Rainbow Creek Flagship project signed 1 landholder management agreement with 1 landholder, planted 3,800 trees over an area of almost 2 hectares and treated almost 10 hectares of weed control.



Headwater willow control

In 2023-24, the upper reaches of the Wirn wirndook Yeerung (Macalister), Avon, Carran Carran (Thompson) and Corner Inlet catchments have been targeted as part of a four-year program to tackle willow infestations.

In 2023-24, over 335 hectares of weed control was completed. The program aims to remove willows in the headwaters and therefore protect riverbanks downstream from reinfestation.

Flexible approach to water for the environment

Water for the environment is an important part of improving the health of rivers and wetlands in Gippsland. This year, due to the higher-than-average rainfall and high flows, 34.5 gigalitres of water for the environment was released into the Carran Carran (Thomson), Wirn wirndook Yeerung (Macalister) and Durt'Yowan (Latrobe) Rivers. This water is critical for native plants, fish, and other animals.

These flows can move sediment and nutrients through rivers, connect habitats and improve water quality. To complement and enhance the water for the environment releases, the constructed Thomson River Fishway, allowing for low flows around the Horseshoe Bend Tunnel, continues to demonstrate its success and the detailed designs were developed for the new fishway to be constructed at the Maffra Weir.



Above: In 2023, we released 10,000 native Bass into Traralgon Creek with Victorian Fisheries Authority and community members



"A major highlight was fencing a two kilometre stretch to provide a wide buffer for revegetation to restore this young waterway and give it a bright future for people, wildlife and the environment."





WATER CASE STUDY

Future shines bright for Rainbow Creek

The Carran Carran (Thomson River) is a flagship waterway for West Gippsland CMA who are working on a long-term restoration project to improve habitat connectivity along the river from the Victorian Alps to the Gippsland Lakes.

Flowing off the Carran Carran is Rainbow Creek, a short but significant waterway with a long and rich history that presents unique challenges and opportunities.

"In the 1950s a flood caused the Carran Carran river to 'jump' its course and carve a new channel through the surrounding floodplains. In the process, the newly formed Rainbow Creek was created, cutting farming land in half," explains David Stork, Waterways Officer for the CMA.

After the fifties flood, the weir at Cowwarr was constructed to keep the Carran Carran flowing down its original course, manage flows to the Rainbow and provide another irrigation offtake for the Macalister Irrigation District.

"Rainbow Creek, which runs from Cowwarr to Heyfield, is really where the Carran Carran river still wants to flow. In floods, there is risk of avulsion (where a waterway creates a new path) meaning it could jump course again and cut a whole new channel through farmland, causing major disruption to agriculture and the local community, like it did the 1950s. Such an event would have a major environmental impact because of the large amounts of sediment and silts that would flow into the waterways and ultimately end up in the Gippsland Lakes.

"For the past four years, we have been delivering the Thomson and Rainbow Management Plan to manage this avulsion risk and improve waterway health for the benefit of agriculture, the community and the Gippsland Lakes."

The community has been instrumental in this process with a panel helping to shape the original plan and then support the delivery of actions to reduce the risk of the river jumping course and to improve the health and social value of both the Thomson and the Rainbow."

Actions included treating hotspots where the river is most likely to form new channels through armouring the banks, removing willows, fencing, weed control and planting along the riverbanks to restore native habitat. These are all aimed at keeping the waterway healthy for local wildlife and communities, while protecting it from future flood events.

In 2023-24, we worked with landholders to plant 3,800 trees over two hectares and treat 10 hectares of weeds. A major highlight was fencing a two kilometre stretch to provide a wide buffer for revegetation to restore this young waterway and give it a bright future for people, wildlife and the environment.

Like rivers carving their course, works on the Rainbow and Thomson are long term and the CMA team is looking forward to seeing results of works to date, and continuing the process to improve connectivity between the Victorian Alps and the Gippsland Lakes for the benefit of the community, environment and catchment.



Biodiversity

The condition of native habitat and the health of native species

A range of challenges can impact the condition of biodiversity within the West Gippsland region. The condition of biodiversity is impacted on a range of factors and to help inform the condition assessment including:

- Strategic Biodiversity Score
- Percentage Tree Cover
- Extent of Native Vegetation
- Area of pest herbivore and predator control
- Area of weed control
- Area of permanent protection.

Program highlights

Pest herbivore and predator control

Pest animals are a major problem for biodiversity, as they compete with native species for resources, prey on native fauna, cause erosion and other physical disturbances, and can affect the functioning of ecosystems. Established terrestrial pest animals in the region include foxes, pigs, wild dogs, rabbits and hares. Overabundant native wildlife can also impact on the region's biodiversity. Deer are an increasing problem and are being seen in parts of the region where they have not been seen before.

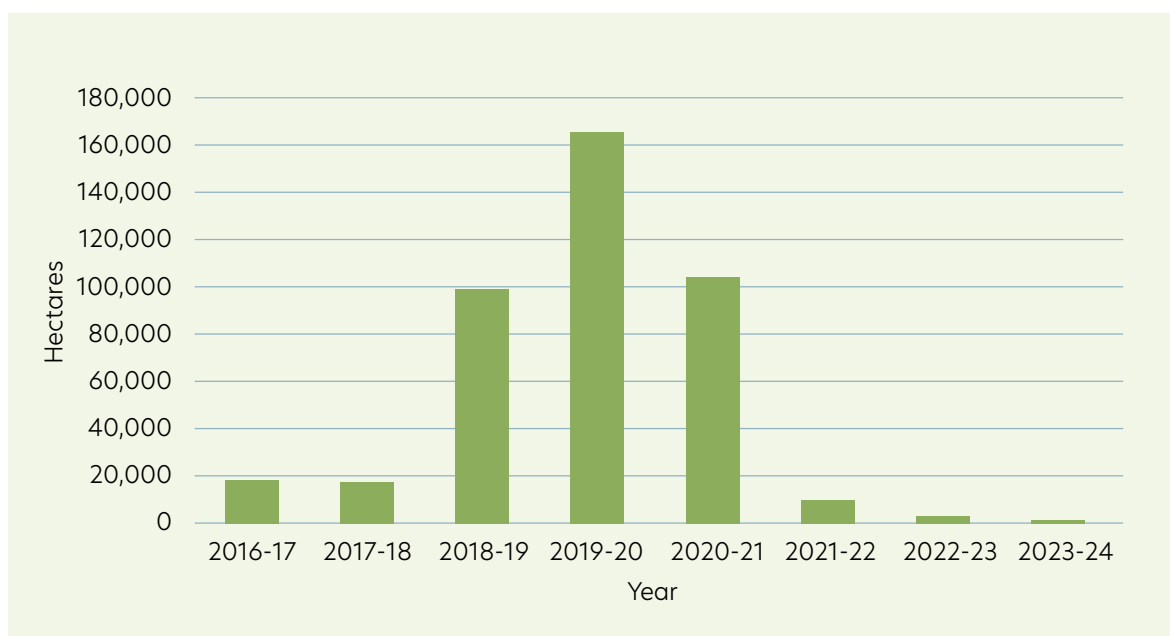


Figure 2: Area of pest animal control West Gippsland Region



Above: Corner Inlet saltmarsh

Protecting biodiversity in Corner Inlet

This is the first year of the five-year Corner Inlet Connections project, funded by the Australian Government. It builds on over 15 years of delivery through this approach and is delivered in partnership with Parks Victoria, GLaWAC, Trust for Nature and BirdLife Australia. The focus of on-ground works has been to protect the Ramsar values of the area including treating spartina, controlling foxes, improving water quality, and protecting saltmarsh. The main activities this financial year included:



Victorian Landcare Grants

We once again delivered Victorian Landcare Grants for West Gippsland. 21 successful recipients in West Gippsland were announced in 2024, receiving \$337,250 for 21 projects and 24 support grants.



"This year we have had the best results to date – all from hitting it continuously. Over 95% of the weed has now been removed through the spraying program."





BIODIVERSITY CASE STUDY

Biodiversity the winner from war on weeds

Corner Inlet wetland is a biodiversity hotspot. For many years, West Gippsland CMA and partners have been working together to target the pest animals and plants that threaten the rich biodiversity of this precious landscape.

A key threat to the inlet is the weed Spartina. If uncontrolled, the invasive weed mats and spreads across wildlife habitats and reduces biodiversity which threatens the integrity of the Ramsar Wetland.

Also known as Rice Grass or Cordgrass, Spartina was introduced in the 1920s and has since become aggressively invasive, competing with indigenous plants, degrading waterbird and fish habitats and restricting waterways.

"Spartina infestation is a major threat to coastal environments," said Martin Fuller, West Gippsland CMA's Chief Executive Officer.

Together with partners, the CMA has been undertaking important weed control works including on-ground and targeted helicopter spraying treatments to protect the internationally renowned Ramsar wetland.

"A helicopter with a snorkel attachment is used to target the intertidal Spartina in Corner Inlet," explains Martin.

Our strong partnership with Parks Victoria ensures land, estuary and coastal public lands are treated for Spartina".

Controlling Spartina helps improve natural estuary habitat for important fish populations, allows vital plant species to re-establish and improves the feeding and breeding sites for local birds and internationally significant migratory species.

"The Spartina control program complements the work we're doing with farmers and landowners in coastal areas to fence and revegetate, control erosion and protect saltmarsh," Martin said.

Tackling such a widespread infestation has required a consistent and sustained effort involving multiple partners – all dedicated to restoring and maintaining the inlet's natural values.

Along with reducing the weed, monitoring has continued to be an important tool to understand how the plant is responding to treatment and provides a real time and structured approach to gather data and plan future spraying and control operations.

In 2023-24 weed control covered the entire 67,000 hectares of Corner Inlet Ramsar Site, including air and ground treatments.

"This year we have had the best results to date – all from hitting it continuously. Over 95% of the weed has now been removed through the spraying program," said West Gippsland CMA Project Delivery Officer, Richard Allen, who has been involved in controlling spartina infestations of the weed for over a decade.

"We can start to say that we are getting on top of this weed," concluded Richard.



Land theme

Soils are moderately well-structured across the West Gippsland region and support a range of natural ecosystems and agricultural enterprises. A large proportion of private land within the region is used for agricultural, industrial and residential purposes, with fertile soils dedicated to grazing, cropping and irrigated seasonal horticulture.

Government, conservation, and community groups are working together to protect the region's soil and land while also maintaining long term agricultural productivity, opportunities for recreation and protection of important cultural values. Formal conservation parks and reserves, covenants, landholder agreements and management plans are all key tools used to help improve or conserve the condition of public and private land within the West Gippsland region.

There are a range of indicators to inform the condition of land within West Gippsland the following have been used to do this:

- Land cover
- Soil moisture
- Agricultural commodities
- Land-use change.

Program highlights

Sustainable Irrigation Program

The renewal of the Lake Wellington Land and Water Management Plan was finalised in 2019-20 and provides a ten-year vision for sustainable irrigation and water management in the Lake Wellington catchment. This year, the Sustainable Irrigation Program delivered 33 new or updated irrigation farm plans which will influence 2,806 hectares of land in the Macalister Irrigation District. There were 22 on-farm irrigation efficiency projects completed covering an area of 767 hectares, providing estimated water savings of over 1,535 megalitres each year and 7 re-use systems – with savings of 523 megalitres..

Landcare – Sustainable Agriculture

Gippsland Sustainable Agriculture Network (GSAN) is an informal network of professionals working to improve the sustainability and productivity of agriculture in the Gippsland, Port Phillip, and Westernport regions. GSAN resumed in person meetings this year to share updates on Agriculture projects with the aim of improving coordination of activities across the region, reducing duplication of effort, developing networks and forming partnerships.

We have also partnered with Food and Fibre Gippsland to host the West Gippsland Drought Resilience and Innovation Adoption Officer. The Adoption Officer works with farmers and their communities to pick up innovative tools and practices to build drought resilient businesses.



Above: West Gippsland CMA team at GippsDairy Muster



"These farmers are paving the way for sustainable irrigation by trialling technology that will lead to better on-farm productivity, improved water quality in waterways and less greenhouse emissions from irrigated agriculture."

Sandra Jefford and Wilco Droppert
one of the four farmers who
participated in the trials



LAND CASE STUDY

Showcasing Gippsland's innovative irrigators

West Gippsland CMA, in partnership with Agriculture Victoria, supported four irrigators in central Gippsland to trial innovative irrigation and nutrient management practices that boost farm productivity while improving the environment.

"We partnered with irrigators to help tackle some of the region's greatest challenges like maximising water use efficiency and improving nutrient management," said Land Programs Coordinator with West Gippsland CMA, Anthony Goode.

"These farmers are paving the way for sustainable irrigation by trialling technology that will lead to better on-farm productivity, improved water quality in waterways and less greenhouse emissions from irrigated agriculture."

The four trial projects include the use of variable rate irrigation (VRI) technology to optimise irrigation, expanding dairy effluent application through a pipe and riser system, installing a self-cleaning effluent pump to reduce blockages in pivot irrigators and smart sprinkler controls powered by solar energy.

James Clyne trialled variable rate irrigation (VRI) technology to optimise water use and increase pasture on a dairy farm with challenging terrain.

James' 300-hectare farm at Newry features low-lying pockets of land that are prone to waterlogging, rendering them unproductive for pasture and potentially hazardous for the herd.

By installing VRI technology to an existing pivot irrigator, James has optimised irrigation to suit the varying terrain and soil profiles of his paddocks. This benefits his pasture and the health of the herd while also increasing water-use efficiency, reducing runoff and improving nutrient retention on the farm.

"We've noticed an increase in water use efficiency by 20%," said James. "I would recommend this technology to anyone with a pivot. There are always areas getting underwatered or overwatered and this technology just instantly helps with that."

All four demonstration trials were completed in mid-2024 and outcomes and learnings will be shared with the farming community through field days run in partnership with Agriculture Victoria, with the aim of increasing the adoption of these farming techniques.

Alexis Killoran, Senior irrigation extension officer at Agriculture Victoria, said:

"Together we can continue to reduce the environmental impacts of irrigation from the farm itself, all the way down to the Gippsland Lakes."

Funding for the trial projects was provided through The Irrigation and Nutrient Management Demonstration Project, an initiative of the Victorian Government's Sustainable Irrigation Program.



Coasts and marine

The condition of coastal and marine environments

West Gippsland's coastal and marine environment extends from San Remo in the west to opposite Lakes Entrance in the east. It includes the Ramsar-listed wetlands of Corner Inlet, Nooramunga, the Gippsland Lakes, several marine protected areas and over 20 estuaries.

A range of indicators inform the condition of Coast and Marine environments within West Gippsland and the following have been used to do this:

- Extent of coastal vegetation
- Water

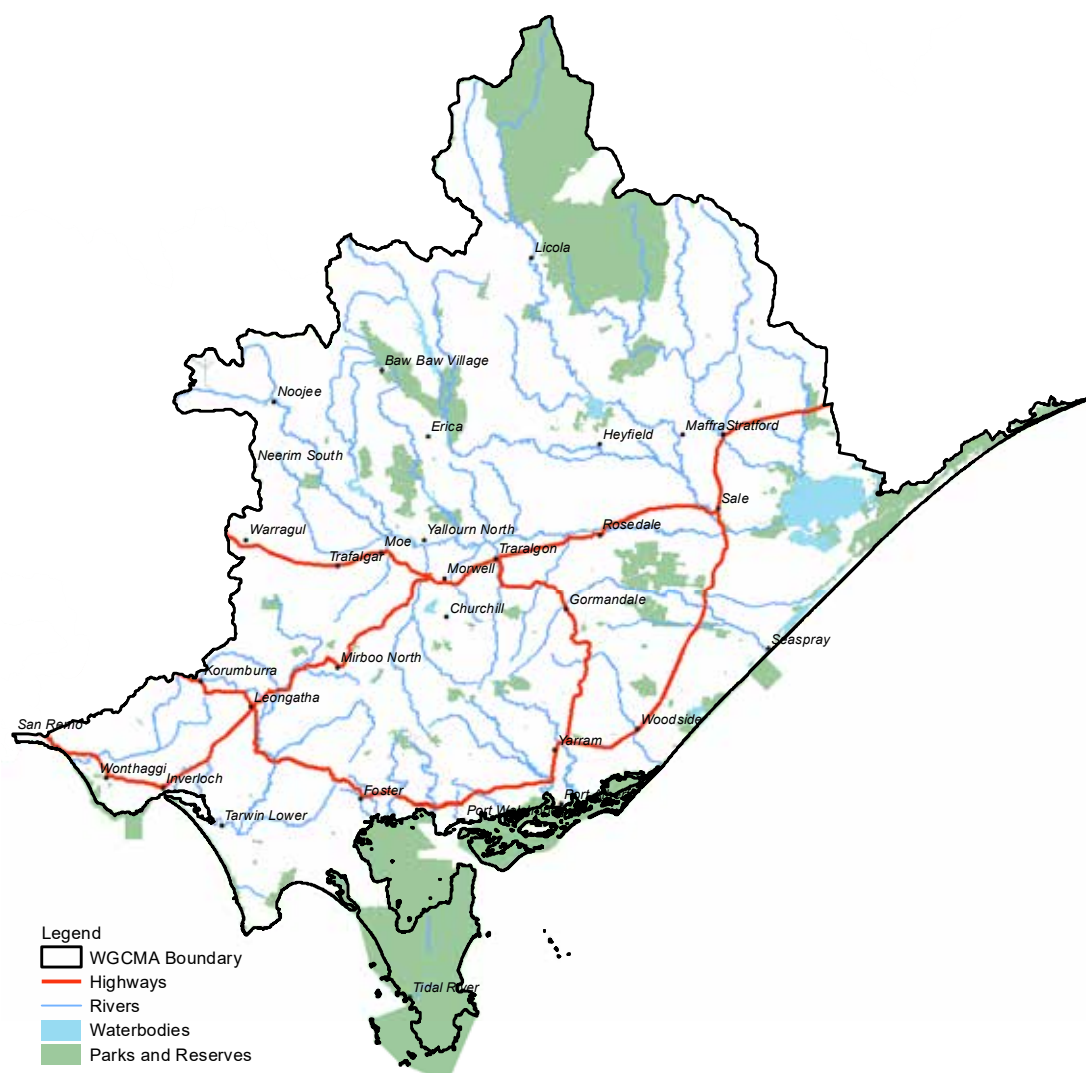


Figure 3: Area of land and water managed for coastal and marine protection including terrestrial and marine parks and reserves



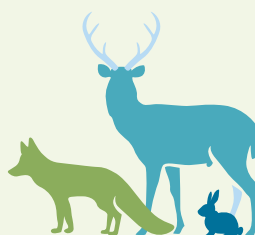
Program highlights

Corner Inlet

This is the first year of the five-year Corner Inlet Connections project, funded by the Australian Government. It builds on over 15 years of delivery through this approach and is delivered in partnership with Parks Victoria, GLaWAC, Trust for Nature and BirdLife Australia. The focus of on-ground works has been to protect the Ramsar values of the area including treating spartina, controlling foxes, improving water quality, and protecting saltmarsh. The main activities this financial year included:



102,319
hectares weed control,
with a treatment area of
1,039 hectares



530
kilometres
pest animal
control

Spartina control

In partnership with Parks Victoria, we coordinated a strategic approach to Spartina control which is a key threat in Corner Inlet, Shallow Inlet, and Andersons Inlet. In 2023-24, highlights included the implementation of the Spartina Control Management Plan which included 1,165 hectares of actual Spartina treatment.

Estuary management

In 2023-24, we undertook a range of projects to help protect, enhance and improve the management and understanding of estuaries. Key activities included:

- Collaborating with stakeholders to identify a Powlett Estuary Alternative Land Management opportunity, including the potential to expand the newly created Yallock-Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park.
- Working with stakeholders in Seaspray around the long-term management of the Merriman Creek estuary.



"Ongoing bird monitoring helps to raise community awareness of the birds' plight so we can work together as a community to protect these special species."



Bart tailed Godwit - one of Corner Inlet's international migratory shorebirds that visit each year



COAST AND MARINE CASE STUDY

Protecting precious coastlines

Working to enhance and protect world renowned Corner Inlet has been a team effort led by West Gippsland CMA that has so far spanned decades. Works begin in the upper reaches of the rivers that flow into the inlet and follow their course down to the coast – home to extraordinary wildlife, fragile saltmarsh and mudflats.

The precious Ramsar wetland is a recognised haven for migratory and resident shorebirds and made up of extensive seagrass meadows, and unique intertidal mudflats and forests of white mangrove (*Avicennia marina*) – the world's most southerly distribution of this species.

"Rewards of a consistent and sustained effort by the CMA, Landcare, Greening Australia, GLaWAC Traditional Owners and partners Parks Victoria, Trust for Nature and BirdLife Australia are definitely paying off," said Tanya Cowell, Waterways Project Officer for West Gippsland CMA.

"Everyone plays their part – like along the flagship Agnes River where we are extremely proud of the dedicated landholders and passionate Landcare volunteers who have largely driven the works."

In 2023-24, 11 landholder management agreements were signed to complete 45 hectares of weed control, put 53,300 plants in the ground across 91 hectares and fence 16 kilometres of the river in partnership with Corner Inlet Landcare Group and Greening Australia.

Down at the inlet, the first of a five-year Corner Inlet Connections project is being delivered in partnership with Parks Victoria, GLaWAC, Trust for Nature and BirdLife Australia.

"Across this first year, the focus has been to protect the Ramsar values of the area including treating spartina, controlling foxes to protect shorebirds, improving water quality, and safeguarding 136 hectares of saltmarsh including a 25 hectare Trust for Nature covenant.

In total, weed control has covered over the entire Corner Inlet Ramsar Site of 67,000 hectares with 530 hectares of pest animal control and water monitoring equipment will help us measure the results of our efforts across the catchment."

Summer and winter shorebird counts provide crucial information to ensure the Ramsar values and levels of acceptable change for key species are maintained based on international Ramsar guidelines.

BirdLife Australia teams undertook seasonal shorebird counts and also monitored the breeding success and health of key species of beach nesting birds such as Hooded Plovers, Pied Oystercatchers and Crested, Caspian and Fairy terns.

This ongoing monitoring is crucial to understanding the bird populations and threats they face. This can then guide effective fox and weed control and assist in community education about the effects of off leash dogs and nest disturbance.

"Ongoing bird monitoring will also help to raise community awareness of the birds' plight so we can work together as a community to protect these special species," said Tanya.



Community

The benefits that flow from community participation

Gippsland communities are very resilient as they continue to have a positive outlook despite the environmental and economic challenges of recent years. Some of the challenges include changing demographics (an ageing farming population and influx of sea- and tree-changers), changing land use (increasing urban development and smaller lots on agricultural land), challenging commodity prices and a changing climate. The transition of the Latrobe Valley resulting from mine closures will impact the region in some form.

Despite these challenges, local communities and groups throughout Gippsland are actively working together to enhance, restore and protect the environment. Landcare has affirmed itself as a major NRM service deliverer through five robust, sophisticated, and well-run Landcare networks that operate at a landscape scale. They remain a vital driver of NRM activity, working directly with private landholders and government agencies to address a wide range of NRM issues.

Landholders are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of soil health. Soil experts conduct industry workshops and field days throughout the region which are extremely well attended.

A network of WaterWatch and EstuaryWatch volunteers provide a vital role in NRM by regularly monitoring sites throughout the region and collecting ongoing data about the health of the West Gippsland waterways.

Community theme benchmark - Community participation

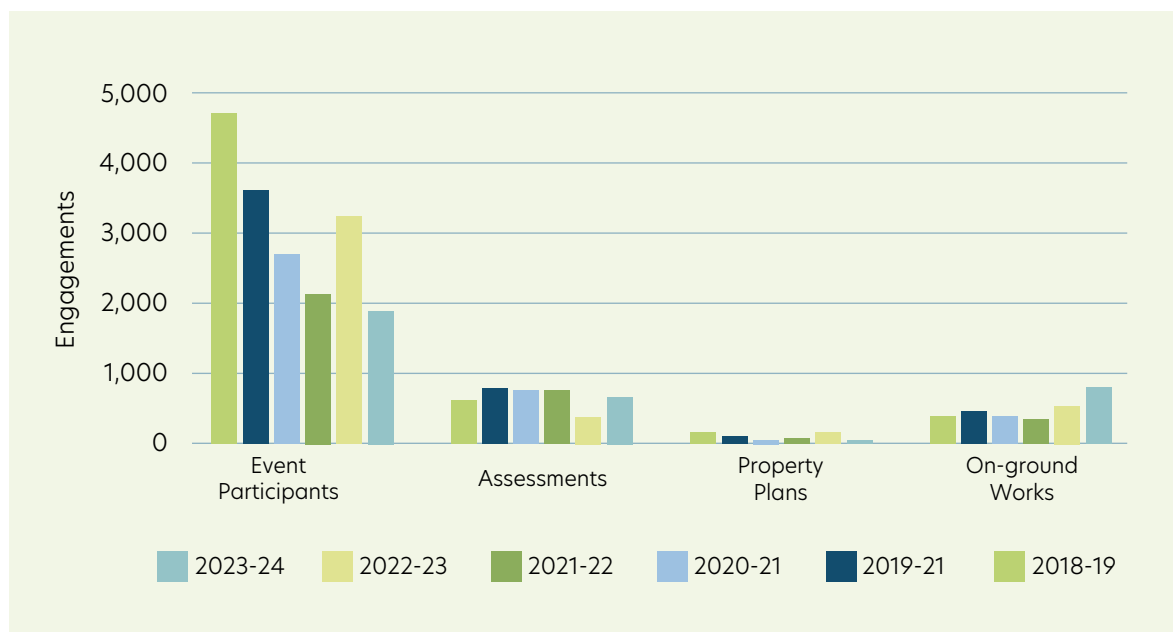


Figure 4: Community participation 2018-24



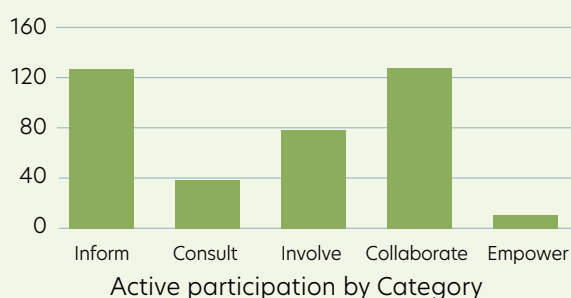
Above: West Gippsland's newly formed Community Engagement Network met for the first time

Community theme benchmark - Active partners

Table 6: Active partners in 2023-24

Active Partners	
Agency/Research Organisations	44
Community Groups	75
Industry/Corporate Organisations	13
Traditional Owner Groups	4

Figure 5: 2023-24 Annual community
condition assessment



Community theme benchmark - Farm businesses engaged in works

Table 7: Farm businesses involved in on
ground works 2023-24

Property type	Number
Agistment	4
Beef	83
Biodiversity	3
Cropping	4
Dairy	55
Forestry	1
Horticulture	3
Other	9
Public Land	5
Sheep	13
Unknown	224
Total	373



Program highlights

Landcare and community volunteering legacy is strong

Landcare has a long and proud history in West Gippsland made up of a committed and motivated grassroots community that have delivered best practice natural resource management for more than 30 years. Five Landcare networks support over 70 Landcare groups. There are also approximately 55 community NRM groups who do not sit within the Landcare network structure, such as friends of groups or foreshore committees of management. All these groups and networks drive projects that address local and landscape-scale issues through on ground works such as revegetation, pest plant and animal management, soil health and riparian management. They also build skills and social connections in the community through training and events.

Landcare and community NRM groups have a successful history in the region and an ongoing commitment to environmental conservation and sustainable development in Victoria. Their current important role is in enhancing the West Gippsland environment and its ability to adapt to meet emerging challenges. Partnerships between agencies and community NRM groups are one of the best ways to achieve great on ground outcomes for the West Gippsland region.

Landcare group health scores have shown some variation year to year but on average it is positive with groups in the West Gippsland region 'moving forward.'

The five networks came together for two days to share the projects and priorities of each Network and to collectively identify the challenges volunteers were facing in West Gippsland and explore collaborative opportunities to address these in the region. We also renewed our Landcare Support plan, which will guide how we can continue to ensure community led NRM work continues to thrive in the region.

Table 8: Landcare group health scores

Category	23-24	22-23	21-22	20-21	19-20
5 = Trail blazing	6	4	6	1	5
4 = Rolling along	10	15	11	21	13
3 = Moving forward	15	23	19	5	16
2 = Struggling	7	9	8	11	11
1 = Just hanging on	0	9	1	2	4
Total groups	38	60	45	40	49
Average group health score	3.39	2.93	3.29	3.2	3.08



Partnerships with Traditional Owners

Cultural competency

Our organisational cultural competency program is ongoing.

In 2023-24, we had 18 staff and over 50 Landcare staff and members complete stage one training.

In addition, 206 community members and partner employees participated in 11 events that included cultural awareness sessions. Feedback from staff and Landcarers was very positive with participants saying they felt the content prepared them well to work with Traditional Owners.

This year has seen our commitment to the process of cultural competency continue to gain momentum in all levels of projects and programs. There has been an increase in GLaWAC and BLCAC work On Country, and in Traditional Ecological Knowledge, communication, and engagement.

Our staff and First Nations partners staff are comfortable working together at all levels from administration to management. This is a great achievement and makes for a good working relationship.

Our established Cultural Heritage process has worked well this year:

- We have completed 96 Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Register and Information (ACHRIS) checks across both the GLaWAC and BLCAC Registered Aboriginal Party areas.
- Several projects have been adapted to avoid possible Aboriginal cultural heritage.



Above: On Country day for National Reconciliation Week at Powlett River/Kugerungmome with Bunurong Land Council and Community



Partnerships with Traditional Land-owning groups

Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC)

We continue to work under the guidance of our MoU with GLaWAC. Further opportunities for involvement have been encouraged from the beginning of all projects undertaken during this time.

Highlights this year include co-hosting two on-Country events with GLaWAC to share knowledge between our agencies. On-Country sessions were held at Sandbanks and Lower Latrobe Wetlands. One session was designed for the newly formed GLaWAC NRM team and the other for Community members. These sessions provided the opportunity for the groups to learn aquatic survey techniques, more about the work of the CMA and how we work as partners with GLaWAC as well as giving our staff the chance to learn from Gunaikurnai people on Country. These were very successful days with more planned in the future.

Partnership meetings are held regularly, focused on co-designing future projects and identifying opportunities for aligning with GLaWAC priorities. All communications occur through protocols put in place by the two organisations, which are reviewed regularly to ensure they are working well.

In addition to our partnership meetings, we are a member of the GLaWAC - GEA working group. This is a group of 11 NRM agencies designed to work towards shared objectives and mutual opportunities that meet our respective goals. Quarterly meetings are attended, with the group working towards Gippsland Environmental Agencies Aboriginal Employment Strategy.

Another highlight for this year was the continued support for GLaWAC to Protect Cultural Heritage from the impacts of climate change in Corner Inlet.

Our delivery team contracted GLaWAC for projects in other areas of the catchment.

We also foster opportunities for mentoring and knowledge building in both agencies. The types of knowledge shared includes:

- cultural knowledge
- technical advice
- site recognition
- historical knowledge
- project planning
- project implementation
- reporting
- environmental water knowledge.



Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BLCAC)

Partnership meetings are currently the main source of knowledge sharing between the two organisations. Having an insight into the development of a relatively new Aboriginal Corporation is a valuable learning experience for our staff and management. Information is being shared both ways with any advice and support being offered and used when relevant. As the corporation grows and increases capacity, so will our work together and sharing of knowledge. Until this time each organisation is staying informed, while not overwhelming the current capacity of BLCAC.

We have partnered with BLCAC to deliver the Powlett River/Kugerungmome Cultural Heritage Management Project. The early stages of the project focused on bringing all the project partners together with BLCAC in a culturally safe environment. The aim was to build the cultural competency of the partners to develop connections that would create additional opportunity to work together and co-deliver on-ground works.

A highlight for the year was our partnership leading to the formation of a BLCAC-led Strong Country working group. This also supported BLCAC to establish a new NRM team located in Gippsland. The NRM team has completed a three day On-Country field day with our staff, aquatic ecologists and the BLCAC water team to share knowledge. The team has also been completing on-ground works with project partners including Bass Coast Landcare Network, Parks Victoria and Trust for Nature, funded through this project.

The highlight for this project so far was the hosting of a partnership session at Powlett River/Kugerungmome during National Reconciliation Week. This project is funded through EC5.

Partnerships and projects

Our Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Officer (ACHO) has developed partnerships with Aboriginal Communities and assisted employees to extend their understanding of Native Title and Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in Gippsland. The ACHO is a member of the following committees:

- Brayakaulung Advisory Group – Latrobe City, Morwell
- CMA state-wide Indigenous Facilitators' Network.

We acknowledge and recognise:

- Close the Gap Campaign
- National Sorry Day/Day of Healing
- National Reconciliation Week
- NAIDOC Week.

We participate through displays, cultural heritage sessions and joint press releases.

We have worked on projects and sought advice and resources from many organisations, including the Close the Gap: Indigenous Health Campaign and the Human Rights Commission, Reconciliation Victoria and NAIDOC.

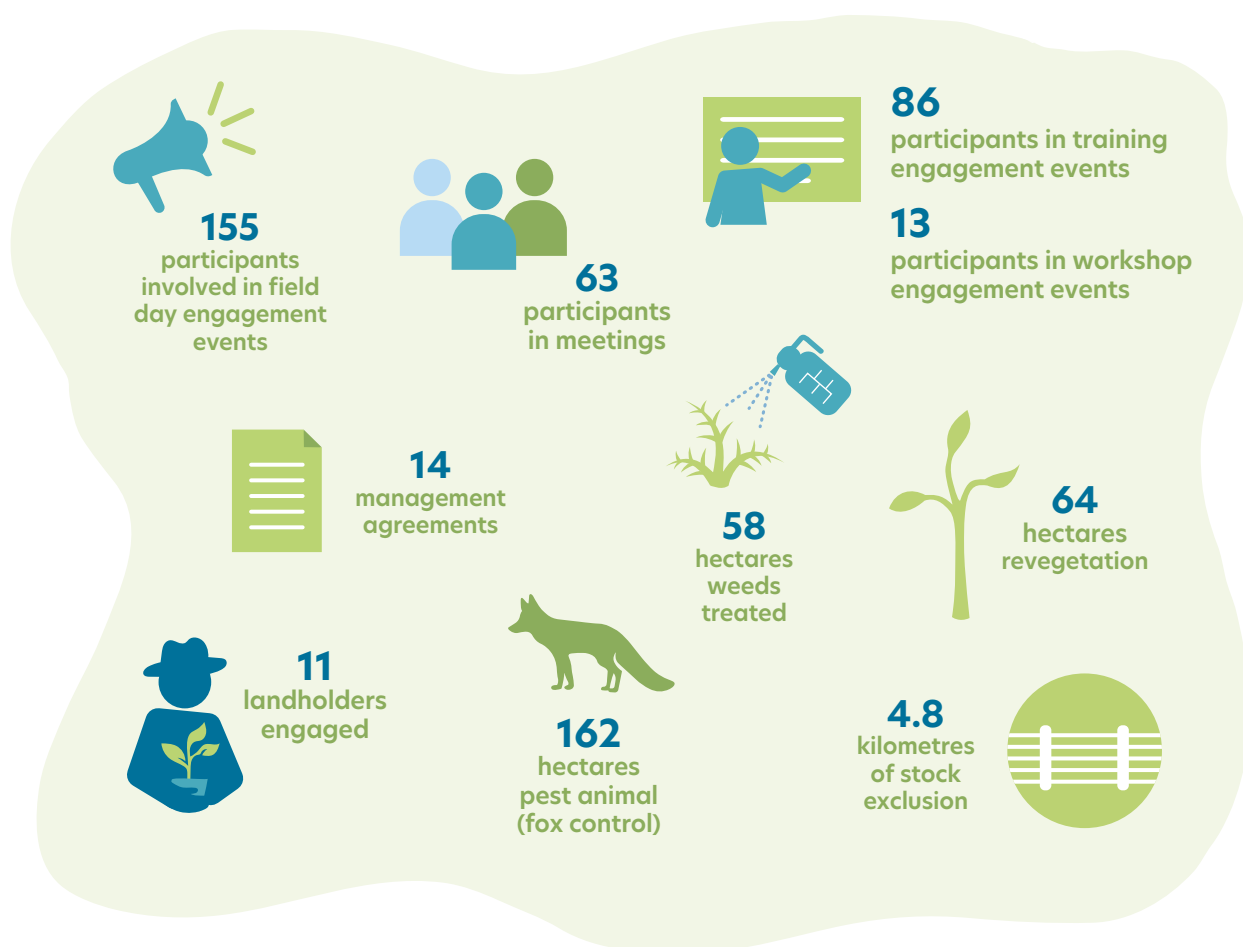


Our Catchments, Our Communities

Powlett River/Kugerungmome Partnerships Project

The Our Catchments Our Communities Powlett River/Kugerungmome Partnerships Project continued across 2023-24. In partnership with Bass Coast Landcare Network, Trust for Nature, Parks Victoria, BLCAC, and BirdLife Australia we undertook riparian protection and enhancement, fox control and riparian vegetation protection and enhancement.

During 2023-24 works completed included:



Our Catchments, Our Communities - Regional Partnerships

We continued to support the GEA Forum including the implementation planning for the Regional Catchment Partnership Agreement. Strategic discussions at the regional level across East and West Gippsland have strengthened partnerships between agencies. This has included supporting GLaWAC on their journey to self-determination as part of the GEA - GLaWAC working group.

The GEA Executive Team finalised a Strategic Plan for this forum which will guide collaboration, effort and advocacy for the region over the next five years.



GEA - Women in Leadership

This year the leadership team delivered four leadership workshops (attended by 125 participants), one field-based networking event at Lake Glenmaggie and held a series of on-line lunch and learn sessions, which were attended by over 600 agency staff. The series allowed female leaders across our agencies to share their leadership journeys and share knowledge of how they have overcome challenges.

Regional Landcare

A range of successful Landcare and community events were held throughout the year focusing on different projects and audiences. In 2023-24 this included:



Community Engagement Network

The CEN plays an important role of information exchange with the community as they bring community issues to us, and we share information on CMA projects and initiatives that members can take back to their communities.

During 2023-24, the CEN was renewed through an EOI process and resulted in 16 new members. The Network met three times and participated in two field trips to Powlett River/Kugerungmome and Durt'Yowan (Latrobe River) to learn and discuss our programs.

Irrigator Reference Group and Environmental Water Advisory Groups

In 2023-24, we recruited new members to this group and thanked retiring members for their input and involvement. The group has an advisory role on programs like those offered through our Sustainable Irrigation Program and the Macalister Irrigation District Incentives Program.

We also established and renewed Environmental Water Advisory Groups for the Carran Carran (Thomson), Wirn wirndook Yeerung (Macalister) and Durt'Yowan (Latrobe) rivers to help inform the Seasonal Watering and Management Plans for these environmental water entitlements.



*"It is amazing
to be a part of
an enthusiastic
community group
with a broad
range of ages
and expertise."*



Dave Sutton is a returning member to the CEN



COMMUNITY CASE STUDY

Fresh faces for the Community Engagement Network

Community representatives from across West Gippsland recently met to kick off the next three-year term of West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority's (CMA) Community Engagement Network.

"The Community Engagement Network or CEN is where we let community members know what work we are doing and priorities we have and they, on behalf of the broader community, can provide valuable feedback on that work and other areas of community interest," said CEO of the West Gippsland CMA, Martin Fuller.

Sixteen new and returning members representing a broad range of age, location and experience make up the network for 2024-26. Marine science graduate Jessica Tong is one of them.

"It is amazing to be a part of an enthusiastic community group with a broad range of ages and expertise," said Jess. "I look forward to learning more about the West Gippsland CMA and contributing to the community voice for environmental preservation."

Returning member Dave Sutton was pleased to see a mix of equal gender representation across members. "It is wonderful to see

some fresh faces to bring new ideas and perspectives to the group," he said.

The latest cohort officially began their term with an induction session at the CMA's Traralgon office to get to know one another and the CMA team. Cultural competence training led by Mandy Leggett, Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Officer for West Gippsland CMA, was also a feature of the day.

Additional member forums throughout the year will provide an opportunity for the group to deep dive on topics of interest such as sustainable agriculture, citizen science, Landcare in West Gippsland and works on waterways.

Executive Manager – Catchment Planning and Delivery for West Gippsland CMA, Dan Garlick, sees the CEN as an important two-way information exchange between local communities and the CMA.

"Over the years there has been incredible input from this group along with advocacy back to the community. As we move into the next round of project funding and delivery, we'll continue having these localised conversations with CEN members to make sure we get the best outcomes for the environment and the community," concluded Dan.



Above: CEN members, CMA staff and Southern Rural Water, Agriculture Victoria staff at Glenmaggie Weir



Regulatory services

We are responsible for regulatory activities for waterways, floodplains and rural drainage. We also contribute to strategic planning across the region including participating in planning scheme amendments and improving the understanding of flood behaviour by developing flood studies.

During 2023-24, we:



Responded to
472
planning
permit referrals
in an average
response time
of 14.5 days



Issued
117
works on
waterways permits
in an average
response time of
14.5 days

Answered
432
requests

for advice regarding flooding, drainage,
annual use limits, whole farm plans and
Southern Rural Water enquiries in an
average response time of 14.5 days

We continued to provide floodplain management and works on waterways services on a contractual basis to East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (EGCMA). On behalf of EGCMA, we responded to 113 planning permit referrals and a further 132 flood advice and Southern Rural Water enquiries. We also issued 52 works on waterways permits.

In 2023-24, we provided administrative services on a contractual basis to the North Central Catchment Management Authorities and uploaded 1,299 applications into FloodZoom.

We continued to support DEECA in the ongoing development and refinement of the FloodZoom planning system. We assisted DEECA with expert user input to improve usability to the system. Significant and ongoing work was also done updating the flood intelligence data that drives both the planning and the emergency management modules.

We collaborated with DEECA and councils through the Gippsland Integrated Water Management Forum. We actively participated in the Inverloch Regional and Strategic Partnership which developed the draft Cape to Cape Resilience Plan to address the erosion occurring along Inverloch Surf Beach.

Significant progress was made during 2023-24 to produce and update flood information for our region. We partnered with Latrobe City to progress the flood study for Waterhole Creek in Morwell. We also partnered with Federation University's Industry Placement Program and industry leaders and progressed flood mapping for the Powlett River and Shady Creek in Welshpool. These studies will provide valuable information which will be used in flood preparedness and response, flood mitigation, planning scheme amendments, and for insurance purposes.

The West Gippsland Floodplain Management Strategy was completed in 2017. We developed the strategy on behalf of key local stakeholders such as the SES, local government, and the community. The strategy identified the significant flood risks across the region, analysed the mitigation options, and determined priority actions to be implemented over the lifetime of the strategy. Implementation of the strategy continued during 2023-24, with 15 actions completed and another 19 of the 59 current actions underway. The remaining actions are scheduled to commence in coming years or are awaiting suitable funding opportunities.



Our organisation

Our purpose

We coordinate the integrated management of land and water resources within the region. We aim to achieve ecologically and economically sustainable development of natural resource-based industries, protection of land and water resources, and conservation of natural and cultural heritage. We have done this since 1997 by working with communities, industries, and government agencies to protect and enhance the condition of the region's natural resource assets.

We exist to implement integrated catchment management to improve priority landscapes.

Our vision

A healthy catchment, valued and cared for by the community, that underpins the environmental, social, cultural and economic wealth of the region.

Our work

We work with our partners and stakeholders to protect and repair the health and extent of the natural resources that remain in our catchment. We do this through meaningful partnerships and relationships with agencies and the community, founded on trust, respect, and common goals.

We achieve these outcomes through positive, highly energised staff that are appropriately supported by Board, management, policies, procedures and systems. We ensure our investors are satisfied; we manage risk and ensure we stay well clear of trouble.

Our principles and values

We ensure all activities we undertake are relevant, transparent, accountable, and reliable. In undertaking our activities, we will act with integrity, fairness, and credibility. We will share knowledge and information, be prepared to accept change, and seek to continuously improve the activities in which we are involved.

We value and encourage participation of the community and other key stakeholders.

We are committed to integrated catchment management and targeted investment that is focused on long-term outcomes for our region.

Our partners and alliances are of the utmost importance to our operation and the development and implementation of the integrated catchment management priorities and plans.

We look to operate in an environment that is based on mutual respect, open communication, sharing of success, and the acknowledgement of achievements.



Values we live by



1 Natural resource management

"We are here to improve West Gippsland's priority landscapes through exemplary integrated regional catchment management."

Outcome: The region's land and water resources are valued, protected and improved

Objectives:

- In accordance with the Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) and other regional plans and strategies:
 - Protect and improve the region's priority landscapes to enhance their productivity and resilience.
 - Increase community awareness of values, knowledge, skills, and advocacy of desired practices.

Approach:

- Improve organisational capability, partnerships, engagement, and monitoring/evaluation systems.
- Draw on the wealth of local, traditional, and scientific knowledge held by staff, partners, and the community to:
 - Improve our understanding of catchments and coasts, including processes and impacts.
 - Apply a deeper, data-driven understanding of changing landscape and community trends.
 - Strengthen evidence-based decisions.
 - Perform statutory functions to benefit our natural resources and the communities that rely on them.
 - Position ourselves as the region's knowledge-bank for changing catchment conditions and practical responses.
 - Influence decision-makers on environmental management from mountain to coast, under a 'whole of catchment' model.

- Develop investment strategies that support the integrated management of our priority landscapes.
- Secure project funding using collaborative and intelligent systems and processes.
- Implement, monitor, evaluate, adaptively manage, and improve the delivery of strategies and plans.

2 Organisational capability

"We are here for the long term: viable, vibrant and effective."

Outcome: An efficient, well-run and reliable organisation

Objectives:

- Attract, nurture, and retain a diverse, passionate, professional workforce.
- Maintain and improve IT&C systems to improve efficiency and maintain continuity of organisational knowledge.
- Appropriate governance is in place to:
 - Ensure financial stability and security for the WGCMA.
 - Meet and surpass community expectations in areas of risk, compliance, and our statutory responsibilities.

Approach:

- Develop a work culture that celebrates success and rewards collaboration.
- Support staff with training, fit-for-purpose systems, and procedures.
- Strengthen leadership by providing staff with opportunities for development.
- Maintain a strong, diligent board and executive with appropriate governance, financial, audit, and risk management processes.
- Implement, monitor, evaluate, adaptively manage, and improve IT and corporate strategies and plans.



Above: Lower Latrobe Wetlands flourishing after rains



3 Community engagement and partnership

"We invite others to join us in our quest to protect, enhance, or restore our region and to create a healthier catchment."

Outcome: Community and regional partners are working together with trust and respect, to protect and improve our catchment.

Objectives:

- Increase the number of catchment-enhancing partnerships across the region.
- Increase the strength and impact of partnerships.
- Engage wider sectors of the community in catchment health projects.
- Increase awareness, knowledge, skills, and confidence of the community and partners.

Approach:

- Maintain and nurture strategic relationships with investors, agencies, organisations, community groups, individuals, local Indigenous communities, and Traditional Owners who can help us achieve our NRM, financial, and organisational goals.
- Engage with the community to better understand shared issues, to advocate for solutions, and to share models of success.
- Increase understanding of barriers to increase participation, strengthen partnerships, build capacity, and take action consistent with Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) objectives.
- Strengthen WGCMA's profile and reputation in the community as an agent of positive change and regional support.
- Increase the WGCMA's leadership profile within regional, state, and national agencies.
- Implement, monitor, evaluate, adaptively manage, and improve community engagement and partnerships framework.

4 Measurement and evaluation

"Measurement and evaluation is an essential, common feature of all our work because the knowledge we gain enables us to improve our work"

Outcome: Evidence-based improvement of our work.

Objective:

- Embed monitoring, evaluation, adaptive management, improvement, and communication of the work we do across all parts of the organisation.
- Initiate and support quantitative research through collaboration with academic bodies.



Approach:

- Embed key evaluation questions into all strategies and plans (effectiveness, impact, appropriateness, efficiency, and legacy).
- Measure, monitor, and map changes in the region's natural assets using our monitoring, evaluation, and reporting (MER) framework.
- Develop and support collaborative MER frameworks, leveraging community support where possible.
- Maintain timely and transparent communication of progress and outcomes with our partners.
- Share and celebrate successes: create a narrative that engages and places the wider community in the story of better catchment management.
- Implement, monitor, evaluate, adaptively manage, and improve the MER and project management frameworks.

Our organisation

We were established to provide integrated management of land and water resources within the region. The state government established ten CMAs on 1 July 1997 following a state-wide review of catchment management structures.

The Board

We are governed by a skills-based Board appointed by the Minister/s who administer the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (CaLP Act). Our responsibilities include strategic and policy direction for the integrated management of land, biodiversity, and water through south, central, and west Gippsland. We operate under the legislative base of many Acts.

The main Acts are the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (CaLP), *Water Act 1989*, *Financial Management Act 1994*, *Audit Act 1994*, *Freedom of Information Act 1982*, *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2012*, and the *Public Administration Act 2004*.

The *CaLP Act 1994* and the *Water Act 1989* define our main purposes as follows:

- To set up a framework for the integrated management and protection of the catchment.
- To encourage community participation in the management of land and water resources.
- To set up a system of controls on noxious weeds and pest animals.

The Board also has a Charter which is in line with DEECA's Governance Guidelines for Statutory Authorities which was formally adopted in June 2005. Details of our Board members are available on pages 59-62.

The relevant Ministers have issued us with a Statement of Obligations under the *CaLP Act 1994* and *Water Act 1989*. The Minister for Water has also issued a Letter of Expectation on which we are delivering. These documents are a key part of the framework that guides the function and activity of our organisation.

Within this framework, one of our primary roles is engaging with the community to develop and implement the Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS). The RCS is a framework for integrated land and water management in the region. It outlines the priority issues for the region through broad consultation with our community and other stakeholders.



The RCS is the overarching strategy for the development, management, and conservation of land and water resources in the region and is formally reviewed every six years.

Within this context, we are responsible for developing annual regional investment priorities within the Department's Victorian Water Program Investment Framework. The board sets priorities in consultation with state and Australian government investors, with regional agency stakeholders, and through our community engagement and partnerships framework. The annual investment package is endorsed by the relevant Ministers. Funds then become available for all successful projects.

Community Engagement Network (CEN) charter

The CEN charter outlines the purpose of the CEN as a forum to:

- Exchange NRM information.
- Identify community NRM needs, issues and barriers to participation.
- Provide community perspective into strategies, plans and projects.
- Strengthen our profile and reputation in the community through advocacy of NRM issues, solutions, and our activities.

The 16 members of the CEN were chosen by a Board appointed panel, based on diversity, geographic spread and strong links to the community.

Community Engagement Network members

Fiona Pfeil, Sale	Barry Rogers, Warragul	Chris Gittins, Fish Creek
David Sutton, Inverloch	Evan De Gooyer, Korumburra	Ellen Peters, Drouin
Graham Ross, Warragul	James Stranger, Traralgon	Dale Yeats, Traralgon
Jessica Obersby, Churchill	Emilie Lafrank, Tynong	Jessica Tong, Woolamai
Callum Reynolds, Coongulla	Nicki Jennings, Sale	Nicole Creaser, Korumburra
Deanne Smith, Nilma North	Phoebe Hicks, Trafalgar	

Two in person meetings and field trips were held in 2023-24. These were held at Powlett River/Kugerungmome and Durt Yowan (Latrobe River) and included a firsthand look at current work activities.

We have further involved our CEN members by:

- Inviting them to various workshops and webinars.
- Sharing information via email including erosion updates, Central and Gippsland Sustainable Water Strategy, Victorian Environmental Water Holder update and our *Gippslandscapes* podcasts.
- Supporting the sharing of information between members such as the Landcare Network newsletters, and the West Gippsland CMA Catchment Snapshot e-newsletter.



The Board and committees



Mikaela Power (Chair)

Mikaela was appointed to the Board on 27 October 2015. In the last financial year, she attended all 8 Board meetings.

Mikaela holds qualifications in arts, education, business and company directorship. She has worked in the public and private sectors in Gippsland, Melbourne and internationally and now works at Federation University. Mikaela was a Baw Baw Shire Councillor from 2012-2022, serving as Mayor and Deputy Mayor during this time. She was Deputy Chair of the Periurban Group of Rural Councils and chaired the West Gippsland Library Board for four years. Her community involvement includes Landcare, education, sport and the arts.



Belinda Nave (Deputy Chair)

Belinda was appointed to the Board on 1 October 2017. In the last financial year, she attended 7 of the 8 Board meetings.

Belinda is a primary producer involved in the family's wagyu beef enterprise. She holds qualifications in environmental and marine science and has extensive experience in NRM including managing on-ground environmental projects, strategic coastal projects, heritage projects and complex environmental assessments.

Belinda has worked in the public and private sectors in Gippsland and Melbourne. She has proven experience in engaging with stakeholders at the state, local government and community levels.

Belinda is passionate about improving the family farm through revegetation and protecting waterways and is an active volunteer in her local community.



Susan Anderson

Susan was appointed to the Board on 1 October 2021. In the last financial year, she attended all 8 Board meetings.

Susan is a primary producer of beef cattle in Bunyip and has conservation qualifications and experience in beef and dairy farm renovation and management.

From 2015 to 2021 Susan was a Board member of the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority and was deputy chair from 2018. She has extensive Landcare and community contacts in the Westernport catchment and is a life member and president of the Bunyip Landcare Group.

Susan is a member of Landcare Victoria's Members' Council and of the Longwarry-Koo Wee Rup Flood Protection District Advisory Committee and a committee member of the Cardinia Environment Coalition.



Liz Clay

Liz was appointed to the Board on 1 October 2019. In the last financial year, she attended 1 of the 2 Board meetings she was eligible to attend.

Liz has operated as a certified organic farmer, working in the Gippsland region for over 32 years to bring transdisciplinary knowledge to local social and ecological systems with a focus on agriculture and natural resources. She has recent and relevant industry experience and has contributed to numerous industry advisory committees including Southern Rural Water Irrigator Advisory committee and a previous term with West Gippsland CMA.

Liz holds formal qualifications in Applied Science (Systems Agriculture and Rural Development) and consults in ecological production systems and is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (GAICD).

Liz's term expired on 30 September 2023.



Peter Jennings OAM

Peter was appointed to the Board on 1 October 2017. In the last financial year, he attended 1 of the 2 Board meetings he was eligible to attend.

Peter is a retired farmer and former chair of our Board; he holds qualifications in farming, science, education, management, and company directorship. He moved from NSW to farm at Giffard in 1981 after working as a science teacher and at Outward Bound. He has been involved with local government, both as a councillor and commissioner, and with the Rural Financial Counselling Service, both as a counsellor, Executive Officer and currently as a Board member.

Peter is a past co-chair of the Gippsland Lakes Coordinating Committee, member of the Gippsland Coastal Board, the Shire of Alberton River Improvement Trust, the Corner Inlet Waterway Authority, and was chair of the Gippsland Grammar Board. He has also had many years of involvement with the VFF, CFA and Landcare.

Peter's term expired on 30 September 2023.



Jodie Mason

Jodie was appointed to the Board on 1 October 2017. In the last financial year, she attended 7 of the 8 Board meetings.

Jodie has qualifications in forest science, business management and company directorship, and over 30 years' professional experience in forest management, environmental auditing, research program management and industry engagement. She has worked in operational and consulting roles across the public and private sectors throughout Australia and internationally.

Jodie is a past Board member of Australian Forestry Standard Ltd, a current Board member of the Tasmanian Forest Practices Authority and is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD).



Shelley McGuiness

Shelley was appointed to the Board on 1 October 2019. In the last financial year, she attended 7 of the 8 Board meetings.

Shelley has over 25 years' experience in the land and water management sector including roles in research, extension, and policy.

Shelley holds a Bachelor of Agricultural Science (Honours) and is a Sessional Member of Planning Panels Victoria. Previously, she was a Director of Coliban Water and a member of the AICD.



Nicholas Murray

Nick was appointed to the Board on 1 October 2019. In the last financial year, he attended all 6 of the 8 Board meetings.

Nick holds an undergraduate degree in education, post graduate qualifications in Management and Occupational Health and Safety, and is a graduate of the AICD.

Nick has worked in the public and private sectors and has extensive Board experience with for-profit, not-for-profit, and member-based entities.

He is currently a member of the Gippsland Lakes Coordinating Committee and former member of the Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Advisory Committee.

Nick is an experienced Chief Executive Officer and prior to retirement from full time work was CEO of Gippsland Ports from 2008 to 2018. Nick is currently principal of a boutique consultancy practice providing services to a range of public and private sector clients.

He has a strong belief that positive conservation outcomes can be achieved through, and in conjunction with, sustainable regional development.



Brian Stevens

Brian was appointed to the Board on 1 October 2021. In the last financial year, he attended all of the 8 Board meetings.

Brian is a proud Gunai man, originating from East Gippsland with a deep understanding and strong connection to his cultural heritage, identity and community. He has worked to support Aboriginal people and communities by leading and shaping government policy and strategies that focus on Aboriginal health, leadership and economic development.

With over 30 years' experience in various Aboriginal leadership roles, Brian has contributed to the development of government policy and systems as well as corporate and business planning, change management, program design, evaluation and reporting.

Brian is an experienced Board member, he has led the development of community organisations and is a Board member of the Centre of Excellence for Aboriginal Health in East Gippsland and a member of the Bass Coast Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Advisory Committee. He is an Alumni of the Melbourne Business School, MURRA Indigenous Business program, a qualified and accredited coach and facilitator, trained in conflict management, adult education and training and completed the Australian Institute of Company Directors Training.



Jenny O'Sullivan

Jenny was appointed to the Board on 1 October 2023. In the last financial year, she attended 6 of the 7 Board meetings she was eligible to attend.

Jenny and her husband run a 664 hectare (1,500 Dry Sheep Equivalent beef and sheep property in south Gippsland. She has worked with rural communities and industries to build the capacity of people, build resilience and enhance wellbeing and embrace innovation and best practice in agriculture and natural resource management.

Jenny is passionate about sustainable agriculture, rural communities, the environment and the red meat industry. Jenny is a member of The Australian Beef Sustainability Steering Group.

Jenny's contribution to agriculture, the environment and community has been recognised with numerous awards over the years including the West Gippsland CMA Lyrebird award.

Board membership of committees

During 2023-24 Board members participated on the following committees:

Audit and Risk Committee

Susan Anderson, Shelley McGuinness and Liz Clay* to 26 November 2023

Shelley McGuinness, Belinda Nave and Jenny O'Sullivan from 27 November 2023

Remuneration Committee

Mikaela Power (Chair), Nicholas Murray and Brian Stevens to 26 November 2023

Mikaela Power (Chair), Brian Stevens and Susan Anderson from 27 November 2023

Corporate Committee

Jodie Mason (Chair), Belinda Nave and Peter Jennings* to 26 November 2023

Jodie Mason (Chair), Belinda Nave and Nick Murray from 27 November 2023

Landcare

Peter Jennings (Chair)* and Susan Anderson to 26 November 2023

Susan Anderson (Chair), Shelley McGuinness and Jenny O'Sullivan from 27 November 2023

Regional Catchment Management Strategy Steering Committee

Shelley McGuinness

** Term expired 30 September 2023*



Audit and Risk Committee

The main responsibilities of the Audit and Risk Committee are to:

- Review and report independently to the Board on the annual report and all other financial information and reports.
- Help the Board review the effectiveness of the organisation's internal control environment covering:
 - effectiveness and efficiency of operations
 - reliability of financial reporting
 - compliance with applicable laws and regulations and
 - determine the scope of the internal audit function and ensure its resources are adequate and used effectively, including coordination with the external auditors.
- Maintain effective communication with external auditors.
- Consider recommendations made by internal and external auditors and review the implementation of actions to resolve issues raised.
- Oversee the effective operation of the risk management framework.

Independent members of the Audit and Risk Committee are Ian Gibson (Chair) and Andrea Buckland.

Table 9: Audit and Risk Committee membership and meeting attendance 2023-24

Name	Independent	Term	Attended	Eligible to Attend
Ian Gibson, Chairperson	✓	1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024	5	5
Andrea Buckland	✓	1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024	5	5
Belinda Nave	✗	27 November 2023 to 30 June 2024	2	2
Jenny O'Sullivan	✗	26 November 2023 to 30 June 2024	2	2
Shelley McGuinness	✗	1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024	3	5
Susan Anderson	✗	1 July 2022 to 26 November 2023	3	3
Liz Clay	✗	1 July 2022 to 26 November 2023	2	3

Internal audit plan

Audits have been undertaken in accordance with the internal audit plan. This plan was developed in consultation with the internal auditor and the risk and audit committee. Reviews carried out this year were:

- Compliance with Standing Directions
- Records Management.



Organisational structure

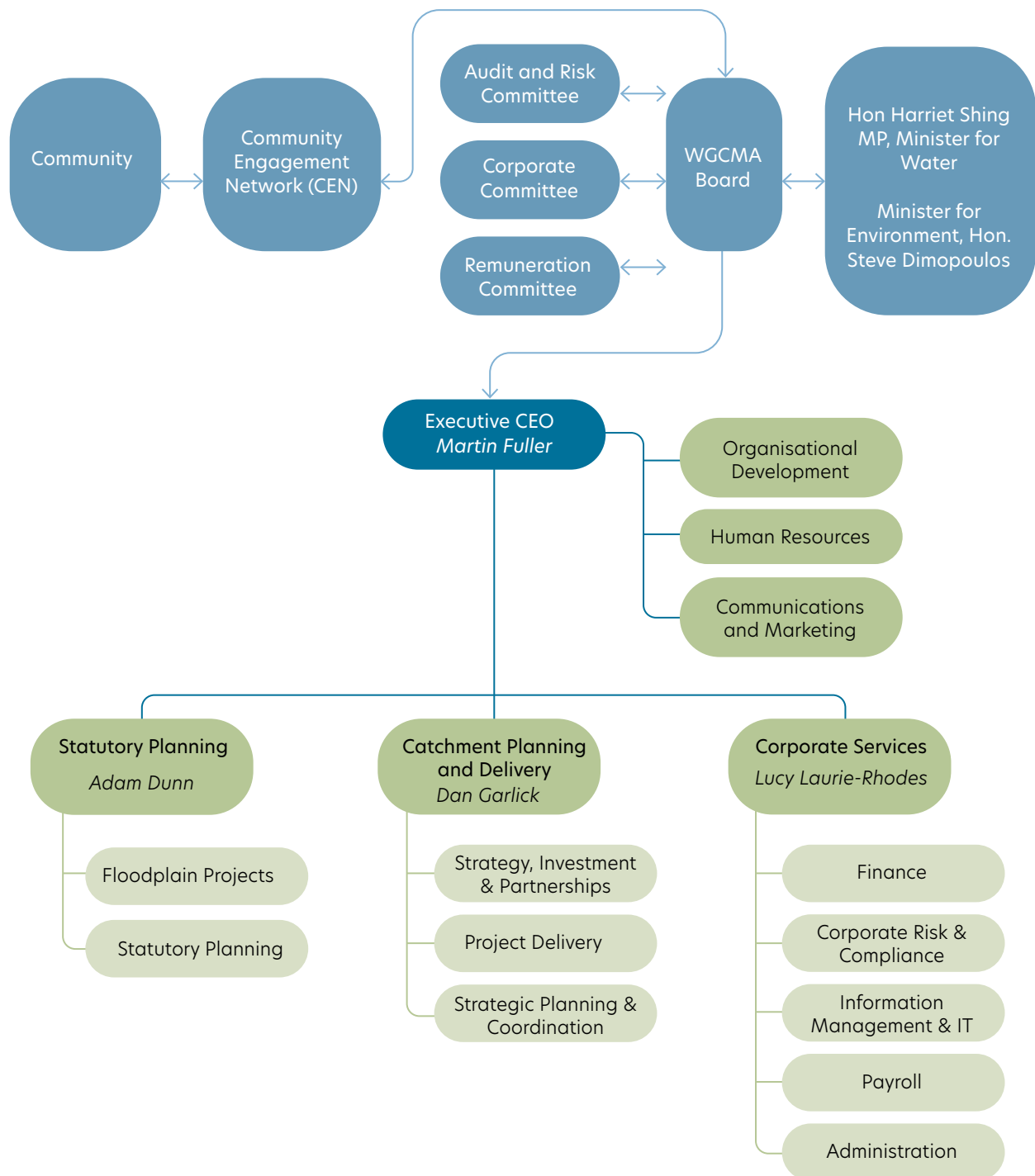


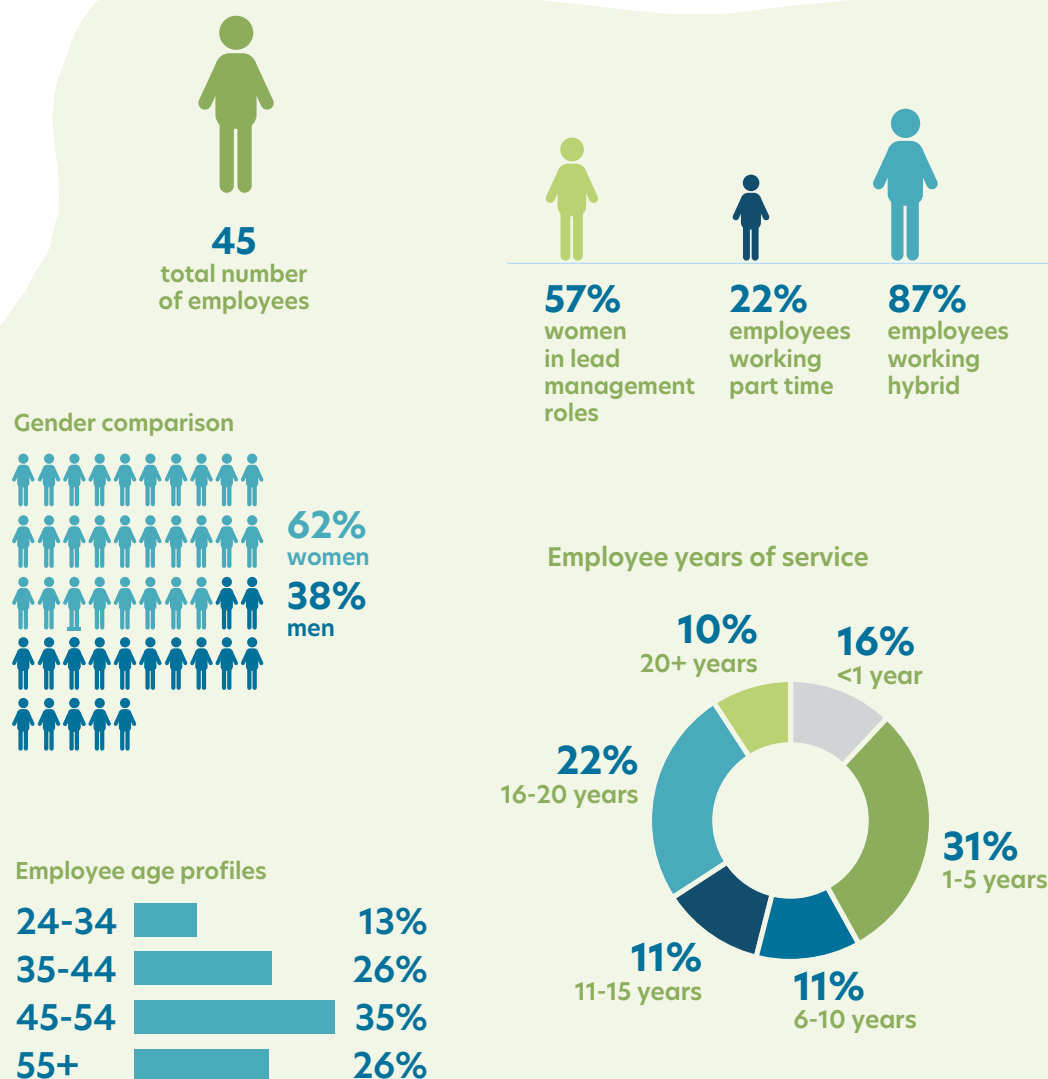
Figure 6: West Gippsland CMA's organisational structure 2023-24

Our people

Supporting our people to be their best

Our people are resilient, technical, and capable of great outcomes. We focus our efforts on building programs and initiatives that drive a continuous improvement culture which in turn enhances the employee experience. Our people are engaged and aligned to what West Gippsland CMA is trying to achieve, are satisfied in their roles which in turn, builds a strong stakeholder experience.

Current snapshot of our workforce





Health, safety & wellbeing

We are committed to providing and maintaining a safe work environment that does not pose health and safety risks to our employees, contractors, visitors, and volunteers. We recognise that work health and safety is extremely important and minimising risks to health and safety is the joint responsibility of the board, management, and employees. We will continue to promote a culture of awareness and focus on continuous improvement in work health and safety.

Throughout the year, there were no notifiable incidents that were required to be reported to the Victorian Workcover Authority for the reporting period.

OH&S Committee

The OH&S Committee meets quarterly and is chaired by the CEO. Committee members are elected as per our Work Health and Safety Committee policy and focus on and review key topics including:

- Prioritising the safety of our workforce.
- Enhance safety leadership capabilities.
- Improve our safety culture.
- Meet the relevant Australian standards to improve safety data collection, compliance, and reporting.
- Training delivery, safety inspections, and investigations.

Table 10: OH&S five-year summary

	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19
Reported hazards/incidents (i) (ii)	13	5	6	7	10	12
Lost time standard claims	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Average cost per claim	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Training events	2	2	2	4	4	3

(i) Reported internally.

(ii) Includes general incidents, motor vehicle incidents and windscreen incidents.

Learning and Development

We are continually improving our learning and development systems to ensure our people are equipped for the interpersonal complexities of today's professional environment. We have developed a learning and development framework to ensure all capability development activities put us in the best position to meet current and future challenges.

We promote succession planning for the development of our people to progress to senior or specialist roles by way of creating opportunities to participate in higher duties, secondments, mentoring and other skill sharing options.

- This year we optimised our learning management system to improve end user experience achieving almost 90% completion rate of all mandatory compliance training which includes privacy, cyber-security, health and safety, bullying and harassment, fraud and corruption and meeting our legal, ethical and governance requirements.
- We also explored and offered numerous bespoke individual development opportunities.



Leadership

We build leadership capability and capacity throughout the organisation by developing excellent leaders and managers who model people leadership, management and supervision skills and behaviours. This includes coaching and mentoring by team leaders and managers as well as direct feedback during employee reviews each year.

- This year we strengthened our leadership capability by integrating Leadership aspects into our People & Culture Strategy 2023-28 and by designing our bespoke Leadership Program for 2023-24.

Diversity and inclusion

We are continuously working towards building an inclusive environment. We share a commitment to value and embrace diversity in all forms so that our workplaces are safe spaces where we can all belong. This is integral to creating a great employee experience, growing our capability, and supporting our communities. This year we are on track to launch our Diversity & Inclusion Plan 2024-2029. We also continued to celebrate the most significant days of each of our diverse groups and conduct events on nominated celebration/commemoration days to promote understanding, acceptance, and as a means of celebrating diversity in all its forms.



Above: West Gippsland CMA team members



Workforce data

Table 11: Headcount and FTE as at June 2024 and June 2023

	2023-24	2023-24	2022-23	2022-23
Classification	Number (headcount)	FTE	Number (headcount)	FTE
Executives	1	1	1	1
Senior Managers	3	3	4	4
Administration staff	42	34.9	37	32
Total	46	38.9	42	37

Note: FTE numbers may not total due to rounding.

- (i) Excluded are those on leave without pay or absent on secondment, external contractors/consultants, and temporary staff employed by employment agencies.
- (ii) Ongoing employees include people engaged on an open-ended contract of employment and senior management and executives engaged on a standard executive contract who were active in the last full pay period of June.
- (iii) Other includes administrative and field staff.
- (iv) Employees have been correctly classified in workforce data collections.

Environmental report

Reducing our environmental impact

West Gippsland CMA is committed to reducing the environmental impact of its operations, both through the reduction of carbon emissions, as well as the implementation of sustainability practices within its operations.

Under FRD 24 Reporting of environmental data by government entities, we are required to report various environmental indicators, as illustrated in the below table. All operations and activities of the West Gippsland CMA are included within the organisational boundary for this reporting period.

Table 12: FRD 24 Reporting of environmental data by government entities

EL1 - Total electricity consumption segmented by source:	2023-24 MW Hrs	2022-23 MW Hrs	2021-22 MW Hrs
Purchased	59.3	56.8	51.5
Not directly purchased	0.0	0.0	0.0
Self-generated	128.5	42.5	37.5
TOTAL	187.8	99.3	89.0

EL4 - Total electricity offsets segmented by offset type:	2023-24 MW Hrs	2022-23 MW Hrs	2021-22 MW Hrs
LGC's voluntarily retired by the entity	0.0	0.0	0.0
LGC's voluntarily retired on the entity's behalf	0.0	0.0	0.0
GreenPower	59.3	56.8	51.5
Renewable Power Percentage	n/a	n/a	n/a
TOTAL	59.3	56.8	51.5

T2 - Number and proportion of vehicles in the organisational boundary segmented by engine/fuel type and vehicle category	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22
Road Vehicles:			
Petrol - (no.)	1	1	1
Petrol - (%)	4%	5%	4%
Diesel/biodiesel - (no.)	25	21	23
Diesel/biodiesel - (%)	96%	95%	96%
TOTAL Road Vehicles - (no.)	26	22	24
TOTAL Road Vehicles - (%)	100%	100%	100%
Non-road Vehicles:			
Petrol - (no.)	0	0	0
Petrol - (%)	0%	0%	0%
Diesel/biodiesel - (no.)	3	3	3
Diesel/biodiesel - (%)	100%	100%	100%
TOTAL Non-road Vehicles - (no.)	3	3	3
TOTAL Non-road Vehicles - (%)	100%	100%	100%

B3 - NABERS Energy ratings of newly completed/occupied entity-owned office buildings and substantial tenancy fit-outs	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22
	N/A	N/A	N/A



Good governance

Report against Corporate Plan targets

Projects we undertake are developed through the Victorian Water Program Investment Framework and National Landcare Program processes and lodged with the Victorian and Australian governments. Once endorsed by government, our staff and Board develop an Annual Action Plan.

To ensure we can report to the Minister against governance requirements, key performance indicators have been included in this report that will complement the outcomes required in our investment plans. These are detailed below.

Table 13: Corporate Plan targets and achievements

Performance area	Performance target	Achievement
Business management and governance	Submit annually, a Board performance assessment report according to any guidelines issued.	Compliant with guidelines issued.
	A risk management strategy/plan approved by the Board and being implemented.	Plan is approved by the Board and is being implemented.
	100% of the CMA's policies reviewed and approved by the Board every three financial years.	100% of relevant policies reviewed.
	Full compliance with all applicable Standing Directions under the Financial Management Compliance Framework Checklist.	Full compliance was achieved.
Regional planning and coordination	A regional catchment strategy (RCS) approved by the Minister.	Approved and being implemented.
	A regional waterways strategy (RWS) approved by the Minister.	Approved and being implemented.
	A regional floodplain strategy (RFS) approved by the Board.	Approved and being implemented.
	Land and water management plans (LWMP) in designated irrigation areas (or equivalent) approved by the Board.	Approved and being implemented.
	A stakeholder and community engagement framework/plan approved by the Board.	Approved and being implemented.
	A regional Landcare support plan approved by the Board.	Approved and being implemented.

Table 13: Corporate Plan targets and achievements *continued...*

Performance area	Performance target	Achievement
Regional delivery	Progress with implementation of the RCS and any major sub-strategies is reviewed by the Board annually.	RCS program reviewed and reported to Board.
	Projects/activities to implement the RCS are delivered and reported according to associated funding agreements.	Approved projects and activities are being delivered and reported according to associated funding agreements.
	Projects/activities to implement the regional floodplain management strategy delivered and reported according to associated funding agreements.	Approved projects and activities are being delivered and reported according to associated funding agreements.
	Projects/activities to implement LWMP are delivered and reported according to associated funding agreements.	Approved projects and activities are being delivered and reported according to associated funding agreements.
Statutory functions under part 10 of the Water Act	90% of statutory requirements (permits, referrals, advice and licences) associated with waterway and floodplain management are responded to within the prescribed period.	Achieved 99%
Statutory functions under part 11 of the Water Act	90% of statutory requirements (permits, referrals, advice and licences) associated irrigation management are responded to within the prescribed period.	>90% achieved

In addition to the performance areas and indicators outlined above, we monitor our progress against our five-year Corporate Strategic Plan and the Key Areas of Focus outlined on pages 53-57. This is done through an annually approved Action Plan which cascades down through staff work plans and is reported quarterly to the Board. For 2023-24, a 95% delivery was achieved for the Action Plan.



Community inclusion

Multicultural Victoria Act 2004

Our support for cultural diversity and the involvement of women, youth, and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities took a variety of forms this year.

We have a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with both GLaWAC and BLCAC. This MoU outlines how we will work with each group, with the focus of the MoU ensuring that each corporation is involved from the beginning of all projects in their relevant Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) areas. The MoU has remained a priority in all projects and programs within their areas. The GLaWAC RAP area covers approximately 80% of the West Gippsland region. The BLCAC RAP area covers approximately 7.5% of the area.

We meet bi-monthly with each corporation to develop and plan projects as well as monitor their implementation. The Traditional Owner section of our *Regional Catchment Strategy 2021-2027* guides our work together.

Working with youth

Throughout the year we have been involved in mentoring GLaWAC Cultural Water staff, GLaWAC Rangers and Aboriginal trainees in other NRM agencies. This work is now a target in our plan for the coming five years. To date training/mentoring has taken place in:

- Project planning
- Water quality monitoring
- Blackfish habits and habitats
- Data collection.

An appointment process is underway to secure an Associate Director (Youth), this process will be complete by the end of quarter one 2024-25.

Involving women

Six members of our Board are female. Eleven of the 26 members of the CEN are female. Of our 35 (FTE) employees, 51% are female.

Workforce Inclusion policy

We are working towards creating a balanced working environment, where equal opportunity and diversity are valued and reflects the communities we serve, consistent with the *Gender Equality Act 2020*. We developed a Diversity and Inclusion Plan in 2017-18 with actions continuing to be implemented.

A focus for this year has been to promote the availability of flexible work arrangements with staff. Flexible work arrangements include options to work part-time, work from home, and to be able to purchase additional leave.

Table 14: Inclusion measures and progress 2020-24

Diversity and Inclusion Plan Initiative	Measure	Actual progress for 2023-24	Actual progress for 2022-23	Actual progress for 2021-22
Promote the availability of flexible work arrangements	Number of staff with flexible work arrangements	100% of staff	100% of staff	100% of staff

Note: reported as a percentage against headcount figure.



Other disclosures

Manner of establishment and relevant Minister

Our organisation was established under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (CaLP).

The responsible Ministers for the period 1 July 2023 - 1 October 2023 were Hon Harriet Shing MP, Minister for Water and Hon Ingrid Stitt MP, Minister for Environment.

The responsible Ministers for the period 2 October 2023 - 30 June 2024 were Hon Harriet Shing MP, Minister for Water and Hon. Steve Dimopoulos MP, Minister for Environment.

Local Jobs First Act 2003

The *Local Jobs First Act 2003* introduced in August 2018 brings together the Victorian Industry Participation Policy (VIPP) and Major Project Skills Guarantee (MPSG) policy which were previously administered separately.

WGCMA is required to apply the Local Jobs First policy in all projects valued at \$3 million or more in Metropolitan Melbourne or for statewide projects, or \$1 million or more in regional Victoria.

MPSG applies to all construction projects valued at \$20 million or more.

The MPSG guidelines and VIPP guidelines will continue to apply to MPSG applicable and VIPP applicable projects respectively where contracts have been entered prior to 15 August 2018.

During 2023-24, we did not commence any contracts under which the *Local Jobs First Act 2003* would apply.

Government advertising expenditure

In 2023-24 there were no government advertising campaigns with total media spend of \$100,000 or greater (exclusive of GST).

Consultancy expenditure

Details of consultancies (valued at \$10,000 or greater)

In 2023-24, there was one consultancy where the total fees payable to the consultants was \$10,000 or greater.

Details of individual consultancies are outlined below:

(\$ thousand)				
Consultant	Purpose of Consultancy	Total Approved Project Fee (excl. GST)	Expenditure 2023-24 (excl. GST)	Future Expenditure (excl. GST)
Alluvium Consulting Pty Ltd	2D modelling for the Thomson River Long-Term management plan	38	31	0



Details of consultancies under \$10,000

In 2023-24, there were two consultancies engaged during the year where the total fees payable to the consultants were less than \$10,000. The total expenditure incurred during 2023-24 in relation to these consultancies was \$3,383 (excl. GST).

Reviews and studies expenditure

During 2023-24, there were no reviews or studies undertaken.

Information and Communication Technology expenditure

For the 2023-24 reporting period, the Authority had a total ICT expenditure of \$684,015 with the details shown below:

Table 15: BAU Expenditure 2023-24

All operational ICT expenditure		ICT Expenditure related to projects to create or enhance ICT capabilities	
Business As Usual (BAU) ICT expenditure (Total)	Non-Business As Usual (non-BAU) ICT expenditure (Total = Operational expenditure and Capital expenditure)	Operational expenditure	Capital expenditure
\$669,331	\$14,684	\$3,975	\$10,710

ICT expenditure refers to the Authority's costs in providing business enabling ICT services within the current reporting period. It comprises Business as Usual (BAU) ICT expenditure and Non-Business as Usual (non-BAU) ICT expenditure. Non-BAU ICT expenditure relates to extending or enhancing the Authority's current ICT capabilities. BAU ICT expenditure is all remaining ICT expenditure which primarily relates to ongoing activities to operate and maintain the current ICT capability.


Disclosure of major contracts

The Authority did not award any major contracts (valued at \$10 million or more) during 2023-24.

Freedom of Information

The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the Act) allows the public a right of access to documents held by us. The purpose of the Act is to extend as far as possible the right of the community to access information held by government departments, local councils, Ministers, and other bodies subject to the Act.

An applicant has the right to apply for access to documents held by the Authority. This comprises documents both created by the Authority or supplied to the Authority an external organisation or individual, and may also include maps, films, microfiche, photographs, computer printouts, computer discs, tape recordings, and videotapes. Information about the type of material produced by the Authority is available in the Authority's website under its Part II Information Statement.



The Act allows the Authority to refuse access, either fully or partially, to certain documents or information. Examples of documents that may not be accessed include cabinet documents; some internal working documents; law enforcement documents; documents covered by legal professional privilege, such as legal advice; personal information about other people; and information provided to the Authority in-confidence and information that is confidential under another Act.

Under the Act, the FOI processing time for requests received is 30 calendar days. However, when external consultation is required under s29, 29A, 31, 31A, 33, 34 or 35, a 15 day automatic extension applies. Processing time may also be extended by periods of 30 days, in consultation with the applicant. With the applicant's agreement this may occur any number of times. However, obtaining an applicant's agreement for an extension cannot occur after the expiry of the timeframe for deciding a request.

If an applicant is not satisfied by a decision made by the Authority, under section 49A of the Act, they have the right to seek a review by the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC) within 28 days of receiving a decision letter.

Making a request

Freedom of Information (FOI) requests can be lodged online at www.foi.vic.gov.au. An application fee of \$32.70 applies from 1 July 2024. Access charges may also be payable if the document pool is large, and the search for material time consuming.

Access to documents can also be obtained through a written request to our FOI officer, as detailed in s17 of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

When making an FOI request, applicants should ensure requests are in writing and clearly identify what types of material/documents are being sought and should be accompanied by the application fee to be a valid request.

Requests for documents in possession of the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA) should be directed to:

Lucy Laurie-Rhodes, FOI Officer
West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority
PO Box 1374, Traralgon VIC 3844

Enquiries can be made to the Authority's FOI officer via email at lucyl@wgcm.vic.gov.au

FOI statistics/timeliness

During 2023-24, West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority received no FOI applications.

Further information

Further information regarding the operation and scope of FOI can be obtained from the Act, regulations made under the Act, and ovic.vic.gov.au.



Building Act 1983 compliance

The WGCMA owns two depot buildings located in Maffra and Cowwarr and each complies with the building and maintenance provisions of the *Building Act 1993*.

Appropriately qualified consultants and contractors are engaged for all proposed works on land controlled by the WGCMA, and we ensure that their work and services comply with current building standards. All such consultants and contractors are expected to have appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure compliance with the building and maintenance provisions of the *Building Act 1993*, *Building Regulations 2018* and the National Construction Code.

Appropriately qualified consultants and contractors are engaged for mandatory testing of emergency and exit lighting in accordance with relevant standards for monthly, quarterly and bi-annual inspections, preventive routine maintenance of mechanical services and all fire service audits.

Competitive neutrality policy

Competitive neutrality requires government businesses to ensure that where services compete, or potentially compete, with the private sector, any net advantage arising from government ownership is accounted for if it is not in the public interest. Government businesses are required to set a competitively neutral price, which accounts for any net advantage that comes from public ownership. Competitive neutrality policy supports fair competition between public and private businesses and provides government businesses with a tool to enhance decisions on resource allocation. This policy does not override other policy objectives of government and focuses on efficiency in the provision of service.

The Authority ensures that Victoria fulfils its requirements on competitive neutrality reporting principles as required under the *Competition Principles Agreement* and *Competition and Infrastructure Reform Agreement*.

Compliance with the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012*

The *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012* (the Act) enables people to make disclosures about improper conduct by public officers and public bodies.

The Act aims to ensure openness and accountability by encouraging people to make disclosures and protecting them when they do.

What is a 'public interest disclosure'?


A public interest disclosure is a complaint of corrupt or improper conduct by a public officer or a public body.

West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority is a "public body" for the purposes of the Act.

What is 'improper or corrupt conduct'?

Improper or corrupt conduct involves substantial:

- corrupt conduct
- criminal offence
- serious professional misconduct
- dishonest performance of public functions
- intentional or reckless breach of public trust
- intentional or reckless misuse of information
- substantial mismanagement of public resources

- 
- substantial risk to health or safety of a person
 - substantial risk to the environment
 - conduct of any person that adversely affects the honest performance by a public officer of their functions
 - conduct of any person that is intended to adversely affect the effective performance by a public officer of their functions for the benefit of the other person.

Conduct that is trivial will not constitute improper conduct for the purpose of the Act.

How do I make a 'public interest disclosure'?

You can make a public interest disclosure about West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority or its Board members, officers or employees by contacting the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC), the Victorian Inspectorate (VI) or the Victorian Ombudsman (VO) on the contact details provided below.

West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority is not able to receive public interest disclosures.

How can I access West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority's procedures for the protection of persons from detrimental action?

We have established procedures for the protection of persons from detrimental action in reprisal for making a public interest disclosure about West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority or its employees. You can access our procedures on our website:

wgcma.vic.gov.au

Contacts

As noted earlier, the Act does not permit us to receive public interest disclosures. If you wish to make a disclosure about West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority or any of its staff, please make that disclosure directly to the IBAC, the VI or the VO.

The IBAC can be contacted in writing at:

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC) Victoria

Level 1, North Tower, 459 Collins Street, Melbourne Victoria 3000, or
IBAC, GPO Box 24234, Melbourne Victoria 3001

W: ibac.vic.gov.au

T: 1300 735 135

E: See the website above for the secure email disclosure process, which also provides for anonymous disclosures.

The VI can be contacted in writing at:

Victorian Inspectorate

Level 8, 565 Bourke Street, Melbourne Victoria 3000

W: vicinspectorate.vic.gov.au

T: 1800 518 197

E: info@vicinspectorate.vic.gov.au

The VO can be contacted in writing at:

Victorian Ombudsman

Level 2, 570 Bourke Street Melbourne VIC 3000

W: ombudsman.vic.gov.au

T: 1800 806 314

The VO also offers an online form, available at: ombudsman.vic.gov.au/complaints



Further Information

The Public Interest Disclosure Policy and Procedures, which outline the system for reporting disclosures of improper conduct or detrimental action by the Authority or any of its employees and/or officers, are available on the Authority's website.

Table 16: Disclosures under the Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012

	2023-24 number	2022-23 number
The number of disclosures made by an individual to the Authority and notified to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission		
Assessable disclosures	0	0

Disclosure of Emergency Procurement

Nil reports – during 2023-24, West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority did not activate its Emergency Procurement Plan.

Disclosure of Procurement Complaints

Under the Governance Policy of the Victorian Government Purchasing Board (VGPB), the Department must disclose any formal complaints relating to the procurement of goods and services received through its procurement complaints management system.

West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority received no complaints through its procurement complaints management system in 2023-24.

Employment and conduct

The Authority is committed to applying merit and equity principles when appointing staff. The selection process ensures applications are assessed and evaluated fairly and equitably on the basis of the key selection criteria and other accountabilities without discrimination. Employees have been correctly classified in workforce data collections.

Statement of availability of other information

Information relevant to Financial Reporting Direction 22I of the *Financial Management Act 1994* is held at our office and is available on request, subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*. The *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* establishes a regime for the responsible collection and handling of personal information in the Victorian public sector.

We comply with the ten Information Privacy Principles. This information is available on request by contacting Lucy Laurie-Rhodes, FOI Officer. Further information is available at the Privacy Victoria website ovic.vic.gov.au.

Social Procurement Framework

West Gippsland CMA is fully committed to supporting the Government's directions under the Social Procurement Framework (SPF) and we recognise that we play a role in advancing social and sustainable outcomes for Victorians.

Developed in 2019 and reviewed in May 2022, the West Gippsland CMA's Social Procurement Strategy enables a strategic, agency-wide approach to how we will deliver social and sustainable outcomes through our procurement in accordance with the Social Procurement Framework and beyond.

In the strategy, the CMA prioritises three SPF objectives – detailed in the table below along with their associated reporting metrics. These SPF objectives were chosen due to their high degree of alignment with the CMA's strategic direction and values as well as being best positioned to advance our identified social procurement opportunities.

Table 17: SPF Objectives and reporting framework

Objective Prioritised	Outcome Sought	SPF Reporting Metric
Sustainable Victorian social enterprises and Aboriginal business sectors	Purchasing from Victorian Aboriginal businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of Victorian Aboriginal Businesses engaged (2) Total expenditure with Victorian Aboriginal Businesses, expressed both in dollar terms and as a percentage of total procurement
Opportunities for Victorians with a disability	Purchasing from Victorian social enterprises and Australian Disability Enterprises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of disability enterprises engaged Total expenditure with disability enterprises
Sustainable Victorian Regions	Job readiness and employment for people in regions with entrenched disadvantage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total expenditure with suppliers with business addresses within Deciles 1 & 2 within Victoria

The following details the Authorities 2023-24 aggregate expenditure with identified Social Benefit suppliers.

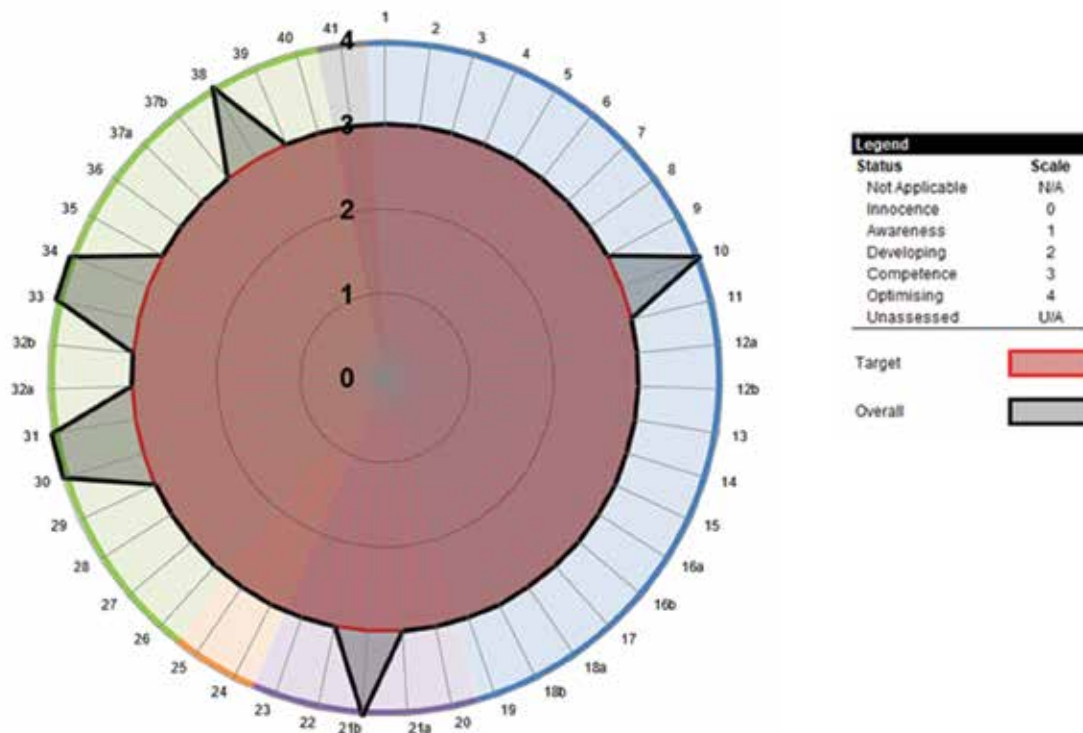
Table 18: WGCMA aggregate expenditure with identified Social Benefit suppliers – 2023-24

Area of Social Benefit	No.	Value (\$) (GST ex.)	% Total Spend
Total Expenditure	341	\$6,396,031	100.00%
Social benefit suppliers	5	\$36,267	0.57%
Objective: Opportunities for Victorian Aboriginal people Outcome: Purchasing from Victorian Aboriginal businesses			
Aboriginal businesses engaged	2	\$94,712	1.3%
Objective: Opportunities for Victorians with disability Outcome: Purchasing from Victorian social enterprises and Australian Disability Enterprises			
Victorian social enterprises (led by a mission for people with disability) and Australian Disability Enterprises engaged	1	\$1,379	0.02%
Objective: Opportunities for disadvantaged Victorians Outcome: Purchasing from Victorian social enterprises			
Victorian social enterprises engaged	3	\$5,988	0.09%
Victorian Aboriginal businesses engaged	2	\$30,279	0.47%

Asset Management Accountability Framework (AMAF) maturity assessment

The following sections summarise the Authority's assessment of maturity against the requirements of the Asset Management Accountability Framework (AMAF). The AMAF is a non-prescriptive, devolved accountability model of asset management that requires compliance with 41 mandatory requirements. These requirements can be found on the [DTF website](#).

The Authority's target maturity rating is 'competence', meaning systems and processes fully in place, consistently applied and systematically meeting the AMAF requirement, including a continuous improvement process to expand system performance above AMAF minimum requirements.



Leadership and Accountability (Requirements 1-19)

The Authority has met or exceeded its target maturity under all requirements under this category.

Planning (Requirements 20-23)

The Authority has met or exceeded its target maturity under all requirements under this category.

Acquisition (Requirements 24 and 25)

The Authority has met its target maturity under all requirements under this category.

Operation (Requirements 26-40)

The Authority has met or exceeded its target maturity under all requirements under this category.

Disposal (Requirement 41)

The Authority has met its target maturity under all requirements under this category.



DataVic Access policy

Consistent with the DataVic Access policy issued by the Victorian Government in 2012, the information included in this annual report will be available at data.vic.gov.au in electronic readable format.

West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority Financial Management Compliance Attestation Statement

I, Mikaela Power, on behalf of the Responsible Body, certify that the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA) has no Material Compliance Deficiency with respect to the applicable Standing Directions of the Minister for Finance under the *Financial Management Act 1994* and Instructions.



Mikaela Power

26 August 2024

Significant changes in financial position

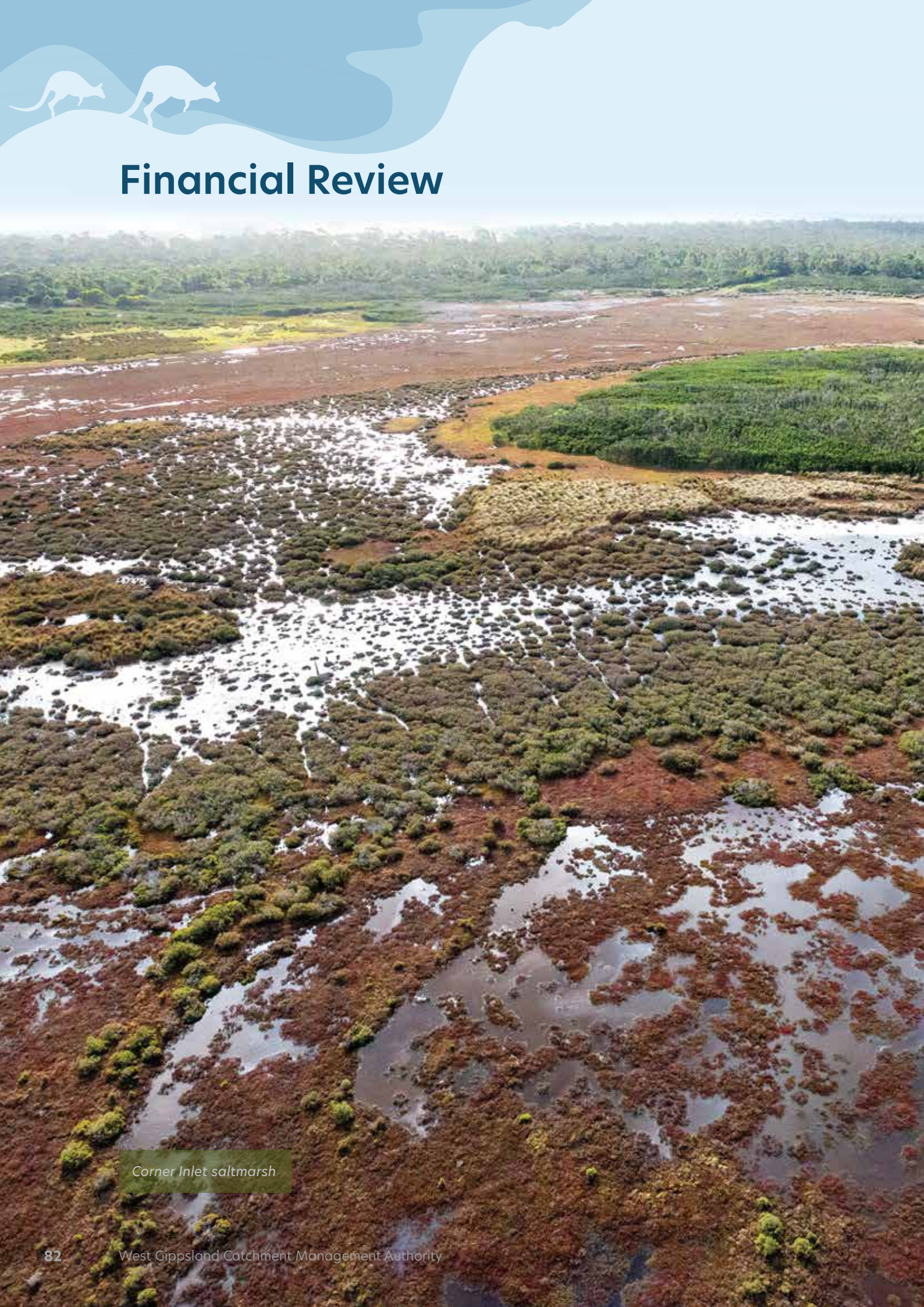
Our financial position has had no major change to base programs compared to previous years and cash on hand committed to projects and other activities remains available into the future.

Major changes or factors affecting performance

There were no changes or factors which affected our performance during the reporting period.

Subsequent events affecting future operations

There were no events occurring after balance date which may significantly affect our operations in subsequent reporting periods.



Financial Review

Corner Inlet saltmarsh



Declaration in the Financial Statements

We further state that, in our opinion, the information set out in the comprehensive operating statement, balance sheet, statement of changes in equity, cash flow statement and accompanying notes, presents fairly the financial transactions during the year ended 30 June 2024 and financial position of the Authority at 30 June 2024.

At the time of signing, we are not aware of any circumstances which would render any particulars included in the financial statements to be misleading or inaccurate.

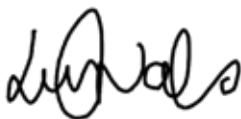
We authorise the attached financial statements for issue on 26 August 2024.



Mikaela Power
Chairperson



Martin Fuller
CEO and Accountable Officer



Lucy Laurie-Rhodes
Chief Finance & Accounting Officer



COMPREHENSIVE OPERATING STATEMENT

for the financial year ended 30 June 2024

	Notes	2024 \$	2023 \$
Income from transactions			
Government contributions	2.1.1	10,157,897	10,315,586
Interest		1,025,982	571,727
Other income	2.1.2	1,396,830	1,368,174
Total income from transactions		12,580,709	12,255,487
Expenses from transactions			
Employee expenses	3.1.1	5,356,730	5,065,059
Depreciation and amortisation	4.1.2	700,688	640,002
Materials, maintenance, grants and consultancies	3.2	2,082,162	1,820,674
Contractors		4,434,654	4,790,615
Interest expense on lease liabilities	6.2.2	31,085	5,374
Other operating expenses	3.3	728,521	795,828
Total expenses from transactions		13,333,840	13,117,551
Net result from transactions (net operating balance)		(753,131)	(862,064)
Other economic flows included in net result			
Net gain/(loss) on non-financial assets (ii)	8.2	80,822	222,261
Net result		(672,309)	(639,804)
Other economic flows - other comprehensive income			
Items that will not be reclassified to net result			
Changes in physical asset revaluation surplus		39,019	-
Comprehensive result		(633,291)	(639,804)

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Note:

- (i) This format is aligned to AASB 1049 Whole of Government and General Government Sector Financial Reporting.
- (ii) Net gain/(loss) on non-financial assets includes unrealised and realised gains/(losses) from revaluations, impairments, and disposals of all physical assets and intangible assets, except when these are taken through the asset revaluation surplus.

BALANCE SHEET

as at 30 June 2024

	Notes	2024 \$	2023 \$
Assets			
Financial assets			
Cash and deposits	6.3	23,655,024	21,491,009
Receivables	5.1	36,422	104,088
Total financial assets		23,691,447	21,595,098
Non-financial assets			
Property, plant and equipment	4.1	2,906,322	2,865,657
Intangible assets	4.2	-	6,828
Other non-financial assets		110,273	99,631
Total non-financial assets		3,016,595	2,972,115
Total assets		26,708,042	24,567,213
Liabilities			
Payables	5.2	393,018	549,668
Contract Liabilities	5.3	7,164,140	4,161,300
Lease liabilities	6.1	1,025,608	1,103,051
Employee related provisions	3.1.2	1,679,794	1,674,421
Total liabilities		10,262,560	7,488,440
Net assets		16,445,482	17,078,773
Equity			
Accumulated surplus/(deficit)		349,365	349,365
Physical asset revaluation surplus		533,128	494,109
Committed funds reserve		7,201,547	7,873,856
Contributed capital		8,361,442	8,361,442
Net worth		16,445,482	17,078,773

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Note:

(i) This format is aligned to AASB 1049 *Whole of Government and General Government Sector Financial Reporting*.



CASH FLOW STATEMENT

for the year ended 30 June 2024

	Notes	2024 \$	2023 \$
Cash flows from operating activities			
Receipts			
Receipts from government		13,387,249	14,632,471
Interest received		1,025,982	571,727
Goods and services tax received from the ATO (ii)		459,353	386,746
Other receipts		1,237,985	1,221,148
Total receipts		16,110,569	16,812,091
Payments			
Payments to suppliers and employees		(13,223,341)	(12,473,570)
Interest and other costs of finance paid		(31,085)	(5,374)
Total payments		(13,254,426)	(12,478,944)
Net cash flows from/(used in) operating activities	6.3.1	2,856,143	4,333,147
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchases of non-financial assets		(535,072)	(590,372)
Proceeds from the sale of non-financial assets		109,288	273,380
Net cash (outflow) / inflow from investing activities		(425,784)	(316,993)
Cash Flows from Financing Activities			
Repayment of principal portion of lease liabilities (iii)		(266,344)	(284,578)
Net cash provided by / (used in) financing activities		(266,344)	(284,578)
Net increase / (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents		2,164,015	3,731,576
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year		21,491,009	17,759,434
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	6.3	23,655,024	21,491,009

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Notes:

- (i) This format is aligned to AASB 1049 *Whole of Government and General Government Sector Financial Reporting*.
- (ii) GST received from the Australian Taxation Office is presented on a net basis.
- (iii) The Authority has recognised cash payments for the principal portion of lease payments as financing activities; cash payments for interest portion as operating activities consistent with the presentation of interest payments and short-term lease payments for leases and low-value assets as operating activities.

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY

for the financial year ended 30 June 2024

	Accumulated surplus	Physical asset revaluation surplus	Committed funds reserve	Contributed capital	Total
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Balance at 1 July 2022	349,365	494,109	8,513,659	8,361,442	17,718,576
Net result for the year	(639,804)	-	-	-	(639,804)
Transfers to/(from) reserves (ii)	639,804	-	(639,804)	-	-
Balance at 30 June 2023	349,365	494,109	7,873,856	8,361,442	17,078,773
Net result for the year	(672,309)	39,019	-	-	(633,291)
Transfers to/(from) reserves (ii)	672,309	-	(672,309)	-	-
Balance at 30 June 2024	349,365	533,128	7,201,547	8,361,442	16,445,482

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Note:

- (i) This format is aligned to AASB 1049 *Whole of Government and General Government Sector Financial Reporting*.
- (ii) The amounts transferred from accumulated surplus to committed funds reserve consists of carry forward project funding that has been set aside for the purpose of funding specific projects.



NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

for the year ended 30 June 2024

1. ABOUT THIS REPORT

The West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority is a government authority of the State of Victoria, established on 1 July 1997 by the state government.

Its principal address is: West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority
16 Hotham Street
Traralgon, VIC 3844

A description of the nature of its operations and its principal activities is included in the Report of operations, which does not form part of these financial statements.

Basis of preparation

These financial statements are in Australian dollars and the historical cost convention is used unless a different measurement basis is specifically disclosed in the note associated with the item measured on a different basis.

The accrual basis of accounting has been applied in preparing these financial statements, whereby assets, liabilities, equity, income and expenses are recognised in the reporting period to which they relate, regardless of when cash is received or paid.

Accounting policies are selected and applied in a manner which ensures that the resulting financial information satisfies the concepts of relevance and reliability, thereby ensuring that the substance of the underlying transactions or other events is reported.

Unless otherwise stated, all accounting policies applied are consistent with those of the prior year.

Judgements, estimates and assumptions are required to be made about financial information being presented. The significant judgements made in the preparation of these financial statements are disclosed in the notes where amounts affected by those judgements are disclosed. Estimates and associated assumptions are based on professional judgements derived from historical experience and various other factors that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised and also in future periods that are affected by the revision. Judgements and assumptions made by management in the application of AAS that have significant effects on the financial statements and estimates are disclosed in the notes under the heading: 'Significant judgement or estimates', and relate to:

- employee benefit provisions (Note 3.1.2);
- accrued expenses (Note 5.2);
- estimating discount rate when not implicit in the lease (Note 6.2);
- determining whether the lease arrangement is in substance short-term arrangement (Note 6.2);
- lease terms (Note 6.2);
- determining whether the performance obligations are sufficiently specific so as to determine whether the arrangement is within the scope of AASB 15 or AASB 1058 (Note 2.1);
- the timing of satisfaction of performance obligations (Note 2.1);
- determining transaction price and amounts allocated to performance obligations (Note 2.1);
- fair value measurements of assets and liabilities (Note 7.3).

Rounding

Unless otherwise stated, amounts in the report have been rounded to the nearest dollar. Figures in the financial report may not equate due to rounding.

Compliance Information

These general purpose financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the *Financial Management Act 1994* (FMA) and applicable Australian Accounting Standards (AASs) which include Interpretations, issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB). In particular, they are presented in a manner consistent with the requirements of AASB 1049 *Whole of Government and General Government Sector Financial Reporting*.

Where appropriate, those AASs paragraphs applicable to not-for-profit entities have been applied. Accounting policies selected and applied in these financial statements ensure that the resulting financial information satisfies the concepts of relevance and reliability, thereby ensuring that the substance of the underlying transactions or other events is reported.

2. FUNDING DELIVERY OF OUR SERVICES

Introduction

The Authority's overall objective is for the co-ordinated control of natural resource management within the broader catchments of West Gippsland. The role of the Authority is to ensure effective implementation of the Regional Catchment Strategy. Associated with this role, the Authority carries out strategic planning and advises Government.

To enable the Authority to deliver on its objectives, it receives income predominantly through State and Commonwealth Government Contributions.

2.1 Income from transactions

Significant judgement: Grants Contributions

The Authority has determined that all grant income is recognised as income of not-for-profit entities in accordance with AASB 1058, except for grants that are enforceable and with sufficiently specific performance obligations and accounted for as revenue from contracts with customers in accordance with AASB 15.

2.1.1 Government contributions

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Income recognised as income of not-for-profit entities under AASB 1058		
State Government		
Catchment Planning	790,751	252,999
Sustainable Irrigation	706,000	1,116,000
River Health	4,792,305	5,034,500
Floodplain Management	367,500	300,000
Other State Funding	190,717	963,382
	6,847,273	7,666,881
Commonwealth Government		
National Landcare Program	2,330,464	1,933,006
Other Commonwealth Funding	15,000	65,000
	2,345,464	1,998,006
Income recognised as revenue from contracts with customers under AASB 15		
State Government		
Other State Funding	965,160	650,700
	965,160	650,700
Total Government contributions	10,157,897	10,315,586

Grants recognised under AASB 1058

The Authority has determined that the grant income included in the table above under AASB 1058 has been earned under arrangements that are either not enforceable and/or linked to sufficiently specific performance obligations.

Income from grants without any sufficiently specific performance obligations, or that are not enforceable, is recognised when the Authority has unconditional right to receive cash which usually coincides with receipt of cash. On initial recognition of the assets, the Authority recognises any increase in liabilities, decrease in assets, and revenue ('related amount') in accordance with other Australian Accounting Standards. Related amounts may take the form of:

- revenue or a contract liability arising from a contract with a customer, in accordance with AASB 15;
- a lease liability in accordance with AASB 16;
- a financial instrument, in accordance with AASB 9; or
- a provision, in accordance with AASB 137 *Provisions, Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assts.*

Grants recognised under AASB 15

Income from grants that are enforceable and with sufficiently specific performance obligations are accounted for as revenue from contracts with customers under AASB 15. As at the 30 June 2024 the Authority has recognised \$965,160 as revenue under AASB 15 (2023: \$650,700). Revenue is recognised when the Authority satisfies the performance obligation by providing the relevant services. This is recognised based on the consideration specified in the funding agreement and to the extent that it is highly probable a significant reversal of the revenue will not occur. The funding payments are normally received in advance or shortly after the relevant obligation is satisfied.



2.1.2 Other income

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Partnership Contributions	1,057,952	1,130,461
Employee Contributions	225,738	204,713
Rental Income	28,440	33,000
Ancillary Trading	84,700	-
Total other income	1,396,830	1,368,174

Partnership contributions consists of funds received from organisations as partners in major projects, and are recognised as income on receipt as they do not contain sufficiently specific performance obligations, and are disclosed in the comprehensive operating statement as other income.

Employee contributions include staff contributions towards the private use of motor vehicles.

Rental Income from leasing of surplus office spaces, which are operating leases, are recognised on a straight line basis over the lease term.

All other income is recognised when the right to receive payment is established.

3. THE COST OF DELIVERING SERVICES

Introduction

This section provides an account of the expenses incurred by the Authority in delivering services. In Section 2, the funds that enable the provision of services were disclosed and in this note the cost association with the provision of services are recorded.

3.1 Employee expenses

3.1.1 Employee benefits in the comprehensive operating statement

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Salaries & wages	3,746,101	3,582,839
Annual leave	369,226	325,435
Long service leave	162,130	43,724
Public Holidays	196,693	198,789
Sick Leave	151,681	130,557
Other leave	11,952	51,094
Defined contribution superannuation expense	491,478	436,694
Defined benefit superannuation expense	12,754	12,633
Other employee expenses	209,342	164,156
Movement in provisions for employee benefits	5,373	119,138
Total employee benefit expenses	5,356,730	5,065,059

Employee expenses include all costs related to employment including wages and salaries, payroll tax, fringe benefits tax, leave entitlements, termination payments and WorkCover premiums.

The amount recognised in the comprehensive operating statement in relation to superannuation is employer contributions for members of both defined benefit and defined contribution superannuation plans that are paid or payable during the reporting period.

3.1.2 Employee benefits in the balance sheet

Significant judgement: Employee benefit provisions

In measuring employee benefit provisions, consideration is given to expected future wage and salary levels, experience of employee departures and periods of service. Expected future payments are discounted using a single weighted average discount rate based on market yields of national government bonds in Australia that reflects the estimated timing and amount of benefit payment.

Provision is made for benefits accruing to employees in respect of wages and salaries, annual leave and long service leave (LSL) for services rendered to the reporting date and recorded as an expense during the period the services are delivered.

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Current provisions for employee benefits		
Time in lieu and RDO:		
Unconditional and expected to be settled within 12 months	29,951	28,055
Annual leave:		
Unconditional and expected to be settled within 12 months	369,174	365,116
Unconditional and expected to be settled after 12 months	27,990	38,619
Long service leave:		
Unconditional and expected to be settled within 12 months	60,014	45,754
Unconditional and expected to be settled after 12 months	893,364	982,222
Provisions for on-costs		
Unconditional and expected to be settled within 12 months	61,541	49,947
Unconditional and expected to be settled after 12 months	97,111	127,787
Total current provisions	1,539,145	1,637,500
Non-current provisions for employee benefits		
Long service leave:		
Conditional and expected to be settled after 12 months	126,429	32,800
Provisions for on-costs		
Conditional and expected to be settled after 12 months	14,219	4,121
Total non-current provisions	140,649	36,921
Total provisions for employee benefits and on-costs	1,679,794	1,674,421
Reconciliation of movement in on-cost provision		2024 \$
Opening balance		181,855
Additional provisions recognised		(8,983)
Closing balance		172,872

Wages and salaries and annual leave:

Liabilities for wages and salaries (including non-monetary benefits, annual leave and on-costs) are recognised as part of the employee benefit provision as current liabilities, because the Authority does not have an unconditional right to defer settlements of these liabilities.

The annual leave liability is classified as a current liability, as the Authority does not have an unconditional right to defer settlement of the liability for at least 12 months after the end of the reporting period. Annual leave balances of less than 6 weeks are measured at the undiscounted amount expected to be paid, whilst balances above 6 weeks are measured as the present value of the estimated future cash outflows to be made by the entity.

No provision has been made for sick leave as all sick leave is non-vesting and it is not considered probable that the average sick leave taken in the future will be greater than the benefits accrued in the future. As sick leave is non-vesting, an expense is recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Income as it is taken.

Employment on-costs such as payroll tax, workers compensation and superannuation are not employee benefits. They are disclosed separately as a component of the provision for employee benefits when the employment to which they relate has occurred.



Long service leave (LSL):

Regardless of the expected timing of settlement, unconditional LSL is classified as a current liability because the Authority does not have an unconditional right to defer the settlement of these liabilities.

Unconditional LSL liability amounts expected to be wholly settled within 12 months are measured at the nominal value. Unconditional LSL liability amounts that are not expected to be wholly settled within 12 months are measured as the present value of the estimated future cash outflows to be made by the entity.

Unconditional LSL represents long service leave entitlements accrued for employees with more than 7 years of continuous service.

Conditional LSL is classified as a non-current liability and measured as the present value of the estimated future cash outflows to be made by the entity.

Any gain or loss following revaluation of the present value of the non-current LSL liability is recognised as a transaction, except to the extent that a gain or loss arises due to changes in bond interest rates for which it is then recognised as an 'other economic flow' in the net result.

3.1.3 Superannuation contributions

Employees of the Authority are entitled to receive superannuation benefits and the Authority contributes to both defined benefit and defined contribution plans. The defined benefit plans provide benefits based on years of service and final average salary.

The Authority does not recognise any defined benefit liability because it has no legal or constructive obligation to pay future benefits relating to its employees. The Department of Treasury and Finance discloses in its annual financial statements the state's net defined benefits cost related to the members of these plans as an administered liability (on behalf of the State as the sponsoring employer).

The name, details and amounts expensed in relation to the major employee superannuation funds and contributions made by the Authority, and outstanding at year end, are as follows:

	Paid Contribution for the year		Contributions outstanding at year-end	
	2024	2023	2024	2023
Defined benefit plans: (i)	\$	\$	\$	\$
Government superannuation office	12,732	12,545	431	408
Defined contribution plans:				
Vision super	152,554	142,452	3,323	3,768
Aware super	69,948	65,572	1,590	1,349
Other private schemes	256,880	217,697	6,775	5,535
Total	492,113	438,266	12,118	11,061

Note:

(i) The basis for determining the level of contributions is determined by the actuary of the defined benefit superannuation plan.

3.2 Materials, maintenance, grants and consultancies

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Materials	655,468	422,430
Repairs and maintenance	92,244	82,152
Grants paid	932,111	840,538
Computer software and support	367,465	368,663
Consultants	34,873	106,891
Total materials, maintenance, grants, and consultancies (i)	2,082,162	1,820,674

Note:

(i) The increase in total expenditure on materials, maintenance, grants and consultancies in 2024 is attributable to a number of factors:

- Weather conditions have been favourable increasing the amount of on-ground works undertaken; and
- Irrigation incentive grants have been more widely taken up due to the dryer conditions.

Grants are recognised in the period in which they are paid or payable.

Materials and consultants are recognised as an expense in the reporting period in which they are incurred.

3.3 Other operating expenses

	Notes	2024 \$	2023 \$
Telephones and mobile data		59,579	162,091
Fleet expenses		211,220	191,746
Fares and accommodation		54,954	50,487
Lease expenses	6.2.1	22,114	20,207
Education, training, conferences and seminars		46,678	40,538
Meeting expenses		46,030	35,452
Insurance		46,109	40,842
Office expenses		85,204	78,508
Promotions and public relations		5,462	14,159
Subscriptions and publications		24,869	28,216
Advertising		17,272	25,932
Uniforms, clothing, medicals, first aid		23,934	21,974
Other expenses		85,096	85,674
		728,521	795,827

Other operating expenses generally represent the day-to-day running costs incurred in normal operations and are recognised as an expense in the reporting period in which they are incurred.

4. KEY ASSETS AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT OUTPUT DELIVERY

Introduction

The Authority controls property and other investments that are utilised in fulfilling its objectives and conducting its activities. They represent the key resources that have been entrusted to the Authority to be utilised for delivery of those outputs.

4.1 Total property, plant and equipment

	Gross carrying amount		Accumulated Depreciation		Net carrying amount	
	2024	2023	2024	2023	2024	2023
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Land at fair value	462,000	462,000	-	-	462,000	462,000
Buildings at fair value	1,812,624	2,457,865	(535,321)	(1,108,595)	1,277,303	1,349,269
Works assets at fair value	151,000	151,000	(22,650)	(15,100)	128,350	135,900
Plant and equipment at fair value	262,312	250,352	(192,697)	(203,716)	69,615	46,636
Office furniture and equipment at fair value	617,474	681,175	(473,163)	(516,149)	144,311	165,026
Motor vehicles at fair value	1,460,725	1,201,552	(635,981)	(494,726)	824,743	706,826
Net carrying amount	4,766,135	5,203,943	(1,859,813)	(2,338,286)	2,906,322	2,865,657

Initial recognition

Items of property, plant and equipment are measured initially at cost and subsequently revalued at fair value less accumulated depreciation and impairment. Where an asset is acquired for no or nominal cost, the cost is its fair value at the date of acquisition.

Items with a cost or value in excess of \$1,000, or in the case of ICT equipment in excess of \$200, and a useful life of more than one year are recognised as an asset. All other assets acquired are expensed.

Subsequent measurement

Property, plant and equipment are subsequently measured at fair value less accumulated depreciation and impairment.

Non-specialised land is valued using the market approach, whereby assets are compared to recent comparable sales or sales of comparable assets that are considered to have nominal value.

The market approach is also used for specialised land, although is adjusted for the community service obligation (CSO) to reflect the specialised nature of the land being valued. The CSO adjustment reflects the valuer's assessment of the impact of restrictions associated with an asset to the extent that the CSO adjustment is also equally applicable to market participants.

Non-specialised buildings and works assets are valued using the current replacement cost method.



Revaluation of property, plant and equipment

Non-financial physical assets are revalued at fair value every five years in accordance with the Government purpose classifications defined in Financial Reporting Direction 103 Non-Financial Physical Assets (FRD 103). The Valuer-General Victoria (VGV) is the Government's independent valuation agency and is used by the Authority to conduct these scheduled revaluations.

Revaluations may occur more frequently if fair value assessments indicate material changes in values. In such instances, interim managerial revaluations are undertaken in accordance with the requirements of FRD 103.

The Authority in conjunction with VGV, monitors changes in the fair value of each asset class through relevant data sources, in order to determine whether a revaluation is required.

The Authority's assets relating to land and buildings were independently valued by the VGV as at 30 June 2021.

At 30 June 2024 a fair value assessment was undertaken on the Authority's Non-Financial Physical Assets. As a result, a managerial revaluation was undertaken in accordance with FRD 103 Non-Financial Physical Assets on the Authority's building assets due to the cumulative impact of index application since the independent valuation undertaken at 30 June 2021.

Note 7.3 includes additional information in connection with fair value determination of property, plant and equipment.

Accounting for revaluation movements - land and buildings

Fair value is determined with regard to the asset's highest and best use (considering legal or physical restrictions imposed on the asset, public announcements or commitments made in relation to the intended use of the asset).

Revaluation increases or decreases arise from differences between an asset's carrying value and its fair value.

Revaluation increases and decreases relating to individual assets in a class of PPE, are offset against other assets in that class but are not offset against assets in different classes. An asset revaluation surplus is not transferred to accumulated funds on the de-recognition of the related asset.

Revaluation increments are credited directly to the asset revaluation reserve, except to the extent that an increment reverses a revaluation decrement in respect of that class of asset previously recognised as an expense, in which case the increment is recognised immediately as revenue.

Revaluation decrements are recognised immediately as an expense, except to the extent that a credit balance exists in the asset revaluation reserve applicable to the same class of assets, in which case the decrement is debited directly to the asset revaluation reserve.

4.1.1 Total right-of-use assets: buildings

This note explores right-of-use assets, a subset of the Authority's total assets, where right-of-use assets represent the Authority's right to use an underlying asset for the lease term.

	Gross Carrying Amount 2024 \$	Accumulated Depreciation 2024 \$	Net carrying Amount 2024 \$	Gross Carrying Amount 2023 \$	Accumulated Depreciation 2023 \$	Net carrying Amount 2023 \$
Buildings at Fair Value	1,531,384	(535,321)	996,062	2,175,428	(1,082,502)	1,092,926
Net Carrying Amount	1,531,384	(535,321)	996,062	2,175,428	(1,082,502)	1,092,926

	Buildings at fair value \$
Opening Balance - 1 July 2023	1,092,926
Additions	185,472
Right-of-use adjustment (i)	3,428
Disposals	-
Depreciation	(285,764)
Closing Balance - 30 June 2024	996,062
Opening Balance - 1 July 2022	446,026
Additions	917,326
Right-of-use adjustment (i)	1,378
Disposals	-
Depreciation	(271,804)
Closing Balance - 30 June 2023	1,092,926

Note:

- (i) This adjustment relates to an increase in the value of right-of-use lease asset and liability due to a CPI increase applied under the lease contract.

Right-of-use asset acquired by lessees - Initial measurement

The Authority recognises a right-of-use asset and a lease liability at the lease commencement date. The right-of-use asset is initially measured at cost which comprises the initial amount of the lease liability adjusted for:

- any lease payments made at or before the commencement date less any incentive received; plus
- any indirect costs incurred; and
- an estimate of costs to dismantle and remove the underlying asset or to restore the underlying asset or the site on which it is located.

Right-of-use asset - Subsequent measurement

The Authority depreciates the right-of-use assets on a straight-line basis from the lease commencement date to the earlier of the end of the useful life of the right-of-use asset or the end of the lease term.

As per the requirements of FRD103 *Non-Financial Physical Assets*, right-of-use assets are subject to revaluation to Fair Value, whereby management undertake an assessment to determine whether the current lease payments under the contract approximate current market rentals for equivalent properties that would be paid in the current environment.

Management has completed an assessment at 30 June 2024 comparing current lease payments against current market rentals for equivalent properties and has determined that no adjustment to the right-of-use asset or liability is required.

In addition, the right-of-use asset is periodically reduced by impairment losses, if any and adjusted for certain remeasurements of the lease liability.

4.1.2 Depreciation and amortisation

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Charge for the period		
Buildings	299,886	291,397
Works assets	7,550	7,550
Plant & equipment	8,972	6,459
Office furniture & equipment	80,949	74,162
Motor vehicles	300,111	256,581
Intangible assets	3,221	3,853
Total depreciation and amortisation	700,688	640,002

Depreciation for the period of which relates to right-of-use assets:

Buildings	285,764	271,804
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All buildings, plant and equipment and other non-financial physical assets that have finite useful lives are depreciated.

Land which is considered to have an indefinite life and is not depreciated. Depreciation is not recognised in respect of these assets because their service potential has not, in any material sense, been consumed during the reporting period.

Depreciation is calculated on a straight-line basis at rates that allocate the asset's value, less any estimated residual value, over its estimated useful life. Typical estimated useful lives for the different asset classes for current and prior years are included in the table below:

Asset	Useful Life
Buildings	40 years
Buildings - right-of-use	1 - 10 years
Works assets	20 years
Plant and equipment	3 - 20 years
Office furniture & equipment	3 - 10 years
Motor vehicles	4 years
Intangible assets	3 - 10 years

The estimated useful lives, residual values and depreciation method are reviewed at the end of each annual reporting period, and adjustments made where appropriate.

Right-of-use assets are generally depreciated over the shorter of the asset's useful life and the lease term.

Impairment

The recoverable amount of primarily non-cash-generating assets of not-for-profit entities, which are typically specialised in nature and held for continuing use of their service capacity, is expected to be materially the same as fair value determined under AASB 13 *Fair Value Measurement*, with the consequence that AASB 136 does not apply to such assets that are regularly revalued.

4.1.3 Reconciliation of movements in carrying values of property, plant and equipment

	Land at fair value	Buildings at fair value	Works assets at fair value	Plant and equipment at fair value	Office furniture and equipment at fair value	Motor vehicles at fair value	Total
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
2023-24							
Opening balance	462,000	1,349,269	135,900	46,636	165,026	706,826	2,865,657
Additions	-	185,473	-	31,950	60,266	442,811	720,500
Disposals	-	-	-	-	(32)	(24,782)	(24,814)
ROU adjustment	-	3,428	-	-	-	-	3,428
Revaluation	-	39,019	-	-	-	-	39,019
Depreciation	-	(299,886)	(7,550)	(8,972)	(80,949)	(300,111)	(697,467)
Closing balance	462,000	1,277,303	128,350	69,615	144,311	824,744	2,906,322
2022-23							
Opening balance	462,000	699,526	143,450	42,646	120,931	575,297	2,043,849
Additions	-	939,763	-	10,449	118,257	414,377	1,482,846
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-	(26,267)	(26,267)
ROU adjustment	-	1,378	-	-	-	-	1,378
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Depreciation	-	(291,397)	(7,550)	(6,459)	(74,162)	(256,581)	(636,149)
Closing balance	462,000	1,349,269	135,900	46,636	165,026	706,826	2,865,657

4.2 Intangible assets

Significant judgement: Determination whether configuration and customisation services are distinct from SaaS access

The authority considers where the software code resides, whether it is identifiable and whether the authority has the power to both obtain economic benefits from the software and restrict the access of others to those benefits. Configuration or customisation costs that do not qualify for recognition as an intangible asset are expensed.

	Notes	2024 \$	2023 \$
Computer Software			
Gross carrying amount			
Opening Balance		709,814	709,814
Closing balance		709,814	709,814
Accumulated depreciation			
Opening Balance		(702,986)	(699,133)
Disposals		(3,607)	-
Amortisation		(3,221)	(3,853)
Closing balance		(709,814)	(702,986)
Net book value at end of financial year		-	6,828

Initial recognition

Purchased intangible assets are initially recognised at cost. When the recognition criteria in AASB 138 *Intangible Assets* is met, internally generated intangible assets are recognised at cost. Subsequently, intangible assets with finite useful lives are carried at cost less accumulated amortisation and accumulated impairment losses. Depreciation and amortisation begins when the asset is available for use, that is, when it is in the location and condition necessary for it to be capable of operating in the manner intended by management.

Subsequent measurement

Intangible produced assets with finite useful lives, are amortised as an 'expense from transactions' on a straight line basis over their useful lives.

Intangible non-produced assets with finite lives are amortised as an 'other economic flow' on a straight line basis over their useful lives. The amortisation period is three to ten years.

Impairment of intangible assets

Intangible assets with finite useful lives are tested for impairment whenever an indication of impairment is identified. The policy in connection with testing for impairment is outlined in section 4.1.2

Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) arrangements

SaaS arrangements are service contracts providing the Authority with the right to access the cloud provider's application software over the contract period. As such, the Authority does not recognise the contract as an intangible asset.

5. OTHER ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

Introduction

This section sets out those assets and liabilities that arose from the Authority's operations.

5.1 Receivables

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Receivables		
Contractual		
Trade receivables	24,714	28,472
Other receivables	4,000	4,000
	<u>28,714</u>	<u>32,472</u>
Statutory		
GST input tax credits recoverable	7,708	71,616
	<u>7,708</u>	<u>71,616</u>
Total receivables	<u>36,422</u>	<u>104,088</u>
<i>Represented by:</i>		
Current Receivables	32,422	100,088
Non-Current Receivables	4,000	4,000

Receivables consist of:

- Contractual receivables, which are classified as financial instruments and categorised as 'financial assets at amortised cost'. Subsequent to initial measurement they are measured at amortised cost less any impairment; and
- Statutory receivables, which do not arise from contracts and are recognised and measured similarly to contractual receivables (except for impairment), but are not classified as financial instruments for disclosure purposes.

Details about the Authority's impairment policies, the Authority's exposure to credit risk, and the calculation of the loss allowance are set out in Note 7.1.

5.2 Payables

Significant judgement: Accrued expenses

Accrued expenses represent goods or services that have been received or supplied but have not been invoiced by the supplier. In estimating the amount of an accrued expense, consideration is given to the stage of completion of the services being performed.

Payables	2024	2023
Contractual	\$	\$
Trade payables	59,323	236,536
Accrued expenses	300,326	286,052
	<u>359,649</u>	<u>522,588</u>
Statutory		
FBT accrual	11,996	10,943
Superannuation	12,118	11,061
Payroll Tax	9,254	5,076
	<u>33,369</u>	<u>27,081</u>
Total payables	<u>393,018</u>	<u>549,668</u>
<i>Represented by:</i>		
Current Payables	393,018	549,668

Payables consist of:

- Contractual payables, classified as financial instruments and measured at amortised cost. Accounts payable represent liabilities for goods and services provided to the Authority prior to the end of the financial year that are unpaid; and
- Statutory payables, that are recognised and measured similarly to contractual payables, but are not classified as financial instruments and not included in the category of financial liabilities at amortised cost, because they do not arise from contracts.

Payables for supplies and services have an average credit period of 30 days.

5.3 Contract liabilities

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Contract liabilities		
Opening balance	4,161,300	-
Add: Payments received for performance obligations yet to be completed during the period	3,968,000	4,812,000
Less: revenue recognised in the reporting period for the completion of performance obligations	(965,160)	(650,700)
Total current contract liabilities	<u>7,164,140</u>	<u>4,161,300</u>

Contract liabilities include consideration received in advance in the form of government contributions.

6. HOW WE FINANCED OUR OPERATIONS

Introduction

This section provides information on the sources of finance utilised by the Authority during its operations, along with interest expenses (the cost of borrowings) and other information related to financing activities of the Authority.

This section includes disclosures of balances that are financial instruments, such as cash balances. Notes 7.1 and 7.3 provide additional, specific financial instrument disclosures.

6.1 Borrowings

	Notes	2024 \$	2023 \$
Current borrowings			
Lease Liabilities (i)	6.2	273,414	266,346
Total current borrowings		273,414	266,346
Non-current borrowings			
Lease Liabilities (i)	6.2	752,194	836,705
Total non-current borrowings		752,194	836,705
Total Borrowings		1,025,608	1,103,051

Note:

- (i) Secured by assets leased. Lease liabilities are effectively secured as the right to the lease assets revert to the lessor in the event of default.

6.1.1 Maturity Analysis of borrowings

		Maturity dates					
	Carrying Amount	Nominal Amount	Less than 1 month	1 to 3 months	3 months to 1 year	1 to 5 years	5+ years
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
2024							
Lease Liabilities	1,025,608	1,090,087	25,016	75,048	203,722	786,301	-
Total	1,025,608	1,090,087	25,016	75,048	203,722	786,301	-
2023							
Lease Liabilities	1,103,051	1,180,187	24,881	70,930	200,764	883,612	-
Total	1,103,051	1,180,187	24,881	70,930	200,764	883,612	-

6.2 Leases

Significant judgement: Lease Terms

In determining the lease term, the Authority considers all facts and circumstances that create an economic incentive to exercise an extension option, or not exercise a termination option. The assessment is reviewed if a significant event or a significant change in circumstances occurs which affects this assessment.

The Authority leases various properties. Lease terms are negotiated on an individual basis and contain a wide range of different terms and conditions. Rental contracts are typically for fixed periods of between 1 to 5 years, with up to extension options of between 1 to 10 years typically available.

Leases with a contract term of 1 year and a value of less than \$10,000 are either short-term and/or leases of low value and are recognised on a straight-line basis. The Authority has elected not to recognise right-of-use assets and lease liabilities for these leases.

As at 30 June 2024, the Authority has committed to short term leases and the total commitment at that date was \$14,844 (Note 6.4)

Leases at significantly below-market terms and conditions

The Authority entered into a 10-year lease for the use of a crown land. The lease contract specifies a lease payment of \$1. The leased land must be used by the Authority for a River Diversion Channel and Water Regulating Gates, Dowd Morass Wetland. This land accounts for a small portion of similar assets used by the Authority in delivering this project to the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action and therefore it does not have a significant impact on the Authority's operations.

6.2.1 Right-of-use assets

Right-of-use assets are presented in Note 4.1.1



6.2.2 Amounts recognised in the Cashflow Statement

The following amounts are recognised in the Cashflow Statement for the year ending 30 June 2024 relating to leases:

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Interest expense on lease liabilities	31,085	5,374
Expenses relating to short term leases	22,114	20,207
Repayment of principal portion of lease liabilities	266,344	284,578
Total cash outflow for leases	319,543	310,159

For any new contracts entered into, the Authority considers whether a contract is, or contains a lease. A lease is defined as 'a contract, or part of a contract, that conveys the right to use an asset (the underlying asset) for a period of time in exchange for consideration'. To apply this definition the Authority assesses whether the contract meets three key evaluations:

- Whether the contract contains an identified asset, which is either explicitly identified in the contract or implicitly specified by being identified at the time the asset is made available to the Authority and for which the supplier does not have substantive substitution rights;
- Whether the authority has the right to obtain substantially all of the economic benefits from use of the identified asset throughout the period of use, considering its rights within the defined scope of the contract and the Authority has the right to direct the use of the identified asset throughout the period of use; and
- Whether the authority has the right to take decisions in respect of 'how and for what purpose' the asset is used throughout the period of use.

This policy is applied to contracts entered into, or changed, on or after 1 July 2019.

Lease Liability - Initial Measurement

The lease liability is initially measured at the present value of the lease payments unpaid at the commencement date, discounted using the interest rate implicit in the lease if that rate is readily determinable or the Authority's incremental borrowing rate.

Lease payments included in the measurement of the lease liability comprise the following:

- fixed payments (including in-substance fixed payments) less any lease incentive receivable;
- variable payments based on an index or rate, initially measured using the index or rate as at the commencement date;
- amounts expected to be payable under a residual value guarantee; and
- payments arising from purchase and termination options reasonably certain to be exercised.

Lease Liability - Subsequent Measurement

Subsequent to initial measurement, the liability will be reduced for payments made and increased for interest. It is remeasured to reflect any reassessment or modification, or if there are changes in-substance to fixed payments.

When the lease liability is remeasured, the corresponding adjustment is reflected in the right-of-use asset, or net result if the right-of-use asset is already reduced to zero.

Short term and low value leases

The Authority has elected to account for short-term and low value leases using the practical expedients. Instead of recognising a right-of-use asset and lease liability, the payments in relation to these are recognised as an expense in net result on a straight-line basis over the lease term.

Below market /Peppercorn Leases

Right-of-use assets under leases at significantly below-market terms and conditions that are entered into principally to enable the Authority to further its objectives, are initially and subsequently measured at cost.

Presentation of right-of-use assets and lease liabilities

The authority presents right-of-use assets as 'property plant equipment' unless they meet the definition of investment property, in which case they are disclosed as 'investment property' in the balance sheet. Lease liabilities are presented as 'borrowings' in the balance sheet.

6.3 Cash flow information and balances

Cash and deposits, including cash equivalents, comprise cash on hand and cash at bank, deposits at call and those highly liquid investments with an original maturity of three months or less, which are held for the purpose of meeting short-term cash commitments rather than for investment purposes, and which are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and are subject to an insignificant risk of changes in value.

	2024	2023
Cash and deposits disclosed in the balance sheet:	\$	\$
Cash on hand	200	400
Deposits at call	23,654,824	21,490,609
Balance as per cash flow statement	23,655,024	21,491,009

6.3.1 Reconciliation of net result for the period to cash flow from operating activities

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Net result for the period	(672,309)	(639,804)
Non-cash movements:		
(Gain) on disposal of non-current assets	(80,822)	(222,261)
Depreciation and amortisation of non-current assets	700,688	640,002
	(52,443)	(222,062)
Movements in assets and liabilities:		
Decrease in receivables	67,666	8,558
(Increase)/decrease in non-financial assets	(10,643)	75,315
(Decrease)/increase in payables	(156,650)	190,897
Increase in contract liabilities	3,002,840	4,161,300
Increase in employee benefits	5,373	119,138
Net cash flows from/(used in) operating activities	2,856,143	4,333,147

6.4 Commitments for expenditure

Commitments for future expenditure include operating commitments arising from contracts. These commitments are recorded below at their nominal value and inclusive of GST. These future expenditures cease to be disclosed as commitments once the related liabilities are recognised in the balance sheet.

6.4.1 Total commitments payable

	2024	2023
Operating commitments payable	\$	\$
Less than 1 year	14,844	14,692
1 to 5 years	-	-
5 years or more	-	-
Total commitments (inclusive of GST)	14,844	14,692

The 2022-23 and 2023-24 operating lease commitments relate to an office lease with a term of 12 months. The contract does not allow the Authority to purchase the facilities after the lease ends, but the Authority has the option to renew the lease at the end of the lease term. Short-term operating lease payments are recognised as an expense in the comprehensive operating statement on a straight-line basis over the lease term. The leased asset is not recognised in the balance sheet.

6.5 Carry forward project funding

Catchment Management Authorities are responsible for the facilitation and coordination of catchments in an integrated and sustainable manner. This is achieved by undertaking projects funded by Victorian and Australian Government programs. The Authority received funding for specific projects which are guided by the Regional Catchment Strategy and delivered in line with the Authority's Corporate Plan approved by the Minister for Water.

The projects funded by the State and Commonwealth Governments can be undertaken over multiple financial years and is received at various stages of the project life based on contractual agreements. At the end of the financial year there are some projects that have not reached completion but will be completed within the contractual terms in future financial periods. At balance date the Authority has cash and cash equivalents that will be utilised to complete these projects in future financial years.



7. RISKS, CONTINGENCIES AND VALUATION JUDGEMENTS

Introduction

The Authority is exposed to risk from its activities and outside factors. In addition, it is often necessary to make judgements and estimates associated with recognition and measurement of items in the financial statements. This section sets out financial instrument specific information, (including exposures to financial risks) as well as those items that are contingent in nature or require a higher level of judgement to be applied, which for the Authority relate mainly to fair value determination.

7.1 Financial instruments specific disclosures

Financial instruments arise out of contractual agreements that give rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another entity. Statutory receivables and payables (FBT, GST etc) are not considered financial instruments.

Categories of financial instruments

Financial Assets are measured at amortised cost if they are held by the Authority to collect contractual cash flows, the contractual terms give rise to cash flows that are solely payments of principal and interest, and if they not designated as fair value through net result. These assets are initially recognised at fair value plus any directly attributable transaction costs. Subsequent to initial measurement, these financial assets are measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method less any impairment. The financial assets at amortised cost category includes cash and deposits, and trade and other receivables (excluding statutory receivables and lease liabilities).

Financial liabilities at amortised cost are initially recognised on the date they originated. They are initially measured at fair value plus any directly attributable transaction costs. Subsequent to initial recognition, these financial instruments are measured at amortised cost with any difference between the initial recognised amount and the redemption value being recognised in profit and loss over the period of the interest bearing liability, using the effective interest rate method. Financial instrument liabilities measured at amortised cost include all of the Authority's contractual payables (excluding statutory payables).

A financial liability is derecognised when the obligation under the liability is discharged, cancelled or expires.

Contractual receivables at amortised cost

The Authority has a low expected loss rate due to majority of funding sourced from State and Federal government.

The expected loss rate for the year ending 30 June 2024 has been calculated at 0%, and as such no loss allowance has been recognised.

7.1.2 Financial risk management objectives and policies

The Authority's main financial risks include credit risk, liquidity risk and interest rate risk. The Authority manages these financial risks in accordance with its financial risk management policy.

The Authority uses different methods to measure and manage the different risks to which it is exposed. Primary responsibility for the identification and management of financial risks rests with the CEO and the Board.

Financial instruments: Credit risk

Credit risk refers to the possibility that a borrower will default on its financial obligations as and when they fall due. The Authority's exposure to credit risk arises from the potential default of a counter party on their contractual obligations resulting in financial loss to the Authority. Credit risk is measured at fair value and is monitored on a regular basis.

Credit risk associated with the Authority's contractual financial assets is minimal because the main debtors are the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments. For debtors other than the Government, the Authority has adopted a policy of only dealing with creditworthy counterparties and obtaining sufficient collateral where appropriate. For cash assets, the Authority's policy is to only deal with banks with a high credit rating assigned by international credit-rating agencies. All cash and deposits are held with the National Australia Bank.

The Authority records the allowance for expected credit loss for the relevant financial instruments applying AASB 9's Expected Credit Loss approach. Subject to AASB 9 impairment assessment include the Authority's contractual receivables and statutory receivables.

Financial instruments: Liquidity risk

Liquidity risk arises from being unable to meet financial obligations as they fall due. The Authority operates under the Government fair payments policy of settling financial obligations within 30 days and in the event of a dispute, making payments within 30 days from the date of resolution.

The Authority's exposure to liquidity risk is deemed insignificant based on prior periods' data and current assessment of risk. The Authority maintains high levels of cash and deposits readily available to meet its financial obligations. The Authority manages its liquidity risk by maintaining adequate cash reserves and continually monitoring the Authority's expenditure commitments and cash flow needs.

Financial instruments: Market risk

The Authority's exposure to market risk is primarily through interest rate risk with significant surplus funds held in deposits at a call in the Central Banking System. The weighted average interest rate was 4.40% in 2024 (2023: 3.06%).

The Authority has no exposure to foreign exchange risk or other price risk.

Cash flow interest rate risk is the risk that the future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market interest rates. The Authority is required to invest surplus funds with the State Government Central Banking System (CBS) in compliance with the Standing Directions 2018 under the *Financial Management Act 1994* (2018 Directions). The floating interest rates provided by the Central Banking System expose the Authority to interest rate risk. Management monitors movements in interest rates on a daily basis.

Interest rate risk sensitivity

The sensitivity analysis below shows the impact on the Authority's net result and equity for a movement of 50 basis points up and down in market interest rates.

	Carrying amount \$	Interest rate			
		-50 basis points		+50 basis points	
		Net result \$	Revaluation surplus \$	Net result \$	Revaluation surplus \$
2024					
Cash and deposits (i)	23,655,024	(118,274)	-	118,274	-
2023					
Cash and deposits (i)	21,491,009	(107,453)	-	107,453	-

(i) Cash and deposits includes \$23,654,824 (2023: \$21,490,609) that is exposed to floating rates movements.

Sensitivities to these movements are calculated as follows:

- 2024: \$23,654,824 x -0.005 = -\$118,274; and \$23,654,824 x 0.005 = \$118,274
- 2023: \$21,490,609 x -0.005 = -\$107,453; and \$21,490,609 x 0.005 = \$107,453

7.2 Contingent assets and contingent liabilities

Contingent assets and contingent liabilities are not recognised in the balance sheet but are disclosed and, if quantifiable, are measured at nominal value.

Contingent assets

As at 30 June 2024, the Authority has no known contingent assets.

2024	2023
\$	\$
-	-

Contingent liabilities

Guarantees for loans to other entities (i)

26,500	26,500
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(i) The amount disclosed is the nominal amount of the underlying loan that is guaranteed by the Authority. The Authority has reviewed its financial guarantees and determined that there is no material liability to be recognised for financial guarantee contracts at 30 June 2024.



7.3 Fair value determination

Significant judgement: Fair value measurements of assets and liabilities

Fair value determination requires judgement and the use of assumptions. This section discloses the most significant assumptions used in determining fair values. Changes to assumptions could have a material impact on the results and financial position of the Authority.

The Authority's property, plant and equipment are carried at fair value.

7.3.1 Fair value hierarchy

In determining fair values, a number of inputs are used. To increase consistency and comparability in the financial statements, these inputs are categorised into three levels, also known as the fair value hierarchy. The levels are as follows:

- Level 1 – Quoted (unadjusted) market prices in active markets for identical assets or liabilities;
- Level 2 – Valuation techniques for which the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement is directly or indirectly observable; and
- Level 3 – Valuation techniques for which the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement is unobservable.

The Authority determines whether transfers have occurred between levels in the hierarchy by reassessing categorisation (based on the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement as a whole) at the end of each reporting period.

7.3.2 Fair value determination of financial assets and liabilities

The Authority currently holds a range of financial instruments that are recorded in the financial statements where the carrying amounts are a reasonable approximation of fair value, either due to their short-term nature or with the expectation that they will be paid in full by the end of the 2024-25 reporting period.

These financial instruments include:

Financial assets

Cash and deposits

Receivables:

- Trade receivables
- Other receivables

Financial liabilities

Lease liabilities

Payables:

- Trade payables
- Accrued expenses

7.3.3 Fair value determination: Non-financial physical assets

Fair value measurement hierarchy

Non-specialised land is fair valued in accordance with level 2 categorisation. Specialised land, buildings, work assets, plant and equipment, office furniture and motor vehicles are fair valued as level 3.

There have been no transfers between levels during the period.

Non-specialised land & non-specialised buildings

Non-specialised land is valued using the market approach. Under this valuation method, the assets are compared to recent comparable sales or sales of comparable assets which are considered to have nominal or no added improvement value, and are classified as Level 2 fair value measurements.

For the Authority's non-specialised buildings, the current replacement cost method is used, adjusting for the associated depreciations. As depreciation adjustments are considered as significant, unobservable inputs in nature, non-specialised buildings are classified as Level 3 fair value measurements.

Right-of-use non-specialised buildings are valued as per the requirements of AASB 16 *Leases*. This is detailed further in Note 6.2.

For non-specialised land and non-specialised buildings (excluding right-of use-assets), an independent valuation was performed by the Valuer-General Victoria (VGV) to determine the fair value using the market approach. Valuation of the assets was determined by analysing comparable sales and allowing for share, size, topography, location and other relevant factors specific to the asset being valued. From the sales analysed, an appropriate rate per square metre was applied to the subject asset. The effective date of the valuation was 30 June 2021.



Specialised land

The market approach is also used for specialised land, although is adjusted for the community service obligation (CSO) to reflect the specialised nature of the land being valued.

The CSO adjustment is a reflection of the valuer's assessment of the impact of restrictions associated with an asset to the extent that is also equally applicable to market participants. This approach is in light of the highest and best use consideration required for fair value measurement, and takes into account the use of the asset that is physically possible, legally permissible, and financially feasible. As adjustments of CSO are considered as significant unobservable inputs in nature, specialised land would be classified as Level 3 assets.

An independent valuation of the Authority's specialised land was performed by the Valuer-General Victoria using the market approach adjusted for CSO. The effective date of the valuation was 30 June 2021.

Works assets

Works assets represent an owned Quarry, which is valued using the current replacement cost method.

An independent valuation of the Authority's works assets was performed by the Valuer-General Victoria (VGV) to determine the fair value using the market approach, with an effective date of 30 June 2021. Valuation of the assets was determined by analysing comparable sales and allowing for share, size, topography, location and other relevant factors specific to the asset being valued. From the sales analysed, an appropriate rate per square metre was applied to the subject asset.

Motor vehicles

Motor vehicles are valued using the current replacement cost method. The Authority acquires new vehicles and at times disposes of them before the end of their economic life. The process of acquisition, use and disposal in the market is managed by experienced fleet managers in the Authority who set relevant depreciation rates during use to reflect the utilisation of the motor vehicles.

Plant and equipment and Office furniture and equipment

Plant and equipment and office furniture and equipment is held at fair value. When plant and equipment or office furniture and equipment is specialised in use, such that it is rarely sold other than as part of a going concern, fair value is determined using the current replacement cost method.

There were no changes in valuation techniques throughout the period to 30 June 2024.

For all assets measured at fair value, the current use is considered the highest and best use.

Description of significant unobservable inputs to Level 3 valuations

	Valuation technique	Significant unobservable inputs
Specialised land	Market approach	Community Service Obligation (CSO) adjustment
Non-specialised buildings	Current replacement cost VGV indexation factors	Direct cost per square metre Useful life of non-specialised buildings
Works assets	Current replacement cost	Direct cost per square metre Useful life of quarry
Plant and equipment	Current replacement cost	Cost per unit Useful life of plant and equipment
Office furniture and equipment	Current replacement cost	Cost per unit Useful life of office furniture and equipment
Motor vehicles	Current replacement cost	Cost per unit Useful life of vehicles

8. OTHER DISCLOSURES

Introduction

This section provides additional material disclosures required by accounting standards or otherwise, for the understanding of this financial report.

8.1 Ex gratia expenses

Ex gratia expenses are the voluntary payments of money or other non-monetary benefit (e.g. a write-off) that is not made either to acquire goods, services or other benefits for the entity to meet a legal liability, or to settle or resolve a possible legal liability of or claim against the entity.

The Authority had no ex gratia expenses for the year ending 30 June 2024 (2023 \$0).

8.2 Other economic flows included in net result

Other economic flows measure the change in volume or value of assets or liabilities that do not result from transactions.

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Net gain/(loss) on disposal of non-financial assets		
Proceeds from sale of non-financial assets	109,242	248,527
Less written down value	(28,420)	(26,266)
Total net gain/(loss) on disposal of non-financial assets	80,822	222,261

8.3 Reserves

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Physical asset revaluation surplus: (i)		
Balance at beginning of financial year	494,109	494,109
Revaluation increments	39,019	0
Balance at end of financial year	533,128	494,109
Committed funds reserve: (ii)		
Balance at beginning of financial year	7,873,856	8,513,659
Net transfers from accumulated funds	(672,309)	(639,804)
Balance at end of financial year	7,201,547	7,873,856
Total Reserves	7,734,675	8,367,965

Notes:

- (i) The physical assets revaluation surplus arises on the revaluation of land and buildings and works assets.
- (ii) The Committed funds reserve has been established to recognise that the Authority receives funding for programs in advance of the program works taking place. The Authority is committed to expending these funds in accordance with its Corporate Plan in succeeding years. At the end of the financial year any Accumulated Funds which represents unexpended program funding, has been transferred to the reserve.

8.4 Responsible persons

In accordance with the Ministerial Directions issued by the Assistant Treasurer under the *Financial Management Act 1994* (FMA), the following disclosures are made regarding responsible persons for the reporting period.

The names of the persons who were responsible persons of the Authority at any time during the financial year were:

The Hon. Harriet Shing MP	Minister for Water	1 Jul 2023 to 30 Jun 2024
The Hon. Ingrid Stitt MP	Minister for Environment	1 Jul 2023 to 1 Oct 2023
The Hon. Steve Dimopoulos MP	Minister for Environment	2 Oct 2023 to 30 Jun 2024
Mikaela Power	Chair	1 Jul 2023 to 30 Jun 2024
Belinda Nave	Board Member & Deputy Chair	1 Jul 2023 to 30 Jun 2024
Martin Fuller	CEO	1 Jul 2023 to 30 Jun 2024
Peter Jennings	Board Member	1 Jul 2023 to 30 Sep 2023
Jodie Mason	Board Member	1 Jul 2023 to 30 Jun 2024
Shelley McGuinness	Board Member	1 Jul 2023 to 30 Jun 2024
Nicholas Murray	Board Member	1 Jul 2023 to 30 Jun 2024
Elizabeth Clay	Board Member	1 Jul 2023 to 30 Sep 2023
Susan Anderson	Board Member	1 Jul 2023 to 30 Jun 2024
Brian Stevens	Board Member	1 Jul 2023 to 30 Jun 2024
Jennifer O'Sullivan	Board Member	1 Oct 2023 to 30 Jun 2024

Remuneration

Remuneration received or receivable from the Authority in connection with the management of the Authority during the reporting period was:

Income band	2024	2023
\$0–\$9,999	2	0
\$10,000–\$19,999	7	8
\$20,000–\$29,999	0	1
\$30,000–\$39,999	1	0
\$240,000–\$249,999	0	1
\$270,000–\$279,999	1	0
Total number of Responsible persons	11	10
Total Remuneration \$	429,114	402,867

The compensation detailed above excludes the salaries and benefits the Portfolio Ministers receive. The Ministers' remuneration and allowances is set by the *Parliamentary Salaries and Superannuation Act 1968* and is reported within the State's Annual Financial Report.

8.5 Remuneration of executive officers

The Authority did not have any executive officers, other than the CEO, to whom the Victorian Government's Public Entity Executive Remuneration (PEER) Policy applies. The CEO is an accountable officer and therefore disclosed under Note 8.4

8.6 Related parties

Related parties of the Authority include:

- all key management personnel and their close family members and personal business interests (controlled entities, joint ventures and entities they have significant influence over);
- all cabinet ministers and their close family members; and
- all departments and public sector entities that are controlled and consolidated into the whole of state consolidated financial statements.

All related party transactions have been entered into on an arm's length basis.



Significant transactions with government-related entities

WGCMA is a wholly owned and controlled entity of the state of Victoria. During the 2024 financial year, the Authority received significant funding from the following government-related entities:

Entity	Nature of Transaction/s	Payments received 2024 \$	Funding Receivable at 30 June 2024 \$
Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action	Service Level Agreements and Lease Agreement	10,813,087	-
East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority	Service Level Agreements and Shared Services	794,152	-

During the 2023 financial year, the Authority received significant funding from the following government-related entities:

Entity	Nature of Transaction/s	Payments received 2023 \$	Funding Receivable at 30 June 2023 \$
Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action	Service Level Agreements and Lease Agreement	12,954,914	-
East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority	Service Level Agreements and Shared Services	803,563	-

During the 2024 financial year, the Authority made significant payments to the following government-related entities:

Entity	Nature of Transaction/s	Payments made 2024 \$	Payable at 30 June 2024 \$
Trust for Nature (Victoria)	Service Supply Agreement	183,403	-
Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action	Reimbursement of expenditure and Service Supply Agreements	241,085	-

During the 2023 financial year, the Authority made significant payments to the following government-related entities:

Entity	Nature of Transaction/s	Payments made 2023 \$	Payable at 30 June 2023 \$
Trust for Nature (Victoria)	Service Supply Agreement	258,696	131,937
Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action	Reimbursement of expenditure and Service Supply Agreements	185,451	-
Parks Victoria	Service Supply Agreement	491,064	-
Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority	Reimbursement of expenditure	95,822	47,618

Remuneration of key management personnel

The compensation detailed below excludes the salaries and benefits the Portfolio Minister receives. The Ministers' remuneration and allowances is set by the *Parliamentary Salaries and Superannuation Act 1968* and is reported within the State's Annual Financial Report.

Compensation of KMPs

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Short-term employee benefits	388,450	365,720
Post-employment benefits	40,664	37,147
Total	429,114	402,867

There were no significant related party transactions or balances that involved key management personnel, their close family members and their personal business interest.



8.7 Remuneration of auditors

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Victorian Auditor-General's Office for audit of financial statements	30,000	28,000
Internal audit costs	21,134	28,760
Total auditors' remuneration	51,134	56,760

8.8 Subsequent events

No matters or circumstances have arisen since the end of the reporting period which significantly affected or may significantly affect the operations of the authority, the results of those operations, or the state of affairs of the authority in future financial years.

8.9 Australian Accounting Standards issued that are not yet effective

Certain new and revised accounting standards have been issued but are not effective for the 2023-24 reporting period. These accounting standards have not been applied to the Financial Statements. The Authority is reviewing its existing policies and assessing the potential implications of these accounting standards which includes:

AASB 2022-10 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards – Fair Value Measurement of Non-Financial Assets of Not-for-Profit Public Sector Entities.

AASB 2022-10 amends AASB 13 Fair Value Measurement by adding authoritative implementation guidance and illustrative examples for fair value measurements of non-financial assets of not-for-profit public sector entities not held primarily for their ability to generate net cash inflows.

Among other things, the Standard:

- specifies that an entity needs to consider whether an asset's highest and best use differs from its current use only when it is held for sale or held for distributions to owners under AASB 5 Non-current Assets Held for Sale and Discontinued Operations or if it is highly probable that it will be used for an alternative purpose;
- clarifies that an asset's use is 'financially feasible' if market participants would be willing to invest in the asset's service capacity, considering both the capacity to provide needed goods or services and the resulting costs of those goods and services;
- specifies that if both market selling price and some market participant data required to fair value the asset are not observable, an entity needs to start with its own assumptions and adjust them to the extent that reasonably available information indicates that other market participants would use different data; and
- provides guidance on the application of the cost approach to fair value, including the nature of costs to be included in a reference asset and identification of economic obsolescence.

This Standard applies prospectively to annual periods beginning on or after 1 January 2024, with earlier application permitted.

AASB 17 Insurance Contracts, AASB 2022-8 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards – Insurance Contracts: Consequential Amendments and AASB 2022-9 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards –

AASB 17 replaces AASB 4 Insurance Contracts, AASB 1023 General Insurance Contracts and AASB 1038 Life Insurance Contracts for not-for-profit public sector entities for annual reporting periods beginning on or after 1 July 2026.

AASB 2022-9 amends AASB 17 to make public sector-related modifications (for example, it specifies the pre-requisites, indicators and other considerations in identifying arrangements that fall within the scope of AASB 17 in a public sector context). This Standard applies for annual reporting periods beginning on or after 1 July 2026.

AASB 2022-8 makes consequential amendments to other Australian Accounting Standards so that public sector entities are permitted to continue to apply AASB 4 and AASB 1023 to annual periods before 1 July 2026. This Standard applies for annual reporting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2023.

The Authority is in the process of analysing the impacts of these standards and amendments.

Other Amending Standards

Several other amending standards and AASB interpretations have been issued that apply to future reporting periods, but are considered to have limited impact on the Authority's reporting.



Independent Auditor's Report

To the Board of the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority

Opinion	<p>I have audited the financial report of the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (the authority) which comprises the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• balance sheet as at 30 June 2024• comprehensive operating statement for the year then ended• statement of changes in equity for the year then ended• cash flow statement for the year then ended• notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies• declaration in the financial statements. <p>In my opinion, the financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the authority as at 30 June 2024 and its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the financial reporting requirements of Part 7 of the <i>Financial Management Act 1994</i> and applicable Australian Accounting Standards.</p>
Basis for Opinion	<p>I have conducted my audit in accordance with the <i>Audit Act 1994</i> which incorporates the Australian Auditing Standards. I further describe my responsibilities under that Act and those standards in the <i>Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report</i> section of my report.</p> <p>My independence is established by the <i>Constitution Act 1975</i>. My staff and I are independent of the authority in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 <i>Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants</i> (the Code) that are relevant to my audit of the financial report in Victoria. My staff and I have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.</p> <p>I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.</p>
Board's responsibilities for the financial report	<p>The Board of the authority is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and the <i>Financial Management Act 1994</i>, and for such internal control as the Board determines is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.</p> <p>In preparing the financial report, the Board is responsible for assessing the authority's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless it is inappropriate to do so.</p>

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial report

As required by the *Audit Act 1994*, my responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on the audit. My objectives for the audit are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, I exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the authority's internal control
- evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Board
- conclude on the appropriateness of the Board's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the authority's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the authority to cease to continue as a going concern.
- evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with the Board regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

MELBOURNE
2 September 2024



Paul Martin
as delegate for the Auditor-General of Victoria



Appendix 1 – Disclosure index

West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority's Annual Report 2023-24 is prepared in accordance with all relevant Victorian legislation and pronouncements. This index has been prepared to help identify compliance with each of the statutory disclosure requirements.

Report of Operations		
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FRD 22	Purpose, functions, powers, and duties	53
FRD 22	Key initiatives and projects	8
FRD 22	Nature and range of services provided	53
Management and Structure		
FRD 22	Organisational structure	64
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FRD 12	Disclosure of major contracts	74
FRD 22	Employment and conduct principles	78
FRD 22	Occupational health and safety policy	66
FRD 22	Summary of financial results for the year	11
FRD 22	Summary operational and budgetary objectives including performance	11, 70-71
FRD 22	Significant changes in financial position for the year	81
FRD 22	Major changes or factors affecting performance	81
FRD 22	Subsequent events	81, 109
FRD 22	Application and operation of <i>Freedom of Information Act 1982</i>	74-75
FRD 22	Compliance with building and maintenance provisions of <i>Building Act 1993</i>	76
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FRD22	Workforce Inclusion Policy	72
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FRD 25	Local Jobs First	73
FRD 29	Workforce data disclosures	68

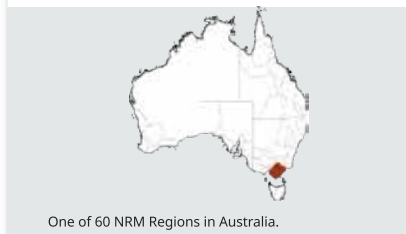


Report of Operations		
Legislation	Disclosure	Page
Compliance Attestation and Declaration		
SD 5.1.4	Attestation for Compliance with Ministerial Standing Direction	81
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Other Requirements Under Standing Directions 5.2		
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FRD 21	Disclosure of Responsible Persons, Executive Officers and other personnel (Contractors with Significant Management Responsibilities) in the Financial Report	107
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	<i>Financial Management Act 1994</i>	81

Appendix 2 – West Gippsland Environment Report summary



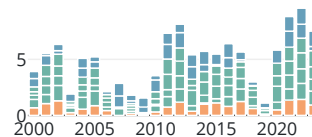
West Gippsland



Summary Score

7.5

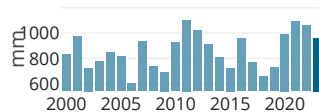
-2.1



The overall environmental score (out of 10) was 7.5, down from 9.6 in 2022.



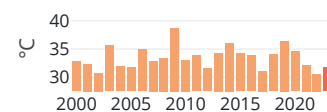
Rainfall



Rainfall was above average.



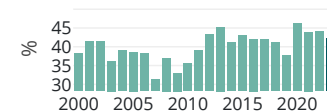
Maximum temperature



Maximum temperature was below average.



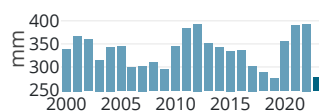
Tree cover



Woody vegetation cover was above average.



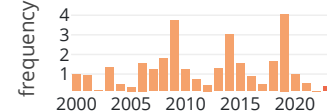
Soil moisture



The mean amount of moisture in the soil was 2nd lowest since 2000.



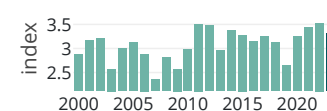
Hot days



The number of days above 35 °C was below average.



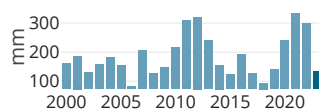
Vegetation condition



Leaf area index was above average.



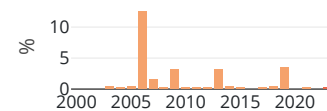
River flows



River flows were below average.



Bushfire extent



The area burnt was about average.



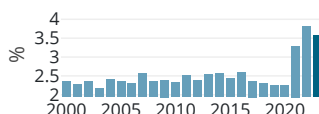
Exposed soil



The area of unprotected soil was below average.



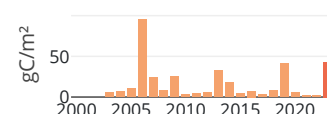
Inundation



Inundation was 2nd highest since 2000.



Biomass burnt



Fire carbon emissions were 2nd highest since 2000.



Vegetation growth



Vegetation growth was the highest since 2000.

West Gippsland

NRM Regions

Area: 20,953 km²

Climate indicators

averages for 2000-2022

Precipitation: 860 mm per year

Days over 35°C: 1.2 per year

Days with frost: 4.4 per year

Land use: Grazing on modified pasture (39%), Production native forests (24%), Natural environments (19%), Plantation forestry (8%)

Tree cover: 0.89 Mha or 42.2% (2023)

For more information about this region follow [this link](#)

National context

Deviation from 2000-2022 average



About This Report

The annual Australia's Environment Report summarises a large number of observations on the trajectory of our natural resources and ecosystems.

On the report [website](#), you can find a national summary report, as well as report cards for different types of administrative and geographical regions. In the accompanying data explorer, the spatial data can be viewed as maps, accounts or charts by region and land use type, and downloaded for further use.

Acknowledgements: Production was possible thanks to the National Computational Infrastructure and data published by Geoscience Australia, Bureau of Meteorology, European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts, NASA, Japan Meteorological Agency, US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, US National Snow and Ice Data Center, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, CSIRO, NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Atlas of Living Australia, and Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics.

About The Data

Summary score: overall environmental condition expressed between 0 and 10 relative to previous years. It is calculated as the average of the ranking of component scores (from top to bottom in the bar graph): inundation and streamflow (blue), vegetation growth, leaf area, soil protection and tree cover (green) and the number of hot days (orange).

Indicators: measures of the condition of natural resources and ecosystems summarised from several spatial data sources. Land cover, inundation, fire occurrence, burn extent, exposed soil, and vegetation leaf area are derived by automated analysis of satellite imagery. The other indicators are estimated by integrating ground- and satellite data with environmental prediction models. For full details on the methods, follow this [link](#).

National context: Selected environmental indicators as a relative change from average conditions since 2000. Such a change can be part of a long-term trend or be within normal variability. For historical context on each indicator follow this [link](#).

About Us

Australia's Environment is produced annually by the Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Network (TERN) and the Australian National University (ANU).

ANU's Centre for Water and Landscape Dynamics develop new methods to measure, monitor and forecast climate, water availability and landscape conditions by combining satellite and field measurements using biophysical modelling and machine learning.

TERN is Australia's land ecosystem observatory, an NCRIS-enabled National Research Infrastructure that provides long-term preservation and access to analysis-ready ecosystem data for researchers and decision-makers to help Australia prepare for the future.

To find out more, please contact:
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Australia



For further information on the environment condition of this and other parts of Australia visit www.ausenv.tern.org.au



FENNER SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENT & SOCIETY
also College of Science

Australia's Environment is produced by the Australian National University's Centre for Water and Landscape Dynamics with support from TERN, an NCRIS-enabled National Research Infrastructure.

Australia's Environment | 2023 Regional Report Card



*Endangered beach nesting birds -
Hooded Plovers and chick*



*This page: Agnes River
Back cover: Cowwarr Fishway*



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