2026-27 Seasonal Watering Proposal

Latrobe River/*Durt'Yowan*

West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority



Lake Narracan March 2024

Acknowledgement of Country

The West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA) would like to acknowledge and pay our respects to the Traditional Landowners and other Indigenous people within the catchment area: the Gunaikurnai people.

We also recognise the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations in land and natural resource management.

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Document Control

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Template	1.0	Kris Leckie	02/12/2025	Prepopulated content incorporated into template ready for issue to CMA.
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Final	1	Adrian Clements	21/4/2026	Final version of proposal

1 CONTEXT

This seasonal watering proposal outlines the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority's (WGCMA) proposed priorities for use of environmental water within the Lake Wellington catchment. This is as per the requirements under section 192A of the *Water Act 1989* and is a priority of the West Gippsland Waterway Strategy (WGCMA, 2014). This proposal covers the Latrobe River environmental entitlement which is managed on behalf of the Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEWH), by the WGCMA.

Potential watering actions and environmental objectives are informed by flow recommendations and objectives, derived from the Latrobe Environmental Water Requirements Investigation (2020). Where meaningful, this proposal also includes watering requirements specific to the Latrobe estuary. Although the estuary does not have a specific entitlement, it benefits from all river flows of the Thomson, Macalister, and Latrobe.

This proposal will be used by the VEWH to inform the development of the state-wide Seasonal Watering Plan. The plan will outline the full scope of state-wide priorities for use of environmental water, including the West Gippsland catchment environmental entitlements. Environmental water in the Latrobe, Thomson and Macalister rivers will be used to protect and enhance the ecological health of their respective waterways. Where applicable, coordinated management of the three river entitlements will also be used to protect and enhance the lower Latrobe wetlands and the Latrobe estuary. The extent to which this is achieved will be governed by the amount of water available and the relevant climatic scenario.

Climatic conditions and system regulation strongly influence river flows, and thereby the opportunities and need to actively manage environmental water. Flexibility is built into this proposal to enable adaptive management.

2 SYSTEM OVERVIEW

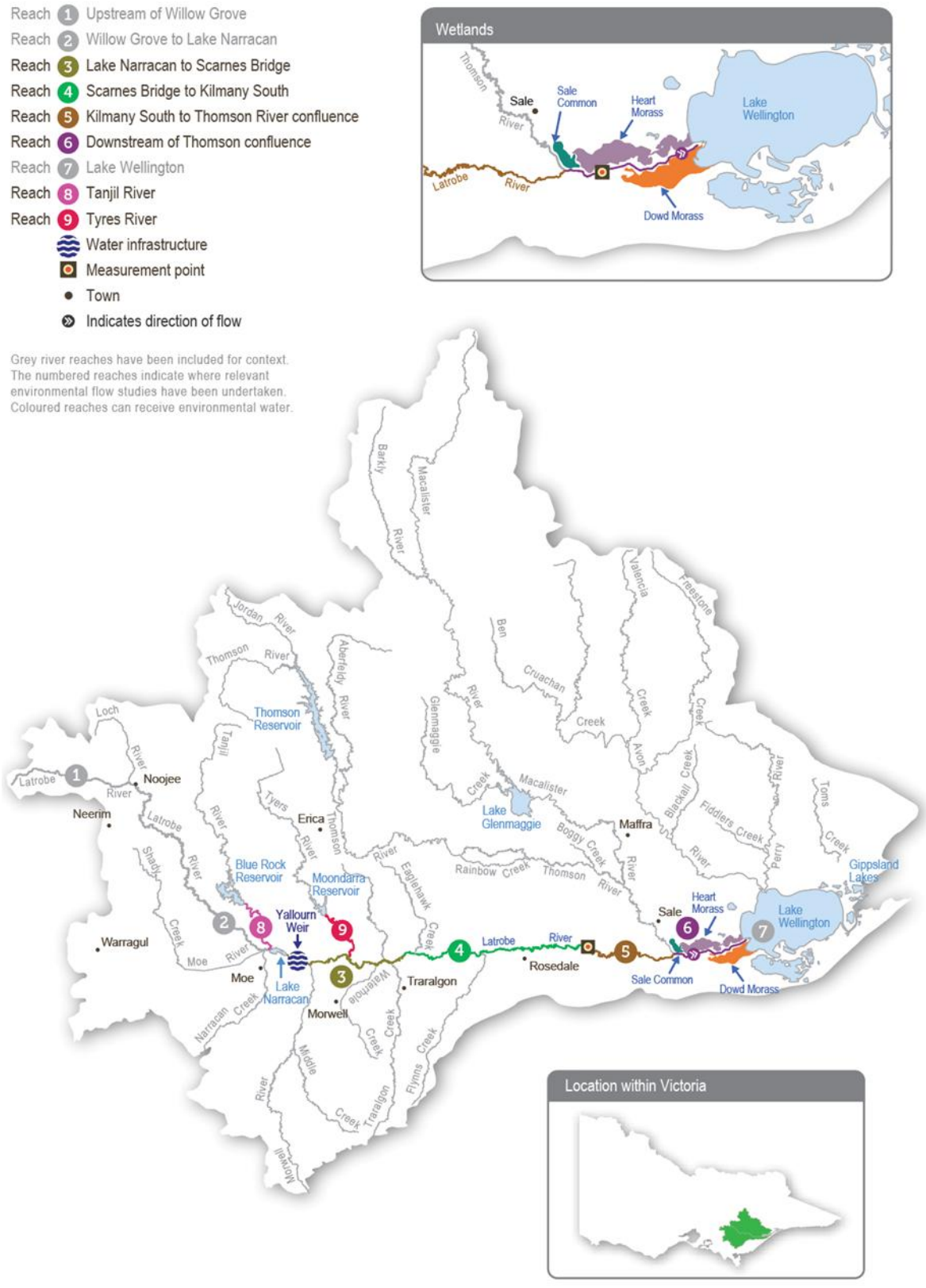
Durt-Yowan (Latrobe River) originates near the Baw Baw Plateau and passes through relatively flat to undulating plains, largely cleared for agriculture, before flowing into Lake Wellington (the westernmost point of the Gippsland Lakes) (Figure 2.2.1). Notable tributaries include the Tanjil River, Narracan Creek, Morwell River, Tyers River, Traralgon Creek and *Carran Carran* (Thomson River).

Water for the environment is supplied to the Latrobe River from Blue Rock Reservoir on the Tanjil River and Lake Narracan on the Latrobe River. Both reservoirs also supply water for irrigation, urban supply, electricity generators and a paper mill in the Latrobe Valley.

The Latrobe River from Kilmany to the Thomson River confluence (reach 5) is a high-priority reach for delivering water for the environment because it contains endangered plant communities with good potential for rehabilitation. Capacity constraints within reach 5 mean that some of the larger freshes required to meet environmental objectives in reaches 3, 4, 5 and 6 cannot be delivered without inundating private land. Until this can be resolved, environmental flows will be managed in consultation with impacted landholders. Where possible, flows in the Latrobe River are coordinated with freshes in the Thomson River to meet targets for the Latrobe River estuary.

Options to deliver water for the environment to the Latrobe River via the Tyers River are being investigated. These options include a physical transfer of water from Blue Rock Reservoir to Moondarra Reservoir via existing infrastructure operated by Gippsland Water or a temporary

administrative transfer arrangement. Delivering water via the Tyers River would increase the proportion of the Latrobe catchment that could receive water for the environment without compromising outcomes in the main target reaches of the Latrobe River. If adopted, these options are expected to benefit native in-stream and streamside vegetation and non-migratory fish within the Tyers River.


Reach 1 Upstream of Willow Grove
Reach 2 Willow Grove to Lake Narracan
Reach 3 Lake Narracan to Scarnes Bridge
Reach 4 Scarnes Bridge to Kilmany South
Reach 5 Kilmany South to Thomson River confluence
Reach 6 Downstream of Thomson confluence
Reach 7 Lake Wellington
Reach 8 Tanjil River
Reach 9 Tyres River
Water infrastructure
Measurement point
Town
Indicates direction of flow
Grey river reaches have been included for context.
The numbered reaches indicate where relevant environmental flow studies have been undertaken.
Coloured reaches can receive environmental water.
Wetlands
Thomson River
Sale
Sale Common
Heart Morass
Lake Wellington
Latrobe River
Dowd Morass
Barkly River
Macalister River
Jordan River
Thomson River
Aberfeldy River
Thomson Reservoir
Loch
Tanjil River
Latrobe River
Noojee
Neerim
Tyers River
Erica
Glenmaggie River
Lake Glenmaggie
Ben Cruachan Creek
Valencia Creek
Freestone Creek
Avon River
Blackall Creek
Fiddlers Creek
Perry River
Toms Creek
Gippsland Lakes
Maffra
Boggy Creek
Rainbow Creek
Eaglehawk Creek
Blue Rock Reservoir
Moondarra Reservoir
Yallourn Weir
Shady Creek
Warragul
Moe River
Moe
Lake Narracan
Morwell
Narracan Creek
Traralgon
Waterhole Creek
Flynns Creek
Middle Creek
Traralgon Creek
Morwell River
Rosedale
Latrobe River
Location within Victoria

3 ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES

The upper reaches of the Latrobe River flow through state forest and are relatively intact and ecologically healthy. They have continuous stands of river red gums and intact streamside vegetation, and they support native animals, including barred galaxias, river blackfish, Gippsland spiny crayfish and nankeen night herons.

Below Lake Narracan, the Latrobe River is regulated and highly degraded due to historic river management practices. Most large woody habitat has been removed from the river, and many sections have been artificially straightened. These practices have caused significant erosion and widened the channel, reducing the quality and quantity of habitat for aquatic plants and animals.

There is endangered and vulnerable vegetation in all but the most modified sections of the Latrobe River. The banks along the lower reaches support stands of swamp scrub, characterised by swamp paperbark and tea tree. Mature river red gums grow adjacent to the lower Latrobe wetlands and provide nesting habitat for sea eagles and other birds of prey that hunt in the wetlands. The Latrobe River supports native estuarine and freshwater fish, including black bream, Australian bass, Australian grayling and short- and long-finned eel. The river also provides habitat and supports feeding and breeding conditions for platypus, rakali (water rats) and freshwater turtles.

The Latrobe River and its tributaries provide an essential source of freshwater to the Gippsland Lakes system, of which the lower Latrobe wetlands are an important component.

Environmental objectives in the Latrobe River	
 F1	Increase native fish (migratory, resident and estuary) populations
 G1	Increase in-stream geomorphic diversity
 MI1	Increase the abundance of waterbugs
 PR1	Increase the extent of the platypus and rakali (water rat) populations
 T1	Maintain the abundance of freshwater turtle populations
 V1	Improve the condition and increase the extent and diversity of submerged, emergent and streamside native vegetation
V2	Reduce the extent and density of invasive plants
 WQ1	Avoid adverse water quality conditions (such as high salinity) in the lower reaches of the Latrobe River and its estuary

4 TRADITIONAL OWNER CULTURAL VALUES AND USES

The Gunaikurnai have a continued connection to land and waters for tens of thousands of years, including with **Durt'Yowan** (the Latrobe River), its waterways and connected Country.

For the Gunaikurnai Traditional Owners, there are immense challenges to heal, protect and manage Country, which has been drastically altered since colonisation.

> "As Gunaikurnai, we see our land (*Wurruk*), waters (*Yarnda*), air (*Watpootjan*) and every living thing as one. All things come from *Wurruk, Yarnda* and *Watpootjan*, and they are the spiritual life-giving resources, providing us with resources and forming the basis of our cultural practices. We have a cultural responsibility to ensure that all of it is looked after."

– Water is Life: Traditional Owner Access to Water Roadmap 2022 – Gunaikurnai Nation Statement

In September 2025, the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation released a position statement '*Healing Wurruk After Coal*' outlining Gunaikurnai principles, rights and priorities for the remediation of coal mines in the Latrobe Valley. The statement, informed by the Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country Plan, included a strong message on the life-sustaining importance of yarnda (water), and the need to improve the health of Durt'Yowan and all waterways that connect to Talikator (Gippsland Lakes).

Objectives for Durt'Yowan include;

- ensuring water quality, both with water instream, and water coming into the river,
- operations moving to a prioritisation of water delivered for healthy Country ahead of other interests,
- government investment in waterway rehabilitation,
- connection of Durt'Yowan to its wetlands and floodplains, and
- GLaWAC participation in ongoing monitoring, restoration and management.

GLaWAC notes that no formal government ecological monitoring took place on Durt'Yowan in 2025-26. Water management decisions including environmental water deliveries need to be informed. The lack of ecological monitoring in Durt'Yowan in 2025/26 as it moves to a future of mine rehabilitation presents a significant risk. GLaWAC seeks the environmental watering program, and other water uses in Durt'Yowan, be informed by multi-seasonal annual ecological, water quality and cultural monitoring from 2026-27.

Cultural values and uses of Durt'Yowan are encompassing, including cultural landscape and connection, plants and animals, the importance of place and its role in communicating story and the entire ecosystem's health. This extends to maintaining water quality, controlling pest species and maintaining a natural, seasonal flow regime and overbank flood events.

GLaWAC seeks the following from Durt'Yowan environmental watering in 2026-27:

- Collaboration with Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) regarding the timing of the delivery of water for the environment to support water quality, and a seasonal flow regime that embodies healthy Country
- Monitoring, including monitoring of cultural indicators, to be seasonal and continuing, to inform the impacts of changed water regimes from water storage dams, urban and mine supply and other uses.
- River flows of Durt'Yowan to aid freshwater supply to the Durt'Yowan estuary, and associated freshwater wetland habitats

- Durt'Yowan connectivity up and down stream is supported, noting connection to floodplains in 2026-27 is not forecast.
- Water quality objectives aimed at supporting cultural values and uses of significance to the Gunaikurnai, including plants, animals and place.
- Target Durt-Yowan flows to help fill large wetlands to support gidai (black swan) breeding in late winter to spring, through supporting the growth of loombrak (water ribbon) and submerged aquatic plants
- Annual Government ecological monitoring including cultural indicators already provided by GLaWAC is conducted to inform outcomes and future environmental watering needs.

GLaWAC continues to have a close partnership with West Gippsland CMA. We aim to work together in 2026-27 to increase involvement of Gunaikurnai Traditional Owners in planning and managing environmental flows and progressing opportunities towards self-determination in the environmental watering program, a core commitment of the VEWH and its program partners. This is reinforced by legislation and policy commitments, including the *Water Act 1989*, the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework, the 2016 Water for Victoria, the 2022 Water is Life: Traditional Owner Access to Water Roadmap and, in some cases, agreements under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*.

5 SOCIAL RECREATIONAL AND ECONOMIC (SRE) VALUES AND USES

In planning the potential environmental watering actions, the West Gippsland CMA considered how environmental flows could support values and uses, including:

- water-based recreation (such as fishing and water skiing)
- riverside recreation and amenity (such as birdwatching and game hunting)
- socioeconomic benefits (such as commercial fishing, tourism and improved water quality for domestic, irrigation and stock use).

Planned environmental flows may be modified to align with a community benefit so long as environmental outcomes are not compromised. The West Gippsland CMA works with the storage operator to ensure releases of water for the environment do not affect Lake Narracan's water levels during water skiing events held between January and March.

	Environmental watering will also support water sports activities (e.g., canoeing, kayaking, rowing, swimming, water skiing) by…

6 SCOPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL WATERING

This chapter outlines the Potential Watering Actions (PWAs) that may be delivered in the Latrobe River system during 2026–27 (Table 2.2.1). It describes the flow components planned to support priority environmental objectives across the river and estuary, drawing on flow recommendations, expected climatic conditions and system constraints. The PWAs presented here form the basis for scenario planning in later sections and may be adjusted in response to real-time conditions, operational requirements and opportunities for coordinated management.

Table 2.2.1 Potential Watering Actions in 2026-27

Potential environmental watering action	Expected watering effects	Environmental objectives
Latrobe River - reach 5		
Winter/spring low flow (620 ML/day during July to November 2026 and June 2027)	• Wet benches to maintain habitat, support the growth of emergent macrophyte vegetation and limit the encroachment of terrestrial vegetation • Maintain oxygen levels in pools and maintain sediment (sands and silts) in suspension to prevent pools from filling and depositing on substrates, helping to maintain habitat for macroinvertebrates, turtles, aquatic mammals and breeding substrate for river blackfish • Maintain longitudinal connectivity to allow movement/dispersal of native fish, turtles, platypus and rakali (water rats)	F1  G1  PR1  T1  V1 & V2  M1 WQ1
Latrobe River - reach 3 & 5		
Summer/autumn low flow (440 ML/day during December to May)	• Maintain an adequate depth in pool habitat to support native fish, turtles, platypus and rakali (water rats) and submerged vegetation • Limit encroachment by terrestrial vegetation and support the growth of emergent macrophyte vegetation • Mix pools to maintain oxygen levels suitable for aquatic animals	F1  PR1  T1  V1  M1 WQ1

Potential environmental watering action	Expected watering effects	Environmental objectives
Latrobe River - reach 3, 4 & 5		
Spring /summer/autumn river freshes (one to nine freshes of 980 to 1,400 ML/ day for one to five days during November to May). Note: at lower magnitude (980 ML/day) objectives are met in reaches 3 and 5. At upper magnitude (1,400 ML/d) objectives are met in reaches 3, 4 and 5.	Water-quality fresh (one-day duration): •freshen water quality in pools to support fish, macroinvertebrate and zooplankton communities •provide sufficient velocity to turn over and flush sediments (sands and silts) from pools, scour algae from hard surfaces and clean fine sediment from substrates, including river blackfish nesting habitats Fish and vegetation fresh (three to five days duration) objectives of the one-day fresh as well as: •wet benches to support the growth of emergent macrophyte vegetation •provide longitudinal connectivity (including over benches for Australian grayling) for native fish, platypus and rakali (water rats)	F1 PR1 G1 V1 & V2 M1 WQ1
Latrobe Estuary- reach 6		
Spring Summer/autumn estuary fresh(es) (one to three freshes of 2,200 ML/ day for seven to 10 days during November to May) **Note**: this is a combined magnitude with the Thomson River over the equivalent period; a contribution of up to 1,220 ML/day from the Thomson is require	• Upper estuary: fully flush with freshwater to support submerged vegetation, provide adequate oxygen levels for aquatic animals, transport silt, wet benches, and deliver freshwater to connected wetlands • Mid-estuary: partially/fully flush the upper layer of the water column to improve water quality, support emergent macrophytes, provide freshwater habitat and associated food sources for freshwater fish and provide breeding opportunities for estuary fish • Lower estuary: partially flush the upper layer of the water column; a flow of this magnitude will also provide opportunities to fill the lower Latrobe wetlands	F1 G1 V1 M1 WQ1

7 SCENARIO PLANNING

For any given year the level at which an environmental watering objective can be met will vary depending on the extant weather and climate conditions. For this reason, the overarching goals for environmental water management varies over four climatic scenarios. These goals are as follows:

- Drought — **Protect** high priority environmental assets, key functions, and priority refuges to ensure chance of future recovery and avoid catastrophic events such as low dissolved oxygen or algal blooms
- Dry — **Maintain** high priority environmental assets, key functions, and priority refuges to ensure chance of future recovery and avoid catastrophic events such as low dissolved oxygen or algal blooms
- Average — **Recover** by improving ecological health and resilience and enhance recruitment opportunities for key flora and fauna
- Wet — **Enhance** by maximising recruitment opportunities for flora and fauna species.

Target reach

Watering actions for the Latrobe River are aimed at meeting environmental objectives in all reaches from Lake Narracan to Lake Wellington, with flow recommendations for the estuary reliant on flows from the Thomson River. The compliance reach for Latrobe River flows is reach 4 (Rosedale).

Delivery

Environmental water deliveries are released from Blue Rock Lake on the Tanjil River where they travel to Lake Narracan on the Latrobe River. From here flows can be temporarily retained or allowed to flow through depending on the environmental objective or operational constraints at the time.

In designing environmental flow releases, while the target is Latrobe River outcomes, Tanjil River outcomes are considered, maximising the benefits of environmental water releases.

Options to deliver environmental water to the Latrobe River via the Tyers River are being considered for as per previous years with Gippsland Water and DEECA recently undertaking modelling for such a scenario. WGCMA will continue to work with Gippsland Water and DEECA on this matter. A completion date for this work is not apparent at the time of writing.

Monitoring

Members of the Latrobe Environmental Water Advisory Group (LEWAG) highlighted the value of strengthening monitoring as a more explicit objective of the environmental water program, to better demonstrate ecological responses to watering actions and support adaptive management over time. Currently, monitoring in the Latrobe River system is limited, with hydrological outcomes primarily assessed through river gauge data and flow compliance. Ecological responses are inferred from these hydrological metrics, supported by limited and opportunistic monitoring activities, including sporadic eDNA sampling where funding and partnerships allow.

In the absence of a comprehensive monitoring program, assumptions regarding ecological response are also informed by findings from the Latrobe Environmental Water Requirements Investigation and by monitoring results from the adjacent Thomson River system, where similar flow objectives and species assemblages occur. LEWAG noted that expanding monitoring coverage, improving coordination and developing a longer-term monitoring approach would strengthen the evidence base for future proposals. Opportunities to enhance monitoring will continue to be explored over time, subject to resourcing, partnerships and alignment with broader regional and state-wide monitoring priorities.

Constraints

Significant constraint to environmental water delivery exists in the lower Latrobe area adjacent to Pearsondale. Low channel capacity combined with tidal influence and interaction from Thomson River flows impacting water level interactions means that water delivers are limited by capacity of reach 5.

Recent years of flooding, combined with impacts from stranded carp, have reduced channel capacity in this reach. WGCMA has commenced a project to investigate the geomorphic history and trajectory of the Latrobe River. This project will identify a range of options to address these constraints, with a list of feasible options expected by July 2026. WGCMA will continue to work with impacted landholders over the next 12 months and seek landholder agreement in the appropriate form, where required.

Seasonal Review

The year to date has had below-average inflows, with minor flooding in early winter and late spring. Although no formal monitoring occurs in the Latrobe River system, ecological condition can be inferred from flow compliance:

- zero non-compliance days for winter/spring low flows
- five natural winter/spring freshes
- nine non-compliance days for summer/autumn low flows
- two natural summer/autumn freshes

Planned environmental water for the remainder of the year will focus on maintaining autumn low flows and providing targeted freshes to support water quality, habitat condition and fish movement where natural inflows are insufficient (Figure 1).

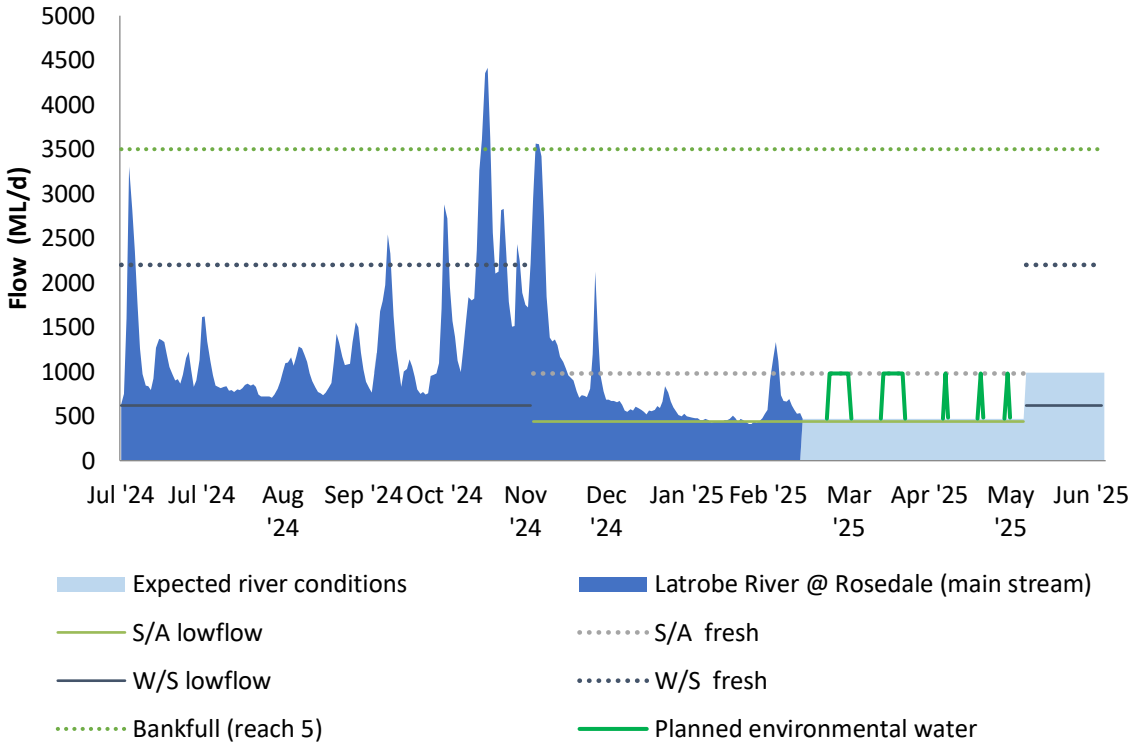


Figure 1 Observed and planned flows at Rosedale for 2025–26, showing natural freshes, low-flow compliance and planned environmental water deliveries for the remainder of the year

Water availability

The expected water availability for the 2026-27 water year is presented in Table 1. It is anticipated that the beginning of the water year will see the Blue Rock Environmental Entitlement at 100% capacity and the Latrobe River Entitlement (the VEWHs portion of the redistributed ¾ bench entitlement) at its cap level of 5.3 GL. Any watering actions undertaken in the remainder of the 2025-26 water year will most likely be recouped before the end of the year.

The VEWH's share of inflows to Blue Rock have been calculated using minimum values for each climate scenarios and are derived from source model outputs.

The Latrobe River entitlement incudes a share of storage and inflows to both Lake Narracan and Blue Rock Reservoir, as well as a share of unregulated flows in the Latrobe River. This entitlement has a capped use of 5.3 GL per year and is separate from the existing Environmental Entitlement in Blue Rock Reservoir. Operating arrangements are yet to be developed for this portion of the environmental entitlement.

Table 1. 2026-27 Expected water availability for the Environmental Entitlements across four climate scenarios.

Planning scenario	*Drought*	*Dry*	*Average*	*Wet*
Bluerock Environmental entitlement	18,737 ML	18,737 ML	18,737 ML	18,737 ML
Environment share of Bluerock inflows	6,332 ML	7,466 ML	11,057 ML	14,364 ML
Environment portion of 3-4-bench	5,300 ML	5,300 ML	5,300 ML	5,300 ML
Total	*30,369 ML*	*31,503 ML*	*35,094 ML*	*38,401 ML*

Potential watering actions and scenario planning

With dry conditions expected, the focus for 2026–27 is on protecting and maintaining high-priority environmental assets, ensuring critical functions can continue and avoiding catastrophic events such as low dissolved oxygen or algal blooms. Watering actions this year will primarily support native fish communities by maintaining baseflows and delivering targeted freshes that enable movement, dispersal and survival of new recruits. Providing freshwater to the Latrobe estuary and connected wetlands is also a high priority.

The available water allows all tier 1 actions in the drought and dry scenarios to be met. Maintaining target low flows year-round remains essential to support habitat for native fish, turtles, platypus and rakali (water rats), and to sustain riparian and aquatic vegetation.

Delivering spring/summer/autumn freshes to both the river and the estuary is a priority in all planning scenarios. These freshes maintain water quality, provide opportunities for native fish migration and consolidate the gains made in the estuary following several wet years. Longer-duration estuary freshes (up to 10 days) may be coordinated with flows from the Thomson River when feasible to meet estuary flow recommendations.

In wetter scenarios, most flow recommendations will likely be met through natural flows and passing flows. In drier scenarios, fewer natural inflows are expected, and environmental water will be used to deliver freshes and low flows at the lower end of their recommended magnitudes and frequencies to maintain, rather than improve, ecological condition. Even in drought and dry conditions, some natural tributary inflow is expected during winter and spring.

Because the Latrobe system does not have true carryover, the VEWH relies on its ongoing share of storage in Blue Rock Reservoir and Lake Narracan. To maintain delivery capability into early 2026–27, at least 5,000 ML should remain in storage at the end of the water year under drought and dry scenarios, and 3,000 ML under average conditions.

Tier 2 watering actions

Tier 2 watering actions represent enhanced versions of the standard (tier 1) freshes and would only be delivered if the delivery constraint in reach 5 is resolved. These actions use higher-magnitude flows (1,400 ML/day) to achieve the full environmental flow recommendations for the Latrobe River and estuary without increasing the total number of events.

If the reach 5 constraint is removed, selected lower-magnitude tier 1 freshes would be substituted with higher-magnitude tier 2 freshes. This would improve outcomes for native fish movement, estuarine freshness, sediment transport and vegetation without increasing event frequency. In drought and dry scenarios, longer-duration freshes are prioritised because they provide more sustained access to freshwater for the lower Latrobe wetlands, helping to avoid catastrophic water-quality conditions, reduce invasive vegetation and inundate mudflats.

Under drought and wet scenarios, available environmental water is sufficient to deliver all proposed tier 2 actions due to lower overall demand in drought conditions and higher natural inflows in wet conditions. Under dry and average scenarios, an additional 1,600 ML and 2,000 ML respectively would be required to fully implement tier 2 actions. Where these volumes are not available, the system would revert to lower-magnitude tier 1 freshes to maintain critical ecological functions.

Table 2 shows the proposed redistribution of flows with and without the constraints in place.

Table 2. Showing the redistribution of freshes with predicted water availability if constraints to environmental water are lifted.

Watering action	Magnitude (ML/d)	Constrained (tier 1)				R5 constraint addressed (Tier 2 substitutes)			
		Drought	Dry	Average	Wet	Drought	Dry	Average	Wet
Water quality fresh	980	4	5	6	6	3	5	6	6
	1,400	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Fish & vegetation fresh	980	1	2	3	3	-	2	2	-
	1,400	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3
Estuary Fresh	980	2	2	3	3	1	1	2	2
	1,400	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1

Table 3: Scenario Planning in 2026-27

Planning scenario	Drought	Dry	Average	Wet
Expected conditions	• Small contributions to low flow from unregulated reaches and tributaries • Passing flow likely reduced over summer/autumn	• Possible spills from storages in spring, minor flood levels may occur • Some natural flow contributing to low flow and freshes Passing flow likely reduced over summer	• Regular spills from storages in spring and minor to moderate flood levels may occur Natural flow and/or passing flow likely to meet low-flow requirements	• Large and frequent spills from storages and moderate to major flood levels may occur Natural flow and/ or passing flow are likely to meet low- flow requirements
Estimated availability of water for the environment	30,369 ML	31,503 ML	35,094 ML	38,401 ML
Latrobe River & Estuary				
Potential environmental watering – tier 1 (high priorities)	Tier 1			
	• Winter/spring low flow • Summer/autumn low flow • Spring, summer/autumn river freshes of 980 ML/d (three or four freshes of lower duration and one of mid-duration [four days]) • Spring, summer/autumn estuary freshes of 980 ML/d (one or two freshes of lower duration) •	• Winter/spring low flow • Summer/autumn low flow • Spring, summer/autumn river freshes of 980 ML/d (five freshes of lower duration and two of mid-duration [three days]) • Spring, summer/autumn estuary freshes of 980 ML/d (two freshes of upper duration) •	• Winter/spring low flow • Summer/autumn low flow • Spring, summer/autumn river freshes of 980 ML/d (six freshes of lower duration and three of mid-duration [four days]) • Spring, summer/autumn estuary freshes of 980 ML/d (three freshes of upper duration) •	• Winter/spring low flow • Summer/autumn low flow • Spring, summer/autumn river freshes of 980 ML/d (six freshes of lower duration and three of upper duration [five days]) • Spring, summer/autumn estuary freshes of 980 ML/d (three freshes of upper duration) •
Potential environmental watering – tier 2 (additional priorities)	Tier 2			
	• Spring, summer/autumn estuary freshes of 1,400 ML/d (one freshes of lower duration) • Spring, summer/autumn river freshes of 1,400 ML/d (one fresh of lower duration [one day])	• Spring, summer/autumn estuary freshes of 1,400 ML/d (one fresh of upper duration)	• Spring, summer/autumn estuary freshes of 1,400 ML/d (one fresh of upper duration) • Spring, summer/autumn river freshes of 1,400 ML/d (one fresh of mid-duration [four days])	• Spring, summer/autumn estuary freshes of 1,400 ML/d (one fresh of upper duration) • Spring, summer/autumn river freshes of 1,400 ML/d (two freshes of lower duration and three of

Planning scenario	Drought	Dry	Average	Wet
				upper duration [five days])
Possible volume of water for the environment required to achieve objectives	Tier 1 22,000 ML Tier 2 3,000 ML	Tier 1 22,000 ML Tier 2 5,900 ML (requires 1,600 ML additional water)	Tier 1 30,000 ML Tier 2 9,200 ML (requires 2,000 ML additional water)	Tier 1 20,500 ML Tier 2 17,800 ML
Priority carryover requirements for 2027-28	5,000 ML		3,000 ML	0

8 ENGAGEMENT

Connecting with local landholders has been the focus of engagement efforts over the past year while we investigate constraints in delivering environmental water to the Latrobe River. This has included visits to local landholder properties and one-on-one conversations to gain an understanding of the current condition of the riverbanks and identify areas that may need restoration or repair.

The Friends of Tyers Park have continued to assist with the eDNA sampling program on the Tyers River (a tributary of the Latrobe). The data helps us gain a better understanding of what lives and uses the river. It also strengthens our relationship with an informed and eager group, who can contribute local knowledge and advocacy.

WGCMA hosted this year's Environmental Water Officer's regional tour, showcasing the Latrobe River and Lower Latrobe Wetlands. This was an opportunity to highlight the unique challenges facing this system with twenty environmental water professionals, with the aim of raising awareness and sharing knowledge.

The broader community was engaged via the quarterly environmental water email and SMS notification system. This was used to share delivery updates, monitoring results and other information. Several articles were also included in VR Fish newsletters to reach our recreational fishing audience, highlighting the importance of environmental flows for fish spawning and recruitment.

Input into the environmental water program is predominantly via our Latrobe Environmental Water Advisory Group (LEWAG). This group is composed of members from government agencies, storage operators, community, Traditional Owners and environmental groups, as well as landholders/irrigators.

Membership of this group was formed from the previous Latrobe Environmental Water Requirements Investigation project advisory group as well as an expression of interest process designed to target a diverse range of communities of interest.

In the annual planning meeting held on the 13th of March 2026, members of the LEWAG supported the proposed objectives for the 2026–27 watering year and suggested the inclusion of monitoring as a more explicit objective in future proposals. This was seen as a way to better demonstrate ecological responses to environmental watering actions and to inform ongoing adaptive management. The group also noted the value of developing a longer-term or multi-year strategy to complement the annual seasonal watering proposal and provide clearer strategic direction over time.

LEWAG members also discussed opportunities to improve the operational aspects of environmental water delivery, particularly to better align managed releases with natural flow events. It was suggested that further work be undertaken to improve operational flexibility to enhance or extend natural freshes where feasible. In addition, the group supported a site visit to the constrained reach of the Latrobe River below Kilmany (reach 5) to improve shared understanding of delivery constraints, floodplain interactions and potential options to address these issues.

Engagement with Traditional Owners (TO)

The Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) have Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) status under the Aboriginal Heritage Act (2006) and their area of determination covers all West Gippsland rivers that receive environmental water. The WGCMA has a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in place with GLaWAC since 2013, which includes regular strategic engagmenet between the WGCMA and GLaWAC. In this MoU the WGCMA agrees to involve the Aboriginal corporation in all WGCMA projects from the beginning as well as build capacity of GLaWAC to protect and conserve natural resources.

While a GLaWAC representative was invited to attend EWAG meetings, they were unable to attend. Therefore, specific engagement occurred separately. WGCMA has worked closely with GLaWAC on our SWPs for several years and have amassed a wealth of cultural knowledge on the river system which will be reviewed along with the proposed flows.

WGCMA is working with GLaWAC to coordinate river based eDNA monitoring, looking for sites of shared interest and complementarity, to increase knowledge sharing and participation in waterway management activities.

Strategic engagement between the WGCMA and GLaWAC does occur regularly.

Summary table

Table 4: Summary of stakeholder engagement that informed this Seasonal Watering Proposal

Stakeholder Category	Stakeholder(s)	Engagement method	Engagement purpose
Community groups and environment groups	• VR Fish • Friends of Tyers Park • Friends of Latrobe Water • Great Latrobe Park	• Formal advisory group (EWAG) • Direct engagement (one-on-one)	• Provide information to stakeholders on seasonal watering proposals. • Seek input to the development of the proposal. • Review previous environmental watering actions and seek feedback on any outcomes or observations. • Assist in increasing awareness and understanding of the purpose of objectives of the environmental watering program in the Latrobe system. • Provide an opportunity for individuals, agencies and groups to contribute to the proposed watering actions and intended outcomes. • Identify opportunities to achieve shared benefits. • Increase collaboration and awareness of the Latrobe catchment.
Government agencies	• Southern Rural Water • Gippsland Water • Victorian Environmental Water Holder • Arthur Rylah Institute		
Landholders/farmers	• Individual landholders	• Direct engagement (one-on-one, emails)	• Increase collaboration and awareness of the Latrobe catchment. • Identify opportunities to achieve shared benefits
Recreational Users	• Recreational Users • Community members	• Direct engagement (one-on-one, email distribution list)	
Traditional Owners	• Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation	• Review of draft proposal • Direct engagement (one-on-one)	• Invitation to collaborate and share knowledge, • Inform on proposed watering actions, • Identify opportunities to achieve shared benefits.

Local businesses	N/A		

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

A risk management workshop hosted by the Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEWH) was held in February 2026. The workshop participants included representatives from relevant water corporations MW, GW, land managers, WGCMA and VEWH. A representative from SRW was not available on the day. Participants identified the key potential risks that may occur in the 2026-27 water year, to prevent environmental objectives not being met. The risks were considered within the context of the likely watering actions proposed for 2026-27, and the current conditions of environmental assets across each system.

The risk assessment was undertaken using the likelihood, consequence and risk rating tables contained in the updated Victorian Environmental Watering Program Risk Management Framework (updated 2026). The risk assessment process also had regard for dynamic risks that are more likely to vary from year to year, depending on seasonal conditions or the specific watering actions proposed.

Risks and mitigation strategies identified at this workshop are provided in the report on outcomes from the 2026 risk workshop supplied by the VEWH. Many of the risks were categorised as low risks, with the balance rating as medium risks with only one high risk. There were no extreme risks prior to mitigations.

The “high” risk, applicable to all systems, related to safety risk around rapid changes in river conditions due to flow releases. Post mitigation actions (i.e. enacting communications plan, notifications, appropriate ramp up and ramp down rates), the residual risk was identified as low.

The medium and high risks were assessed as having low residual risk levels for 2026-27 following the application of the identified mitigation actions.

10 APPROVAL, ENDORSEMENT AND CONSENT

WATERWAY MANAGER APPROVAL OF THE SEASONAL WATERING PROPOSAL

I, the authorised representative of the agency shown below approve the Seasonal Watering Proposal for the Latrobe River system in 2026-27 and declare that:

- the information provided in this proposal is true and correct,
- all required approvals and endorsements from storage managers, land managers, Traditional Owners or other relevant party have been granted, and
- unless otherwise stated, any consent/s required to use or reproduce Traditional Owner language and knowledge has been obtained.

SIGNED FOR AND ON BEHALF OF WEST GIPPSLAND CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

Signature of authorised representative:



Name of authorised representative: Martin Fuller

Position of authorised representative: CEO

Date: 27/04/2026

11 REFERENCES

12 APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Values icons used in the Seasonal Watering Plan

Environmental Values

Icon	Unique ID prefix	Value it represents
	A	Icon indicating an environmental objective in this system relates to frogs.
	B	Icon indicating an environmental objective in this system relates to waterbirds
	CN	Icon indicating an environmental objective in this system aims to maintain, increase, or enable carbon and nutrient cycling and connectivity.
	F	Icon indicating an environmental objective in this system relates to fish.
	G	Icon indicating an environmental objective in this system aims to maintain or strengthen physical stream characteristics
	MI	Icon indicating an environmental objective in this system relates to invertebrates.
	PR	Icon indicating an environmental objective in this system relates to platypus or rakali.
	T	Icon indicating an environmental objective in this system relates to turtles.
	TA	Icon indicating an environmental objective in this system relates to terrestrial animals.
	V	Icon indicating an environmental objective in this system relates to vegetation.
	WQ	Icon indicating an environmental objective in this system aims to maintain or increase water quality and/or conditions.

Traditional Owner

	Watering planned and/or delivered in partnership with Traditional Owners to support cultural values and uses

Social, recreational, and economic values and uses.

	Icon indicating that environmental watering will also support water sports activities (e.g. canoeing, kayaking, rowing, swimming, water skiing)
	Icon indicating that environmental watering will also support waterbird-related recreational activities (e.g., twitching, birdwatching)
	Icon indicating that environmental watering will also support angling activities
	Icon indicating that environmental watering will also support peaks in visitation (e.g., camping, or other public activities on long weekends or school holidays)