

ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

SUMMARY FOR THE COMMUNITY



HIGHLIGHTS

The link between partnerships and innovation was highlighted by a number of projects and initiatives delivered during 2015/16.

- We are working with a private sector organisation (Agersens) to develop virtual fencing technology to manage stock access near waterways. The project is listed as a priority in the Regional Riparian Action Plan and we are keen to attract additional funding to progress the project trials.
- The Victorian Government contracted the Goulburn Broken CMA to lead regional input (community engagement and technical studies) into the development of the Goulburn River Constraints Management Business Case between May 2015 and February 2016. In response to feedback from 34 community information sessions and from community advisory groups, the initial proposal of additional flows of up to 40,000 ML/day at Shepparton to water the lower Goulburn floodplain was revised to 25,000-30,000 ML/day; and the cost of mitigation works was estimated to be more than \$139 million rather than earlier estimates of \$31-\$47 million.
- Finalisation of the Australian Government funded NRM Planning for Climate Change Strategy has been a major collaborative effort by the state's CMAs and provides a clear way forward for climate change adaptation in the NRM sector. To build on this body of work, over the past year the CMAs continued to work together to develop a list of state-wide adaptation priorities that supports the Victorian Government's vision to become a leader in climate change.
- As we head into the last year of the Australian Government's Biodiversity Fund it was pleasing to highlight that through the Creating Biodiverse Carbon Landscapes and Linking Key Habitat Elements project, 1966 ha of land are now covered by 10-year management agreements and another 1000ha is due to be protected by the end of the project.
- We have signed Service Level Agreements with Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation and Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, and entered into an agreement with the Algabonyah Community Cabinet (to commit to Indigenous people making up to at least 2% of the regional workforce by 2020).
- We led a collaboration between the CMAs, DELWP and Deakin University to survey Victoria's inland wetlands for their carbon sequestration capacity. All indications are that inland wetlands are effective carbon sinks and could therefore provide carbon offsets. This is of considerable value to NRM agencies in building the case for securing investment to restore wetlands
- We welcomed the announcement of \$22 million for the state's 10 CMAs to implement the Our Catchments, Our Communities strategy, Victoria's first state-wide strategy for integrated catchment management. The commitment to four-year funding (rather than annual) will provide greater certainty and support for the catchment community to deliver on-ground works and measure and report on the effectiveness of those works.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING ACROSS THE CATCHMENT?

Across the Catchment, the landscape, people, threats and priorities differ. To address these differences, six social-ecological systems have been identified in the Regional Catchment Strategy through consultation and research. These systems don't have sharp boundaries but they do share similar characteristics and issues that give them a unique identity.

A description of the activities achieved in each social-ecological system is described here.



- Agricultural Floodplains
- Productive Plains
- Commuting Hills
- Upland Slopes
- Southern Forests
- Urban Centres



AGRICULTURAL FLOODPLAINS

Northern floodplain with Murray River along boundary with NSW

- Landscape highly modified for agriculture
- Major investment in on and off-farm irrigation infrastructure
- Barmah National Park highly valued internationally important breeding site for many bird species
- Long history of community leadership in managing land and water problems

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

- Water Minister Lisa Neville launched Round 4 of the Victorian Farm Modernisation Program. Seventy four applications worth over \$15 million were received for this round.
- Native fish relocated from Rice's Weir along the Broken Creek following alarming drops in dissolved oxygen linked to blue green algae outbreak and unseasonably hot dry weather.
- Kotupna-Wyuna focus landscape used as a pilot for working with partners to target integration of native vegetation into whole farm plans.
- 9.9 ha of riparian areas along priority reaches and wetlands were revegetated, with 6.9 km fenced.
- The Goulburn Broken CMA, Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation and Parks Victoria continued work in partnership on a project to address 'Weeds of National Significance' and pest animals in the Barmah Forest.



PRODUCTIVE PLAINS

Foothills and floodplains towards the north of the Catchment

- Predominantly dryland farming
- Habitat provided by vegetation along waterways, roadsides, ranges and spring soak wetlands
- Rivers and creeks in moderate condition, wetlands in moderate to good condition



COMMUTING HILLS

Mountainous southern and south western urban fringe

- Public and private forests support many plant and animals including threatened Golden Sun Moth
- Land use also supports range of agricultural industries and lifestyle communities
- People drawn to area for natural beauty and lifestyle and commute to Melbourne for work



UPLAND SLOPES

Slopes and valleys towards the south of the Catchment

- Grazing and other agricultural enterprises occur in cleared valleys surrounded by partially forested hills and vegetation along waterways
- Lake Eildon provides water for agricultural production, recreation, tourism, and river health all the way down the Catchment and beyond the boundary
- Generational farmers live alongside increasing numbers of lifestyle properties and absentee landholders

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

- Volunteers from Uniting Church Volunteers and Blaze Aid as well as work crews from Beechworth and Dhurringile prisons finished replacing or repairing fences damaged by fires that burnt more than 14,000 ha near Stewarton, Boweya and Creighton's Creek in mid-December 2014.
- More than 50 people including local politicians, Traditional Owners and community attended the launch of the interpretive trail at Tallis Winery, Dookie.
- A number of native fish (including a threatened freshwater catfish) were caught, tagged and released during electrofishing surveys around re-snagged areas in Tahbilk Lagoon.
- The first year of the Strathbogie Streams project resulted in significant on-ground works on streams flowing from the Strathbogie Ranges, including the Hughes Creek, Seven Creeks, Honeysuckle Creek and Pranjip Creek.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

- Completed assessment of damage caused by the Tallarook and Lancefield fires that burnt about 4,500 ha.
- Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment Anthony Carbines launched the Riparian Project at the Y Water Centre in Yea.
- Four-day canoe trip along the Goulburn River from Alexandra to Seymour organised by Taungurung Clans and Goulburn Broken CMA.
- Significant preparation for an ongoing VCAT hearing relating to a high profile case of quarrying in the Goulburn River.
- Continued to work with Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation on its Whole of Country Plan.
- Effective Water Management workshop held at Kilmore to help farmers understand and manage their water requirements during dry times.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

- Goulburn River winter fresh started as planned in June but the flow and duration of the event was reduced in July as bridge replacement works at Ghin Ghin Bridge by Murrindindi Council limited flows to a maximum of 2,000 ML/day.
- More than 300 people attended Fish Circus held at Hughes Creek.
- More than 40 people celebrated the achievements of rural women in agriculture and the environment at the Catchment's inaugural Chicks in the Sticks event at Mt Buller.
- Supported the Up2Us Landcare Network's "Inspiring small farms to grow big ideas" project to help cottage farmers to develop successful local businesses.
- Hosted a "Tough Season" workshop with Graeme Hand at Alexandra to help farmers better cope with dry and variable seasonal conditions.



SOUTHERN FORESTS

South-east mountains, waterways and snow covered alps

- Unique alpine vegetation supports endangered mountain pygmy possum
- Most of the area is public land managed for conservation, but also for recreation and timber production
- Waterways are in good condition with recreation and tourism highly valued
- People live in small and seasonal communities and travel to and from this area
- The interface between private and public land is important for management

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

- Input into finalisation of the Jamieson FloodSafe Guide.
- Continued to deliver the Alpine Bogs Project with Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation. This project focuses on enhancing the ecological character of these unique wetland systems and partnering with Parks Victoria to identify and manage pest plants, in particular blackberry.
- Worked with fly fishers, Mansfield Council and Up2Us to revegetate a section of the Delatite River.



URBAN CENTRES AND WHOLE OF CATCHMENT

The Goulburn Broken Catchment

- Covers 2.4 million hectares, about 10.5 per cent of Victoria
- Main centres include Shepparton, Seymour and Benalla
- Population of more than 205,000 including 6,000 Indigenous Australians
- Yields more than 3,500 gigalitres or 10.5 per cent of the Murray Darling Basin's water
- Agriculture is a significant contributor to the Catchment's economy with a gross value of agricultural production of almost \$2 billion

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

- Launched the Taungurung Indigenous Garden at Seymour College.
- Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment Anthony Carbinis attended RiverConnect 10th year celebrations to recognise the partnership between Greater Shepparton City Council, Traditional Owners, Goulburn Broken CMA, Parks Victoria and the community.
- 2014/15 Goulburn Broken Community NRM Report Card launched with DELWP Deputy Secretary Kate Houghton and Goulburn Murray Landcare Network Chair John Laing.
- More than 6,000 students participated in the Waterwatch Program, including water week and water quality and catchment education.
- Reviewed Biodiversity Strategy for Goulburn Broken Catchment 2010-15 and started development of updated strategy.
- Developed projects for 20 Million Trees and Green Army (Australian Government's National Landcare Programme).
- Improved genetics of seed production areas by working with CSIRO. This will increase adaptability to climate change.
- Projects to protect gliders, brush-tailed phascogale and legless lizards were among 11 in the Goulburn Broken catchment to share in more than \$157,000 of funding through the Victorian Government's Community Volunteer Action grants.
- More than 50 people attended the inaugural Women in Agriculture forum held in Euroa to hear more about the link between good natural resource management and farm sustainability, and dealing with change and challenges.
- Endangered and threatened species including the Regent Honeyeater, Warby Swamp Gum, Superb Parrot and Euroa Guinea Flower protected thanks to \$130,000 of funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme.

ACHIEVEMENTS DURING 2015-16

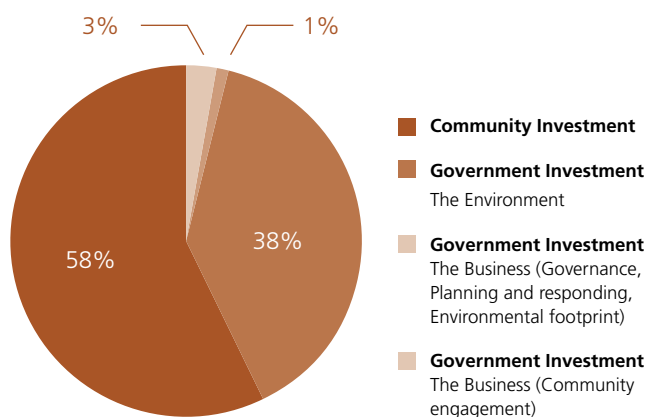
Output ⁱ	Achieved	Target ⁱⁱ
Remnant vegetation fenced, ha	714	508
Wetlands fenced, ha	3	0
Rivers and streams fenced, ha	244	0
Riparian land fenced, ha	247	0
Long-term conservation agreements, ha ⁱⁱⁱ	70	60
Indigenous revegetation planted, ha	750	625
Irrigation drains built, km	0	0
Reuse systems installed, numbers	51	9
Laser levelling, ha	3,553	8,145
Groundwater pumps installed, numbers	0	0
Weeds treated, ha	2,894	1,270
Rabbits and foxes treated, ha	7,321	7,021
Environmental water use, ML	698,264	
River or stream bed and bank protection actions, km	1.82	0.60
Fishway structures installed and barriers modified, numbers	0	0
Threatened species projects, numbers	0	0
Whole farm plans prepared, numbers	51	140

i. Please see more detail in the Annual Report.

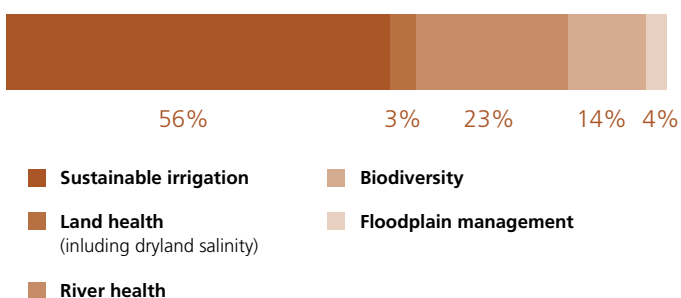
ii. Targets are determined by considering levels of government funding as at 30 June 2015 and any subsequent adjustments over the financial year.

iii. These are shown as 'Binding management agreements' in the detailed outputs in the Annual Report. This target will only be reported once covenants are on title, which takes more than 12 months.

GOULBURN BROKEN INVESTMENT SHARE



GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT - THE ENVIRONMENT



LOOKING AHEAD

- ✓ Review of the Goulburn Broken Water Quality Strategy 1996-2016.
- ✓ Complete and pilot implementation of the Goulburn Broken Native Vegetation Offset and Management Scheme.
- ✓ Continue implementing the Farm Water Program – driving farm irrigation modernisation across the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District – and continue to identify opportunities for further water-use efficiencies.
- ✓ Respond to major water plan changes, such as the Water for Victoria Plan, and monitor impacts of water leaving the Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District.
- ✓ Release the 2016-21 Biodiversity Strategy for the Goulburn Broken Catchment.
- ✓ Make use of new planning tools such as the Spatial Assessment Tool developed under the Goulburn Broken CMA's NRM Planning for Climate Change project.
- ✓ Complete the Land Health Strategy review.
- ✓ Progress the development of Tri-State Murray NRM Regional Alliance projects to protect and improve the environmental and social values of the Murray River corridor. This includes approaches to dealing with carp; responding to extreme weather and changing water availability and security; and engaging meaningfully with Traditional Owners. The alliance consists of the Goulburn Broken, North East, North Central and Mallee CMAs, Murray Local Land Services (NSW) and Natural Resources South Australia Murray-Darling Basin.
- ✓ Continue to conduct community engagement activities and technical studies for the Goulburn River Constraints Management Strategy on behalf of the Victorian Government.
- ✓ Continue roll-out of the Strathbogie Streams Regional Riparian Action Plan project.
- ✓ Opportunities for multiple uses of environmental water will continue to be explored with neighbouring CMAs, the Victorian Environmental Water Holder, the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority.
- ✓ Native fish surveys will continue in the Hughes, Seven, King Parrot and Holland creeks and Broken and Goulburn rivers. The effectiveness of the large scale re-slagging project on the Broken Creek between Numurkah and Nathalia will be assessed.
- ✓ Prepare a new Goulburn Broken Regional Floodplain Management Strategy.
- ✓ Work with partners to develop an implementation plan for the Our Catchment Our Community funded Linking the Lower Goulburn project that will deliver targeted on-ground works in priority landscapes to improve and protect waterways and biodiversity and support sustainable water use.



CASE STUDY ONE

A degraded site at Seymour College is now a tranquil garden featuring local plants and highlighting the Taungurung Clans as the Traditional Owners of the region.

Designed by Karen Sutherland, of Edible Eden Design, the layout of the garden features a dry creek bed with a frog pond at its centre surrounded by vegetation.

Planted in September 2015 the garden provides shelter for local species, plants for local butterflies, and habitat for frogs. The garden incorporates signage that identifies the importance of the plants and raises awareness in the school community of the Taungurung Clans as the Traditional Owners of the region.

Two striking metal sculptures of Taungurung Clans' totems 'Bunjil' (the Eagle) and 'Waa' (the Crow), designed by Taungurung man, Mick Harding, and manufactured by Dow Engineering in Dookie, keep watch over the garden from the wall of the sports stadium bordering the garden.

The project was made possible thanks to the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme and a Nestlé Community Environment Program grant.

Seymour College vice principal Trish Bulluss said the college was thrilled to receive the funding and the opportunity it provided to engage the school's Aboriginal students in the project.

"The project has involved students, volunteers and workers from the school along with staff from Taungurung Clans and the Goulburn Broken CMA. A lot of time, thought and preparation has gone into the garden and I know that it will be an impressive feature in the school for years to come.

"In partnership with Taungurung Clans we appointed some of the Year 7 Aboriginal girls as leaders in the project. One of their roles was to help the younger children who took part in the planting."

Goulburn Broken CMA CEO Chris Norman said the organisation was very proud to have been involved in the project.

"It's also an example of the types of projects we hope to continue to be involved in as a result of the three year Service Level Agreement we've signed with Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation.

"Taungurung has looked after Country for thousands of years and it's important to work together to share this traditional ecological knowledge that will have long-term benefits for the region's land, water, biodiversity and communities."



CASE STUDY TWO

Members of the Mansfield and District Flyfishers Club, the Australian Trout Foundation and Up2Us Landcare Alliance worked alongside staff from the Goulburn Broken CMA and Mansfield Shire to plant more than 500 trees and shrubs along the Delatite River near Mansfield.

Goulburn Broken CMA's Jim Castles said re-establishing native riparian vegetation, including trees, shrubs, grasses and ground covers, would help improve the health of the river.

"Like many of the upper Goulburn streams, the Delatite River has an east-west orientation and is exposed to the hot summer sun as a result," Mr Castles said.

"We know that native riparian vegetation plays an important role in shading streams and keeping waters cool. We approached the Mansfield and District Flyfishers Club for some assistance with this project and they were very keen to help out."

"Members of the Australian Trout Foundation and the Up2Us Landcare Alliance were also more than happy to assist on the day, so a group of 20 people meant we were able to get the trees in the ground really quickly."

Mr Castles said the trees and shrubs would eventually result in an increase in instream habitat (snags), and would also provide leaves for aquatic insects to eat.

"Over time the trees will grow large enough to provide shade and will result in a natural supply of large timber branches and leaf litter to the stream, which will provide important habitat and food for fish," Mr Castles said.

"Many reaches of the Delatite River have been cleared of native riparian vegetation and the stream has been lacking shade and an input of leaf litter from native tree and shrub species as a result, so this work is a very important step towards rehabilitating the river."

The Delatite River is listed as a priority stream in the Goulburn Broken Waterway Strategy (2014-2022).

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