

West Gippsland Catchment
Management Authority

Corporate Plan

2023-24



Acknowledgement

The West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (CMA) 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 Brataulung 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.

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

The West Gippsland CMA 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: Macalister Irrigation District.
Above: GLaWAC smoking ceremony.
This page: Corner Inlet, by Warren Reed.

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Chair's Foreword

I have much pleasure in presenting the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA) Corporate Plan for endorsement.

Our operating environment remains highly variable and requires a regional focus with strong connections to partners. It requires us to be nimble and adaptive. The importance of having a solid plan, capable staff and a diverse and mature Board have never been more important.

In this 2022-23 Corporate Plan, we outline our one-year blueprint to continue business operations and gather momentum following impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis on our organisation and flood events throughout Victoria. We will continue to deliver high quality projects and services to the community.

While challenging, the events of 2020-23 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 seen in the sections below.

As West Gippsland CMA enters its 27th 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 a diverse, skills-based Board and staff with wide-ranging experience and extensive links to the community. This ensures we understand local needs and are well placed to help government deliver its programs.

Our planning and delivery capacity is firmly established. It is understood and trusted by the community and partners in the region. We have continued to work to improve and protect the region's wonderful natural assets and helped to set society on a path to recovery from the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Gippsland is at the forefront of land use and energy transition with projects to produce and store power from solar farms, offshore and onshore wind generation and battery storage underway and planned. Changing from coal-fired power generation also means that the region must grapple with rehabilitating mines. In addition, the move away from native forest harvesting means a transition for the environment and the communities and businesses in the region. WGCMA's partnership approach means that we are well-placed to achieve positive environmental outcomes – even during a time of transformation. This approach has also been the cornerstone of our prompt response to the significant flood event the region experienced in June 2021. Since this significant event, and with the assistance of the State Government, we have been successful in delivering remediation work in many devastated areas.

Looking ahead, this Corporate Plan hones in on areas where West Gippsland 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 2023-24 are outlined in Section 2.

Working in partnership with the Australian Government through the National Landcare Program, 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 for government in achieving their objectives.

The current National Landcare 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 collective efforts to implement important projects of national significance in the West Gippsland region and are well positioned to assist in delivery of the next phase of the Australian Government suite of programs. We are confident that we can coordinate efforts to add value to all investment in NRM in West Gippsland as part of the development and delivery process.

In Section 1.1 of this plan, we have outlined our goals; these will be further refined through the recent approval of the West Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS). We are excited about implementing the fourth RCS with regional partners.

Given the 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, Victorian Farmers Federation and several not-for-profit and philanthropic organisations to deliver on-ground work. We are also particularly proud of ongoing 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 the region and strongly support their Self Determination journey.

For the year ahead, we look forward to assisting in the delivery of the final year of the Environmental Contribution Levy Tranche Five (EC5) programs, having worked closely with many partners in the NRM industry to bring these programs to life. We are excited about the next phase 6 and look forward to working with government to develop programs 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* have created opportunities for West Gippsland CMA and our partners to capitalise on the work done in previous years.

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

On behalf of the West Gippsland CMA 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 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 percent 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.

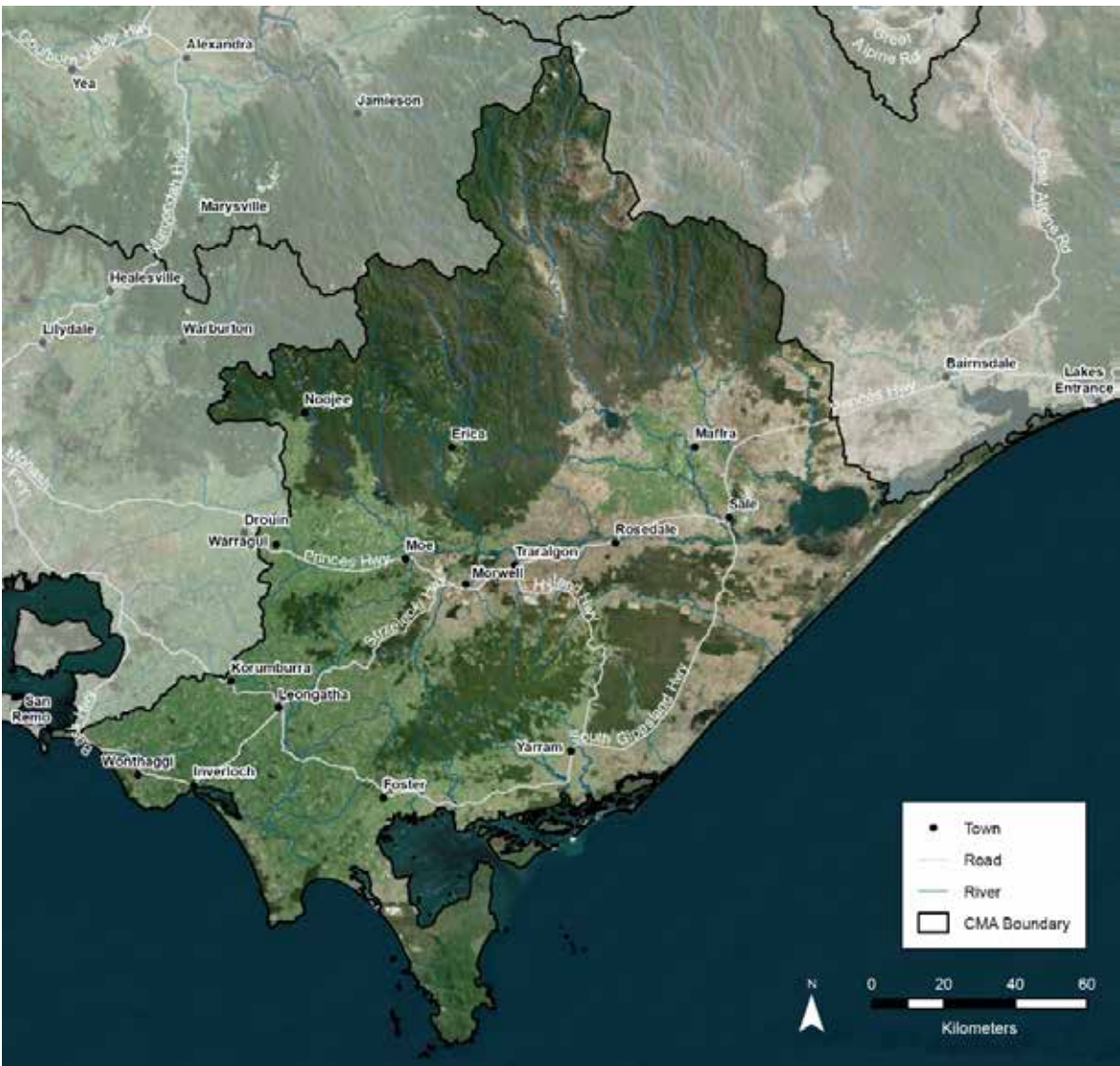
The West Gippsland region is rich in natural resources and supplies water, electricity, gas, oil, saw logs, pulpwood, agricultural products, and tourism opportunities to people both within and beyond the region's boundaries. The estimated Gross Regional Product of the region is more than \$2.5 billion 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.

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; we manage risk and ensure we stay well clear of trouble.



Our Principles and Values

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

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

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

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

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

Values we live by

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."

Image: Marley Point.

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 the West Gippsland CMA's 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 community and other stakeholders and is formally reviewed every six years. We launched the fourth RCS in 2022 and its implementation has commenced.

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 *CaLP 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.

West Gippsland CMA's current management structure has three units: Catchment Planning and Delivery, Statutory Planning, and Corporate Services.

The Unit Managers report to the Chief Executive Officer and form the executive team for the organisation.

Current staffing levels are at 40 equivalent full-time staff members and these numbers are expected to remain the same in the 2023-24 financial year.

Measures to improve accountability, effectiveness and efficiency have been progressively implemented. We actively participate in VicCatchments 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 the 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 realise 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 efforts to achieve the stated outcomes of the Strategic Plan.

The 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: Joel Kilgour from BCLN and landholder Clive Hollins.

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."

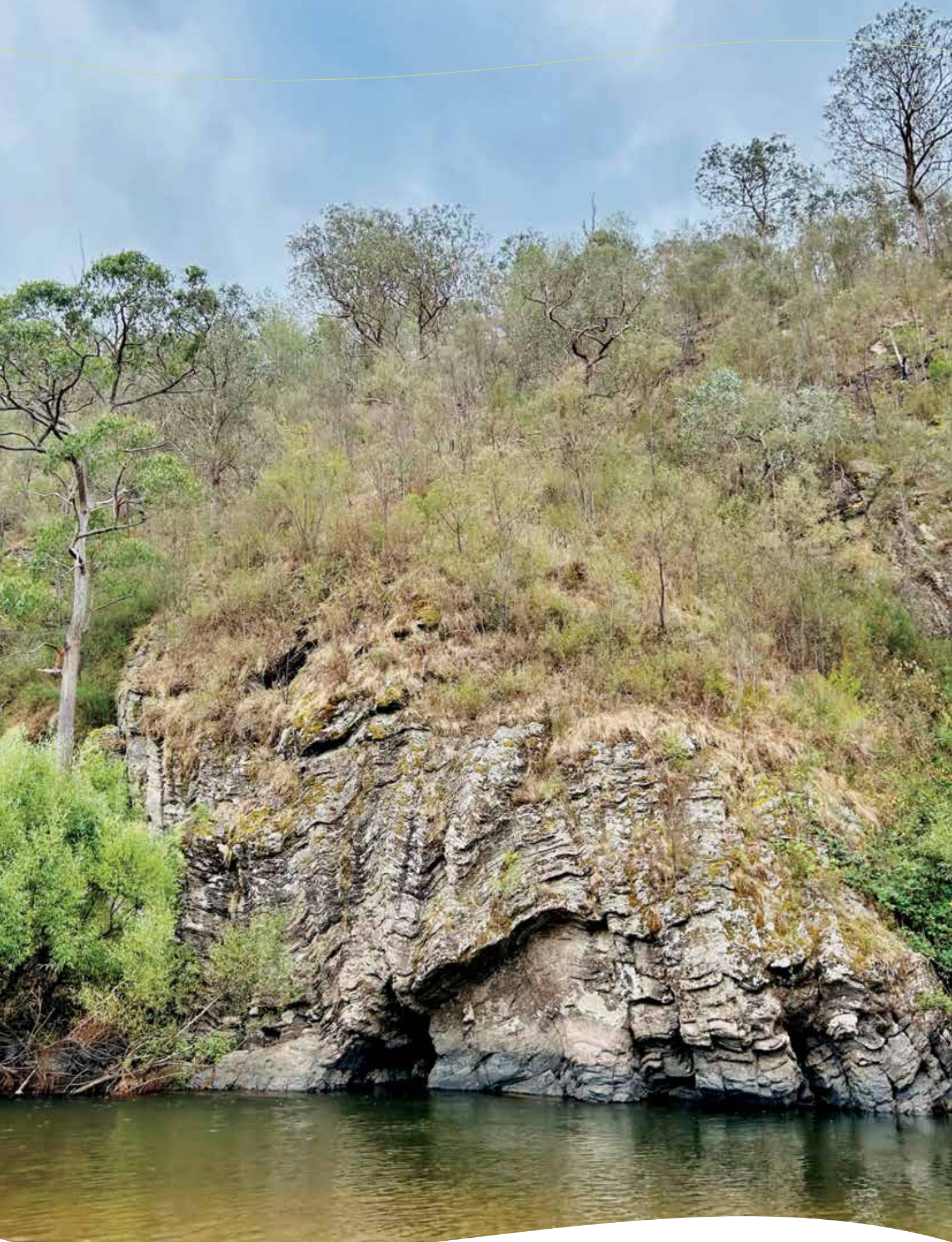
OUTCOME
 The region's land and water resources are valued, protected and improved.

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.



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: Nerrena Tarwin Valley
Landcare Group.



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: Friends of Freestone Creek.



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.

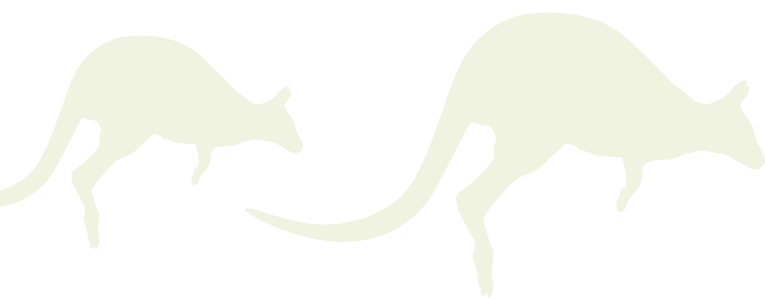
The Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) was renewed and finalised in 2022 and has confirmed the value of focusing on local landscapes.

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. Each has been pivotal in the renewal process that took place during 2020-21.

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 the 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.



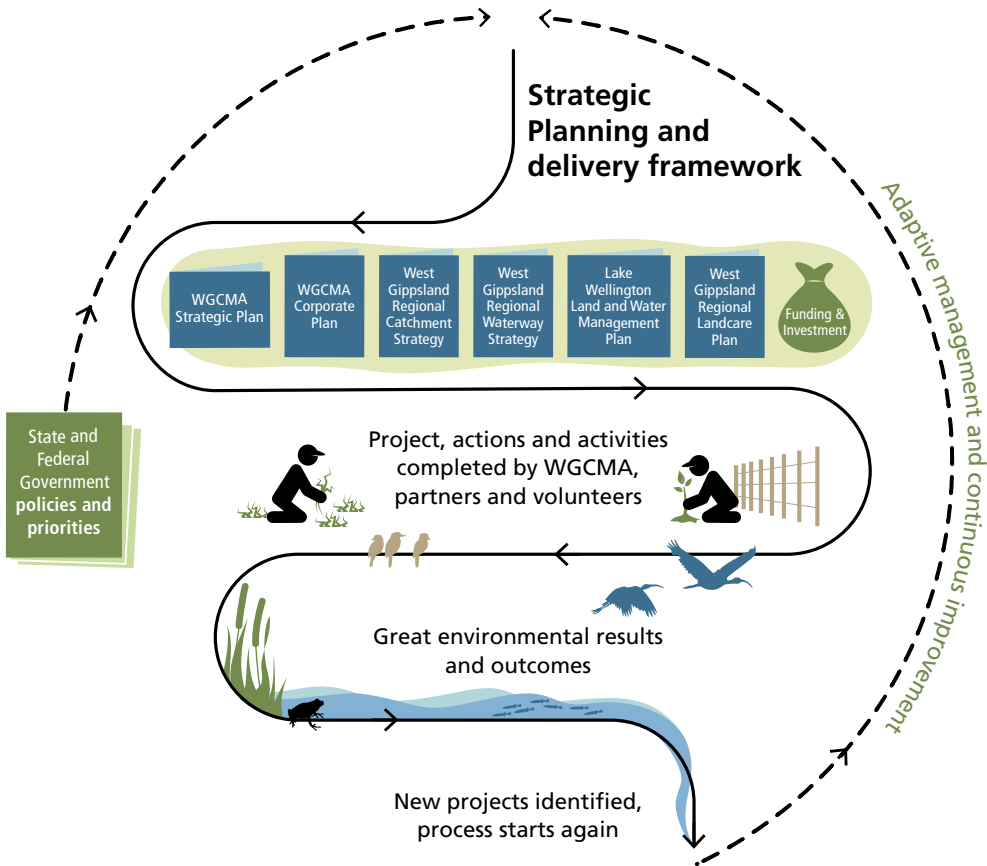
Alignment and Links to Key Government Strategic Directions and Policies

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 work with government to assist in activating these policies at a regional level.

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



Minster's Letter of Expectation

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

Minister’s Expectation	Our Response and Plan
<p>Improved performance and demonstrating outcomes</p> <p><i>We are committed to work with government to assist in activating these policies at a regional level.</i></p>	<p>Having successfully operated under these expectations for over 25 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 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. The formal arrangements with EGCMA will continue in the year ahead.</p> <p>We will continue to support and contribute to VicCatchments 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>During 2020-21 we completed the third independent Organisational Performance Excellence review. The results suggest we are performing at a high level. We will seek to build on the results and continue the quest for continuous improvement.</p>
<p>Waterway and Catchment Health</p> <p><i>Provide leadership in delivery of programs to improve the health of priority waterways and catchments.</i></p>	<p>A full outline of our approach to this area can be seen in section 2. Significant Projects and Activities 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 WGCMA’s partnership approach to delivering Gippsland Lakes initiatives with EGCMA.</p> <p>WGCMA 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</p> <p><i>Explore opportunities and / or deliver carbon sequestration initiatives and adapt to climate change and climate variability.</i></p>	<p>We have worked with other CMAs and DELWP 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 WG RCS has also integrated the WG 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 knowledge of the carbon economy and environmental accounting to support change.</p>
<p>Water for Agriculture</p> <p><i>Support a productive and profitable irrigation sector and vibrant and resilient regional communities.</i></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 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.</p> <p>We will be delivering actions in the Lake Wellington Land and Water Management Plan will further support work in this area with partners.</p>
<p>Community Engagement and Partnerships</p> <p><i>Ensure aspects of service delivery will be customer and community centred.</i></p>	<p>We have robust and long-term trusted partnerships in place with the community and local government. We will continue to support 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>Despite COVID-19 limitations, the CEN has progressed well and we look forward to escalating efforts during 2023-24.</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>
<p>Resilient and liveable cities and towns</p> <p><i>Contribute to healthy communities and support resilient environments.</i></p>	<p>We have strong relationships with both local government and water corporations. Work on Integrated Water Management plans took place over the last two years and we are well positioned to implement both Integrated Water Management and management plans. Agreed on through the Gippsland IWM Forum, we will host a shared position to further drive IWM in the region.</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

Recognise Aboriginal cultural and spiritual values and support economic inclusion in the water sector

Promote self-determination of Traditional Owners, including by supporting the Treaty process as required. Support the implementation of *Water is Life: Traditional Owner Access to Water Roadmap* 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.

Recognise recreational values

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.

Leadership, diversity and culture

Reflect the diverse needs of the community.

Our Response and Plan

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 Recognised Aboriginal Parties in the region.

This provides a strong platform on which to activate the Minister's expectation.

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.

Formal arrangements are now in place where GLaWAC staff have office space and access at the Traralgon WGCMA office.

We will continue to play an active role in the Gippsland Environmental Agencies Group in the year ahead.

Traditional Owners are key delivery partners for a number of initiatives in the region and works crews are successfully delivering on-ground work.

These are embedded in the processes for developing Seasonal Watering Plans and delivering the Regional Waterway Program.

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.

We will continue to play an active role in the Gippsland Environmental Agencies Group in the year ahead.

We have a Diversity and Inclusion Plan in place and are well advanced in implementing it.

We will continue to review this plan to ensure it reflects community needs and expectations.

We participate in the People Matter Survey and use the results to drive improvements within the organisation.

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.

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.

The CEO participated and contributed to the DEECA run Insight and Bridging the Gap program during 2021-22. We will continue our support for the program (and similar) during 2023-24.

We continue to demonstrate leadership through supporting the Gippsland Environmental Agencies forum and [GEA Women's Leadership Team](#).





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 and we have subsequently aligned planning and delivery efforts around this strategy.

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: <https://westgippsland.rcs.vic.gov.au>

Actions and Priorities

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

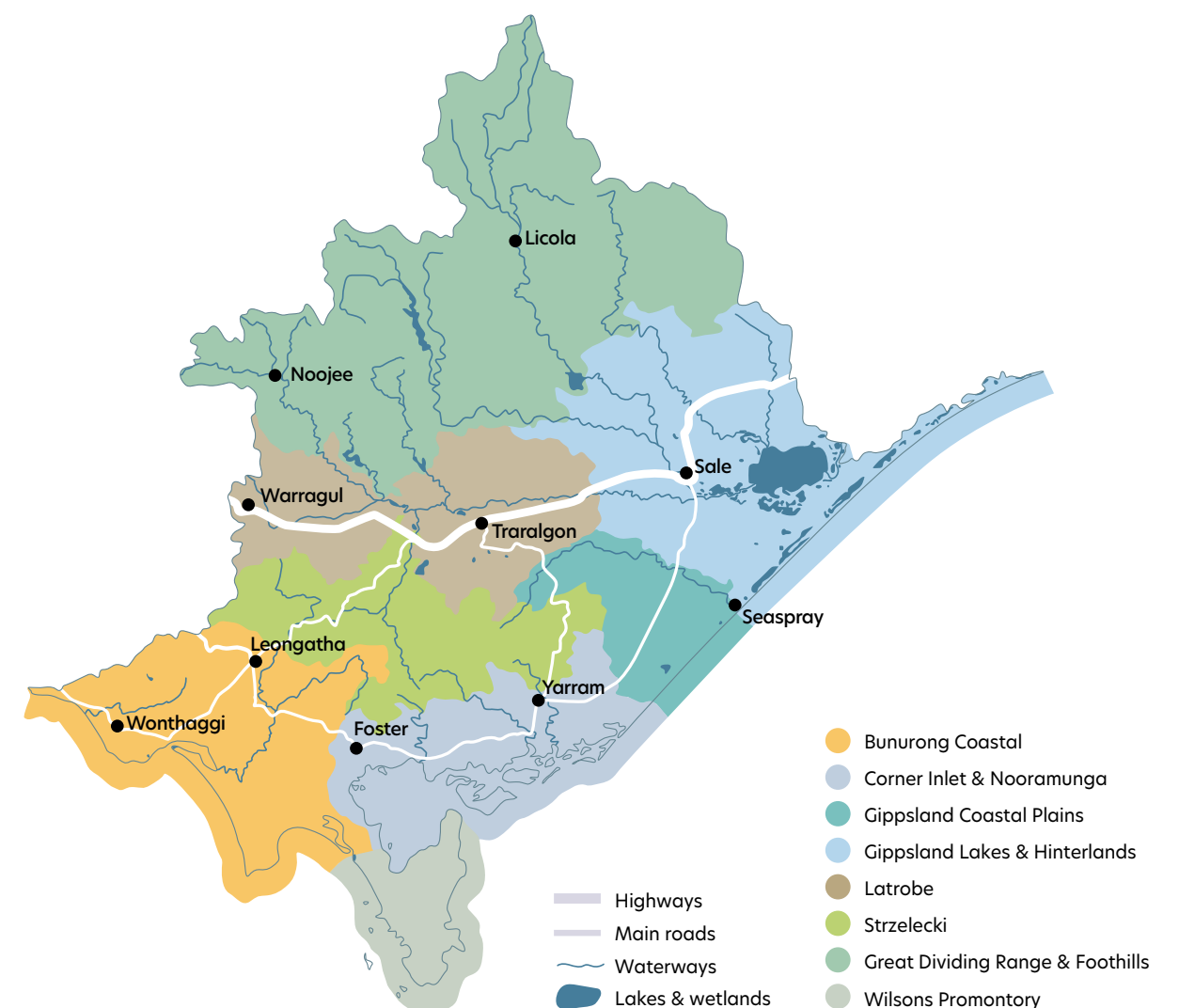
These policies and priority actions form the basis of the natural resource management programs of the CMA and other natural resource managers. As with the RCS they have had extensive community and other stakeholder input as part of their development.

Local Area Outcomes

Through the RCS development process, the West Gippsland CMA Board and partners agreed on eight key Local Areas to focus attention on, 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

Significant Projects and Activities

In line with local, state and federal priorities, the following suite of projects has been developed and most have been funded to be delivered in 2022-23 and beyond, while funding for some is yet to be confirmed.

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

The State Government projects include projects funded through the various EC5 funding streams. These projects commenced in 2021-22 and are multi-year with a completion date of June 30, 2024.

The Australian Government’s National Landcare Program – Regional Land Partnership Program (five years: 2018-2023) funds projects as listed in the table below. The WGCMA has recently submitted a tender to enable the continuation of this program beyond June 30, 2023 – the outcome of this is yet to be announced.

In addition to the projects funded through the major funding programs (EC5 and NLP) following the 2021 June Flood and Storm event, the WGCMA 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 2021 – 30 JUNE 2024		
WGCMA Landcare Support <i>(non EC5 project)</i>	Yarram Yarram Landcare Network (YYLN), South Gippsland Landcare Network (SGLN), Maffra & District Landcare Network (MDLN), Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network (LCLN) and 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 EC5 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
Caretaker of Waterway Health <i>(EC5 project)</i>	DELWP – Water and catchments GLaWAC BLCAC Parks Victoria Local government (Bass Coast, Baw Baw, Wellington, Latrobe City, South Gippsland) VRFish Landcare Networks / groups Water corporations: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Southern Rural Water (SRW)Gippsland Water (GW)South Gippsland Water (SGW)Melbourne Water (MW) DEECA – Gippsland Trust for Nature Greening Australia Agriculture Victoria Environment Protection Authority (EPA) BirdLife Australia	<p>The <i>Caretaker of Waterway Health</i> project will enable the WGCMA to continue to lead and coordinate the implementation of an integrated waterway management program for the West Gippsland region during 2021-2024 to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The Victorian government and other key stakeholders are confident in the impact, legacy and cost-effectiveness of their investment in waterway management in West Gippsland;WGCMA governance and delivery is appropriate and compliant with the CMA Water Act Statement of Obligations – Part 6 Waterways; andPartnerships are developed and / or strengthened through collaboration.
WGCMA Statutory Functions – Floodplain and Waterway Protection <i>(EC5 project)</i>	Baw Baw Shire Latrobe City Wellington Shire South Gippsland Shire Bass Coast Shire EPA SRW GW SGW MW	<p>This project delivers the WGCMA'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> andCMA Statement of Obligations. <p>This project delivers the following key activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Providing Flood Advice directly to the communityResponding to Section 55 Planning Permit, Section 52 notices and Planning Scheme Amendments from Local GovernmentIssuing Works on Waterways Permits or Works LicensesResponding to rural drainage enquiriesPreparing for and responding to floods.

Project	Key Partners	Key Features
Managing Water for the Environment and Community Engagement (EC5 project)	Victorian Environmental Water Holder DEECA GLaWAC GW SGW SRW MW Parks Victoria Gippsland Lakes Coordinating Committee	<p>This project enables the WGCMA to deliver on its statutory responsibility to manage the Environmental Water Reserve (EWR) in three river basins within West Gippsland. It also allows the WGCMA to work closely with targeted delivery and community partners groups to increase awareness, knowledge, advocacy and relationships, with the aim of optimising environmental water delivery.</p> <p>This project is about delivering water for the environment to improve the health and resilience of rivers and wetlands in West Gippsland, through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The efficient and effective management of environmental water entitlements in the Thomson, Macalister, Latrobe and lower Latrobe Wetlands. Effective community engagement and healthy partnerships to support successful environmental water planning and delivery, including Traditional Owner participation. <p>Building on successes already delivered throughout EC4, the 'managing water for the environment' project and the 'community engagement for environmental water' project have been brought together for EC5, to reflect the integrated nature of environmental water planning, management, delivery, community engagement and partnerships.</p>
West Gippsland CMA Floodplain Management Strategy Implementation (EC5 project)	Baw Baw Shire, East Gippsland Shire, Latrobe City, Wellington Shire, South Gippsland Shire, Bass Coast Shire Victoria State Emergency Service EPA SRW GW SGW MW	<p>We have worked with stakeholders (local councils, Victoria State Emergency Service and others) to prepare the West Gippsland Floodplain Management Strategy (RFMS) which contains prioritised actions to help reduce flood risk across the region. The CMA will work with its stakeholders to implement relevant actions and will also lead a monitoring and evaluation process.</p> <p>This project has considerable linkages and cross over with the Water Statutory Functions Floodplain and Waterway Protection Project. Information produced by the strategic activities completed under this Project will be used to help make and support any statutory decisions we make under the Water Statutory Functions project. The focus of the strategic activities will involve engagement and planning with key regional partners and stakeholders and will be informed by the West Gippsland Floodplain Management Strategy (2018-2028). Activities include flood studies, floodplain management plans and raising flood awareness.</p>

Project	Key Partners	Key Features
Sustainable Irrigation in WGCMA (EC5 project)	SRW 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>Vision: A highly productive and sustainable irrigation community that values and protects its natural and cultural assets.</p> <p>The program will deliver 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.
Protecting Pristine Headwaters of the Victorian Alps and Strzelecki Ranges (EC5 project)	Parks Victoria DEECA Monash University Franklin River Landcare Group Agnes River Landcare Group Albert River, Hallston Landcare Group Yinnar Landcare Group YYLN, SGLN, LCLN, MDLN Friends of Middle Creek Greening Australia Wollangarra Wilderness Camp Gippsland Recreation Outdoors Parks Victoria Regional DEECA	<p>This project aims to protect the environmental condition of pristine waterways and support recreational use and tourism in the headwater catchments of the Victorian Alps and the Strzelecki Ranges. Waterways in the project area are highly valued for their intact native riparian zones, water quality and diverse ecological communities. This project will address risks arising from the spread of highly invasive willow species (particularly Grey sallow willow – <i>S. cinerea</i> and <i>hybrids</i>) on these values. This will be achieved through a targeted program of surveillance and willow control activities in hard to access locations.</p>

Project	Key Partners	Key Features
Flagship waterway: Mid Thomson River (EC5 project)	GW SRW Wellington Shire Council GLaWAC Local landholders	This project is a continuation of the EC4 Flagship Waterway: Mid Thomson River project (WG1617.20.278), which will encompass the reaches from Cowwarr Weir to the Rainbow Creek confluence. This project will begin the implementation of the Thomson River and Rainbow Creek Waterway Management Plan (the Plan), which was developed in collaboration with community and agency representatives during EC4 and marks a phase change from "Target Setting" to "Taking Action".
Flagship waterway: Corner Inlet (EC5 project)	GLaWAC Parks Victoria DEECA Trust For Nature SGLN Agnes River Landcare Group	The Corner Inlet EC5 flagship project aims to address water quality risks to the ecological character of the Corner Inlet Ramsar site and improve riparian connectivity along the Agnes River. The project forms part of the long-term vision for the Corner Inlet and tributaries Flagship Waterway which will implement the Ramsar Site Management Plan (RSMP) and actions in the Corner Inlet Water Quality Improvement Plan (WQIP) to achieve water quality objectives and prevent further decline of seagrass.
Estuaries and Inlets of the Bunurong to the Mullungdung Coasts (EC5 project)	VRfish Regional Roads Victoria Bass Coast Shire Council South Gippsland Water Gippsland Ports Parks Victoria Sandy Point Community Anderson Inlet Angling Victorian Fisheries Authority DEECA BCLN	<p>This project is designed to protect West Gippsland's high value (non-Ramsar) estuaries and inlets along the Bunurong to the Mullungdung coasts. Invasive weeds, climate change, sea level rise surrounding land use and increasing urban development threaten these high value habitats for several biotas including Coastal Saltmarsh and Mangrove Shrubland communities. The coastlines are also habitat for many endangered and vulnerable species such as the Hooded Plover, Australian Grayling, Eastern Great Egret and the Orange Bellied Parrot.</p> <p>This project has been divided into two distinct activities. The first is the treatment of the highly invasive weed of Spartina in the permanently open estuaries of Anderson Inlet (Inverloch and Venus Bay) and Shallow Inlet (Sandy Point). Spartina is a highly invasive aquatic weed that smothers out saltmarsh, mangrove and inter tidal mudflat areas. This work is consistent with the strategic focus outlined in the Regional Catchment Strategy (2013) (RCS) and will continue the implementation of the West Gippsland Spartina Management Plan (2018) (WGSMP).</p>

Project	Key Partners	Key Features
West Gippsland Our Catchments Our Communities Project (EC5 project)	BCLN, LCLN, MDLN, SGLN, YYLN GippsDairy, Trust for Nature, Greening Australia, SRW GW, SGW, 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 RCS Renewal • West Gippsland ICM Project • West Gippsland Regional Partnerships. <p>The ICM approach is not new in West Gippsland and the Our Country Our Community (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 Powlett whilst continuing work in the Perry Providence Ponds.</p>
Corner Inlet Ramsar Site Coordination (EC5 project)	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 EC5 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>
OTHER STATEWIDE AND PROJECT INITIATIVES		
Improving visitor access and experience in Lower Thomson and Latrobe Wetlands	Wellington Shire Gippsland Ports Field and Game Australia Parks Victoria GLaWAC	<p>The funding will be used to support three distinct components in the lower Thomson and lower Latrobe wetlands that will improve visitor access and experience. The project will comprise of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnering with Wellington Shire Council and Gippsland Ports in order to undertake collaborative weed and vegetation control that will improve fishing, boating and rowing access at Flooding Creek / Lower Thomson River. This is aimed to support local community and business groups • Partnering with Field and Game Australia and Parks Victoria to improve access track, completion of walking track and improvements to kayak launch and angler access at Heart Morass. • Partner with Parks Victoria and Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation to identify and implement improvements to Sale Common / Dowds Morass (e.g: improved walking / access tracks, weed control and signage).



Project	Key Partners	Key Features
Maffra Weir Fishway	SRW	<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 in-stream 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 WGCMA, 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). The WGCMA, 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 Bird Life 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 (TBC)	Landcare, Industry, local and State Government agencies, Traditional Owners, conservation organisations	<p>Key components –</p> <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; and 6. Maintain a productive, cooperative and ongoing relationship with the Departments.
Corner Inlet Connections (TBC)	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 (TBC)	Parks Victoria East Gippsland CMA North East CMA GLaWAC	<p>This is a cross regional project, including EGCMA and NECMA, 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>This project is focused on weed management, engaging Aboriginal Communities in both on-ground actions and planning, developing and implementing a fire management protocol, supporting a deer control trial in the North East CMA region, horse surveillance, peatland condition monitoring and engaging various peatland user groups in monitoring activities (especially for weeds and inappropriate access).</p>
Regional Agricultural Landcare Facilitator (TBC)	BCLN, LCLN, MDLN, SGLN, YYLN, Southern Farming Systems, Dairy Australia, GippsDairy, AusVeg, DEDJTR	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.
Building Capacity and Participation (GLaWAC led – TBC)	GLaWAC	GLaWAC have identified the need for greater capacity and resourcing to enable participation and leadership in this program space. This project will support GLaWAC to resource a role to help coordinate their involvement in the program.
Threatened Species in West Gippsland	DEECA Parks Victoria BirdLife Australia GLaWAC	This project is still being scoped however, it will focus on the key threatened species in the region listed in the Threatened Species Strategy and those species identified in our NRM Plan as having a current and feasible recovery plan. It is likely to continue the work with Hooded Plovers, New Holland Mouse, Gippsland Giant Earthworm and will involve a planning phase with key partners to prioritise effort.

Project	Key Partners	Key Features
Red Gum Grassy Woodlands (TBC)	DEECA Private landholders Landcare Parks Victoria GLaWAC	<p>This protect will undertake works to protect and enhance remnant populations of the EPBC listed Red Gum Grassy Woodlands community on private property. It will partner with Trust For Nature, GLaWAC, Landcare, Greening Australia and private landholders and will specifically involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conservation tenders to protect of 232 hectares of high and medium quality Red Gum Grassy Woodland and their associated Native Grasslands <p>On ground works include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fencing• Pest and Weed Control• Ecological burning• Ecological thinning• Enhancement planting

COVID 19 Impacts and Measures to Address

Between 2020 and 2023, management and the Board put in place several measures to ensure the organisation was able to deliver, wherever possible, a business-as-usual approach.

Whist mostly redundant, WGCMA will continue to monitor requirements and work with staff to manage risks and any impact on programs.

Key Business Partnerships

West Gippsland CMA's approach to improving catchment health is founded on mutual and meaningful partnerships which will continue through 2023-24 and beyond.

Across the CMA's 25th year, and as we continued the recovery from flood and the impacts of COVID-19, partnerships and relationships were 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 2023-24.

Monitoring and evaluating partnerships help us increase efforts to understand key partnerships and their health enabling us to establish a baseline of partnership health. This has helped improve 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 engagement work.

Community engagement and partnerships are a key reason for the existence of CMAs and are pivotal in achieving Natural Resource Management (NRM) outcomes and the delivery of the Regional Catchment Strategy (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 the West Gippsland CMA's 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:

- ▶ Embed community engagement and build partnerships in all that we do.
- ▶ Provide meaningful opportunities for communities and partners to contribute to strategies and initiatives.
- ▶ Approach community and partnerships in a well planned, tailored, targeted and evaluated way.
- ▶ Collaborate with 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 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.



"Our planning and delivery capacity is firmly established. It is understood and trusted by the community and partners in the region."

Mikaela Power, Board Chair

Image: Spoonbill Powlett 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 as well as recovery from COVID-19. Within this context there are a range of trends and issues emerging that are likely to impact on catchment management in the region over the next three to five years.

The Board allocates time to identify and track emerging issues and challenges in the region. In doing so, we can focus efforts consistent with the West Gippsland CMA's 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.
- Adapting to ongoing industry expansion and transition as well as population shift that will impact the region's demand on natural resources and assets. Ensuring the environmental water needs of waterways are met and sustained.
- Understanding and addressing the impact of climate change and resultant weather variability on 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. Noting and 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 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 II nearing completion. We are leading a regional approach to deliver on the next 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 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 2023-24 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 cities will need to be monitored and understood.	E	WB
Understanding transition of the Latrobe Valley 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 the West Gippsland 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 the 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 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.	E	WB
Expansion of carbon offsets and new initiatives e.g. teal and blue carbon 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 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 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 the 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 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 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
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 the West Gippsland CMA's 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 are evaluated;
- Residual risk is assessed;
- Risk treatment options are considered;
- Actions are determined and prioritised; and
- 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.

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 the West Gippsland CMA's program of internal audits conducted by 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 (Rewards 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 CMA's
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 • Pandemic Response Team (COVID-19) • Critical Incident Response Plan • Provision of appropriate PPE • Regular direct reporting to Board

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, incl. 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 • Active monitoring of Government Policy in NRM and Environment • Segregation of duties <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"> • 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
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 • Cyber Incident Response Plan • 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
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

Risk	Mitigation Measure / Control
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 CMA's 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

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 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 Owner's) for all staff • Long term tenure of staff enabling strong networks and relationships

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 governance requirements we have included key performance indicators in this plan which will complement the outcomes required in investment plans. These are detailed below and if necessary, will be reported on through the 2023-24 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 why 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.	<i>State the percentage of responses that were within the prescribed period.</i> OR <i>Summarise the reason/s why the percentage of responses within the prescribed period was less than 90 per cent.</i> AND <i>Identify if waterways and / or floodplain related responses were affected.</i>
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.	<i>State the percentage of responses that were within the prescribed period.</i> OR <i>Summarise the reason/s why the percentage of responses within the prescribed period was less than 90 per cent.</i>

Image: Callum Edwards and Kathleen Bartlett at the Powlett River Estuary.



Image: Christine from
Maffra Landcare.

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 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 2023-24 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 annual reporting. Annual reports can be downloaded from <https://wgcm.vic.gov.au>.

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		
	2023-24 \$	2024-25 \$	2025-26 \$
Information Technology	171	41	100
Office Equipment and Furniture	122	2	0
Motor Vehicles	140	200	300
Plant and Equipment	4	2	2
Total	436	245	402

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 2023-24 Financial Year

	\$'000			
Programs	Expected income			Total
	State	C'with	Other	
CMA Corporate and Statutory Operations				
Board	246	-	-	246
Chief Executive Officer & Support	394	-	-	394
Corporate Support	-	-	829	829
Statutory Operations	600	-	454	1,054
<i>Sub-total</i>	1,240	-	1,283	2,523
CMA VIF Priority Landscape Areas				
Regional	4,586	476	-	5,062
Bunurong Coastal	374	-	-	374
Corner Inlet Nooramunga	925	1,132	-	2,057
Gippsland Lakes & Hinterland	4,744	-	-	4,744
Victorian Alps	-	485	-	485
<i>Sub-total</i>	10,629	2,093	-	12,722
				-
Total Expected Program Income	11,869	2,093	1,283	15,245

4.9 Operating Statement

Operating Statement	\$'000		
	Plan 2023-24	Forecast 2024-25	Forecast 2025-26
Revenue			
Local			
Interest	749	549	519
Other	534	534	534
Grants			
State	11,869	8,018	8,134
Commonwealth	2,093	2,093	2,093
Total revenue	15,245	11,194	11,280
Expenditure			
Corporate			
Operations	1,997	2,028	2,043
Depreciation	526	494	480
Strategic programs			
Regional	7,215	3,868	3,887
Bunurong Coastal	534	286	287
Corner Inlet Nooramunga	2,932	1,572	1,580
Gippsland Lakes & Hinterland	6,762	3,626	3,643
Victorian Alps	691	371	373
Total expenditure	20,657	12,245	12,293
Operating surplus/(deficit)	(5,412)	(1,051)	(1,013)

4.10 Cash Flow Statement

\$'000			
Cash Flow Statement	Plan 2023-24	Forecast 2024-25	Forecast 2025-26
Opening Cash Position	19,974	14,651	13,850
Cash Receipts			
Local			
Interest	749	549	519
Other	534	534	534
Grants			
State	11,869	8,018	8,134
Commonwealth	2,093	2,093	2,093
Other	-	-	-
Total cash received	15,245	11,194	11,280
Cash payments			
Corporate and programs	20,132	11,751	11,814
Capital Expenditure	436	244	402
Other			
Total cash payments	20,568	11,995	12,216
Net cash changes	(5,323)	(801)	(936)
Closing cash position	14,651	13,850	12,914

4.11 Balance Sheet

\$'000			
Balance Sheet	Plan 2023-24	Forecast 2024-25	Forecast 2025-26
Assets			
Current			
Cash	14,651	13,850	12,914
Investments	-	-	-
Receivables	120	120	120
Prepayments	100	100	100
Total current assets	14,871	14,070	13,134
Non-current			
Fixed assets	2,015	1,765	1,688
Receivables	4	4	4
RoU Buildings	1,012	750	476
Total non-current assets	3,031	2,519	2,168
Total Assets	17,902	16,589	15,302
Liabilities			
Current			
Creditors & accruals	200	200	200
Provisions	1,681	1,681	1,681
RoU Lease Liability	272	272	272
Total current liabilities	2,153	2,153	2,153
Non-current			
Provisions	41	41	41
RoU Lease Liability	740	478	204
Total non-current liabilities	781	519	245
Total Liabilities	2,934	2,672	2,398
Net Assets	14,968	13,917	12,904
Equity			
Contributed capital	8,362	8,362	8,362
Accumulated funds	349	349	349
Reserves	11,669	6,257	5,206
Retained Earnings- Current Year	(5,412)	(1,051)	(1,013)
Net Equities	14,968	13,917	12,904

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.



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 the Annual Report 2023-24 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: Freckled Duck on the Durt-Yowan (Latrobe River).

6 Appendices

Appendix 1: Embedded Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Align action plan to Strategic Plan objectives

- Proposed action plan 2023-24 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).

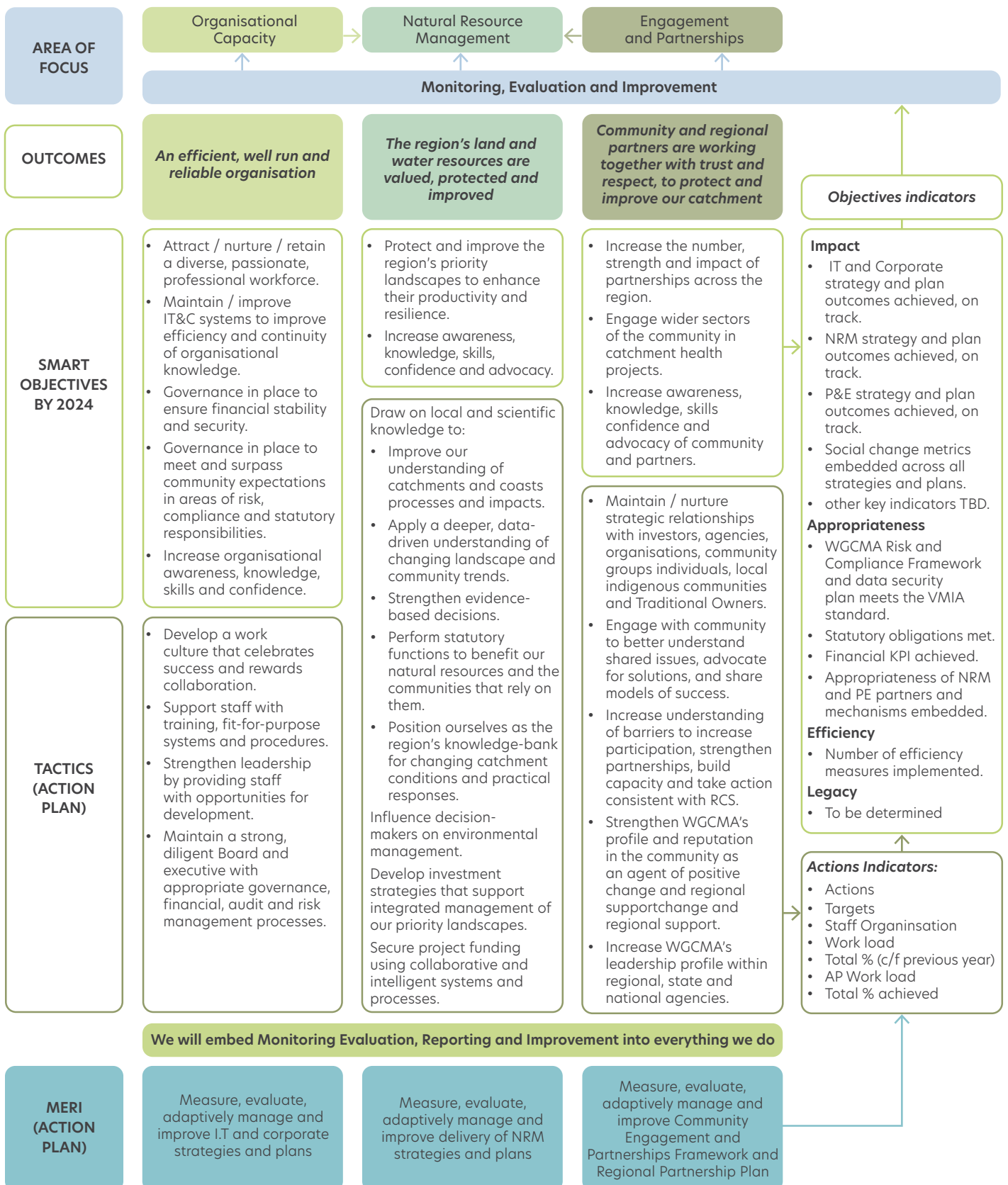
Align plans and strategies to Strategic Plan objectives

- 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

- 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: Kayaking on Dowd Morass.