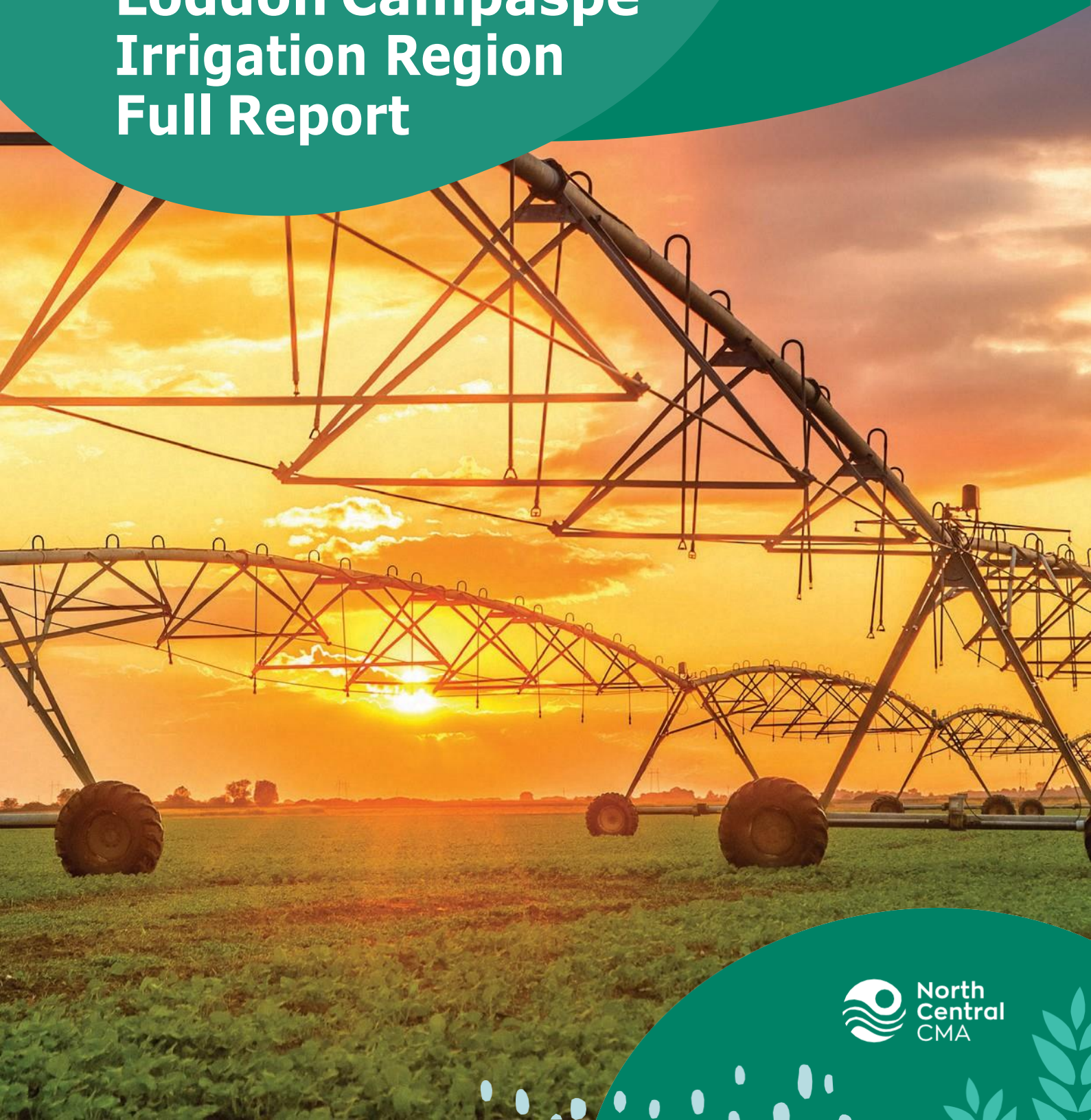
Land and Water Management Plan 2020-2030

Loddon Campaspe Irrigation Region Full Report



North Central CMA

Acknowledgment

North Central Catchment Management Authority wishes to acknowledge the Victorian Government who provided funding for this publication through the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning's (DELWP) Sustainable Irrigation program. We also wish to acknowledge Agriculture Victoria, the North Central CMA's Loddon Campaspe Irrigation Region Land and Water Management Plan Steering Committee, the North Central CMA Board and CMA staff, RM Consulting Group, and the regional irrigation community for their contributions in the development of this plan.

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Acknowledgment of Country

The North Central Catchment Management Authority 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.

Document name: "Land and Water Management Plan 2020-2030. Loddon Campaspe Irrigation Region – Full Report"

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This publication was developed in 2020 using the most relevant information at the time.

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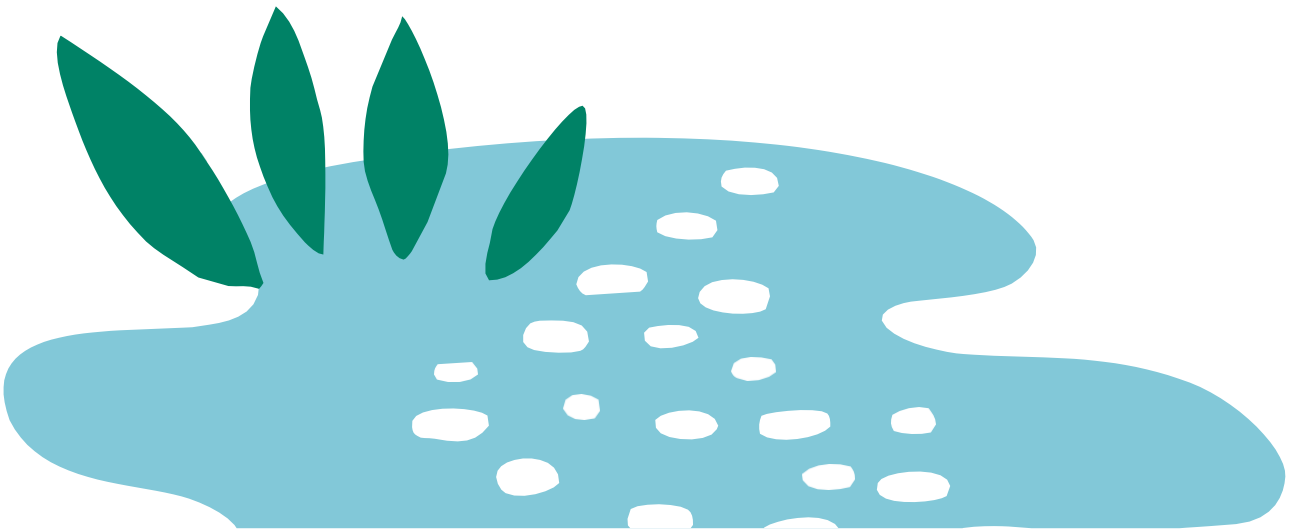
Acronyms

Acronym	Full Words
ARC	Agricultural Redevelopment Coordinator
AULs	Annual Use Limits
BSM2030	Basin Salinity Management 2030 Strategy
CALP	Catchment and Land Protection
CMA	Catchment Management Authority
CRC	Cooperative Research Centre
D&S	Domestic and Stock
DCDs	Drainage Course Declarations
DELWP	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
GL	Gigalitre (one billion litres)
GMID	Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District
GMW	Goulburn-Murray Water
GRDC	Grains Research and Development Corporation
ha	Hectare
HRWS	High Reliability Water Share
ICC	Irrigated Cropping Council
LCIR LWMP	Loddon Campaspe Irrigation Region Land and Water Management (Plan)
L-MIRSWMS	Loddon Murray Irrigation Region Surface Water Management Strategy
LMLWMS	Loddon Murray Land and Water Management Strategy
MATs	Management Action Targets
MERI	Monitoring Evaluation Reporting and Improvements
M	Million
ML	Megalitre (one million litres)
MLA	Meat and Livestock Australia

Acronym	Full Words
m	Metres
MDBA	Murray-Darling Basin Authority
MERI	Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NPV	Net Present Value
NRM	Natural Resource Management
RCS	Regional Catchment Strategy
RCTs	Resource Condition Targets
SDL	Sustainable Diversion Limit
SMDB	Southern Connected Murray-Darling Basin
SIP	Sustainable Irrigation Program
SMP	Salinity Management Plan
TO	Traditional Owner
WFP	Whole Farm Planning/ Whole Farm Plan
WUE	Water Use Efficiency



1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of the Loddon Campaspe Irrigation Land and Water Management Plan 2020-2030 (LCIR LWMP) is to provide an integrated planning framework for the management of irrigated land, water and impacted biodiversity resources in the region.

The LWMP's aspirational goal is ***"Using water for healthy, productive, sustainable irrigated food and fibre[1] "***

To achieve this, the LWMP needs to work towards the following long-term objectives over the next 10 years:

- Sustainable, profitable, adaptive and innovative farming practices.
- Empowered and informed irrigation community.
- Protected and improved condition of environmental assets and values.
- Active involvement of Aboriginal peoples and communities.

This depends on achieving the following desired outcomes over the next 5-10 years:

- More efficient and integrated irrigation (on and off farm).
- Improved on-farm irrigation, nutrient and soil management.
- Improved regional irrigation drainage infrastructure and management.
- Impacts of irrigation on salinity, biodiversity and water quality managed within agreed limits.
- New and significant irrigation redevelopments are best practice.
- Increased community awareness and involvement in plan activities.
- Impacts of irrigation on other third parties are better understood and managed e.g. recreation and users downstream.
- Traditional Owner and Aboriginal landholder values are better understood and integrated into management decisions.

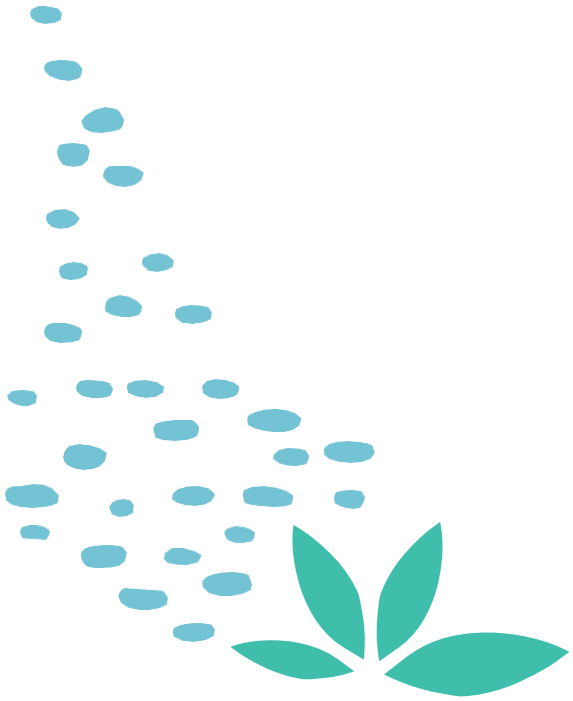
The Plan's outcomes are underpinned by five themes: Planning and Development; Land Management; Water Management; Biodiversity Management and Community Capacity. These themes cover the areas of feedback provided throughout the consultation process during renewal.

The new directions are a direct response to a rapidly changing operating environment for irrigation, the lessons and results achieved from the previous LWMP, feedback from focus group meetings and the Victorian Government's directions under *Water for Victoria*.

The process to develop this plan included community focus groups and a steering committee of community and agency representatives to oversee the process for developing the new plan.

The plan covers all irrigation in the North Central Region except for that included in the Rochester Irrigation Area that is covered by the Shepparton Irrigation Region Land and Water Management Plan (Figure 1-1). Noting that this plan includes the upper catchment irrigation, groundwater and private diversions that were not part of the previous plan.

The role of the LWMP is to provide a focus for on-farm activities to improve the sustainability of irrigation. Broader natural resource management is managed by a range of strategies and plans under the Regional Catchment Strategy (refer to Section 3.5).



[1] The intent is to encompass all irrigated production, including the main irrigated land use of mixed irrigation, dairying, irrigated cropping, irrigated grazing, grass, hay, wool, beef, fruit, nuts, grapes, vegetables, nurseries and cut flowers.

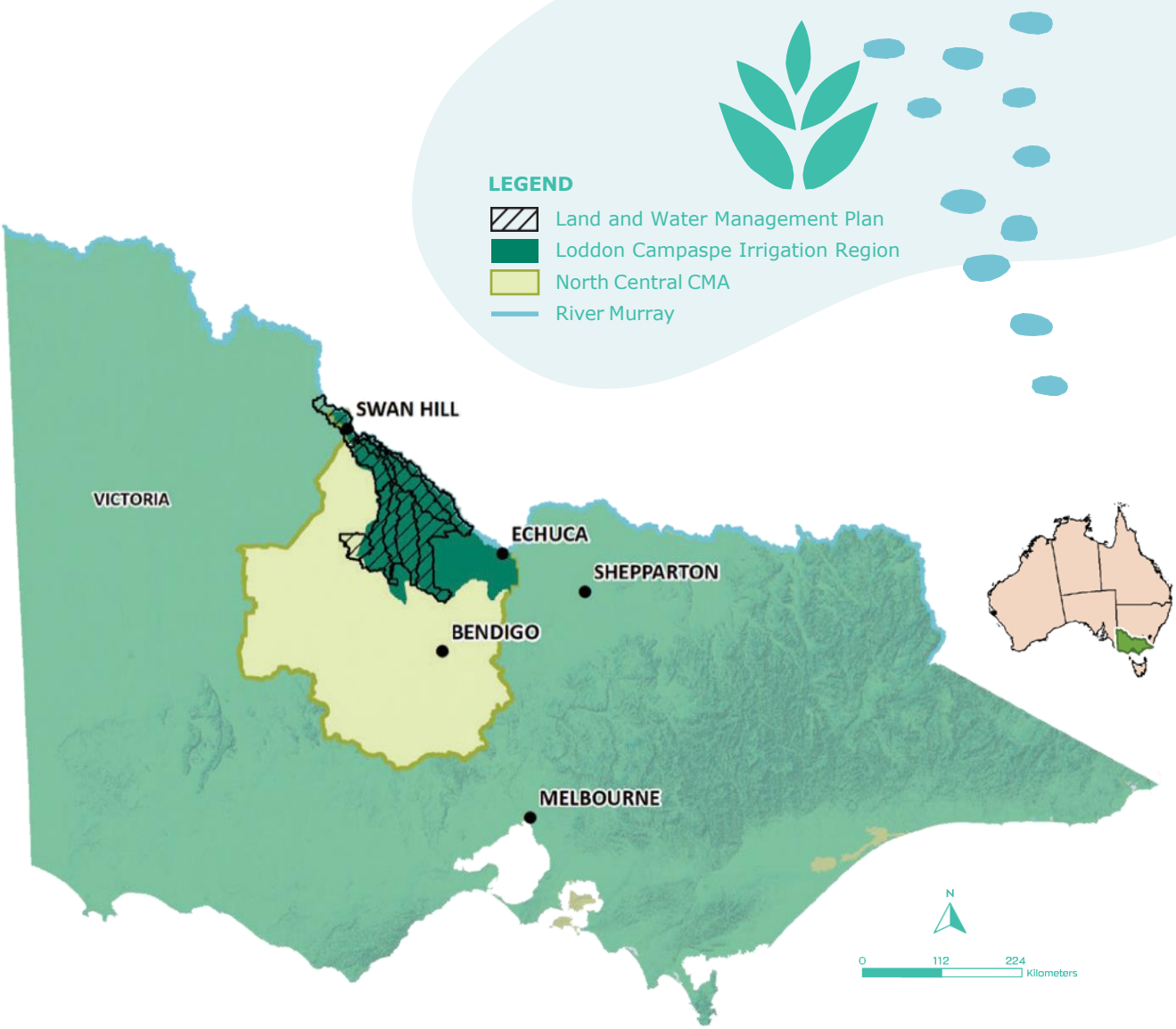


Figure 1-1 **GMID component of the Plan area (note irrigation in other parts of the CMA region are also covered)**

1.2 Regional overview and planning framework

Renewal scope

Under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (Vic) LWMPs have been developed to guide government investment in natural resource management across designated irrigation areas. This LWMP guides government investment in land and water management in the Loddon Campaspe Irrigation Region. The Plan is a sub-strategy of the North Central Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) focusing on irrigation and is due for renewal.

The previous LCIR LWMP 2010 was a broader document and some areas are now covered by other sub-strategies developed under the RCS including the: Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Plan; Regional Floodplain Management Strategy; Waterway Strategy; Regional Sustainable Agriculture Strategy and Soil Health Action Plan.

It is important to note that while the LWMP endeavours to protect water quality, it does not include the broader management and allocation of water resources or the operation of the water market. This work is undertaken at a state and Murray-Darling Basin scale; i.e. through trading rules set by the Victorian Minister for Water, the Victorian Water Register and consistent with principles and rules in the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

Regional planning context

The dominant irrigated enterprise in the LCIR is irrigated pasture, then irrigated mixed farming. There are also small areas of irrigated perennial horticulture which make a large contribution to the region's economy.

Prior to 2002, five Salinity Management Plans and the Regional Development Plan covered the LCIR. The six plans were known as the Tragowel Plains Salinity Management Plan (SMP); Kerang-Swan Hill SMP; Boort West of Loddon SMP; Torrumbarry East of Loddon SMP; Campaspe West SMP and the Loddon Murray 2000 Plus Regional Development Initiative. In 2002 these six plans were combined into one integrated regional strategy - the Loddon Murray Land and Water Management Strategy (LMLWMS). This integrated approach continued with the creation of the LCIR LWMP 2011.

The strength of the irrigation region has been a focus on community engagement, improving farm water use efficiency, drainage and groundwater management to control salinity and nutrients. To aid in delivery, the LWMP is aligned to regional natural resource management actions and the Goulburn-Murray Water Connections Project and farm modernisation programs.

LWMPs are essential for translating national and Victorian laws and policies into practical on-ground actions. The renewal must be undertaken in-line with the LWMP guidelines, developed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). The guidelines specify that the LWMP must demonstrate clear links between plan actions and outcomes and summarise this in a program logic (see Figure 4-2).

The renewed plan will detail and justify works and measures to achieve five-year and longer-term targets.

A monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI) framework for the plan will provide accountability and feedback to enable an adaptive management approach.

The MERI framework will incorporate measurable outcomes and deliverables aligned to actions that have been identified in each of the proposed program areas.

The goals and desired outcomes of the LWMP align with the Victorian Sustainable Irrigation Program (SIP) and are part of the North Central RCS. This approach ensures the overarching Victorian Government's program and regional priorities are central to the LWMP.

Broader issues that are not specific to irrigated land are also important and are covered by other strategies in the RCS. The LWMP has an important role in signposting these other strategies (Appendix 2, Section 3.5).

1.3 The need for a Plan

The key drivers of change for irrigation enterprises in the region include climate change (a drier, hotter climate and increased climate variability), drought, irrigation modernisation, changing water policy[2], water trade out of the region and shifting commodity prices and farm business advantage. These drivers have reduced the amount of irrigation in the region, changed the mix of irrigation enterprise types, changed irrigation businesses and changed surface and subsurface drainage requirements. All these changes affect the implementation of the LWMP and the magnitude of targets and the type of actions the plan should be targeting in the future.

The region has faced major challenges and has already adapted in many ways. The Plan is designed to address the following continuing challenges within the LCIR:

- **Social and economic impacts in the region:** Irrigated agriculture and communities are under pressure to remain economically viable due to regional changes in water availability (as described in section 3.1), water costs, water trade, climate change, farm restructuring and succession, and enterprise types.
  - The recovery of water entitlements by governments, particularly between 2008 and 2013, and the rapid expansion of large scale horticulture on greenfields sites in north west Victoria (e.g. almonds on previously dryland cereal farms near Robinvale) and in SA, has led to changes in water use and irrigated production in the LCIR, with water entitlements moving from smaller farms within shared schemes such as Torrumbarry and Pyramid Hill-Boort, to new, independently supplied developments.
  - Declining water availability has caused land-use change and farm adjustment and is a result of:
    - climate change causing higher temperatures, reduced rainfall and more extreme weather events such as drought and reduced storage inflows.
    - water reform such as water recovery and water trade (as above).
- **Protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage sites:** Stronger engagement with Traditional Owner and Aboriginal landowners to identify and protect their cultural heritage on land in the LCIR (as described in Section 3.3). In particular:
  - Insufficient recognition of Aboriginal cultural heritage values in land and water management planning.
  - Adopting suitable ways to improve Aboriginal cultural awareness and heritage knowledge in the whole community.
- **Threats to natural assets:** Climate change, salinity, flooding, habitat loss and fragmentation, declining water quality, fire, pest plants and animals, farm dams and afforestation (upper catchments), water reform policy, land use change and social change are all threats to natural assets throughout the region (as described in Table 3-1). In particular:
  - The risk of re-emergence of salinity from high watertables causing salinisation of land and watercourses; and the need to meet obligations under BSM2030 salinity accountability and reporting requirements.
  - Poor water quality from farm run-off, especially nutrients and sediments and effluent management that may impact on downstream environmental and recreational values and beneficial uses.
  - Inappropriate floodplain management that does not balance biodiversity with upstream and downstream drainage needs or account for instream barriers for native fish.
  - Potential loss of terrestrial biodiversity from habitat loss and fragmentation on farms, fire and pest plants and animals.

Without a plan there is a lack of coordination of federal and state government investment and programs to address these issues. This means the costs incurred by the community are much greater.

The focus of this Plan is to deliver support to farmers that will increase public benefits from irrigation on private land. Delivering change on private irrigated land is critical to achieving the Plan's vision.

The main opportunities presented to the community by this investment are:

- A narrower scope and stronger focus on the needs of the irrigation community – this will increase community interest and engagement.
- Increased investment in agency staff delivering services directly to landholders in the form of support advice and incentives to encourage on-ground works.
- Better targeted education and training on matters critical to assisting existing and new irrigation businesses to adapt to rapid change.
- A better understanding of cultural heritage, Traditional Owner and Aboriginal landholder water values, uses and objectives - responses will be built directly into programs.
- A better appreciation of the needs of recreational water and other users downstream.
- A more cost-effective drainage program targeted to where drains are needed to service areas where the public benefits of drainage are greatest.

[2] Water policy changes have also been in response to changing environmental conditions and priorities.

2. The Region

2.1 The Loddon Campaspe Irrigation region

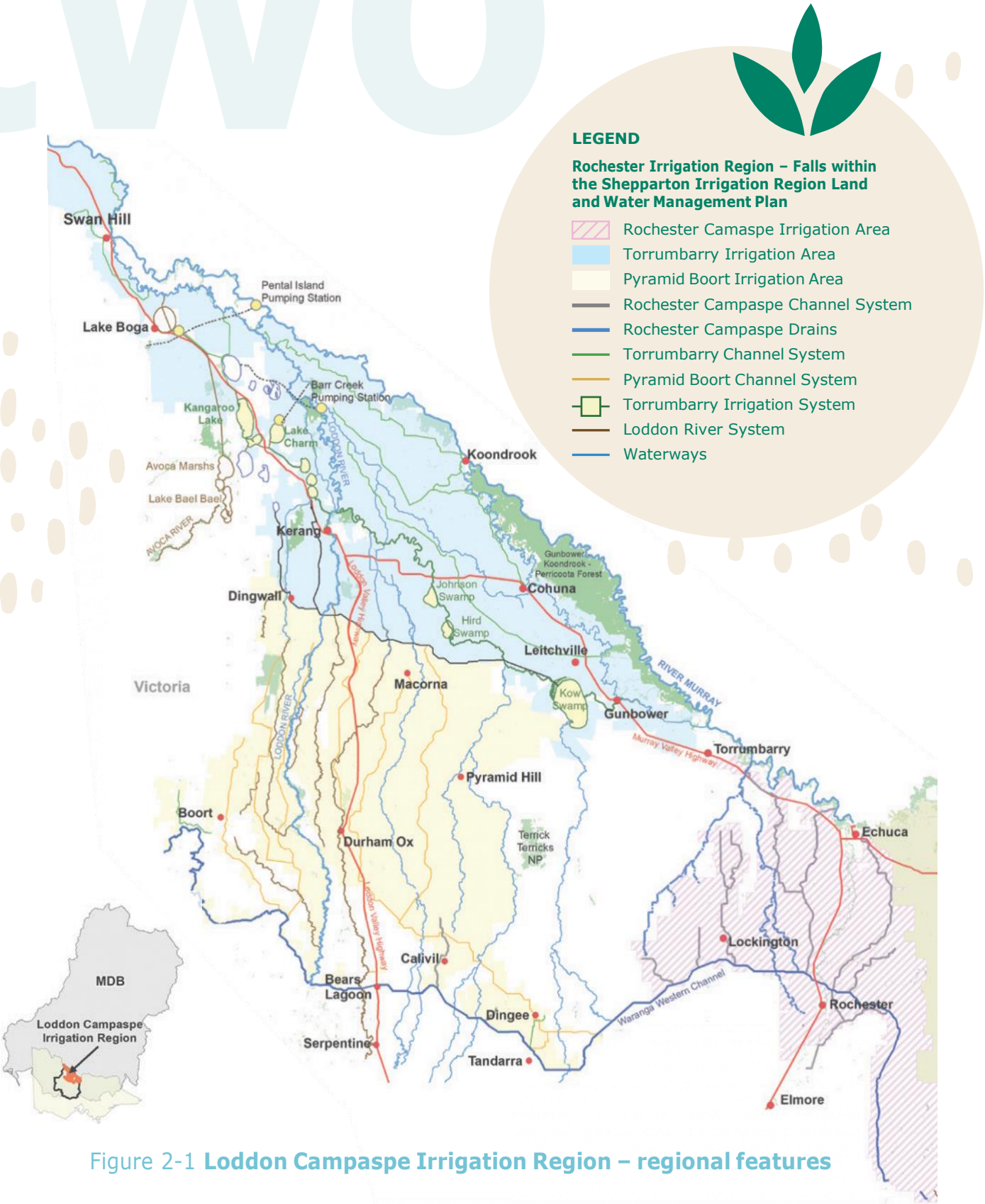


Figure 2-1 **Loddon Campaspe Irrigation Region – regional features**

The Loddon Campaspe Irrigation Region comprises the irrigation districts of Torrumbarry, Rochester Campaspe, Pyramid Boort and the Loddon River System. The Plan also covers all irrigation in the North Central CMA Region except for that covered by the Shepparton Irrigation Region Land and Water Management Plan (Figure 2-1).

The scope of the LWMP is private land that holds an irrigation water use licence where the cumulative impacts of irrigation has the potential to affect public or offsite values. This applies to all irrigation in the North Central CMA region and to dryland that retains an irrigation water use licence[3].

The LWMP does not cover the management of public land or public waterways and wetlands. These are covered by other sub-strategies in the RCS. Feedback from consultation on issues related to other sub-strategies is recorded in the Appendices so the North Central CMA can refer to community feedback when these sub-strategies are reviewed and updated.

The Plan will also apply to land without a water use licence that has the potential to be irrigated, but new irrigation developments will not be eligible[4] for financial incentives although they will be able to participate in the extension components of the Plan.

The main area of focus is expected to be within the Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District (GMID), which, in North Central CMA region, comprises the Torrumbarry, Loddon Valley and the Torrumbarry and Loddon Valley Water Service Areas. Private diversion irrigation or groundwater pumping outside of the GMID are also covered where there is potential to significantly impact on public or offsite values. Note that the Rochester Irrigation Area is excluded from this plan but included in the Shepparton Irrigation Region Land and Water Management Plan.

2.2 Community

The LCIR has been strongly influenced by proximity to the Murray River, with all the larger towns - Echuca, Kerang and Swan Hill - located on or near the river. The location of the smaller inland settlements is influenced by the river crossings and railways for the collection of grains and other agricultural produce. The region's 2016 population was approximately 53,000[5] (ABS 2016). The largest increase in population has occurred around Echuca – about a 50 per cent increase from 1981 to 2006. Almost 70 per cent of the regional population is classified as urban, but the largest industry providing employment is agriculture. This employs more than 5,500 people, with irrigated agriculture generating around 4,000 jobs on farm (Table 2-1).

The region offers a wide range of lifestyles – rural, small town or farming environments and has excellent facilities, services and amenities for business, industry and the community. The region has high amenity values and is a drawcard for tourists who come for the excellent food and wines, and recreational facilities on the Murray, Loddon and Campaspe rivers, and associated lakes and creeks. Recreational water use is expanding with growth and tourism but can be threatened by blue green algae and low waterbody levels.

[3] Also including Take and Use Licences covering irrigation from unregulated streams and from groundwater.

[4] Victorian government policy is that new irrigation developers must fully fund the cost of meeting best practice standards and are therefore not eligible for farm incentives.

[5] 7,516 Loddon plus 10,549 Gannawarra plus estimated 80% of 20,584 Swan Hill plus estimated 50% of 37,061 in Campaspe

Table 2-1 **Regional employment ABS 2016 (Not all of the Rural City of Swan Hill or Campaspe Shire is in the LCIR)**

ABS data	Campaspe	Gannawarra	Loddon	Swan Hill
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	13.3%	24%	35.5%	17.6%
Mining	0.5%	1.1%	0.7%	0.3%
Manufacturing	12.4%	6.4%	7.5%	7.7%
Electricity, gas, water & waste services	1.4%	2%	0.8%	0.9%
Construction	7.9%	7.3%	4.4%	6.5%
Wholesale trade	2%	2%	2.1%	2.8%
Retail trade	10.4%	10.4%	6.6%	10.3%
Accommodation and food services	7.1%	4.4%	3.3%	6.8%
Transport, postal and warehousing	3.8%	4.1%	3.6%	4.3%
Information media and telecommunications	0.6%	0.4%	0.4%	0.6%
Financial and insurance services	1.3%	1.2%	1.2%	1.6%
Rental, hiring, & real estate services	0.9%	0.5%	0.3%	0.6%
Professional scientific & technical services	3.2%	2.8%	1.8%	3.1%
Administrative and support services	2.2%	1.8%	1.9%	2.8%
Public administration and safety	3.7%	5%	4.4%	4.5%
Education and training	6.8%	5.6%	6.2%	8.3%
Health care and social assistance	13.4%	11.9%	11%	11.6%
Arts and recreation services	1.2%	0.9%	0.7%	1.1%
Other services	4%	3.5%	2.1%	3.7%
Total persons employed (no.)	**15,950**	**4,404**	**2,838**	**8,568**
Total for all shires - all industries	**31,760**			
Agricultural jobs	2,121	1,057	1,007	1,508
Less non GMID/dryland estimated	100	100	500	750
GMID estimated jobs	2,021	957	507	758
Estimated irrigation farm jobs	**4,243**			

2.3 Traditional Owners and Aboriginal landholders

First Nations people have cared for land and water for millennia and strong connections with the landscape exist for Traditional Owners today.

The Loddon Campaspe Irrigation region includes the traditional lands of Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung, Barapa Barapa, Wamba Wemba, Wadi Wadi and Yorta Yorta Nations. Aboriginal heritage sites and places (both tangible and intangible) are at the core of their people's physical, spiritual and cultural existence and identity. The relevant Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) and Traditional Owners (First Peoples State Relations Group in non-RAP areas) must be consulted regarding identification, protection and enhancement of sites and places. Across the region approximately 1,700 archaeological sites have been identified and placed on the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register (VAHR).

Archaeological sites include isolated artefacts; shell middens; cooking mounds; rock shelters and caves; scarred trees; and sacred burial sites. It is important to note that less 2% of the state has been surveyed for Aboriginal cultural heritage and countless unrecorded sites exist, often in the vicinity of waterways and wetlands. All Aboriginal cultural heritage sites and areas are protected by legislation under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* and Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018.

The LWMP has been developed with Aboriginal and Traditional Owner engagement. (As outlined in Appendix 8).

As a result of this engagement, an immediate action within the LWMP will see the development of an Aboriginal Landholder and Traditional Owner Engagement Plan.

This will action work towards one of the four long-term objectives of the Plan to deliver active involvement of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal landholders.

A key outcome for this LWMP is to acknowledge Traditional Owner and Aboriginal landholder interests and create more opportunities for the self-determined involvement of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal landholders in land and water management.

Figure 2-2 **Community smoking ceremony, McDonalds Swamp**

2.4 The region's assets

2.4.1 The Goulburn-Murray Irrigation district

The 1840s saw the establishment of sheep and cattle runs, mostly as large pastoral holdings. In the decades following, farmers struggled to deal with periods of extreme climatic conditions and farming in a low-rainfall region. To overcome these problems landholders began experimenting with irrigating land to increase its productivity. Despite the relatively small scale of these schemes, waterlogging and land clearing caused watertables to rise. Salinity soon emerged as a problem for the region.

In the early 1900s, driven by the need to create employment, the Victorian government developed policies for closer settlement. In 1905 the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission was established to advance policy. This was a predecessor of GMW. After taking over the smaller irrigation trusts it developed the GMID which included areas in the LCIR. Irrigation water was supplied by four natural river systems – the Murray, Goulburn, Campaspe and Loddon – and was delivered to irrigators through the region's extensive network of natural waterways and man-made distribution supply channels. Land continued to be developed for closer settlement right up until the 1960s when the Campaspe Irrigation District and Lake Eppalock was developed. Following the Millennium Drought the Campaspe District was voluntarily closed down after a vote was taken by local irrigators as part of the Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project (NVIRP)/GMW Connections Project.

The irrigation areas are embedded in a complex system of waterways (Figure 2-1).

The region has been facing declining water availability, reduced inflows and the introduction of allocation policies to secure water supplies in a drier climate, e.g. carryover and a more conservative reserve policy. With increased scarcity, water prices have increased across the GMID. The Torrumbarry system faces increasing pressure since tighter restrictions on water trade out of the Goulburn were applied in August 2019 which has led to even higher prices for water in areas downstream of the Barmah Choke and Goulburn, i.e. Zone 7 Murray.

Figure 2-3 shows irrigation usage has declined by 50% from its peak in the 1990s. This reduces the agricultural output unless it can be offset by improving the efficiency of water use and increasing irrigated production per megalitre (ML). Significant progress to lift production per ML has been made, but ongoing improvement is essential for the region to remain competitive in the water market. Therefore, continuing to drive water use efficiency and improve returns per ML is critical for the future and assisting this is an important role for the Plan.

Redevelopment and new irrigation opportunities will need to be developed through the Plan. The GMID Resilience Strategy is an overarching strategy currently in preparation that will also provide new opportunities for industries and communities in the LCIR. The GMID Resilience Strategy provides a framework for continued adaptation, long-term resilience and prosperity across the agricultural sector. Its development is in response to the wide-ranging complex challenges faced by the GMID, particularly the change in water availability for agricultural use.

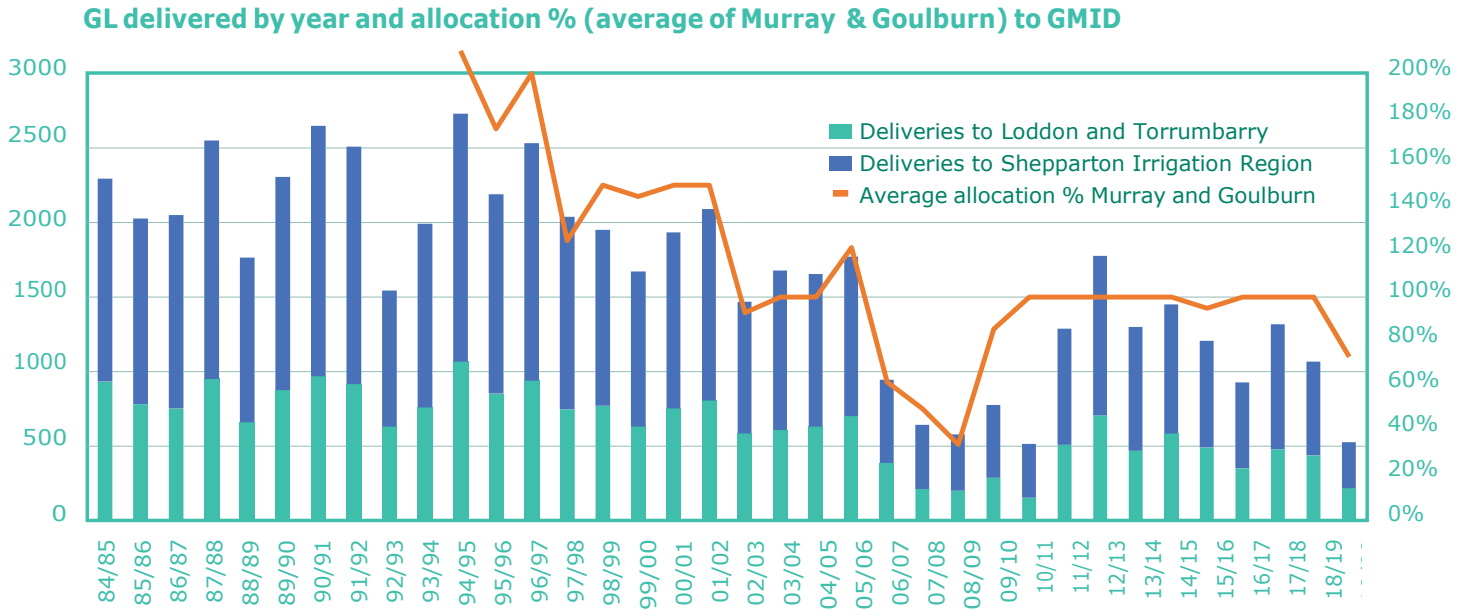


Figure 2-3 **GMID Irrigation water deliveries – Torrumbarry and Pyramid Boort (Loddon-Murray) shown in light green**

2.4.2 Land-use and value of production

In 2017-18 the North Central CMA region held approximately 1,400 farm businesses[6] which irrigated 200,000 ha and used 590 GL of water for irrigation. Table 2-2 provides a summary of the major irrigated land and water use.

Table 2-2 Major irrigated land and water use in the North Central CMA region, ABS 2017-18[7]

Irrigated crop	Area watered (ha)	Volume of irrigation water used (ML)	No. of businesses
Pastures:			
Pastures (including lucerne) and cereal crops used for grazing	103,211	363,281	981
Pastures (including lucerne) and cereal crops cut for hay	20,095	58,798	286
Pastures (including lucerne) and cereal crops cut for silage	15,964	30,695	123
Broadacre crops:			
Other cereals for grain or seed (e.g. wheat, oats, maize)	38,666	75,861	259
Other broadacre crops	9,591	18,387	78
Perennial horticulture:			
Fruit trees, nut trees, plantation of berry fruits	5,630	23,002	132
Grapevines	2,381	7,113	87
Seasonal horticulture:			
Vegetables for human consumption	2,445	10,925	76
Other crops (not classified)	1,421	4,397	259
Totals	**199,405**	**592,458**	**1,386**[8]

In 2017-18 irrigation in the region generated around $800 M at the farm gate (Table 2-3) and supported farm employment and off-farm employment through associated manufacturing, food processing and industries servicing agriculture. Broadly horticulture generates around $2,000 to $5,000/ML, dairying generates around $900/ML and mixed farming generates approximately $300/ML. In total irrigated agriculture in the region generates around 4,000 farm jobs. Regional food processing creates similar jobs when done in the region, which is usually the case for perishable products such as dairy, fruit and vegetables (the number of jobs is tabulated in earlier Table 2-1).

[6] A farm business is defined as having an estimated value of agricultural operations > $40,000/year. There are also approximately 3,000 irrigation properties that do not meet the ABS definition of a farm business. While large in number, these do not manage large area or ML use.

[7] ABS 46180DO001_201718 Water use on Australian Farms 2017-18

[8] This total is less than the sum of businesses for each crop as some businesses operate more than one enterprise.

Table 2-3 **Gross Value of Irrigated Agriculture Production in the North Central Region, ABS 2017-18**[9]

Crop types	Gross Value of Irrigated Production ($ Million)
Dairy production	$237
Production from sheep and other livestock	$176
Fruit and nuts (excluding grapes)	$101
Other	$95
Production from meat cattle	$72
Vegetables	$55
Hay	$18
Grapes	$12
Other broadacre crops	$10
Total	**$777M**

The current state and outlook for each of the main irrigation industries is shown in Table 2-4.

Table 2-4 **Irrigation industry trends**

Industry	Current state	Outlook	Trend	Challenges/ opportunities
Dairy	Dominates parts of the region, e.g. Cohuna and Rochester, but low confidence.	Steady. Trend to larger herds and total mixed rations. Exposed in drought years.	Decline	Continuing to improve water use efficiency. Access to capital. Large land parcels. Milking areas needing high water security.
Horticulture	Positive, switch to fresh fruit. High $/ML.	Increasing value, may expand more rapidly if export markets develop.	Expanding	Market development, quality focus, labour costs, access to capital. Need high water security and service.
Mixed and dryland farming	Positive, but low $/ML and declining irrigation use. High $/ML for domestic and stock (D&S).	Needs scale, difficult to compete with NSW. Expanding area of dryland.	Decline	Flexibility to move in and out of irrigation. Need large land parcels. Declining water use with large numbers of nil/low water use outlets. Increasing rural residential (right to farm).
Specialist and emerging	Expanding large scale operations. Very high $/ML.	Large growth in poultry. Growth in pork. Growth in glasshouses.	Expanding	Land use planning. Environmental approvals. Proximity to abattoir for chickens. Proximity to feed for piggeries. Proximity to skilled workforce and services for glasshouses. High value industries with large employment needing high quality services.

[9] ABS 4610055008DO001_201718 Gross Value of Irrigated Agricultural Production 2017-18

2.4.3 Geology and soils

Geology

The region is part of the northern Victorian Riverine Plains. It is located in the Murray Basin - a shallow basin that formed around 65 million years ago. The basin is filled with tertiary sediments laid down between 65 million years to the present. The base of the Murray Basin rests upon a highly deformed structure of sedimentary and crystalline rock.

The surface and subsurface geology of the North Central CMA region is diverse, ranging from the Palaeozoic metasediments and Devonian granites in the uplands through to recent geological formations of the Murray Basin along the Murray River (Figure 2-4).

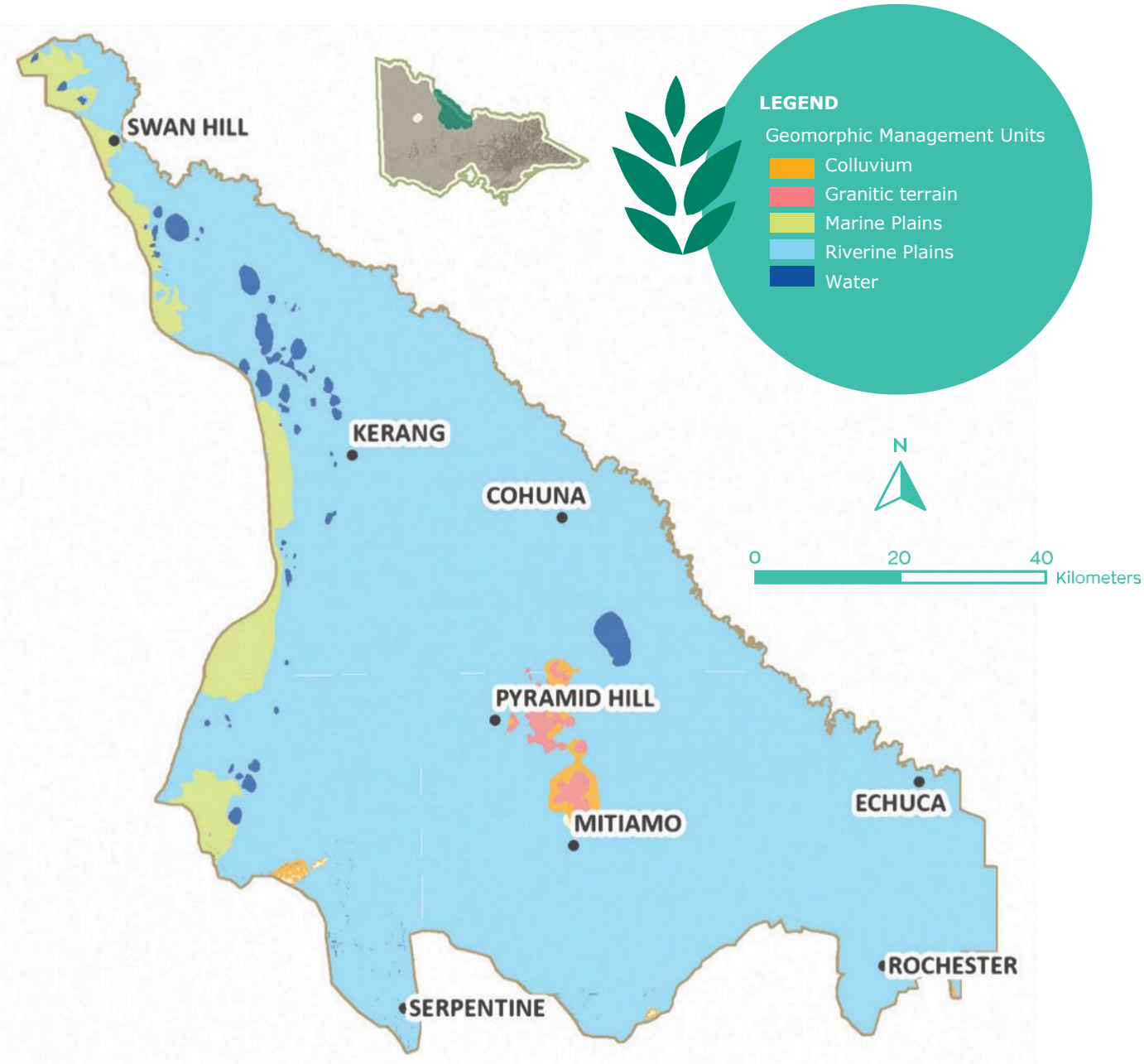


Figure 2-4 **Surface geology of the North Central CMA region**

Groundwater and salinity

The North Central CMA region comprises at least 20 different groundwater systems. Fractured rock aquifers are common within the bedrock uplands, as are localised flow systems. Much larger aquifers comprising alluvial sands and gravels are found within the northern plains. In the north and west, sediment deposited during the last marine incursion forms a sheet-like body of fine sands that function as an unconfined aquifer.

The large alluvial aquifers provide a substantive resource and groundwater usage is commonplace, particularly on the northern plains. Groundwater is used to supplement surface water for the purposes of irrigation and stock and domestic supplies. Groundwater in many areas is saline and can cause substantial salinity problems where it comes close to the surface. Saline groundwater discharge and salinity issues are widespread throughout the region and extend from the smaller groundwater flow systems common to the uplands through to the regional aquifers of the Northern Plains.

In moving from the uplands to the immediate Riverine Plains, deep leads escape the confines of the narrow upland valleys and fan out reflecting a network of anatomising streams across the floor of the basin. In these areas expansive areas of Calivil Formation extend laterally for more than 10 kilometres and form an extensive aquifer in the region of Goornong in the Campaspe Valley (Macumber, 2008) and at Derby, north of Leichardt in the Loddon Valley.

As the deep leads pass further northward into the Riverine Plains the valleys containing them are incised into the alluvial and paludal sediments of the Renmark Group. These strata form the basal sediments of the southern Murray Basin. Two units are recognised. The lowermost is the Warina Sand, a sheet-like body of coarse sand and minor gravels distributed over the bedrock floor of the basin. This varies considerably in thickness and texture in sympathy with bedrock topography.

The Calivil Formation of the lower Loddon and Campaspe Valley Plains is deposited within trenches cut within the upper surface of the Olney Clay. It is not clear whether groundwater in the Calivil Formation is in hydraulic connection with the underlying Warina Sands. The olney formation is known to be a confining layer to the Warina Sand beneath the marine sediments of the Wimmera, but the relationship between the two units is less clear in the eastern sector of the Riverine Plains.

In northern Victoria the Early Oligocene transgression resulted in the deposition of the geera clay and a local variant, the Torrumbarry Silt. These fine-grained clay-rich strata were established under the shallow water marine conditions that prevailed along the coastal margins extending westerly from Cohuna/Kerang along the highland front through to Wycheproof and Donald.

A continuous thick layer of fine-grained sand and stranded beach ridges formed as the sea retreated from the Murray Basin during the final regression. A blanket of this semi-consolidated sand, the 'Parilla Sand', up to 50 metres thick, now rests over the Mologa Surface above the Geera Clay. It is the uppermost stratigraphic unit and outcrops over large areas of northern Victoria where it forms a continuous unconfined aquifer. In the North Central CMA region, it is found between Cohuna/Kerang in the east and stretches to Donald in the west. It extends both northward and westward into the Victorian Mallee.

Groundwater within the Parilla Sand aquifer is saline with total dissolved salts ranging in concentration from about 20,000 through to about 30,000 mg/L. In some areas, saline groundwater discharges to landscape depressions forming salinas. Some of these are natural (primary), whilst others are relicts of past episodes of salinity reactivated by contemporary land use (secondary).

The Late Miocene/Early Pliocene regression drowned the deep lead channels that had cut into the Upper Renmark Group, and subsequent deposition of Parilla Sand backfilled and buried them beneath the sandy aquifer. The deep leads, thus, extend below the Parilla Sand. In regions distant from the highlands, the channels diminish and ultimately terminate. Here the deep leads discharge to the overlying unconfined Parilla Sand and the consequent dramatic reduction in transmissivity promotes regional saline groundwater discharge, and the characteristic salina/lunette complexes. These phenomena are particularly evident where the Loddon deep lead terminates in the Kerang/Cohuna region and where the Avon-Richardson deep lead terminates below the Parilla Sand west of Donald.

Salinity from rising groundwater levels has been a major threat historically and the focus of much investment both within the LCIR and more broadly across the Murray-Darling Basin. In response to several changes, salinity threats have reduced overall in the Loddon and Campaspe catchments. For example, the floods of 2010-11 caused rapid increases in watertable levels and renewed salinity threats. Figure 2-5 illustrates the indicative changes in LCIR watertable levels in recent years.

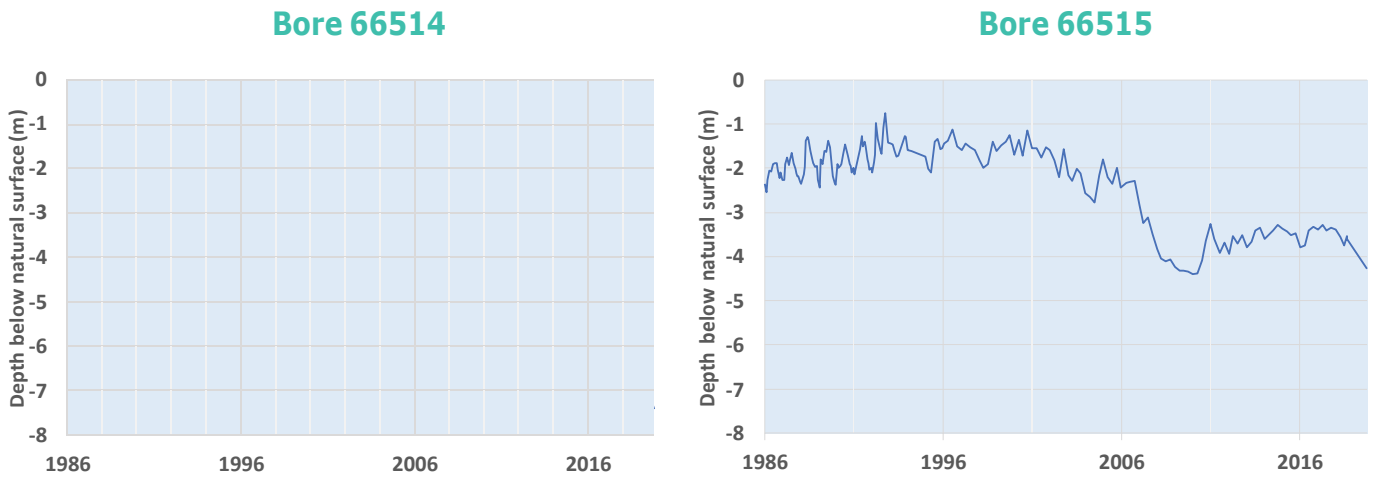


Figure 2-5 **Changes in depth to watertable near Gunbower**[10]

Source: Visualising Victoria's Groundwater 2017 www.vvg.org.au

The ongoing reduction in salinity threat from lower watertables can be attributed to the following changes in the LCIR since 2011:

- **Climate change** – reduced winter and spring rainfall (DELWP, 2016) has been a major driver of continued reductions in groundwater recharge.
- **Water use efficiency (WUE) on-farm** – in response to low water availability, higher water prices and government programs (such as the Farm Water Program), irrigation efficiency has continued to improve on-farm, e.g. growth in centre pivot irrigation in Boort, funding of laser grading and drainage reuse systems under the Farm Water Program. In doing so, accessions to groundwater have reduced.
- **GMW Connections Program** – decommissioning of irrigation channels and channel lining have reduced accessions to groundwater from irrigation seepage (as some areas of irrigation are converted to dryland farming following channel decommissioning) and channel leakage in recent years.
- **Water trade** – high prices for allocation trade (temporary water) and water share trade (permanent water) has contributed to the movement of water out of the LCIR and the reduction in irrigation area. Accessions to groundwater have therefore reduced.
- **Land use change** – the area and intensity of irrigation has continued to reduce overall in response to different crops being grown, leading to less groundwater recharge from irrigation seepage. This has occurred for several reasons. As some landholders have improved irrigation efficiency, they have moved to higher value crops with higher water use but over a much smaller area. There has been a shift from perennial to annual pastures which use less water over time. For example, land use in the upper Barr Creek, Tyntynder Flats, Lockington, Bamawm and Rochester areas was traditionally dominated by intensive dairying on perennial pastures with water use from 8 to 15 ML/ha/y. This is now a much smaller proportion of the landscape. Irrigation is now often tailored to crops that maximise dry matter per ML, which has meant that there is a greater emphasis on annual pastures with water use typically 0 to 6 ML/ha/y. More opportunistic irrigation patterns are also apparent such that irrigation only occurs when the commodity price is likely to be affordable relative to the water price.
- **Lower dairy prices relative to water price** – resulting in less milk production, less irrigation of perennial pastures and therefore reduced accessions to groundwater.
- **Expanded groundwater pumping on farm** – this has reduced the pressure on the Deep Leads groundwater aquifer in the upper catchments.

[10] Bore 66515 monitors the shallow groundwater (known as the Shepparton Formation). Bore 66514 monitors the deep groundwater (known as the Calivil/Renmark Formation). Location is between Leitchville and Gunbower adjacent to Murray Valley Highway.

The reduction in salinity threat is expected to continue in the future, while noting that periods of salinity impact may occur following extended wet periods. Recent reviews of salinity register entries such as the Barr Creek Catchment Strategy, found that salt loads to the Murray River are much lower than those expected when entries were first prepared – from the early 1990s onwards. This means salinity risks have declined, perhaps by as much as 90% from the peak loads[11], but a 'watching brief' is still required given the high potential for mobilising salt from the region following a change in climatic or water use conditions.

The North Central CMA has commenced work on the development of a fit-for-purpose integrated accounting model to assess its accountable actions.

There are Australian and Victorian government commitments regarding salinity management, e.g. the Basin Salinity Management 2030 Strategy (BSM2030), which supports management of salinity in catchments through LWMPs. Responsibility to manage salinity impacts, including monitoring and reporting, is delegated to CMAs by the Victorian government. Therefore, salinity management must continue to be a focus for future investment and should remain a key priority in the LCIR LWMP.

Groundwater and surface water monitoring are conducted within the Reporting and Accounting for Salinity (RAS) Project managed by the North Central CMA. This project is concerned with meeting CMA and state obligations relating to compliance with the Basin Salinity Management 2030 Strategy, particularly the reporting of regional salt load contributions to the Murray River. The CMA monitors 355 bores within the irrigation area and collects information from 25 surface water monitoring sites throughout the North Central CMA region. A review is underway to confirm a set of monitoring bores with reliable stratigraphy and accurate records that will continue to be monitored to inform future reporting under the BSM2030.

The watertable is now lower (below the critical 2 metres from soil surface level) most of the time, with fluctuations following wet periods. A depth to water table map for the LCIR (spring 2017) is shown in Figure 2-6.

[11] Salt loads in the Barr Creek peaked at around 250,000t/y in the 1990s, but over the last 25 years have fallen to 25,000t/y, except for in high rainfall years.

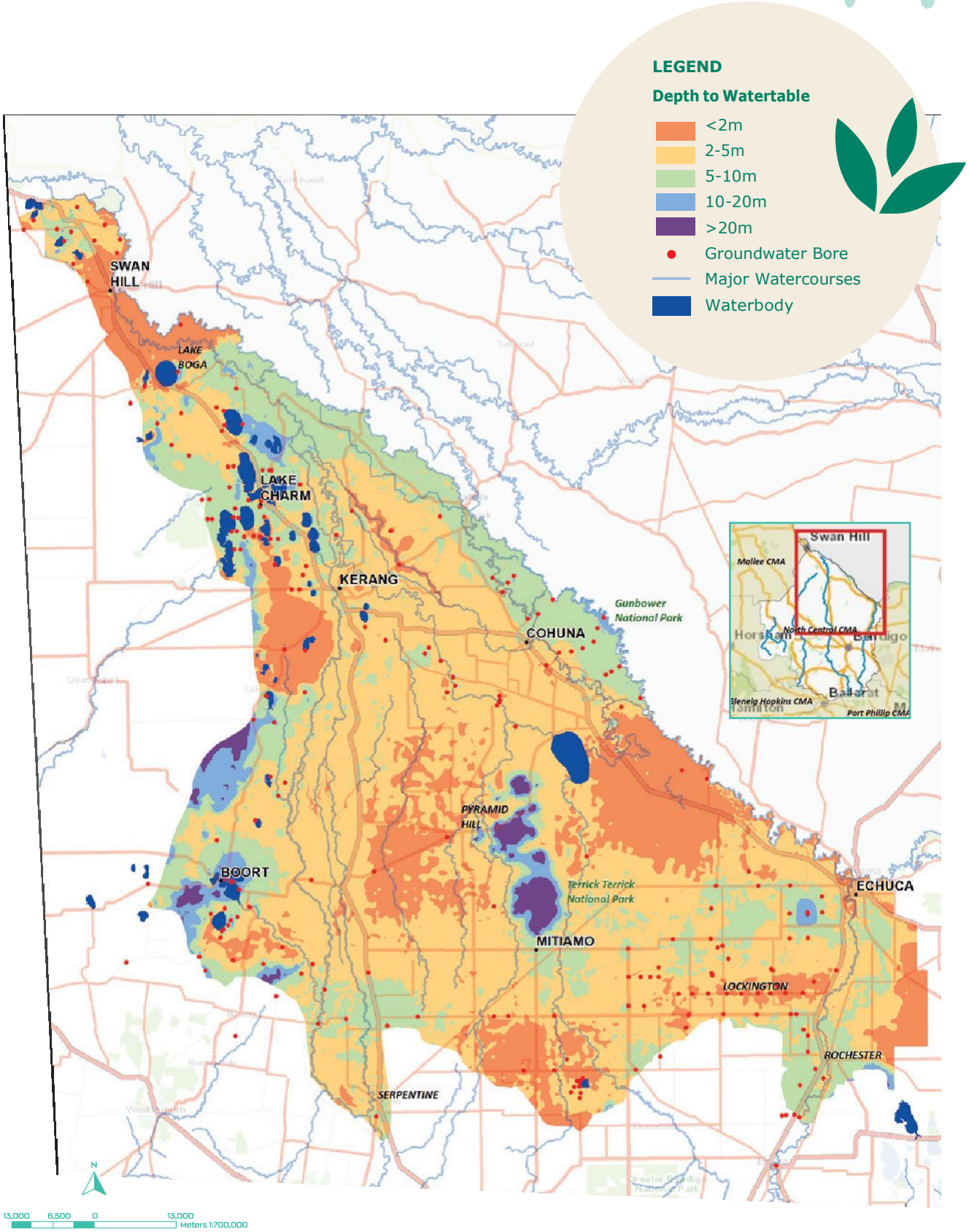


Figure 2-6 **Depth to watertable map for the LCIR (spring 2017)**

Soils

The region has many diverse and variable soil types including red and yellow duplex soils; red friable earths; red and grey loams; pure grey, grey and red clays; grey sands and stony mottled duplex soils. The most common soil type in the region is red duplex soil. The most productive soils have good access to irrigation and drainage.

Improving farm management practices helps to reduce excessive leaching through highly permeable soils and waterlogging of low-lying and impermeable soils, which in turn helps to manage land deterioration threats.

Some landholders are turning their attention to poorly explored deep groundwater resources that in many instances are high in salinity. This is an area requiring additional attention because the cost of establishing deep production bores is considerable and application of relatively high salinity water on soil health will vary with soil type and may require substantial investment in ameliorants to avoid loss of soil structure.

Figure 2-7 illustrates the soil types and their location within the region.

The North Central CMA is working closely with the Centre for eResearch and Digital Innovation (CERDI) at Federation University to establish a national approach and model that will provide a suite of tools that support spatial definition of soils information including that collected by community groups under the CMA's Farming for Sustainable Soils (FSS) Program. Given completion of the FSS project in 2018 this work is now being progressed within the CMA through the current Regenerative Agriculture project supported by the National Landcare Program.

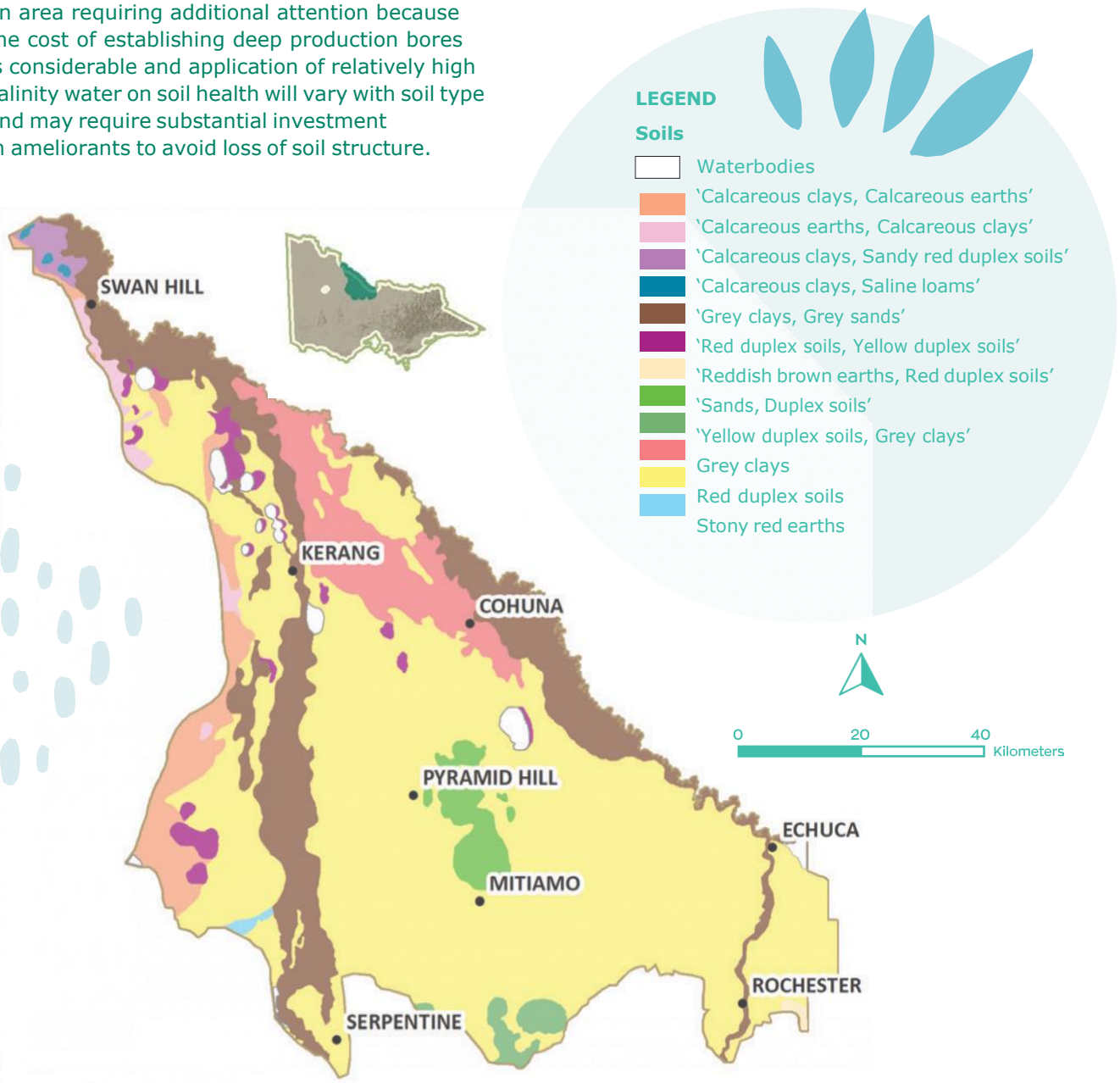


Figure 2-7 **Soils types and their location within the Loddon Campaspe Irrigation Region**

2.4.4 Waterways, floodways and wetlands

Waterways

The LCIR includes a complex system of waterways, many being flood distributaries across the floodplain. These are illustrated in Figure 2-8. The region contains 112,337 km of waterways. The region's major river systems are the lower stretches of the Loddon, Avoca and the Campaspe, with the Murray River forming the northern boundary. Other important waterways include Gunbower, Bullock, Mount Hope, Pyramid, Barr, Serpentine, Bannacher and Sheep Wash creeks, and the Little Murray River.

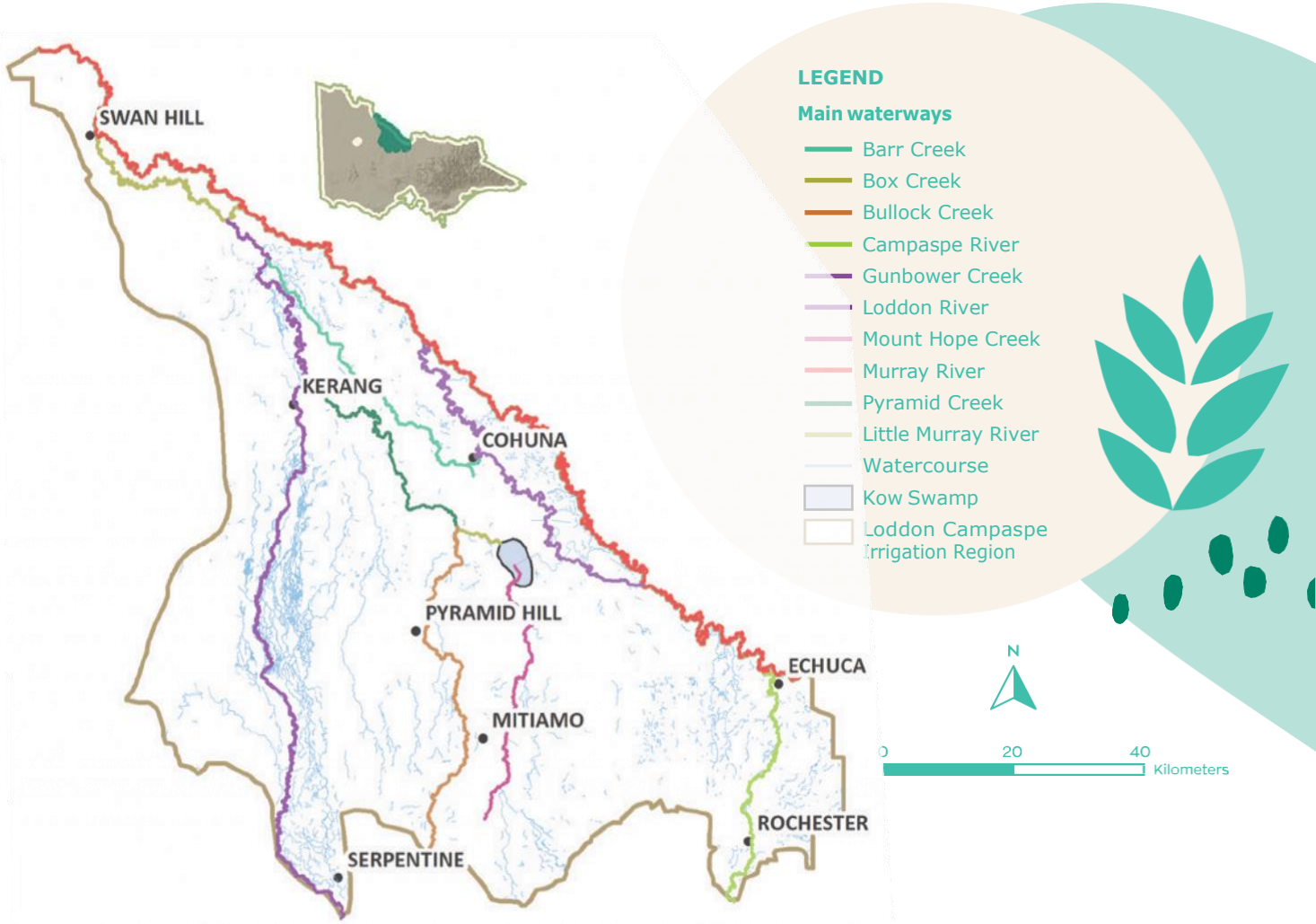


Figure 2-8 **Loddon Campaspe Irrigation Region's extensive network of waterways**

These waterways support native fish communities, with significant values including:

- Presence of many threatened species including Murray cod, silver perch, freshwater catfish, Murray-Darling rainbowfish, southern purple-spotted gudgeon, flathead galaxais and olive perchlet.
- Recreational fishing contributes significantly to regional economies and tourism.
- Fish are highly valued by Traditional Owners and the general community.

Threats to native fish communities include loss of instream and fringing habitat, loss of connectivity (irrigation infrastructure creates barriers to movement and migrations), fish loss from natural waterways to the irrigation channel network, altered flows (high flows in summer during irrigation season and low flows in winter during irrigation off-season) and introduced species (such as carp and redfin).

Other values of waterways in the region include:

- Presence of native species other than fish such as platypus and turtles, array of waterbirds.
- Often the most intact remnant vegetation in an area is the riparian vegetation. Therefore, provides critical habitat and connectivity across the landscape for the movement of native terrestrial fauna, (e.g. small mammals).
- Importance of waterways to mental health and wellbeing, community connectivity.

Floodways

The lower portions of the Loddon, Avoca and Campaspe floodplains cover a large area of the region. This region is characterised by shallow floodplains which can extend many kilometres wide, with flooding lasting from weeks to months, as experienced during the 2010 – 2011 floods. These floodplains have become highly modified as a result of the patterns of settlement and agricultural development that has occurred throughout the region. Modifying these floodplains has altered their hydraulic function and their connections to the natural waterways and wetlands across the LCIR and major floods can result in significant damage and disruption to land owners and communities in these regions.

The construction of private and public levees to control floodwater during flood has changed the natural paths of floods. Many of the privately constructed levee systems have degraded over time, reducing their effectiveness to mitigate flood impacts and risks.

The presence of vegetation in floodplains does cause the water to slow down and reduce impacts of erosion from flood events and help to maintain soil structure. This is why much of the riparian and floodplain rehabilitation projects involve revegetation (along with biodiversity benefits). Only in very confined waterways with lots of vegetation and large woody debris with high flows/ velocity does it appear flood heights may increase.

The North Central CMA has undertaken floodplain studies to develop a greater understanding of the current state of the region's floodplains and levee systems.

A program implemented post the 2011 floods was to purchase agricultural enterprises established on marginal land bordering designated floodplains. The strategic purchase of such properties can enable the natural connectivity of the floodplain to be reinstated. The increased storage capacity of the floodplain also allows for better management of the localised and downstream impacts of flooding.

A major floodplain system begins at Serpentine and follows the Loddon River north, running into an extensive system of wetlands located between Kerang and Swan Hill. Another important floodway in the region starts at the southern boundary of the catchment south east of Mitiamo and flows in a northerly direction into Kow Swamp. A smaller network of floodways originates in the eastern corner of the catchment at Rochester and follows the Campaspe River north to Echuca. Figure 2-9 illustrates the extensive network of floodways contained within the region. The region's floodways provide habitat for birds such as Brolgas, which can be found among water bodies near Durham Ox and the Kerang Lakes.

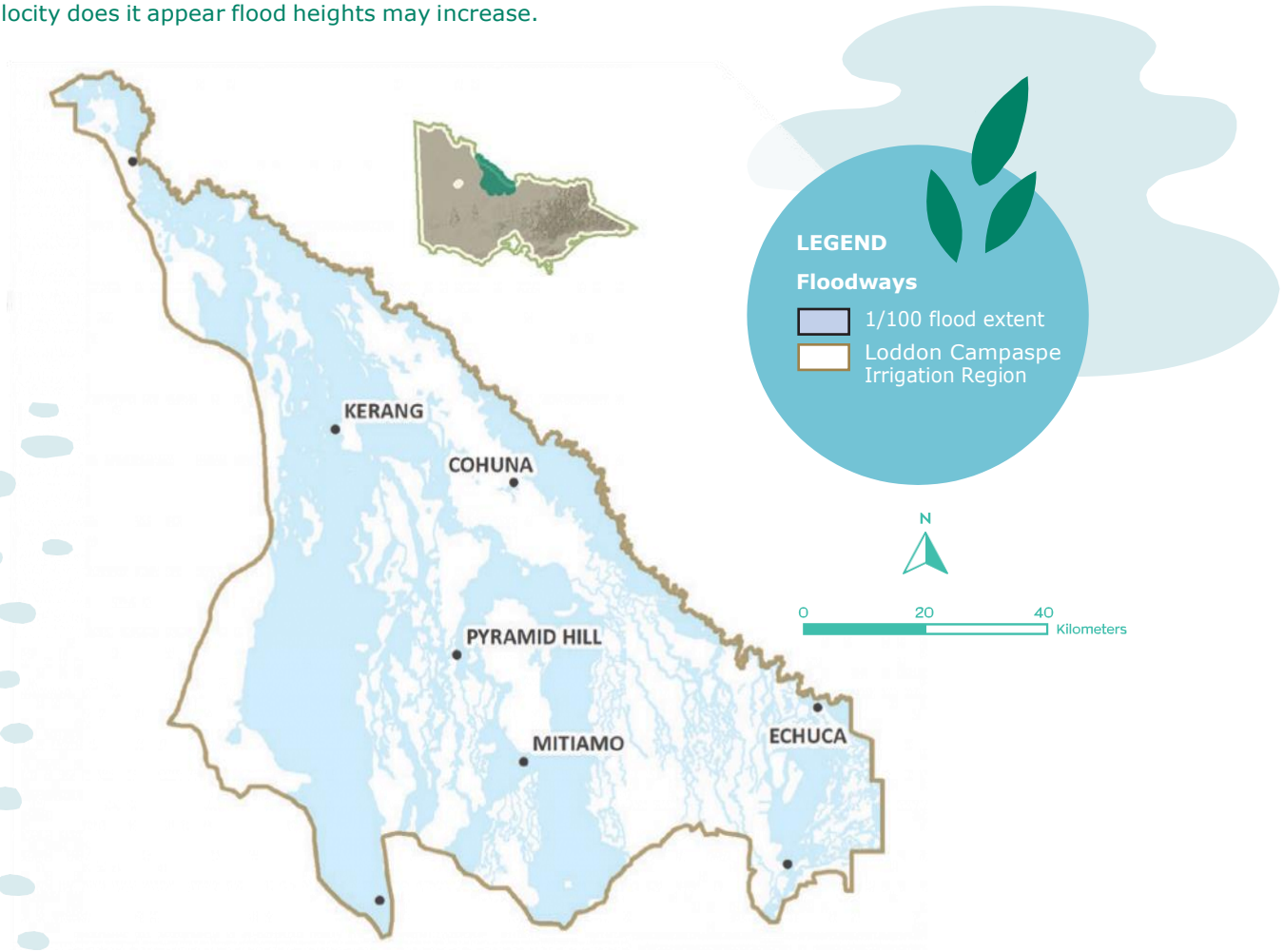


Figure 2-9 **Floodways across the LCIR.**

Wetlands

The region has an extensive network of more than 120 significant wetlands, ranging from freshwater to hypersaline (Figure 2-10). The wetlands vary from permanent water bodies to ephemeral wetlands and cover 39,796 ha or 5.6 per cent of the region's total land mass. While the majority of these significant wetlands are located on public land, there are a small number of wetlands on private land. Of the 120 wetlands, 23 are listed under the *Ramsar Convention* as being wetlands of international importance.

The LCIR's wetlands now exist in a highly modified hydrological state. Their natural flooding cycles have been altered by roads, levee banks, irrigation infrastructure and, agricultural activity by blocking flow paths. Many of the region's wetlands are now managed for multiple uses including their values. These include cultural heritage, irrigation storage, salt disposal storage, drainage water storage, recreation, tourism, biodiversity or a combination of these. The irrigation supply network and flow is a component of maintaining these uses and values.

The region also has 25 wetlands listed in the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia and six wetlands that are listed on the *Register of National Estate*. These wetlands provide an important habitat for a variety of native fauna such as the Freckled Duck and the Growling Grass Frog.

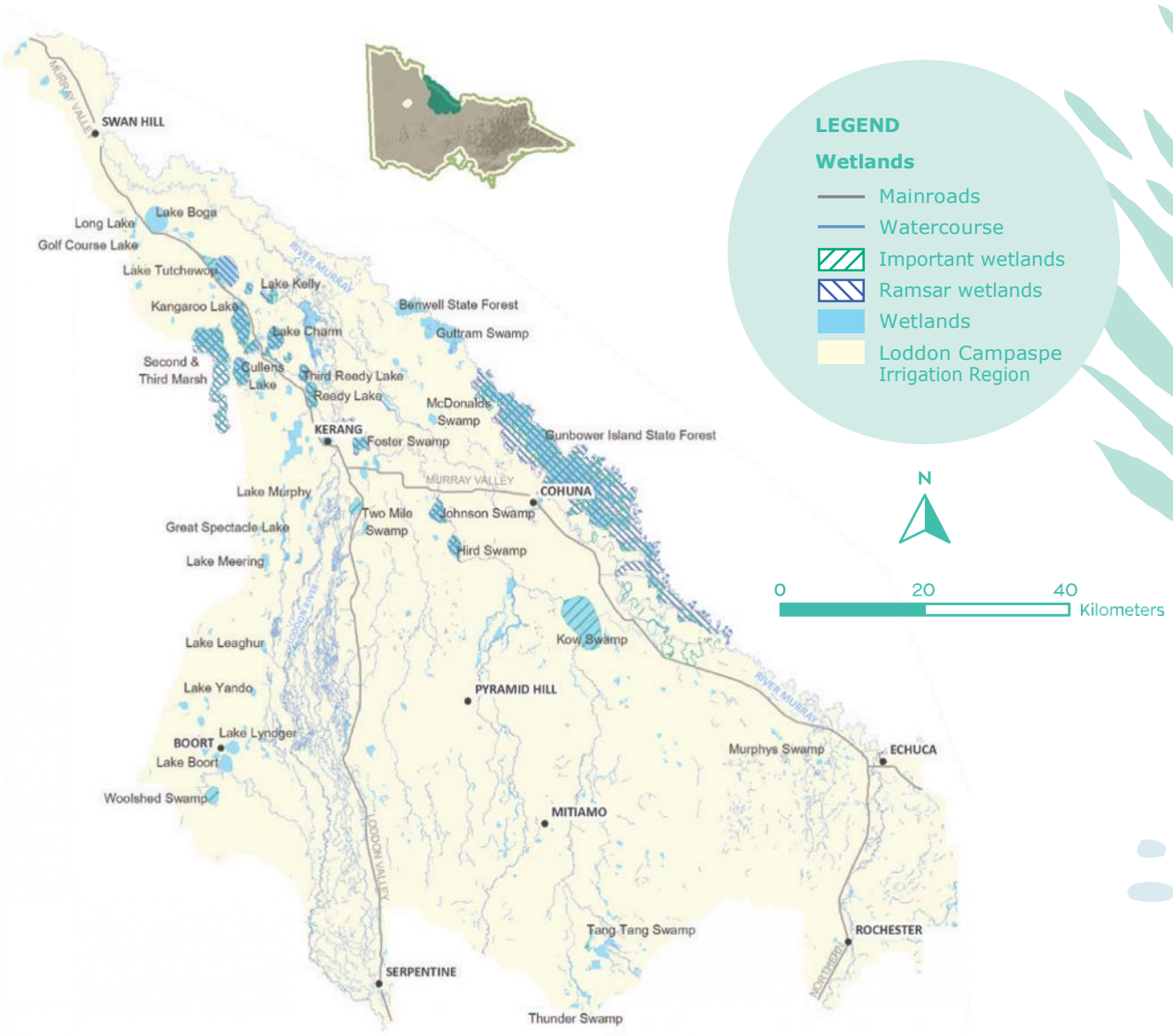


Figure 2-10 **Significant wetlands of the LCIR.**

The region's wetlands and waterways are highly valued due to:

- Significant areas of Aboriginal cultural heritage.
- A mix of wetland types including permanent open freshwater, permanent saline, semi-permanent saline and shallow freshwater marsh systems.
- The Kerang Wetlands Ramsar site, which has 156 species of indigenous flora – eight of which are listed as Threatened in Victoria.[12] This site also has more than 102 species of indigenous terrestrial fauna. Of these, 24 species are listed under the *Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*. In addition, 32 species listed as Threatened in Victoria have been recorded at the Kerang Wetlands Ramsar site with a further 17 species near-Threatened.[13]
- Gunbower Forest Ramsar Site. The Gunbower Forest, near Cohuna, lies on the floodplain between the Murray River and Gunbower Creek. 50 km long, and with a water frontage of 130 km, it is characterised by swamps, river red gums and – on the higher ground – box forest. The Victorian government created the Gunbower National Park in June 2010. Gunbower Forest is also one of Australia's 53 Ramsar-listed sites, where numerous varieties of waterbirds are a feature. Gunbower Forest supports a diversity of native animals (including kangaroos, emus, goannas, possums and snakes) and 160 bird species.
- Some wetlands include the presence of Murray Hardyhead (Craterocephalus Fluviatilis) which is considered threatened under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Migratory birds listed under the Japan Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (JAMBA), China Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (CAMBA) and Korea Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (KAMBA) are particularly abundant and diverse across the region.

MacDonald Swamp - North Central CMA

[12] Victorian Flora Information System Department of Sustainability and Environment, 2003b.

[13] Atlas of Victorian Wildlife, Department of Sustainability and Environment, 2003a.

2.4.5 Biodiversity

Much of the biodiversity in the LCIR is associated with wetlands and waterways on the floodplain. Wetlands underpin the environmental values of the region. The main wetland types in order of value are:

- Shallow freshwater marsh
- Deep freshwater marsh
- Permanent saline
- Semi-permanent saline
- Permanent open freshwater
- Hypersaline lakes.

The region contains a mixture of these wetlands but is overrepresented in the last two types, which have lower value. Wetlands and watercourses that are part of the regulated irrigation system are generally permanent open freshwater systems that are likely to remain in their current condition and improvements in biodiversity are limited by lack of flow variability.

1,367 native flora and fauna species have been recorded across the region, but only 12 per cent of the region's original native vegetation remains. Habitat loss, fragmentation, salinity, altered flooding regimes, declining water quality, urban development, agricultural activities, inappropriate recreation, pest plants and animals, changes to fire regimes, and climate change have all impacted upon the extent and health of the region's native vegetation.

The region supports 978 species of remnant vegetation. Fifteen per cent of these native species of flora is listed as being rare or threatened.[14] The Plains Grasslands, which dominated the landscape prior to European settlement, now covers only two per cent of the region. Similarly, the Plains Woodland now covers one per cent. The Chenopod Grassland and the Riverine Chenopod Woodland also cover just one per cent. Pockets of remnant vegetation are found on private land and whilst this is highly fragmented across the landscape, they are still significant for maintaining biodiversity. Protecting these small remaining areas on private land is vital.

Adjacent to farmland are areas of remnant vegetation on public land. These include the Terrick Terrick National Park (3,880 ha), Koorangie Wildlife Reserve (3,254 ha), Leaghur State Park (1,522 ha); Wandella Flora & Fauna Reserve (956 ha); Gunbower Island State Forest (17,621 ha), Guttrum State Forest (1,151 ha), Benwell State Forest (561 ha) and Dartagook Wildlife Reserve (502 ha).

The region includes the largest ibis breeding colonies in Victoria, as well as numerous species listed under International Migratory Birds agreements. Species include the Eurasian coot; grey teal; freckled duck; blue-billed duck; pinkeared duck; Pacific black duck; more duck; great cormorant; little black cormorant; little red cormorant; little bittern; great crested grebe; hoary headed grebe; and the Australian shelduck. The region's lakes act as refuges for waterbirds during drought.

Ecosystems containing many different species are resilient, as they can reorganise after disturbances. Building the resilience of ecosystems by sustaining biodiversity and ecological stocks or processes will allow ecosystems to adapt and self-organise as circumstances change. However, many of the connections between natural habitats have been severed by changed land uses, leaving some habitats isolated within a matrix of farmland, urban land and other altered areas. Establishing biolinks and improving ecological connectivity will increase the potential for plants and animals to disperse, recolonise and adapt to climate change. Biolinks are broad geographic areas identified for targeted action to increase ecological function and connectivity.

The plan encourages land managers to be active in their role as environmental stewards. The plan puts systems and processes in place to support farmers and to safeguard the health of the natural environment through a mixture of information, incentives and regulations. Farmers will be encouraged to incorporate environmental objectives into their farm plans to enhance regional biodiversity values. Through improved environmental management and the adoption of sustainable practices, farmers can increase the resilience and long-term productivity of farm ecosystems.

[14] (CMA, North Central, 2011)

3. Context for the new Plan

3.1 Changing water availability and demand

The region is part of the southern connected Murray-Darling Basin (sMDB) (Figure 3-1). The amount of water available for use within the GMID is highly influenced by the water available in the sMDB and trade with water users in other parts of the sMDB. Since the 1990s when irrigation use across this area of the sMDB was at its peak, the region has seen significant changes.

Over the last 20 years, there has been an almost 50% net decline in water resources. This is due to a combination of climate change, water recovery as part of the Murray Darling Basin Plan, changes to water policy and competition for water from outside the region. Living with variability is already a feature of Agriculture across the GMID. Supply and demand determine water price and competing industries buy or sell water at different price points. (GMID Resilience Strategy)

In Victoria, a substantial increase in horticulture was observed between 2003-2009 before plateauing until 2015. Similar rates of horticulture expansion across Victoria, NSW and SA have since been observed since 2015 (Review of Historical Use of Water: Barmah to the SA border (mdba.gov.au))

Approximately 30 % of water entitlements in northern Victoria are now held and used for the environmental purposes as part of the implementation of the Basin Plan (Water Market Trends: Updated trends in Northern Victorian Water Trade 2001-2018 (DELWP)).

The combination of an increase demand for water for horticulture and environmental watering in the Murray has resulted in an increased reliance on inter-valley trade from both the Goulburn and the Murrumbidgee Rivers (Managing Delivery Risks in the River Murray System (mdba.gov.au)).

Goulburn	Trading Zone 1 and 3	NSW Murray	Trading Zone 10 and 11
Campaspe	Trading Zone 4A and 4C	SA Murray	Trading Zone 12
Loddon	Trading Zone 5A	Murrumbidgee	Trading Zone 13
Vic Murray	Trading Zone 6, 6B and 7	Lower Darling	Trading Zone 14

Figure 3-1 **Southern connected Murray Darling Basin (source: MDBA)**

Implications for GMID

The GMID, including the LCIR, has significantly reduced its water use with a large decline in water use by the dairy industry and mixed farming. As part of the Basin Plan there has been 417 GL (346GL of buyback and 71GL of farm efficiency[15] of High Reliability Water Share (HRWS) entitlements recovered from the GMID, and additional water traded out of the GMID to other regions.

Water use in the GMID has fluctuated over the past twenty years in response to seasonal conditions and water availability but has trended downwards and the GMID as a whole has had a net decline in water use of up to 1,000 GL/y (almost 50%) [15].

A large portion of this can be attributed to Basin Plan water recovery and the rest due to a combination of factors such as improvements in on-farm efficiency, the influence of factors such as water trade, downstream demand and climate change, reduced catchment inflows and pre-Basin Plan water recovery such as the Living Murray [15].

Torrumbarry is particularly exposed to competition as once horticulture below the Barmah Choke is fully matured demand may exceed the privately held volume of Murray Zone 7 HRWS available downstream of the choke where many irrigators rely on carryover and allocation trade from other zones, including the Goulburn.

The Victorian Government has recently reviewed the Goulburn to Murray operating and trade rules; proposing new rules to protect the lower Goulburn River from unseasonal high flows. (DELWP 2021)

This will impact GMID irrigators differently based on whether they are in the Murray or the Goulburn system.

The next severe drought year poses several challenges for the region, such as:

- Deliveries will be much lower than during the last drought, so can the system run with such low deliveries.
- Low water use in drought years will place increased pressure to minimise losses through the delivery systems.
- The opportunity to enhance security of supply in drought.
- Infrastructure costs are largely fixed. The GMID faces a quandary in that if delivery share charges were reduced for dryland (previously irrigated land) then it may mean that charges for irrigated land would rise, which may act as a barrier for irrigation expansion and irrigation competitiveness.
- Further downward trend in water-use and drought could threaten parts of the GMID and potentially lead to scenarios where irrigators vote to close down a channel system due to viability.

[15] RMCG 2018, Update on GMID water availability scenarios and production across the southern connected Basin. Prepared for the Goulburn Broken CMA.

Whilst the GMID has seen reductions in water use it has also been a net purchaser of water in average and wet years, therefore maintaining and enhancing access to the sMDB water market so the region has the ability to expand its production and buy water from other areas .

Despite a downward trend in water use irrigators in the GMID tend to use more than the volume of entitlement tied to their land and are reliant on the water market and carryover to help meet their water needs. Trends in water price reflect the market fundamentals of supply and demand, and in recent years when water availability across the southern connected basin has been low, price has gone up.

As demand for water in Sunraysia increases from horticulture and permanent plantings mature, competition for water is increasing and in times of drought there may be insufficient water to meet the needs of GMID irrigators. The influence of speculators and investors on the water market has been a growing concern in parts of the irrigation community in recent years. Through 2019/20 the Victorian Government committed to working with the community to investigate water market transparency reforms and ways to strengthen public confidence in the market.

The ACCC Water Markets Inquiry final report [16] concluded that water trade has supplied substantial benefits to many water users across the Basin. The ACCC found water allocation price movements are strongly driven by relative scarcity of water allocation; with no evidence found of water prices increasing due to investor (parties who hold and trade water assets for financial gain, not production) participation. Since 2019/20 the Victorian Government has committed to continuing to work with the community to investigate water market transparency reforms and ways to strengthen public confidence in the market.

Markets provide increased flexibility and allow irrigators to increase their water supplies, to produce income through selling water rights, to expand production, or to release capital for investment in their businesses.

Despite the challenges presented by drought, the occurrence of low allocation seasons, and the uncertainty of climate change and its impacts on water security, irrigated farm businesses in the GMID have demonstrated resilience and have a long term future in the region.

The complexity of water management decisions including how much water to use and how much to own has come into sharp focus with recent water price trends. A farmer's profit per ML and variation between enterprise, farm systems and the water prices are all key variables to consider when making these decisions. Actions proposed within this plan will support farmers to understand the variables influencing water management decisions, establish resilient farming enterprises and make wise water decisions.

[16] https://www.accc.gov.au/focus-areas/inquiries-finalised/murray-darling-basin-water-markets-inquiry-0

3.2 Achievements of the previous Land and Water Management Plan

The previous Plan was broad in scope and covered activities now covered in separate strategies under the RCS, such as floodplain management, sustainable agriculture, soil health, environmental flows and river health.

In 2017 the LWMP 2010-2020 was reviewed. The review found:

- Substantial progress implementing the management activities intended under the Plan.
- Progress against a large majority (90%) of management outcomes intended one to eight years after implementation.
- Progress regarding the long-term resource condition outcomes (intended more than eight years after implementation), with overall improvements detected in waterway condition, agricultural viability and community capacity.
- Issues existed with recording and extracting management output data where its availability varied for individual management and long-term resource condition outcomes.

The review also identified several areas where the current LWMP could be improved and these recommendations have been considered in the preparation of this plan. Areas for improvement included:

- Better clarification of scope and purpose of the Plan.
- Amend aspirational goals and outcomes to embrace Aboriginal cultural heritage considerations and Traditional Owner and Aboriginal Landowner involvement.
- Better clarification of partnership arrangements and the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders in relation to delivery of ongoing management activities.
- Use of property planning tools to achieve outcomes intended under the LWMP, on private land.
- Maintaining a simple and regularly updated planning document hierarchy to illustrate the relationship between the LWMP and other North Central CMA plans to improve planning transparency and understanding of how activities fit together and contribute towards "big picture" aspirational goals.
- Monitoring of primary threats to natural assets.

A summary of the changes in primary threats to natural assets in the LCIR (since 2011) is outlined in Table 3-1 and the implications for this plan are explained.

Table 3-1 Changes in the primary threats to natural assets and LCIR LWMP implications

Threat	Trend since 2011	Drivers of change	Implication for LCIR LWMP
1. Climate change	Increasing	Global climate drivers	Remains a primary threat. Latest climate projections and impacts should be included. Focus management on mitigation activities where available (e.g. to manage increases in other threats) and ensure alignment with the North Central Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Plan and other relevant planning documents.
2. Salinity	Fluctuating	Climate change, on-farm WUE, Modernisation; Program, water trade, land use change, groundwater pumping	Remains a primary threat due to risk post wet periods. Ensure management activities reflect direction of latest policies and plans, e.g. BSM2030.

Threat	Trend since 2011	Drivers of change	Implication for LCIR LWMP
3. Flooding of a floodway	Variable – increase overall with reductions in specific locations	Climate change, waterway maintenance, works on regional drains and levees, buy-back of land, ongoing development controls, activities under strategies, studies and plans	Remains a primary threat but is also beneficial to some assets. The 2010/11 flood event, latest flood management activities and implications (both positive and negative) for assets should be included. Focus management on protecting negatively impacted assets and promoting flooding of positively impacted assets. Ensure alignment with the Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy, Rochester Flood Management Plan and Echuca Flood Study.
4. Habitat loss and fragmentation	Increasing	Climate change, "extinction debt"	Remains a primary threat. Relevant information from recent strategies and plans should be included, e.g. RCS, North Central Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Plan. Ensure management activities align with the Native Vegetation Plan.
5. Declining water quality	Variable concentrations, loads fluctuate with flows	Climate change, improved irrigation drainage management	Remains a primary threat. Focus irrigation drainage management on farm measures and ensuring that natural drainage courses are not blocked, in line with Water for Victoria (DELWP, 2016). Align broader catchment management activities to improve water quality with other relevant plans, e.g. RCS, North Central Waterway Strategy.
6. Fire	Increasing	Climate change, higher fuel loads in forests receiving environmental water	Remains a primary threat. Ensure management activities reflect direction of latest policies and plans, e.g. Mallee and Murray Goulburn bushfire risk landscape (BRL) and associated strategic bushfire management plan.
7. Pest plants and animals	Increasing	Climate change	Remains a primary threat. Ensure management activities reflect direction of latest policies and plans e.g. North Central Invasive Plants and Animals Strategy.
8. Farm dams and afforestation in the upper catchments	Increasing	Climate change	Remains a primary threat. Assess periodically to identify new information.
9. Water reform policy and land use change	Increasing	Climate change, water trade, Basin Plan	Increased need to ensure irrigators and community have access to accurate information and capacity to manage change supported.
10.Social change	Increasing	Broader market drivers, water trade, Basin Plan, farm succession	Remains a primary threat.

3.3 Consultation during renewal process

Consultation during the development of the Plan was undertaken in three stages:

First round consultation (pre-plan)

The North Central CMA engaged consultants to undertake independent consultation with stakeholders to identify the land and water management issues that were of concern. During March 2019 focus group meetings were held in Pyramid Hill, Cohuna, Swan Hill and Boort and there was also an agency focus group meeting in Huntly.

As would be expected a range of issues were raised at the meetings, some of which have a broader focus than the remit of a LWMP, as defined by the Victorian government's guidelines and the investment priorities for sustainable irrigation.

Findings and analysis from the focus group consultation has been documented in a separate consultant's report. In Appendix 1, their findings are collated and assessed for their relevance to the new LWMP. The broader NRM issues that were raised have been documented in Appendix 2 and these will be considered by the North Central CMA in the renewal of the RCS and its other sub-strategies.

The irrigation specific issues and actions that have been considered in developing the new LWMP are provided in Appendix 3.

The following provides a summary of the key directions from the initial consultation:

- **Integrated catchment management** – properly integrate the Plan with the delivery of other RCS sub-strategies and irrigation related programs, such as the GMW Connections Project and Transformation Program, including local council approvals for earth and drainage works.
- **Natural resource management priorities** – broaden the focus from impacts of irrigation to include some attention to biodiversity and vegetation corridors, pest plants and animals and private wetlands.
- **On the ground people and on-ground action** – ensure funding is channelled towards extension people working directly with landholders more often, and towards incentives for on-ground work.
- **Growing the region culturally and economically** – take a greater focus to recognising the region's cultural heritage and working with Traditional Owners when making decisions about water.
- **Whole farm planning** – strengthen these programs and continue to support them because WFP is strongly backed by the community; also provides opportunity for agency staff to work directly with landholders.

Second round consultation on Draft Discussion Paper

In August and September 2019 RMCG and the North Central CMA met with several communities to discuss the proposed programs in the Land and Water Management Plan. The workshops were held in: Swan Hill, Kerang (agencies), Pyramid Hill, Boort, Kerang (community) and Gunbower.

The programs were then amended to incorporate the feedback from these sessions. A summary of the discussion points from each workshop is provided in Appendix 4.

Public consultation on Draft Plan

The Loddon Campaspe Irrigation Region Land and Water Management Plan draft discussion paper (the draft Plan) was released for public comment 20 December 2019. An online survey was made available alongside the Plan to capture comments and suggestions for consideration in the final Plan. The consultation closed 31 January 2020.

A standalone report is available on the North Central CMA website that presents a summary of the quantitative survey results and responses to individual's comments and agency submissions on the draft.

3.4 Alignment with government policy

3.4.1 Legislation

Land and Water Management Plans

Victoria's framework for the integrated management of catchments is established under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (the *CaLP Act*). CMAs are responsible for the integrated planning and coordination of land, water and biodiversity management in each catchment and land protection region. RCSs provide the primary integrated planning framework for the management of land, water and biodiversity resources. They provide high level guidance associated with both dryland and irrigation areas. They seek to integrate community values and regional priorities with state and federal legislation and policies.

In Victoria's major irrigation districts, CMAs prepare and implement regional LWMPs to reduce the environmental and third-party impacts of irrigation and improve farm water use efficiency. LWMPs are critical to ensuring governments and government agencies can demonstrate they are managing the impacts of irrigation consistent with legislation and regulation. As such the new LWMP must include activities that implement:

- Relevant clauses of the State Environment Protection Policy (Waters).
- The Basin Salinity Management 2030 Strategy (BSM2030).
- Salinity and water quality aspects of the Basin Plan.

And comply with:

- *Water Act 1989* obligations, especially those relating to water use licences, e.g. irrigation development guidelines, annual use limits (AULs) and review of water use objectives and standard and specific conditions. This includes Section 51 take and use licences and is partially implemented through the application of new irrigation development guidelines.
- Schedule B (Salinity Management) of Schedule 1 of the *Water Act 2007* (Cth).
- *CALP Act 1994* – under the Statement of Obligations (2018) for the Act CMAs are required to develop and coordinate the implementation and review of LWMPs (clauses 23.1 and 23.5)
- New (October 2018) State Environment Protection Policy (Waters) requirements for LWMPs:
  - water quality targets.
  - clause 35 Management of saline discharges.
  - clause 36 Management of irrigation drains and channels on receiving waters.
  - clause 37 Responsibilities of irrigation drains.
  - possibly cooperation on dairy effluent management systems.
- Guidelines/planning reforms for intensive livestock developments.

Water use licences

Section 64L of the *Victorian Water Act 1989* specifies that a person requires a water use licence to use water on land for irrigation purposes if the water is taken from a declared water system, i.e. from the Murray or Goulburn systems. The license authorises the use of water from a regulated system for the purposes of irrigation on the land specified under that license. It sets out the conditions for use, such as how much water can be used on the specified parcel of land in a single irrigation season. This is called the annual use limit or AUL.

New development requires several approvals to be met before a new license can be issued. When issuing a new license under 64M of the Act GMW is required to consider:

- Impacts the proposed use may have on other persons or the environment (in particular water logging, salinity and nutrient impacts);
- Whether or not the proposed use can meet Standard Water Use Conditions that would apply to the license, if granted;
- Any comments received from the CMA, if the application was referred to the CMA and comments received within 30 days of the referral; and
- Any other matters the Minister considers relevant to that corporation.

A Ministerial Determination sets five Water Use Objectives that water use licences must meet. These are conditions for:

- Managing groundwater infiltration.
- Managing disposal of drainage.
- Minimising salinity.
- Protecting biodiversity.
- Minimising cumulative effects of water use.

New Irrigation Development guidelines provide a guide for government agencies to process applications for new irrigation development. Such as:

- The roles and responsibilities of agencies.
- The communication protocols between agencies.
- The relevant legislation that underpins the approval to issue new planning approvals, works licences, water-use licences or take-and-use licences with site-specific conditions (including AULs) that reflect the outcomes of the approvals processes.
- The approval processes used by agency staff.
- The development standards required to manage impacts on the environment and other values.
- Linkages to other environmental or cultural heritage protection measures and agencies.

Basin Salinity Management 2030 Strategy

BSM2030 provides guidance and support to local communities and governments within the Murray-Darling Basin to:

- Ensure salinity levels in the shared water resources of the Murray-Darling river system are managed appropriately to ensure the protection of the environment while observing economic, cultural and social values.
- Manage salinity in the shared water resources through agreed works and measures introduced by partner governments with their local communities.
- Monitor and assess salinity levels and salt loads across the Basin to identify salinity risks and to support the implementation of cost-effective measures to protect the shared water resources and local assets.
- Identify salinity risks and, where appropriate, contribute to the maintenance of appropriate salinity levels for the protection of local assets and downstream water resources through water resource plans, land and water management plans or other relevant statutory instruments.
- Facilitate continuous improvement and provide assurance that flow management that affects the shared water resources is collectively undertaken in ways that have regard to the Basin Plan salinity targets.
- Optimise the benefits of salinity control for economic, environmental, cultural and social values across the Basin.

Victoria remains compliant with Schedule B to the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement (Schedule 1 to the *Water Act 2007*). Victoria's net balance of salinity credits as of 30 June 2017 is -32.33 EC (modelled at Morgan in SA) or $6 million/year which remain unused. Within the North Central Region the accountable actions on salinity Register A as of September 2019 were:

- Barr Creek Catchment Strategy credit -7.7 EC (Victorian measure).
- Church's Cut decommissioning credit -0.3 EC (Victorian measure).
- Pyramid Creek Salt Interception Scheme credit -0.6 EC (This is a joint works & measures shared by all jurisdictions).
- New operating rules for Barr Creek pumps credit -0.9 EC (This is a joint works & measure shared by all jurisdictions).
- Tragowel Plains Drains debit of +0.2 EC (Victorian measure).
- Kerang Lakes/Swan Hill Salinity Management Plan debit of +1.6 EC (Victorian measure).
- Campaspe West debit of +0.3 EC (Victorian measure).
- Woorinen Irrigation District Excision debit of +0.8 EC (Victorian measure).

Victoria is progressing work to assess new Accountable Actions. This includes an upgrade of the Kerang Lakes Model to enable estimation of the salinity impact of the Victorian Mid-Murray Storages, salinity impacts of the GMW Connections Project and a preliminary salinity impact assessment of the Benwell drainage system. As mentioned in Section 2.4.3 there is potential to progress possible additional EC credits from the changes that have occurred in Barr Creek.

Murray-Darling Basin Plan

In 2007, the Australian government assumed a greater role in water management across the Murray-Darling Basin when it passed the *Commonwealth Water Act*. This Act integrated the management of water resources, including new limits on how much water can be taken from the Murray-Darling Basin's surface and groundwater systems. It established the independent Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA), which was charged with preparing a Basin Plan.

Under the Basin Plan, the volume that can be diverted is called the sustainable diversion limit (SDL) which is calculated as a long-term average. Implementation of the SDL has required government buy backs of water entitlements from irrigators and investment in water saving measures both on and off-farm.

Governments have agreed that a long-term average annual volume of 2,750 gigalitres (GL) of water for the environment would be recovered across the Basin. Victoria's share is a long-term average annual volume of 1,075 GL, which is about 40% of total Basin water recovery.

The Basin Plan requires all states to prepare water resource plans. Victoria's North and Murray Water Resource Plans, prepared by DELWP, are relevant to the LCIR. They demonstrate how Victoria will meet the requirements of the Basin Plan (Figure 3-2).

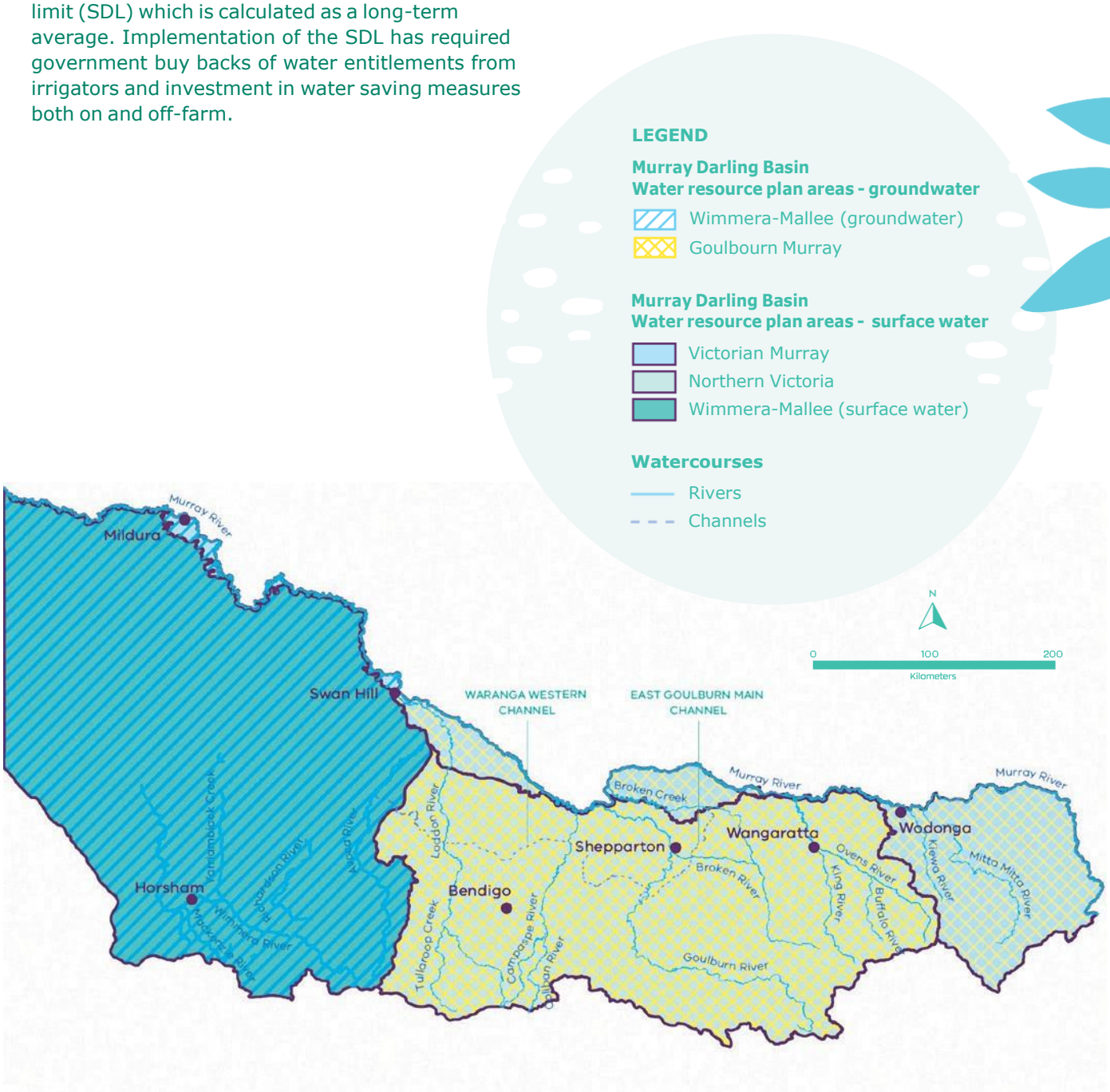


Figure 3-2 **Victorian Water Resource Management Plan areas (map courtesy of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning)**

3.4.2 State priorities for irrigation

Sustainable Irrigation Program

The Victorian government's Sustainable Irrigation Program (SIP), administered and funded by DELWP, is the major investor in the LWMP. SIP issues guidelines for the development of LWMPs that provide direction on the priorities, structure, development and content of LWMPs. This includes matters relating to government policy priorities, planning, incentives, regulations/standards, education and training, research and monitoring and drainage infrastructure development and operations. The Guidelines are designed to be flexible and allow for regional differences. However, opportunities to secure funding from the SIP will be increased if the broad expectations of the Guidelines are followed. The expectations of the SIP are for the LWMP to progress:

- **Planning:** with communities for irrigation policy and managing impacts, via the LWMPs including community, Aboriginal and recreational user engagement, strategic directions for drainage and input into relevant policy areas.
- **Incentives:** providing financial and technical support to irrigators to improve farm practice, including whole farm planning, farm irrigation works and other irrigation related projects.
- **Regulation and Standards:** implementing requirements for managing irrigation impacts, including: Water Use Licences, Irrigation Development Guidelines, Basin Plan and BSM2030 requirements and salinity accountability (A and B Registers).
- **Education and Training:** building irrigator capacity to adapt to change and improve water use efficiency including: whole farm planning extension programs, case management of irrigation development, cultural heritage training particularly in the context of changes to farm infrastructure and management, impacts of irrigation on recreation water uses, and adaptation to climate change. The region aims to better understand Aboriginal values and seek active involvement of Aboriginal people in this irrigation landscape.
- **Research and Catchment Monitoring:** measuring and improving the effectiveness of activities, including: innovation, new technologies, program evaluation, baseline conditions and trends over time and environmental asset conditions.
- **Drainage Infrastructure Development and Operations:** investing in construction, maintenance and operation of infrastructure to manage irrigation impacts such as: irrigation drainage channels, public groundwater pumps, cooperation across agencies with an Irrigation drainage memorandum of understanding (MOU).

Water for Victoria: Water Plan

Consistent with Water for Victoria the LWMP pursues the joint objectives of facilitating irrigated agricultural development while managing impacts on the environment and third parties. Specific actions that will need to be incorporated into the LWMP include:

- Action 4.4 – reduce barriers to change and support communities in irrigation districts.
- Action 4.5 – improve water delivery efficiency in irrigation districts including improved monitoring and reporting of farm water use efficiency (WUE).
- Action 4.6 – manage salinity, waterlogging and water quality including developing priorities for the Victorian Irrigation Drainage Program.
- Action 4.7 – manage irrigation development.
- Consideration of actions in Chapter 6 which include recognising and managing for Aboriginal values.

3.4.3 Draft Drainage Strategy

The Draft Loddon Murray Irrigation Region Surface Water Management Strategy (L-MIRSWMS) was developed in 2018. It covers all drainage catchments in the Loddon Murray Irrigation Region, which covers the Torrumbarry Irrigation Area and the Loddon Valley Irrigation Area. It does not cover Rochester or any other of the Campaspe catchments, because these drainage catchments are covered by the Shepparton Irrigation Region Drainage Strategy that is overseen by the Goulburn Broken CMA.

The previous 2001 Surface Water Management Strategy required updating to match future drainage needs for irrigated land, given the significant regional change that has occurred in the last decade, in particular the large reduction in water used for irrigation.

The new strategy addresses the issue of surface water management from a 'whole of catchment' approach. This means the focus is not purely on implementing regional works and measures, but also includes on-farm actions that will minimise downstream impacts, through improving irrigation practices and better managing irrigation tailwater on farms.

The region is 510,000 ha and has a drainage network that covers 181,000 ha. This includes GMW drains, North Central CMA drains and community drains, but only the GMW drains have a formal rating base and maintenance program. There is around 138,000 ha classified as potentially needing drainage/undrained with the remainder being unclassified or classed as drainage not required.

The drivers for installing drainage in the original Strategy that was developed twenty years ago included less water logging, less salinity and opportunities to increase agricultural production. These drivers were amplified by higher water availability, a larger irrigation footprint, higher-than-average rainfall, high watertables and extensive salinity.

Implementation of the original Strategy has been delayed due to drier conditions, lower drivers for drainage and lower funding. The total irrigation water applied and the footprint of irrigation has approximately halved since peaking in the 1990s and this reduced the need for drainage, because:

- The irrigated areas at risk have reduced.
- The ability to relocate irrigated areas within farms away from risk areas has increased.
- The ability to relocate farms to unirrigated areas with drainage is now possible.

In 2013-14, a typical year for contemporary conditions, 44% of the region was not irrigated, 46% received less than 3 ML/ha/y, and 10% had more than 3 ML/ha/y. Of the 50,000 ha of high intensity irrigation that received more than 3 ML/ha/y, which is the area most at risk, 15,000 ha was classified as potentially needing drainage/undrained.

An examination of the rate of drainage following the January 2011 flood event indicates the undrained areas drained at a rate that was similar to drained areas. This indicates the remaining undrained areas have sufficient natural drainage or have private drains that are unmapped.
An examination of regional trends in land use, irrigation intensity and drainage flows show that the risk of drainage problems developing is continuing to decline. Also, an economic analysis indicates that installing new drainage is not economic for the undrained areas in most of the Loddon Murray region.

Therefore, the revised drainage strategy proposes:

- The strategy should provide ongoing management arrangements for all existing drains. Declaring Drainage Course Declarations (DCDs) over existing North Central CMA drains and Community Drains is a suitable low cost solution for improving the governance of these networks. DCDs provide improved legal protection for maintaining a drainage line and do not require a rate payment. The cost of removing unauthorised blockages is levied to (the) offending landholder(s) only. It is recommended that North Central CMA continue discussions with relevant agencies and irrigators to explore management arrangements which include establishing the legal framework provided by a DCD and ensuring there are resources available to facilitate this as a management agreement.
- Farm reuse should be encouraged by extension and whole farm planning and incentives, targeting undrained areas, especially where there is unauthorised disposal to public land and to GMW channels.
- Overall the cost of constructing new drains in undrained areas is not justified by the benefits and there is potential for further decline in the irrigation area and this reduces the need and affordability of additional new drains. Therefore, new drainage should not be implemented unless there is a compelling case to demonstrate that the irrigation area is unlikely to reduce in that area and the new drains are viable and attractive for landholders.
- A lower priority is to investigate the practicalities of implementing DCDs on drainage courses that may exist in "undrained" areas. Undrained areas with a high level of benefit should be looked at initially. The economic analysis identified undrained parts of the Loddon, Barr Creek and Wandella Catchments as areas where DCDs may be economic.

3.5 Links with Regional Catchment Strategy priorities

The Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) 2013 – 2019 provides long-term vision for natural resource management within the North Central CMA region. The North Central CMA is currently seeking input from partners and community to renew the Regional Catchment Strategy for 2021-27.

The North Central RCS encompasses a range of supporting documents. These include the River Health Strategy, Waterway Management Strategy, Environmental Watering Plan, Native Vegetation Management Plan, Floodplain Management Strategy, Invasive Plant and Animal Strategy, Regional Sustainable Agriculture Strategy, Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Plan, and Soil Health Action Plan.

The Regional Catchment Strategy priorities are:

- Community engagement in natural resource management.
- Protecting and enhancing waterway and river assets: Avoca River, Campaspe River, Loddon Rover, Coliban River, Gunbower Creek.
- Improving native vegetation extent and condition across the North Central CMA region.
- Land protection through better land management and soils protection.
- Protecting and enhancing wetland assets: Gunbower forest, Kerang Ramsar Wetlands, Central Murray Wetlands, Mid Loddon Wetlands, York Plains Wetlands, Moolort Plains Wetlands, Kamarooka Wetland Complex.

In accordance with the Victorian Government's LWMP guidelines, this plan highlights where related activities are being addressed in other plans and strategies. This avoids overlap with other RCS sub-strategies, identifies synergies and improves the targeting of LWMP actions. Related projects being implemented in other strategies are summarised in Table 3-2.

Table 3-2 Related projects in other RCS sub strategies

Strategies and plans	Related projects
Waterway Strategy 2014-2022 Regional Floodplain Management Strategy 2018-2028 Seasonal Environmental Watering Plan Native Fish Recovery Plan (2014) River Health Strategy (2005)	Victorian Murray Floodplain Restoration Project - Gunbower, Guttrum and Benwell forests Environmental flows – Birches Creek, Campaspe, Coliban and Loddon River Caring for the Campaspe A Healthy Coliban Catchment Kerang and Gunbower Ramsar Wetland Project Loddon Murray and Wimmera-Mallee Wetlands
Native Vegetation Management Plan (2005) Invasive Plant and Animal Strategy 2010-2015	Bringing Back the Bittern Plains for Wanderers
Regional Sustainable Agriculture Strategy (2015) Soil Health Action Plan (2017)	Soil Health Action Plan Regenerative Agriculture Healthy Productive Landscapes Regional Landcare Facilitator Plan2Farm ExtensionAUS
Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Plan (2015)	Upper Coliban and Tullaroop Integrated Catchment Management Plans (in progress)

4. Framework for the Plan

4.1 Overall framework and program logic

The overall framework includes an aspirational goal that is supported by long term objectives and desired outcomes including targets to be achieved through the delivery of LWMP programs. This is illustrated in the overall Plan framework presented in Figure 4-1.

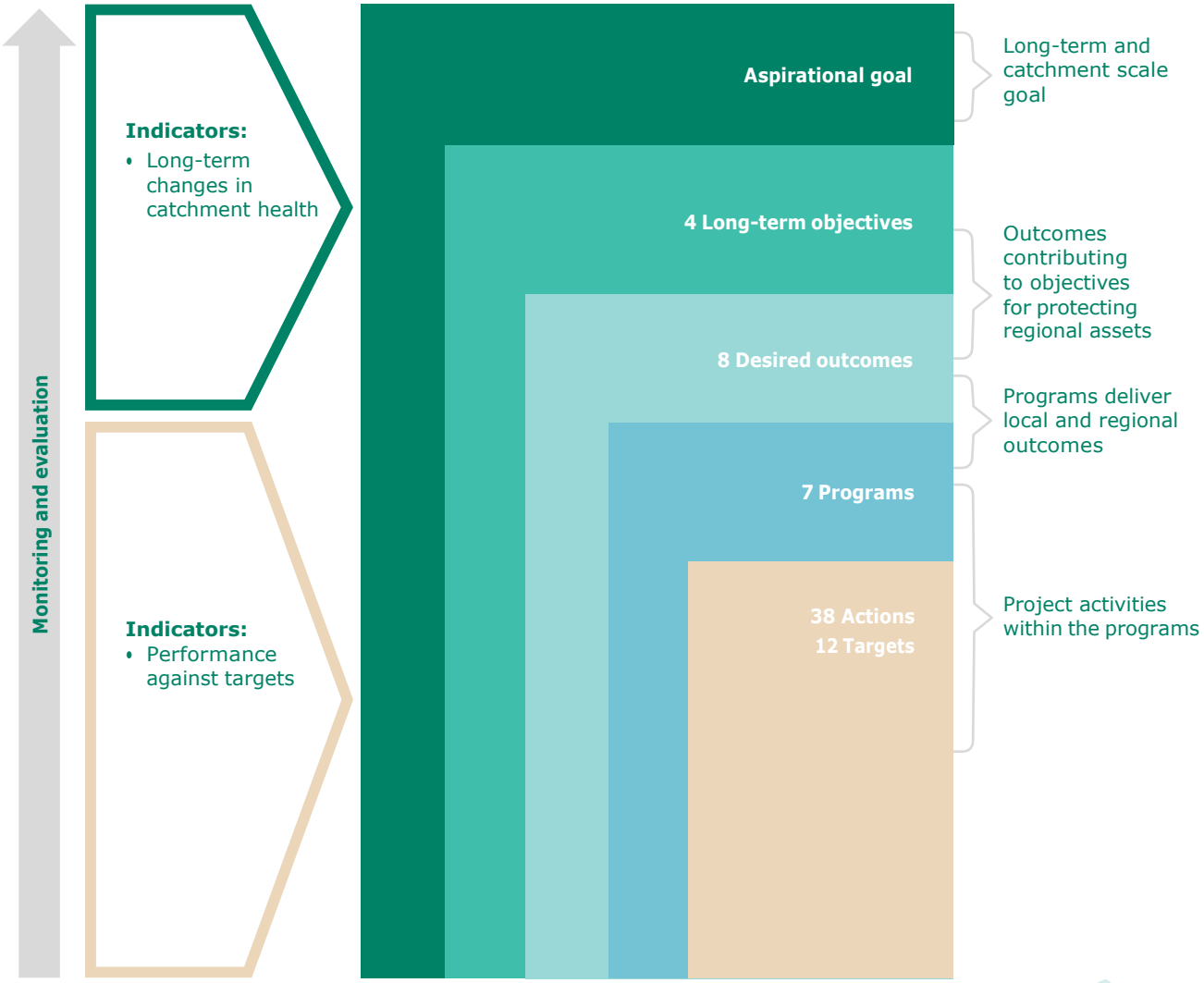


Figure 4-1 **Overall Plan framework**

The LWMP aspirational goal (10 plus years) is:

"Using water for healthy, productive, sustainable irrigated food and fibre[17]"

To achieve this, the plan needs to work towards the following **four long-term objectives** over the next 10 years:

- **Sustainable, profitable, adaptive and innovative farming practices**
  - Enabling adjustment to changing water availability by improving water efficiency and regional productivity through irrigation system modernisation: achieving a vibrant, productive and sustainable irrigation sector in Victoria depends on using water resources efficiently across all irrigation industries. This is integral for improving resilience to drought and climate change while continuing to adapt to water recovery and includes consideration of any expansion of irrigation and managing a changing irrigation footprint.
- **Active involvement of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal landholders**
  - A steady engagement approach with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal landholders is required to better understand opportunities for active involvement.
  - By working with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal landholders the LWMP programs will be adapted to incorporate traditional knowledge and participation on an ongoing basis.
- **Protected and improved condition of environmental assets and values**
  - Protecting the health of waterways and maintenance of water quality: by achieving reduced salinity and nutrient loads from irrigation to help protect the health of waterways and managing uncontrolled surface run-off to minimise the risk of eutrophication of regional waterways and the Murray River.
  - Protecting land from salinisation and shallow watertables: by reducing accessions into groundwater to reduce the risk of waterlogging and secondary salinisation of land, which occurs due to excess water from rainfall in conjunction with irrigation. Continuing to reduce soil salinisation and waterlogging will assist agricultural productivity and enhance environmental values.
  - Ensuring biodiversity is protected from any offsite impacts from irrigation: by improving irrigation efficiency, ensuring natural assets are protected and enhanced in the whole farm planning process and by ensuring new irrigation development guidelines provide adequate environmental protection.
- **An empowered and informed irrigation community**
  - Adoption of practices that achieve the above outcomes will depend upon having an empowered and informed irrigation community that engages with the Plan and drives positive change.

The plan will contribute to eight desired outcomes over the next 5-10 years. These outcomes are:

1. More efficient and integrated irrigation (on and off farm).
2. Improved on-farm irrigation, nutrient and soil management.
3. Improved regional irrigation drainage infrastructure and management.
4. Impacts of irrigation on salinity, biodiversity and water quality managed within agreed limits.
5. New and significant irrigation redevelopments are best practice.
6. Increased community awareness and involvement in plan activities.
7. Impacts of irrigation on other third parties are better understood and managed, e.g. recreation and users downstream.
8. Traditional Owner and Aboriginal landholder values are better understood and integrated into management decisions.

Funding will also be required to implement the following **seven LWMP programs**:

- Promotion and Partnerships
- Planning and Governance
- Adoption
- Regulation and Standards
- Education and Training
- Research and Catchment Monitoring
- Drainage Infrastructure Development and Operations

[17] The intent is to encompass all irrigated production, including the main irrigated land use of mixed irrigation, dairying, irrigated cropping, irrigated grazing, grass, hay, wool, beef, fruit, nuts, grapes, vegetables, nurseries and cut flowers.

The Program Logic for the LWMP is shown in Figure 4-2.

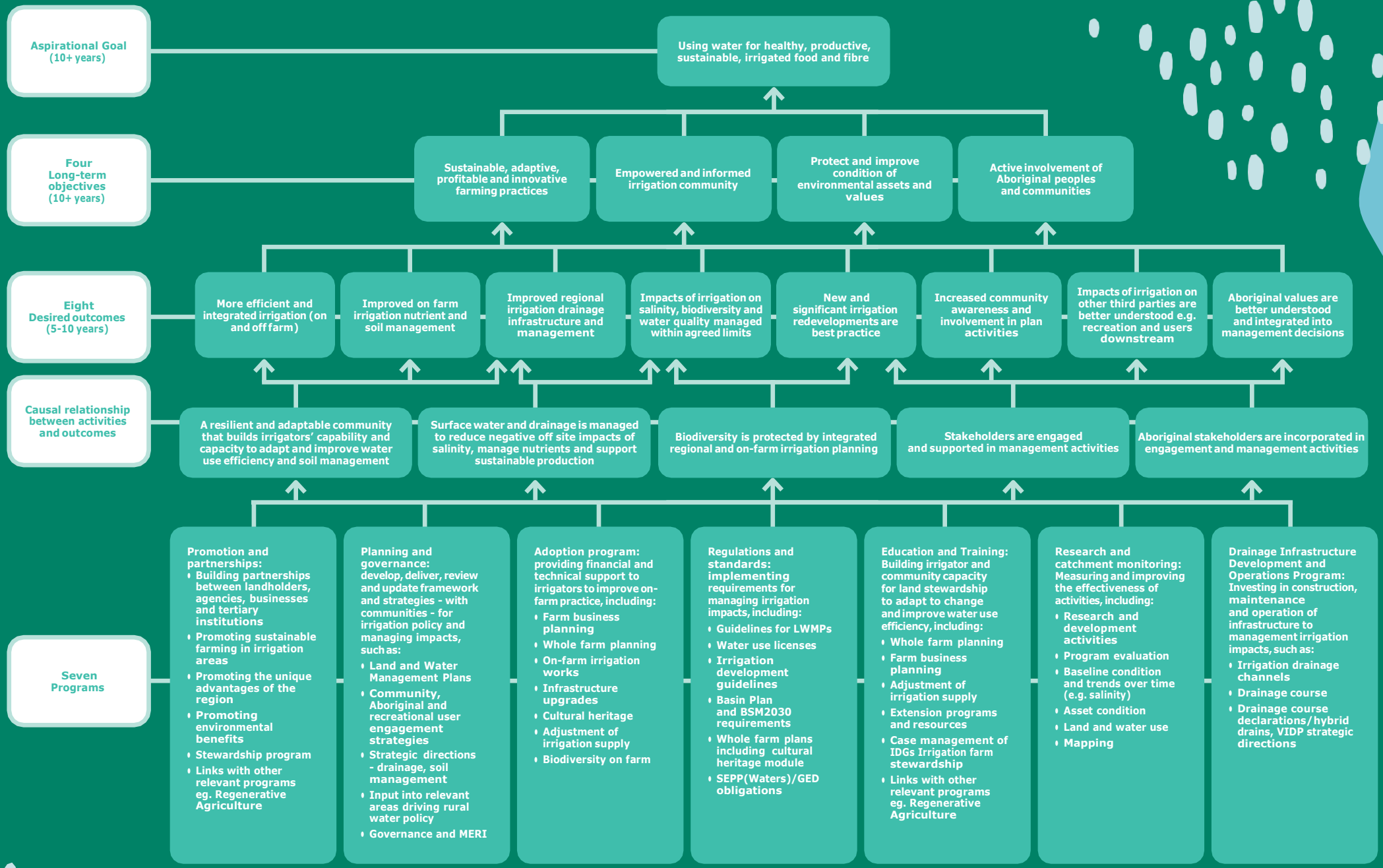


Figure 4-2 **Proposed program logic that links the LWMP aspirational goal with the possible LWMP programs.**

5. Proposed programs

The LCIR LWMP determines priorities for investing in works and measures in the irrigation region for a range of investors and sets the accountability framework that ensures public funds are targeted to actions that align with Victorian government and local priorities. It demonstrates how actions are delivering on agreed objectives and irrigation management priorities and establishes how actions and outcomes will be monitored and reported to demonstrate the benefits of the program to the community and government.

The objectives of the seven proposed LWMP programs are outlined in Table 5-1.

Table 5-1 **Objectives of programs**

Program	Objective
Promotion and Partnerships	• To coordinate, collaborate and work with industry programs, other CMA programs and other government programs. This will avoid duplication of effort and ensure a greater return on investment. • Promoting stewardship of region. • Undertake engagement with stakeholders. • Understand and engage with the community on social impacts.
Planning and Governance	• To ensure the programs remain relevant to the operating environment of the LCIR, including social impacts. • Establish MERI framework and implement process to monitor the progress of the Plan.

Adoption
- for efficient water use and linking farm to catchment environmental program
	• To support stewardship and build irrigator capacity to improve:
	  • water use efficiency
	  • nutrient management and soil health
	  • reduce surface runoff
	  • farm biodiversity and regional biolinks
	  • Aboriginal cultural heritage awareness
	  • business performance.

Regulation and Standards	• To ensure best practice for new irrigation development and lift standards for redevelopment of existing irrigation. • Meet salinity accountability and reporting requirements. • Meet State Environment Protection Policy targets (new laws intended to commence on 1July 2021 under the Environment Protection Act 2017). • Meet cultural heritage requirements.
Education and Training	• Building capacity for stewardship, adaptability and resilience. • To increase the skills and capacity of agencies and the community by identifying gaps/opportunities and implementing training programs.
Research and Catchment Monitoring	• To measure and improve the effectiveness of the Plan activities. • Measuring change in catchment condition and offsite impacts.
Drainage Infrastructure Development and Operations	• Drainage is affordable and fit for purpose. There is ongoing management in place for existing drainage infrastructure.

5.1 Overview of programs and actions

Table 5-2 sets out the 38 actions within the proposed programs and assigns a priority and delivery responsibility. The level of priority assigned to each action has been classified depending on its relative importance in meeting the stated outcomes and long term objectives of the plan. An explanation of two priority ratings follows:

Priority	Description
High	Core obligations including monitoring and reporting to meet legislative requirements, and where there is a strong need identified by the community and agency stakeholders.
Medium	Actions where there is a substantial need recognised and identified by the community

Table 5-1 Objectives of programs

Program	Action Ref. No.	Action	Priority	Delivery responsibility
1. Promotion and Partnerships	1.1	Establish inter agency/stakeholder group to oversee R&D activities	M	North Central CMA
	1.2	Promote uptake of new irrigation development guidelines (IDG) and coordinate extension support for irrigation redevelopment	M	North Central CMA, Agriculture Victoria
	1.3	Design, pilot and implement an environmental stewardship program	M	North Central CMA
	1.4	Develop an engagement plan for working with Traditional Owner and Aboriginal landholders	H	North Central CMA
2. Planning and Governance	2.1	Confirm MERI framework, establish MERI plans for funded projects and implement process to monitor the progress of the Plan with attention to measuring indicators of: • irrigation performance • best practice nutrient and soil management • off-site impacts of irrigation on downstream users • best practice new irrigation development • meeting regulatory obligations • increased community awareness • increased awareness of Aboriginal landholders' and Traditional Owners' values and their involvement in the Plan	H	North Central CMA

Program	Action Ref. No.	Action	Priority	Delivery responsibility
2. Planning and Governance	2.2	Establish a LWMP community steering committee to review progress and provide oversight	H	North Central CMA
	2.3	Planning and reporting support for implementing the Plan and achievement of outcomes of: • efficient irrigation • improved regional irrigation drainage • meeting regulatory obligations • best practice new irrigation development • increased community awareness and involvement • better understanding and management of downstream irrigation impacts • increased awareness of Aboriginal landholders' and Traditional Owners' values and their involvement in the Plan.	H	North Central CMA, Agriculture Victoria, Traditional Owner groups
3. Adoption	3.1	Deliver farm business and whole farm planning support and training	H	North Central CMA, Agriculture Victoria
	3.2	Provide extension and incentives for adoption of: • efficient irrigation technology (systems checks and scheduling tools/survey, design and upgrades, soil moisture monitoring) • best nutrient and soil management practices	M	Agriculture Victoria
	3.3	Explore opportunities and provide extension support to horticulture	M	Agriculture Victoria
	3.4	Set up and support paddock-based demonstrations and trials on water use efficiency, nutrient and soil management	M	Agriculture Victoria with industry groups
	3.5	Extension and incentive support for the construction of farm reuse systems where there is substantial public benefit	M	Agriculture Victoria
	3.6	Extension support for the adoption of the new irrigation development guidelines (IDG) by the private sector	M	Agriculture Victoria
	3.7	Provide extension and incentives for environmental stewardship projects (e.g. riparian and wetland restoration, and replanting native vegetation in sensitive areas and regional bio-links) These would be delivered through a range of farmer led models (e.g. cluster groups, one-on-one extension, focus/discussion groups)	M	North Central CMA, Agriculture Victoria

Program	Action Ref. No.	Action	Priority	Delivery responsibility
3. Adoption	3.8	Incorporate assessment of cultural heritage values into whole farm planning support	H	North Central CMA, Agriculture Victoria
4. Regulation and Standards	4.1	Partner with key organisations (EPA) to ensure the SEPP (Waters)/GED obligations is adhered to. For example, no impact on the beneficial users of groundwater	H	North Central CMA
	4.2	Participate in quarterly partner meetings and report under the BSM2030 strategy salinity accountability requirements annually	H	North Central CMA
	4.3	Implementing the Murray-Darling Basin Salinity Management 2030 Strategy (BSM2030)	H	North Central CMA
	4.4	Manage accountable actions for MD BSM2030 Salinity Registers. Monitoring the impact of any new actions and reporting on these if required through the development and application of an improved landscape salinity model incorporating the understanding of surface water and groundwater interactions active in the generation of salt exports from northern Victoria including Barr Creek and the Tragowel Plains.	H	North Central CMA
	4.5	Provide review and monitoring reports to the Victorian Government to meet their reporting requirements under BSM2030	H	North Central CMA
	4.6	End of Valley monitoring sites are monitored and reported on to achieve compliance with the MD BSM2030 and the Basin Plan.	H	North Central CMA
	4.7	New Irrigation developments and environmental watering within the BSM2030 guidelines consistent with the salinity register	H	North Central CMA
5. Education and Training	5.1	Offer irrigation management training courses (e.g. Irrigation 101, Water Trade Literacy, ExtensionAUS, Irrigation Risk Management, Impacts of climate change)	H	Agriculture Victoria
	5.2	Co-ordinate farm business planning support and training to irrigators (including redevelopment projects)	H	North Central CMA. Agriculture Victoria, Industry

Program	Action Ref. No.	Action	Priority	Delivery responsibility
5. Education and Training	5.3	Establish training opportunities with key industry groups (including dairy, horticulture, cropping) to build confidence with irrigation technology, options for new crops and new land use options including means to adapt to climate change.	M	North Central CMA. Agriculture Victoria, Industry
	5.4	Educate agency staff and wider community about impacts of irrigation on downstream users using a wide range of communications media	M	North Central CMA
	5.5	Work with Aboriginal Landholders and Traditional Owner groups to establish a community based approach to sustainable irrigation that is informed by an improved understanding of cultural practices and potential management options in a changing climate.	M	North Central CMA and Aboriginal Landholders and Traditional Owner groups
	5.6	Explore feasible business planning support to Aboriginal landholders and offer culturally appropriate training opportunities	M	North Central CMA and Aboriginal Landholders and Traditional Owner groups
	5.7	Agency staff and landholders complete field based cultural heritage training	H	North Central CMA, Agriculture Victoria
	5.8	Educate irrigators on the risks of irrigation with saline/brackish groundwater in northern Victoria Resolving issues with the community about the use of saline brackish groundwater in northern Victoria through participation in regional groundwater steering committee, workshops, information sessions and field-based research	H	North Central CMA, Agriculture Victoria, GMW, DELWP
6. Research and Catchment Monitoring	6.1	Irrigation investigations and research into: • new WUE technologies in a drying climate • regional land and water use mapping with considerations of a changing climate. • best practice nutrient management techniques • soil management practices including those that maintain and enhance soil structure • provide a quantitative assessment of the impacts of soil management practices on soil structure and consequences in terms of soil hydrology (permeability) • farming systems or faming principles for new irrigation systems	M	North Central CMA, Agriculture Victoria, Research organisations, Industry, Universities
	6.2	Investigations and monitoring of impacts of irrigation on downstream water users and recreation values of irrigation	M	North Central CMA

Program	Action Ref. No.	Action	Priority	Delivery responsibility
6. Research and Catchment Monitoring	6.3	Improving the groundwater monitoring network across northern Victoria consistent with meeting the reporting needs under BSM2030 through the adoption of digital technology including telemetry	H	North Central CMA, Agriculture Victoria
7. Drainage Infrastructure Development and Operations	7.1	Assess need for regional drainage infrastructure upgrades such as community surface drains with guidance from the surface water management plan	H	North Central CMA, Agriculture Victoria
	7.2	Develop projects to execute regional irrigation drainage infrastructure upgrades	M	North Central CMA, Agriculture Victoria
	7.3	Implement the Irrigation Drainage MOU with all partners	M	North Central CMA, GMW
	7.4	If identified, Drainage Course Declarations will be implemented on North Central CMA drains with guidance from the surface water management plan	M	North Central CMA, GMW
	7,5	Support construction of new drains (only where needed)	M	North Central CMA, GMW

5.2 Assumptions underpinning program actions

When implemented, the actions for each program will lead to the eight desired outcomes of the Plan. The assumptions are based on evidence of practice change and these relationships are shown in Figure 5-1.

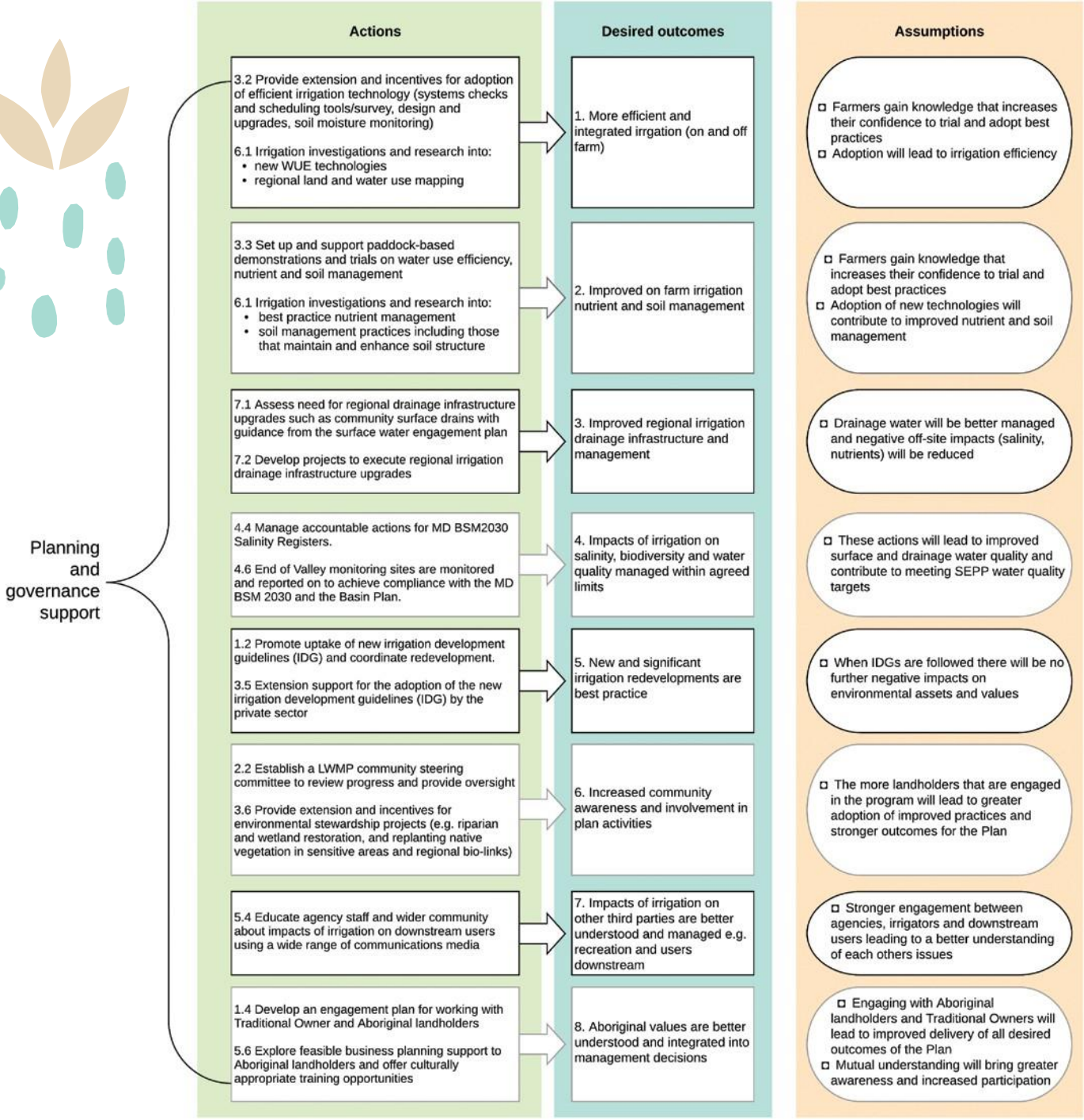


Figure 5-1 **How actions will contribute to meeting outcomes in the Plan**

5.3 Details of each program

A description of the rationale, and expected actions and benefits for each program follows. An estimate of the cost of the main elements within each program is provided in Appendix 6.

5.3.1 Promotion and Partnerships program

Rationale

To coordinate, collaborate and work with industry programs, other CMA programs and other government programs. This will avoid duplication of effort and ensure a greater return on investment.

It will also promote stewardship of the region, particularly of the ecosystem services and habitat values that are enhanced by active biodiversity conservation that will be undertaken by farmers participating in the LWMP programs. It will also provide pathways to programs for controlling pest plants and animals.

Environmental stewardship is foundational to this plan because the proposed programs have been designed to promote best practice irrigation and taking responsibility for looking after the land. For the purpose of this plan environmental stewardship is defined as: *Landholders supporting ecological function by enhancing and conserving ecosystem services, using collaborative planning and adopting sustainable land management practices* (Chaplin, 2009) (Mathevet, 2018) (Kennett, 2020).

This program will provide the funding for North Central CMA LWMP staff to create partnerships with industries, local government, government departments, tertiary organisations and farmer groups that will progress the objectives of the LWMP.

This program will undertake engagement with stakeholders such as field days, farm walks and expos. It will provide opportunities for two-way engagement with the broader community so the social change occurring in the community is understood and plan programs are responsive to changing circumstances.

A current program is the Agricultural Re-development Coordinator (ARC) Pilot Project that provides developers with a single contact point to access information on new and existing irrigation developments within the GMID.

Actions

This program will develop a stewardship program to engage landholders and to work with industry groups and other farmer service providers to plan, develop and deliver joint research, development and extension activities, e.g. field days, publications, trials and other best practice information sharing with global leaders via podcasts etc.

In instances where the opportunity is broader than the irrigation community this may be pursued by the Sustainable Agriculture Strategy or other North Central CMA Programs. Linkages to other programs will be identified by this program, e.g. Regenerative Agriculture and Soil Health Action Plan (North Central CMA).

The program will promote uptake of new irrigation development guidelines (IDG) and form an inter-agency/stakeholder group to oversee R&D activities. An engagement plan for working with Traditional Owner and Aboriginal landholders will also be developed as part of this program.

Benefits

Mutually beneficial partnerships with a range of organisations will be developed to assist in delivering the LWMP programs. The program is expected to create significant environmental benefits as well as enhancing sustainable production and regional identity and brand.

Agriculture in the LCIR is uniquely woven within a mosaic of wetlands and natural water courses, many of which are internationally recognised. Therefore, through improved environmental stewardship the LWMP will assist governments meet national and international environmental commitments under Ramsar, CAMBA/JAMBA and the *Environmental Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

The economic benefits of the Promotion and Partnerships program on its own have not been quantified, and in any case, the legal obligations to protect the environmental values and character require that the assets have appropriate active management to ensure agriculture enhances their environmental features. Examples of this include water birds, such as the ibis, which depend on neighbouring irrigation land for feeding and nest in the adjacent wetlands.

Instead the economic benefits of an improved environment have been assessed for the LWMP as a whole. This is detailed in Appendix 7 and summarised in Section 5.4.

5.3.2 Planning and Governance program

Rationale

To ensure the programs remain relevant to the operating environment of the LCIR, including changing economic, social and environmental circumstances. The region is going through enormous change and the dynamic nature of these changes means that the LWMP programs need to be flexible and adaptive to changing circumstances.

Actions

This program will fund the LWMP community steering committee to meet four times per year to provide oversight and review progress reported on by each agency involved in the Plan's programs. It will also enable the steering committee to go and inspect programs being delivered on the ground.

This program will provide governance arrangements and a transparent and defendable MERI framework that includes adapting programs to changing circumstances.

The MERI framework will need to fund project output mapping (works done), photo-point mapping, event evaluation, stories of change, case studies and project evaluation.

The LWMP community steering committee will oversee program expenditure.

Benefits

The economic benefits have not been quantified, but the program will underpin the benefits of each of the other programs that the LWMP Community Steering Committee oversees.

5.3.3 Adoption program

Rationale

To deliver on-ground farm practice change. The change is intended to drive efficient water use and align farm actions with broader environmental objectives. The adoption program will build irrigator capacity to improve:

- Water use efficiency.
- Nutrient management and soil health.
- Surface runoff.
- Farm biodiversity and regional bio-links.
- Knowledge and use of environmental watering on private land.
- Cultural heritage awareness.
- Business performance – based on water planning scenarios for low, medium and high-water price years and the areas irrigated in these scenarios.
- Irrigation infrastructure – where identified by the farmer this can facilitate farmer-initiated irrigation infrastructure adjustment to changing water availability and water prices. This will include both farm infrastructure, and where agreed, GMW infrastructure.

This is also expected to result in reduced delivery share fees and discounted termination fees where farmer plans align with agreed opportunities to rationalise GMW infrastructure/costs[18].

- Long term water supply and drainage needs – through cooperative group action led by neighbours to progress rationalisation and reconfiguration to reflect their long-term water supply and drainage needs. It is expected that this process will start at the end of spurs and progress upstream, rather than the other way around, which can result in GMW still maintaining infrastructure for downstream customers.

There is a continued need to provide extension support to irrigators capitalising on the benefits of region wide infrastructure modernisation. This program recognises that in 2020 the GMW Connections Project is due to finish, but after this date there will be an ongoing need to reduce GMW and farmer owned infrastructure costs. The program provides the opportunity to continue that process, but in a 'bottom up' longer timeframe that better matches farm business planning horizons, rather than that driven by the Connections Project, which was a more 'top down' approach.

[18] This progresses actions 1.4 and 1.5 from the 2018 Delivery Share Review, (DELWP, 2018).

The framework outlining the linkage between the LWMP and farm decision making is outlined in Figure 5-2. Delivery will be achieved through a combination of both farm planning, incentives and information transfer. A key step will be to provide the information and a decision-making framework for individual landholders to clarify their business goals and future farming system for a range of different water prices before they decide how much area they will irrigate in high, medium and low priced water years and which paddocks and practices are most relevant for their whole farm plan. This includes considering cultural heritage in some form and this aspect will be explored with and Traditional Owners and Aboriginal landholders.

This program will continue the farm business planning program delivered by the North Central CMA which encourages individuals to set clear goals and develop a farm plan that is consistent with these goals. This then informs decision making about farm enterprises, areas irrigated in different water price scenarios and type of irrigation supply needed.

The process will provide the strategic basis for farmer driven decisions about irrigation modernisation and rationalisation that best suits the long-term needs of irrigation businesses.

The program will provide a list of referrals to other relevant services such as providers of succession planning, rural financial counsellors, employment agencies and other providers. Therefore, the program may facilitate the succession of farm businesses to the next generation or to new entrants.

Whilst the program will use a farm business planning process (similar to Plan2Farm) for goal setting, farm planning and to facilitate discussions and information sharing, it will recognise that individual farm business decisions are commercial decisions best left to individual businesses. The landholders will complete the individual workbooks on goal setting and decisions on farm plans using the knowledge of their own individual circumstances and attitude to risk.

The practical landholder led approach is based on the following principles:

- People need to firstly establish their goals to design their future farm systems and layout of irrigation and dryland.
- Farm layouts and different scenarios (high water price, medium water price and low water price) will inform their irrigation areas and GMW supply.
- GMW infrastructure will be optimised if neighbours work together.
- A process that is landholder owned with an independent facilitator will provide a trusted process.
- A trusted independent process will be more efficient in time and dollars.
- Farmers are best placed to provide GMW with clear signals for where infrastructure should be removed, reconfigured or maintained to most effectively manage and share costs.

The rationale of this program is to ensure landholders are clear about their business direction before deciding upon an infrastructure configuration and funding agreement – this enables landholder goals to align with GMW's supply infrastructure and service.

Implementation will progress Outcome 1 of the Delivery Share Review (DELWP, 2018) *"Help irrigators adjust delivery shares to better signal infrastructure requirements"*. It will also enable participating irrigators to access both the termination fee discounts and the limited service contracts for delivery shares.

The linkages with GMW are important, it makes sense that GMW identify landholder groupings with common infrastructure. However, farm goals and decision making should be made independently by landholders so that they get the outcome that best suits their business.

The role of the LWMP is to provide an independent process that will assist landholders to be clear about their long-term future and goals. Farmers will set their goals with support from the farm business planning program and then develop a concept plan that includes the physical layout of their farm and environmental assets.

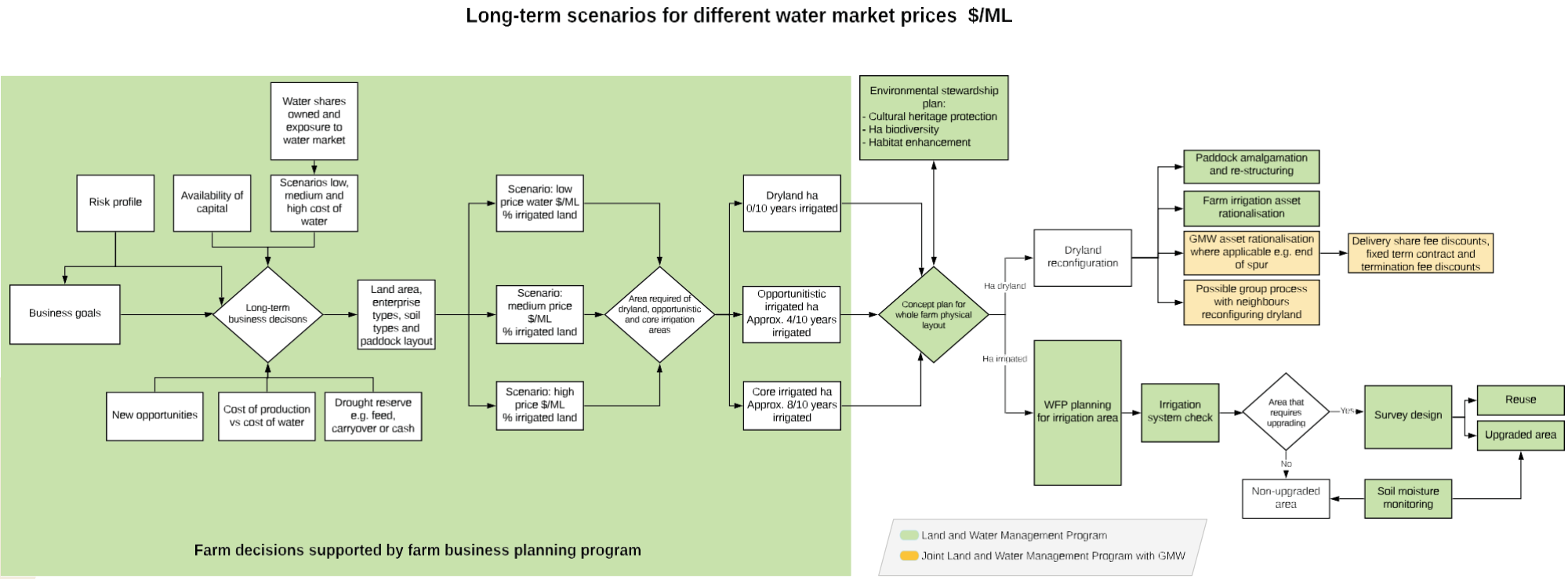


Figure 5-2 **Linkage between LWMP adoption programs and long-term farm business decisions and water market scenarios**

Note: Irrigators can join program at any one point. The program will aim to attract and retain water in the region by lifting water use efficiency and creating opportunities for higher value irrigation i.e. $/ML returns.

Actions

This is the foundation of the LWMP. By integrating good information with long-term strategic decision-making landholders and government will achieve environmental, social and economic goals.

Incentives are proposed to be made available for:

- Farm business planning program to determine future goals, new opportunities and irrigation intentions – including scenario planning for irrigation areas in low/medium/ high water prices.
- Whole Farm Plans – Concept Plan including entire property that includes soils assessments, dryland and irrigated land, environmental features, biodiversity areas, cultural heritage areas, floodways, drainage lines, effluent ponds etc.
- Systems check to evaluate performance of existing irrigation systems.
- Farm adjustment packages if transitioning out of irrigation, e.g. assistance to move unwanted infrastructure and achieve larger paddock sizes, existing irrigation supply, rationalising supply points, amalgamating farms, relocating to main channels etc.
- Survey for irrigation upgrades that are identified in the WFP.
- Design for irrigation upgrades that are identified in the WFP.
- Infrastructure upgrades.
- Irrigation scheduling tools and related technologies.
- Fencing and replanting native vegetation in sensitive areas and on regional bio-links.
- Incorporating cultural heritage values.
- Consideration of environmental water being allocated to high value wetlands on farms.

The framework being informed by a farm concept plan and environmental stewardship plan.

Historically the LWMP has not offered any incentives for the Mallee horticulture areas around Swan Hill, e.g. in Woorinen and Tresco however a horticultural program will be developed similar to the Mallee Irrigation incentives program.

The transition to cut and carry and total mixed ration and barn dairy systems has been identified as a key strategy for dairy farmers to improve their water use efficiency and production per ML. This strategy is a 'capital intensive' option for farmers, but the high value of water is making these systems more attractive. As part of the farm business planning program and water budgeting scenarios this program may refer dairy farmers who are interested in pursuing these directions to relevant expertise and information.

The program will encourage land managers to be active environmental stewards through a mixture of information and incentives. Farmers will be encouraged to incorporate environmental objectives into their farm plans to enhance regional biodiversity values to increase the resilience and long-term productivity of farm ecosystems.

Benefits

The benefits of this action will depend on the number of landholders that participate in this program and the benefit received by each landowner as a consequence of being part of it.

There are at least 500 full time large irrigation farms in the region. The plan is to engage with at least half of these over the next five years; this is at least 50 per year, with around 30 per year expected to undertake whole farm plans and irrigation upgrades. Smaller part time farmers may also participate in the program. This is expected to create private benefits in terms of improved productivity and saved water, which would be retained by the irrigator and available for increased farm production. The private benefit is estimated at $13.3 M (refer to Appendix 7 for detail).

In addition, there would also be public benefits due to:

- Saved costs from less public GMW infrastructure valued at $2.8 M (Appendix 7). This is a benefit for GMW customers in the GMID.
- Increased public benefits associated with the greater protection of environmental sites on neighbouring public land and also on private land. This would include wetlands, water courses and terrestrial remnant vegetation. This has been valued at $13 M (Appendix 7).

The public benefit of this program of $15.8 M is not entirely due to the adoption program and depends on other contributing programs, such as the Education and Training program, which will assist in the delivery of the benefits.

The level of incentives, which determines the cost share between government and landholders for the above program elements will be determined through guidelines developed by the steering committee with relevant agencies. The intent is to develop guidelines that will enable an assessment of the public benefits of an individual farm project. For example, the area set aside and values created for native vegetation, cultural heritage or waterway protection.

The incentive levels may also be higher for those farmers that participate in whole farm planning and courses run by the education and training program.

5.3.4 Regulation / Standard program

Rationale

This program will deliver the actions required to meet commitments delegated to the North Central CMA under the Victorian Catchment and Land Protection Act (1994) under the Statement of Obligations, and Victoria's BSM2030 salinity accountability and reporting requirements. This includes managing the register entries that are listed in Section 3.4.1 Legislation.

This program will ensure the LWMP meets State Environment Protection Policy (Waters) targets (new laws intended to commence on July 1 2021 under the *Environment Protection Act 2017*) and requirements, including: water quality targets, saline discharges, irrigation drains and channels on receiving waters and responsibilities for irrigation drains and irrigation water use licenses.

This program will ensure best practice for new irrigation development and lift standards for redevelopment of existing irrigation. It will also specify the minimum standards and incentive levels for the adoption program.

The actions proposed under this program include working jointly on:

- The Northern Victorian Irrigation Development Guidelines (IDG) coordination of new development.
- Incentive guidelines.
- The management of irrigation drains through the Irrigation Drainage Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DELWP, Agriculture Victoria, EPA and the Goulburn Broken CMA.
- Involvement in the Victorian Salt Disposal Working Group.
- Monitoring and reporting required for BSM2030.
- Other reporting as required for the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and the Northern Victorian Water Resource Plan.

Benefits

This program will maintain the reduction in salinity levels in the Murray River achieved by past investments. The benefits of these actions are not costed as they are broader responsibilities that are legislatively required. There is also the potential for claiming further EC credits such as in Barr Creek, which have a very high economic value[19] and are potentially the same order of magnitude as the other public benefits created by the LWMP. Any additional credits have the potential to support further irrigation developments, protection of irrigation, environment and community water supplies downstream.

[19] For example, EC credits were valued at $112,000 /y by the MDBC in year 2000 dollars. Capitalised this is $1.5 M at 4% over 20 years, after inflation to $2019 this is approximately $2.5 M value per EC. With the potential for 25 EC credits in Barr Creek. This could be worth $63 M if they were required. But currently, Registers are in balance and there is a surplus of credits. Therefore, this benefit has not been costed, but the LWMP will help preserve these credits for future use if circumstances change.

Also, the expected annual benefits of nutrient reductions to the Murray River were calculated to be $22.9 M/year in1999 (LWRDDC/ Atech Group, 1999). Allowing for inflation this is $38 M/y and if the LWMP were to contribute just 0.5% to nutrient reduction benefits on the Murray it would provide a public benefit of approximately $2.6 M present value 4%, 20 years.

5.3.5 Education and Training program

Rationale

To improve knowledge of crops and sustainable farming systems that improve returns per ML and returns per ha and enhance environmental outcomes. The program will build on existing knowledge and skills to enhance the competitive advantages for profitable opportunistic irrigation, dryland, high value irrigation and other opportunities. One outcome of the program is that farmers are more aware of their duty of care responsibilities regarding managing off-site impacts of irrigation and drainage. Training will primarily be available to irrigators and agency staff if applicable. This will include co-ordinating farm business planning support and training to irrigators.

To increase the likelihood of adoption the program will ensure that there is locally relevant agricultural research and development. The program will also work to establish relationships and collaborative projects with industry bodies and the Victorian Government to secure support for and co-investment in actions to improve dairy water use efficiency, and develop new technologies and farm practices for the grains industry and sheep and beef production. Collaboration and co-investment in pest plant and animal control and soil health management also offer opportunities to enhance water use efficiency.

This program will also work closely with the rural research and development corporations in developing its projects and build on work already started by North Central CMA, which has established that there is a high level of interest in new land use options.

Actions

This program will work closely with local landholders to identify and trial new crops and pastures, develop alternative irrigated crops, new technologies and reduce the cost of production of existing enterprises. Productivity improvements will be identified and communicated through practice change programs. Information on the economics of new enterprises will also be developed.

The program will also include environmental management and sustainability so that the outcomes provide public as well as private benefits. For example, pest plant and animal control, salinity and sodicity management has environmental and productivity benefits. This program will explore the possibility of co-investing with other Victorian Government programs funding pest plant and animal control.

It will be delivered by funding Agriculture Victoria and the North Central CMA to work together. They will be accountable for and funded to deliver the program. They will work with a local landholder steering committee on the development and extension of new practices and enterprises for the Region.

Building on the previous success of the North Central CMA "Adopting Sustainable Farming Practices", "Sustainable Soils" and "Regenerative Agriculture" projects and farmer preferences for practical demonstrations, a large part of the program will be based on trials and field days. These paddock-based activities will demonstrate to landholders the various options and generate confidence to adapt and change farming practices.

Specific activities could include field days on alternative crops, regional seminars, information sessions, development of new initiatives to employ young people in agriculture and provision of fact sheets on water use efficiency case studies.

Benefits

The benefits will depend on commodity prices, water prices and a range of factors outside the direct control of the program.

The gain in agricultural production from irrigation and dryland agriculture targeted from this program is $1 million/year increase in gross margin. It represents a small increase on the $776 M/y gross value of irrigated agriculture production. This is a private benefit with a present value of $13.6 million at 4% (discount rate) over 20 years. This benefit will also be delivered through improved knowledge from the research and monitoring program.

There will also be public benefits achieved with improved environmental outcomes, such as healthier soil, and pest plant and animal control from better land management associated with this program. It will also support delivery of the adoption program and the improved environmental benefits that were described in the adoption program.

5.3.6 Research and Catchment Monitoring program

Rationale

The rationale of this program is to measure and better understand environmental change so that the effectiveness of activities undertaken by the plan can be continuously improved.

Actions

The actions proposed include:

- Investigate and fund research into new water use efficiency technologies, e.g. The internet of things and desalination.
- Land and water use changes (geospatial mapping and reporting).
- Improving understanding of soil health under irrigation including local understanding of use of saline groundwater.

Benefits

The benefits of this program are that the effectiveness of the plan will be improved and that the knowledge base of the region is enhanced. Benefits have not been costed, but previous evaluations of natural resource research programs in Australia typically value the benefits much higher than the cost of research. For example, recent Australian research in irrigation programs was calculated to have a benefit cost ratio of 1:2.8 and research into water use efficiency had a benefit cost ratio of 1:5.4. (Chudleigh, 2006). A conservative benefit 1:1 has been assumed.

5.3.7 Drainage Infrastructure Development and Operations program

Rationale

The rationale for this program is to ensure drainage is affordable and fit for purpose. The focus is on providing more certainty over North Central CMA and community surface drains and existing management arrangements for GMW drains are not replicated.

The approach is outlined in the Draft Drainage Strategy (L-MIRSWMS) which recommends Drainage Course Declarations (DCDs) be implemented on existing North Central CMA drains to ensure that they are appropriately managed. Drainage Course Declarations may not be the only option for managing drains and the North Central CMA is currently exploring options with the community, as guided by the North Central CMA's DCDs Communications Plan.

The North Central CMA is undertaking a DCD feasibility study to investigate options in the approach to managing drainage in the Loddon Murray region which has resulted from the outcomes from the Benwell Surface Water Management System Review report and the draft Loddon Murray Irrigation Region Surface Drainage Strategy.

The project is currently undertaking investigations into the technical feasibility and community acceptance of declaring DCDs over the existing Community Surface Drains (CSDs) and the Bullock Creek River Improvements. A community reference group currently provides guidance on the progress of this project.

Farm reuse will also be encouraged and targeted to undrained areas as a priority where there is significant public benefit. New drains will be implemented if a compelling case can be demonstrated.

Actions

A process will be developed with a responsible authority to work with the community to increase the area and length of natural drainage lines protected with a DCD, which would also include existing drains to ensure passage of flow. North Central CMA and a responsible authority will develop and implement the approach. Funding for DCDs requires projects to be economically feasible, to support improved environmental outcomes, and importantly to show evidence of strong community support (including how landowner engagement and addressing landowner concerns has been undertaken).

Before a DCD is declared there will be an investigation and approval process that must satisfy the local community and responsible authorities before proceeding[20]. The ongoing costs for DCD administration, compliance and management are estimated to be low. DCD compliance under the Victorian Water Act would not include management, maintenance or dispute resolution of existing North Central CMA and private community drainage assets. Only obstructions identified as part of the DCD would form part of a responsible authority's compliance.

The North Central CMA drains and private community drains may need to have defined guidelines developed to communicate ongoing asset management, drain maintenance (spraying and asset remediation/replacement) and defined paths for conflict resolution for drainage enquiries.

The DCDs being implemented in the Shepparton Irrigation Region have strong community support, which is assisted by the current drainage program (Victorian Sustainable Irrigation Program) funding of an obstruction removal program upfront. Although the Water Act allows for enforcement of unauthorised blockages to be levied to offending landowners, adopting this method of obstruction removal at DCD implementation stage could put landowner support at risk – so an upfront funded DCD obstruction removal program is likely to be a key ingredient to success and harnessing community support. Actions are to support the design of and create additional reuse systems where there is significant public benefits, such as tail water potentially impacting sensitive environments. This will be delivered as per the existing Drainage Reuse On-farm Pilot (DROP) Program, which targets areas without access to drainage.

Benefits

Benefits include reduced waterlogging and drainage losses and reduced salinity risks on both agricultural and environmental assets. Benefits have been costed for undrained land in the Draft Loddon Murray Irrigation Region Surface Water Management Strategy, 2019 (RMCG, 2019). The benefits of providing certainty of service for existing drainage lines through DCDs are expected to be $7.2 M (present value of benefit) and are detailed in Appendix 7. There would also be additional benefits associated with improved water use efficiency and nutrient capture from the additional reuse systems. This is estimated to have a private benefit of $4.9 M (saved water value) and a public benefit of $0.9 M. These figures are explained in more detail in Appendix 7.

[20]The steps in the DCD investigation and approval process include:

- Business case/ proposed project logic clearly mapped out i.e. define the extent/ scope of issues the DCDs will address
- Develop a 'high level' concept plan and confirm economic and technical feasibility
- Test the concept with community, gauge interest, support and drainage needs, i.e. understanding of what a DCD will and won't do, ongoing costs and expectations
- Formally engage with GMW as a possible responsible authority to determine specific requirements. GMW will require:
- Strong community support, acceptance and long-term identification about need for surface drainage; and
- Alignment with current and future projected and identified drainage benefits to GMW customers.

5.4 Summary of costs and benefits

Table 5-3 outlines the expected costs[21] and benefits from a public and private perspective of the programs. Detail on the assumptions are documented in Appendix 7.

Table 5-3 **Estimated cost and benefits of programs at 4% (discount rate) over 20 years**

	Public costs and benefits		
Program	**Annual government cost of programs**	**Present Value of government cost (5yrs)**	**Present value of public benefits created by LWMP**
Promotion and Partnerships Program	$200,000	$0.9 M	Un-costed
Planning and Governance Program	$50,000	$0.2 M	Un-costed
Adoption Program	$2,380,000	$11.0 M	$2.8 M GMW infrastructure $13.0 M environment
Regulation and Standards Program	$300,000	$1.4 M	Un-costed. But with potential to generate significant EC credits.
Education and Training Program	$800,000	$3.7 M	Included under adoption program
Research and Catchment Monitoring Program	$350,000	$1.6 M	$1.6 M
Drainage Infrastructure Development and Operations Progran	$700,000 Institutional framework implementation	$3.2 M institutional framework	$7.2 M institutional framework through DCDs. 70% of benefits are public.
	$700,000 reuse program	$3.2 M reuse incentives	$0.9 M reduced drainage damages plus uncosted water quality benefits
Totals subject to rounding.	$5,480,000/year for 5 years	**$25.4 M**	**$25.5 M**

[21] These cost estimates are based on 2019 pricing

[22] This is on top of the investment of $10 million to $30 million per year by irrigation farmers on their systems that would occur even without a LWMP

	Private costs and benefits		Total	
	Present value of additional private costs created by LWMP	**Present value of additional[22] private benefits created by LWMP**	**Costs**	**Benefits**
	In kind community participants time not costed	Un-costed	$0.9 M plus un-costed	Un-costed
	In kind community participants time not costed	Un-costed	$0.2 M plus un-costed	Un-costed
	Nil cost improved standards $4.1 M (additional farm modernisation)	$7.8 M improved standards $5.5 M additional farm modernisation	$15.1 M	$29.1 M
	Un-costed	Un-costed	$1.4 M plus un-costed	Un-costed
	Nil additional costs (existing training time is made more effective)	$13.6 M irrigation gross margin improvement	$3.7 M	$13.6 M
	Some In kind community time not costed	Included in education and training program above	$1.6 M	$1.6 M
	Nil private costs	Included in public benefit of drainage.	$3.2 M	$7.2 M
	$1.4 M (will vary depending on reuse incentive level adopted)	$4.9 M saved water	$4.6 M	$5.8 M
	$5.5 M plus uncosted	**$31.8 M** plus uncosted	**$30.9 M** plus uncosted	**$57.3 M** plus uncosted

5.5 Conclusions from the economic analysis

- The total benefits of the LWMP are $57.3 M and the costs are $30.9 M. This means that the plan is economic, with a positive net present value (NPV) of $26.4 M. It has a cost: benefit ratio of 1:1.9.
- From a public investment point of view, it is important to consider the public benefit against the public cost. The present value of government costs over the next 5 years is $25.4 M. This is expected to generate at least $25.5 M of public benefits plus significant additional un-costed public benefits worth millions, such as that associated with water quality improvements.[23]
- There are also regional recreation and tourism benefits[24] arising from the investment in the Plan.
- Therefore, from a public investment perspective this LWMP has a positive NPV as the public benefit exceeds the public costs. It represents a sound investment for government. It also facilitates a partnership with the irrigation community to assist with the regional economy.
- The private benefits also exceed private costs. This means that the LWMP programs will be attractive for farmers to participate in. This will enable a partnership between the government and community by implementing LWMP programs to tackle environmental improvement and irrigated farm adjustment.

The tailored nature of the programs means that they are inter-dependent. The synergy created through the combination of programs will help address declining water availability through improved water use efficiency, restructuring and achieving enhanced environmental outcomes. This in turn will increase regional pride and sustainability.

The LWMP is value for money for landholders, governments, industry and by taking on farm improvements will enhance our precious land and water resources – land, waterways, wetlands and birds, fish, plants and animals.

5.6 Funding streams

The DELWP Sustainable Irrigation Program plays a vital support and funding role to ensure successful implementation of the plan. Implementation of the LWMP will be subject to the availability of funding over the life of the plan and a priority has been given to the proposed actions within each program to assist with directing available funding and resources. The implementation of the programs developed within the LWMP are likely to vary in scale year to year based on factors such as uptake and participation in programs, water availability, climatic conditions and pace of irrigation modernisation/rationalisation.

The North Central CMA and its partners will scope and apply for all available funding opportunities from a range of sources and investment processes over the Plan's implementation period. They will regularly identify local priorities and objectives based on the LWMP and present these as project proposals to investors to seek funding.

[23] For example, EC credits were valued at $112,000 /y by the MDBC in year 2000 dollars. Capitalised this is $1.5 M at 4% over 20 years, after inflation to $2019 this is approximately $2.5 M value per EC. With the potential for 25 EC credits in Barr Creek could be worth $63 M if they were required. But currently, Registers are in balance and there is a surplus of credits. Therefore, this benefit has not been costed, but the LWMP will help preserve these credits for future use if circumstances change.

Also, the expected annual benefits of nutrient reductions to the Murray River were calculated to be $22.9 M/year in 1999 (LWRDDC/Atech Group, 1999). Allowing for inflation this is $38 M/y and if the LWMP were to contribute just 0.5% to nutrient reduction benefits on the Murray it would provide a public benefit of approximately $2.6 M present value 4%, 20 years.

[24] The Gannawarra Shire estimated the direct economic impact of domestic overnight visitation to the shire at $40.87 million per annum (Gannawarra Shire Council, 2014). A 1% increase in tourism would be worth $5.5 M as a present value. Although some of this benefit may be double counted in the public benefit of environmental improvement under the Adoption Program.

6. Evaluation of the Plan

6.1 Measuring success

The community steering committee, who provided oversight of the development of this LWMP, will continue to oversee the implementation of the Plan and of the funded programs.

Success will be measured by tracking progress towards targets for each desired outcome. The process for evaluation will be guided by a Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) plan that will include reporting against long and short-term targets.

The MERI plan will help the North Central CMA and its LMWP partners track the progress of the plan activities and improve them where required. Monitoring and reporting will be proportionate to the level of investment and be designed to support adaptive management. Annual, five yearly and end of life (10 year) reporting and review of plan implementation will be undertaken and shared with stakeholders.

Overarching targets have been set for each of the eight desired outcomes of the plan as outlined in Table 6-1.

Table 6-1 **Targets for each desired outcome (5-10 years)**

#	Desired outcome	Outcome level target
1	More efficient and integrated irrigation (on and off farm)	• Increase Gross Value (Irrigated) Agricultural Production (per ML water use) by 10% in an average allocation year
2	Improved on farm irrigation nutrient and soil management	• 10 farms in the LCIR demonstrate best practice nutrient and soil management by 2025 • 10 case studies developed demonstrating best practice
3	Improved regional irrigation drainage infrastructure and management	• All irrigation drains designed and managed to minimise risks to receiving waters each year. • 100% of North Central CMA drains under a management agreement within 10 years.
4	Impacts of irrigation on salinity, biodiversity and water quality managed within agreed limits	• Meet all regulatory obligations including monitoring and reporting under BSM2030, every year • Improve regional biodiversity and environmental values and measures by 5% by condition
5	New and significant irrigation redevelopments are best practice	• 100% compliance with standards in IDG by all new irrigation development • 100% compliance with new standards in IDG by all significant re-development
6	Increased community awareness and involvement in plan activities	• 250 irrigators engaged in at least one of the programs over the life of the Plan; 125 irrigators participating by 2025
7	Impacts of irrigation on other third parties are better understood and managed e.g. recreation and users downstream	• Downstream salinity and water quality meet Irrigation Drainage MOU targets
8	Aboriginal values are better understood and integrated into management decisions	• Traditional Owners and Aboriginal landholders are aware and resourced to actively participate by 2025

6.2 Evaluation framework

There needs to be consistency between monitoring and evaluation frameworks, measurement against indicators, and targets to monitor progress against, during the implementation of the plan.

Land and water use is dynamic in the LCIR and funded actions will evolve over the life of the plan. A monitoring framework is outlined in Appendix 5 that includes 72 provisional SMART targets and reporting indicators against program actions.

The brief evaluation framework provided in Table 6-2 aligns with the state wide Sustainable Irrigation Program processes undertaken by DELWP. The framework includes example key evaluation questions for each of the program logic levels: Aspirational goal, long term objectives, desired outcomes and program activities. A detailed MERI plan will be developed at the program and project level that will cover all funded actions.

Table 6-2 Evaluation framework

Program logic level	Key evaluation questions	Measurement/reporting
Aspirational goal (10 + years)		
Using water for healthy, productive, sustainable irrigated food and fibre.	**Legacy:** • How has the plan improved land and water management in the LCIR? • Were there any unexpected outcomes from implementing the plan? (positive or negative)	Interviews and workshop with delivery staff and wider stakeholders Annual reports, midterm review and end of Plan evaluation
Four Long term objectives (10 years)		
1. Sustainable, profitable, adaptive and innovative farming practices	**Impact:** • What difference did the plan make? • Were these objectives met / partly met? • How did the plan contribute to meeting these objectives? • What evidence is there indicating that these objectives were met?	Interviews and workshop with delivery staff and wider stakeholders Resource condition indicators
2. Active involvement of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal landholders		
3. Protected and improved condition of environmental assets and values		
4. An empowered and informed irrigation community		
Eight Desired outcomes (5 to 10 years)		
1. More efficient and integrated irrigation (on and off farm)	**Effectiveness:** • How effective were the partnerships in implementing the plan? • To what extent has the plan been implemented? • Have the outcome level targets been met? • What evidence exists to confirm a positive trajectory in improved practices and catchment condition (water quality, soil management, irrigation efficiency)	Interviews and workshop with delivery staff and wider stakeholders. Surveys of participants. Biennial case studies (2022, 2024 etc.) highlighting changed practices and improved catchment condition Review of feedback forms and attendance Review of activity monitoring data Review of research and investigations data
2. Improved on farm irrigation nutrient and soil management		
3. Improved regional irrigation drainage infrastructure and management		

Program logic level	Key evaluation questions	Measurement/reporting
Eight Desired outcomes (5 to 10 years)		
4. Impacts of irrigation on salinity, biodiversity and water quality managed within agreed limits	• What additional measures may be required to manage risks and maintain these improvements over the long term? • To what extent has landholders' awareness, knowledge and skills in irrigation efficiency, nutrient and soil management improved? • To what extent has landholders' awareness, knowledge and skills in understanding environmental assets on their farm improved? • To what extent are Aboriginal values better understood and considered?	Refer to monitoring framework in Appendix 5.
5. New and significant irrigation redevelopments are best practice		
6. Increased community awareness and involvement in plan activities		
7. Impacts of irrigation on other third parties are better understood and managed e.g. recreation and users downstream		
8. Aboriginal values are better understood and integrated into management decisions		
Program activities (each year)		
Refer to monitoring framework in Appendix 5 for activities.	**Effectiveness:** • Were the high priority actions adequately funded? • How did the program adapt to changes in funding? • To what extent were stated outputs achieved? • How well did funded projects align with regional strategic goals and actions? **Efficiency:** • To what extent were the activities delivered in a cost-effective way? • To what extent did partnerships contribute to the success of the project? • What could have been done differently to improve delivery of the project? **Appropriateness:** • Have the approaches used been well suited to the local conditions and communities?	Feedback forms and attendance Activity monitoring data Refer to monitoring framework in Appendix 5 for targets.

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Barapa Barapa Water Resource Plan 2019 - Part 11.

Taungurung Country Plan 2016

Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation Whole of Country Plan 2021-2030

Appendix 1 **Summary - First Round Consultation findings**

The feedback has been analysed according to four categories to 'signpost' issues and to inform this Plan, and relevant CMA and other government plans (Table A1):

1. Relevant to sustainable irrigation and of direct applicability to the LWMP and the Sustainable Irrigation Program that will be a funding source for the Plan.
2. Relevant to the North Central CMA Sustainable Agriculture Strategy
3. Relevant to the renewal of the North Central Regional Catchment Strategy and its supporting plans such as the River Health Strategy, Waterway Management Strategy, Environmental Watering Plan, Native Vegetation Management Plan, Floodplain Management Strategy, Invasive Plant & Animal Strategy, Regional Growth Plans, Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Plan, Waterway Strategy, and Soil Health Action Plan.
4. Relevant to broader Government plans/ strategies.

Broader NRM issues raised in the consultation have been documented in Appendix 2. It is recommended that these be considered by the North Central CMA in the renewal of the RCS and its sub-strategies.

Table A-1 **Consultants findings/analysis with category and suggested response**

Theme	Finding/Analysis	Category	Suggested Response in LWMP
Overview	*People are feeling the pain of the water reform, the price of water and the current drought (and the effects of climate change). LWMP needs to contribute to the creation of certainty and getting confidence back.*	1	Identify key opportunities for higher more profitable water use.
Planning and Development	*There is a perception of a disconnection of the CMA and other agencies with the community on the ground. Farmers are experiencing insufficient resources getting to the ground. They recognize that:* *The CMA is insufficiently funded to undertake on-ground management;* *Local knowledge and corporate knowledge are not being effectively shared and exchanged, though this would improve outcomes that are sought by the Regional Catchment Strategy.;* *There is a need for improved collaboration and cohesion between agencies;* *To maintain credibility, agencies need to be good land managers of their own estate (manage Crown land well).*	1	Develop credible business case for LWMP to attract government and private investment and resources into the LWMP. This will require demonstrating how it delivers Government objectives and that the community supports the initiatives.

Table A-1 **Consultants findings/analysis with category and suggested response**

Theme	Finding/Analysis	Category	Suggested Response in LWMP
Planning and Development	*A common wish was to have more agency field officers based in the community and from the community [There was high praise for competent, diligent locally based government officers, and a real wish to see more staff on ground and in the field]; One focus group even proposed a ratio of "at least 1 field officer for every 3 that are sitting in the office"; and recommended that various agencies "ensure their field officers attend at all different field days to introduce the environmental agenda".*	1	Resourcing will depend on strong business case and LWMP should reflect community desire for more locally based field staff.
	Groups recommended that the LWMP needs features the benefits of the Loddon Campaspe Irrigation Region and its strategic advantages in the state and national water market.	1	The sustainable competitive advantages of irrigation in the Region need to be highlighted. New opportunities for higher value should be covered.
Landscape management	*The Future Farming workshops were very good, and there is a need for these types of future crop workshops again. These would be a good platform from which to offer customised follow-up services such as Plan 2 Farm.*	1 and 2	Extension programs to be designed to match the LWMP programs. Broader farming extension part of sustainable agriculture strategy.
	There was strong interest expressed for the re-creation of incentives for farmers to undertake revegetation. While this may be from grants or incentives, it may also be from the CMA playing a more active role in brokering farmer engagement with the carbon market and Emission Reduction Fund (ERF) opportunities.	1, 2 and 3	Revegetation to be part of LWMP program.
	Whole farm plans (WFP) are widely regarded and considered positive. They identified a need for a process to revisit WFP when properties change hands, or other circumstances change. WFP can go deeper and push for further improvements and better integration with local area planning, and better management of rainfall in non-irrigated parts of farms. There may be a need to adapt WFP to follow shifts in farming – i.e. WFP package designed for new hobby and 'boutique' farmers.	1	Continue WFP with adaptation to different irrigators.
	There needs to be deliberate structuring of landscape change to create opportunities and healthy communities. There is a need for further work on organising groups to create more connected landscapes – with public and private biodiversity corridors and refugia integrated into the productive farming landscape.	1, 2 and 3	Regional biodiversity plantings to create connected landscapes are integrated in whole farm plans.
	Approaches need to integrate whole health of the community [social, economic, environmental].	1, 2 and 3	LWMP to provide social, economic and environmental net benefits for its own scope.

Theme	Finding/Analysis	Category	Suggested Response in LWMP
Water management	*'We have the most modernised, efficient irrigation system in the world, but we can't afford to use it'.*	1	LWMP to promote more profitable water use.
	It was observed more than once that it is only when farmers are making money that they can achieve good stewardship.	1	LWMP to promote more profitable water use.
	Stewardship guidelines and a definition of what stewardship looks like are both needed.	1	Extension program.
	If it is true that middle-sized farms are disappearing, then there needs to be considered view of what wider social and environmental obligations go with these changes – in relation to keeping the infrastructure affordable, and tests of overall improved prosperity for the district.	4	Goulburn Murray Water (GMW) need to address this issue.
	There was criticism of the current environmental watering program for 'tunnel vision' and focus groups recommended that it needs to have better processes to take on local knowledge about pockets of habitat that should be maintained, which have built up around 100 years of irrigation channel infrastructure.	1, 3 and 4	Environmental watering programs should include watering private wetlands in seasonal water priority setting.
	There is real concern about the 12% of people who own water but don't own land and who don't pay service delivery fees.	4	This is Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC) issue regarding functioning of water markets nationally.
	Research is needed into a feasible ceiling for high-value water in irrigation districts, and this needs to be included into the process for approving new irrigation developments as well as built into regulation. The perception at least is that there is unchecked irrigation development downstream.	4	This a DELWP/ACCC/MDBA issue regarding functioning of water markets nationally. Also being considered as part of MINCO deliverability and water availability work.
	Landholders expressed the need for leadership to directly address the patchwork quilt of irrigation now, which is becoming an unaffordable game. There is no future for the LCIR if it is uncompetitive and people can make more money selling the water to somewhere else.	1	Increase competitiveness of LCIR GMW transformation?
	Landholders want to ensure the adaptability in the water system –to enable change between industries without completely re-designing / rebuilding the infrastructure.	1 and 4	GMW have a role.

Table A-1 **Consultants findings/analysis with category and suggested response**

Theme	Finding/Analysis	Category	Suggested Response in LWMP
Water management	*The focus groups acknowledged that improved drainage and the community surface drainage and the re-use dams have contributed to saving the whole area from salinization and high-watertables*	1	Implementation of the LCIR Drainage Strategy is part of LWMP. Maintain existing infrastructure and promote for new/re-developments.
	Where farmers voluntarily relinquish their irrigation rights, which results in reducing infrastructure costs, there are mutual benefits which should be investigated, including exemption from payment of termination fees.	1 and 4	GMW have a role – yes was proposed in Delivery Share Review and GMW Transformation.
Biodiversity	*Appreciated initiatives include: fish ladders; Plains Wanderer work; in-stream habitat creation for platypus and turtles; revegetation programs i.e. fencing off and exclusion of stock from waterways and increasing public access and awareness of wetland habitats.*	3	Other RCS Strategies will cover this. But could also consider in WFPs, i.e. notify River Health Programs of opportunities.
	There is a strong desire for another significant investment in biodiversity / revegetation and ecosystem health. For 'tunnel vision' and focus groups recommended that it needs to have better processes to take on local knowledge about pockets of habitat that should be maintained, which have built up around 100 years of irrigation channel infrastructure.	1 and 3	Whole Farm Planning with direction from other RCS Strategies.
	Previous revegetation programs (Landcare / NHT) have been great. Farmers particularly mentioned the fencing off and exclusion of stock from waterways. There is a need for enforcement or other follow-up where properties change hands, and assistance and advice on undertaking pest, plant and animal control. and who don't pay service delivery fees.	1 and 3	Whole Farm Planning with direction from other RCS Strategies.
	More information on ways to allow native animals to exist with and be supported by agriculture e.g. types of fencing.	1, 2 and 3	Whole Farm Planning with direction from other RCS Strategies.
	Further investment in the roll out of the Regenerative Agriculture program.	2	This is broader than the irrigation Region.
Community Capacity	*Deep understanding of changing social dynamics will enable the LWMP to implement its mandate effectively. Communities have to be at the centre of the LWMP process, because without activated communities there will be no change (or reversal of gains) in the other thematic areas.*	1	Governance arrangements should build new connections and activate landholders currently disengaged.

Theme	Finding/Analysis	Category	Suggested Response in LWMP
Community Capacity	*Landcare is struggling because of lack of funding for coordinators. There is a need for people to be employed to run the farmers' groups and distribute results and maintain communication.*	3	Broader RCS issue
	Landcare could be the vehicle for localisation of planning, but this needs to be framed within community renewal, and include a wide coalition including sports & recreation, community health, neighbourhood houses.	3	Broader RCS issue
	Community change is happening, with new families and businesses coming in to work in intensive industries and immigrants taking up jobs. This is good, but there needs to be a supported transition, and active processes to transfer knowledge, skills and history to younger or new actors.	1, 2, 3, and 4	Incorporates broader regional responsibilities.
	Participants observed a real rift between the CMA and communities at present, and the CMA needs to change its mindset from 'business as usual' and work to heal that division, or it will lose its mandate from the community to operate.	3	Broader RCS issue
	Leaders need courage to lead and ground themselves in local advice and awareness.	1, 2, 3, and 4	Incorporates broader regional responsibilities.
	Getting confidence back into the LCIR is crucial to achieving LWMP outcomes.	1	Develop credible business case for LWMP to attract government and private investment and resources into the LWMP. This will require demonstrating how it delivers Government objectives and that the community supports the initiatives
	There is concern that the trend towards corporate farming will erode communities and lead to a reduced level of engagement with the catchment-wide environmental agenda. The volunteerism of the local community is an enormous contribution to landscape management and rural resilience.	1	The LWMP should engage with all landholder types including corporate.
	It should not be assumed that all corporatisation leads to improved water and production efficiencies as focus groups gave numerous examples of the failure of these corporate models.	1	Noted. Potential issue for Irrigation Development Guidelines.

Table A-1 **Consultants findings/analysis with category and suggested response**

Theme	Finding/Analysis	Category	Suggested Response in LWMP
Community Capacity	*It should not be assumed that new businesses have the same values or knowledge of stewardship hence induction to the area and a stewardship code is needed.*	1	LWMP should provide an extension package for new irrigators. Potential issue for Irrigation Development Guidelines.
Agency Management	*People see inconsistencies between agency expectations and their own management.*	1 and 2	LWMP must include effective extension that is two way learning.
	There needs to be better synchronisation between agencies, for example with GMW to manage flood regimes better, and running joint field days with multiple activities and angles.	1, 2, 3 and 4	Noted. Improved connections between RCS programs and between RCS programs and other land and water agencies.
	Agencies need to understand each other's roles and responsibilities better and be able to speak together.	1, 2, 3 and 4	LWMP needs to define clear roles and responsibilities.
	Agencies need to run better integrated programs on pest plants and animals (PPA).	3 and 4	RCS - Invasive Plant and Animal Strategy. Links to WFP?
	There was high praise for competent, diligent locally based government officers, and a real wish to see more staff on ground and in the field.	1, 2, 3 and 4	Note desire for local contact in LWMP.
	The CMA needs to work to ensure the involvement of council in the LWMPs, so they really understand it and embrace the plans. There is strong scope for joint work with local governments on nature-based tourism; information materials for new landholders, and whole-of-community provision of services and information.	1, 3 and 4	Role of Local Govt in LWMP needs to be defined in LWMP.
Analysis of -Challenges and opportunities of the renewal	*Frame the LWMP planning process as community renewal, so that it is considered as nourishing the whole community – by a wide coalition of effort including:* *employment opportunities (how do we keep our people?);* *sports and recreation;* *health, neighbourhood houses etc;* *engagement needs to avoid the usual suspects; community inclusion is needed.*	4 and 5	LWMP has a role within this much broader objective.
	There is a need for the CMA to drive community renewal to maintain an integrated landscape /wholistic catchment approach	3	The LWMP is a sub-strategy of the RCS, which provides the integration.

Theme	Finding/Analysis	Category	Suggested Response in LWMP
Analysis of -Challenges and opportunities of the renewal	*Take a broader approach to Irrigation – Irrigation is one of four sources of water to manage the land: rainfall, floods, channel irrigation and diversion from river, creek and lake systems. Hence it is a mistake to take too narrow a definition of irrigation, particularly in the changing context of the LCIR.*	1	It is suggested that the scope of the Land and Water Management Plan be private land that holds a water use licence where the cumulative impacts of irrigation has the potential to affect public or offsite values.
	We need stronger rural communities, ideas and planning driven by local groups, achieving local ownership in the way that was achieved by the Salinity Management Committees. There has to be both local ownership and landscape scale planning. Place-based landscape actions are needed. There are advantages of an area-based plan that has strong community ownership, over a series of generalised, thematically-based strategies.	1	The LWMP should have a regionally based governance and reporting. Improved linkages between RCS and RCS programs
	The LWMP should recognise and have a significant focus on the role and potential of Regenerative Agriculture in increasing resilient food production in the LCIR.	1 and 2	Regenerative agriculture is broader than irrigation and applies to all agriculture. Its role should be investigated and demonstrated in LWMP.
Analysis of -Support needs Farmers, landholders and communities need support to:	*Redefine themselves in the light of new realities brought about by water market reform, the MDBP and climate change.*	1 and 2	Transition out of irrigation to new industries is part of the LWMP and already happening at a fast rate.
	Gain new knowledge and techniques for sustainable agriculture (Regenerative Agriculture), that focus on deep knowledge of soil development processes, and recognising that irrigation will be more episodic and opportunistic, depending upon water availability and affordability.	1 and 2	Regenerative agriculture is broader than irrigation and applies to all agriculture. Its role should be investigated and demonstrated in LWMP.
	Assert the balance between perennial horticulture and other industries, recognizing the importance of local employment and production, the maintenance of communities and viable irrigation infrastructure and take into account the risks associated with crops which have a fixed seasonal water demand.	1, 4 and 5	While the LWMP can assist with adjustment. The water market rules are set by ACCC/MDBA/ DELWP.
	Significantly improve the connectivity and extent of remnant native vegetation and habitat which is largely concentrated along riparian ecosystems, and which largely remains in the private land estate	3	Broader RCS. Possible considerable in WFP.

Table A-1 **Consultants findings/analysis with category and suggested response**

Theme	Finding/Analysis	Category	Suggested Response in LWMP
Analysis of -Support needs Farmers, landholders and communities need support to:	*Understand and develop opportunities for payment for protection of ecosystem services (including healthy productive soils) through engagement with carbon markets.*	2	Broader Sustainable Ag. Strategy. Noting that carbon farming proposals to date have brought a low return as carbon price is too low.
	Engage with the opportunities in emerging renewable and bioenergy markets (biogas, biofuels, solar installations) and integrate these into their farming vision and landscape.	2	Broader Sustainable Ag. Strategy. Noting that carbon farming proposals to date have brought a low return as carbon price is too low.
Analysis of -Training and communication	*There is a need for increased community engagement and awareness, so that people know what the CMA does and ways for the community to support each other.* *The structured communication processes that the agencies have need to be re invigorated.* *CMA communication needs to be robust, more frequent, and not just oriented around plans, but also around connecting plans, activities and directions.*	1 and 3	Broader RCS and clear roles of LWMP delivery staff.
	Education and leadership is a key part of the CMA mandate that should be reflected in the LWMP, and this is evidenced by various references in the DELWP Guidelines with phrases such as "enable devolved, adaptive management" and "maintain strong engagement with irrigators, stakeholders and delivery partners". Some examples of the types of education mentioned by focus groups included: *Different marketing of farm produce to show all the PPA work of farmers and support for stewardship payments for farmers and tying this into a regional business model for the LCIR.* *Coordination of training to facilitate farming businesses, mindful that environmental improvements only occur when landholders are profitable.* *More information on management of native grasslands.*	1, 2 and 3	Broader RCS and Sustainable Ag. Strategy also part of this. Linkage with industry programs is also key, which is part of the Sustainable Ag. Strategy.

Appendix 2 **Priorities relating to broader natural resource management**

Table A-2 below records broader natural resource management issues that were raised in consultation. Note the suggested actions listed, do not necessarily correspond with the issues raised.

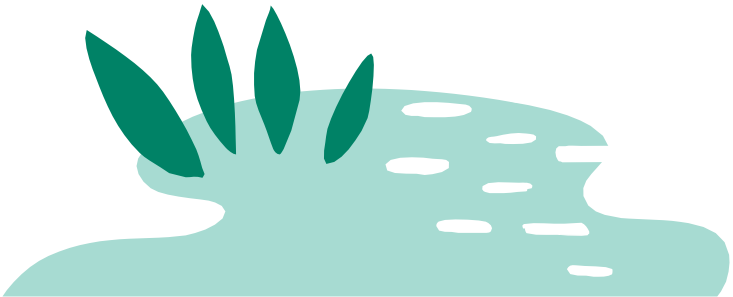
Table A-2 **Issues and actions feedback sorted by North Central CMA program**

Relevant CMA Programs	Issues raised in consultation	Suggested actions raised in consultation
Sustainable Agriculture	• Need a paid for facilitator to run community groups. The farmers want to participate but do not have the time to organise group sessions and putting in funding applications. • Frustration with the connections program because of delays and lack of local knowledge. • Protection of native vegetation versus reduced production capacity. • Lacking support for better grazing management. • Resilient long-term fodder. • Farming with native fauna and flora. • Support for better grazing management. • Paid coordination for a Landcare or CMA facilitator. • Data is gathered through landholders i.e. Farming for Sustainable Soils and also gathered during seasonal events through different metering systems but landholders are not permitted to access the data. It inhibits farmers from being able to use it to make good decisions. • There is no follow-up on the investments, for example a $3mil fencing program was great but let go into disrepair, no education on grazing for new landholders and no on-going maintenance. • Sustainable soils report not fed back. • Uncertainty for Crown lease renewal. • Certainty for lease renewal and conditions. • Succession planning for both farms and environmental knowledge. • Investigate bio-energy. • Create the ability to scale the whole farm plan to small landholders. • Create an opportunity for environmental water to be available for private land. • Public funding for local seed banks. • Balance the intensification of animal industries for nutrients and biosecurity.	• Create better information sharing mechanisms. • Help farmers be recognised as environmentalists i.e. farming marketing plan. • Acknowledge wetland environment on private land. • Maintain long-term waterfront leases for pest, plant and animal control. • Need a framework for managing land to a certain standard i.e. to encourage good neighbours. • Stronger compliance needed for pest, plants and animals. • Foster partnerships between state government, local government and farmers for pest plant and animal control. • Enable green manure / waste re-use and establishment of viable dryland pastures. • Native animals existing with farms – how should farmers do it. • Integrated pest management training for farmers. • Enable farmers to be adaptable during the seasons. • Revegetation projects need another wave. • Future farming workshops need to run again. • Need more Landcare groups. • Repair riparian fencing. • Education program in the plan for the whole community – schools etc. • Information and training on cultural heritage to protect Aboriginal history while farming.

Table A-2 **Issues and actions feedback sorted by North Central CMA program**

Relevant CMA Programs	Issues raised in consultation	Suggested actions raised in consultation
Sustainable Agriculture	• Improve the geographical integration of farm types. • Build knowledge and capacity amongst new farmers and facilitate knowledge sharing. • Farmers need the ability to be able to make decisions. • The temperature of the water released can be too cold from some locations. • Fencing of waterways has reduced capability to manage pest plants and animals. • Neighbours, particularly the Crown, not managing their land for pest plants and animals. • Pest plant and animal control. • Accessibility to fenced off areas. • Compliance by authorities is non-existent i.e. pest plants and animals on neighbouring properties. • Pest plant and animal control is extending into cultural sites. • Feral pigs are a biosecurity risk. • Parks Victoria and Vic Rail aren't managing their land for PPA. • Integrated pest management needed.	
Rivers and wetlands	• Some pest plant and animal control is not prioritised effectively, for example Gunbower Creek was sprayed but the lagoons upstream were not so weeds progressed down-stream to Gunbower Creek. • Storage management plans for Lake Boga, Kow Swamp and other storages/ wetlands to encourage multi-use values e.g. bike tracks, cultural heritage and app based tours. • Deal with constraints on Gunbower creek when environment and irrigators want water at the same time. • Cultural water. • Consider recreational values of irrigation systems.	• Wetland and environmental areas are set aside in the "big picture" i.e. the balance must include water for ecosystems along channels and how flood events force animals onto farms. • Make channel and waterway monitoring data available to farmers.
Biodiversity	• Fish habitat – fish screens are required on private channels but are not implemented on public channels. "Blackhole" for information relating to what plant species to plant, fence. • Limited funding now for revegetation and lack of information out there in how to do it. • Fencing. • Protection needed for native vegetation.	• Have a link between water bodies and nature-based tourism. • Rail trail with environmental features.

Relevant CMA Programs	Issues raised in consultation	Suggested actions raised in consultation
Flood plain management	• Flood mapping – the CMA needs accurate flood data. • The flood data is "incorrect" and the property probably shouldn't have an inundation overlay so it is impacting the connections project. The connections project requires a planning permit. • Three regional flood studies but none of them have been implemented. • Flood warning system- lack of stations on the Loddon. • Poor road management during flood events (Pyramid Hill region). • Access to monitoring data. • Joint PPA works with Parks Victoria. • Improve landscape connectivity / biodiversity habitat.	• Make channel and waterway monitoring data available to farmers.
Other	• Community engagement versus community awareness. • Middle sized family farms are disappearing. It is having impacts on community dynamics and organisations such as footy clubs. Small towns rely on volunteers for a lot of work i.e. Landcare. • Inequity in funding across the region. • Ethical sourcing of labour. • The communication has been lost between agencies and communities – there's no one on the ground to facilitate the two-way communication between farmers/community members and the agencies. • Money for plans and no money for implementation. • The CMA is never in the community. • The decisions about how funding should be spent in an area are not made by the community. • Lack of systems knowledge in the Catchment Management Authority. • Business sustainability and resources versus community growth. • Need to attract people / jobs. • Lack of young people.	• Build capacity within governing agencies to recognise the needs of the communities. • Have transparent communication between agencies i.e. DELWP and CMA on issues that affect all landholders. • How to ethically source on-farm labour. • Have a field officer in every regional town to: bring people to events, have slide shows about environmental issues at other community events, facilitate knowledge exchange, provide access to scientists etc. - 1 field officer for every 3 in the office. • Embed CMA staff in community. • Control wastage grant money. • Enable the LWMP to integrate with Council Plans (assist councils to understand the important and liveability). • Establish a use for dead carp. • Not a lot of people left to volunteers – need to pay community volunteers.



Appendix 3 **Irrigation issues and actions raised**

The Table below records sustainable irrigation issues that were raised in first round consultation. Note the suggested actions listed, do not necessarily correspond with the issues raised.

Table A-3
Consultation Issues and actions feedback sorted by North Central CMA program

Relevant LWMP themes	Issues raised in consultation	Suggested actions raised in consultation
Planning and development	• Need planning scenarios for irrigation water versus environmental water. • Plans are not being implemented because the CMA is risk averse. • Lack of money to implement plans. • Affordability of water and business viability. • Adaptation in 7 years is too short. It is a lot to ask one generation of farmers to absorb when there are also droughts, floods, production down-turn and the expectation to invest in capital. • "It is a better option to sell the water to someone else and get out, that is devastating to the community" – 30 farms leaving Cohuna in the last 8 weeks. • Encourage development within the GMID rather than outside it. • CMA changes its focus, for example, the Connections Program – it was happening elsewhere but the channel the person was on made them ineligible. The channel became eligible later and by then all the funding opportunities had passed. • Financial viability of GMID is under threat.	• Maintaining salt disposal schemes. • Landcare plans for wetlands for landholder groups. • New irrigation development approvals streamlined. • Maximise opportunities for new irrigation development e.g. Melbourne vegetable farmers re-locating and glasshouses ideally within existing GMID. • Incorporate cultural heritage into plans. • Better protection of middens and cultural heritage sites especially when undertaking pest, plant and animal control. • Partnership with GMW – ensure CMA and Dept of Ag are involved with water services committees. • Link the WFP to Council with a permit system (a similar model to that in Shepparton) so the permit enables the landholder to fulfil the works as set out in the WFP. • Balance water needs (environment and irrigators).
Land management	• Crown land is operated by agencies but not managed by agencies • Lifestyle properties. • Irrigation districts are shrinking, and more dryland areas are in amongst the irrigation. • Plan needed for newly de-watered land and what do to with it (managing C&D classed land). • Regulation isn't happening because the authorities do not have the capacity to respond i.e. illegal levee banks built.	• Need lifestyle property planning e.g. at Tyntynder Flats – desperately needs a Landcare group. • Create the ability to scale the whole farm plan to small landholders. • Assist adaptation to less water by transitioning to dryland and intensive animals. • River frontage management for pest, plant and animal management. • New enterprises for de-watered land.
Water management	• Groundwater protection infrastructure is old and protects certain areas, it requires upgrading. • 30% of outlets are only delivering 10ML (they cost $50,000 to put in). • More people are trading in water that don't irrigate. • Existing structures aren't being used to their potential. • Some people are paying for the infrastructure even though they aren't using any water. • Expanses of channel structures doesn't enable the water to get there quickly. Pumps don't stop running whereas outlets do when the water level drops. It can take 10 hours for the water level to rise again.	• Increase investment in the WFP and on-farm modernisation. • Expand Plan 2 Farm for new enterprises. • Amalgamation of small blocks to attract scale for investors. • Stewardship covenants payments for protecting the environment. • Incentives for water use efficiency. • Continue to fund farmer Landcare / productivity groups and their facilitators e.g. Normanville, Pyramid Hill. • Consistent incentives for those outside the GMID i.e. the WFP incentive is lower for groundwater users. • Better standards for irrigation designs. • Recommissioning of ground water monitoring with private monitoring e.g. Kilter (monitoring 40 bores).

Relevant LWMP themes	Issues raised in consultation	Suggested actions raised in consultation
Water management	• Uncertainty about irrigation going forward so is limiting confidence to invest in infrastructure. • Farmers don't get the benefits of water savings. • Frustration that modernisation is not working on long channels where distance between control structures is too large. • Stranded assets because water dried off. • Mid-Loddon groundwater irrigation is not available for irrigation incentive. • Salt is under control. • De-watered land has already been addressed by farmers (except for small blocks in Tyntynder). • People have adapted to lower rainfall in the dryland. • Loddon Valley has adjusted to lower water use whereas Cohuna has not. • Channel capacity at Little Murray Weir. • Inequitable funding opportunities across irrigators in the Connections Program. • Irrigation attracting rain – community concern catch 22 (less irrigation = less rain). • Poor regional drainage designs i.e. dry lagoons. • Drain and waterway management responsibility is falling on farmers. • Need for drainage much reduced as landscape has dried up. • CMA is exploring landholders taking over CMA drains – this is not supported by landholders.	• Flexibility in GMID water services to assist industries to adapt and to fine tune level of service to their need e.g. horticulture vs opportunistic. • Re-visit Lake Meran operational plan – community has no confidence in data setting operational rules. • Sensible GMW rationalisation to reduce costs. • Information and training on cultural heritage to protect Aboriginal history. • How to manage C & D classed land in the irrigation district – need to make sure irrigation is on the best soils. • Set up people to monitor and gather results. • Monitoring data is not accessible to farmers i.e. flood data. • Undertake a climate change impact study on the GMID. • Research, development and extension on farm wetlands and their watering needs to demonstrate a case for environmental water. • Salt monitoring on Little Murray Weir. • Address 30% of modernised outlets delivering less than 10ML per year vs equity for those who want 20ML per day outlets GMW reconfiguration crossing floodways putting blockages across floodways. • Drainage infrastructure development and operations -Better manage drainage systems. • Drainage needs to reconnect lagoons.
Biodiversity management	• Loss of native vegetation and local ecological systems due to channel lining. • Screens on CMA water structures for carp control. • Upgrading channels has been detrimental to animals/ habitat. • Removed vegetation 12m each side of channel. • Did not relocate wildlife so they washed up in paddocks. • Lack of seepage form the channel increased water use efficiency but killed localised habitat that relied on seepage. • No offsets. • Channels are a dead-end for water fauna. • Fish and turtles are vulnerable to pumps (need screens). • Gravity systems replaced with pumps and no alternative power supply. • Fencing channels has stopped wildlife from being able to access water to drink. • Native fauna forced onto farms during forest watering.	• Better biodiversity input into irrigation upgrade planning.
Community capacity	• Cultural heritage and WFP – how to manage it?	• New lifestyle landholders increasing – they have little experience and need greater support e.g. for pest, plants and animals and environmental works.

Appendix 4
Second Round Consultation on Discussion Paper

As per the first round of consultation, the feedback has been analysed according to four categories to 'sign post' issues and to inform this Plan, and relevant CMA and other government plans (Table A4):

1. Relevant to sustainable irrigation and of direct applicability to the LWMP and the Sustainable Irrigation Program that will be a funding source for the Plan.
2. Relevant to the North Central CMA Sustainable Agriculture Strategy
3. Relevant to the renewal of the North Central Regional Catchment Strategy and its supporting plans such as the River Health Strategy, Waterway Management Strategy, Environmental Watering Plan, Native Vegetation Management Plan, Floodplain Management Strategy, Invasive Plant & Animal Strategy, Regional Growth Plans, Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Plan, Waterway Strategy, and Soil Health Action Plan.
4. Relevant to broader Government plans/ strategies.

Table A-4 **Issues and actions feedback sorted by North Central CMA program**

Relevant CMA Programs	Category	Issues raised in consultation	Signpost to relevant sub-strategy
Sustainable Irrigation - LWMP	1	• Remodelling Whole farm planning to include: • Business planning. • Audit of physical resources. • Scenarios: high medium low water availability. • Soil salinity survey. • Options to make the most of dryland – removing fences and lane ways, amalgamating blocks etc. • System check audit.	Whole farm planning under the LWMP Adoption program
	1	• Extension needs for: • Abandonment of orchards in the Tresco – pest plant and animal issue, biosecurity issue with fruit fly. • Tyntynder flats – extension and land use planning- a special planning zone? • Pest plants and animals – there has been land that used to be irrigated that still holds a water use licence and is starting to harbour pests	LWMP education and training program
	1	• Removing delivery shares when rationalising.	Joint Land and Water Management Program with GMW under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Revisit soil salinity maps.	Whole farm planning under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Understanding water markets and water use efficiency.	LWMP education and training program
	1	• Mallee incentives - Capturing Tresco and Woorinen horticulture under the Mallee incentives program.	Mallee Irrigation Incentives Program

Relevant CMA Programs	Category	Issues raised in consultation	Signpost to relevant sub-strategy
Sustainable Irrigation - LWMP	1	• Salinity – monitoring and precursor to WFP.	Whole farm planning under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Water holding capacity soil assessments would be useful.	Whole farming planning and education and training under LWMP adoption program
	1	• GMW channel rationalisation should start from the bottom up.	Joint Land and Water Management Program with GMW under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Potential industry partners need to be included.	LWMP promotion and partnerships program
	1	• Demand for reuse incentive is high and should continue.	Whole farm plan for irrigation area – reuse under LWMP adoption program and drainage program
	1	• Farms are expanding in size.	Plan 2 Farm for irrigation area under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Dairy farms are exiting and in transition to mixed farming or expanding and adopting total mixed ration systems/ barns	Plan 2 Farm for irrigation area under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• New Irrigation development -centre pivots needing vegetation removal is an issue, not always going through the necessary approvals.	Northern Victoria Irrigation Development Guidelines
	1	• Pivots being installed on the wrong soil types.	Whole farm planning under the adoption program and the education and training program under the LWMP
	1	• Field days are supported with broad agency participation and community engagement.	LWMP promotion and partnerships program. This is also covered under the Sustainable Agriculture Strategy
	1	• Change thinking around corporate farming; can be positive.	LWMP promotion and partnerships
	1	• Ramsar and high value wetlands are a reason for government to invest.	Environmental Stewardship Plan under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Irrigation system check incentive would be supported.	Whole farm planning under the LWMP adoption program

Table A-4 **Issues and actions feedback sorted by North Central CMA program**

Relevant CMA Programs	Category	Issues raised in consultation	Signpost to relevant sub-strategy
Sustainable Irrigation - LWMP	1	• Soil moisture probes incentive would be supported.	Whole farm planning under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Soil suitability assessment incentive would be supported.	Whole farm planning under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Post Connections irrigation program to assist GMW reconfiguration.	Joint Land and Water Management Program with GMW under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• WFP to be at a higher level -> Plan 2 Farm Resources Audit -> Scenario planning High, Medium, Low water prices-> Layout plus GMW supply rationalisation.	Whole farm planning / Concept Plan supported by Plan 2 Farm under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Compulsory training a precursor to receive incentives.	LWMP education and training program to be considered by implementation committee
	1	• Stewardship - field days, break thinking around corporates, opportunity with factories to the east, secondary value add.	LWMP education and training program
	1	• Adoption program- range of scenarios around availability, broader whole farm planning, centre pivots and laterals- irrigation system checks, water use licence - SMM probes, irrigation course, energy efficiency, matching irrigation system with soil.	Whole farm planning / Concept Plan supported by Plan 2 Farm under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Council greater role, transitioning little pockets and how are they going to be managed, capability of modernisation, re-use and high flow.	LWMP promotion and partnerships and education and training program under LWMP e.g. field days
	1	• Support for Plan 2 Farm, but it should not be compulsory. Succession planning is important.	Whole farm planning supported by Plan 2 Farm under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Want to see tree planting and fencing incentives.	Environmental Stewardship Plan under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Want to see what cultural heritage programs might be.	Environmental Stewardship Plan and Whole Farm Plan under the LWMP adoption program

Relevant CMA Programs	Category	Issues raised in consultation	Signpost to relevant sub-strategy
Sustainable Irrigation - LWMP	1	• Sustainable soils groups supported.	LWMP education and training program
	1	• Soil salinity maps still important.	Whole farm planning under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Whole farm planning mixed support, many do works without a formal WFP.	Whole farm planning under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Rationalisation of GMW supply and outlets should be considered with reduced delivery shares.	Joint Land and Water Management Program with GMW under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Support to convert to dryland opportunities.	Plan 2 Farm and Concept Plan under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Open to irrigation system checks, uniformity and power use	Whole farm planning under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Incentive for re use systems supported.	Whole farm planning under the LWMP adoption program and drainage program
	1	• WFP for those who need it - linking and protecting trees on farm, tree belts and shelter for shade.	Whole farm planning and Environmental Stewardship Plan under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Irrigation scheduling supported- soil moisture probes.	Whole farm planning under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Research and development - water use efficiencies species/ pastures.	LWMP research and development program
	1	• Wetlands - intermittent, permanent. Modernisation has reduced wetland areas when channels decommissioned/ pipelined.	Private wetlands will be covered by the Environmental Stewardship Plan under the LWMP adoption program. Public Wetlands covered by the RCS Rivers and Wetlands Sub-Strategy
	1	• Water for private wetlands and farm biodiversity supported.	Environmental Stewardship Plan under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Local knowledge important to include in WFP.	Whole farm planning under the LWMP adoption program

Table A-4 **Issues and actions feedback sorted by North Central CMA program**

Relevant CMA Programs	Category	Issues raised in consultation	Signpost to relevant sub-strategy
Sustainable Irrigation - LWMP	1	• Do not want to see GMW irrigation system rationalised as we cannot predict future. Water may return. Loddon valley has been doing okay in recent years and has its place. Now not losing as much water as other parts of GMID.	Adoption program to ensure reconfiguration is farmer driven through Joint Land and Water Management Program with GMW
	1	• Boort has had new pivots and new development.	Northern Victorian Irrigation Development Guidelines and Concept Plan for whole physical layout under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Cost of delivery shares is an issue and reducing delivery shares may impact on irrigators.	Dryland reconfiguration and Joint Land and Water Management Program with GMW under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Whole farm planning - incentives need to be consistent between diverters and districts. Incentives for private diverters and irrigation district irrigators need to be the same rates and rules.	Whole farm planning under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Irrigation scheduling – soil moisture monitoring and weather stations supported.	Whole farm planning under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• WFP - shelter belts/trees/ farm biodiversity need to be included.	Environmental Stewardship Plan under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Incentives required for landholders to protect biodiversity.	Environmental Stewardship Plan under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Certified whole farm plans would be useful, but if the process is too hard people do not do them and this means the opportunity to address environmental improvements is lost.	Whole farm planning through the adoption program and education and training support under the LWMP
	1	• Education - making things accessible, understand yield bite sized chunks local people delivery.	LWMP education and training program
	1	• Group community-based model for delivery. Landcare an important player.	LWMP education and training program

Relevant CMA Programs	Category	Issues raised in consultation	Signpost to relevant sub-strategy
Sustainable Irrigation - LWMP	1	• Whole farm planning – follow up on previous WFP on the earth works implemented. Current 5 year time frame seems reasonable to revise WFP. New technology always changing designs e.g. bigger bays. And now seeing parts of the farm modernised. Plus larger paddocks for cropping. Property ownership changes often trigger need to revise WFP as enterprises and options change.	Whole farm planning and concept plan under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Irrigation systems checks would be useful and also need to consider energy requirements of the irrigation system.	Whole farm planning under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Checklist in producing WFP design: Encourage contractors input into preliminary design of the whole farm plan. Consult with those who are doing the work.	Whole farm planning under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Dynamic future water environment requires business planning to scope options for low, medium and high water price scenarios. Link to Plan 2 Farm program. Enable farmers to look into options for their business so they can transform given the change that is happening with the water market.	Whole farm planning and Concept Plan supported by Plan 2 Farm under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• WFP could include identifying opportunities to rationalise GMW infrastructure/outlets and be proactive for discounted termination fees and limited term contracts – delivery share review.	Whole farm planning and Joint Land and Water Management Program with GMW under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Assist farm amalgamation and explanation by removing barriers e.g. delivery shares /termination fees make land unattractive to buy and restricts entry of next generation and new enterprises.	Dryland re-configuration and Joint Land and Water Management Program with GMW under LWMP adoption program
	1	• Increasing pressure for remaining irrigators if the costs of GMW infrastructure are not reduced.	Farm decisions supported by Plan 2 Farm and Joint Land and Water Management Program with GMW under LWMP adoption program

Table A-4 **Issues and actions feedback sorted by North Central CMA program**

Relevant CMA Programs	Category	Issues raised in consultation	Signpost to relevant sub-strategy
Sustainable Irrigation - LWMP	1	• Extension to support all of the above is required. Business planning needs to be delivered by expert consultants as it is a highly specialised area and do not want businesses committing to poorly developed directions.	Plan 2 Farm (adoption program) supported by the education and training program under the LWMP
	1	• Soil assessments to include: soil capability, matching soil type and irrigation infrastructure (e.g. centre pivots are not ideal on heavy clay soils), optimising soil health, sink hole potential.	Whole farm planning under the LWMP adoption program supported by the research and monitoring program
	1	• Research: Deep soil analysis to further understand sink holes given the growing interest in ground water pumping and the dryer environment. Is regional groundwater pumping in Vic/NSW contributing to this problem?	LWMP research and monitoring program
	1	• Tyntynder flats is an example of an area that is transitioning out of irrigation to rural living.	LWMP promotion and partnerships program supported by the and Joint Land and Water Management Program with GMW under LWMP adoption program
	1	• Irrigation tools: interest in soil moisture monitoring.	Whole farm planning under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Streamlined process for implementing incentives program.	LWMP adoption program
	1	• Make incentive payments direct to farmer rather than provider.	LWMP adoption program
	1	• Incentives on best practice and to young farmers.	Whole farm planning and Plan 2 Farm under the LWMP adoption program and supported by the education and training program
	1	• Address issues so that land is not abandoned.	Environmental Stewardship Plan through whole farm planning under LWMP adoption program
	1	• Need to brand our product.	LWMP promotion and partnerships program

Relevant CMA Programs	Category	Issues raised in consultation	Signpost to relevant sub-stra
Sustainable Irrigation - LWMP	1	• Need to provide information on new crops and higher value enterprises for irrigation.	LWMP research and monitoring program
	1	• Investigate if Drainage Course Declarations approach could lower the cost of GMW owned drains	LWMP drainage infrastructure development and operations program
	1	• Continue to support WFP, plus irrigation scheduling tools and infrastructure upgrades.	Whole farm planning under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Support for transitioning to higher value crops (e.g. turf) or to dryland.	Whole farm planning and Plan 2 Farm under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Need to recognise the environmental impact of shrinking irrigation area and biodiversity and that this needs to be offset with environmental works on farms. E.g. habitat trees.	Environmental Stewardship Plan under LWMP adoption program
	1	• Research into understanding the impacts of drying land on biodiversity (dairy farms used to be wetlands).	LWMP research and monitoring program
	1	• It is too hard to access incentives: process is too complex and transaction cost for farmers is too high.	LWMP adoption program – education and training program to support applications
	1	• There is interest in alternative high value irrigation, new enterprises are looking to enter the area i.e. turf.	LWMP promotion and partnerships
	1	• Concerns about transitioning to dryland and removing GMW infrastructure i.e. it is like removing under used railway lines.	Joint Land and Water Management Program with GMW under LWMP adoption program
	1	• Need streamlined process for irrigators/ investors to obtain new information.	LWMP education and training program and promotion and partnerships
	1	• Resources are chewed up in planning rather than action on the ground, need to make it an easier process. And need people on the ground.	LWMP Planning and Governance program to address governance issues

Table A-4 **Issues and actions feedback sorted by North Central CMA program**

Relevant CMA Programs	Category	Issues raised in consultation	Signpost to relevant sub-strategy
Sustainable Irrigation - LWMP	1	• Need to promote the Region in partnerships program and link with Councils economic development programs. Agencies need to proactively seek new industries and businesses to the area.	LWMP promotion and partnerships
	1	• Increasing biodiversity and trees on farms and linking it with Whole Farm Planning strongly supported.	Whole farm planning and Environmental Stewardship Plan under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Farm business planning – Plan 2 Farm supported.	Whole farm planning under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Increasing intensification (e.g. feed pads) of farms requires business plans (P2F) as does transition out of irrigation.	Whole farming planning supported by Plan 2 Farm under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Encouraging young farmers is important.	LWMP Plan 2 Farm and Education and training
	1	• Big changes occurring 180 dairy farms (Cohuna area) and 30 already gone this year and 38 on the verge of going.	Farm decisions supported by Plan 2 Farm under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Intermittent wetlands on private land needs managing.	Environmental Stewardship Plan under the LWMP adoption program
	1	• Extension and education around land stewardship, rules and regulations of native vegetation.	Environmental Stewardship Plan under the LWMP adoption program supported by the education and training program
	1	• Community - irrigation drives community. Retaining the water and GMW system. Many modernised outlets with little use, means we are worse off.	LWMP promotion and partnerships program
	1	• Keeping communities together, losing jobs is big concern. Want vibrant sustainable agriculture communities.	LWMP promotion and partnerships program
	1	• Further engagement needed with dairy industry, no turnout at Gunbower.	LWMP promotion and partnerships program

Relevant CMA Programs	Category	Issues raised in consultation	Signpost to relevant sub-stra
Sustainable Agriculture	2	• Community engagement with - sustainable soils program, farm walks supported.	Regenerative Agriculture project under the Sustainable Agriculture Strategy
	2	• Local experience sharing is important. Sustainable soils program is successful and should continue.	Regenerative agriculture project under the Sustainable Agriculture Strategy and LWMP education and training program
	2	• Alternative fertilisers/ composts needs more research- link with effluent ponds and opportunity to use nutrients for production and energy production (Methane) especially with increasing intensification.	Sustainable Agriculture Strategy
	2	• Biowaste opportunities.	Sustainable Agriculture Strategy
	2	• All industries need to expand, cannot be small anymore. But possibly a 2,000 cow herd is practical maximum due to nutrient balances?	Sustainable Agriculture Strategy
	2	• Effluent management for intensive animals industries – dairy, chicken, piggeries.	Sustainable Agriculture Strategy
	2	• Council want a bigger role and want intensive animal industries.	Sustainable Agriculture Strategy
Rivers and wetlands	3	• Natural resource management issues on public land need to be recognised so public land manager's address, e.g. erosion around mid-river storages when they are kept at full supply (Kow Swamp, Kangaroo, Charm, Boga). Also, joint action on pest plants and animals need to involve public land manager.	CMA to work with the Public Land Manager
	3	• Locals are not satisfied with the Lake Meran management plan. They believe insufficient irrigation allocation and usage in the management plan is making lake saline.	Managed under the Loddon Murray Wetlands
	3	• Lake Meran is still an issue for the people who pump from it. The water is too salty. Need a new management plan.	Managed under the Loddon Murray Wetlands

Table A-4 **Issues and actions feedback sorted by North Central CMA program**

Relevant CMA Programs	Category	Issues raised in consultation	Signpost to relevant sub-strategy
Biodiversity	3	• Pest plants and animal risks increase as irrigation retreats and dryland not yet viable units.	Invasive Pest Plant & Animal Strategy
Flood plain management	3	• Lignum in drainage lines blocking drainage flows needs to be addressed.	Flood plain management.
Other	4	• Big concern over high water prices and water leaving the district.	Murray Darling Basin Plan and Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
	4	• Solar farms and potential erosion and drainage from panel run-off.	Responsibility of local government
	4	• Gold miners entering the Region may have impacts on surface water and groundwater.	Earth Resources Regulation
	4	• Mining companies looking at prospects in the area: LWMP should emphasise that there should be no negative impacts on natural environment or the irrigation industry.	Earth Resources Regulation
	4	• Increased water needed – another dam?	Relevant to State and Federal water resource policy
	4	• Illegal native vegetation clearing – compliance and lack of resources for Councils.	Council responsibility with support from DELWP
	4	• Illegal native vegetation clearing – more understanding needed of the pathways for vegetation clearing. Funding needed for extension to build capacity within the shires. Local people unwilling to report.	Council responsibility with support from DELWP Council responsibility with support from DELWP
	4	• Education of native vegetation clearance and other regulations is required by/for Councils. An extension person for each shire on native vegetation and biodiversity is needed.	Council responsibility with support from DELWP

Appendix 5 **Plan monitoring framework**

Table A-5 **LWMP Monitoring framework – 38 actions and 72 provisional targets**

#	Program actions	Provisional SMART targets	MERI Indicators	Measurement / reporting
1. Promotion and partnerships				
1.1	Establish inter agency/ stakeholder group to oversee R&D activities	Inter-agency R&D group meet twice per year	Number of meetings/ other events	Year 1
1.2	Promote uptake of new irrigation development guidelines (IDG) and coordinate extension support for redevelopment	75% of surveyed new irrigation developers report increased knowledge and awareness of best practice irrigation management by year 3	Number of IDG developments Number of participants	Annual Activity monitoring data
1.3	Design, pilot and implement an environmental stewardship program	Establishment of a stewardship program within 2 years X number of industry bodies involved in the development of the program X number of participants in farm business planning	Number of participants Number of projects on farm Number of industry participants/groups	Year 1 Activity monitoring data
1.4	Develop an engagement plan for working with Traditional Owner and Aboriginal landholders	Engagement plan completed within 12 months	Number of participants	Year 1
2. Planning and governance				
2.1	Confirm MERI framework, establish MERI plans for funded projects and implement process to monitor the progress of the Plan with attention to measuring indicators of: • irrigation performance • best practice nutrient and soil management • off-site impacts of irrigation on downstream users • best practice new irrigation development • meeting regulatory obligations • increased community awareness • increased awareness of Aboriginal landholders' and Traditional Owners' values and their involvement in the Plan	MERI Framework with performance measures established and operating within 12 months and reviewed annually Catchment condition indicators targets will correspond with RCS targets and be developed and monitored depending on funded actions	Number of case studies per year highlighting improved practices Number of audits of programs	Year 1 Activity monitoring data

Table A-5 **LWMP Monitoring framework – 38 actions and 72 provisional targets**

#	Program actions	Provisional SMART targets	MERI Indicators	Measurement / reporting
2. Planning and governance				
2.2	Establish a LWMP community steering committee to review progress and provide oversight	Community SC meet four times per year	Number of meetings/ other events	Year 1
2.3	Planning and reporting support for implementing the Plan and achievement of outcomes of: • efficient irrigation • improved regional irrigation drainage • meeting regulatory obligations • best practice new irrigation development • increased community awareness and involvement • better understanding and management of downstream irrigation impacts • increased awareness of Aboriginal landholders' and Traditional Owners' values and their involvement in the Plan	All relevant activity output targets met on time, within budget taking stock every two years X case studies per year highlighting improved irrigation practice Half yearly progress reports to investors.	Number of stakeholders engaged (various forums) Number of delivery and evaluation/review reports Number of case studies highlighting improved practices	Annual Activity monitoring data
3. Adoption				
3.1	Deliver farm business and whole farm planning support and training	X ha of irrigated areas covered by whole farm plans per year X % of farm planning participants report increased knowledge of irrigation opportunities on their farm within two years X % of farm planning participants have implemented elements of their plan within two years of completion 100% of farm plans comply with statutory obligations for cultural heritage, native vegetation, works on waterways and floodplain earthworks.	Number of participants Irrigable area (ha) covered by plans Number of participants have developed farm adjustment plans Number of farms involved in irrigation farm business planning Number of new or up to date WFPs GVAP $ per ML water use Change in awareness and knowledge Change in practice Number of case studies highlighting improved farm business decisions	2 years Surveys of participants Feedback forms & attendance Activity monitoring data

#	Program actions	Provisional SMART targets	MERI Indicators	Measurement / reporting
3. Adoption				
3.2	Provide extension and incentives for adoption of: • efficient irrigation technology (systems checks and scheduling tools/survey, design and upgrades, soil moisture monitoring) • best nutrient and soil management practices	Production per ML has increased by X% e.g. additional $10/ML GM per 100 GL/year X % of incentives recipients and farm planning participants report increased confidence to invest in on-farm irrigation upgrades X % of incentives recipients and farm planning participants report improved ability to manage their irrigation water. X% of participants report increased confidence and improved ability to manage nutrients and soil health on their farms X number of soil assessments X number of nutrient management plans X % improvement in water use efficiency on average across all incentives projects	Number of participants Value of incentives Number of technology tools adopted; type of systems installed Change in pumping costs ($) / pump efficiency Number of systems checked GVAP $ per ML water use Change in awareness and knowledge Change in practice Number of demonstration farms/ paddocks Number of soil assessments Number of other events Area (ha) of practice change occurring Number of extension materials (fact sheets, pod casts, case studies highlighting results)	2 years Surveys of participants Feedback forms & attendance Activity monitoring data
3.3	Explore opportunities and provide extension support to horticulture	X% of participants report increased confidence and improved ability to manage environmental assets and values on their irrigation water.	Number of landholder participants	2 years Activity monitoring data
3.4	Set up and support paddock-based demonstrations and trials on water use efficiency, nutrient and soil management	X % participants report increased ability to adapt to variable climate conditions and reduced water availability X number of participants have incorporated climate adaptation actions into their farm business X % of participants report the program to have been valuable within two years X number of field days or other extension activities held each year	Number of participants Number of demonstration farms/ paddocks Number of climate adaptation actions Number of other events Area (ha) of practice change occurring Number of extension materials (fact sheets, pod casts, case studies highlighting results) Change in awareness and knowledge Change in practice	2 years Surveys of participants Feedback forms & attendance Activity monitoring data

Table A-5 **LWMP Monitoring framework – 38 actions and 72 provisional targets**

#	Program actions	Provisional SMART targets	MERI Indicators	Measurement / reporting
3. Adoption				
3.5	Extension and incentive support for the construction of farm reuse systems where there is substantial public benefit	X number of new (or significantly upgraded) reuse systems per year	Number of installed re use systems Number of landholder participants	2 years Activity monitoring data
3.6	Extension support for the adoption of the new irrigation development guidelines (IDG) by the private sector	80 % of IDG referrals processed within agreed timeframes 80 % of IDG applicants surveyed had a clear understanding of the requirements of the IDG process 80 % of applicants surveyed agreed the support provided through the IDG process was appropriate	Number of landholder participants Number of IDG applicants Number of promotion events	2 years Activity monitoring data
3.7	Provide extension and incentives for environmental stewardship projects (e.g. riparian and wetland restoration, and replanting native vegetation in sensitive areas and regional bio-links) These would be delivered through a range of farmer led models (e.g. cluster groups, one-on-one extension, focus/discussion groups)	X number of participants achieved steps towards environmental accreditation X% of participants report increased confidence and improved ability to manage environmental assets and values on their farms X number of native vegetation planting and area protection projects	Number of participants Change in awareness and knowledge Change in practice Project outputs (e.g. km fencing, ha protected etc) Photo points information Number of site visits	2 years Surveys of participants Feedback forms & attendance Activity monitoring data
3.8	Incorporate assessment of cultural heritage values into whole farm planning support	X % of participants report increased knowledge and awareness of Aboriginal cultural values within two years X % of drainage plans and designs included cultural assessment	Number of participants Number of drainage plans culturally assessed	2 years Feedback forms & attendance Activity monitoring data
4. Regulation and standards				
4.1	Partner with key organisations (EPA) to ensure the SEPP (Waters)/ GED obligations is adhered to. For example, no impact on the beneficial users of groundwater	100% of SEPP (Waters)/GED obligations water quality targets met.	SEPP (Waters)/GED obligations quality targets	Annual Activity monitoring data

#	Program actions	Provisional SMART targets	MERI Indicators	Measurement / reporting
4. Regulation and standards				
4.2	Participate in quarterly partner meetings and report under the BSM2030 strategy salinity accountability requirements annually	All partners meet three times per year	Number of meetings with partners Number of monitoring sites Number of EC credits	Annual
4.3	Implementing the Murray-Darling Basin Salinity Management 2030 Strategy (BSM2030)	Accountable Actions review plan completed within 12 months	Number of participants	Ongoing
4.4	Manage accountable actions for MD BSM2030 Salinity Registers. Monitoring the impact of any new actions and reporting on these if required through the development and application of an improved landscape salinity model incorporating the understanding of surface water and groundwater interactions active in the generation of salt exports from northern Victoria including Barr Creek and the Tragowel Plains	100% of accountable actions are undertaken in accordance with the accountable action review plan each year	Number of accountable actions reviews	2 years
4.5	Provide review and monitoring reports to the Victorian Government to meet their reporting requirements under BSM2030	All BSM2030 reporting requirements met each year	Number of reports	Annual
4.6	End of Valley monitoring sites are monitored and reported on to achieve compliance with the MD BSM2030 and the Basin Plan.	100% compliance with Murray Darling Basin Agreement	Number of monitoring sites Number of reports	Annual Activity monitoring data
4.7	New Irrigation developments and environmental watering within the BSM2030 guidelines consistent with the salinity register	80% meet the requirements of the Northern Victorian Irrigation Development Guidelines each year	Number of audits Level of compliance	2 years Activity monitoring data

Table A-5 **LWMP Monitoring framework – 38 actions and 72 provisional targets**

#	Program actions	Provisional SMART targets	MERI Indicators	Measurement / reporting
5. Education and training				
5.1	Offer irrigation management training courses (e.g. Irrigation 101, Water Trade Literacy, ExtensionAUS, Irrigation Risk Management)	X % of training course participants report increased knowledge and awareness of best practice irrigation management within two years; X % of extension program participants implement a practice change on their farm within 3 years X number of training modules and other materials within 3 years X number of extension materials e.g. fact sheets / case studies / podcasts	Number of participants Type of training support Number of extension materials (fact sheets, pod casts, case studies, training modules) Change in awareness and knowledge Change in practice	2 years Surveys of participants Feedback forms & attendance Activity monitoring data
5.2	Co-ordinate farm business planning support and training to irrigators (including redevelopment projects)	X number participants reporting increased knowledge and business performance Number of case studies highlighting improved farm business decisions"	Number of participants Number of case studies highlighting improved farm business decisions	2 years Feedback forms & attendance
5.3	Establish training opportunities with key industry groups (including dairy, horticulture, cropping) to build confidence with irrigation technology, options for new crops and new land use options	X number of participants reporting increased confidence with irrigation technology, options for new crops and new land use options.	Number of engagements with individuals and organisations Type of engagement	2 years Feedback forms & attendance
5.4	Educate agency staff and wider community about impacts of irrigation on downstream users using a wide range of communications media	X% of agency staff report an improved understanding of recreational water users needs X% of downstream water users report an improved understanding of competing demands for water	Number of engagement sessions Number of participants (agency, downstream water users)	2 years Feedback forms & attendance
5.5	Work with Aboriginal Landholders and Traditional Owner groups to establish a community based approach to sustainable irrigation that is informed by an improved understanding of cultural practices and potential management options	X number of Aboriginal landholder involved X number of Traditional Owner groups involved	Number of engagement sessions Number of Aboriginal landholder or Traditional Owner participants	2 years Feedback forms & attendance

#	Program actions	Provisional SMART targets	MERI Indicators	Measurement / reporting
5.6	Explore feasible business planning support to Aboriginal landholders and offer culturally appropriate training opportunities	X number of Aboriginal landholder involved X number of Traditional Owner groups involved	Number of Aboriginal landholder involved Number of Traditional Owner groups involved	2 years Feedback forms & attendance
5.7	Agency staff and landholders complete field based cultural heritage training	X % of participants report increased knowledge and awareness of Aboriginal cultural values.	Number of participants	Year 1 Activity monitoring data
5.8	Educate irrigators on the risks of irrigation with saline/brackish groundwater in Northern Victoria Resolving issues with the community about the use of saline brackish groundwater in Northern Victoria through participation in regional groundwater steering committee, workshops, information sessions and field-based research	X % of participants report increased knowledge and awareness	Number of regional workshops	2 years Feedback forms & attendance
6. Research and catchment monitoring				
6.1	Irrigation investigations and research into: • new WUE technologies • regional land and water use mapping • best practice nutrient management techniques • soil management practices including those that maintain and enhance soil structure • provide a quantitative assessment of the impacts of soil management practices on soil structure and consequences in terms of soil hydrology (permeability)	X number of trials in partnership with landholders, research organisations and industry within 3 years X number of research reports within 3 years Establishment and use of benchmarking information on water and land use and production within 2 years X number of research reports within 3 years	Number of participants Number of trials participants, farms/ paddocks Number of extension materials (fact sheets, pod casts, case studies highlighting results) Area (ha) with up-to-date irrigated land and water use mapping	Annual Activity monitoring data
6.2	Investigations and monitoring of impacts of irrigation on downstream water users and recreation values of irrigation	Review of monitoring requirements for irrigation drainage Downstream salinity and water quality Irrigation Drainage MOU targets are met; reviewed every 5 years	Number of monitoring sites	Annual Activity monitoring data

Table A-5 **LWMP Monitoring framework – 38 actions and 72 provisional targets**

#	Program actions	Provisional SMART targets	MERI Indicators	Measurement / reporting
6. Research and catchment monitoring				
6.3	Improving the groundwater monitoring network across northern Victoria consistent with meeting the reporting needs under BSM2030 through the adoption of digital technology including telemetry	X% monitoring sites using digital technology	Number of monitoring sites using digital technology	Annual Activity monitoring data
7. Drainage infrastructure development and operations				
7.1	Assess need for regional drainage infrastructure upgrades such as community surface drains with guidance from the surface water engagement plan	100% of affected landowners consulted during drainage management planning within 5 years.	Number of landholders participated	2 years Activity monitoring data
7.2	Develop projects to execute regional irrigation drainage infrastructure upgrades	X number of projects completed within 2 years	Number of projects	2 years Activity monitoring data
7.3	Implement the Irrigation Drainage MOU with all partners	Irrigation Drainage MOU is adopted, and all drainage water is managed sustainably	Number of agreements	2 years Activity monitoring data
7.4	If identified, Drainage Course Declarations will be implemented on North Central CMA drains with guidance from the surface water engagement plan	Establish a surface water engagement plan for community surface drains Implement the plan within 4 years X ha of catchments drained / km of drains protected (with or without DCDs)	Number and hectares of DCDs	2 years Activity monitoring data
7.5	Support construction of new drains (only where needed)	X ha of catchments drained / km of new drains constructed per year;	Number of projects	2 years Activity monitoring data

Appendix 6 **Estimated costs of main program elements**

Promotion and Partnerships

The cost of this program is based on a full time North Central CMA LWMP officer dedicated 100% of their time on stewardship, promotions and partnerships. They will achieve mutually beneficial partnerships with a range of organisations that will assist in delivering the LWMP programs. It is recommended that this position be based in the LCIR region in Kerang.

This is estimated to cost $200,000 per year including salary, on-costs and an operating budget.

Table A6-1 **Indicative cost of Promotion and Partnerships program subject to funding availability**

Program element	Delivery mechanism	Annual cost
Planning Officer	100% of a full time North Central CMA officer and operating costs	$200,000

Planning and Governance

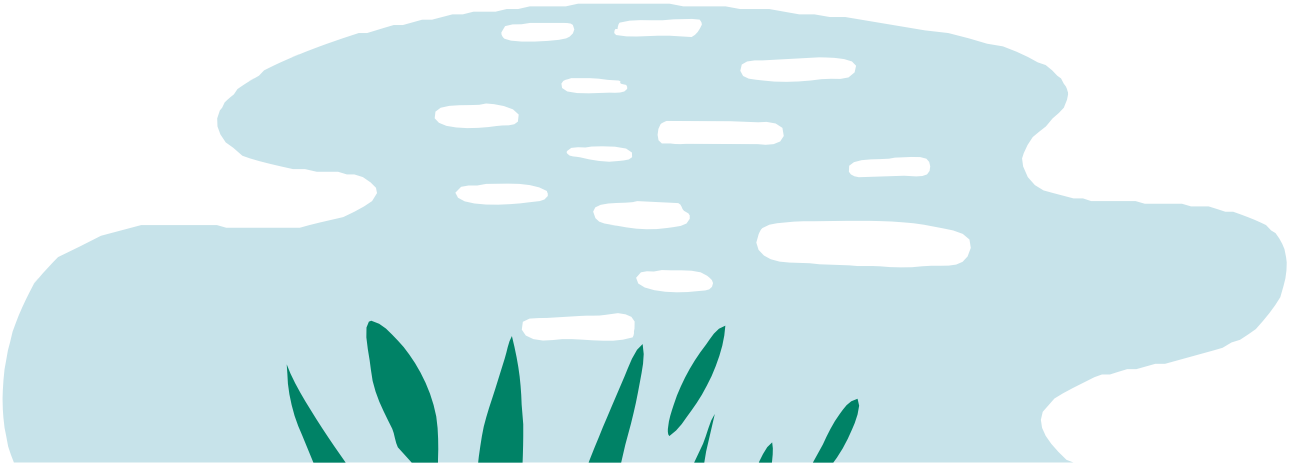
It is envisaged that this program will be delivered through the North Central CMA and the LWMP community steering committee.

The costs of the program are expected to be 20% of a full-time officer who will support the steering committee and manage the MERI plan.

This is estimated to be $50,000/year, comprising $40,000 for the officer and operating costs; with community steering committee costs of $10,000/year.

Table A6-2 **Indicative cost of Planning and Governance program subject to funding availability**

Program element	Delivery mechanism	Annual cost
Planning Officer and community steering committee	20% of a full-time North Central CMA officer $10,000 steering committee costs	$50,000



Adoption

The costs of the program are tabulated in Table A6-3.

Table A6-3 **Indicative cost of adoption program subject to funding availability**

Program element	Delivery mechanism	Target no. of Farms	Annual investment sought
Farm business planning program	Consultants and trained agency staff with 1:1 farmer meetings	30	$450,000
Whole Farm Plan – Concept Plan	Consultants and trained agency staff with 1:1 farmer meetings	30	$300,000
Incorporating cultural heritage values	Engagement with Traditional Owners in the WFP-Concept Plan	10	$100,000
Systems check	Consultants/ Irrigation specialists, e.g. with Irrimate to test layout/flow rates	30	$300,000
Farm adjustment packages if transitioning out of irrigation	Incentives for reconfiguring to dryland	30	$300,000
Survey for irrigation upgrades that are identified in the WFP	Incentive for surveys	30	$150,000
Design for irrigation upgrades that are identified in the WFP	Incentive for design	30	$150,000
Infrastructure upgrades	Incentive for approved systems meeting minimum standards	30	$300,000
Irrigation scheduling tools and related technologies	Incentive for approved systems	30	$30,000
Fencing and replanting native vegetation in sensitive areas and on regional bio-links	Incentive for approved plantings	30	$300,000
		Total	**$2,380,000**

Regulation and Standards

The costs of the program are presented in Table A6-4.

Table A6-4
Indicative cost of regulations/standards program subject to funding availability

Program element	Delivery mechanism	Annual cost
Northern Victorian Irrigation Development Guidelines.	Work jointly with DELWP, GMW, North East and Goulburn Broken CMA. Guidelines already funded. 25% of a full-time irrigation development coordinator. 25% of $200,000 = $50,000 funding to Agriculture Victoria	$50,000
Incentive guidelines	Steering committee and supporting agencies to develop guidelines to determine individual farm project incentive levels based on public benefits	Covered in Planning and Governance program and Adoption Program
Management of irrigation drains through the Irrigation Drainage Memorandum of Understanding between DELWP, Agriculture Victoria, EPA, Goulburn Broken CMA.	Work jointly with DELWP, Agriculture Victoria, GMW, EPA and Goulburn Broken CMA. 25% of a full time North Central CMA officer. 25% of $200,000 = $50,000	$50,000
Monitoring and reporting required for BSM2030 Involvement in the Victorian Salt Disposal Working Group Other reporting as required for the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and the Northern Victorian Water Resource Plan.	50% of a full time North Central CMA officer. $100,000 Plus, investigations and monitoring $100,000	$200,000
	Total	**$300,000**

Education and Training

Program costs include two full-time equivalent positions in each of North Central CMA and Agriculture Victoria. That is, four positions in total, plus operating costs to set up field sites, trials, and extension costs. This will require funding of $400,000 per year to the North Central CMA and $400,000 per year to Agriculture Victoria.

Community feedback is that these positions should be based in the irrigation region e.g. Kerang.

This is a cost of $800,000 per year for five years. Funding will be sought from State and Federal governments and rural research and development corporations. Support and co-investment from industry will be essential.

The costs of the program are presented in Table A6-5.

Table A6-5 Indicative cost of program subject to funding availability

Program element	Delivery mechanism	Annual cost
2 North Central CMA extension staff and 2 Agriculture Victoria staff based in Kerang	$200,000/staff member including operating budgets	$800,000

Research and Catchment Monitoring

The costs of the Research and Monitoring program are presented in Table A6-6.

Table A6-6 **Indicative costs of program subject to funding availability**

Program element	Delivery mechanism	Annual cost
Investigate and fund research into new water use efficiency technologies, e.g. The internet of things and improvement of advice on water quality.	Funding for research trials to tertiary organisations, Agriculture Victoria and other groups.	$100,000
Land and water use changes (Geospatial mapping and reporting).	Funding of Agriculture Victoria.	$100,000
Improving understanding of soil health under irrigation.	Funding of Agriculture Victoria.	$100,000
Monitoring Evaluation Reporting and Improvement (MERI) process of LWMP programs.	CMA staff. 25% of full-time project officer including operating.	$50,000
	Total	**$350,000**

Drainage Infrastructure Development and Operations

Table A6-7 outlines the expected costs of the Drainage program.

Table A6-7 **Indicative cost of program subject to funding availability**

Program element	Delivery mechanism	Annual cost
Irrigation reuse incentives – e.g. DROP program.	Through Agriculture Victoria.	$700,000
DCD implementation.	North Central CMA with GMW.	$700,000
	Total	**$1,400,000**

Appendix 7 **Economic analysis**

Private benefits from the adoption program

Generally, irrigation systems have a life of around 20 - 40 years before they need upgrading in some form. This means that of the 200,000 ha irrigated in the LCIR under contemporary conditions, there would be between 5,000 ha to 10,000 ha per year upgraded on average. This is expected to cost irrigators $10 million to $30 million per year and is a private cost that would occur even without a LWMP. The 'additionality' created by the LWMP is more likely to be an improved standard of the works and their environmental benefit rather than an additional area, although it is recognised some irrigators will bring forward investment as a result of the LWMP programs. This 'additionality' creates both private and public benefits.

Private benefits have been based on case studies from the Farm Water Program. This generated on-farm irrigation modernisation, within a whole farm plan that had minimum standards and the benefits were:

- Net productivity of $300/ha/year gross margin improvement.
- Water efficiency benefits of 1.8 ML/ha/y saving valued at value of $175/ML, which is $315/ha/year. This water saving is frequently used to double crop or move to a higher water use crop/s that are enabled by the more efficient system; this benefit is in addition to the $300/ha/year benefit above for the production gain on the same crop.
- Labour savings $140/ha/y.
- This provides an annual benefit of $755/ha/y.

The value created through the LWMP is a higher standard of works and also some additional works encouraged. The attribution of the total benefit to the LWMP funded programs as a result of higher standards is estimated to 5% of the $755/ha/y or $38/ha/y in private benefit[25]. Assuming that:

- No additional private costs associated with this benefit, as the whole farm planning process may save costs for some and incur additional transaction costs for others, so that overall it is cost neutral.
- 3,500 ha/y of the 5,000 ha/y to 10,000 ha/y being upgraded in some form going through the LWMP adoption program whole farm planning process.
- Then there would be 3,500 ha x $38/ha/y = $133,000/y[26] additional benefit at year 1, increasing at the same rate each year to $655,000/y benefit from 17,500 ha at year 5. This has a present value of $7.8 M at 4% over 20 years.

Higher WFP standards

Year	Benefits
0	
1	$133,000
2	$266,000
3	$399,000
4	$532,000
5	$665,000
6	$665,000
7	$665,000
8	$665,000
9	$665,000
10	$665,000
11	$665,000
12	$665,000
13	$665,000
14	$665,000
15	$665,000
16	$665,000
17	$665,000
18	$665,000
19	$665,000
20	$665,000
Present Value 4%	**$7,806,968.64**

Figure A7-1 **Private benefits of adoption program**

In terms of additional area modernised or significantly brought forward in time. It has been assumed that 5 farms per year doing an additional area of irrigation upgrade of 25 ha per farm, which they otherwise would either not have done or have done many years later[27] this is 125 ha/y. Over 5 years this is 625 ha.

- 625 ha x $755/ha/y = $471,875/year additional private benefits, at year 5. Capitalised using a discount rate of 4% over 20 years provides a present value of benefits of $5.5 M at 4% over 20 years.
- Less additional capital development costs irrigation and associated infrastructure at $7,000/ha (lasering, pipe & riser, reuse, drip etc), which for 625 ha spread over 5 years is 125 ha for each of the 5 years of the program at $7,000/ha or $875,000/y cost for 5 years. Present value of costs is $4.1 M.
- This gives a Net Present Value of $1.5 M, private benefits less private costs for this component.

[25] This is $74/ha additional benefit that would have occurred in the counterfactual or 'without plan case'.

[26] This compares with 51,630 ha of whole farm plan designs being undertaken between 2007/8 and 2015/16 which was 6,454 ha/year in the LCIR. But this included acceleration due to the Farm Water Program, so a lower value of 3,500 ha/y has been used.

[27] This is 125 ha/y above the base rate of adoption that would have occurred in the counterfactual or 'without plan case'.

Farm costs and benefits with additional modernised area

Year	Costs	Benefits	Benefits-costs
0	($875,000)		($875,000)
1	($875,000)	$94,375	($686,250)
2	($875,000)	$188,750	($591,875)
3	($875,000)	$283,125	($497,500)
4	($875,000)	$377,500	$471,875
5		$471,875	$471,875
6		$471,875	$471,875
7		$471,875	$471,875
8		$471,875	$471,875
9		$471,875	$471,875
10		$471,875	$471,875
11		$471,875	$471,875
12		$471,875	$471,875
13		$471,875	$471,875
14		$471,875	$471,875
15		$471,875	$471,875
16		$471,875	$471,875
17		$471,875	$471,875
18		$471,875	$471,875
19		$471,875	$471,875
20		$665,000	$471,875
Present Value 4%	**$4,051,158.32**	**$5,539,719.29**	**$1,488,560.97**

Figure A7-2 **BCR Additional irrigation upgrade/modernisation**

The sum of the private benefits is $5.5 M plus $7.8 M, which is $13.3 M.

The Plan2 Farm component within the adoption program also generates intangible, un-costed benefits from the farm strategic management decisions, e.g. from seeing an accountant, succession planning, restructuring debt, checking insurance, making wills etc.

Private Benefits through the education and training and the research and development programs

A modest benefit has been attributed to the benefits of extension for the education and training program with the research and development program.

This is estimated to achieve an additional $1 million per year from irrigated agriculture through an additional $10/ML gross margin return on 100,000 ML. This is in the context of the Region using between 200,000 to 600,000 ML/year depending on the year and that gross returns vary from around $300/ML for mixed farming to $5,000/ML for high value horticulture with dairying around $1,000/ML (gross margins are approximately half the gross returns per ML).

The total gain in agricultural gross margins represents a small increase of approximately $2 M (gross value is approximately double gross margin) on the $776 M/y gross value of irrigated agriculture production and is a deliberately conservative assessment of benefits.

This is a private benefit with a present value of the gross margin of $1 M/y being $13.6 million at 4 % over 20 years.

[28] Rationalisation of GMW infrastructure at $60,000 per farm. Note one outlet cost saved is more than $40,000 and there is also associated channel decommissioning and other GMW structures. Often several outlets are decommissioned per farm, so $60,000 is a conservative (low) level of benefit.

Public benefits

Public benefits are expected due to:

- Saved costs from less public GMW infrastructure being required to be modernised or replaced. It is assumed that 10 additional farmers per year will change GMW infrastructure at an average capital saving of $60,000 per farm in saved costs[28]. This saves $0.6 million/year for five years of the program. The present value of this is $2.8 M at 4% over 20 years. This is a benefit for GMW customers.

Year	Benefits
0	$600,000
1	$600,000
2	$600,000
3	$600,000
4	$600,000
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	
13	
14	
15	
16	
17	
18	
19	
20	
Present Value 4%	**$2,777,937.13**

Figure A7-3 **Public benefits rationalisation of GMW infrastructure**

- Enhanced public benefits associated with the enhanced protection of environmental sites on neighbouring public land and also on private land. This would include wetlands, water courses and terrestrial remnant vegetation.
- There are approximately 40,000 ha of wetlands in the area (Figure 2-9), the majority of which are on public land, but conservatively it is estimated that there are at least 4,000 ha (10% of the 40,000 ha) within influence of practices on private land and would benefit from improved stewardship on farm as a result of this LWMP. After identifying key high value areas for targeting action on individual farms in the adoption program, the actions that would be encouraged include reconnecting to floodplain, replanting, fencing, weed control and environmental watering[29]. The program will improve environmental health and create biodiversity linkages and corridors across farms in order to create regional scale improvements e.g. along waterways and linking wetlands.
- Estimating the benefit generated by environmental improvements is a challenge. In an economic evaluation for the MDBA (Morrison, 2010) the Loddon Avoca Region was assessed to have a benefit of $3,363,000 to $5,403,000 for every 1% increase in healthy vegetation.
- Using this valuation with an expected 30% improvement in the health of 4,000 ha (10% of wetlands) as a result of the plan would be equivalent to a 3% increase in healthy vegetation in the region and would have a benefit of around $10 million to $16 million. The mid-point value of $13 million benefit has been assumed as a result of implementing this LWMP.

[29] The North Central CMA has already undertaken environmental watering of private wetlands in the Wirra-lo Wetland Complex, which is a 66 hectare series of swamps, creeks, depressions and associated margins located on 150 hectares of private land

Drainage benefits

Institutional framework/ DCDs

The economic value of drainage includes benefits to agriculture, roads and environmental values. In the Calivil Creek and Pyramid Creek drainage systems, which are mostly served by North Central CMA drains that are earmarked as possible DCDs, it has been calculated that the annual value of the benefit from drainage services is $2.3 M/year. Approximately seventy percent of this value is associated with public benefits associated with roads and the environment. This has been calculated using the framework for assessing benefits from drainage that was developed for the Draft Loddon Murray Irrigation Region Surface Water Management Strategy, 2019 (RMCG, 2019).

Without institutional protection and a management regime the drainage infrastructure would be expected to decline. It is assumed that the drainage system would depreciate over 40 years (2.5% per year decline in benefits) and after this time it would be no longer effective.

Drainage benefits

Year	Benefits
0	
1	$57,500
2	$115,000
3	$172,500
4	$230,000
5	$287,000
6	$345,000
7	$402,500
8	$460,000
9	$517,500
10	$575,000
11	$632,500
12	$690,000
13	$747,500
14	$805,000
15	$862,500
16	$920,000
17	$977,500
18	$1,035,000
19	$1,092,500
20	$1,150,000
Present Value 4%	**$7,196,413.18**

Figure A7-4
Value of drainage benefits

Drainage reuse program

In terms of the drainage reuse program. It is assumed:

- Additional adoption of 20 reuse systems per year for five years.
- After 5 years resulting in 100 reuse systems servicing 40 ha each.
- This is 4,000 ha capturing an additional 0.7 ML/ha/y of surface runoff or 2,800 ML/y water value.
- An annual water value of $150/ML (after pumping costs), which is after 5 years this is $420,000/year in water value, which being retained by the farmer is a private benefit. Capitalised at 4% over 20 years the saved water value provides $4.9 M private benefits and there would be additional public benefits in water quality improvement.
- A public benefit associated with reduced drainage problems as a result of the reuse. The actual area downstream with less drainage issues will vary but is assumed to be the same area of 4,000 ha.
- Installing drains in the LCIR undrained areas provides an average benefit of $27/ha/year (Draft Loddon Murray Irrigation Region Surface Water Management Strategy, 2019 (RMCG, 2019). Assuming reuse is targeted to high priority areas with higher benefits, but also that reuse achieves a lower benefit compared to a regional drain as it is less capable in high rainfall events, a benefit of $20/ha/year over 4,000 ha has been assumed. This generates an annual benefit after 5 years of $80,000/year (4,000x 20). This has a present value of benefits of $0.9 M.
- Costs of construction are estimated at $50,000 each for twenty; or $1M/y which is capitalised to be $4.6 M in costs. This cost is to be shared between Government incentives, program management and the irrigators participating depending on the incentive level offered.

Reuse		Reuse benefits to region		Reuse	
Year	**Benefits**	**Year**	**Benefits**	**Year**	**Costs**
0		0		0	$1,000,000
1	$84,000	1	$16,000	1	$1,000,000
2	$168,000	2	$32,000	2	$1,000,000
3	$252,000	3	$48,000	3	$1,000,000
4	$336,000	4	$64,000	4	$1,000,000
5	$420,000	5	$80,000	5	
6	$420,000	6	$80,000	6	
7	$420,000	7	$80,000	7	
8	$420,000	8	$80,000	8	
9	$420,000	9	$80,000	9	
10	$420,000	10	$80,000	10	
11	$420,000	11	$80,000	11	
12	$420,000	12	$80,000	12	
13	$420,000	13	$80,000	13	
14	$420,000	14	$80,000	14	
15	$420,000	15	$80,000	15	
16	$420,000	16	$80,000	16	
17	$420,000	17	$80,000	17	
18	$420,000	18	$80,000	18	
19	$420,000	19	$80,000	19	
20	$420,000	20	$80,000	20	
Present Value 4%	**$4,930,717.04**	Present Value 4%	**$939,184.20**	Present Value 4%	**$4,629,895.22**

Figure A7-5 **Drainage reuse costs and benefits**

[30]Based on 10% of rainfall at 300 mm and 10% of annual usage at 400 mm. This is a low level of capture compared to previous analysis e.g. Holmes, 2007 due to higher water values, more opportunistic irrigation and a greater level of efficiency now.

Appendix 8 **Summary of Traditional Owner Engagement**

A letter of notification for the LCIR LWMP renewal was sent to Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation CEO, Taungurung Land and Waters Council CEO, Barapa Barapa Wamba Wemba Native Title Working Group Secretary, Barapa Barapa Wamba Wemba Country Steering Committee Secretary and Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation CEO.

The letters ensured formal compliance with state government obligations to provide opportunities for active participation as per Recognition Settlement Agreement (RSA) requirements under each of the Natural Resource Management Agreements (NRA). Additionally, engagement addresses Action 6 in the NCCMA Reconciliation Action Plan to' Incorporate TO perspectives in strategy and planning'.

A consultation process was followed with Traditional Owner groups, Aboriginal Water Officers and Indigenous Facilitators to discuss the appropriate way to further engage each group and opportunities in sustainable land management on Country.

Many Traditional Owner groups have developed Country Plans to articulate their goals and further opportunities to increase stewardship of the landscape.

Country Plans were reviewed and summarised to capture agricultural aspirations and potential opportunities for future engagement.

Groups referenced goals for sustainable land management and economic benefit from their respective Country Plan. For example, Dja Dja Wurrung expressed interest in growing native grasses for commercial benefit.

Examples of aligned goals noted during an informal process are summarised in dot points below. Please consult directly with each Traditional Owner group for details on Country Plan goals and current priorities.

Reviewed documents	Potential agricultural and land management interest areas
Dja Dja Wurrung Country Plan 2014-2034	• Undertake a feasibility study of economic opportunities related to carp management • Map contaminated land on Dja Dja Wurrung Country and analyze existing information about that land. • Identify opportunities for service provision in land remediation. • The number of bush foods and medicinal species protected in seed banks. • The availability of priority species of bush tucker and medicine plants • Revegetate wetlands to allow for food and fibre resources, and native, ecologically and culturally important plants.
Barapa Barapa Water Resource Plan 2019-Part 11	• Ongoing challenge with salinity and soil health • Yabby and fish farming is introduced by Barapa Barapa at sites and government works with Barapa Barapa to maintain appropriate water standards to support yabbies and fish at an economic scale. • Government to facilitate for land and water to be managed simultaneously to secure a cultural and holistic approach in water management. • Cultural, environmental, agricultural, economic benefits within a First Nations cultural framework that may be achievable through regenerative agriculture.
Taungurung Country Plan 2016	Acquire freehold property as part of building the Taungurung economic base i.e. land that can be used for private enterprise such as agri-business • Investment for research & development about Taungurung traditional foods and plants.
Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation Whole of Country Plan 2021-2030	• Explore opportunities for producing native plants, seeds, honey, carbon offsets and other products and services on Yorta Yorta controlled land. • Engage Landcare, Trust for Nature, Land for Wildlife and other progressive landholders and sustainable farming groups in discussions, workshops and training about healthy Country practices and offer Woka Walla contractual services. • Investigate the feasibility and opportunities for carbon farming at Yielima and other Yorta Yorta controlled properties.

The strategic relationship between Country Plans and land and water management priorities are supported by following Victorian and Australian government plans:

- Victoria's Water Plan.
- Goulburn Murray Water Resource Plans (groundwater).
- Victorian North and Murray Water Resource Plans (surface water). These includes the following objectives:
  - Recognise Aboriginal values and objectives of water.
  - Include Aboriginal values and traditional ecological knowledge in water planning.
  - Support Aboriginal access to water for economic development.
  - Build capacity to increase Aboriginal participation in water management.

Through consultation and objectives of the LWMP it was determined that an immediate outcome would be the development and collaboration of a Traditional Owner and Aboriginal Landholder Engagement Plan to understand cultural values and build partnerships with TO groups and Aboriginal landholders to explore their agricultural aspirations in a self-determined manner.

"Traditional Owner Uncle Graham Atkinson (Dja Dja Wurrung Elder and North Central Board Member), supported the approach within the LCIR LWMP to engage with Traditional Owner groups and Aboriginal landholders."

This action will work towards one of the four long-term objectives of the Plan to deliver: **Active involvement of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal landholders**.

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