

AGRICULTURE VICTORIA

Lake Wellington Irrigation Efficiency Incentives Program

Irrigation farm plans
Updated irrigation farm plans
Tailored irrigation farm plans

The Lake Wellington Irrigation Efficiency Incentives Program is administered by Agriculture Victoria and the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA). Program funding is provided by the State Government's Sustainable Irrigation Program. Published by the Victorian Government Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action 2025.

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Lake Wellington Irrigation Efficiency Incentives Program

Aims of the Incentives Program

The Lake Wellington Irrigation Efficiency Incentives Program is funded through the Victorian Government's Sustainable Irrigation Program.

The aim of the program is to support a sustainable irrigation sector that values and protects its environmental, cultural and social assets. The program aims to minimise environmental impacts of irrigation by encouraging irrigators within the Lake Wellington Catchment to undertake farm planning and subsequently implement on-farm irrigation upgrades to improve irrigation practices. These improved practices directly contribute to reduced nutrient runoff into Gippsland's rivers, lakes and wetlands, reduced deep drainage and subsequent effects on ground water and water tables, increased water use efficiency, and increased farm productivity.

Rebates are available for the following activities:

- New Irrigation Farm Plans
- Updated Irrigation Farm Plans
- Tailored Irrigation Farm Plans

Benefits of irrigation farm planning

An Irrigation Farm Plan (IFP) can help you to:

- Compare costs and benefits of different systems
- Identify improvements and upgrades that fit with existing infrastructure
- Work towards current best practice standards
- Schedule farm upgrades
- Increase water-use efficiency and reduce nutrient losses for better productivity
- Meet statutory obligations and critical assessment requirements so that planned works can be approved by the relevant referral agencies
- Ensure floodways, wetlands, waterways, native vegetation, cultural heritage and regional infrastructure (e.g. channels and roads) are protected or enhanced during development
- Plan other aspects of your farm, such as effluent and nutrient management, erosion and sediment management, cultural heritage plans, shade and shelter plans and managing energy use
- Maximise any opportunities to take advantage of SRW's modernised delivery system in the MID

Independent Advice & Support

By signing up for the farm planning program you will have access to free and independent professional advice and support from Agriculture Victoria (as well as WGCMA and SRW if applicable). This includes extensive discussions and farm visits with an Agriculture Victoria Irrigation Extension Officer, support throughout the farm planning process, and additional advice as necessary to ensure your plan will support your long-term goals for your property or business. Please contact Agriculture Victoria before you apply for the incentives program to get this support from the very start.

New irrigation farm plans

A new IFP is made up of a survey and a design. The survey includes the current layout and topography of the farm. The design includes the future layout of the farm including irrigation systems, fencing, vegetated areas, laneways/farm tracks, dams etc. New IFPs are available for areas that have never had a farm plan completed with the support of the Irrigation Efficiency Incentives Program.

Rebate

The rebate covers 75 per cent of the IFP's cost up to a maximum of \$90 per hectare, capped at \$10,000, (excl. GST), to engage an irrigation farm planner for an irrigation survey and design.

Updated irrigation farm plans

An updated IFP may be available due to the age of an existing farm plan, or by the modernisation of the irrigation delivery system by SRW creating opportunities for on-farm improvements. If applicable, the updated IFP may incorporate different delivery locations or reduced number of outlets, delivery height or potential connection to a delivery pipeline in agreement with SRW.

An updated IFP only funds updating the design of the original IFP for the area covering the scope of proposed works, unless there is reasonable cause to justify resurveying an area. This decision will be made on a case-by-case basis by the Working Group.

Rebate

The rebate covers 75 per cent of the Updated IFP's cost up to a maximum of \$45 per hectare, (excl. GST), for design only or a maximum of \$90 per hectare (excl. GST) for survey and design, if justified, capped at \$10,000.

Tailored irrigation farm plans

The Tailored Irrigation Farm Plan is a new process for irrigation planning that will be piloted from 2025-2028. The intent of this proposed Tailored Irrigation Farm Planning process is to allow flexibility in the method and detail of irrigation designs to better match varied irrigator needs. Tailored Farm Plans are recommended and approved on a case-by-case basis by Ag Vic and WGCMA.

Eligibility

In general, you are eligible for rebates if you are located within the Lake Wellington Catchment and have a current irrigation licence (section 51 or 64 Licence) AND:

- The proposed area has not previously had a survey and design completed with the assistance of the Irrigation Efficiency Incentives Program; OR
- The existing farm plan for the property is more than 10 years old; OR
- You can demonstrate, with confirmation from SRW, that supply system changes (e.g. modernisation of supply channels, pipelines and outlets) have opened up new opportunities for improvements on farm.

If the proposed development requires a new or amended irrigation licence and triggers the Irrigation Development Guidelines, then the project is ineligible.

Projects must not commence until formal (written) approval has been given. No retrospective payments will be made.

The Oversight Committee reserves the right to overturn the eligibility status of an application (from eligible to ineligible or vice versa) if, in the opinion of the Oversight Committee, the eligibility criteria is creating an unintended outcome in the context of the program objectives.

Funding Limitations and Timelines

There is a cap of up to two farm plans per business per financial year with a combined cap of \$10,000 per financial year (excluding GST).

Once a Landholder Partnership Agreement has been signed, applicants must complete their farm plan within 12 months from the date of contract signing. If the final farm plan has not been submitted within 12 months, applicants will be given a formal written warning. A written request for any extension must be submitted to the Oversight Committee, which will review the request for the project to be extended beyond 12 months. The contract may be cancelled if the farm plan is not finalised within 12 months, and no extension has been sought. The oversight committee reserves the right to cancel the funding if the plan is overdue, and no rebate will be paid.

Irrigators taking advantage of this opportunity are advised of the following:

- Eligibility Disputes: The final decision on eligibility for incentive payments rests with the program's Oversight Committee.

- **Funding Constraints:** Funding is only guaranteed to irrigators who have signed a WGCMA Landholder Partnership Agreement. Any works completed prior to signing are ineligible for funding.
- **Liability for Loss:** No Liability for Loss, however arising, will be accepted by the State of Victoria, its servants, contractors, or by any person connected with the Program for any costs, loss or damage incurred by any applicant for incentive payments under the Program, where an incentive for any reason has or has not been granted.
- **Fraudulent Claims:** Providing false and fraudulent receipts is considered a criminal offence. If you are found to have made a fraudulent claim you will sacrifice your original claim and the ability to make any further claims with the Irrigation Incentive Program. Where it is established that landholders have made a claim using false accounts, Agriculture Victoria together with CMA may initiate proceedings to recover amounts paid together with exemplary or punitive damages.
- **Goods and Services Tax (GST) Registration and Australian Business Number (ABN):** It is strongly recommended that irrigators provide the CMA with their ABN and indicate whether or not they have registered for GST. This will ensure the full incentive amount is paid to the claimant.
- **Review of Guidelines:** These eligibility guidelines may be subject to review by the CMA at any time and without notice. The applicant agrees that they, entirely at their own risk, use the information obtained from any certified irrigation designers, registered soil surveyors or other approved services or product provided by any person selected by the applicant from a list provided by any Agriculture Victoria Officers or any other authority in the course of making an application. To the full extent permissible at law the CMA and its agents excludes all warranties expressed or implied regarding any such services or products. The applicant acknowledges that, the CMA, and its agents, will not be liable for any special, direct, indirect, or consequential damages.

The applicant must agree to:

- Sign a Landholder Partnership Agreement with the WGCMA
- Make a commitment to extensive discussion with the farm planner, AgVic and other relevant agencies to ensure it is the best possible design.
- Have their name, property address, phone number and an electronic copy of the final draft design provided to the following organisations: DEECA (AgVic), West Gippsland CMA, Southern Rural Water. These details may also be provided to Gippsland Water, Environment Protection Authority, Local Government, GippsDairy, and Landcare on a needs only basis.

Farm planning incentive process

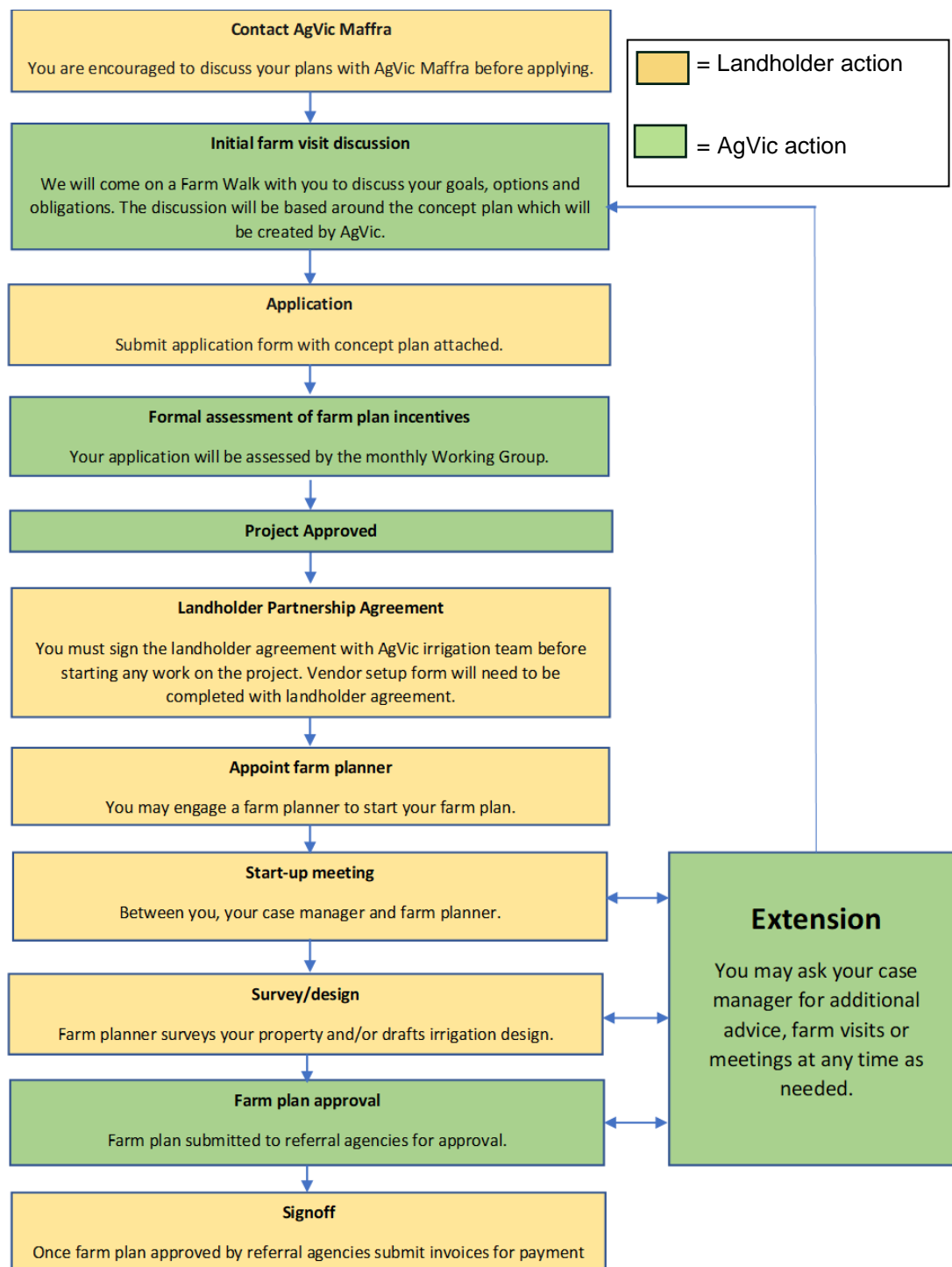


Figure 1. Farm Plan Incentives Process. Note this chart is a guide only.

Applicants are encouraged to contact Agriculture Victoria Maffra before applying (irrigationgippsland@deeca.vic.gov.au).

Initial farm visit discussion with Agriculture Victoria and WGCMA to discuss the concept plan and develop a farm plan proposal. The concept plan consists of a series of maps identifying the constructed and natural assets on the property, planning overlays and any proposed projects. Applications for farm planning can be submitted with a concept plan at any time of the year subject to funding availability.

Applications are evaluated and processed monthly by the Lake Wellington Incentives Program Working Group.

Eligible applications will be funded on a 'first come, first served' basis based on the time and date of application.

20% of the funding available will be reserved for projects within the Lake Wellington catchment that are outside the traditional eligible area. Applications will be capped at 5 in the first 12 months of the program. 80% of the funding available will be reserved for projects within the traditional eligible area. Refer to Appendix: Figure 1 for the traditional eligible area and Figure 2 for the Lake Wellington Catchment.

Applicants will be informed of the status of their application within two months of submission.

Successful applicants will be required to sign a WGCMA Landholder Partnership Agreement that states the requirements of the project, funding protocols and relevant timelines. Any part of the irrigation farm plan commenced before the landholder agreement is signed will be ineligible for funding.

A final farm plan that meets the farm planning critical assessment criteria will be submitted to Ag Vic, who will then share it with relevant referral agencies. Permits and work agreements may be required from the WGCMA, SRW and the relevant Shire.

Once the farm plan is approved by the referral agencies, invoices can be submitted to the WGCMA to receive your incentive rebate for the farm plan project.

The Incentives Program Working Group oversees the Lake Wellington Irrigation Efficiency Incentives Program. The Working Group consists of representatives from Agriculture Victoria (AgVic), West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA) and Southern Rural Water (SRW) and is able to call on representatives from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), GippsDairy, Landcare and Local Government for support on specific cases when needed. All incentive project approvals are made under the guidance of an Oversight Committee consisting of senior representatives from AgVic and the WGCMA. The Oversight Committee is used to refer projects that are complicated and require further review, and it has the final say on eligibility. Grievances or complaints can also be raised with the Oversight Committee at the request of an applicant.

Permits and works agreements

Permits and works agreements may be required for some of the on-farm irrigation upgrades proposed in the IFP. An Agriculture Victoria irrigation extension officer can offer advice about the requirements of various authorities. However, final responsibility for ensuring all requirements have been met and the necessary permits have been obtained remains with the landholder.

Native vegetation

Remnant vegetation such as paddock trees are important features of the landscape as they help to reduce groundwater levels, provide important habitat for native fauna and provide shade for stock. The Gippsland Red Gum Grassy Woodlands and Associated Native Grasslands is a critically endangered ecological community and is protected under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. Any works that are likely to impact on vegetation in this ecological community need to be carefully considered and are unlikely to be supported by the Authority.

Protection zones may be needed to meet legislation (if applicable). Every effort must be made to avoid your new irrigation developments affecting native vegetation. Any designed impact on remnant vegetation will be referred to the relevant Shire. If removal of native vegetation (alive or dead) is required, a permit for native vegetation removal may also need to be obtained. Refer to the Native Vegetation Removal in the Farming and Rural Activity Zones information sheet at:

https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0026/91259/Native-vegetation-removal-in-the-farming-and-rural-activity-zones-Information-sheet.pdf

Contact the Wellington Shire on 1300 366 244, or the Latrobe City Council on 1300 367 700 for information about native vegetation removal.

Wetlands

Wetlands are a critical part of the natural environment and must be preserved. They can reduce the impacts of floods, absorb pollutants and improve water quality. They also provide habitat for animals and plants, and many contain a wide diversity of life, supporting plants and animals that are found nowhere else.

The WGCMA considers the impacts on floodplain wetlands during an assessment of Irrigation Farm Plans. Wetland mapping and aerial photography are used to identify any wetlands that may be impacted. The WGCMA will seek the protection of any wetlands with biodiversity value, noting that many floodplain wetlands are highly modified. The WGCMA does not support the filling of wetlands, or the conversion of wetlands to reuse systems.

Works on waterways permit

It is the responsibility of landowners or managers to seek appropriate advice and permits when planning work on, near, or over a designated waterway or floodplain. Permits are required to ensure development does not adversely affect waterways or impact on water quality or flow. Waterways can include rivers, streams, creeks, gullies, wetlands, lakes, lagoons, swamps and estuaries. A waterway may not have water in it continually.

Examples of works include crossings (bridges), deviations (waterway realignment), extractions of silt and gravel, stabilisation and vegetation alteration (timber or vegetation removal or revegetation projects). Centre pivot or travelling irrigators that need to cross waterways will generally require the installation of culverts. These crossings (pipe or box culverts) must be adequately sized to ensure that the capacity of the waterway is not impacted. The construction of culverts or the crossing of any designated waterway will require a Works on Waterways Permit from the Authority, as per the requirements of the Water Act 1989.

For further information refer to: <https://www.wgcma.vic.gov.au/for-farmers/works-on-waterways>

Contact WGCMA Traralgon on 1300 094 262 for information about undertaking earthworks on waterways.

Contact SRW on 1300 139 510 where a designated waterway is identified as a SRW asset.

Southern Rural Water channels & drains

Permits are required for any proposed structures crossing Southern Rural Water (SRW) channels or drainage easements.

Your case manager will assist you in identifying your permit requirements and the permit application process with SRW, or you may contact SRW on 5139 3100 or refer to:

<https://www.srw.com.au/sites/default/files/documents/2023-01/Private%20Works%20information%20sheet.pdf> for further information

Note: Penalties may apply if you do not obtain the appropriate permits. According to Section 16 of the Water Act 1989, a person may be liable to pay for damages if they cause or interfere with the reasonable flow of water onto any land.

As a landholder you must ensure earthworks carried out on your farm do not negatively impact on your neighbour by changing the quality or flow of water across property boundaries. You must also contact the relevant authorities if you are planning to undertake maintenance works on any drains that cross your property.

Floodplains

Any earthworks within the 1% AEP (or 1 in 100 year) flood extent requires approval from the West Gippsland CMA, or a planning permit from the relevant Shire Council. Earthworks must not alter the way floodwater moves across your property boundary, to ensure that there are no adverse impacts on neighbouring properties or roads.

The WGCMA Community Flood Portal can be used to understand the extent and depth of floodwater on your property. <https://flood.wgcma.vic.gov.au/>

Laser grading has potential to reduce flood storage and change flow behaviour, so this is a key concern. If irrigation plans show significant cut and/or fill, or if flow paths are likely to be compromised, the WGCMA will seek further clarification.

Turkey nest dams on the flood plain will only be approved if a detailed 2-dimensional hydraulic study shows no change to flood behaviour (no impact on neighbouring properties and public infrastructure). All surplus soil from works must be removed from the floodplain.

Reuse systems are assessed on their size and positioning. They are not permitted on designated waterways as this can impact both upstream and downstream landowners.

Farm tracks and new irrigation channels can act as levee banks and are assessed to ensure they do not impact flows. Farm tracks must not increase existing land levels by more than 150mm. All new farm tracks including proposed levels should be clearly shown on plans.

If existing farm channels or delvas are to be removed or new ones added, the WGCMA will consider the need for the landowner to complete a detailed 2-dimensional hydraulic study to confirm that there will be no adverse impact on flood behaviour.

Contact WGCMA Traralgon on 1300 094 262 for information about undertaking earthworks on floodplains.

Other approvals

The proposed works may require approval under other legislation. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all approvals are sought prior to works commencing. The most common requirements are listed below.

Planning and Environment Act

A planning permit is generally required for buildings or works within a floodplain unless a specific exemption is listed in the planning scheme.

The Schedules to the Floodway Overlay (FO) and Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO) in the relevant planning scheme for your area may include the following exemptions:

- Earthworks in accordance with a whole farm plan approved by the responsible authority and floodplain management authority
- Construction of a pump shed
- Construction of an agricultural shed with open sides
- Works associated with roads, roadsides or any other access way (public or private) that do not alter the existing surface level by more than 150mm.
- Routine and maintenance work that do not affect the height, length or location of a levee, embankment or road.

Depending on the location and type of works there may be other overlays or even the zone that triggers a planning permit (e.g. native veg removal) so it is recommended that the farm plan identify what, if any, proposed works will require a planning permit or other approval.

Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006

Applicants are advised that earthworks within an area of cultural sensitivity or in / near a Registered Aboriginal Cultural Heritage place carry a risk of damaging Aboriginal Cultural Heritage, which is protected under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.

It is an offence under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 to damage Aboriginal Cultural Heritage.

Information about Victoria's Aboriginal places and objects can be found at the Aboriginal Victoria website at <https://www.aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/aboriginal-places-and-objects>.

Irrigation farm planners

A quotation from several farm planners can provide valuable information about the quality and cost of the survey and design work.

AgVic's Irrigation Team provides free, independent advice on the farm planning skills and capabilities that will suit your needs and goals for your property. If you are unfamiliar with IFPs, it is highly recommended that you discuss your needs with AgVic's Irrigation Team (see Page 3 – AgVic Contact Details)

Contact details for irrigation farm plan designers

This is a list of designers active in the Lake Wellington Catchment. There are other surveyors and designers who may be able to meet your planning needs.

Ag Work Pty Ltd Nicky Hair C/o Post Office Briagolong 3860 Mobile 0409 547 146 Email info@agworkgfcs.com.au	CAF Consulting Col Findlay PO Box 1948 Shepparton 3632 Mobile 0418 577 399 Email col@cafconsulting.com.au
NJC Irrigation Solutions Neil Carmichael 5 Garvey Rd, Kerang VIC 3579 Mobile 0427 929 117 Email admin@njcis.com.au	Schroen Irrigation Improvements James Schroen PO Box 152 Lockington 3563 Mobile 0428 844 685 Email james@schroenirrigation.com.au
Price Merrett Consulting Pty Ltd Phil Mathieson Nathan Walle 9478 Murray Valley Highway, Kerang VIC 3579 Phone 03 5452 249 Email phil.mathieson@pricemerrett.com.au Email nathan@pricemerrett.com.au	XY3d Eric Hillbrich 1515 Blackgate Road, Freshwater Creek VIC 3217 Mobile 0409 472 631 Email eric@xy3d.com.au

Appendix

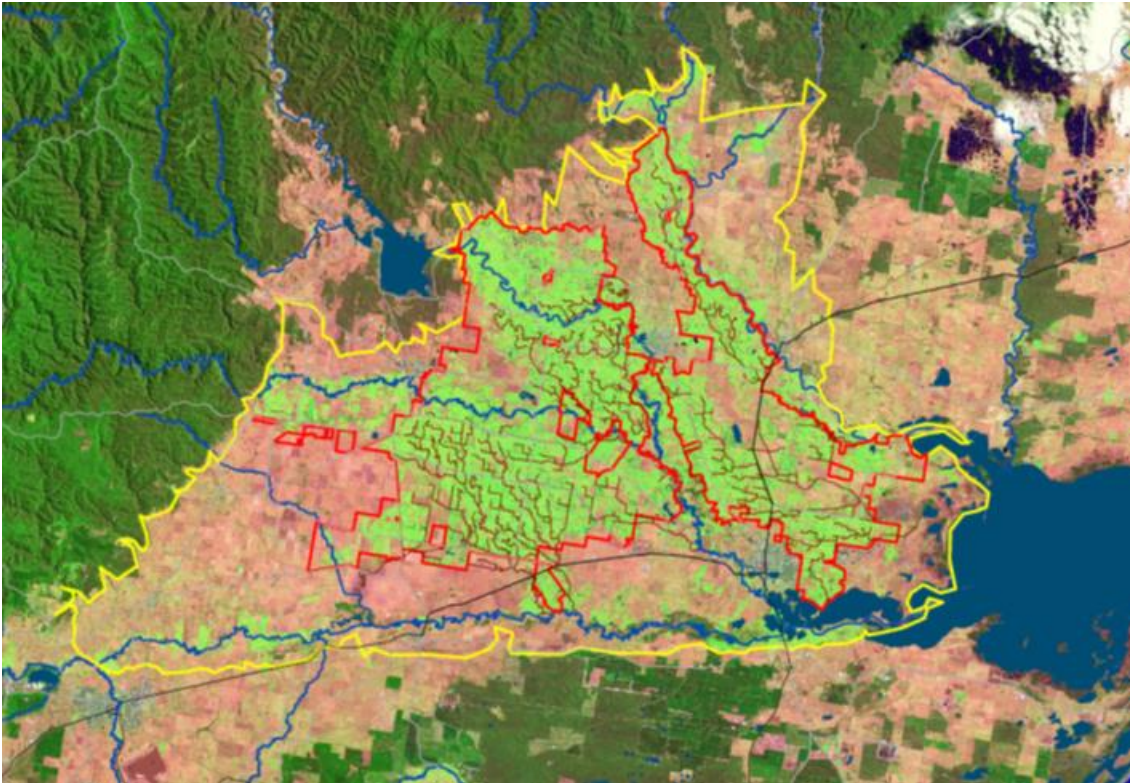


Figure 1. Traditional eligible area, pre 2025, (Central Gippsland, Macalister Irrigation District and surrounds) in yellow.

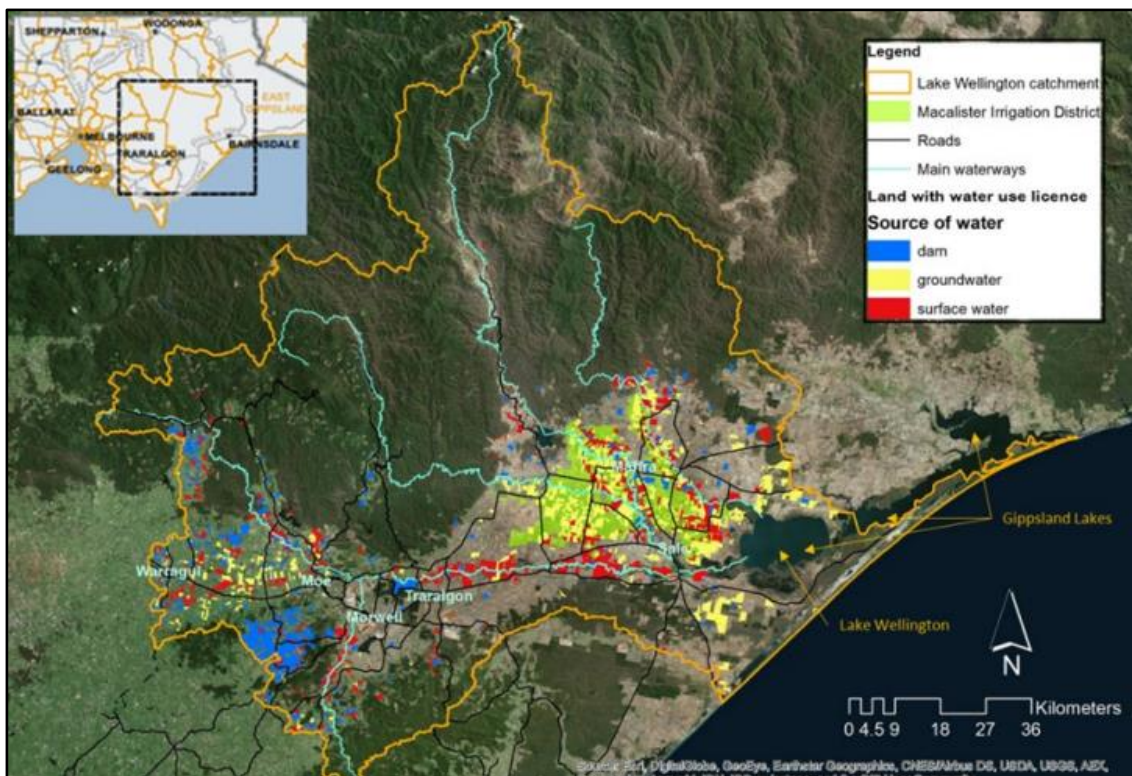


Figure 2. Indicative eligible area (outlined in yellow) for the Lake Wellington incentives program (2025-2028).

FARM PLANNING/IRRIGATION DEVELOPMENT CRITERIA

The farm plan must clearly demonstrate both the existing features and any planned developments. The farm plan must contain sufficient detail to allow for approval of proposed works by referral agencies.

General

All existing physical features, including:

Trees and remnant native vegetation (identify type, location and protection zones)

Water courses and water bodies (wetlands, billabongs etc.)

Buildings, fences, laneways, powerlines, levee banks, dams, troughs, SRW supply points, channels, meters, additional sources of supply, etc.

All heights of structures and terrain

Location, volume, storage time, discharge point & discharge area (ha) of dairy effluent ponds if applicable

Turkey nest storage location and details

Existing & Proposed Laser Graded Areas (if applicable)

Design flow rate

Area of bays

Heights of top and bottom of bays, supply level, and grade

Drain bed levels and connection to reuse system

Checkbanks

Areas and volumes to be top soiled

Earthworks summary for each bay/section

Cuts and fills (including threshold depths)

Pipe and Riser Systems

Identification, location and design of supply pump(s)

Pipe structures & valves

Air relief valves

No. & location of risers

Operating pressure/head velocity

Flow rate designed for each section

Pipe length & diameter for each section

Reuse System and Farm Drains

Drain identification, bed level at direction or slope change

Reuse sump location, design and capacity in ML

Disposal area – recommended at least 40% of catchment area

Reuse pump – position, head pressure, flow rate from reuse

Reuse delivery pipeline or channel & disposal area (ha)

Drainage structures – checks, drops, crossings/access (structure schedule)

Reuse outfall point – SRW drain no. & sill height

Specific catchment areas (section number and ha)

Earthworks schedule for new drains & reuse sump

Drains connected to the reuse and the direction of drainage flow

Pressurised Irrigation Systems

Topographic survey

Supply point

Pump site design & pump specifications

Mainlines, sub-lines, row spacing, sprinklers/drippers

Operating pressure

Application rate (mm/day)

Irrigated area (ha)

Drainage design

Effluent System

Storage locations, types, designs & capacities (ML)

Disposal area (ha) & design

Pump/s (as applicable) – position, head pressure, flow rates

Earthworks schedule