

WEST GIPPSLAND CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

Corporate Plan

2024-25



Acknowledgement

The West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA) is committed to working with Aboriginal stakeholders in Natural Resource Management (NRM) throughout the West Gippsland Region. The organisation is committed to developing and maintaining sound working relationships with Aboriginal People and organisations based on mutual trust, respect and understanding.

The Gunaikurnai Peoples and the Kulin Peoples are the Traditional Owners of the Country covered by this region. Gunaikurnai country extends east from the coast near Wilsons 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.

WGCMA has Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BLCAC) and Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC). In these documents, we agree to involve the respective Aboriginal corporations in all WGCMA projects from the beginning.

We would like to acknowledge and pay our respects to the Traditional Land Owners within the catchment area, the Gunaikurnai, the Bunurong and Boon Wurrung and the Wurundjeri Peoples. We also acknowledge the responsibility to care for Country of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples and organisations in Natural Resource Management and pay respects to Elders, past, present and emerging.

Images:

Cover: Tarwin river at sunrise.

This page: Port Welshpool long jetty. Inset: NAIDOC Week event.



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Chair's Foreword

I present the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA) Corporate Plan for endorsement in the understanding that it has been prepared with knowledge, thought and care.

Our operating environment continues to require a regional focus with strong connections to partners to enable us to address challenges and seize opportunities. Having a solid plan, capable staff and a diverse and mature Board is vital.

In this Corporate Plan 2024-25, we outline our one-year blueprint to continue business operations to consolidate focus following the impacts of 2023 flood events and other disruptions of the past few years. We commit to continuing to deliver high quality projects and services to the community.

While challenging, the events of 2020-24 have further inspired our staff and Board in their work for the environment in West Gippsland and the state of Victoria. We have a forward-looking Strategic Plan to 2024, which supports the Minister's Letter of Expectation and Statement of Obligations and enables us to implement relevant aspects of the Water Act and the Catchment and Land Protection Act. This Corporate Plan is built around the Strategic Plan, as outlined in the sections below.

As our organisation enters its 28th year, we have – with our partners from community groups through to all forms of government – maintained a strong track record of achieving meaningful results. This is a consequence of having staff with wide-ranging experience and extensive links to the community and a diverse, skills-based Board.

In this Board term, we welcomed a member who is a GunaiKurnai Traditional Owner and we have greatly benefited from the wisdom and counsel they provide. We look forward to welcoming an Aboriginal Delegate and Youth Associate director to the board in 2024-2025 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.

We have continued to work to improve and protect the region's wonderful natural assets. Our planning and delivery capacity is firmly established. It is understood and trusted by the community and our partners in the region. This approach has also been the cornerstone of our prompt response to the significant flood event the region experienced in June 2021 and further events in 2023. With the assistance of the Victorian Government, we have successfully delivered remediation works in many flood-devastated areas.

Looking ahead, this Corporate Plan centres on areas where our regional priorities align with those of the Australian and Victorian governments. There will be a continuing focus on Corner Inlet and the Gippsland Lakes, where considerable progress has been made in protecting and restoring these iconic assets.

The key projects we anticipate will be supported in 2024-25 are outlined in Section 2.

Working in partnership with the Australian Government through the National Landcare Program (NLP), we are focused on leveraging their investment with state funding to provide more project outcomes with higher impact. Our involvement in these programs brings a great deal of value to government in achieving their objectives. The current Program concluded on 30 June 2023. As the selected Regional Service Provider for the Regional Land Partnerships component of the NLP, we are proud of our collective efforts to implement important projects of national significance in our region and are well positioned to

assist in delivery of the next phase of the Australian Government suite of programs. We have commenced efforts to add value to all investment in Natural Resource Management (NRM) in our region as part of the development and delivery process.

Our goals are outlined in Section 1.1 of this plan and these will be further refined through the approval of our Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS). We are excited about implementing the fourth RCS with our regional partners.

Given our strong, ongoing connections to our local communities, we are well positioned through a mature community engagement network, coupled with community-driven organisations such as Landcare and several not-for-profit and philanthropic organisations, to deliver on-ground work. We are also particularly proud of our strong relationships with the Traditional Owners of land and water throughout the region.

During 2018-19 we committed for the third time to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation and signed a new MoU with the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation. We are proud to be able to provide opportunities for Traditional Owners to work on Country. These action-orientated MoUs are unique to our region and strongly support their Self Determination journey.

We continue to contribute to the statewide body of Victoria's ten CMAs - Vic Catchments. In April 2024, Vic Catchments was awarded winner of the Nature Positive category in the 35th National Banksia Sustainability Awards. The awards celebrate trailblazers in environmental and social sustainability.

"... there will be a continuing focus on Corner Inlet and the Gippsland Lakes, where considerable progress has been made in protecting and restoring these iconic assets."

For the year ahead, we look forward to assisting in the delivery of the first year of the Environmental Contribution Levy Tranche Six (EC6) programs. Having worked closely with many partners in the NRM industry to bring these programs to life during previous iterations of the program, we are excited about the next phase and look forward to working with government to implement initiatives that do justice to this important funding source.

The development of policy directions through *Water is Life*, *Water for Victoria*, and *Protecting Victoria's Environment - Biodiversity 2036* has created opportunities for WGCMA and our partners to capitalise on the work done in previous years.

I acknowledge the professionalism, commitment, enthusiasm and capacity of the managers and staff of WGCMA who make all this possible and I very much look forward to working with them in the coming years.

On behalf of the WGCMA Board, I recommend the Ministers' endorsement of this Corporate Plan.



Mikaela Power
WGCMA Board Chair

1 Business Direction

1.1 Vision Statement

Our vision is:

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

This Corporate Plan will honour this vision through a suite of strategies, projects and activities outlined below.

1.2 Our Region

The West Gippsland CMA region is one of the most diverse and complex natural resource management regions in Australia. It 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 8% of Victoria's total land area with a population 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 West Gippsland CMA 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.

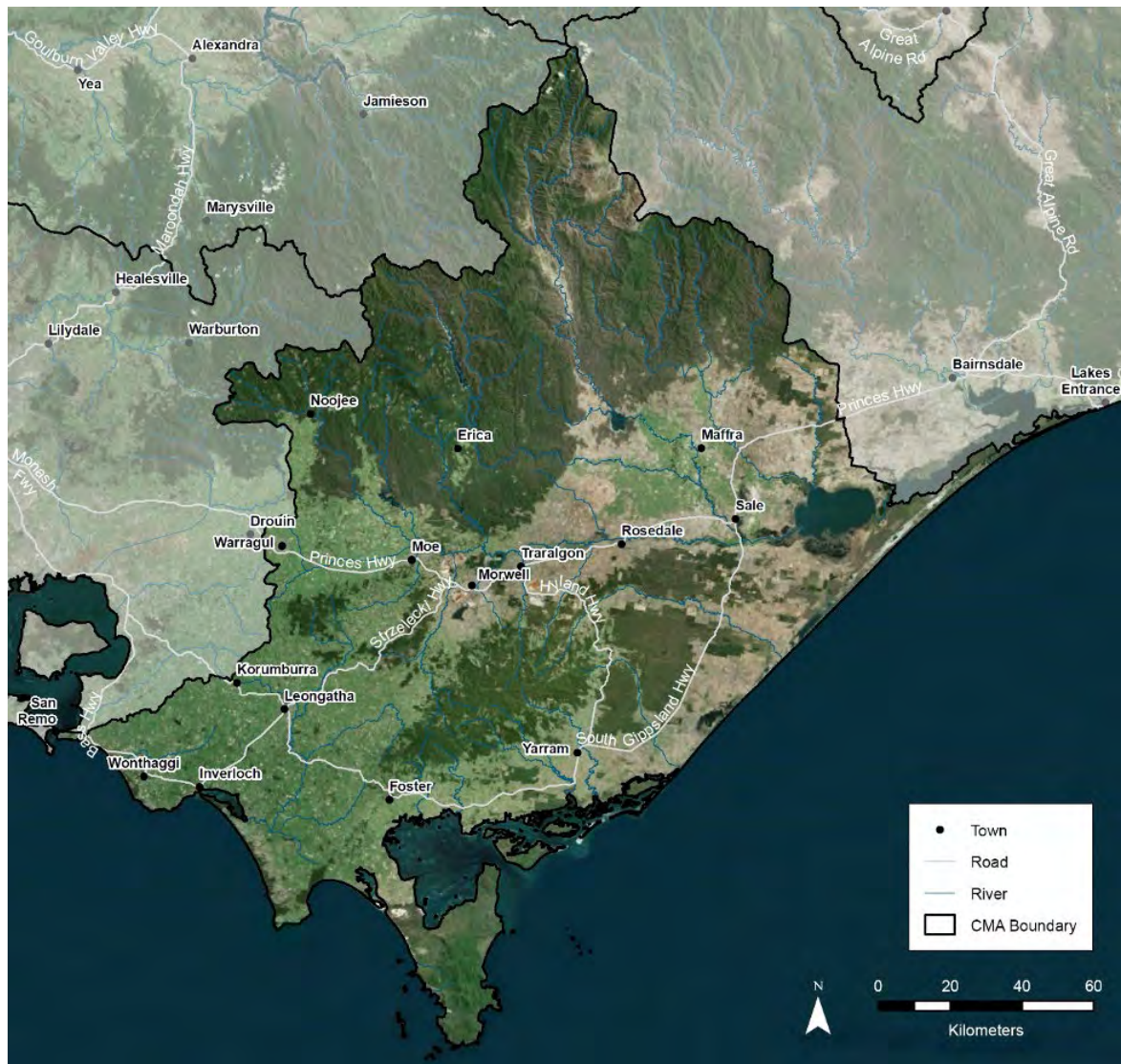
The Gunaikurnai Peoples and the Kulin Peoples are the Traditional Custodians of the Country covered by this region. Gunaikurnai country extends east from the coast near Wilsons Promontory, up to Mount Baw Baw and across a large part of East Gippsland. Tribes of the Gunaikurnai include the Brataualung 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 over 90% of the state's electricity and gas, much of the 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 2032 and Loy Yang in 2048. This transition is expected to have a large impact on the local economy affecting local jobs and businesses.

The West Gippsland Region



The region at a glance

Total land area	17,685 km ²
Population	200,000 approx.
Tenure	46% Public land and 54% Private land
River Basins	Latrobe, Thomson and South Gippsland
Traditional custodians	Gunaikurnai, Bunurong and Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri people
Largest contributors to the regional economy	Construction, mining, manufacturing, forestry, agriculture, fishing, food-related and utilities sectors ¹
Largest employment sectors	Healthcare, social assistance and retail trade ²
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 27% of Melbourne's water

¹ DTPLI (2014b)

² Ibid.

Image: Kayaking on Carran Carran (Thomson River).

1.3 Statement of Corporate Intent and Business Plan

The State Government has established a Catchment Management Framework. This Framework aims to effectively implement integrated catchment management as a tool for ecologically sustainable development of our natural resource-based industries, the protection of land and water resources and the conservation of natural and cultural heritage.

As part of this framework, Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) were created to maximise community involvement in the Framework and ensure transparency in decision-making on these issues.

Our Purpose

Core business undertakings

Our purpose is to 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.

To achieve our vision, we have selected four interrelated areas of focus. This platform will guide the scope of our work to protect and improve our priority landscapes. Our approach to this work is guided by our values.

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 the Board, management, policies, procedures and systems. We ensure our investors are satisfied; by responsibly managing risks and challenges.



Image: Water dragon.



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

Always
working for a
better
environment

We get
the job
done

Approachable & collaborative

We act
with
Integrity

Respectful
and
Trustworthy

Great attitude

**& OPEN
ACCOUNTABLE**

Statement of Intent

"We commit to working respectfully and supportively with and for our staff, our communities and the environment. Our ethics are based on integrity, fairness, and credibility. This forms the basis for how we at West Gippsland CMA approach all our work."

Our Governance Structure

We are governed by a skills-based Board appointed by the Minister administering the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* and are responsible for the strategic coordination of integrated management of land, biodiversity and water through south, central and west Gippsland. We operate under the legislative base of many Acts:

- *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (CaLP)
- *Water Act 1989*
- *Financial Management Act 1994*
- *Audit Act 1994*
- *Freedom of Information Act 1982*
- *The Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*
- *Public Administration Act 2004*

The Board, as part of the Governance Framework, has documented a Board reporting cycle which sees it receive regular reports on the following:

- financials
- risk management
- work health and safety
- policy progress and status
- organisational development
- progress versus expenditure on projects over \$50,000
- strategic issues
- annual action plan.

The Board's Governance Framework also includes three committees where issues can be examined in more detail. These include:

- Remuneration
- Audit and Risk
- Corporate.

Two significant engagement forums also exist, led by Board members. These are:

- Regional Landcare Forum
- Community Engagement Network.

The Board has developed and adopted a Board Charter in line with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning's

(now Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action) Governance Guidelines for Statutory Authorities.

Within this framework, one of our primary roles is engaging with the community to develop and implement the Regional Catchment Strategy.

The Regional Catchment Strategy provides an over-arching 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 and is formally reviewed every six years. We launched our fourth RCS in 2022 and are approaching its midterm review.

Community Engagement Network and Community Engagement

We have established a Community Engagement Network (CEN) representing a diverse range of stakeholders that have influence in the region. The CEN provides a strong link between the community and the Board. We complement this network with focused issue-based community forums and specific engagement on projects, plans and strategies.

Statement of Obligations

We have two Statements of Obligations (SOO), one issued under the *Water Act 1989* and the other under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*.

Many of the obligations included in the SoO are required to be undertaken if funded and to the level of funding provided when funding is made available for a specific obligation.

This plan and our Regional Catchment Strategy are framed around fulfilling these obligations.

Any change in funding to the estimates included in this plan will necessitate a review of our ability to deliver certain obligations.

Management Structure and Staffing

Planned organisational changes and organisational improvements.

Our current management structure has three units: Catchment Planning and Delivery, Statutory Planning, and Corporate Services.

The Executive Managers report to the Chief Executive Officer and form the Executive Team for the organisation.

Our current staffing levels are at 40 equivalent full-time staff members and these numbers are expected to remain the same in the 2024-25 financial year.

Measures to improve accountability, effectiveness and efficiency have been progressively implemented. We actively participate in Vic Catchments and various state-wide forums. We are committed to a joint business systems partnership with seven of the ten Victorian CMAs. We will also continue our formal shared services arrangement with East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (EGCMA) delivering statutory functions and referrals and have offered this service to all other CMAs.

Scope and Nature of Activities

To realise our vision, we undertake a range of activities from providing a leading role in developing the strategic direction for integrated catchment management in the region to coordinating works for river health and water quality. We also act as a regulatory body for the region's floodplains and waterways.

While developing our Strategic Plan, and to achieve our vision and meet our objectives, we identified specific Areas of Focus. Under each Area, there are strategies and tactics that we will pursue during the planning period to help progress our efforts to achieve the stated outcomes of the Strategic Plan.

Our Corporate Strategic Plan is now well established and provides strategic direction to and provides focus to our efforts over a five-year period. This is explained in more detail below.



Image: Intermediate Egret at Heart Morass.



Image: Catchment and Community Liaison Officer Kelsey Tong at Rainbow Creek revegetation site.

1.4 Strategic Areas of Focus



Core Area of Focus

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 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.

Tactics:

- Improve organisational capability, partnerships, engagement, and monitoring / evaluation systems. It also presents an opportunity to reach new and diverse audiences.
- 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 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 priority landscapes.
 - Secure project funding using collaborative and intelligent systems and processes.
 - Implement, monitor, evaluate, adaptively manage and improve delivery of strategies and plans.



Image: Eleisha Keogh, Manager Environmental Water and Waterways, Dr Adrian Clements Environmental Water Officer and Mark Little from VFA at release of 10,000 bass into Traralgon Creek.



Key Area of Focus:

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.
- Increase knowledge, skills and confidence of staff, executive and Board.
- 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.

Tactics:

- 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 I.T and corporate strategies and plans.



Image: Fish Release Day Dwarf Galaxiids Traralgon Creek.



Key Area of Focus:

Community Engagement and Partnerships

"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 community and partners.

Tactics:

- Maintain and nurture strategic relationships with investors, agencies, organisations, community groups individuals, local Aboriginal communities and Traditional Owners who can help us achieve defined 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 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 the Community Engagement and Partnerships Framework.



*Image: Coastal Waterways Officer,
Callum Edwards monitoring at the mouth
of the Powlett River Kugerungmome.*



Common Area of Focus:

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.

Objectives:

- 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.

Tactics:

- 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 the 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 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.

Appendix 1 illustrates the overall logic of the Strategic Plan as well as the embedded nature of the Monitoring Evaluation Reporting and Improvement.

During 2020-21, the Board approved an outcome monitoring report template that is now used to provide a six-monthly briefing to directors. This should provide further confidence to government that we are monitoring outcomes of the Strategic Plan.

1.5 Our Planning and Delivery Approach

This year's regional planning and investment process continues to build on and evolves our landscape planning model.

The Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) was renewed and finalised in 2022 and has confirmed the value of focusing on local landscapes.

The RCS spatially defines eight regionally significant natural landscape areas. The RCS Landscape Areas (LA) represent groupings of significant natural assets at most immediate risk. The RCS identifies the values and threats to regional natural

assets and establishes 20-year objectives and six-year management measures. The RCS is intended to be used by all agencies, groups and individuals with an interest in managing natural resources in our region.

Underpinning the rehabilitation and restoration of each of the LAs are the following principles:

- Projects will aim to protect the best aspects of LAs through integrated catchment management.
- System resilience will be built through enhancing and connecting the land, water and biodiversity ecosystems within and across catchment ecosystems.
- Variability in ecosystems is recognised and managed through an adaptive-management-approach within projects.
- Projects will provide opportunity for community involvement.
- Shared responsibility and partnerships will ensure ecologically sustainable management of catchment ecosystems.
- Programs and projects will be underpinned by good science.

Integration remains central to our regional delivery process. This is done throughout the planning, delivery and evaluation of NRM programs and is based on good communication and trust embedded in the many organisational partnerships that exist. We will continue to pursue this principle moving forward.



Image: Upper reaches of Carran Carran (Thomson River).

Alignment and Links to Key Government Strategic Directions and Policies

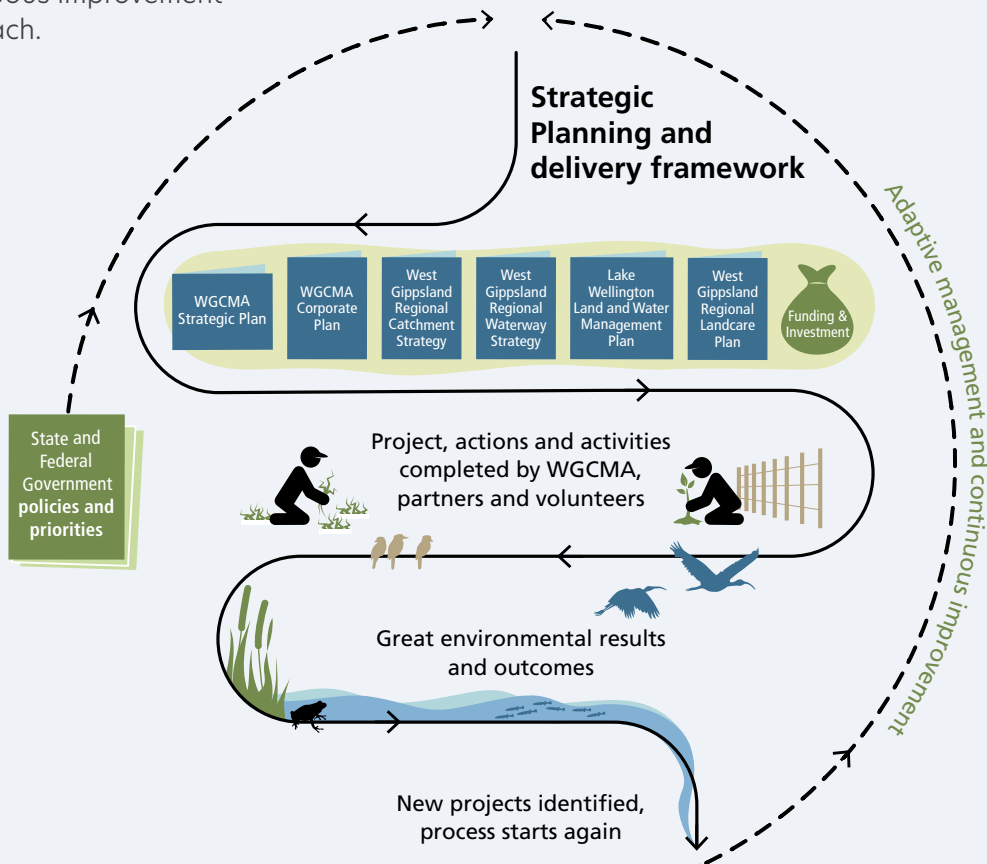
With a renewed Regional Catchment Strategy in 2022, a mature and recently reviewed Regional Waterway Strategy as well as a Lake Wellington Land and Water Management Plan, we are well placed to deliver on regional priorities. We are committed to ensuring the delivery of these key plans is aligned to State Government policies. Their collective focus is well aligned to the government's key policies as they relate to NRM.

These include:

- Water is Life
- Our Catchments Our Communities
- Water for Victoria
- Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037
- Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy
- Victorian Waterway Management Strategy
- Victorian Climate Change Framework

We are committed to working with government to assist in activating these policies at a regional level.

A pictorial summary of our planning, delivery and continuous improvement approach.



Minster's Letter of Expectation

We welcome the Minister's Letter of Expectation and are well positioned to deliver against these expectations as summarised below.

Minister's Expectation	Our Response and Plan
<p>Performance and Financial Management (LoE7)</p> <p><i>Commit to delivery of integrated catchment management, including leading the implementation and monitoring of catchment partnership agreements.</i></p> <p>Improved performance and demonstrated results against outcomes (PE1).</p>	<p>Having successfully operated under these expectations for over 27 years, we are committed to providing continued leadership in this area.</p> <p>Our reputation as a premier and reliable deliverer of services is important to us. We deliver efficiently and in line with funding obligations. We will continue to do this by working together with our delivery partners.</p> <p>We look forward to DEECA's contribution to this collective quest - particularly in those areas that have been challenging in the past.</p> <p>It should be noted that we have led and driven shared services approaches in Victoria through the coordination of a collective approach to business system planning, procurement and maintenance. We have also fostered collective statutory planning services involving East Gippsland, Corangamite and North Central CMAs. Our formal arrangements with East Gippsland CMA will continue in the year ahead.</p> <p>We will continue to support and contribute to Vic Catchments as well as meet challenges through working groups established by DEECA to improve focus on areas such as demonstrating outcomes and implementing efficiency opportunities. Activating and delivering opportunities identified through the Base Efficiency Review collective CMA response will be a high priority for the year ahead.</p> <p>We have conducted three Organisational Performance Excellence reviews. The results suggest we are performing at a high level. We will seek to build on the results and continue our quest for continuous improvement.</p>
<p>Waterway and Catchment Health (LoE9)</p> <p><i>Provide leadership in delivery of programs to improve the health of priority waterways and catchments.</i></p> <p>CH2 - Improved catchment and waterway health and resilience.</p>	<p>A full outline of our approach to this area can be seen in section 2. Significant Projects and Activities are outlined below.</p> <p>Complete details are contained in funding proposals and contractual documents.</p> <p>Further leadership related to waterways and catchments can be seen in West Gippsland CMA's partnership approach to delivering Gippsland Lakes initiatives with East Gippsland CMA.</p> <p>West Gippsland CMA will lead collective efforts and monitor the Regional Partnership Agreement through the Gippsland Environmental Agencies Forum</p>

Minister's Expectation	Our Response and Plan
<p>Climate Change and Energy (LoE1)</p> <p><i>Explore opportunities and/or deliver carbon sequestration initiatives and adapt to climate change and climate variability.</i></p> <p>Carbon sequestration & E2 Adaption to climate change and variability (E1).</p>	<p>We have worked with other CMAs and DEECA to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and trial a framework for multiple-benefit carbon offset opportunities through riparian revegetation. • Develop case studies to demonstrate how Traditional Owners can and could potentially participate in carbon sequestration projects and explore opportunities with them. <p>We will continue to work collaboratively both regionally and statewide.</p> <p>CMAs share a Climate Change Coordinator role that is driving a range of joint initiatives.</p> <p>The renewal of the West Gippsland RCS has also integrated the West Gippsland NRM Plan for Climate Change and embeds climate change as part of the regional strategic approach to coordinating NRM in West Gippsland.</p> <p>We will build our knowledge of the carbon economy and environmental accounting to support change.</p>
<p>Water for Agriculture (LoE10)</p> <p><i>Support a productive and profitable irrigation sector and vibrant and resilient regional communities.</i></p> <p>A productive and profitable irrigation sector and vibrant and resilient regional communities that adapt (WA1).</p>	<p>A full outline of our approach to this area can be seen in Significant Projects and Activities outlined below.</p> <p>Complete details are contained in funding proposals and contractual documents.</p> <p>We have strong working relationships with all our water corporation partners including Southern Rural Water, South Gippsland Water and Gippsland Water. We have and will continue to work closely on a range of initiatives, particularly those authorised through the Central and Gippsland Sustainable Water Strategy.</p> <p>We will be delivering actions in the Lake Wellington Land and Water Management Plan will further support work in this area with our partners.</p>
<p>Customer, Community and Engagement (LoE2)</p> <p><i>Ensure aspects of service delivery will be customer and community centred.</i></p> <p>CE1 A Strong community engagement focus that is a cornerstone of all CMAs functions.</p>	<p>We have robust and long-term trusted partnerships in place with the community and local government. We will continue to support our key community relationships through landholders and directly where we undertake work.</p> <p>We have a Community Engagement Network (CEN) in place and continue to recruit a diverse membership.</p> <p>Our CEN was renewed during 2023-24 and we look forward to escalating our efforts during 2024-25.</p> <p>We also host some Landcare roles within our structure as well as support Traditional Owners through provision of office space.</p> <p>We will continue to play an active role in the Gippsland Environmental Agencies Group in the year ahead.</p>

Minister's Expectation	Our Response and Plan
<p>Recognise Aboriginal Values (LoE3)</p> <p>Promote self-determination of Traditional Owners, including by supporting the Treaty process as required. Support the implementation of <i>Water is Life: Traditional Owner Access to Water Roadmap</i> by building genuine partnerships with Traditional Owners in waterway and environmental water management and decision-making and promote access to waterways and water for cultural, spiritual and economic purposes.</p> <p>Effective partnerships with Traditional Owners (AC1).</p>	<p>We have established a long-standing MoU with Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC), which was renewed in 2019 and have established a similar MoU with the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation. Both are Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAP) in our region.</p> <p>This provides a strong platform on which to activate the Minister's expectation.</p> <p>We are committed to supporting First Nations Peoples in their journey to self-determination and are supportive of and have commenced activities that support Water is Life.</p> <p>Formal arrangements are now in place where GLaWAC staff have office space and access at our Traralgon office.</p> <p>We will continue to play an active role in the Gippsland Environmental Agencies Group in the year ahead.</p> <p>Traditional Owners are key delivery partners for a number of initiatives in the region and works crews are successfully delivering on-ground work.</p>
<p>Recognise Recreational Values (LoE4)</p> <p><i>Support the wellbeing of communities by considering recreational values in waterway planning and management. Where appropriate, support planning for the delivery of the Victoria 2026 Commonwealth Games.</i></p> <p>Planning and Community Processes (RV1 & RV2).</p> <p>Accessible and user-friendly information (RV3).</p> <p>Collaboration with other organisations and government agencies (RV4).</p>	<p>These are embedded in our processes for developing Seasonal Watering Plans and delivering the Regional Waterway Program.</p> <p>We have strong connections with communities and recreational groups. We are sensitive to the impact of adverse climate on communities and implement measures and ensure flexibility in operations to address these as they arise.</p> <p>We will continue to play an active role in the Gippsland Environmental Agencies Group in the year ahead.</p>
<p>Resilient and Liveable Cities and Towns (LoE5)</p> <p><i>Contribute to healthy communities and support resilient environments.</i></p> <p>LC1 Healthy communities and resilient, liveable environments.</p>	<p>We have strong relationships with both local government and water corporations. Work on Integrated Water Management (IWM) plans took place over the last three years and we are well positioned to implement both Integrated Water Management and management plans. We are supporters of a shared position to further drive IWM in the region and have assisted Gippsland Water in developing the hosting arrangement.</p> <p>We will continue to play an active role in the Gippsland Environmental Agencies Group in the year ahead as well as actively participate in the Gippsland Integrated Water Management Forum.</p>

Minister's Expectation	Our Response and Plan
<p>Leadership, Diversity and Culture (LoE6)</p> <p><i>Reflect the diverse needs of the community.</i></p> <p>G1 Diversity and Inclusion</p>	<p>We have a Diversity and Inclusion Plan in place and are well advanced in implementing it.</p> <p>We will continue to review this plan to ensure it reflects community needs and expectations.</p> <p>We participate in the People Matter Survey and use the results to drive improvements within the organisation. This is augmented with a regular internal Pulse Survey.</p> <p>Continued work with Traditional Owner groups is facilitating the development of expertise and confidence by Aboriginal Peoples to work on Country through supporting organisations such as GLaWAC. We will continue to support this approach.</p> <p>During 2024-25 we appointed an Independent Aboriginal Delegate. In 2024-25 we will seek an Associate Director (youth) to the West Gippsland CMA Board.</p> <p>We have a focus on staff wellbeing and have a mental health program in place. Extra focus on this area will continue as we emerge from impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and support ongoing flexible work arrangements.</p> <p>The CEO participated and contributed to the DEECA run Insight and Bridging the Gap program and we will continue our support for the program (and similar) during 2024-25.</p> <p>We continue to demonstrate leadership is through our support to drive the Gippsland Environmental Agencies forum and GEA Women's Leadership Team.</p>
<p>Customer Data Protection Cybersecurity</p>	<p>We understand the challenges related to data protection and cybersecurity. We share the Minister's enthusiasm to apply the highest standards to this important area.</p> <p>We have a dedicated risk on our Strategic Risk Register concerned with the maintenance and protection of our data, records, and systems. This ensures that we continue to focus on data protection and cyber security risk.</p> <p>We have a number of controls in place but due to the changing nature of the risk we ensure that these controls are constantly reviewed and updated. To this end we have actions scheduled to take place over the next year, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking penetration testing, where our systems will be tested to ensure we are not vulnerable to attack. • Creation of a Records Management Strategy. • Continued focus on Essential 8 compliance. • Implementation of managed security on mobile devices.

2 Planned Programs and Services

2.1 Key Business Activities and Priorities

Regional Catchment Strategy

The West Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) is the blueprint for catchment and natural resource management in the West Gippsland region. This document sets out the vision, objectives and high priority actions for implementation. The first RCS was prepared by the West Gippsland Catchment and Land Protection Board (now West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority) and released in June 1997. During 2003, the RCS was reviewed and updated and then endorsed by both State and Federal Governments in July 2004. The RCS was again reviewed and updated in 2012 and 2021. We have aligned our planning and delivery efforts around the RCS.

The RCS was prepared in close consultation with Traditional Owners, natural resource stakeholders and emphasis was placed on engaging the wider regional community.

During 2019-20, we started the renewal of the RCS and together with regional partners, stakeholders, Traditional Owners and the community, have updated the strategy. The renewed RCS was approved by the Minister in 2022.

The renewed RCS achieves further alignment of priorities both at a regional and state level during 2022-24 and provides the framework for future Corporate Plans beyond that time for the next eight years. It is now a web-based strategy and can be viewed at [Home | West Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy \(rcs.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.rcs.vic.gov.au)

Actions and Priorities

The high-level policies and priorities contained within the RCS are further developed in action plans.

These policies and priority actions form the basis of the natural resource management programs of the CMA and other natural resource managers. As with the RCS they have had extensive community and other stakeholder input as part of their development.



*Image: Azure Kingfisher
at Dowd Morass.*

Local Area Outcomes

Through the RCS development process, the West Gippsland CMA Board and our partners have agreed on eight key Local Areas using an integrated asset-based approach.

Local Areas are the unit we have adopted for use for state investment planning

purposes. They will be used, as it is understood the community has a stronger affinity with recognisable assets, or “icons”.

They represent groupings of significant natural assets and are collections of catchment areas that encompass iconic features of the regional landscape. Key outcomes in each Local Area are outlined below.



Medium Term Outcomes Matrix for Local Areas

BC = Bunurong Coastal

C&N = Corner Inlet & Nooramunga

GCP = Gippsland Coastal Plain

GLH = Gippsland Lakes & Hinterland

GDR&F = Great Dividing Range & Foothills

L = Latrobe

S = Strzelecki

WP = Wilsons Promontory

Theme	Medium Term Outcomes; by 2027	Local Area							
		BC	CI&N	GCP	GLH	GDR&F	L	S	WP
BIODIVERSITY	An additional 5,000 ha of revegetation has been undertaken in priority locations to increase vegetation connectivity and enhance the condition of native vegetation**	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
	The area of sustained pest herbivore control has increased by 176,000 ha in priority locations**	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
	The area of sustained pest predator control has increased by 120,000 ha in priority locations**	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
	The area of sustained weed control has increased by 40,000 in priority locations**	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
	An additional 3,500 ha of habitat has been permanently protected**	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
	Strategic biolinks have been identified and incorporated into planning schemes	•				•	•	•	
CLIMATE CHANGE	Climate change adaptation and mitigation options have been incorporated into the renewal of sub-strategies and plans	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
COAST & MARINE	Environmental Reference Standards for sediment and nutrient load reduction to Ramsar sites are met		•		•				
	Increase the area of coastal saltmarsh that is protected or managed*	•	•	•	•				
COMMUNITY	Landcare and Community NRM groups have maintained the number of volunteers in the region	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
	15 community and industry partners have increased their level of participation in land, water, and biodiversity projects	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
LAND	Groundcover has been maintained within the 2000-2019 average (>90%)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
	80% of participants in best management practice programs have increased awareness of sustainable land management practices	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
	60% of participants in best management practice programs have taken action to improve their practices	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
	Measures to protect strategic agricultural and environmental assets in local planning schemes have been identified	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	

Theme	Medium Term Outcomes; by 2027	Local Area							
		BC	CI&N	GCP	GLH	GDR &F	L	S	WP
TRADITIONAL OWNERS	The number of formal partnerships agreements between Traditional Owners and NRM agencies has increased	•	•			•			•
	The number of projects / programs that incorporate and deliver on Traditional Owner objectives for Country and priorities in Country plans has increased	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
	Understanding of cultural landscapes has improved supported by the development / renewal of Country Plans	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
WATER	An additional 150km of waterways have been protected or improved*	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
	Environmental Reference Standards for sediment and nutrient load reduction to Ramsar sites are met***		•		•				
	Increase the area of wetlands protected or managed*	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
	Improve the attainment of environmental water requirements in priority systems*	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
	6 groundwater / ecological assessments are established to inform Permissible Consumptive Volumes in Groundwater Management Areas	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
	14 Flood Mitigation Infrastructure and 13 Warning Systems installed / upgraded where it is cost effective, socially and environmentally feasible	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
	5 planning schemes amended to incorporate the best available flood data	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
	Interim regional water quality targets are not exceeded (in priority waterways) across West Gippsland*	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

Footnotes

Bold shading indicates the outcome is aligned to the statewide outcomes framework, lighter shading indicates the outcome has been regionally specified.

* These outcomes will be quantified through the renewal of the West Gippsland Waterway Strategy.

** These outcomes contribute to the regional targets and priority locations established through Biodiversity 2037 and Trust for Nature's provisional targets for permanent protection on private land. Progress reporting against the outcomes will also account for RCS implementation in other priority locations informed by other regional planning processes.

*** Aligned to the Coasts and Marine water quality indicator



Image: Partner planting day with anglers at Glen Falloch station, Wirn wirndook Yeerung (Macalister River).

Significant Projects and Activities

In line with local, state and federal priorities, the following suite of projects has been developed and we hope they will be fully endorsed to be delivered in 2024-25 and beyond.

Summaries of those proposed projects relating to State and Federal Government investment are included in the table below.

The State Government projects include the projects funded through the various EC6 funding streams. These projects will commence in 2024-25 and are multi-year with a likely completion date of 30 June 2028.

The Australian Government's National Landcare Program – Regional Land Partnership Program (five years – 2024-2029) funds projects as listed in the table below.

In addition to the projects funded through the major funding programs (EC6 and NLP), following the 2021 June Flood and Storm event, West Gippsland CMA is coordinating and delivering a major waterway recovery program. The recovery program is repairing damage to existing waterway health assets, significant damage to waterways impacting the waterway health and repairs to existing riparian works. The recovery program involves over 100 sites across the region and a collaborative effort with landholders and other agencies.

Please note each project has specific outcomes and performance indicators that are part of an agreed contractual arrangement.

Details of Outcome Indicators are found in relevant contracts.

Project	Key Partners	Key Features
State funding – EC5 program 1 July 2024 – June 30 2028		
WGCMA Landcare Support <i>(non EC6 project)</i>	Yarram Yarram Landcare Network (YYLN) South Gippsland Landcare Network (SGLN) Maffra & District Landcare Network (MDLN) Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network (LCLN) Bass Coast Landcare Network (BCLN)	The Regional Landcare Support Project will provide support for the overall integrated coordination of Landcare across the region. The key deliverable for this project is to support the implementation of various state-wide Landcare initiatives. Through the initiative partnerships with the region's five Landcare networks and their 68 member Landcare groups will be reinforced.
Victorian Landcare Grants in WGCMA <i>(non EC6 project)</i>	YYLN SGLN LCLN BCLN MDLN	This project will help deliver the Victorian Landcare Program by supporting Landcare networks and Landcare groups across the region to engage in natural resource management activities that have high public benefit while delivering on Victorian government priorities.

Project	Key Partners	Key Features
Leadership and Management of WGCMA's Waterway Health program <i>(EC6project)</i>	DEECA - Water and Catchments GLaWAC BLCAC Parks Victoria Local Government (Bass Coast, Baw Baw, Wellington, Latrobe City, South Gippsland) VRFish Landcare Networks/ Groups Water Corporations (SRW, GW, SGW, MW) DEECA - Gippsland Trust for Nature Greening Australia Agriculture Victoria EPA BirdLife Australia	<p>This project will provide leadership and management of an integrated waterway health program for the West Gippsland region during 2024-2028. Through this project the West Gippsland CMA will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate all aspects of its waterway health program including planning, delivery, engagement, monitoring, reporting, evaluation and budget management. • Provide high quality and timely policy, strategy and implementation advice and support to internal and external partners and stakeholders, including DEECA (including but not limited to the VWMS) and the West Gippsland CMA Board and Statutory Planning Unit. • Deliver a new regional waterway strategy and associated monitoring, evaluation and reporting. • Proactively manage major waterway related risks including emergency response (flood, fire, Blue Green Algae, fish death), securing past investment through appropriate maintenance (waterway assets and willow management) and emerging risks (e.g. new weeds, landholder enquiries). • Provide support for Traditional Owner and community waterway priorities, including participation in citizen science and on-ground works.
WGCMA Statutory Functions - Floodplain and Waterway Protection <i>(EC6project)</i>	Baw Baw Shire Latrobe City Wellington Shire South Gippsland Shire Bass Coast Shire Environment Protection Authority Southern Rural Water Gippsland Water South Gippsland Water Melbourne Water	<p>This project delivers West Gippsland CMA's statutory responsibilities relating to Floodplain Management and Waterway Health as provided for in the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Water Act 1989,</i> • <i>Planning and Environment Act 1987,</i> • Emergency Management Manual Victoria Part 7, • Building Regulations 2018, • <i>Subdivisions Act 1988</i> and • CMA Statement of Obligations. <p>This project delivers the following key activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing Flood Advice directly to the community. • Responding to Section 55 Planning Permit referrals, Section 52 notices and Planning Scheme Amendments from Local Government. • Issuing Works on Waterways Permits or Works Licenses. • Responding to rural drainage enquiries. • Preparing for and responding to floods.

Project	Key Partners	Key Features
Environmental Water – Management and Engagement <i>(EC6 project)</i>	Victorian Environmental Water Holder DEECA GLaWAC Gippsland Water South Gippsland Water Southern Rural Water Parks Victoria Gippsland Lakes Coordinating Committee Melbourne Water	<p>This project will allow West Gippsland CMA to deliver its statutory responsibility to manage the Environmental Water Reserve and contribute to water planning and allocation processes in regulated and unregulated waterways and groundwater systems.</p> <p>It includes engagement with Traditional Owners, delivery partners, stakeholders, and the community to increase knowledge, participation, and advocacy for environmental water. Project monitoring and evaluation will also be undertaken.</p>
Sustainable Irrigation in West Gippsland CMA <i>(EC6 project)</i>	Southern Rural Water DEECA Agriculture Victoria	<p>The Sustainable Irrigation in West Gippsland project will invest in priority activities under the Lake Wellington Land and Water Management Plan (LWMP) to deliver world class irrigation extension, irrigation farm planning and on-farm support to achieve our vision:</p> <p><i>Vision: A highly productive and sustainable irrigation community that values and protects its natural and cultural assets.</i></p> <p>The program will deliver 3 projects against state priorities for the Sustainable Irrigation Program including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving resilience and adaptability of Victoria's irrigation sector to reduced water availability by providing farm planning support, irrigation extension services and on-farm irrigation incentives to ensure Gippsland's irrigators are operating with maximum water efficiency thereby making every drop in the consumptive pool a productive one. • The offsite impacts of irrigated agriculture are managed within agreed targets including a focus on managing the nutrient emissions and water quality impacts from irrigation farms on waterways and the Gippsland Lakes. This will be achieved by keeping water on-farm for productive use (e.g. via irrigation reuse systems and efficient irrigation practices). • Increased responsiveness and uptake of rural water policy across the irrigation sector by providing a modern irrigation extension program with a range of support mechanisms to ensure irrigators efficiently meet obligations but also take advantage of the scientific, technological and management practice advances available to them.

Project	Key Partners	Key Features
Protecting Pristine Headwaters of the Victorian Alps and Strzelecki Ranges <i>(EC6 project)</i>	Parks Victoria DEECA Monash University Franklin River Landcare Group Agnes River Landcare Group Albert River, Hallston Landcare Group Yinnar Landcare Group Yarram Yarram Landcare Network South Gippsland Landcare Network Maffra and Districts Landcare Network, Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network Friends of Middle Creek Greening Australia Wollangarra Wilderness Camp Gippsland Recreation Outdoors Parks Victoria Regional DEECA	<p>This project will protect and improve priority pristine headwaters in West Gippsland by maintaining willow free areas and reducing the spread of invasive willows in headwater reaches. It will include all critical planning, engagement, delivery, monitoring and evaluation needed to achieve this outcome.</p> <p>Control of willows in the Victorian Alps and Strzelecki Ranges has been a high priority throughout implementation of the West Gippsland Waterway Strategy 2014-2022. It benefits waterway condition in the immediate waterway corridor and reduces the risk of reinfestation in downstream environments. It also enables continued recreation in the Thomson and Macalister rivers, by reducing in-stream obstructions.</p>
Flagship waterway: Mid Thomson River <i>(EC6 project)</i>	Gippsland WaterSouthern Rural Water Wellington Shire Council GLaWAC Local landholders	<p>This project is a continuation of the EC4 and 5 Flagship Waterway: Mid Thomson River project (WG1617.20.278), which will encompass the reaches from Cowwarr Weir to the Rainbow Creek confluence. The project builds on the work from EC4 & 5, as West Gippsland CMA continues in the "Taking Action" phase of the Flagship project to showcase and measure largescale strategic investment towards improved waterway health. It aims to provide high quality riparian and instream continuity and habitat for native species, the preservation and enhancement of current environmental, social, and cultural values, and the management of channel erosion and future river avulsion risks. Monitoring and evaluation of project outputs and outcomes will measure the success of these works towards long-term objectives, and to communicate its achievements and learnings.</p>

Project	Key Partners	Key Features
Flagship waterway: Corner Inlet <i>(EC6 project)</i>	GLaWAC Parks Victoria DEECA TFN SGLN Agnes River Landcare Group Corner Inlet Landcare Group	The Corner Inlet EC6 flagship project will continue the work from EC5 and will continue to “take-action” by improving riparian condition and connectivity, to reduce sediment and nutrient loads to Corner Inlet, to address water quality risks to seagrass. It will contribute to the long-term vision for the Corner Inlet and tributaries Flagship Waterway through planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
Estuaries and Inlets of the Bunurong to the Mullungdung Coasts <i>(EC6 project)</i>	VRfish Regional Roads Victoria Bass Coast Shire Council South Gippsland Water Gippsland Ports, Parks Victoria Sandy Point Community Anderson Inlet Angling VFA DEECA BCLN	This project is designed to protect West Gippsland’s high value (non-Ramsar) estuaries and inlets along the Bunurong to the Mullungdung coasts. This project will protect West Gippsland CMA’s high value Intermittently Open Closed Estuaries (IOCE) and (non-Ramsar) inlets from Spartina infestations, artificial entrance openings, and other high priority risks, to support environmental, cultural, recreational and economic values. It will include all critical planning, engagement, delivery, monitoring and evaluation activities.

Project	Key Partners	Key Features
West Gippsland Our Catchments Our Communities Project <i>(EC6 project)</i>	BCLN LCLN MDLN SGLN YYLN GippsDairy Trust for Nature Greening Australia Southern Rural Water Gippsland Water South Gippsland Water GLaWAC Boon Wurrung Foundation Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation Wurundjeri Land Council DEECA Parks Victoria DEDJTR Regional Development	<p>The West Gippsland Our Catchments, Our Communities Project will implement three key projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Gippsland ICM Project – Powlett/Kugerungmome. • West Gippsland ICM Project – Tarwin. • West Gippsland Regional Partnerships. <p>The ICM approach is not new in West Gippsland and the Our Catchments, Our Communities (OCOC) funding offers the opportunity to apply the learnings from existing programs (Corner Inlet Connections, Gippsland Lakes) and expand the ICM approach to new catchments in the Tarwin, whilst continuing work in the Powlett/Kugerungmome and supporting stakeholders in Perry Providence Ponds.</p> <p>The Regional Partnerships project will build on EC4 and EC5 initiatives that have supported the establishment of our Partnerships and Engagement Framework, supported the establishment of the Gippsland Environmental Agencies (GEA) and renewal of the Catchment Partnership Agreement and nurtured our partnerships with Traditional Owners in the region.</p>
Corner Inlet Ramsar Site Coordination <i>(EC6 project)</i>	GLaWAC Parks Victoria DEECA Australian Government	<p>This project will provide funding to support West Gippsland CMA to continue to effectively fulfil its role as Corner Inlet Ramsar Site Coordinator during the EC6 period. This project will convene and chair the Corner Inlet Ramsar Site Coordinating Committee to oversee the implementation of Ramsar Site Management Plan priorities within an Annual Action Plan.</p> <p>Additionally, this project will monitor critical Components, Processes and Services (CPS) which make up the sites ecological character. This monitoring will be undertaken to satisfy Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) reporting requirements as outlined in the Ramsar Management System.</p>

Project	Key Partners	Key Features
Other statewide and project initiatives		
Maffra Weir Fishway	Southern Rural Water	<p>This project will see the completion of the final fishway design.</p> <p>The Maffra Weir Fishway will reconnect 34 km of high-quality fish habitat to migratory species, including the EPBC listed Australian grayling and recreational prized species such as Australian bass. It will also enable native fish to access a high value drought refuge within the Gippsland Lakes catchment. Provision of fish passage over Maffra Weir will overcome the biggest inhibitor in achievement of the long-term fish objectives for the lower Macalister River and realisation of the full value of the Macalister Environmental Entitlement.</p>
Lower Latrobe Wetlands Watering Infrastructure	Parks Victoria GLaWAC Wellington Shire Council	<p>This project will provide critical infrastructure for the effective management of 3,600 ha of Gippsland Lakes fringing wetlands (Sale Common, Dowd Morass, and Heart Morass). The infrastructure will contribute significantly to the long-term management objectives of these wetlands and help mitigate climate change risks to the Ramsar site. It will also significantly reduce the annual environmental water shortfall for the wetlands.</p> <p>The proposed works will greatly improve the manager's capacity to protect and improve these traditional values and achieve the objectives by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing salinity levels in Heart Morass and Dowd Morass, by allowing freshwater inflows more reliably and saltwater outflows from the wetlands. • Reduce the risk of saltwater entering Sale Common and providing a more regular water supply, thereby protecting the fresh water dependent flora and fauna to maintain or improve species diversity • Allowing greater capacity to manage wetting and drying regimes between flood years to provide conditions for reproduction and expansion of Swamp Scrub and Tall Marsh, and encourage seed and propagule dispersal, ultimately providing food and habitat for wetland dependent fauna.
GLCC: Lower Avon Fish Habitat	Gippsland Ports	<p>This project will construct and install fish habitat structures in the lower Avon River (estuary), including improvements to fishing platform surrounds to improve recreational fishing access. Before and after monitoring activities targeted at fish species and abundance will also be completed.</p> <p>Large structural habitat is typically degraded, reduced or missing in many of the large tributaries of the Gippsland Lakes. The reintroduction of large wood structure or snags has been demonstrated to provide beneficial habits for many native species of estuarine fish.</p>

Project	Key Partners	Key Features
GLCC: Shoreline Protection Vegetation Trial	Greening Australia GLaWAC	<p>Salinisation and wave actions have caused the loss of large Phragmites reedbeds within Lake Wellington, resulting in eroding shorelines and liberation of sediments bound nutrients. This contributes to water quality risks within the Gippsland Lakes and the continual loss of submerged vegetation within Lake Wellington.</p> <p>The project will undertake a trial using temporary wave protection structures and planting of indigenous salt-tolerant plant species to re-establish more than 300 m of vegetated shoreline that is resistant to further degradation. The emergent vegetation will also provide habitat for valuable game fish species such as Black bream, Australian bass, and Estuary perch. Monitoring will provide evidence of outcomes. The project is based off similar trials and technical designs within the Gippsland Lakes and other systems.</p>
GLCC: Dirty Rivers	Landcare Landholders GLaWAC	<p>This project will see instream and riparian works undertaken in priority reaches to reduce the risk of sediment/nutrient liberation or transportation to the Gippsland Lakes. Works will include riparian protection and enhancement to reduce bank erosion, a key contributor to sediment liberation.</p>
GLCC: Room to Move	Trust for Nature GLaWAC Landholders	<p>The preservation and enhancement of freshwater wetlands in the face of climate change is a high priority for natural resource managers, particularly in response to rising sea levels and salinity in the wetlands closer to the Gippsland Lakes embayment's and river estuaries. The fringing wetlands along the lower Thomson/Macalister and Latrobe River reaches were highlighted as priority areas for waterbird and amphibian habitat (ARI, 2018). Over the decades, much work has been done to protect wetlands within these areas but much more can and needs to be done.</p> <p>With over 142 wetlands (287 ha) in the project area yet to receive protection works from the West Gippsland CMA, there are a significant number of opportunities to protect and restore priority wetland habitats.</p> <p>The project area sits within the Gippsland Lakes fringing wetlands project study area (ARI, 2018), and targets wetlands that are regularly inundated by riverine flooding events (i.e. 1 in 5 year events or less). West Gippsland CMA, in partnership with GLaWAC, Greening Australia, and Trust for Nature will work with landholders to investigate, fence, control weeds, and plant native species to protect and enhance these high value wetlands.</p>

Project	Key Partners	Key Features
GLCC: Latrobe Wetlands Flora and Fauna Surveys	BirdLife Australia	<p>This project will enhance existing Ramsar monitoring programs by extending bird monitoring to sites adjacent to the Gippsland Lakes Ramsar site (along the lower Latrobe River and Lake Coleman) and revisiting existing vegetation monitoring from 2015 to assess change in condition. This will inform ongoing adaptive management of the sites and inform fringing wetlands condition assessments.</p> <p>Expansion of the Ramsar bird monitoring will include sites at: Heart Morass (x3), Dowd Morass (x2), Lake Coleman (x2), lower Latrobe (x4). Surveys will be conducted by BirdLife Australia in conjunction with existing bird monitoring in the Ramsar program. Surveys will be conducted monthly with an assessment of data delivered every six months.</p> <p>Flora surveys will involve revisiting quadrats surveyed within Sale Common, Heart Morass, and Dowd Morass in 2015.</p>
Australian Government Funding – National Landcare Program		
Regional Capacity Services	Landcare Industry Local and State Government agencies Traditional Owners Conservation organisations	Key components – <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain the currency of natural resource management planning and the prioritisation of management actions. 2. Support the Community, including Landcare, Aboriginal Communities, and industry to participate in the delivery of projects. 3. Undertake communications. 4. Coordinate delivery of projects and MERI. 5. Develop Project Designs and Project Proposals. 6. Maintain a productive, cooperative and ongoing relationship with the Departments.
Corner Inlet Connections	Parks Victoria SGLN YYLN GLaWAC Trust for Nature Greening Australia	<p>This project will continue the highly regarded Corner Inlet Connections Project. Corner Inlet Connections is a long-term project that aims to maintain the ecological character of the Corner Inlet Ramsar site by addressing priority threats to critical components, processes and services.</p> <p>It will use an integrated catchment management approach with key stakeholders to reduce sediment loads from high priority catchments, control Spartina, address threats to seagrass from poor water quality, reduce predation of migratory and beach nesting birds by foxes and the protection of critical saltmarsh habitat and provide work on country opportunities for GLaWAC.</p>

Project	Key Partners	Key Features
Cross Regional Victorian Alpine Peatland Protection Program - West Gippsland	Parks Victoria East Gippsland CMA North East CMA GLaWAC	<p>This is a cross regional project, including East Gippsland CMA and North East CMA, to protect and enhance the EPBC Listed vegetation community - Alpine Peatlands and Associated Fens.</p> <p>Delivered primarily on Parks Victoria land, the project will reduce threats such as fire, deer and horses on the Alpine Peatlands.</p> <p>We will support North East CMA who are the project lead.</p>
Regional Agricultural Landcare Facilitator	BCLN LCLN MDLN SGLN YYLN Southern Farming Systems Dairy Australia GippsDairy AusVeg DEDJTR	<p>This project will work with the dairy, meat/livestock, mixed cropping and horticulture sectors across the region, focusing on issues such as nutrient management, soil health, soil carbon and on-farm biodiversity protection. The intended outcome is to increase awareness and adoption of land management practices that improve and protect the condition of soil, biodiversity and vegetation on farms in West Gippsland.</p>
Threatened Species in West Gippsland	DEECA Parks Victoria BirdLife Australia BLCAC	<p>This project will focus on the protection and monitoring of Hooded Plovers throughout West Gippsland. The project will undertake targeted fox control work to protect Hooded Plovers.</p>

Key Business Partnerships

Our approach to improving catchment health is founded on mutual and meaningful partnerships which will continue through 2024-25 and beyond.

In our 27th year, and as we continued our recovery from flood and the impacts of COVID-19, partnerships and relationships are more important than ever. Having long-term relationships with key entities in the region has proven how valuable the regional and local approach to catchment management is. COVID-19 has driven innovative approaches to business, and we see opportunities and efficiencies ahead. Improvements in technology have the potential to allow some work to be done more efficiently and offers the chance to rethink how we do business with some partners. We will continue to explore this during 2024-25.

Monitoring and evaluating our partnerships help us increase our efforts to understand key partnerships and their health enabling us to establish a baseline of partnership health. This has helped improve our planning of projects and initiatives. Underpinning our partnership and engagement effort is a Community Engagement and Partnerships Framework (CE&PF). We will continue to refine this as a means of continuously improving our engagement work.

Community engagement and partnerships are a key reason for the existence of CMAs and are pivotal in achieving NRM outcomes and the delivery of the RCS and other key strategies.

The CE&PF is guided by State Government guidelines and is a statutory requirement through the Victorian CaLP Act however the regional approach and actions are defined by our Strategic Plan.

Consistent with the Victorian Community Engagement and Partnership Framework developed through Our Catchments, Our Communities (2016), the principles on which we will base our approach are:

- ▶ We will embed community engagement and build partnerships in all that we do.
- ▶ We will provide meaningful opportunities for our communities and partners to contribute to strategies and initiatives.
- ▶ Our community and partnership approach will be well planned, tailored, targeted and evaluated.
- ▶ We will collaborate with our communities and partners transparently, respectfully and establish clear roles and expectations.

Examples of key partnerships opportunities include:

- Investors including government and private sector as well as philanthropic entities.
- NRM agencies and authorities.
- Planning agencies and authorities.
- Aboriginal groups and communities.
- Local government.
- Non-government organisations and recreational users of waterways.
- Sustainability groups.
- Climate change / low carbon future networks.
- Landcare networks.
- NGOs and the philanthropic sector.
- Research community.
- Farming community, agricultural industry and agribusiness sector.
- Forestry sector.
- Power and extractive resources industry.



Image: Pilefields on the banks of the Wirn wirndook Yeerung (Macalister River).

3 Future Challenges and Opportunities

3.1 Key Business Challenges and Opportunities

Our region is an accessible and diverse region with abundant natural resources and passionate, capable people. There are a myriad of land use and water management challenges which are changing in response to the demand for the region's resources. These are likely to be amplified in the face of climate change and variability. Within this context there are a range of trends and issues emerging that are likely to impact catchment management in the region over the next three to five years.

The Board regularly allocates time to identify and track emerging issues and challenges in the region. In doing so, we can focus our efforts consistent with our Strategic Plan and government policy.

Ongoing work verifies several areas we have identified through previous planning and review work. These remain on our radar and are summarised in the table below.

The key high-level challenges and opportunities for the West Gippsland region are:

- Supporting the transition of the Latrobe Valley away from carbon intense industries and the impact this may have on waterways and catchments.
- Working with Traditional Owners and assisting in their Self Determination journey.
- Adapting to ongoing industry expansion and transition will impact our region's demand on natural resources and assets. Ensuring the environmental water needs of our waterways are met and sustained.
- Understanding and addressing the impact of climate change and resultant weather variability on our waterways and catchments.
- Supporting and building on the momentum achieved in creating a regional partnership and collaborative approach to Integrated Catchment Management in Gippsland.
- Understanding and working with key players to assist communities adjust to changes in timber and forest policy. Planning for the impact it may have on waterways and catchments.

Issue	Status (Historic / Current / Emerging)	CMA Focus (Direct / Influence / Watching Brief)
Policy and funding		
The endorsed Victorian Waterways Management Strategy has established the policy for waterway management. We will plan and deliver within this policy framework as well as the Water for Victoria and Water is Life policy platform. We will continue to deliver work targeted by the VWMS.	C	D
The Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy was released in April 2016 and the Victorian Drainage Strategy was delivered in 2018-19. These strategies have helped clarify the role of CMAs in emergency response, floodplain management and rural drainage. We will work with partners to assist in the delivery of the VFMS.	C	D

Issue	Status (Historic / Current / Emerging)	CMA Focus (Direct / Influence / Watching Brief)
The Australian Government's National Landcare Program III has commenced. We are leading a regional approach to deliver on this phase of the Australian government's policy direction.	C	D
Understanding the role of CMAs play in delivering on <i>Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037</i> . Helping partners in the planning and delivery of key initiatives is an opportunity for us.	C	I
We will continue to seek opportunities to influence planning around climate change through the West Gippsland Region NRM Climate Change Strategy.	C	I
Opportunities exist for us to help government implement the <i>Marine and Coast and Act</i> and the associated Strategic Plan.	C / E	I
Regional initiatives		
The implementation of the Regional Catchment Strategy, West Gippsland Waterway Strategy and the Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Plan as well as the Gippsland Lakes Coordinating Committee Priorities Plan are having a significant influence on our planning and delivery efforts.	H	D
The Lake Wellington Land and Water Management Plan developed in collaboration with key stakeholders and community provides a 10-year strategic framework to achieve a highly productive and sustainable irrigation community that values and protects its natural and cultural assets.	C	D
Delivery of the Regional Landcare Plan so that it meets community expectations.	H	I
The Victorian Waterways Management Strategy continues to be implemented during 2024-25 and the WGCMA will support and contribute where required to its renewal to be led by DEECA.	C	D
Attempting to maximise integration opportunities and ensuring we consider and remain aware of new strategies and plans that have emerged (e.g. Gippsland Regional Plan, Low Carbon Future and Food Plan, Mine Rehabilitation, Latrobe Valley and Gippsland Transition Plan).	C / E	I
Understanding the impacts on water resources and quality resulting from the closures of coal mines in the Latrobe Valley.	C	I
Understanding and helping address environmental legacy issues.	E	WB
Demographics and community		
Continued change in demographics and community may see more absentee farmers, ageing landowners and urban-based farmers. The residual impact of COVID and desire of people to move out of or back to cities will need to be monitored and understood.	E	WB
Understanding transition of the Latrobe Valley workforce as power generators close and its impact on the community.	C	WB

Issue	Status (Historic / Current / Emerging)	CMA Focus (Direct / Influence / Watching Brief)
Understanding and addressing reasons why some parts of our region do not have strong community uptake and adoption of important programs and initiatives.	C	I
There is some uncertainty relating to the recruitment and retention of volunteers. The changing demographics of an ageing population may produce more, or fewer, volunteers and our region needs to meet these recruitment and retention challenges in the coming years. This may be amplified in light of the legacy created by COVID-19. The role of Landcare, Waterwatch, citizen science and volunteerism needs to be understood in this context.	E	WB
There continues to be an increase in demand and expectations from individuals and communities wanting to undertake catchment and waterway improvement works. Having sufficient funding to support this demand is a challenge.	C	I
The rise of social and electronic media and the role it plays in shaping community opinion and action needs to be understood as an operating challenge. It also presents an opportunity to reach new and diverse audiences.	C	I
An increase in corporatisation in some areas of the region will require formation of new relationships and partnerships to achieve RCS objectives.	C	D
Macro environment issues		
Seeking a low carbon growth future could have an ongoing impact on the region. This includes transition to renewable energies such as wind and solar as well as the infrastructure that supports it.	E	WB
Expansion of carbon offsets and new initiatives e.g. teal and blue carbon as well as accounting for nature and the opportunities associated with these.	E	WB
The impact of mine closures will create challenges in achieving a rehabilitation effort that ensures environmental assets (Gippsland Lakes and waterways) are protected in the long term.	C	I
Climate change and variability will increasingly need to be considered in our NRM planning and in impact scenario planning, particularly in relation to coastal inundation and impact on waterways and catchments from extreme weather events. The variable rainfall regime may have an impact on our priorities as well as balancing community expectations.	C	D
Changing attitudes to onshore natural gas and brown coal extraction may be a factor in NRM planning in the region.	C	WB
The increased frequency of intense rainfall events has increased the risk of land salinisation, erosion and nutrient loads entering waterways and wetlands.	C	D
Any return to average or above average rainfall will see an increase in community interest in floodplain and drainage issues.	E	WB

Issue	Status (Historic / Current / Emerging)	CMA Focus (Direct / Influence / Watching Brief)
The continuation of long-term below average rainfall will see increased pressure on water resources and potential pressure placed on Environmental Water Reserves and likely estuary closures in coastal areas.	C	I
Managing the real and potential impacts of drought, flood and fire in the region including our role in recovery efforts.	E	WB
Alternative energy industries may be implemented in volume during this period.	E	WB
Changes in timber harvesting policy and the observation that many existing plantations are approaching maturity for harvesting. Creation of new and regrowth plantations in the region may have a range of potential impacts as will the transition of timber harvesting regimes in upper catchments.	C	WB
State Government Policy changes to native timber harvesting may mean changes to land use and management in on our region.	E	WB
Issues relating to groundwater use, bores and changes in irrigation practices from flood to spray may have an impact on the region.	C	D
Understanding the impact of upper catchment risks and threats such as fire and flood need to be considered in our broader planning efforts.	C	WB
Biodiversity loss and its potential impacts upon ecosystem processes.	C	WB
Management of invasive plants and animals across the region, particularly following fire and floods.	H	I
Organisation		
Over the coming five years retaining, growing and supporting our capability will be an important factor in achieving results as will be support for our NRM partners such as Landcare and other NGOs.	C	D
Managing risks related to cybersecurity and data management (as well as other technological changes such as the use of AI).	E	D
Ensuring coordinated effort and policy alignment between planning agencies and authorities.	C	I
Government elections may increase the need to nurture new relationships to achieve strategic outcomes.	H	I
Ongoing commitment to resource and deliver on our Diversity and Inclusion Plan as well as other social policy areas expected by government.	E	D
Increasing compliance and assurance requirements and expectations required by government.	E	D

3.2 Key Business Risks and Proposed Mitigation Actions

The Authority has established a Risk Management Framework that allows it to strategically and systematically manage its key business risks. The Framework ensures that key risks are effectively identified and responded to in an appropriate manner based on the nature of the risk, our ability to accept or manage the risk, resources available and our culture.

On a quarterly basis, the Executive Management Team (EMT) and Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) review the Strategic Risk Register to ensure that:

- Strategic Risks are identified and assessed.
- The effectiveness of existing controls is evaluated.
- Residual risk is assessed.
- Risk treatment options are considered.
- Actions are determined and prioritised.
- Action plans are implemented.

The Board considers and reviews the EMT and ARC work, specifically the CMAs business risks and effectiveness of controls. In addition, the Board have reviewed the Authority's strategic risks and the Authority's risk appetite and tolerance, with the intention to improve understanding and application of these elements into the risk management framework and associated procedures.

The Currently Endorsed Risk Appetite is:

West Gippsland CMA will carry out activities that minimise and mitigate risk to the organisation while achieving organisational goals, and will avoid activities that result in undue risk. We will not accept any unmitigated risks that may result in:

- Reputation damage;
- Fraud and corruption;
- Significant financial loss or exposure;
- Major breakdowns in information systems or information integrity;
- Significant incidents of regulatory non-compliance; and
- Potential risk of injury to staff and other stakeholders.

West Gippsland CMA is willing to accept some risk in relation to activities that:

- Build collaborative and innovative partnerships in achieving its strategic objectives,
- Support, retain and invest in our workforce,
- Encourage innovative practices in our service and project delivery.

The key risks are identified below and are monitored by the Executive Management Team, the Audit and Risk Committee and the Board on a regular basis. Control and

mitigation efforts are tested through our program of internal audits conducted by our internal auditors.

Risk	Mitigation Measure / Control
Failure to attract and retain a skilled and competent workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management focus on maintenance of positive workplace culture, supported by Lead – Organisational Development role. • Supportive organisational values and culture. • Annual Performance Management Systems (Reward and Recognition). • Annual/Half-year performance reviews and future year work plans. • Competitive remunerations and conditions within Enterprise Agreement. • Career Development opportunities (Higher duties, Secondments, Training, Leadership & Coaching). • Health and Wellbeing programs and events. • Thorough and personal employment selection process. • Employee Assistance Program (EAP). • Wellbeing 'Pulse' Surveys. • People Matter Survey. • Succession Planning. • Flexible working arrangements. • Comprehensive Induction process. • Performance Management process, if required. • Feedback opportunities for staff. • Staff forum and team meetings. • Social Events (end-of-year and mid-year events, quizzes etc). • Close working relationships with learning institutes, agencies and other CMAs. • Staff engagement in Strategic Plan renewal.
Failure to maintain a safe and healthy workplace and safe systems of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OH&S training for staff at induction and bi-annual refresher. • OH&S manual, policies and procedures, on a regular review cycle. • Appropriate culture embracing OH&S. • Reporting and review mechanisms for hazards, incidents and near misses. • OH&S KPI's reviewed as a standing agenda item on EMT and Board agenda. • OH&S Committee (Quarterly meetings). • SWMS completed for specific jobs and high-risk tasks. • SWMS guidance notes. • Review of contractor's OH&S processes and worksite inspections. • Annual workplace inspections. • Regular staff communications on updates to OH&S policies and procedures, emerging risks and other relevant information. • OH&S inductions for staff and on-ground works contractors. • Chemical handling, storage and record keeping procedures. • 2-year OH&S rolling action plan. • Participation in state CMA OH&S forum. • Evacuation Drills. • First Aid representatives and trained OH&S representatives at each office. • Critical Incident Response Plan. • Provision of appropriate PPE. • Regular direct reporting to Board. • Easy to access and use reporting tools (PowerApps).

Risk	Mitigation Measure / Control
Failure to maintain adequate governance in achieving strategic objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate reporting incorporating management review procedures. • 5-year Strategic Plan, including annual action plan reporting from management. • Annual Corporate Plan. • Clear, documented processes for governance. • Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for Board, management and staff, supported by Board Charter and position descriptions. • Direct communication lines between Chair and CEO. • Meeting evaluation. • Regular, scheduled review of charters, frameworks, policies and procedures with updates communicated to staff. • Annual Board review. • Induction and training program for Board members (incl DEECA governance induction). • Processes independently reviewed and reported to Committee and Boards. • Annual Board reporting schedule. • Annual strategic planning session. • Annual Board Action Plan. • Board Development Plan. • Board Committees (Corporate, Audit & Risk and Remuneration) to provide further oversight. • Independent Audit & Risk Committee to review risk controls. • Annual declaration of interests by Board (and KMP) to check for conflicts of interest that may impact ability to appropriately govern.
Failure to plan for and manage the Authority's finances and maintain financial stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective budgeting and forecasting process and controls. • Internal audit schedule encompassing financial controls. • Relationship building, engagement and management of investors. • Asset Management, Financial Management & Code of Practice Frameworks. • Comprehensive Policies and Procedures (for example, Financial, Fraud & Corruption, Asset, Purchasing, etc.). • Staff training and resources. • Cash Flow Management and forecasting. • Bi-monthly financial reporting to the Board. • Collaboration with other CMAs for work sharing and bids for funding. • Quarterly project financial reviews by Executive Managers. • Reporting schedule includes long-term funding, analysis, tracking and reporting to both management and Board. • Controls, workflows and security in-built into financial system. • Input in DEECA funding model development. • Alignment with other CMA's in developing funding bids. • Participation in Investor Workshops. • Project Managers Forum. • Project Management Framework. • Continual monitoring of opportunities for additional investors. <p><i>continued next page ...</i></p>

Risk	Mitigation Measure / Control
Failure to plan for and manage the Authority's finances and maintain financial stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active monitoring of Government Policy in NRM and Environment. • Segregation of duties. • Conflict of interest declarations for staff and annual KMP private interests' declarations. • Insurance policies. • Regular update and review of asset register with physical stocktakes undertaken biennially. • Regular update and review of the Financial Delegation Register. • Budget Modelling and discussion with Board. • Temporary role to manage the upcoming NLP transition and help support business development role to access other investment streams in place.
Failure to maintain and protect data, records and systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyber Security insurance policy. • Monitoring and detection software. • Disaster recovery plan with annual testing. • Nightly back-ups/off site storage. • Outsourced IT support. • IT hardware replacement program. • Regular review of IT system. • Uninterruptable Power Supply. • Multi-factor authentication. • Annual Review of compliance and attestation of VPDS standards. • Internal Audit of systems and improvements from recommendations. • IT network security procedures and process. • Cyber Incident Response Plan. • IT strategies, frameworks, policies and procedures. • Access restrictions built into SharePoint for sensitive information. • Firewalls. • Staff and Board training on data protection requirements and responsibilities. • Annual data protection self-assessment. • Security controls built into Financial System to restrict access to sensitive information, or information not required to perform their duties. • Software updating and patching. • Infrastructure hosted on public cloud. • Annual assessments against the Victorian Government Cyber Maturity Benchmarks.

Risk	Mitigation Measure / Control
Failure to prepare, plan and respond to environmental and climate risk and events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental change scenario planning in key strategies (RCS, RWS, EWMPS). • Close relationships with applicable agencies and strategic alliances. • Monitoring processes. • Continual review of models and research programs to ensure information is up-to-date, and to build in relevancy plans. • Participation in appropriate forums and initiatives to gain knowledge and build relationships. • Plans for the event of a major event – Business Continuity, Critical Incident, Disaster Recovery with regular review schedule. • Mock incident drills. • Post-event reviews. • Participation in interagency response groups – flood recovery, Yallourn mine. • Insurance coverage.
Failure to satisfactorily deliver service delivery outputs and meet contractual requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure correct staff expertise and skills via the recruitment process and provision of ongoing staff training. • Continual monitoring and evaluation procedures. • Gathering appropriate scientific knowledge through Flow Studies and other research. • Working with partners to ensure governance systems are in place. • Periodic review program with VEWH. • Communications based on season's needs. • Adhering to the seasonal watering statement issues by the VEWH. • Project Management Reporting. • Incorporation of Service Level Agreements and KPI's for contractors used in projects. • Project brief defining outcome and expectation. • Comprehensive management of contractors and consultants. • Quarterly project reviews undertaken by Executive Managers. • Project Management framework, policy and procedures. • Project Manager's Forum for sharing of knowledge and skills between staff. • Sector alliance resource and information sharing. • Sector alliance resource and information sharing, including planning with other CMAs through Vic Catchments and CEO's group. • Reports to funders in line with contractual obligation. • Processes to ensure information, systems, maps and data is up-to-date and relevant. • Pre-advisory consultation with the community. • Referral processes and maintenance of good relationships with other relevant stakeholders for statutory flood advice. • Involvement in council's update to their Planning Schemes. • Regional Floodplain Management Strategy, with program to implement annual actions. • Articulation of CMA roles and responsibilities to local government and community in relation to floodplains, costs and drainage. • OH&S Risk Assessment of accessible legacy assets.

Risk	Mitigation Measure / Control
Failure to comply with legislative, statutory and ministerial requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register of Delegations, embedded into systems. • Compliance Framework and annual register. • Staff training. • Information and resource sharing within CMA conglomerate on compliance matters. • Internal audit program, encompassing reviews on legislative compliance requirements. • Annual reporting to Board on Corporate and Legislative compliance. • Audit & Risk Committee oversight of compliance matters. • Annual review of FMCF compliance, including attestation to Department Secretary. Reviewed by ARC annually, with 3-yearly external reviews undertaken. • Compliance report and review of issues undertaken at fortnightly EMT meetings. • Policies and Procedures. • Dedicated resources internally to ensure compliance against requirements (for example, Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Officer, Executive Manager – Corporate Services, Lead – Organisational Development, etc.). • Outsourcing, as required if knowledge is not available internally. • Training and inspections as required – Cultural Heritage, OH&S, etc., to ensure Authority is meeting compliance requirements.
Failure to develop and maintain a positive relationship with community, partners and other stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frameworks, charters, policies and procedures governing Community Engagement and Aboriginal Partnerships. • Utilisation of Engagement Networks and well established partner/ stakeholder relationships. • Use of media to communicate the Authority's goals and programs. • Communications and Marketing Policy. • Dedicated Partnerships and Engagement Team and Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Officer. • Regular reviews of Community Engagement and Partnerships. • Tracking and monitoring of engagement and partnerships. • Staff training and support to increase awareness and skills. • Communication and Engagement Planning incorporated into project planning process. • Structure, processes and culture embracing relationship building with Community and Traditional Owner groups. • Processes in place to work with Traditional Owner groups to protect culture and history. • In-house Cultural Heritage training (in conjunction with Traditional Owners) for all staff. • Long term tenure of staff enabling strong networks and relationships. • Support for Vic Catchments and GEA.

Governance Performance

Performance targets and other measures by which we may be judged in relation to business objectives.

The specific projects that we undertake will be finalised through the State and Federal Government investment processes. These will be lodged in line with the guidelines issued. When these have been endorsed by government, we will develop an annual action plan.

To ensure we can report to the Minister against our governance requirements, we have included key performance indicators in this plan which will complement the outcomes required in our investment plans. These are detailed below and if necessary, will be reported on through the 2024-25 Annual Report.

Performance Area	Performance target	Achievement commentary to be depicted in 2023-24 Annual Report
Business management and governance	Submit annually, a Board performance assessment report according to any guidelines issued.	State if the report complied with any guidelines issued. OR Explain the reason/s if the report was not compliant with any guidelines issued.
	A risk management strategy / plan approved by the Board and being implemented.	State if the strategy / plan is approved by the Board and is being implemented. OR Explain the reason/s if a strategy / plan is not approved by the Board and being implemented.
	One hundred per cent of our policies reviewed and approved by the Board every three financial years.	State the percentage of policies reviewed and approved by the Board during the prior three financial years. OR If less than 100 per cent, state the percentage and explain the reasons why the policies were not reviewed and approved by the Board in the prior three financial years.
	Full compliance with all applicable Standing Directions under the Financial Management Compliance Framework Checklist.	State if full compliance was or was not achieved. OR If less than 100 per cent, explain the reason/s full compliance was not achieved.

Performance Area	Performance target	Achievement commentary to be depicted in 2023-24 Annual Report
Regional planning and coordination	A Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) approved by the Minister.	<i>Describe the status of the RCS at the end of the last financial year.</i>
	A Regional Waterways Strategy approved by the Minister.	<i>Describe the status of the strategy at the end of the last financial year.</i>
	A Regional Floodplain Strategy approved by the Board.	<i>Describe the status of the strategy at the end of the last financial year.</i>
	Land and Water Management Plans (LWMP) in designated irrigation areas (or equivalent) approved by the Board.	<i>Describe the status of LWMP at the end of the last financial year.</i>
	A Stakeholder and Community Engagement Framework / Plan approved by the Board.	<i>Describe the status of the framework / plan at the end of the last financial year.</i> OR <i>Explain the reason/s if a framework / plan was not approved and being implemented.</i>
	A Regional Landcare Support Plan approved by the Board.	<i>Describe the status of the plan at the end of the last financial year.</i> OR <i>Explain the reason/s if a plan was not approved.</i>
Regional delivery	Progress with implementation of the RCS (and any major sub-strategies) is reviewed by the Board annually.	<i>State if the implementation program was reviewed by the Board.</i> OR <i>Explain the reason/s if the implementation program was not reviewed by the Board.</i>
	Projects / activities to implement the RCS are delivered and reported according to associated funding agreements.	<i>State if the projects / activities are being delivered and reported according to associated funding agreements.</i> OR <i>Explain the reason/s if the projects / activities are not being delivered and reported according to the funding agreements.</i>
	Projects / activities to implement the Regional Waterways Strategy and the Regional Floodplain Management Strategy delivered and reported according to associated funding agreements.	<i>State if the projects / activities are being implemented and reported according to associated funding agreements.</i> OR <i>Explain the reason/s if the projects / activities are not being delivered and reported according to the funding agreements.</i>
	Projects / activities to implement LWMP are delivered and reported according to associated funding agreements.	<i>State if the projects / activities are being implemented and reported according to associated funding agreements.</i> OR <i>Explain the reason/s if the projects / activities are not being delivered and reported according to the funding agreements.</i>

Performance Area	Performance target	Achievement commentary to be depicted in 2023-24 Annual Report
Statutory functions under part 10 of the Water Act	Ninety per cent of statutory requirements (permits, referrals, advice and licences) associated with waterway and floodplain management are responded to within the prescribed period.	State the percentage of responses that were within the prescribed period. OR Summarise the reason/s why the percentage of responses within the prescribed period was less than 90 per cent. AND Identify if waterways and / or floodplain related responses were affected.
Statutory functions under part 11 of the Water Act	Ninety per cent of statutory requirements (permits, referrals, advice and licences) associated irrigation management are responded to within the prescribed period.	State the percentage of responses that were within the prescribed period. OR Summarise the reason/s why the percentage of responses within the prescribed period was less than 90 per cent.



Image: By the banks of the Carran Carran (Thomson River) Image: Iryna Mac Millan.



*Image: Bennisson Creek,
Corner Inlet.*

4 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

4.1 Financial Statements

We rely on grant funding from both State and Federal Governments to meet our corporate objectives. Approximately 80% grant funding is provided by the state government with 20% from the Australian Government.

State Government funding includes an allocation to cover corporate costs. This is supplemented by an allocation of 10% from project funding to cover the full costs of corporate administration assurance measures and compliance. When applicable, the disaster funding contribution is capped at 5%.

The budget figures in this Corporate Plan are based on the principle outlined above and are conservatively framed based on the indicative allocations from the State and Australian Governments.

The tables in the plan are based on current information received from investors for the 2024-25 financial year.

These statements have been prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards.

4.2 Accounting Policies Adopted

All accounting policies adopted are consistent with the *Financial Management Act 1994*. Significant accounting policies adopted for this Corporate Plan are consistent with those adopted in our annual reporting. Our annual reports can be downloaded from [our website](#).

4.3 Project Costings Principles

We use project costings principles consistent with the *Financial Management Act 1994* and the *Standing Directions 2018* under the *Financial Management Act 1994*.

4.4 Estimated Capital Expenditure

The capital budget has been developed by assessing our capital needs over the next three years. IT Assets with a value greater than \$200 and other assets with a value greater than \$1,000, are included in this budget.

A summary of capital expenditure over the next three years is as follows:

Asset Class	\$'000		
	2024-25 \$	2025-26 \$	2026-27 \$
Information Technology	82	100	43
Office Equipment and Furniture	22	2	2
Motor Vehicles	321	241	190
Plant and Equipment	4	2	5
Total	428	345	240

4.5 Statement of Assumptions Underpinning Financial Statements

In preparing the financial statements, assumptions and judgements have been made based on the information available at that time. These assumptions and judgements are subject to considerable uncertainty. The following assumptions have been made:

- there will be no significant changes to government policy and legislation regarding catchment management authorities' roles and responsibilities
- there will be no further significant changes to the underlying drivers of the economy e.g. interest rates, CPI, GDP
- revenue estimates are based on known funding at the time of preparation of the financial statements. History, extreme

weather events, and the project-based nature of catchment management authorities means these estimates are subject to, and likely to change.

4.6 Other Planned Expenditure

No other planned expenditure is forecast to occur, other than what is presented in the financial statements.

4.7 Proposed Expenses Related to Depreciation, Amortisation and Movement in Classes of Provision

There are no proposed expenses relating to movement, depreciation or amortisation of provisions.

4.8 Planned CMA and Regional Programs for the 2024-25 Financial Year

Programs	\$'000			Total
	State	C'with	Other	
CMA Corporate and Statutory Operations				
Board	246	-	-	246
Chief Executive Officer & Support	422	-	-	422
Corporate Support	-	-	903	903
Statutory Operations	680	-	461	1,141
<i>Sub-total</i>	1,348	-	1,364	2,712
CMA VIF Priority Landscape Areas				
Regional	4,111	1,900	-	6,011
Bunurong Coastal	325	300	-	625
Corner Inlet Nooramunga	790	600	-	1,390
Gippsland Lakes & Hinterland	4,408	-	-	4,408
Victorian Alps	-	-	-	-
<i>Sub-total</i>	9,634	2,800	-	12,434
Total Expected Program Income	10,982	2,800	1,364	15,146

4.9 Operating Statement

\$'000			
Operating Statement	Plan 2024-25	Forecast 2025-26	Forecast 2026-27
Revenue			
Local			
Interest	832	798	763
Other	532	532	532
Grants			
State	10,982	9,840	16,049
Commonwealth	2,800	2,350	2,350
<i>Total revenue</i>	15,146	13,520	19,694
Expenditure			
Corporate			
Operations	2,186	2,218	2,232
Depreciation	526	494	480
Strategic programs			
Regional	6,519	5,715	6,717
Bunurong Coastal	678	594	906
Corner Inlet Nooramunga	1,508	1,321	2,016
Gippsland Lakes & Hinterland	4,780	4,191	8,392
Victorian Alps	-	-	-
<i>Total expenditure</i>	16,197	14,533	20,743
Operating surplus/(deficit)	(1,051)	(1,013)	(1,049)

4.10 Cash Flow Statement

\$'000			
Cash Flow Statement	Plan 2024-25	Forecast 2025-26	Forecast 2026-27
Opening Cash Position	22,194	21,276	20,345
Cash Receipts			
Local			
Interest	832	797	763
Other	532	532	532
Grants			
State	11,017	9,773	8,281
Commonwealth	2,800	2,350	2,350
Other	-	-	-
<i>Total cash received</i>	15,181	13,452	11,926
Cash payments			
Corporate and programs	15,671	14,038	20,263
Capital Expenditure	428	345	240
Other			
<i>Total cash payments</i>	16,099	14,383	20,503
Net cash changes	(918)	(931)	(8,577)
Closing cash position	21,276	20,345	11,768

4.11 Balance Sheet

\$'000			
Balance Sheet	Plan 2024-25	Forecast 2025-26	Forecast 2026-27
Assets			
Current			
Cash	21,276	20,345	11,768
Investments	-	-	-
Receivables	105	105	105
Prepayments	100	100	100
<i>Total current assets</i>	21,481	20,550	11,973
Non-current			
Fixed assets	1,805	1,655	1,415
Receivables	4	4	4
RoU Buildings	716	427	918
<i>Total non-current assets</i>	2,525	2,086	2,337
Total Assets	24,006	22,636	14,310
Liabilities			
Current			
Creditors & accruals	7,963	7,923	135
Provisions	1,400	1,400	1,400
RoU Lease Liability	272	272	272
<i>Total current liabilities</i>	9,635	9,595	1,807
Non-current			
Provisions	100	100	100
RoU Lease Liability	511	194	705
<i>Total non-current liabilities</i>	611	294	805
Total Liabilities	10,246	9,889	2,612
Net Assets	13,760	12,747	11,698
Equity			
Contributed capital	8,362	8,362	8,362
Accumulated funds	349	349	349
Reserves	6,100	5,049	4,036
Retained Earnings- Current Year	(1,051)	(1,013)	(1,049)
Net Equities	13,760	12,747	11,698

4.12 Cost Recovery

Other than Freedom of Information requests, we do not envisage any cost recovery consistent with the 'Cost Recovery Guidelines' issued by the Department of Treasury and Finance.



Image: Cowwarr Weir fishway on the Carran Carran (Thomson River).

5 Other Relevant Information

5.1 Information to be Provided to the Minister During the Financial Year

Information will be provided as required and in line with the requirements in the relevant acts. Key information will be provided in our Annual Report 2024-25 as well as the Board Performance Report. Key achievements will be provided as part of a collective effort of all CMAs in the annual achievements report.

5.2 Other Matters Agreed on by the Minister and the CMA

Nil.

5.3 Other Key Functions the CMA Intends to Deliver

Nothing outside of those depicted in relevant Statement of Obligation.



Image: Carran Carran (Thomson River).



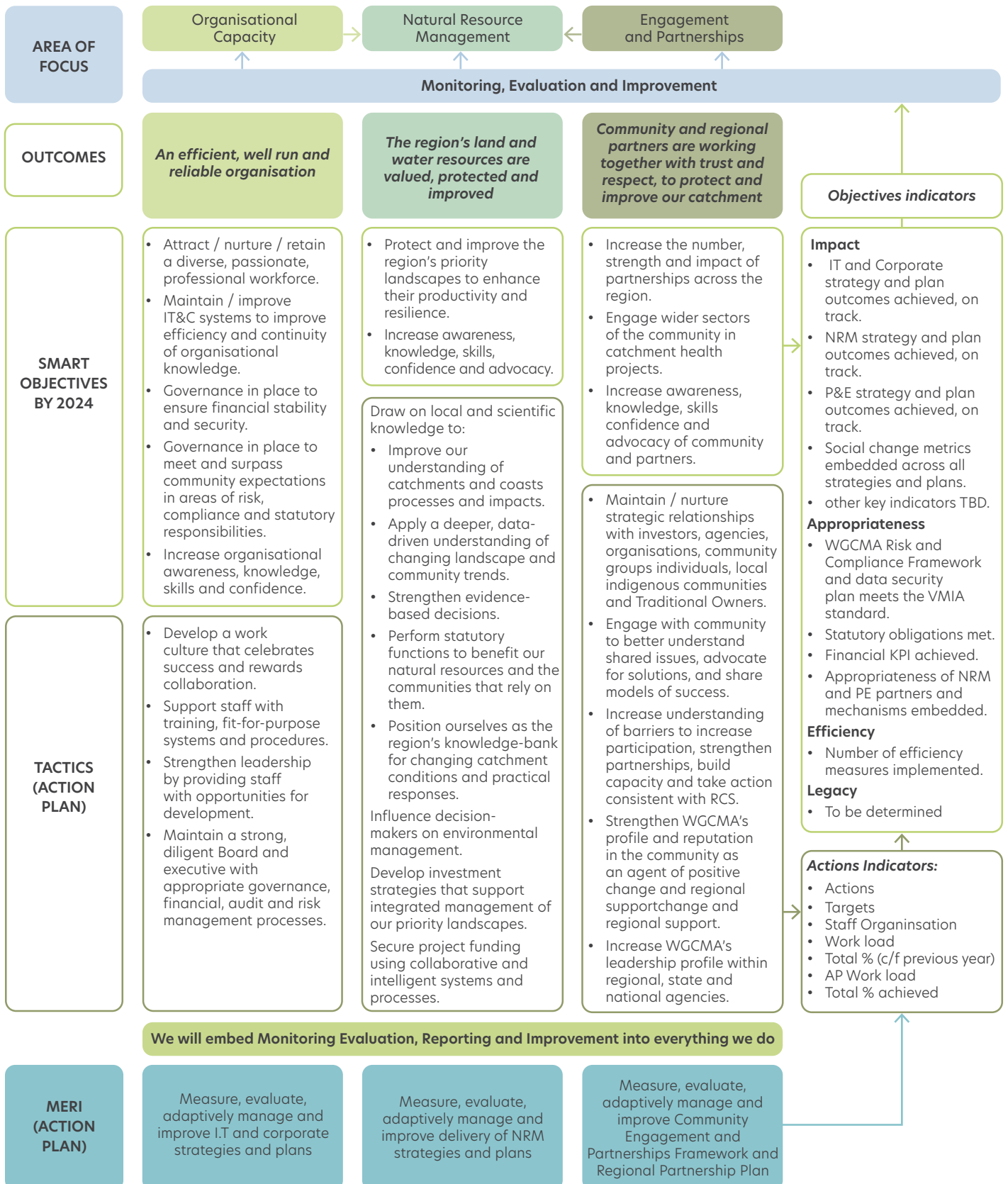
Image: Moondarra Reservoir.

6 Appendices

Appendix 1: Embedded Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Align action plan to Strategic Plan objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proposed action plan 2024-25 aligns all actions with strategic plan.• Action plan has three sections – NRM, P&E, ORG, with MERI now embedded into all actions.• All current actions fit within strategic objectives.• The revised structure has helped identify overlaps which will facilitate efficiency gains.• Further opportunity exists to identify gaps and improve language around some targets, so they are more specific, measurable, achievable and time bound (SMART).
Align plans and strategies to Strategic Plan objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ongoing as plans and strategies are renewed and reviewed.• When all strategy / plans align and consistent with MERI process is embedded, the outcomes of strategies and plans can be aggregated to form the KPI.• Meeting strategy and plan KPIs can be reported to the Board as aggregation of data with specific outcome highlights and barriers to success presented as case study.
Embed MERI into everything we do	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• MERI has been embedded into all actions rather than sitting separately in Action Plan.• Embedding MERI and aligning plans, strategies and actions provides the structure for reporting KPIs.• In accordance with our MERI framework (to be completed) KPIs will be divided into Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs), Effectiveness, Impact, Efficiency, Appropriateness and Legacy.

WGCMA Strategic Plan Logic





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Image: Tarwin River.