

Winner

of the 35th National Banksia
Sustainability Awards



Nature Positive Award



Victorian Catchment Management Authorities

ACTIONS & ACHIEVEMENTS REPORT 2025



VIC CATCHMENTS

A Collaboration of CMAs



Acknowledgement of Victoria's Aboriginal communities

The Victorian Catchment Management Authorities acknowledges Victoria's Aboriginal community and their rich culture and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge Aboriginal people as Australia's first peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land, water and biodiversity on which we rely. We recognise and value the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal people and communities to Victorian life and how this enriches us. We embrace the spirit of reconciliation, working towards self determination and ensuring an equal voice.

*Cover image: Rainbow fish release
in North Central CMA.
This page: Macalister River (WGCMA)*

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MINISTER'S FOREWORD

Partnerships and collaboration are at the heart of healthy catchments and thriving communities.



Healthy waterways are key to thriving communities.

This is the important role Victoria's nation leading Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) play.

CMAs are embedded in the regions, working to protect and enhance our

natural environment and meet human needs while contributing to social, economic, and cultural outcomes.

CMAs are delivering for regional communities, supporting farmers to thrive through innovative irrigation and pest removal, reducing the impacts

of flood and erosion on communities, improving waterway recreation, and improving biodiversity to keep our communities healthy.

Partnerships and community collaboration is at the heart of this work – working alongside Traditional Owners, natural resource organisations, Landcare and the community to get the job done.

2024-2025 has been particularly challenging for our regions, with CMAs supporting communities through drought and bushfire recovery. CMAs have been on the ground – restoring, enhancing, and building resilience in catchments and communities.





Utilising their people, partnerships, knowledge and relationship CMAs have delivered more than 789,000 hectares of pest animal control and more than 194,000 hectares of weed control.

Through sustainable land practices, CMAs have improved more than 4,400 hectares of agricultural land while delivering drought initiatives and employment programs.

Over 53,500 community members joined CMA-led events and CMAs supported almost 80 threatened animal and plant species including Platypus, Hooded Plovers and a range of native fish – so they are not lost on our watch.

CMAs also play a key role in supporting floodplain management – with more than 15,000 planning applications assessed and approved with specialist advice, helping to protect life and property from the impact of floods.

This important work keeps our catchments and waterways healthy, for both the environment and people - now and for future generations.

The significant work outlined in this report demonstrates the value of CMAs - delivering with and for communities.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Tierney'.

The Hon. Gayle Tierney MP
Minister for Water

Above: Magpie Geese made a rare visit to the Gippsland Lakes catchment in 2024-25. (EGCMA) Left: Revegetating roadsides on the Victorian Volcanic Plains. (GHCMA)



VIC CATCHMENTS CHAIR OVERVIEW



Our 2025 Actions and Achievement report is an incredible demonstration of the strength of the regional delivery model that our Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) champion and deliver every day. Working between government and community this model has delivered meaningful outcomes for regional communities for almost 30 years.

CMAs and communities take action for waterway health through their Regional Waterway Strategies. This year, each CMA made great progress with the reviewing their local strategy that identifies the priority actions for waterway health in each region for the next 10 years. At the core of their development is collaboration and engagement with community. It is a perfect example of how our CMAs work with community and partners to maximise investment and work towards common regional goals.

Drought has delivered a significant blow, particularly in the south-west of the Victoria. Our farmers have been hit hard with a lack of water availability and feed. Many have had to destock significantly and it will take many years to recover. We advocated strongly for drought employment programs in regions impacted by the ongoing drought. These employment programs are designed to provide people whose wellbeing and livelihoods have been impacted by drought with meaningful employment, training and income in their local community. This allows them to remain connected with their community so they can return to their normal way of life following recovery. We are grateful that funding has been made available for 2025-26 by the Victorian government to deliver a drought employment program through the Glenelg Hopkins and Corangamite CMAs. It is designed to provide people whose wellbeing and livelihoods have been impacted by drought with meaningful employment, training and income in their local community. This allows them to remain connected with their community so they can return to their normal way of life following recovery.

We also experienced significant bushfires in the west of the State during December and January in and around the Grampians (Gariwerd) National Parks (125,000 hectares) and Little Desert National Parks (95,000 hectares). Locally our CMAs have been involved in providing advice to the agencies about recovery priorities, while Vic Catchments has been working closely with DEECA Forest Fire Management at a more strategic level. We recognise that large scale, high intensity bushfires are occurring more regularly and that many catchment impacts follow. We are working together to explore new approaches to managing fire to minimise these impacts. This work was supported by a very successful fire risk workshop which included CMAs, fire authorities, land managers, water corporations and fire and catchment experts. We recognise that a community-based, collaborative approach is best for achieving balanced outcomes. We look forward to exploring these opportunities further in 2025-26.

Victoria's CMAs have been recognised for our capability and capacity in the agriculture sector by being asked to deliver the field component of the Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's National Soil Monitoring Program. The purpose of the project is to monitor national soil health indicators and to use the data to help understand soil condition and trend. The data will assist farmers to prioritise their soil health and strengthen their soil knowledge and capability. CMAs are sampling 406 sites across Victoria as part of a national sampling program across 3,000 sites. This work complements the sustainable agriculture projects we are delivering for the Australian Government through the NHT and Carbon Farming programs.

This report showcases the huge effort that has gone into improving catchments with the support of our communities - whether that be protecting waterways, controlling invasive pest plants and animals, conducting events to learn about the latest in farm management practices or simply learning from each other about what's going on in our patch. Happy reading.

Cath Jenkins
Chair, Vic Catchments

BOARD CHAIRS

The Vic Catchments Forum was established in February 2017 to showcase Victoria's integrated catchment management framework. Each CMA region has a Ministerially appointed Board of local people responsible for setting strategic directions for regional land, biodiversity and water management and monitoring and evaluating its performance.



Catherine Jenkins
Corangamite



Ewan Waller
East Gippsland



Antony Ford
Glenelg Hopkins



Sarah Parker
Goulburn Broken



Allison McTaggart
Mallee



Sally Mitchell
North Central



Graham Dear
North East



Greg Wilson
Port Phillip and Western Port



Mikaela Power
West Gippsland



Peter Hilbig
Wimmera

CMA REGIONS

Victoria's integrated Catchment Management Framework is working to protect and enhance our rivers and landscapes while supporting productivity from our land and water resources.

Wimmera

Covers 30,000 km² straddling the Wimmera River. Agriculture is the dominant land use, economic driver and employment sector. A quarter of the 50,000 people who live in the region depend directly on agriculture for their income.

Glenelg Hopkins

Covers 26,000 km², characterised by dramatic coastlines and flat volcanic plains in the south, the Grampians, Dundas Tablelands and Central Highlands in the north, and 22% of Victoria's wetlands. One of Australia's most productive farming regions with 80% used for agriculture.

Mallee

Covers almost 40,000 km² making it the largest catchment area in Victoria. It runs along the Murray River from Nyah to the South Australian border and south through vast dryland cropping areas and public reserves.



Corangamite

Extends across 13,000 km² of which 78% is in private ownership. Its landscape is geographically diverse with spectacular coasts, vast volcanic plains and the soaring old growth forests of the Otways.

Goulburn Broken

Covers 24,000 km² of which two thirds is under private ownership. Extends north from the outskirts of Melbourne to the Murray River. It yields 11% of the Murray Darling Basin's water despite making up only 2% of its area. The catchment has a population of more than 248,000.

North Central

Covers 30,000 km² (13% of the State). It is home to 250,000 people, is valued for its internationally recognised environmental assets and supports a diverse agricultural sector.

North East

Extends across 19,000 km² between the Murray River in the north, Victorian Alps in the south and Warby Ranges in the west.

The region is home to 100,000 people, provides 38% of Murray Darling Basin's water and is 55% public land.

East Gippsland

Covers 22,000 km² and approximately 80% publicly owned mainly as significant State forests, national parks and coastal parks.

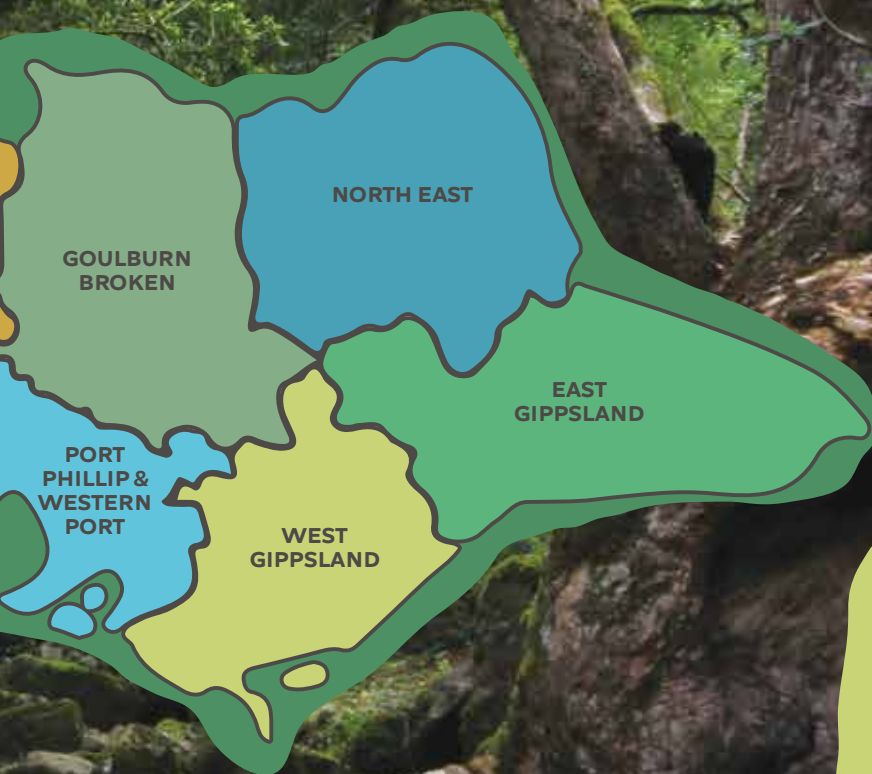
Features the Ramsar listed Gippsland Lakes and six declared Heritage Rivers.

West Gippsland

Covers 18,000 km² from Warragul to the Gippsland Lakes and from the Great Dividing Range to Wilsons Promontory. It provides most of Victoria's electricity, 60% of Melbourne's water storage and 20% of Australia's milk production.

Port Phillip & Western Port

Spans 13,000 km² that feed into Port Phillip and Western Port. Home to over five million people whilst boasting some of Victoria's most productive farming lands and spectacular parks. Home to all four State floral and faunal emblems.



CMAS GET IT DONE

2024-25 Achievement Highlights

**53,552 partners,
landholders, community
members and kids attended
events** to learn about and celebrate
caring for catchments.

**194,574 hectares of
weed control** to preserve
Victoria's precious natural
resources.

640 partnerships these
are our 'superpower' allowing us
to deliver so much more than
we can alone.

**139 kilometres of fencing
to protect and restore
waterways** – that's Leongatha
to Melbourne!

**2,438 hectares of
vegetation established,
protected and enhanced
for wildlife and
biodiversity** – that's
1,219 MCGs restored
for wildlife and
biodiversity.

**4,414 hectares
of agricultural
change** to future
proof farming.



15,000 approvals and advice

given for works on waterways and to keep communities safe from floodwaters – that's 60 per working day!

79 of Victoria's threatened animal and plant species

have CMA-led programs to protect them – that's Platypus, Hooded Plovers, native fish and more not being lost on our watch.

789,224 hectares of pest animal control

to keep endangered species and their habitat safe.

A large, spreading tree with a thick trunk and dense foliage stands in a green field. In the background, there are rolling hills and a clear blue sky. A wire fence is visible in the foreground.

STATEWIDE ACHIEVEMENTS & CASE STUDIES



Landholder Hagen, Project Manager Sally and dog Molly (Ashley Rogers)

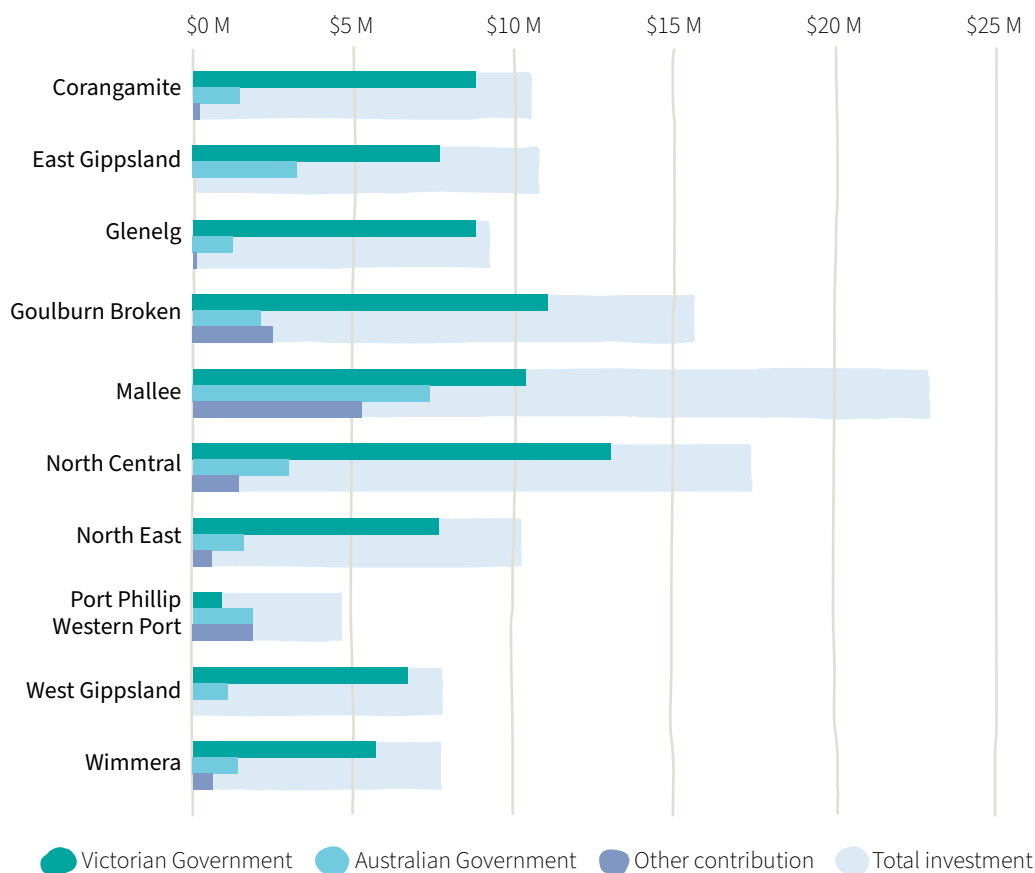
STATEWIDE INVESTMENT 2024-25

The Victorian Government contributed 68% of CMA's total funding in 2024-25 totalling over \$80M dollars

The Australian Government contributed 21% of CMA's total funding in 2024-25 totalling over \$20M dollars



Investment by CMA by fund source



Combined CMA Outputs for 2024-25

Output description	Unit	2024-25 Actuals			
		Victorian Government	Australian Government	Other Organisations	Total
1. Structural works					
Channel	Km	76	-	-	76
Water storage	Number	22	-	3	25
Pump	Number	-	-	-	-
Irrigation structure	Ha	145	-	-	145
Waterway structure	Number	287	17	156	460
Terrestrial structure	Number	14	42	-	56
Terrestrial feature	Number	202	2	-	204
Monitoring structure	Number	284	259	25	568
Fence	Km	123	10	6	139
Visitor facility	Number	65	-	-	65
Road	Km	21	-	-	21
Crossing	Number	2	-	-	2
Marine and coastal Structure	Number	-	-	-	-
2. Environmental works					
Vegetation	Ha	1,937	413	88	2,438
Weed control	Ha	70,517	123,983	74	194,574
Pest animal control	Ha	193,284	583,769	12,171	789,224
Over-abundant wildlife	Ha	-	-	-	-
Threatened species response	Number	74	5	-	79
Emergency species response	Number	2	-	-	2
Soil treatment	Ha	-	2	-	2
Earth works	Number	67	-	-	67
Rubbish removal	Ha	5	-	-	5
3. Management services					
Grazing	Ha	391	98	2	491
Agricultural practice change	Ha	1,117	3,290	6	4,414
Water	Number	156	2	-	158
Fire regime	Number	1	610	-	611
4. Planning and regulation					
Approval and advice	Number	9,508	12	1	9,521
Management agreement	Number	215	72	9	296
Assessment	Number	3,928	1,010	33	4,971
Engagement event	Number of participants	40,197	11,471	1,884	53,552
Partnership	Number	604	27	9	640
Plan	Number	149	30	1	180
Publication	Number	765	148	53	966
Information management system	Number	41	2	1	44

Statewide Case Studies

VALUE ADDING FOR CATCHMENTS

It's hard to imagine Victoria without CMAs and the value our small but mighty network delivers for catchments and communities.

Our compelling narrative is of how shared responsibility and collaborative action leads to substantial and sustainable environmental outcomes.

Central to our impact is our proven ability to collaborate with federal, state, and local funding bodies, to effectively add value to their investments and efforts by delivering on key strategic priorities to:

- Inspire, recruit and coordinate the partnerships required on public and private land to protect, connect and enhance the State's flagship waterways.
- Enhance and deliver on projects using an Integrated Catchment Management approach to bolster collaborations, reduce overlap and extend value for money.
- Be trusted to effectively deliver community-centric initiatives with our local networks through Integrated Catchment Management.

CMAs provide value for money, here's how:

→ **Protecting and enhancing waterways so the state can play.**

Our work enhances access for fishing, water quality for swimming and boating and enhancing the state's tourism appeal.

→ **Supporting farmers to thrive.**

We work with farmers to innovate practices like irrigation, support healthy soils, protect livestock, remove predators, pests and weeds along rivers to improve pasture condition, viability and productivity so agriculture can thrive.

→ **Reducing the impact and costs of floods and erosion.**

Working together to protect and enhance rivers stabilises banks and builds resilience. This reduces the impacts of floods and erosion protecting community and private assets and avoiding or lowering repair costs.

→ **Keeping us happy and healthy with a better environment.**

Protecting the natural environment on a landscape scale increases habitat for wildlife and supports biodiversity. It also sets a foundation for economic activity and healthy and productive Victorian communities to meet future challenges and opportunities.

→ **Supporting regional jobs and communities.**

Employing over 350 local legends, CMA workers across Victoria support their local and First Nations communities and are also part of something bigger with 3.85 direct jobs supported per \$1M spent in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing Support Services industry in Victoria.*

**Source: REMPLAN 2023.*

Above: Thrill and splash on the Wimmera River – water skiing in full flight surrounded by nature's beauty. (WCMA)

Left: East Gippsland CMA's CEO, Bec Hemming with Gippsland Agricultural Group's general manager Jen Smith, celebrating the launch of Victoria's first Soil School. (EGCMA)



Anglers enjoying a peaceful day by the riverbank at the Horsham Fishing Competition. (WCMA)



Stories from across the State

NURTURING NATURAL ASSETS PAYS DIVIDENDS

Wimmera

Waterways are essential for healthy people and places, but actually putting a dollar value on them amplifies their importance to our communities and lives.

Ongoing research with partners has revealed that Wimmera Southern Mallee's high-value waterways contribute an estimated \$30M in annual economic benefits and \$3M in health benefits to their communities.

These figures highlight the incredible return on investment that comes from nurturing natural assets. The figures were gathered over the past nine years through the CMA supporting a visionary initiative to understand and amplify the economic and wellbeing benefits of the region's treasured waterways.

The vitality of these waterways is essential to sustaining these benefits.

By working with local communities, Wimmera CMA significantly contributes to the health of the catchment through:

- Strategic planning and delivery of environmental water.
- Enhancing water quality through erosion control and sustainable grazing practices.
- Boosting amenity with native vegetation and accessible recreational spaces.

Healthy waterways support healthy communities, strong economies, and fuel vibrant community life. The region's waterways are the heart of beloved local events like fishing competitions, water skiing showcases, festivals, and rowing regattas - all bring people together and generate significant economic activity for our communities.



PROVIDING MORE ACCURATE FLOOD ADVICE

Corangamite

Up-to-date, accurate mapping of the Corangamite catchment provides a valuable model to show where waters could flow in a flood event. It is one tool Corangamite CMA uses to manage developments and provide free advice to landholders on floodplains.

Throughout 2024-25, detailed subcatchment mapping was developed giving a fine-grain view of topography and how water could travel across landscapes. This enhanced mapping allows the CMA to provide more accurate flood advice, and understand the connections between waterways, wetlands and floodplains. It also helps to plan improvement works for these waterbodies, such as environmental water releases and refuge pools for native fish.

Above: Corangamite CMA detailed subcatchment mapping.

WE'RE ALL GOING TO SOIL SCHOOL

East Gippsland

The Gippsland Soils Symposium, hosted by the Gippsland Agricultural Group with support from East Gippsland CMA, brought together 112 passionate minds—farmers, soil scientists, agronomists, and community members for a day rich in conversation, connection, and discovery.

The event marked a decade of dedication, showcasing ten years of soil data and farm renovation that's transforming the way Gippsland grows. Attendees explored the vital role of sulphur and trace elements, and heard firsthand from four innovative farmers working the red gum plains each unlocking the hidden potential beneath their feet.

It was more than a symposium. It was a celebration of knowledge, collaboration, and the living, breathing foundation of our landscapes: soil.

Below: Gippsland Agricultural Group's Soil Symposium brings together over 112 attendees. (EGCMA)



Statewide Case Studies

WORKING WITH COMMUNITY

Partnerships are at the heart of everything we do.

We work with Traditional Owners, Landcare and landholders to achieve our united vision. CMAs create, nurture and leverage partnerships across their local communities. In our nearly 30 years, we have developed and nurtured over 35,000 partnerships. These are our 'superpower' allowing us to collectively manage, protect, and enhance so much more of Victoria's natural resources than we could do on our own.

Our people are deeply embedded in, and active parts of their communities – living and working in the catchments they serve.

This provides a unique, firsthand understanding of local challenges and opportunities.

Trust and credibility are cornerstones of our local effort and we have made significant strides in working together to inform and empower practice change to protect and enhance catchments.

"What we do leaves a great legacy and we are super proud of that. Partners such as the CMA have made a massive difference to our success. The team members across all the projects have been great."

Dave Bateman

General Manager Bass Coast Landcare Network



Stories from across the State

WATERING COUNTRY, EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES FORUM

North Central

In the heart of Swan Hill, a powerful story unfolded. Over two vibrant days, more than 180 Barapa Barapa and Wamba Wamba Traditional Owners gathered for the Watering Country, Empowering Communities Forum. This landmark event celebrated deep cultural connection, community leadership, and environmental restoration as part of the Victorian Murray Floodplain Restoration Project.

Culturally safe spaces opened for open dialogue, connection, collaboration, and shared decision-making around Watering Country. It was powerful and insightful, reinforcing the importance of genuine discussions with First Nations Communities and laying the foundation for continued connections.

Project updates focused on enabling water onto the Guttrum and Benwell forest floodplains and resulting Cultural Heritage Management Plans. The First Nations Working Group presented the Supporting Aboriginal Values framework embedding Barapa Barapa and Wamba Wamba values and aspirations into the Project's heart.

Members of the Barapa Wamba Water for Country project provided their perspectives on project outcomes with much to celebrate. The forum also heard about the statewide Water is Life initiative and explored opportunities for naming waterways in language and strengthening cultural heritage protections.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE OVENS

North East

It's amazing what's being achieved by everyone working together to restore the Upper Ovens River. The united effort involves Traditional Owner groups, partners and community groups all working to care for the river they love and enjoy in many different ways.

This multi-stakeholder approach demonstrates the power of collaboration in achieving long-term environmental outcomes and sets a benchmark for inclusive catchment restoration.

Left: Landcare, Parks Victoria, community members and NECMA – Freeburgh Streamside Reserve National Tree Planting Day 2025. (NECMA)



KUGERUNGHOME, A RIVER WITH HEART

West Gippsland

Empowering communities to tackle the challenge of healing rivers is at the heart of the Our Catchments Our Communities program and what is happening on the ground for Kugerungmome/Powlett River in South Gippsland.

Flowing across Bunurong Country, Kugerungmome is alive with biodiversity, stories and cultural heritage. Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation are the Traditional Owners and cultural authority of the river's story. They gifted the name, Kugerungmome, with a painting of its story and are implementing a Traditional Owner-led project across the program.

Along its course the river passes farms, small townships and schools. Starting in 2022 following decades of collective efforts driven by Landcare, new projects will include land stewardship, habitat restoration on conservation covenants, fox control and community action for Hooded Plovers. Landholders and community will collaborate to expand the reach and possibilities of works.

"We're excited about what we can achieve together and the legacy we will leave. Caring for catchments isn't something that can be done alone, we need everyone," said Mikaela Power, West Gippsland CMA Board Chair.

Above: Kugerungmome Powlett River partners on Bunurong country. (WGCMCA)

Taungurung, Duduroah, and Bangerang Traditional Owner groups are working with Parks Victoria, Landcare, fly fishers, council and community to restore the river stretch.

Another highlight is the collaborative effort to restore the Freeburgh Streamside Reserve where the CMA removed weeds before Landcare mobilised volunteers to plant native trees.

Taungurung Land and Waters Council contracted Biik Heritage Services for follow-up weed control ensuring culturally informed land management.

Further downstream, fly fishers worked with the CMA to enhance the river through strategically placed hardwood timber and boulders. This will support native fish populations and aquatic species such as platypus, while improving overall river health. Fishing groups also contributed through 'Trees for Trout' planting days, reinforcing their commitment to ecological sustainability.

Statewide Case Studies

RESPONDING TO DROUGHT

Frontline in dry times

CMAs are on the ground in our communities - in the good times and the dry.

Across the state, we work year round to strengthen resilience in catchments and communities. But when dry times hit, we are often the first to feel their impact. We are on the ground, ready to pivot from resilience to response mode, working with partners like Agriculture Victoria to deliver the programs and assistance our communities need for as long as they need as the long lasting ripple effects spread far and wide.

Addressing the impacts of climate change on natural systems is central to our work. We support a Climate Change Coordinator to provide support across all CMAs, facilitate collaborative projects, promote knowledge sharing and influence policy design.

We know all too well that droughts are not just about water - they are about people. Along with the environmental and financial impacts, mental health takes a major blow and this is reflected in our personalised and local drought response.

Regulated releases flowing over the Dergholm fishway on the Glenelg River. (Alex Lewis)

"The impact the environmental flow and compensation flow water has had in a series of disastrous years to sustain flora, fauna and farmers is enormous. This water has literally sustained life across the region."

Justin Weaver, landholder on the Glenelg River
Balmoral, Victoria



Stories from across the State

KEEPING SUPPORT FLOWING FOR FARMERS DURING DROUGHT

Glenelg Hopkins

During the 2024–25 water year, Glenelg Hopkins CMA released compensation flows to support landholders and communities along the Glenelg River. This entitlement, managed by the Glenelg Hopkins CMA, is designed to meet domestic and stock water requirements along the river following the construction of Rocklands Reservoir.

Releases were initiated in response to feedback from the Compensation Flow Users' Group, a group of farmers which provides guidance on the use of this entitlement. Due to prolonged dry conditions over the past 12 months, several landholders have been increasingly reliant on the river. Concerns were also raised regarding elevated salinity levels impacting its use as drinking water for stock.

The CMA ordered the release of 1,211 megalitres across three separate events, over 71 days. Landholders were informed ahead of time and the releases were coordinated with environmental water deliveries to maximise shared benefits across both types of flows.

CENTRAL CONNECTION FOR CORANGAMITE COMMUNITY

Corangamite

It's been a particularly challenging year with drought conditions in the Corangamite region testing landholders and rural communities and the role of the Sustainable Agriculture Facilitator has provided crucial support. The designated central contact point for farmers, landholders, industry, and community groups, supports climate-smart sustainable agriculture practices in the region.

When conditions are tough, providing opportunity to connect remains an important function of the Facilitator, bringing people together to share information and resources and to support each other. In drought conditions, the focus of conversations



AMPLIFYING RURAL VOICES

Goulburn Broken

Using novel ways to help communities better prepare for and adapt to the impacts of drought and climate change is a key strategy of the Goulburn Drought Resilience Plan coordinated by the CMA.

The Plan, creates a central point to share information and build awareness, skills and adoption of drought preparedness actions in the agricultural community.

Four screenings of *Just A Farmer*, a film amplifying rural voices to raise awareness about mental health, which were attended by more than 550 people.

The Yea Saleyards Health Checks program was evaluated to develop guidelines to extend the initiative to other farming sectors and regions.

The facilitation of 'Occasional Counsellor' training sessions, delivered in-person and online, equipping rural professionals with practical strategies to support mental health in their communities.

Goulburn Broken CMA, in partnership with local councils, is exploring opportunities to water community recreation reserves during drought periods.

The Regional Drought Resilience Planning program is funded through the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund and the Victorian Government.

Above: Just a Farmer film screening. (GBCMA)

has shifted and adapted as required to meet the community and stakeholders where they are at.

Drought conversations were a focus for the Facilitator across the many community events and farm visits. They provided the space for discussions, to listen and understand what issues and challenges the community are facing, and supplied critical information on programs, grants, and support available to support them through truly trying times.

Below: Farm site visit, drying dam. (CCMA)



Statewide Case Studies

SUPPORTING FIRE RECOVERY

Rising from the ashes

Bushfires have been a harsh reality for Victoria over the past year - and decade - with both the immediate response of fires in the Grampians and Little Desert National Parks and ongoing recovery from the unprecedented 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires.

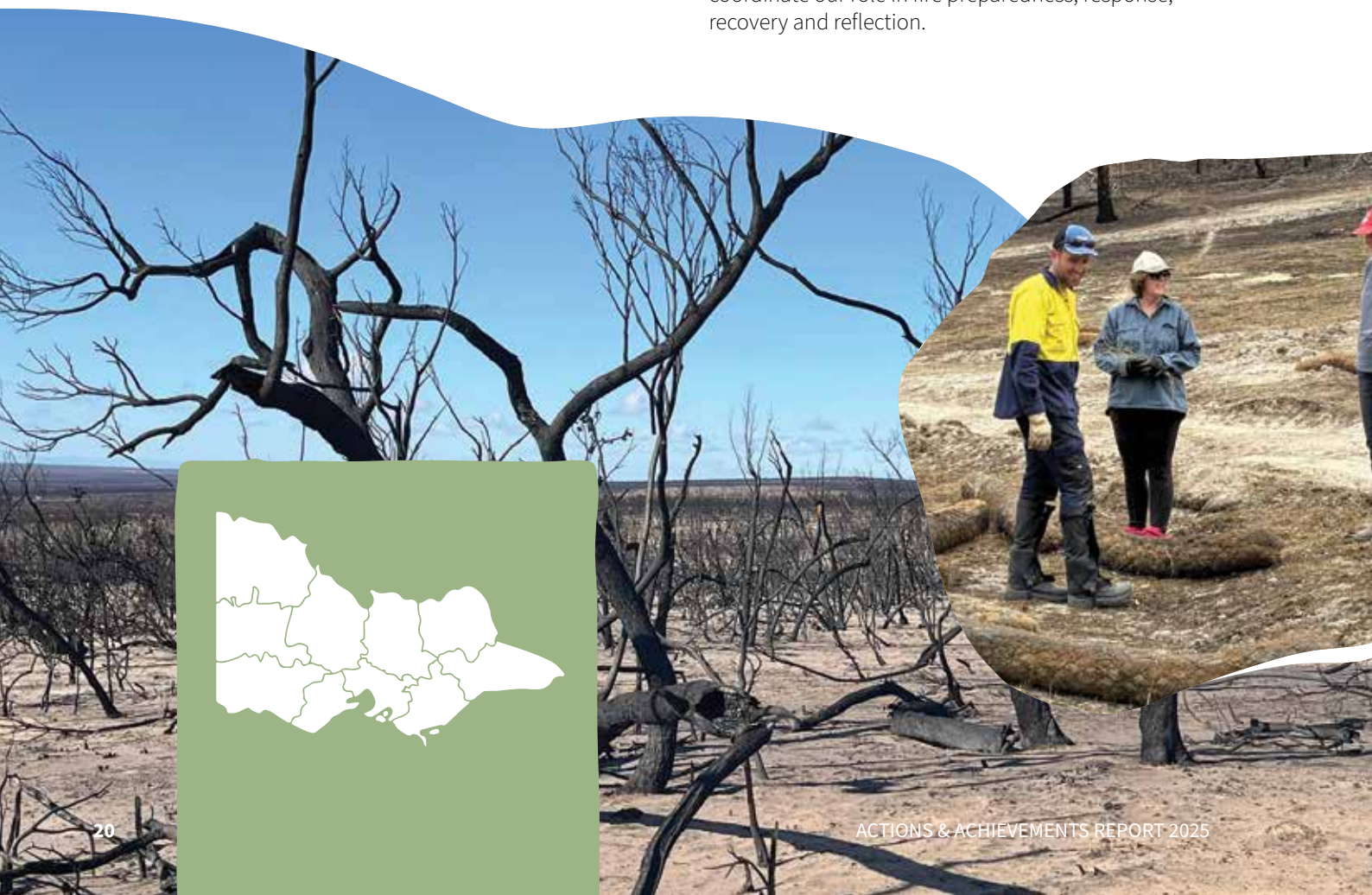
As part of the local community, CMAs feel the effects of such events greatly and, once the emergency is over, we are on the ground to be part of the solution utilising our people, partnerships, knowledge and relationships.

Our role is vital to the bushfire response, relief and recovery efforts. We can swiftly mobilise efforts - doing what we do every day - listening to Traditional Owners, working with local Councils, local government, partners and the communities we are part of to maximise funds, opportunities and impacts.

We can be there to protect waterways, help landholders and protect threatened landscapes and species. We are proud to be trusted by the Victorian and Australian Governments to deliver programs to build resilience in and restore landscapes.

There is overwhelming evidence that climate change is driving an increase in fire severity, frequency and geographical spread across Victoria. Whole catchments are being impacted, leading to largescale stream and estuary health impacts. This significantly increases the risk to Victoria's communities and catchments.

Under our legislative responsibilities, Victorian CMAs currently play varied roles and have differing levels of influence in fire management in Victoria. Over the past five years Vic Catchments has worked with Government and community to improve and coordinate our role in fire preparedness, response, recovery and reflection.



Stories from across the State

MOVING MALLEEFOWL AND RESTORING RIVERS AFTER DEVASTATING FIRES

Wimmera

In the summer of 2025, major bushfires swept through the Wimmera region. Two significant bushfires swept through Gariwerd (Grampians National Park) and joined to burn 135,000 hectares over many weeks. In January, a fire in Little Desert National Park threatened Dimboola township and burnt 95,000 hectares - most in a single day – demonstrating its severity.

The Gariwerd bushfires impacted upper catchment waterways, having a major effect on native habitat and wildlife. Forty out-buildings were destroyed, and thousands of hectares of agricultural land were burnt and livestock lost.

After the fires, Wimmera CMA worked with GWMWater to monitor water quality and prevent sediment moving downstream into waterways and key water storages and partnered with landholders to replace damaged riparian fencing.

RAPID RESPONSE FOR RIVER RECOVERY

Glenelg Hopkins

Small but mighty, the Glenelg Hopkins' two-person Regional Works crew helped safeguard vital livestock water supplies and natural waterways after the devastating Gariwerd bushfires.

The crew was established to provide additional help for land managers, community groups, and partner organisations to deliver the Glenelg Hopkins Regional Waterway Strategy. Having a crew ready at short notice has proved essential over the past few years.

The extensive Gariwerd fires severely impacted the Park and neighbouring landholders and once the fires were extinguished, land managers and the community were deeply concerned about how soot and sediment would impact rivers and dams when it rained.

The Crew rapidly deployed to the region to identify priority sites and construct 14 temporary sediment control structures across seven properties. They were right on time as the structures successfully safeguarded the farms when over 70 millimetres of rain fell to put them to the test.

Left: Little Desert National Park after the 2025 fire. (GHCMA)
Inset left: Galen, RWC crew leader and Landcare facilitator Lisa McIntyre, together with farmer Lizzie Marcus plan sediment control installation post-fire. (GHCMA)



Home to endangered Malleefowl populations, the Little Desert fire impacted known nesting and habitat sites. The CMA continues to work with partners to assess the long term impacts on populations. The fire destroyed the Little Desert Nature Lodge, one home at Dimboola and extensive native bushland – the intensity means it will be a slow recovery for the precious ecosystem.

Wimmera CMA worked with partner agencies on emergency response works including the recovery and translocation of two Malleefowl eggs and targeted pest animal control to promote regeneration.

DOUBLING DOWN ON FIRE RECOVERY

East Gippsland

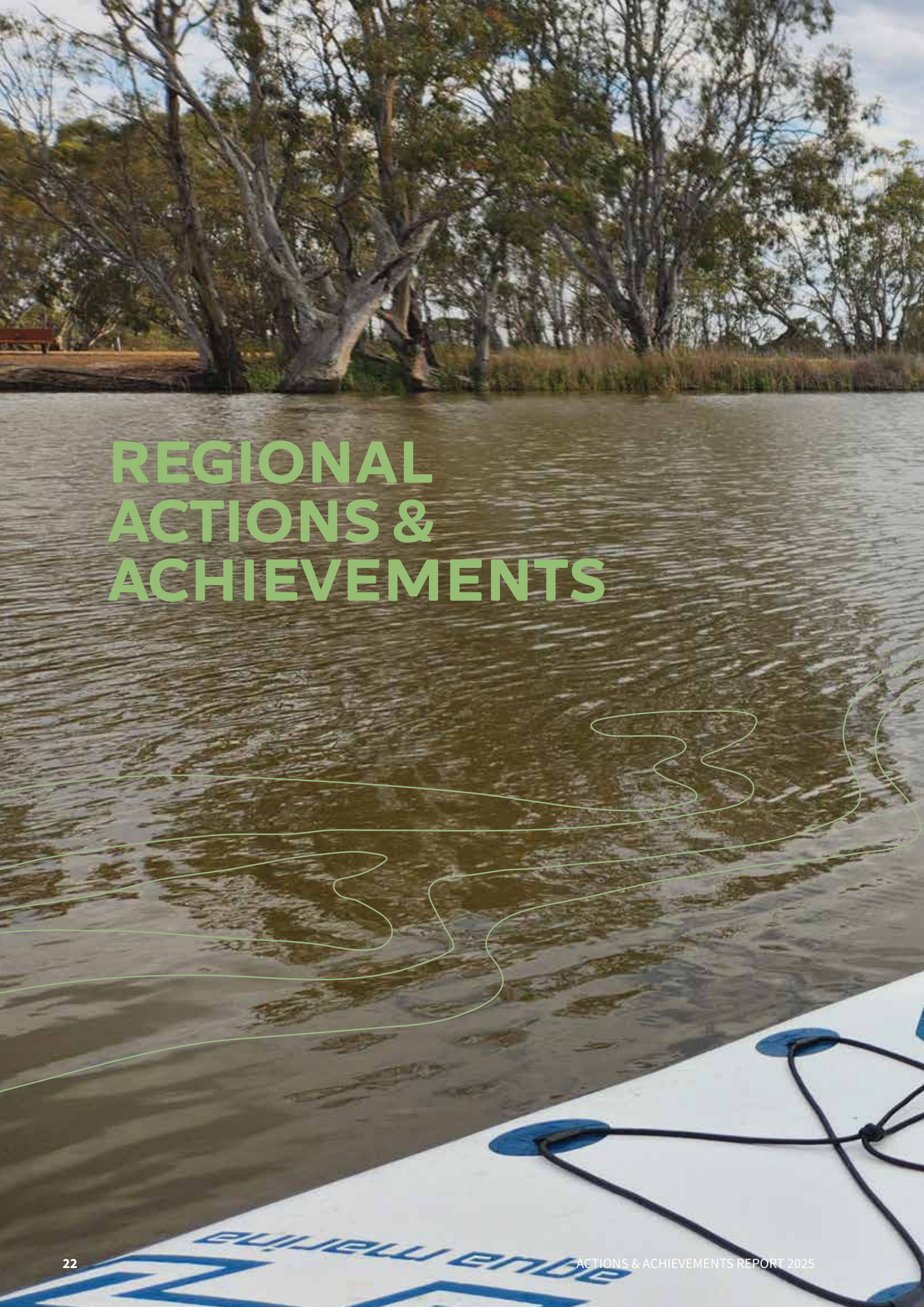
In March 2025 Vic Catchments hosted a fire briefing bringing together fire management agencies, community representative agencies and Victorian CMAs to talk about all aspects of fire and catchment management.

Over 80 attendees learnt from guest speakers Euan Ferguson on community impacts and collaborative decision making, Dr Petter Nyman on fire impacts catchment modelling and spatial analysis, Dr Mark Norman on climate change impacts and future management and Chris Hardam on the history and future of fire management in Victoria.

Participants shared ideas and looked at opportunities and issues moving forward in fire management. From this, Vic Catchments and the State's CMAs are committed to continue to work together to further develop collaborative leadership models, simplify regional planning, increase communications and community engagement and to share local knowledge and networks to coordinate recovery efforts.

Below: Vic Catchments Fire Briefing guest speakers.





REGIONAL ACTIONS & ACHIEVEMENTS



Fishing Boat ramp Horsham – enjoying new access ramps and piers along Wimmera River. (WCMA)



“This year has been extremely difficult for farmers, communities and the environment in southwest Victoria, due to the ongoing impact of two years of drought. Such conditions amplify the reliance of people, businesses and the economy on nature and the services that it provides.”

Cath Jenkins
Corangamite CMA Chair

Windmill. (Alison Pouliot)

CORANGAMITE

2024-25 Achievements

- Together with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation we helped keep the Moorabool River flowing during dry conditions through water for the environment and Wadawurrung water.
- Launched Curdies River Coordinating Committee Strategic Plan 2025-2030, outlining its five-year roadmap.
- Worked with Southern Farming Systems and Great South Coast Food and Fibre to implement regional drought resilience plan actions and share knowledge about climate-smart agriculture practices with farmers and industry.

Our future vision

Healthy and productive lands and waters cared for and enjoyed by thriving communities.

Corangamite Regional Catchment Strategy



Curdies River Coordinating Committee.



Moorabool River flowing at Dog Rocks Batesford.



Keeping a river flowing in extremely dry conditions can be a significant challenge. Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and Corangamite CMA are working together to maintain flow on the Moorabool River.



LOCATION

Moorabool River

TRADITIONAL OWNERS

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners
Aboriginal Corporation

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Managed 3 Environmental Water Holdings.
- Secured 1 Management Agreement - binding non-perpetual.
- Held 8 engagement events.
- 1 Management Plan.

INVESTMENT

Australian Government, Natural
Heritage Trust (DAFF) 2024/2025
\$126,660, 2020-2025 5 year project total
\$734,740

PARTNERS

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners
Aboriginal Corporation, Barwon Water,
Central Highlands Water, Victorian
Environmental Water Holder

Case Study

WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP MOORABOOL RIVER FLOWING

The Moorabool River is one of the most flow-stressed rivers in Victoria. The construction of reservoirs, extraction for drinking water supply and irrigation, and a significant number of farm dams in the catchment are all contributing factors. This is compounded by dry conditions in the Moorabool catchment; June 2025 was the first month to exceed average rainfall totals since April 2024.

Corangamite CMA supports the health of rivers and wetlands through water for the environment – water that is released into rivers and wetlands to support the plants and animals that live, feed and breed in them.

On the Moorabool River, Corangamite CMA strategically manages water for the environment with support from Central Highlands Water, the operator of the Lal Lal Reservoir near Ballarat. Water is released from Lal Lal Reservoir at different times of the year in different volumes to support a range of ecological processes.

Maintaining varied flow within a river is very important for a diverse and healthy river. Higher flows allow native plants to grow and spread, providing habitat for animals, whereas many waterbugs, a key food source for fish and platypus, need lower flows. Getting the right balance is the role of Corangamite CMA's Environmental Water Team.

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation has also used volumes of water supplied by Central Highlands Water and Barwon Water in the past two years as 'Wadawurrung water' to support Cultural values along the Moorabool River.

Both Wadawurrung water and water for the environment have their place in supporting the environmental and cultural health of the Moorabool River, especially during periods of low and sporadic rainfall.

The absence of sustained rainfall has also meant that recent freshes – large pulses of water that help trigger fish migration and streamside plant growth – have all been due to water for the environment and Wadawurrung water.

Being able to deliver and maintain flow in such a dry year is a great example of what Traditional Owners, water corporations and CMAs are doing behind the scenes to protect and restore our rivers for their long-term health.

*Top: Water for the environment is released from Lal Lal Reservoir.
Left: The Moorabool River surrounding Batesford is vulnerable to
cease-to-flow events where the river stops flowing.*

Case Study

BUILDING STRONG, CLIMATE-SMART CONNECTIONS

The Sustainable Agriculture Facilitator (SAF) is a designated central contact point for farmers, landholders, industry, and community groups that supports climate-smart sustainable agriculture practices in the Corangamite CMA region.

The scope of the SAF role is to:

1. Engage and inform farmers, landholders, community groups, and agriculture industries within their NRM region about climate-smart, sustainable agriculture practices
2. Facilitate partnerships and connections that will assist farmers, landholders, community groups and agriculture industries to work together
3. Support the delivery of sustainable agriculture projects in the region

Bringing together such diverse stakeholders across the catchment in a meaningful way can be a challenging task, needing not only great relationship building skills but an approach that empowers all parties and provides on-ground benefits.

To bring the knowledge-sharing approach to life, Corangamite CMA's Sustainable Agriculture Facilitator Karen O'Keefe regularly hosts Communities of Practice (CoP) meetings.

A CoP is a group of people who share a common concern, similar challenges, or an interest in a topic who come together to fulfill both individual and group goals.

Communities of Practice often focus on sharing best practices, connecting like-minded people, and creating new knowledge to advance professional practice. Interaction on an ongoing basis is an important part of this.

The CoPs facilitated by the Corangamite CMA SAF have included:

- Dung Beetles in southeast Australia CoP
- Southwest Dairy Natural Resource Management (NRM) CoP
- Regenerative Agriculture in Corangamite CoP
- Corangamite Rural Women's Network CoP
- Carbon Farming Outreach Program in Southwest Victoria CoP
- A new Victorian Equine Landcare CoP

The CoP model is fostering networks of people including agricultural industry groups, community and Landcare groups, Government agencies, farmers, agricultural businesses, researchers and students to share information about climate smart farming ideas, learn about current research, share information about projects, and to discuss collaboration opportunities, both within and beyond the Corangamite CMA region.

Top: Corangamite CMA Sustainable Agriculture Facilitator Karen O'Keefe hosting a CoP meeting.

Right: Corangamite CMA Sustainable Agriculture Facilitator Karen O'Keefe with the Southwest Dairy NRM community of practice.



To foster knowledge-sharing about climate-smart sustainable agriculture practices and stronger connections between farmers, landholders, industry and community groups, Corangamite CMA's Sustainable Agriculture Facilitator hosts regular Communities of Practice meetings.



LOCATION

Corangamite CMA region

ACHIEVEMENTS

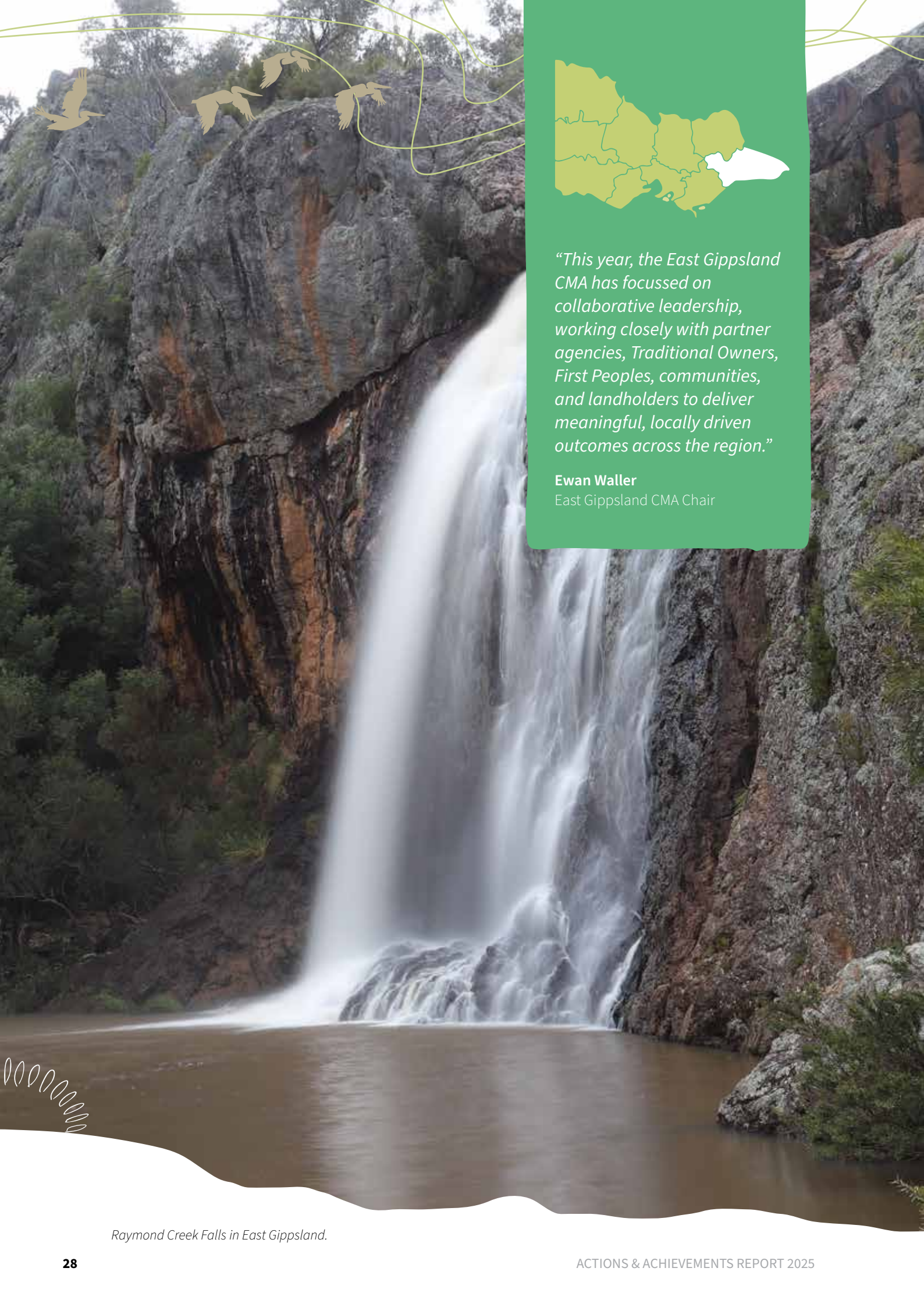
- Supported climate-smart sustainable agriculture practices.
- Fostered knowledge-sharing.
- Shared current research.
- Built connections between farmers, landholders, community groups, Landcare, agencies, and agriculture industries.

INVESTMENT

EC6 \$670K total over 4 years.

PARTNERS

WestVic Dairy, Agriculture Victoria, Landcare groups and networks, Southern Farming Systems, Otway Agroforestry Network, and Landcare Victoria Incorporated



“This year, the East Gippsland CMA has focussed on collaborative leadership, working closely with partner agencies, Traditional Owners, First Peoples, communities, and landholders to deliver meaningful, locally driven outcomes across the region.”

Ewan Waller
East Gippsland CMA Chair

Raymond Creek Falls in East Gippsland.



EAST GIPPSLAND

2024-25 Achievements

- Delivered quality projects with partners, landholders and community including completing the bushfire recovery program, supporting community through several floods and engaging with community to update the estuary opening protocols.
- Supported collaborative leadership models to deliver sustainable agriculture programs. This includes coordinating the Topsoils3 program, Sustainable Agriculture Facilitator, Carbon Outreach program and the CSIRO soil monitoring program for East Gippsland.
- Partnered with agencies to advance climate adaptation, including the Gippsland Lakes Room to Move project, Flagship waterways and monitoring, and renewing estuary opening protocols across the region.

Our future vision

We are leaders in integrated catchment management, partnering with our communities to enhance East Gippsland's landscapes, biodiversity and cultural values.

East Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy



A day learning about the Macleod Morass with Lucknow Primary School.



Launch of Gippsland Soil School with Gippsland Agricultural Group GaaG. (Lyric Anderson)



Students across East Gippsland explored natural resource management through art and wildlife, thanks to East Gippsland CMA's Catchment Connections roadshow, highlighting biodiversity, waterway health, and threatened species.



LOCATION

East Gippsland

TRADITIONAL OWNERS

GLaWAC

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Engaged 500 participants at events.
- Produced 6 publications per year.
- Working with partners to achieve successful results.
- Increased habitat for endangered shorebirds and migratory birds.

INVESTMENT

Victorian Government's EC6 \$100,000, year 1 of 4

PARTNERS

Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC), East Gippsland Art Gallery, Black Snake Productions, East Gippsland Landcare Network, Far East Victoria Landcare, Cann Valley Landcare Group, Bairnsdale Men's Shed, East Gippsland Primary Schools and P12 schools

Case Study

CATCHMENT CONNECTIONS

As an ongoing commitment to environmental education, East Gippsland CMA delivered its Catchment Connections program to schools across the region, with a special focus this year on threatened species.

Students learned about the vital work undertaken by the East Gippsland CMA, in collaboration with partners, environmental organisations, and dedicated volunteer groups, to protect and restore the health of local catchments.

Teaming with Black Snake Productions and their display of native wildlife, students were captivated with live animal encounters that brought biodiversity and threatened species education to life.

This year's program also featured a creative new partnership with the East Gippsland Art Gallery. Students participated in guided art classes where they decorated wooden cutouts of threatened species, learning about each animal's habitat and the importance of biodiversity. These artworks were also showcased at a special event to mark Threatened Species Day.

The program was made possible through the support of many community volunteers. The Bairnsdale Men's Shed crafted the wooden stakes used to display the students' artwork, while other volunteers prepared the animal cutouts for decorating.

East Gippsland Landcare Network's Seedbank also contributed by supplying native seeds for students to grow. These seeds, sourced by volunteers from across the region, were carefully selected to support the habitats of the species the students learnt about. The revegetation of local areas with these indigenous plants plays a key role in restoring ecosystems and supporting biodiversity.

East Gippsland CMA are always keen to help schools, and their students gain a deeper understanding of the environment and in this case the vital role of healthy habitats for threatened species.

By combining interactive wildlife encounters, hands-on art activities, and environmental education, Catchment Connections continues to inspire the next generation to care for their local environment.

This initiative is proudly funded by the Victorian Government as part of its commitment to protecting and enhancing Victoria's waterways and catchments.

Top: Lindenow South Primary School decorating a threatened species at East Gippsland CMA's Catchment Connections school program. Left: Mallacoota P12 interact with wildlife at East Gippsland CMA's Catchment Connections school program.

Case Study

PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR WORLD RENOWNED GIPPSLAND LAKES RAMSAR SITE

The project is enhancing critical habitats and nesting areas for Little Terns, Australian Fairy Terns, Eastern Hooded Plovers, and Eastern Curlews through targeted sand renourishment efforts.

There have been major declines to populations of shorebird across Australia due to predation from introduced species, loss of habitat and human activities. Breeding colonies are becoming rarer, and many traditional nesting sites have been abandoned.

Sand dredged by Gippsland Ports has been used to create critical breeding and feeding habitats across several locations in the Gippsland Lakes, restoring a further four hectares of vital habitat.

In addition to sand renourishment, the project is protecting fringing wetlands and saltmarsh habitats surrounding the Gippsland Lakes by installing fencing to restrict animal and human access.

The project includes the monitoring of key ecological health indicators of the Gippsland Lakes with the installation of water quality gauges and conducting surveys of migratory birds, frogs, saltmarsh, and seagrass. The data collected will inform management actions for the Gippsland Lakes throughout this project and into the future.

Bird surveys are an important part of this project, and with over 20 years of data already captured, these efforts are continuing. Sightings of terns already using the renourished area is a very encouraging early sign of the project's success.

This data will help guide future management actions, keeping the Gippsland Lakes healthy and sustainable into the future.

This project is funded by the Australian Government Natural Heritage Trust and delivered by the East Gippsland CMA, a member of the Commonwealth Regional Delivery Partners panel.



Top: Day old Little Tern chick on nest – image taken under scientific license by BirdLife staff. (D. Sullivan)

Right: Bar-tailed Godwits happily foraging whilst Gippsland Ports work on the sand renourishment program to support habitat.



This collaborative project is restoring vital shorebird habitat in the Ramsar listed Gippsland Lakes, enhancing nesting areas through sand renourishment and ecological monitoring to protect threatened species and guide future conservation.

LOCATION

East Gippsland, Gippsland Lakes

TRADITIONAL OWNERS

GLaWAC

ACHIEVEMENTS

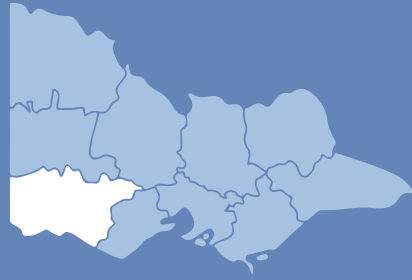
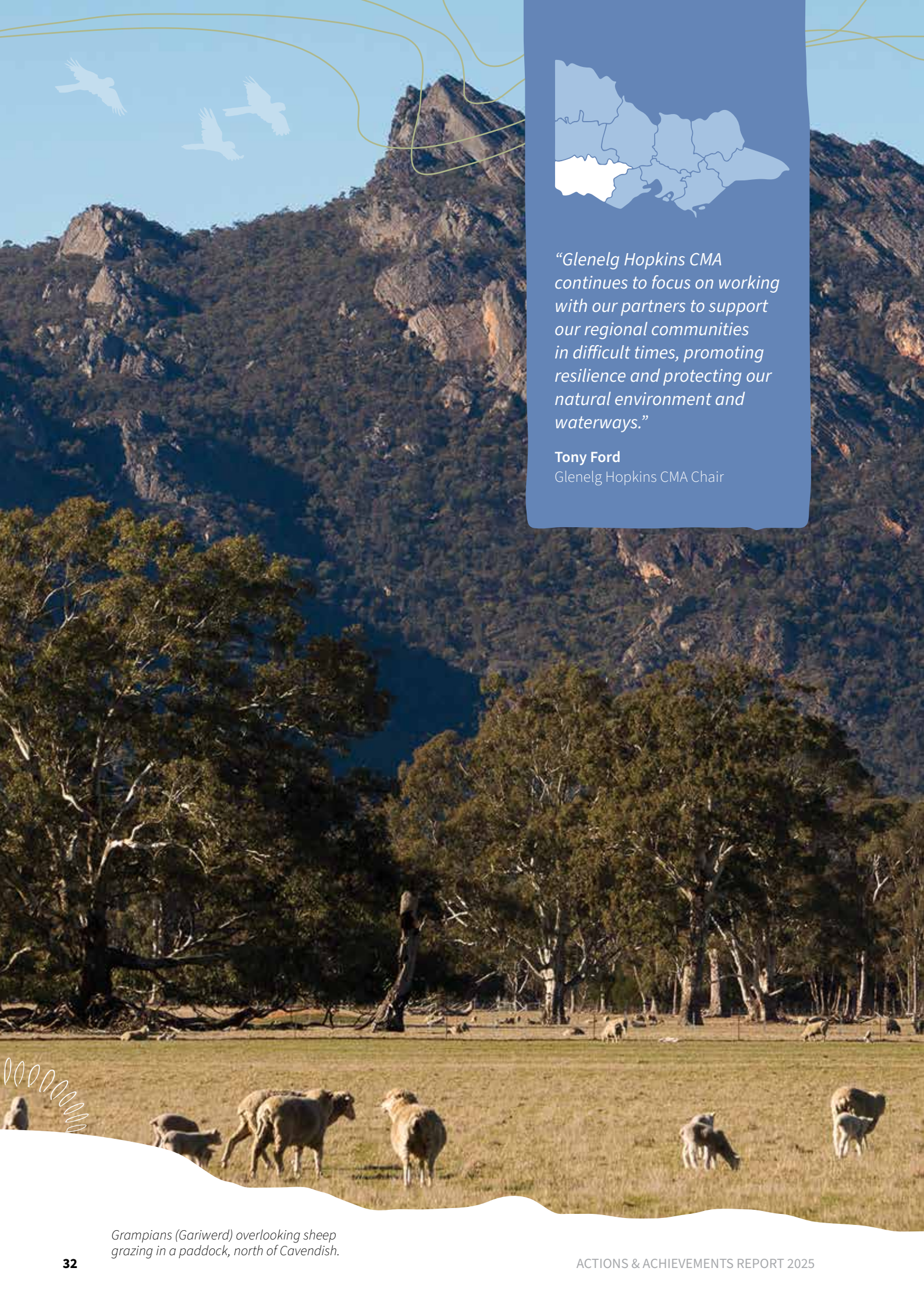
- Produced 2 written publications.
- Protected and restored 2 hectares of habitat.

INVESTMENT

National Heritage Trust, \$110,000 year 2 of 5

PARTNERS

GLaWAC, Gippsland Ports, BirdLife Australia, Greening Australia, Parks Victoria



“Glenelg Hopkins CMA continues to focus on working with our partners to support our regional communities in difficult times, promoting resilience and protecting our natural environment and waterways.”

Tony Ford
Glenelg Hopkins CMA Chair

Grampians (Gariwerd) overlooking sheep grazing in a paddock, north of Cavendish.



GLENELG HOPKINS

2024-25 Achievements

- Secured \$1.62M for recovery and resilience building after the Grampians Yarram Gap Road bushfire with bank stabilisation, revegetation, riparian fence repairs, debris removal and weed control activities planned.
- Created new populations of endangered grassland species, and featured in The Age and ABC Television, promoting the importance of these grasslands to the wider community through the Saving 17 Species Project.
- Visited Country with amazing tour guides, where school students had unforgettable cultural heritage learning experiences and developed cultural knowledge about the Gunditjmara.

Our future vision

Empowered communities nurturing a rich and connected landscape for all – today, tomorrow, together.

Glenelg Hopkins Regional Catchment Strategy



The Glenelg Hopkins CMA's Saving 17 Species project, funded through the Victorian Government's Nature Fund, is revegetating the Victorian Volcanic Plains.



The Grampians (Gariwerd) were impacted by bushfires in late 2024 and 2025 and repair work has now begun through Glenelg Hopkins CMA funded works to support waterway resilience post fire.



The Winda-Mara Junior Rangers school holidays program is a long running partnership between Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation and Glenelg Hopkins CMA's water resources team, helping young people learn about the catchment on Country.



LOCATION

Glenelg Hopkins Catchment area

TRADITIONAL OWNERS

Gunditjmarra

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Fun learning on Country.
- Education-based learning.
- Hands on activities.
- Focus on nature and catchment.

INVESTMENT

Funding through the Glenelg Hopkins CMA Water Resources team from various Victorian Government sources

PARTNERS

Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation, Victorian Government

Case Study

JUNIOR RANGERS LEARNING ON COUNTRY

The Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation is an organisation whose key focus is to provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their families to access culturally appropriate services and community activities. Winda-Mara reached out to Glenelg Hopkins CMA's Water Resources Team several years ago to run healthy catchment activities as part of their Junior Rangers School Holiday Program.

The focus for the program organisers was to contribute to their program goals of getting kids out on Country.

Through Winda-Mara, the activities are planned to support the holistic nature of caring for Country; that healthy Country makes healthy people and healthy people make healthy Country. The environment is ever variable and flowing, and similarly we attempt to deliver different, hands-on opportunities for children to engage in nature depending on how they are feeling on the day.

Over Winter when activities are based indoors, elements of the environment are brought inside. More recently, the CMA also partnered with small regional businesses (Nurture in Nature and Black Snake Productions) to bring further skills and resources.

Many of the Junior Rangers attend multiple program days, and often when there is a recap of previous messaging, they will jump in to answer the questions. Additionally, these Junior Rangers have been able to use these days to share their own experiences and knowledge such as the times of the First Nations seasonal calendar when they can catch crayfish, that the presence of a certain flowers blooming means they're entering their birthday season, or seeing eagles in the sky and commenting there must be lots of fish in the river for Bunjil to eat.

Throughout the years, activities have included learning about how an estuary works, native animals, how a catchment operates, native plants and trees, and the importance of water to Country. Activities run through the program are often hands on, with the Junior Rangers handling native animals, walking through native grasslands and forest areas, participating in building items to support learning and learning through art such as drawing, painting and photography.

Pictured: The Winda-Mara Junior Rangers project brings learning on Country through a partnership between the Glenelg Hopkins CMA and Winda Mara Aboriginal Cooperative.

Case Study

PLATY PATCH FOR THE PLATYPUS

A total of \$1.6M of works to support, create and protect platypus habitat are now underway on, in and around four sites along the Merri and Hopkins Rivers in Warrnambool by Glenelg Hopkins CMA and project partners as part of the Victorian statewide Platy Patch project.

The project is jointly funded through both the Australian Government through the Natural Heritage Trust under the Urban Rivers and Catchments Program and Victorian Government through the Rivers of Warrnambool Flagship Waterways Project.

“There has been a lot of planning going on in the background for these projects for a long period of time, and it’s exciting these projects are underway in our local area,” Glenelg Hopkins CMA CEO Adam Bester said.

The first of these projects led to a platypus habitat installation at Jubilee Park at Woodford being completed in early 2024.

Platypus are difficult creatures to study, since they are secretive and mainly active at night, dusk and dawn. Whilst they are found across much of Victoria, they need reliable surface water and flows, stable banks to burrow, intact streamside vegetation, instream woody habitat and sufficient invertebrate food.

Works to improve Platypus habitat will occur in the Warrnambool projects and build on the significant works the CMA has already undertaken to support the rivers around Warrnambool, including fish habitat works, riverbank woody weed removal, and stream connectivity over the last 20 years.

Platy Patch works will be undertaken by Glenelg Hopkins CMA in partnership with a variety of stakeholders including private landholders, Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, Warrnambool City Council and local angling and community groups.



Top: Riverbank vegetation planted as part of the first of 4 Platy Patch projects in the Glenelg Hopkins CMA region.
Right: Installation of in-stream platypus habitat in the Merri River, Warrnambool, as part of the Platy Patch Project.



A state-wide project across 14 sites to support the iconic platypus brings additional habitat and riparian vegetation to waterways in the southwest.

LOCATION

Glenelg Hopkins Catchment area

TRADITIONAL OWNERS

Gunditjmara, Eastern Maar

ACHIEVEMENTS

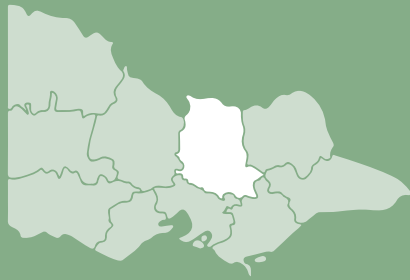
- Increased platypus habitat in waterways.
- Improved riparian areas through revegetation.
- Reduced non-native species in waterways.
- Increased awareness of platypus and habitat in local area.

INVESTMENT

\$1.652M over 4 years as part of the \$24M Platy Patch Project across Victoria

PARTNERS

Australian Government NHT: Urban Rivers and Catchments Program, Victorian Government, CMAs, Melbourne Water, Coliban Water, One Tree Planted, Zoos Victoria, Australian Platypus Conservancy, local governments, Parks Victoria, Landcare



“Partnerships are critical to the success of environmental health and have been the base of natural resource management in the Goulburn Broken catchment for more than 25 years. We actively partner with almost 40 organisations to achieve more resilient landscapes and successful communities.”

Sarah Parker
Goulburn Broken CMA Chair

GOULBURN BROKEN

2024-25 Achievements

- Released our third Reconciliation Action Plan which reinforced our continuing commitment to reconciliation as leaders who build respect, recognition, relationships and opportunity for Traditional Owners.
- Launched the Shepparton Irrigation Region Land and Water Management Plan 2050 which seeks to direct investment to safeguard the land and water resources that form the foundation of a healthy irrigation region.
- Assisted partner organisations to translocate threatened native fish from waterways with declining habitat and assisted in the release of Freshwater Catfish into local waterways to help establish new wild populations.

Our future vision

Resilient landscapes, thriving communities.

Goulburn Broken Regional Catchment Strategy



Threatened native fish including Flathead Galaxias were translocated from declining habitat to ensure their survival.



The Shepparton Irrigation Region Land and Water Management Plan 2050 was launched.



The Connecting Culture and Country project is working together with Traditional Owners and partners to protect and enhance the Goulburn Broken catchment's natural and cultural values.



LOCATION

Mooroopna Sand Hills and Reedy Lake

TRADITIONAL OWNERS

Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation and Taungurung Land and Waters Council

ACHIEVEMENTS

- 412 hectares of catchment stewardship, including revegetation, pest animal control, cultural assessments, community extension, a field day and publication.

INVESTMENT

State Government (DEECA) Our Catchments Our Communities 2024-2028

PARTNERS

Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation and Taungurung Land and Waters Council, Greater Shepparton City Council, Parks Victoria, DEECA, landholders, community

Case Study

CONNECTING CULTURE AND COUNTRY

This Our Catchments, Our Communities project promotes increased catchment stewardship in the Goulburn Broken catchment with a focus on connecting people, Traditional Owner culture and the natural environment through on-ground works and natural resource management extension.

Focusing on the protection and enhancement of public and private land, the project concentrates on the Sand Hills at Mooroopna on Yorta Yorta Country and the 1300 hectare Reedy Lake Wildlife Reserve, near Nagambie on Taungurung Country.

By the end of the first year, a combined 412 hectares of stewardship was achieved. In partnership with Traditional Owners, activities included pest plant and animal control, cultural assessments and surveys, fencing and site enhancement and maintenance.

The project runs until mid-2028 but the environmental and cultural benefits will be long term. For example, an increase in on-ground works and cultural knowledge at Reedy Lake contributes towards the broader health and cultural story of Taungurung Country.

The project also facilitates an increase in Traditional Owner access to Country, meaning there is greater potential for further identification, protection and mapping of significant cultural sites.

Connecting people, culture and the environment is the project's primary aim, offering an opportunity for landholders to improve remnant landscapes and connect with Traditional Owner cultural values.

Future activities include the establishment of a seed production area at the Mooroopna Sand Hills, stewardship on private land, cultural burning and continued pest plant and animal control.

Community engagement is an important part of the project. Activities have included The Year of the Tree Hollow community awareness campaign in 2025 to raise awareness around the importance of hollow-bearing habitat. A publication, The Bird Book, featuring woodland birds of the project area was produced.

Top: The wetlands and woodlands of the Reedy Lake Wildlife Reserve on Taungurung Country are culturally and environmentally significant. Left: The Mooroopna Sand Hills on Yorta Yorta Country have benefited from woody weed control and revegetation.

Case Study

PROTECTING TURTLES IN RAMSAR WETLANDS

The Barmah National Park, at approximately 30,000 hectares in area, encompasses the Barmah Forest Ramsar site and supports unique cultural and ecological values.

Goulburn Broken CMA's Barmah Country project aims to improve the condition of the Ramsar site by reducing threats posed to native flora and fauna by feral foxes, pigs and weeds.

One of the project priorities is protecting the three species of turtles that live there: the Broad-shelled, Murray River and Eastern Long-necked freshwater turtles.

Fox activity, pig-related disturbance and weed distribution were investigated to monitor impact and determine targeted pest plant and animal control works.

Recruitment and nest predation of juvenile turtle species was monitored by ecologists from the Arthur Rylah Institute, to measure the results of pest control activities.

In a fantastic outcome, a one-to-two-day-old critically endangered Murray River Turtle hatchling was recorded in February 2025, likely the youngest ever recorded.

The turtle's age was determined by the presence of its egg tooth which helps a hatchling break out of its shell, before falling off in one-to-two days.

This is a positive sign for the species, confirming the worthwhile impact of the pest control activities.

As part of working in partnership to protect biodiversity, the Barmah Country project supports the Joint Management Plan that gives voice to the Yorta Yorta people as the Traditional Owners of the land. This ensures their aspirations, knowledge and cultural priorities are at the forefront of healing Country.

The Barmah Country project funded a five-day floodplain ecology course, which marked its 15th year in 2024.

The course brings together specialists to present and share knowledge on floodplain topics such as cultural, ecological and geomorphological aspects. In the past year, 24 participants from 17 organisations and 20 expert presenters participated.

This project is funded by the Australian Government Natural Heritage Trust and delivered by the Goulburn Broken CMA, a member of the Commonwealth Regional Delivery Partners panel.



Goulburn Broken CMA is working in partnership to protect biodiversity in Barmah National Park from the impact of pest plants and animals.



LOCATION

Barmah National Park

TRADITIONAL OWNERS

Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Turtle nest predation and recruitment monitoring.
- Pest plant and animal monitoring.
- Pest plant and animal control.
- Floodplain Ecology Course.
- Skills and knowledge surveys.

INVESTMENT

Australian Government Natural Heritage Trust 2024-2028

PARTNERS

Parks Victoria, Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation, Arthur Rylah Institute (ARI), Ecology Australia Pty Ltd, Goulburn Murray Landcare Network

Top: A critically endangered Murray River Turtle hatchling was recorded in Barmah National Park. (ARI)

Right: The Ramsar-listed Barmah National Park, in flood - a critical breeding location for Murray River, Eastern Long-necked and Broad-shelled turtles. (ARI)



“Partnerships are integral to what we do. Strong, mutually beneficial partnerships underpin our work in the Mallee, and we are fortunate to have strong Traditional Owners, delivery partners, community groups and Landcare to work with.”

Allison McTaggart
Mallee CMA Chair

An unprecedented bird breeding event occurred at Lakes Powell and Carpul, near Robinvale, following the delivery of water for the environment.



MALLEE

2024-25 Achievements

- Delivered 92% of environmental works to address key threatening processes on priority landscapes, including: 565,000 hectares pest animal control, 61,000 hectares weed control, 100 hectares revegetation and 1,200 hectares of floodplain inundated by environmental water.
- Established and maintained 56 partnership arrangements to strengthen engagement, capacity, and on-ground delivery outcomes.
- Delivered 348 engagement events for 3,938 stakeholders with 99% of participants rating them as 'good' or 'excellent'.

Our future vision

Healthy and resilient landscapes being cared for by connected communities.

Mallee Regional Catchment Strategy



Mallee CMA's Kobe Brown and First People of the Millewa-Mallee's Dylan Lawson at an on-Country fishing event on Mulcra Island.



Mallee CMA's Emma Johnston and Victorian Fisheries Authority's Mark Adams translocating native catfish at Sandilong Creek.



For Mallee farmer Matt Curtis, putting his hand up for the Mallee CMA stewardship program meant he was able to finish an important job that may not have seen completion.

LOCATION

Boy Creek, Wargan, approximately 35 kilometres west of Mildura

ACHIEVEMENTS

- 5 management agreements.
- 5 mixed partnerships.
- 3 social assessments.
- 21 participants in engagement events.

INVESTMENT

Victorian Government: Our Catchments, Our Communities program

PARTNERS

Landholders

Case Study

FARMERS PUTTING THEIR HANDS UP TO GET THE JOB DONE

Third generation farmer Matt Curtis calls Boy Creek his home.

Matt has lived at Boy Creek his whole life and can't imagine living anywhere else.

It's that deep generational tie to the land that makes Matt so passionate about the sustainability and future of Boy Creek, located at Wargan, approximately 35 kilometres west of Mildura.

Matt was disheartened with pest animals and livestock foiling his attempts at regenerating the property with Black Box, Mallee and Belah trees.

"The trees (I planted) were being eaten by sheep and trampled by kangaroos," he said.

"They needed protection, but fencing is an expensive and time-consuming operation."

That's where the Mallee CMA Stewardship Program came in, providing Matt with not only the funding to make it possible to protect and preserve the riparian zone along the creek line, but also the resources needed to make it easy.

"The team at Mallee CMA have made being a part of the stewardship program really easy," he said.

Matt said the program has given him the ability and resources to fence off a stretch of the creek line on Boy Creek.

"Putting in the fencing has protected this riparian zone, for sure-it's given these trees a fighting chance," he said.

"They're now fenced off and protected, they're thriving and will hopefully be here for many years to come."



*Top: The Mallee CMA stewardship program has enabled Mallee farmer Matt Curtis to protect and preserve the riparian zone along his creek line
Above: Mallee CMA Coordinator State Investment Programs Derrick Boord and Matt Curtis at Boy Creek.*

Case Study

SUPPORTING CLIMATE SMART AGRICULTURE THROUGH CATCHMENT PARTNERSHIPS

A Victorian Mallee partnership is driving a four-year project to address one of the biggest challenges facing local farmers, maintaining groundcover at the right level to protect soil.

Mallee CMA, Agriculture Victoria, Birchip Cropping Group and Mallee Sustainable Farming are working together to better understand how farmers can protect their most valuable resource: soil.

Implementing changes to support increased groundcover and overall soil stability has always been a priority for farmers managing the region's light sandy soils, particularly in dry years when the risk of wind erosion increases and careful management is required to ensure that on-farm (e.g. soil health) and broader community (e.g. dust storm) impacts are minimised.

As the impacts of climate change become more evident (i.e. increased rainfall variability and temperatures), identifying alternative or modified practices that provide for climate-ready systems and effective responses to seasonal conditions will be critical to achieving regional groundcover targets and long-term sustainability.

Project delivery is helping to address this challenge by focusing on two key drivers of groundcover and associated soil health outcomes in low rainfall cropping systems: stubble and legume management, along with monitoring how current management practices are influencing groundcover levels across the region.

Specifically:

- Sustainable soils and stubbles (Birchip Cropping Group), working with local farmers to identify stubble management practices that support both productivity and soil health improvements, regardless of the season, while also understanding any associated implications for carbon emissions.
- Legume based cropping systems (Mallee Sustainable Farming), comparing a range of different rotations with high legume intensity to identify which options are most profitable and their associated impacts on soil fertility and groundcover.
- Wind Erosion and Land Management (Agriculture Victoria), collecting roadside transect survey data and utilising remote sensing applications to identify long-term and within-season changes in both management practice and groundcover levels across the region.

Top: Climate-ready systems and effective responses to seasonal conditions are critical to the long-term sustainability of Mallee farming.



In the Victorian Mallee, a regional partnership is working with dryland farmers to identify and validate management practices to support sustainability, productivity and profitability in a changing climate.

These projects were developed through consultation with Mallee CMA's Sustainable Agriculture Catchment Partnerships Committee (CPC). With all partners represented on the forum, this approach enabled each organisation to design individual components, while also ensuring coordinated and collaborative approaches to delivering against regional priorities and government policy.

LOCATION

Whole of region – 2.4M hectares dryland agricultural land

ACHIEVEMENTS

- 1 partnership maintained.
- 10 demonstration/trial sites established.
- 2 roadside surveys of over 1,000 representative paddocks.
- 10 communication materials produced.
- 11 community/stakeholder engagement events delivered (230 participants).

INVESTMENT

Australian Government Natural Heritage Trust under the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program (\$2.1M total, year 1 of 4)

PARTNERS

Agriculture Victoria, Birchip Cropping Group, Mallee Sustainable Farming, and dryland farmers



“Healthy landscapes and communities need innovation. We’re developing programs that meet local carbon needs, working on making the inclusion of flood information into planning schemes better and faster, and managing water for the environment alongside First Nations communities, placing our region at the leading edge of natural resource management.”

Sally Mitchell
North Central CMA Chair



A male endangered Eltham copper butterfly spreads its wings while sitting on the sweet bursaria plant, key to its survival as part of the North Central CMA's Protecting the Eltham Copper Butterfly From Extinction project. (Callie Schultz)

NORTH CENTRAL

2024-25 Achievements

- Developed a surface-water land-management model driving a multi-aquifer groundwater model, to link the management of land, water and climate to groundwater flow systems and predict salt delivery to the stream network and the quality of the Murray River.
- Helped communities recover from, and prepare for, floods by securing significant funds for flood studies, progressing better and faster planning scheme amendments, and updating modelling and communication technology.
- Delivered large-scale works on waterways and environmental flows across the catchment that have provided much-needed protection and habitat improvement to a range of waterbirds, small and large-bodied native fish, and the iconic platypus and rakali.

Our future vision

Healthy Landscapes supporting prosperous communities.

North Central Regional Catchment Strategy



Monitoring one of Australia's rarest birds – the Plains wanderer – on the Patho Plains as part of the Plains for Wanderers project.



Gunbower Primary School students Theo, Adam, Hunter, Zane, Saige, Ayva, and Kalvin were the winners of a competition to name man-made Turtle Islands on Longmore Lagoon.



Eleven years working alongside local First Nations people to restore and protect one of the few remaining river red gum floodplains in Victoria has produced long-lasting legacies and opportunities.



LOCATION

Barapa Barapa and Wamba Wemba Country, north central Victoria

TRADITIONAL OWNERS

Barapa Barapa and Wamba Wemba

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Employment of an Aboriginal Water Officer.
- Lake Boga Children's Day.
- Cultural Monitoring Plan.
- Traditional Owner-led seasonal watering proposal and cultural heritage investigations.

INVESTMENT

Victorian Government, 2024-25 funding \$305,010

PARTNERS

Barapa Barapa and Wamba Wemba communities, DEECA, Goulburn Murray Water, Parks Victoria, First Peoples State Relations, local primary schools, local councils

Case Study

WATER FOR COUNTRY

The Barapa Barapa Wamba Wemba Water for Country project has broken new ground across natural resource management, First Nations self-determination, and creating opportunities that have crossed generations.

Innovation was on clear display in this last year of the project that aimed to increase First Nations People's influence over water policy and decision-making. It also aimed to provide employment and economic development for Barapa Barapa Wamba Wemba and promote cultural values, heritage, and practice to be part of government policy and practice.

The project's many achievements are not just milestones – they speak to self-determination and the strength of community, culture, and Country. It placed the First Nations communities in the north of the catchment at the heart of water for the environment delivery and planning. From cultural burns and ecological knowledge sharing to the development of frameworks to guide future generations, the impact of the Water for Country work will be felt for years to come.

The project wrapped up with events such as the children's day celebration at Lake Boga that promoted Aboriginal water values and aspirations and gave families a great day out.

The CMA's Aboriginal Water Officer supported the Steering Committee's values and aspirations to care for Country. This resulted in self-determined project outcomes including a Cultural Monitoring Plan that combines consideration of both intangible and tangible cultural values.

In partnership with the Victorian Environmental Water Holder, the CMA investigated potential future sites where water for the environment can support cultural objectives including Red Gum Swamp in the catchment's north.

The outcomes added to work over the previous decade, which saw the engagement of more than 80 Traditional Owners, a national Landcare award, cultural awareness in schools, the Barapa Barapa Wamba Wemba Ecological Knowledge Guide, being the first non-formally recognised group to do a cultural burn with DEECA, involvement in seasonal watering proposals, and a lot more.

Top: Reed Bed Swamp – Traditional Owner Seasonal Watering Plan engagement. Left: Cultural Burning.

Case Study

KNOW YOUR NUMBER, CONTROL YOUR FUTURE

Emissions reporting is expected to be mandatory for all farms contributing to supply chains by 2030.

This includes not just on-farm emissions such as fuel use and livestock methane, but also indirect emissions from electricity and, crucially, those that occur up and down the supply chain. While primary producers are not expected to eliminate all their emissions, they will need to know their carbon position.

The Carbon Farming Outreach Program empowers Victorian farmers and land managers to work out how to improve their carbon number, and North Central CMA was tasked with engagement of the program across the region.

Farm emissions monitoring engagement was always going to be challenging, so the CMA created an innovative strategy focussed on improved messaging, relevant local speakers, and solutions that stretched people's knowledge base.

The program was rebranded locally to Know Your Number, Control Your Future and delivered:

- Workshops focused on improvements farmers could make to their properties to both improve productivity and reduce emissions. These included looking at herd efficiencies, soil carbon and productivity, agroforestry, irrigation efficiencies, and more.
- Location-focussed messaging, speakers, and topics for irrigation and dryland farmers.
- Partnerships with Landcare Victoria, Agriculture Victoria, and Vic Catchments.
- Nine sessions across the catchment attended by more than 60 landholders who left with a raft of tips and strategies.
- High online engagement with more than 303,000 views on Facebook and 240 podcast downloads.

The Victorian Carbon Farming Outreach Program is delivered with funding support from the Commonwealth of Australia through the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water under the National Carbon Farming Outreach Program.



Top: Farmers at the Rochester Session. Centre: Farmers at the Marong Session. Above: Cover crop nearly covering tractor.



Communicating future emissions monitoring requirements to farmers can throw up challenges, so the North Central CMA thought innovatively, highlighting actions that benefit both the environment and farm businesses.



LOCATION

Nine towns across the catchment

ACHIEVEMENTS

- 9 group sessions across the catchment.
- Direct engagement with 60 landholders.
- 2 podcasts with 240 downloads.

INVESTMENT

The Victorian Carbon Farming Outreach Program is delivered with funding support from the Commonwealth of Australia through the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water under the National Carbon Farming Outreach Program. \$76,866 was invested in the first of a two-year program

PARTNERS

Landcare Victoria, Agriculture Victoria, Vic Catchments, Australian Government



“We continue to strengthen our stakeholder engagement processes, particularly around complex issues such as water allocation, land use change, waterway stability, and climate adaptation. The CMA has focused on regular formal and informal dialogue with our local communities to ensure that diverse voices inform our decision-making.”

Graeme Dear
North East CMA Chair

Buffalo River.

NORTH EAST

2024-25 Achievements

- Completed three flood and bushfire recovery projects with a \$2.2M investment into local contractors, landowners, businesses, and community groups to restore infrastructure, support environmental works, and partner with Traditional Owners on cultural assessments.
- Involvement of 186 Traditional Owners /First Nations peoples from 9 groups in project planning, delivery and partnerships, including participation in Ryans Lagoon environmental watering, cultural burning and alpine protection projects.
- Invested over \$600,000 in local community, producers, Landcare groups and organisations to support sustainable agriculture and practical changes in planning and responding to dry seasonal conditions and drought.

Our future vision

Diverse, healthy and connected landscapes and communities.

North East Regional Catchment Strategy



Ryans Lagoon Nature Conservation Reserve.



North East CMA's Andrew Holzheimer planting trees as part of the Bringing Back the Maccas to Livingstone Creek project. (Nat Ord)



Duduroa Dhargal Aboriginal Corporation is leading the restoration and stewardship of Ryans Lagoon Nature Conservation Reserve, transforming former cattle paddocks into a thriving wetland of ecological and cultural importance.



LOCATION

Ryans Lagoon Nature Conservation Reserve

TRADITIONAL OWNERS

Duduroa Dhargal Aboriginal Corporation

ACHIEVEMENTS

- 1 environmental water event delivered.
- 3 flora assessments undertaken.
- 1 fauna assessment undertaken.
- 1 community event day held.

INVESTMENT

Victorian Government Environment Contribution Fund Tranche 6 (EC6)

PARTNERS

Duduroa Dhargal Aboriginal Corporation, Parklands Albury Wodonga, North East Water, Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, Victorian Environmental Water Holder, Murray Darling Basin Authority

Case Study

REVITALISING RYANS LAGOON

Situated on the Murray River floodplain below Lake Hume, Ryans Lagoon Conservation Reserve is now a vibrant refuge for biodiversity and a place for cultural connection.

The nationally significant wetland complex supports at least 29 species of waterbirds, eight frog species - including the endangered Sloane's Froglet - and three freshwater turtle species.

Duduroa Dhargal Aboriginal Corporation's vision for the site includes restoring the natural water regime to support these species, particularly those of cultural significance such as the totemic long necked turtle.

Historically, the wetlands were replenished by overbank flows from the Murray River. However, river regulation has disrupted this natural hydrology, making inundation rare outside of flood events or unregulated releases from Lake Hume.

In spring 2024, Duduroa Dhargal Aboriginal Corporation partnered with North East CMA, North East Water and the Victorian and Commonwealth Environmental Water Holders to deliver 185 megalitres of Commonwealth environmental water to Ryans Lagoon. This marked a major milestone in restoring the wetland's ecological function. Following the watering, North East CMA's Environmental Water Officers confirmed the presence of Sloane's Froglet using acoustic monitoring, with further surveys planned.

Environmental water is also helping suppress invasive weeds and promote native vegetation. Monitoring in 2024-25 assessed the response of wetland plants and tree health to the watering.

Beyond its ecological value, Ryans Lagoon is a place for cultural sharing and education. In November 2024, Duduroa Dhargal Aboriginal Corporation hosted the 'Our Cultures, Our Futures' event, bringing together First Nations students and community groups to celebrate the site's revitalisation and explore future opportunities in First Nations land management and careers.

This collaborative effort highlights the power of cultural leadership and environmental stewardship in restoring landscapes and strengthening community connections.

Top: North East CMA staff and Traditional Owners at Ryan's Lagoon (Jacqui Shultz). Left: Water for the environment has restored the hydrological regime. (Jacqui Shultz)

Case Study

PROTECTING VICTORIA'S ALPINE PEATLANDS

Alpine peatlands are a nationally listed ecological community under significant pressure from invasive species, particularly Sambar deer. These ecosystems play a vital role in water regulation, carbon storage, and biodiversity, yet face ongoing degradation due to deer-related disturbance. To address this pressure, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), through the Office of the Threatened Species Commissioner provided North East CMA with funding to undertake targeted deer control and monitoring efforts between 2024-2026.

North East CMA led the project in partnership with Parks Victoria, Hancock Victorian Plantations (HVP), and Alpine Resorts Victoria (Falls Creek, Mount Hotham, and Baw Baw Alpine Resorts). Together, these partners delivered coordinated deer control operations and monitoring across three catchment regions: North East, East Gippsland, and West Gippsland on both public and private land.

Key project activities included multiple broadscale deer control operations over 118,814 hectares of priority alpine and adjoining landscapes including timber plantations located downslope of the alps. These adjoining areas often provide safe harbour for deer during the cooler months. A total of 601 Sambar deer were culled through these operations, significantly reducing deer pressure on endangered alpine peatlands. Sixty remote cameras were monitored for deer presence and activity to prioritise key areas for deer control, track population dynamics over time, and to inform future control operations.

All partners exceeded their contracted output targets, demonstrating strong delivery capacity and commitment. The project aligned with national and state conservation priorities and laid the groundwork for ongoing ecological resilience.



*Top: Sambar Deer observed creating a wallow within an Alpine Peatland in the Alpine National Park (Parks Victoria).
Right: Healthy peatland located in Alpine National Park.*



Targeted Sambar deer control across the Victorian Alps has reduced threats to nationally listed alpine peatlands, improved ecological resilience, and strengthened long-term partnerships for cross-catchment biodiversity protection.

LOCATION

North East, East Gippsland and West Gippsland CMA regions

ACHIEVEMENTS

- 118,814 hectares of deer control undertaken.
- 601 deer culled.
- 60 remote cameras monitored and analysed.

INVESTMENT

Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust Program (2024-2026)

PARTNERS

Parks Victoria, Alpine Resorts Victoria, Hancock Victorian Plantations



“Our catchments are essential to our way of life. By working together with partners and communities, we’re strengthening these landscapes to support thriving wildlife habitats, resilient farms, healthy catchments, and natural spaces everyone can enjoy.”

Greg Wilson
Melbourne Water Chair

PORT PHILLIP AND WESTERN PORT

2024-25 Achievements

- Facilitated the establishment of a Nature Positive Community of Practice for Victoria's Water Corporations and CMAs providing a place to share knowledge and resources and build literacy and understanding of nature positive action.
- Delivered the inaugural From the Ground Up Film Festival, hosted by Costa Georgiadis, celebrating volunteers, Landcare professionals and First Nations people caring for land, water and community and attended by 220 people.
- Continued our long-standing collaborations through Living Links, Grow West and Yarra4Life, to deliver impactful habitat restoration across Port Phillip and Western Port, made possible through the collective efforts of partners.

Our future vision

A healthy and resilient environment in the Port Phillip and Westernport region.

Port Phillip & Western Port Regional Catchment Strategy



The Biodiversity Conservation Action Plan guides protection efforts for wildlife. Musk Lorikeets (Glossopsitta concinna).



Rob Fallon, Landcare Facilitator with the Northern Yarra Landcare Network, is featured amongst the stories in the From the Ground Up Film Festival.



The Western Port Ramsar site, stretching nearly 60,000 hectares across wetlands, tidal flats and seagrass meadows, is a biodiversity hotspot of global significance.



LOCATION

Western Port

TRADITIONAL OWNERS

Bunurong

ACHIEVEMENTS

- 0.5 hectares of mangrove restoration.
- 1,116 hectares of pest animal control.
- 39 hectares of pest animal control.
- 1 management agreement.
- 1 social media post.

INVESTMENT

Victorian Government \$1.51M year 1 of 4

PARTNERS

Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, Parks Victoria, French Island Landcare, Bass Coast Landcare Network, Deakin University, Phillip Island Nature Parks, Mornington Peninsula Shire Council

Case Study

PROTECTING WESTERN PORT RAMSAR WETLANDS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

As one of only twelve Ramsar wetlands in Victoria, the Western Port Ramsar site plays a critical role in supporting threatened migratory birds, hosting the southernmost mangroves in the world, and sustaining more than 1,350 species in its diverse estuarine ecosystems.

In 2024-2025, a key milestone was reached with the expansion of the Restoring Western Port project, bringing new partners on board and delivering the largest seagrass restoration trials in the site's history. This work, co-delivered with community, Traditional Owners, and research partners, builds on years of collaborative planning and positions the site for long-term resilience against climate change.

Western Port faces significant and growing pressures, from climate change and urban development to habitat loss and invasive species. To protect and enhance the site's ecological character, Melbourne Water leads a coordinated partnership approach involving Traditional Owners, local councils, Landcare groups, conservation organisations, tourism operators, and state and federal agencies.

As the official site coordinator, Melbourne Water combines scientific expertise, cultural knowledge, and collaborative action to keep Western Port healthy. Together, partners are restoring seagrass beds, managing invasive *Spartina*, monitoring ecological change, and working with landholders to improve wetland health on private land. Equally important is the strong partnership with the Bunurong of the Kulin Nation, whose living culture and knowledge continue to guide and shape care for Country.

Through Port Phillip & Western Port's Healthy Waterways Strategy, this collective effort is delivering tangible improvements, supporting native species, improving water quality, and ensuring decisions about the region's future recognise the wetland's ecological significance. Western Port is more than just a Ramsar site, it is a living example of how strong partnerships and place-based stewardship can safeguard natural values now and for generations to come.

The Restoring Western Port project is supported by the Victorian Government through the Victorian Water Programs Investment Framework.

Top: Melbourne Water staff, Rhyll Inlet, Western Port Ramsar Wetland. (Doug Gimesy). Left: Balirt Biik (Strong Country) Rangers planting mangroves, Western Port Ramsar site. (Lauren Effenberg)

Case Study

BUILDING ENDURING PARTNERSHIPS AND TRADITIONAL OWNER COLLABORATION

In May 2025, Melbourne Water marked a significant milestone with the launch of its inaugural Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan (2025–2028), celebrated on Wadawurrung Country at the Western Treatment Plant. Co-hosted with the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, the event reinforced Melbourne Water's long-term commitment to reconciliation, accountability, and practical actions that drive cultural, social, and economic change.

The document co-designed in partnership with Traditional Owner organisations, including Bunurong, Gunaikurnai, Taungurung, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri, reflects on Melbourne Water's reconciliation journey to date and sets clear actions for the years ahead. It focuses on supporting self-determined outcomes, embedding cultural understanding, and strengthening enduring partnerships to care for land and water.

During 2024–2025, Melbourne Water progressed several key partnership initiatives:

- **Formalising the Wadawurrung Partnership:** Building on strong collaboration, Melbourne Water continued delivering the Wunggurwill Ngitj ('Strong together') agreement with the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation. This work advances the Paleert Tjaara Dja Wadawurrung Country Plan, supporting knowledge sharing, cultural education, and capacity building.
- **Deepening collaboration with Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC):** Actions included joint planning on waterway management and cultural heritage protection, alongside engagement on water justice discussions.
- **Expanding engagement with other Registered Aboriginal Parties:** Strengthening relationships with Bunurong, Taungurung, and Wurundjeri organisations through cultural advice, joint projects, and early steps towards future formal agreements.

These achievements demonstrate Melbourne Water's commitment to walking together with Traditional Owners, recognising their deep connection to Country, valuing cultural knowledge, and creating shared pathways to care for Victoria's waterways, lands, and skies.

Pictured: Front Cover of Melbourne Water's Stretch – Reconciliation Action Plan 2025 – 2028.



Melbourne Water's Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan strengthens long-term partnerships with Traditional Owner groups, to centre self-determination, cultural custodianship, and shared care for Country.

LOCATION

Melbourne Water operational area

TRADITIONAL OWNERS

Wadawurrung, Bunurong, Wurundjeri, Gunaikurnai, Taungurung

ACHIEVEMENTS

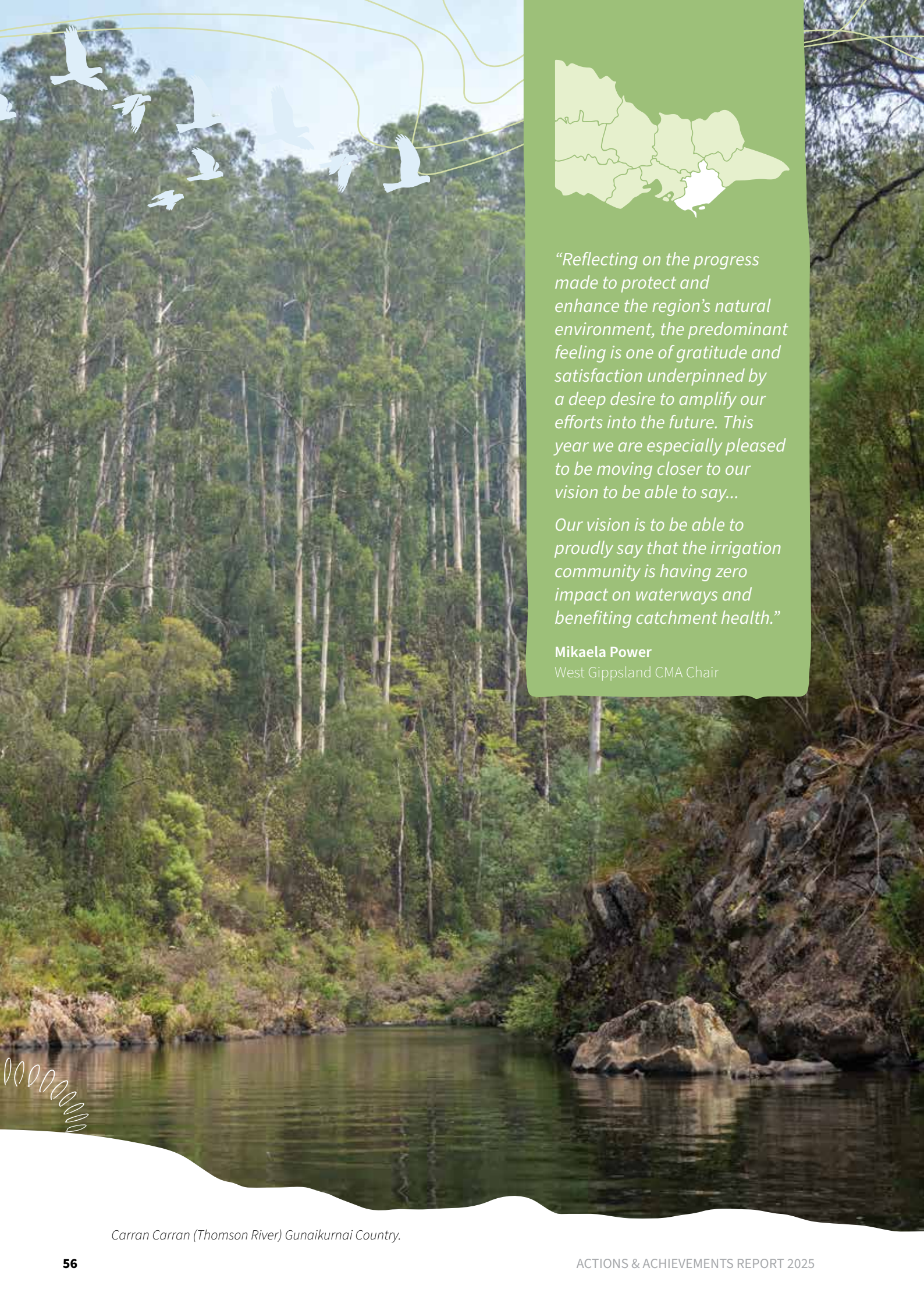
- Strengthened relationships with Traditional Owners.
- Increased understanding and respect internally at Melbourne Water.
- Increased opportunities for the First Peoples community through procurement initiatives aimed at First Peoples business growth, employment, and retention policies.
- Effective governance to carry out RAP objectives.

INVESTMENT

Melbourne Water funded, year one of three for delivery

PARTNERS

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, Taungurung Land and Waters Council, Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation



“Reflecting on the progress made to protect and enhance the region’s natural environment, the predominant feeling is one of gratitude and satisfaction underpinned by a deep desire to amplify our efforts into the future. This year we are especially pleased to be moving closer to our vision to be able to say...

Our vision is to be able to proudly say that the irrigation community is having zero impact on waterways and benefiting catchment health.”

Mikaela Power
West Gippsland CMA Chair

WEST GIPPSLAND

2024-25 Achievements

- Continued the Corner Inlet Connections project to protect Ramsar site values with 68,682 hectares of Spartina control, 7.2 hectares of saltmarsh protection and 696 hectares of pest animal control.
- Committed to protecting the Eastern Hooded Plovers from extinction by controlling their number one predator through 30,388 hectares of fox control works and protecting over 40 Hooded Plover breeding sites with 50 volunteers.
- Celebrated 25 years of Sustainable Irrigation in central Gippsland with over 46 gigalitres of nutrient rich water carrying an estimated 23 tonnes of phosphorus now being kept on farm every year.

Our future vision

Catchment Health – Gippsland's Wealth.

West Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy



Over 50 volunteers and the BirdLife team protected 40 Hooded Plover breeding sites, Bunurong Country.



Protecting the important saltmarsh and mudflat habitats of Corner Inlet Ramsar site.



For a quarter of a century, Gippsland's sustainable irrigation program has been producing positive results with long-term partnerships at the centre of its success.



LOCATION

Macalister Irrigation District and Lake Wellington Catchment

TRADITIONAL OWNERS

Gunaikurnai

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Delivered 14 irrigation projects across 375 hectares.
- Saved 730 megalitres of water.
- Retained more than 190 kilograms of phosphorous on farm.

INVESTMENT

Ongoing program funded by Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action's Sustainable Irrigation Program, implemented by Agriculture Victoria and West Gippsland CMA

PARTNERS

Agriculture Victoria, Irrigation community, Southern Rural Water, Gippsland Water, Wellington Shire Council, EPA, Gipps Dairy, Food & Fibre Gippsland

Case Study

CELEBRATING A 25-YEAR PIVOT TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE FARMING FUTURE

This year, the joint initiative between the CMA, Agriculture Victoria and local farmers celebrated 25 years of collaborative effort that has resulted in a remarkable transformation of irrigated land and water use across central Gippsland.

The program has delivered over 1,200 irrigation improvement projects in the Macalister Irrigation District (MID) and across the Lake Wellington Catchment.

"The CMA is incredibly proud to celebrate over two decades of effort to reduce the environmental impact of irrigation by keeping water and nutrients on farm and out of local waterways that flow into the Gippsland Lakes," said West Gippsland CMA Board Chair, Mikaela Power.

"Thanks to the sustained, collective efforts of farmers, agencies, water corporations and local irrigation communities, we're now seeing savings of 47 gigalitres of water worth \$85M annually. That's a huge financial benefit for irrigators and a boost to water security for the region's agricultural industry."

Encouraging irrigators to embrace sustainable irrigation practices has been a key driver of the program's success with a shift in attitudes over the years.

"We thank those farmers who put their hands up in the early days to trial new irrigation methods and systems for the benefit of the wider irrigation community. We've now partnered with nearly all landholders in the MID, achieving 94% coverage of the district with farm irrigation plans. Combined with the 179 spray conversions, 299 reuses systems and 70 best practice surface irrigation projects, it adds up to a remarkable, long-term transformation of irrigated farmland."

It's a classic 'win-win' with over 46 gigalitres of nutrient rich water carrying an estimated 23 tonnes of phosphorus being kept on farm every year to benefit soil health and pasture productivity. It also reduces the need for synthetic fertilisers and protects surrounding waterways from run-off.

During 2024-25, 14 irrigation projects covering 375 hectares were delivered, with water savings of 730 megalitres and phosphorous loads reduced by 190 kilograms per year.

"Our vision is to be able to proudly say that the irrigation community is having zero impact on waterways and benefiting catchment health. That will be a fantastic day," concluded Mikaela.

Top: Encouraging irrigators to embrace sustainable irrigation practices has been a key driver of the program's success.

Left: Over 46 GL of nutrient rich water is now kept on farm each year.

Case Study

PARTNERSHIP TO SAVE PLOVERS FROM EXTINCTION

Eastern Hooded Plovers, affectionally known as ‘Hoodies’, are tiny shorebirds that nest along the Victorian coastline. The adults, their eggs and chicks are highly vulnerable to disturbance by humans, weeds, storms, off-lead dogs and their number one predator, foxes.

Together with Bunurong Traditional Owners (barriytbarriyt is the Boonwurrung language name for the plovers), partners and community, the CMA is delivering a four-year project to help the Hoodies survive.

Actions include protecting nests during the breeding season, controlling foxes and other introduced pests and engaging the community to become plover lovers.

“There are only around 3,000 Hoodies remaining in south-eastern Australian and less than 2.5 percent of eggs make it to adult stage,” said Mikaela Power, West Gippsland CMA Board Chair.

“The coastline between San Remo and Inverloch is home to the second largest population of Hooded Plovers in Victoria so it’s vital that we work together to protect these vulnerable native species,” Ms Power said.

During the breeding season, Hoodies face many threats from people accidentally trampling their nests to off-lead dogs scaring the birds and disturbing nests.

Even if the eggs successfully hatch, Hoodie chicks can’t fly for the first five weeks of their life, making them highly vulnerable to predators, particularly foxes. To reduce this threat, the CMA and partners will undertake a coordinated approach to fox control across public and private land.

BirdLife Australia is key to supporting monitoring and community awareness activities. Their team of community volunteers assists with monitoring nests and educating beach goers about the plovers’ plight and how to share the beach by observing signage and keeping dogs on leads.

“This partnership project is an exciting next step in the protection and recovery of West Gippsland’s plover populations. The CMA is thrilled to be involved in this important work as part of our role in catchment health and protecting the region’s unique biodiversity.”

This project is funded by the Australian Government Natural Heritage Trust and delivered by West Gippsland CMA, a member of the Commonwealth Regional Delivery Partners panel.

Top: Barriytbarriyt (Eastern Hooded Plover) on Bunurong Country. (Mark Lethlean). Right: Balit Biik Rangers monitored and cared for barriytbarriyt at nine key coastal sites on Bunurong Country.



Not on our watch. West Gippsland CMA is working with partners and the community, to build the love, tackle the key threats and save vulnerable Hooded Plovers from extinction.



LOCATION

Bass Coast - Bunurong and South Gippsland coastline

TRADITIONAL OWNERS

Bunurong

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Delivered over 30,388 hectares of fox control works.
- Protected 40 Hooded Plover breeding sites.
- Engaged over 50 community volunteers.

INVESTMENT

The \$1.5M project over five years is funded by the Australian Government Natural Heritage Trust

PARTNERS

Birdlife Australia, Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, Bass Coast Landcare Network, community volunteers, South Gippsland Landcare Network, Parks Victoria



“This year, Wimmera CMA delivered impactful environmental and community outcomes, from pioneering native fish recovery to strengthening drought resilience and cultural partnerships. Our team’s dedication continues to shape a healthier, more sustainable catchment for future generations.”

Peter Hilbig
Wimmera CMA Chair

Blue Devils along the Yanga Track, Wimmera River Horsham.

WIMMERA

2024-25 Achievements

- Achieved a world-first breeding of River Blackfish in captivity. Forty juveniles released into local waterways, launching a three-year recovery program to prevent extinction and restore native fish populations.
- Delivered independent training to 141 land managers, helping them understand carbon farming benefits, emissions reduction, carbon storage, and market opportunities through free, trusted resources and practical decision-making support.
- Identified priority drought-resilient green spaces across six municipalities, supporting regional climate adaptation, community wellbeing, and infrastructure planning under the Wimmera Southern Mallee Drought Resilience Plan.

Our future vision

A healthy Wimmera catchment where a resilient landscape supports a sustainable and profitable community.

Wimmera Regional Catchment Strategy



Chicks in the Sticks event returned this year, empowering women in agriculture through connection, knowledge-sharing, and leadership development.



Celebrating partnership and progress—VFA, BGLC and Wimmera CMA working together for the release of River Blackfish, showcasing the economic and cultural benefits of healthy waterways. (VFA)



Wimmera CMA is planning to tap into a vast regional piping network to protect environmental waterway assets.



LOCATION

Wimmera catchment

TRADITIONAL OWNERS

Barengi Gadjin Land Council

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Produced 2 publications.
- Developed 1 project plan.
- Involved 10 partnerships.
- Held 3 engagement events.

INVESTMENT

Victorian Government (multiple projects) \$740,000 year 1, Wimmera Southern Mallee Development (Agriculture Victoria) - Wimmera Green Spaces - \$80,000, year 1 of 1

PARTNERS

DEECA, GWM Water, Victorian and Commonwealth Environmental Water Holders, Parks Victoria, Wimmera Southern Mallee Development, Arthur Rylah Institute, Wimmera municipal councils

Case Study

PLANNING WATER MANAGEMENT FOR DRY TIMES

Wimmera CMA is working with GWM Water to develop projects connecting stock and domestic pipeline supply to drought-refuge pools.

The move combines innovation, adaptation, science, community and Traditional Owner knowledge to protect environmental and socio-economic assets with limited water.

Environmental water allocations, although limited by diminished inflows, have been primary tools in achieving Wimmera waterway health and resilience objectives through drought conditions.

Wimmera CMA identified that pipelines, free of water-loss issues, could provide an efficient alternative to waterway flows as a source of water supply – until regular flows returned after drought.

Wimmera drought-refuge pools can maintain ecological values and increase wildlife resilience until rain returns. But the longer dry conditions continue, the harder it becomes to supply and maintain them with waterway flows.

Projects developed in the past 12 months include preparation and planning of pipeline watering points in lower and upper reaches of key Wimmera waterways.

Construction of connections to lower Wimmera River refuges, co-funded by VEW, and upper Mt Cole Creek, with DEECA funding, is underway. Wimmera CMA has also launched a feasibility study for MacKenzie River-Burnt Creek connections as a Water Cycle Adaption Plan priority project.

Wimmera CMA has completed preliminary assessments for an upper Wimmera River project based on plans for a new pipeline.

Tracking alongside these efforts has been targeted monitoring and fish-salvage or pest-removal and adaptive outcome-driven water-management programs.

Wimmera CMA provided leadership in Wimmera Integrated Water Management that has led to new water sources becoming available in the region. An example is an integrated approach in Horsham to use recycled water for the benefit of agricultural research, community green-space reserves and emerging industry.

Wimmera CMA has also helped five municipal councils create a community 'priority green spaces' audit for when drought starts to impact urban supply. This work has provided a foundation and guiding document to allow appropriate community decisions on how best to manage and use future restricted water allocations.

*Top: Fish Translocation in February 2025 in the Lower MacKenzie River.
Left: Drought refuge pool site.*

Case Study

WIMMERA CMA LEADING THE WAY IN NATIONAL SOIL MONITORING

Wimmera CMA is proud to lead Victoria's contribution to the National Soil Monitoring Program, a landmark initiative that supports climate-smart agriculture and sustainable land management across Australia.

In partnership with Victorian CMAs, Melbourne Water, Agriculture Victoria, and CSIRO, Wimmera CMA is delivering the field component of this program across the state. The program is led nationally by the Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) as part of the Australian Government's Climate-Smart Agriculture Program and National Soil Strategy.

Across Australia, approximately 3,000 sites will be sampled, including 406 in Victoria, with a strong focus on key agricultural zones. Wimmera CMA is at the forefront of this effort, coordinating activities such as:

- Engaging with landholders.
- Soil sampling and bulk density testing.
- Soil characterisation.
- Collecting site data on land use and management practices.

CSIRO will undertake the analysis, with results made publicly available via the Australian National Soil Information System (ANSIS). This open-access data will empower farmers, researchers, and policymakers to make informed decisions that improve soil health, boost agricultural sustainability, and enhance climate resilience.

Wimmera CMA's leadership ensures that Victoria's soil data is not only nationally consistent but also regionally relevant, supporting strategic decision-making at local, state, and national levels.

For land managers, the insights gained will provide a deeper understanding of how land use and management practices impact soil over time, helping to guide more sustainable approaches.

This project highlights Wimmera CMA's commitment to innovation, collaboration, and environmental stewardship, delivering real benefits for agriculture, communities, and ecosystems across Victoria.



On behalf of Victorian CMA's, Melbourne Water and Agriculture Victoria, Wimmera CMA is leading the delivery of the Victorian component of the National Soil Monitoring Program.



LOCATION

Statewide

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Sampled 50 sites statewide.
- Trained and upskilled CMA staff in soil sampling and analysis.

INVESTMENT

CSIRO \$1.27M, year 1 of 2

PARTNERS

CSIRO, Agriculture Victoria, Victorian CMA's, Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF)

Top: Soil Core samples. Right: Wimmera CMA staff David and Ewan collecting soil samples.

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Healthy Coliban. (NCCMA)



Projects featured in this report were supported by Victoria's 10 CMAs, the community and a range of partners through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and the Victorian Government.



Ryans Lagoon Drone shot (Jacqui Schulz)