

Irrigation Drainage and Water Quality Memorandum of Understanding

The Memorandum of Understanding for Irrigation Drainage Management and Water Quality, which is known as the Irrigation Drainage Memorandum of Understanding (IDMOU), applies to the Shepparton and Loddon-Murray irrigation regions of northern Victoria. It was signed on the 22 June 2004 and clearly defines the responsibilities of key government organisations with respect to managing the water quality impacts of drainage from irrigation areas.

The parties to the memorandum, which is in place for a minimum of five years, are:

- Department of Sustainability and Environment
- Environment Protection Authority
- Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority
- North Central Catchment Management Authority
- Goulburn-Murray Rural Water Authority.

The IDMOU is underpinned by a set of core principles, which have been agreed to by all parties. These principles include a commitment to:

- long term sustainability
- protection, enhancement, and improvement where feasible and justified
- community involvement and empowerment
- a cooperative, partnership approach between all stakeholders
- achieving a triple bottom line outcome leading to a net gain
- accountable and transparent decision making.

The IDMOU fosters continuous improvement through adaptive management processes, including regular performance reviews and audits, and enhanced monitoring programs focused on achieving key outcomes. Promotion of new approaches to water quality management is also fostered within the IDMOU through commitments to explore innovative concepts and ideas as part of the ongoing evolution of irrigation drainage management.

A central component of the IDMOU is the setting of targets for key contaminants at existing and new regional drainage outfall points (referred to as 'Resource Condition' targets). These targets are aimed at preserving or improving the resource condition of water in Victoria's waterways. The target setting framework includes agreement on the need for independent auditing and regular reporting. This will facilitate transparent and rigorous assessment of water quality achievements against well-defined targets.

Targets will also be set for the implementation of on-ground works (referred to as 'Management Actions') that decrease the impacts of drainage water on waterways and receiving waters. For example, within the processes defined in the IDMOU, catchment-wide targets could be set for the construction of farm dams to capture and recycle drainage water.

Under the terms of the IDMOU, Resource Condition and Management Action targets will be included as Schedules within existing, or updated, community developed land and water management strategies and plans.