

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Enhancing Northern Waterways Advisory Group
(ENWAG)

September 2022



1. Introduction

The North Central Catchment Management Authority's (CMA) region includes diverse landscapes and land-use that covers 13% of the state. It is bordered by the Murray River to the north, the Great Dividing Range and Wombat State Forest to the south and Mt Camel Range to the east.

The North Central CMA acknowledges Traditional Owners within the region, their rich culture and spiritual connection to Country. We also acknowledge the contribution and interest of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations in land and natural resource management, and pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

For more than 25 years, the CMA has been working with others to care for our natural resources. We are better when we work together. Bringing people together, sharing knowledge, listening, and learning from each other to act is what motivates us, and in-turn supports productive and prosperous communities.

Program and Project Steering Committees and Advisory Groups are important vehicles to support partnering with government, industry, and community. Members are appointed to these committees according to their skills, knowledge, interest, experience, and ability to reflect community views and communicate information to the community. This approach supports sound decision making with knowledge from a range of perspectives; provides a mechanism to share knowledge and information with the community; enables the community to have a voice; enables decisions to be made with a full understanding of the issues and helps to garner stakeholder support for these decisions.

The Enhancing Northern Waterways Advisory Group (ENWAG) has been established to provide community insight and advice to support the implementation of the North Central CMA managed projects and programs in the northern part of the catchment (the Torrumbarry Irrigation Area, refer to map).

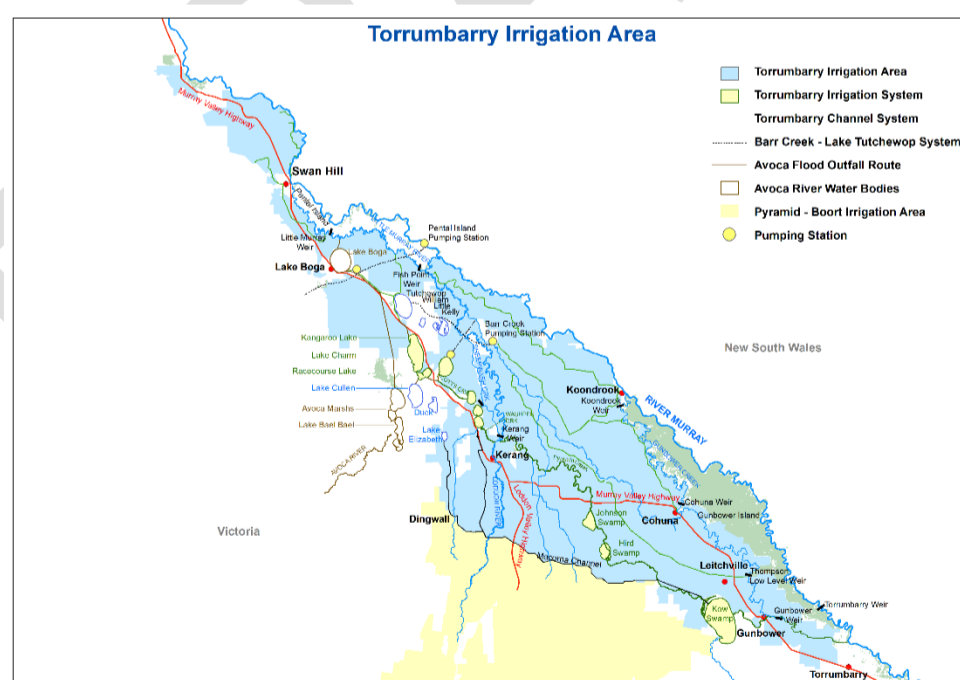
2. Governance

The work of the North Central CMA is guided and supported by five Board sub committees and various project or program specific committees. The Chairperson of each project/program committee, including the Chair of this group is appointed by the North Central CMA Board. Chair of project and program committees are also a member of Community Leaders' Group (CLG), one of the Board's sub committees. The CLG provides an opportunity for community groups to share information and collaborate across the region.

3. Role of the Committee and Members

3.1 Background

The North Central CMA, in partnership with Traditional Owners, other agencies and the community delivers a range of projects and programs across the Torrumbarry Irrigation Area to help protect and enhance the environment.



This Terms of Reference relates to the Enhancing Northern Waterways Advisory Group which will provide insight into the broad range of projects that North Central CMA manages within the Torrumbarry Irrigation Area to support a more holistic approach to management.

The North Central CMA programs and projects that the group will provide insight, support and a community perspective include:

- The Murray and Loddon Floodplain Fish Recovery Project,
- Gunbower Ramsar Project,
- Kerang Lakes Ramsar Project,
- Gunbower Forest and Gunbower Creek Environmental Watering Program,
- Guttrum and Benwell Forests Environmental Watering Program,
- Central Murray Wetlands Environmental Watering Program,
- new projects that are developed from time to time.

Contributions from the community about activities outside of these CMA lead programs, or projects will need to be directed to the responsible agency or organisation and may not be able to be addressed through this forum.

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The Murray and Loddon Floodplain Fish Recovery Project

The Flagship Waterway Project will continue to implement and expand North Central CMA's 2014 Gunbower and Lower Loddon Native Fish Recovery Plan. The project aims to improve river health, increase native fish populations, recover Threatened species, and create a world class Murray cod fishery in a vibrant irrigation area. The project is expected to create significant ecological, cultural, and socio-economic benefits in the region.

The 'Planning and Taking Action' phase of the project will continue the large-scale on-ground works program that has been underway since 2015, focussing on three anabranch systems of the Murray River. These are Gunbower Creek; Taylors Creek, Ghow (Kow) Swamp, Box-Pyramid Creek, and the lower Loddon River; and Little Murray River. The 'Target Setting' phase of the project will work with local communities and project partners to identify long-term outcomes and priority actions in Loddon floodplain waterways such as the Bannacher and Pennyroyal creeks and the Kerang Lakes. These systems have significant ecological, cultural, and recreational values, and enormous potential for fish recovery through improved flows, habitat, and connectivity. This phase will include and update and expansion of the existing fish recovery plan, and seek significant input and direction from stakeholders, Traditional Owners, and community groups.

This project is overseen by a Project Control Group which will meet twice yearly with the Enhancing Northern Waterways Advisory Group to seek advice and community perspectives.

Gunbower Ramsar Project and Kerang Wetlands Ramsar Project

The Ramsar projects are funded through the Victorian government to assist agencies that manage Ramsar sites meet their obligations under the Ramsar convention. Victoria has 12 wetlands of international significance designated under the Ramsar Convention, including Gunbower Forest.

The Gunbower Forest Ramsar project and Kerang Wetlands Ramsar Project will continue to restore and maintain the unique waterways, wetlands and forests of this important natural area. The project will see community members, Traditional Owners and agencies working together to focus on controlling pest plants and animals and maximise the impact of natural flows and water for the environment in Gunbower Forest.

This project is overseen by a Coordinating Committee which will meet twice yearly with the Torrumbarry Community Environment Advisory Group to seek advice and community perspectives.

Environmental Watering Program

The North Central CMA is responsible for managing the environmental water program for the region's rivers and wetlands, many of which are identified as regionally, state, basin or internationally important. Water dependant flora and fauna have been impacted by river regulation and consumptive water use. Water for the environment is a critical management tool for protection and rehabilitation for the Gunbower Forest Floodplain, Gunbower Creek, Guttrum and Benwell Forest and the Central Murray Wetlands and provides shared benefits to the community. The North Central CMA is responsible for preparing annual Seasonal Watering Proposals (SWPs) to ensure water for the environmental is used to achieve the best environmental outcome with the available water. SWPs are used to request water for the environmental from the Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEWH).

Input from the community is important to the annual SWP process to ensure that the knowledge and experience of communities is considered and to assist the CMA to make environmental water management decisions. Whilst environmental outcomes must be considered first, advice from the community can help shape how recommended watering events can be delivered in a way that enhances the environmental, social and economic outcomes for the catchment. For example, how social and recreational uses or values may be supported through delivery of the environmental watering program.

3.1 Role of the group

The ENWAG has been established to:

- Support balanced decision making by ensuring local knowledge from a range of perspectives is considered in project development and implementation.
- Enable project decisions to be made with a full understanding of the issues and to garner community support for these decisions.
- Provide advice regarding community engagement opportunities, emerging issues, and funding opportunities that can be leveraged through North Central CMA projects.
- Support the development of landscape planning.
- Facilitate communication regarding the projects through represented community groups and the wider community.
- Broaden exposure of the North Central CMA program of work in the local community to increase community knowledge and understanding.
- Build positive and productive relationships between local landholders, communities, forest users and key stakeholders.
- Increase the local community's knowledge and understanding of North Central CMA projects.

While the group has input to the CMA's projects at critical input/decision points, the CMA as the Statutory Authority responsible for the projects maintains decision making powers and these are not divested to the group.

3.2 Role of members

ENWAG members will:

- Provide local knowledge, guidance and advice to North Central CMA to inform decision making on design and delivery of relevant projects including identifying constraints and opportunities.
- Advocate for North Central CMA projects amongst their community networks, user groups and relevant industries.
- Provide feedback to the North Central CMA about the impacts and possible issues related to target setting and implementation of projects
- Provide specific advice on community engagement approaches and opportunities.
- Provide a local perspective, including, historical and technical knowledge about the waterways and wetlands of the Murray and Loddon Floodplain
- Provide local knowledge of the community and emerging issues. Facilitate interaction and communication regarding the project to the wider community.
- Maintain a respectful and safe working environment where the opinions and views of all members can be heard etc.

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Members that represent a community group that have specific responsibilities e.g., ensuring their respective organisations or community group are kept up to date regarding North Central CMA projects; and facilitating interaction between the North Central CMA and their respective agencies or community group where necessary.

4. Role of Chair

It is the Chairperson's responsibility to:

- Ensure members have opportunity to input into the development of the agenda.
- Participate at meetings and to convey community concerns or commentary related to the work of the CMA.
- Develop an Annual workplan with the CMA Project Manager that includes meeting dates, venue and will be used to inform meeting agenda topics.
- Ensure meetings are run concisely, respectfully and support members to actively engage in the agenda items.
- Effectively communicate with members during the meeting and if required outside of the meeting.
- Provide committee updates and/or recommendations to the Community Leaders Group.

5. Membership

Membership on the ENWAG will be up to 16 community members and when appropriate, invited as guests. Membership should represent the diversity of the community, localities, interests, and backgrounds represented in the project area and are:

- Knowledgeable about the environmental, cultural, social and/or economic values of the area.
- Passionate about achieving good environmental and community outcomes for the area.
- Committed to understanding issues relating to natural resource management.
- Interested in strengthening relationships between the agencies responsible for managing and delivering natural resource management projects, local communities and relevant interest groups.
- Able to motivate and inform others.

5.1 Guests

- The Chair is to give prior approval for the attendance of other community members (who are not ENWAG members) to attend meetings.
- Land Managers, Water Authorities and other CMA partners may attend meetings as guests to support the role of the Group.
- Other additional advice may be co-opted, and attendance requested at meetings through the Chair.

6. North Central CMA role

North Central CMA staff will:

- Provide management leadership to support the group.
- Manage the projects and programs.
- Retain accountability for project delivery and will look to this group in an advisory capacity.
- Provide the group where possible, with at least two weeks advance notice of meetings.
- Maintain meeting agendas, minutes and action lists.
- Provide project updates at meetings.
- Gather and incorporate local knowledge on the project sites.
- Be responsible for formal communications and media activity relating to the program in line with an agreed communications plan.

7. Number of meetings

The number of meetings held pre year will be dictated by the group's workplan although it's expected that there will be monthly meetings, however no meeting will be held in December unless otherwise advised.

Meetings will be held at the most convenient times for community members and will last up to 4 hours. Meetings will be held both face to face or using MS Teams. One to two field visits are also likely throughout the year and may be longer than 4 hours in duration.

8. Review

A workplan for the group will be developed and reviewing at each meeting.

The Terms of Reference, including the Operating Protocols (Attachment 1), will be reviewed every two years. Following review, the agreement to the Terms of Reference and Operating Protocols will be sought from members (Attachment 2).

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Attachment 1: OPERATING PROTOCOLS

1. Purpose

To provide members with operational and administrative guidance relevant to membership and meetings.

2. Meetings

2.1 Member attendance

Members are expected to attend and actively participate in at least 80% of scheduled meetings, subject to specific circumstances which may be agreed with the Chair. Members having difficulty with participation are encouraged to discuss this with the Chair and alternative arrangements may be sought.

To support member attendance and reduce impact to the environment some meetings will be held online and/or online presence will be supported.

2.2 Participation and conduct

The North Central CMA values the differences between people and the contribution these differences make to our work. We believe in the inherent value of a diverse workforce reflective of the communities in which we operate. We will actively manage diversity, finding ways of utilising the differences that exist to improve the way we work. We will actively seek to accommodate the unique needs of many different employees, partners and stakeholders. Above all, we are committed to ensuring that all people are treated with respect and dignity.

Members will:

- Act in a reasonable and fair manner, which is not discriminatory on the basis of gender, religion and race or contrary to the *Equal Opportunity Employment Act 1995*.
- Support a collaborative approach through
 - Respect for individuals
 - Open and honest discussion
 - Working together
 - Communicate decisions accurately.
- Encourage innovative thinking and be open to different ways of resolving issues.
- Acknowledge that difficult discussions may take place and recommendations may need to be made.
- Act honestly, in good faith, and to the best of their ability in the interests of the North Central CMA.
- Provide an honest and open environment for concepts, issues and knowledge to be shared in a safe and collaborative environment.
- Treat sensitive issues discussed within the group with respect.
- Comply with specific requests from the Chairperson to maintain confidentiality outside the group.
- Are punctual and make every effort to attend all meetings.
- Do not invite community members (who are not ENWAG members) to attend meetings without prior approval of the CRG Chairperson. Approval from the chair for a community member guest to attend must be sought a minimum of 24 hours in advance of a meeting date.
- Adhere to the Victorian Public Sector Code of Conduct that outlines the standards of behaviour that the CMA and wider community rightly expect of us and all public sector employees. When we consistently act in accordance with the public sector values, it strengthens our capacity to operate effectively and builds trust with the communities in which we operate.
- Accept a duty to avoid a conflict of interest and the associated duty not to misuse their position or information that comes to the group.
- Distribute accurate and up to date information back to the broader community.

2.3 Conflict of Interest

At the beginning of each meeting members must declare any potential or perceived conflict of interest in respect of any item and where appropriate to absent themselves from discussion and/or the room while the item is being considered.

2.4 Administrative support

The group is supported by a CMA Project Manager and other support as required.

2.4 Agenda

Members seeking to request Agenda items are to discuss the inclusion with the Chair for consideration no less than two weeks prior to the meeting. The agenda and relevant supporting information will be made available to members one week prior to meeting.

2.5 Minutes

Draft minutes will be taken by the CMA and be made available to the Chair for review and approval within ten working days. The approved draft minutes will be circulated to the members with the agenda papers for endorsement at the next meeting. Endorsed Minutes will be made available to public on request.

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3. Sitting Fees, Travel and Member Expenses

Meeting types and positions where sitting fees/travel expenses are payable as determined by North Central CMAs Policy - Reimbursement and Remuneration of Community Members.

The North Central CMA Board will appoint the Chair of the group, and the members will be appointed by the responsible project/program Executive Manager.

Reimbursement for travel expenses for attendance at Advisory Committee meetings where the community member is required to travel further than 20km's (one way) from their usual place of residence (home) via the shortest possible route. The community member shall be paid a motor vehicle mileage allowance at the current 'cents per kilometre car expense payments' rate set by the Australian Tax Office for the shortest possible route. This is a taxable allowance.

The Board appointed Chair of the group is eligible for travel reimbursements and a sitting fee per meeting to recognise attendance and pre meeting preparation requirements.

The total fees payable to the Chairperson must not exceed \$2,250 per annum for each eligible committee that they are appointed to, as per the Instrument of Appointment (dated 8 December 2019) under section 19J(1) and 19 J(3) of the *Catchment and Landcare Protection Act 1994*.

4. Recruitment, length of term, resignation and termination

Recruitment:

Community members will be required to nominate, through a publicly available Expression of Interest process to be considered for membership on this group. The membership of the group should represent the diversity of the community, area, interests, and backgrounds represented in the project area.

The North Central CMA may also invite community members who have knowledge of a specific area, or specific skills and experience to join the group to fill an identified gap in the membership.

Nominations must address the following criteria to enable the CMA to ensure that the group collectively, has the required knowledge, skills, interest, and experience to undertake the role of the group.

Selection criteria:

Membership should include people who live and or work in the region and who are:

- Knowledgeable about the environmental, social, cultural and/or economic values of the area.
- Passionate about achieving good environmental and community outcomes.
- Knowledgeable and interested about understanding issues relating to natural resource management and environmental water management.
- Interested in strengthening relationships between the agencies responsible for managing and delivering natural resource management projects, water for the environmental, local communities and relevant interest groups.
- Committed to sharing information with the broader community about the work of the North Central CMA.
- Able to motivate and inform others.

Members will be offered a position including term through a letter of offer and asked to accept in writing.

Length of term:

To manage succession, community members will be asked to nominate their preferred term e.g., two or four years at the time of recruitment. With prior discussion, at the end of the member term the CMA may ask the member to renominate.

Resignation:

Resignations can occur through written correspondence to the Chair who will advise the North Central CMA responsible Executive Manager.

Termination:

The North Central CMA has the right to terminate a member's term, effective immediately, if they

- Do not act within the Terms of Reference
- Are verbally or physically abusive toward CMA staff or other members of the group.
- Are removed by way of consensus.

5. Correspondence

Inward:

Committee members may at times receive correspondence from individuals and/or organisations addressed to a members' private address that has relevance to the CMA or their role on the group.

If this occurs, please contact the Project Manager and copies of inward correspondence must be made available to the CMA for registration to determine the most appropriate response.

If correspondence requires a reply, the Project Manager will discuss correspondence with the Chairperson regarding an appropriate response.

A copy of the correspondence, if appropriate, will be tabled at the next meeting for information or for further discussion.

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Outward:

There may be times when the Project/Program advisory group is required to respond to inward correspondence or prepare correspondence on behalf of the committee. The following process applies:

- Outward correspondence on behalf of the group or member, is to be discussed and approved by the North Central CMA Program Delivery Executive Manager and Chairperson.
- It may be appropriate for the content of the correspondence to be discussed at the CLG meeting. The North Central CMA Program Delivery Executive Manager and/or Chairperson will determine if this is necessary.
- In most instances the correspondence is prepared (with input from CLG member/s if appropriate), signed and circulated by the Program Delivery Executive Manager and/or Chairperson.
- All committee members receive a copy of the correspondence.
- Copies will be recorded in the appropriate section of the document management system of the North Central CMA.

6. Communication Protocol

The following outlines the normal responsibilities in relation to communicating with the Board, staff, the community and the media. It also provides clear protocols for staff-initiated communication with members.

With North Central CMA staff:

The relationship between members and North Central CMA staff is important for the success of the Enhancing Northern Waterways Advisory Committee.

The Chair and members of groups are encouraged to communicate with North Central CMA project managers who are responsible for implementing projects. Communication can be face-to-face, formal written correspondence, emails and over the phone. Communicating refers to phone calls, emails, electronic and written correspondence.

If a member has concerns with a North Central CMA project manager or the operation of the ENWAG, the issue should be raised with the North Central CMA Executive Manager Program Delivery, through the Chair, in the first instance. The Executive Manager will then discuss the issue with the appropriate manager. An approach to resolve the issue will be communicated with the member.

If concerns are raised about a member's behaviour which contravenes the Terms of Reference and supporting documentation, the Executive Manager will communicate with the member either directly or through the Chair to address the concern.

With the media:

Generally, responding to media requests or making comment on behalf of the North Central CMA is the responsibility of the North Central CMA Board Chair, CEO or authorised staff representative. Media requests relating to CMA projects should be directed to North Central CMA staff. However, on occasion members may speak to the media on behalf of the project if authorised and with guidance from the CMA.

Social media: If engaging on social media, members are expected to be respectful, factual and not comment in a way which undermines the North Central CMA or State Government policy or culture.

7. Use of Information

There is an expectation that members will make reasonable and informed decisions and recommendations on matters presented at meetings where a community perspective is sought. Through the engagement process members need to be:

- Aware that they are only entitled to access information which is relevant to matters before the group.
- Mindful that, except on matters before the group, they enjoy the same access rights to information as any other member of the community.
- Prudent in the use of information that they acquire as members.
- Careful that information is not used in a way which may cause detriment to others.
- Distribute accurate and up to date information back to the broader community

8. Confidentiality

The North Central CMA, through its functions and responsibilities, seeks to ensure that the public is well informed about issues under consideration.

To this end, matters considered by the group in closed sessions is relatively few. However, it may be necessary at times to consider some matters in closed sessions. Only matters which have been classified as confidential can be considered in closed sessions. Items classified as confidential generally relate to commercial in confidence information that has been provided to the group by tenders, contractors, joint ventures, or other confidential information which is a confidential right prior to a public announcement.

A policy on confidential information and processes has been developed because of:

- The confidential nature of certain materials which comes before the North Central CMA and its committees.
- The need for members to be clear as to what material is properly characterised as confidential, to lessen the likelihood of an inadvertent breach of the provisions relating to improper use of information.
- The necessity to ensure that any confidential information to which members and officers have access remains confidential for as long as required, in order not to prejudice any negotiations or compromise the position of the other parties who may be involved.
- Having determined information as confidential, it is necessary that members ensure that appropriate processes are in place for dealing with confidential material.

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The following describes the process:

- The group operates in an environment of public accountability and scrutiny. The North Central CMA seeks to comprehensively inform the public on issues under consideration and the nature of decisions made after engagement with the community, as appropriate.

Confidential information shall not be:

- disclosed to any third party without the North Central CMA's consent
- incorporated in the agenda or minutes of any meeting (except by reference) unless it is the agenda or the minutes of a closed meeting of the group.

9. Safety

Members and officers are expected to adhere to OH&S standards that require protective footwear and appropriate protective clothing according to weather conditions, if in the field.

Cultural and psychological safety standards are also expected to be met. For further information please refer to the North Central CMA Cultural Safety Guide 2021

10. Consumption of Alcohol

North Central CMA accepts its responsibility to provide a safe, secure, and healthy workplace for all employees, Board members, community members, contractors and visitors. The consumption of alcohol is not permitted during meetings. This responsibility extends to North Central CMA social functions whether conducted on the authority's property or elsewhere, of during or after working hours.

The conduct of social functions entails many risks. In order to mitigate these risks all North Central CMA social functions must be conducted in accordance with the Authority's Functions Policy HR007.

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Attachment 2: Agreement to Terms of Reference and Operating Protocols

These Terms of Reference and Operating Protocols were ratified by the PSC on/...../..... and have been agreed to by each of the members:

Signature	Name	Organisation