**Gunbower Creek Flow Investigations Community Group**



**Terms of Reference**

April 2019

# Background

The North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) and Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW) are investigating the flow constraints along the Gunbower Creek and potential options to remove these constraints through *The Living Murray (TLM) Environmental Works and Measures Program Stage Two Project (the project).* The projectis about securing enough capacity in Gunbower Creek for everyone*.* These investigations include work to be undertaken in 2019, by a consultant with expertise in stream processes.

***Gunbower Creek’s capacity constraints***

GMW currently aims to manage flows up to ~800 ML/d over Gunbower Weir, to manage the risk of inundating private land and infrastructure at higher flows. This means current constraints can affect the delivery of both irrigation water and water for the environment.

The constraints mean that during times of high irrigation demand, irrigation delivery may be constrained, and the North Central CMA may not be able to deliver adequate water to:

* Support river red gum watering, waterbirds and native fish populations in Gunbower Forest and its wetlands in spring and summer;
* Provide higher flows down the Creek in spring to promote Murray cod spawning;
* Provide minimum flows over Koondrook Weir to allow fish passage from the Murray River into Gunbower Creek (after construction of the proposed fishway).

***The Gunbower Creek Flow Investigations Community Group***

The Gunbower Creek Flow Investigations Community Group (FICG) is a revised form of a pre-existing community group known as the Cockatoo Lagoon Community Working group (CWG). In early 2018, North Central CMA and GMW established the Cockatoo Lagoon CWG to provide community input into the options that were being investigated at the time, which potentially impacted Cockatoo Lagoon. These options involved changes to Thompsons Weir, a known flow constraint, and developing a plan to improve the health of Cockatoo Lagoon. The main role of the Cockatoo Lagoon CWG was to provide input to options being investigated and assist with the development of the environmental plan for the Lagoon. However, investigations revealed several issues, including the presence of acid sulfate soils in the sediments of Cockatoo Lagoon and constraints further downstream of Thompsons Weir. The project has now expanded scope to investigate multiple constraints along the length of Gunbower Creek in more detail, with a focus on those between Gunbower Weir and Hipwell Road Weir.

As the project is now focussed on multiple flow constraints, it is appropriate to provide the opportunity for community members with an interest in and knowledge of the broader Gunbower Creek to also be involved in the community group. It is recognised that some members of the Cockatoo Lagoon CWG will wish to remain on the group, while others may no longer be interested in the expanded scope of the project. Therefore, this is also an opportunity for current members to step down if they wish.

# Purpose

The purpose of the FICG is to provide local input into the Gunbower Creek Capacity Constraints Investigation Project and an avenue to increase community understanding of the project*.* It will not be a decision-making group, but members will work collaboratively with the North Central CMA and GMW by providing local knowledge and advice relevant to the project as it develops.

# Objectives

The objectives of the FICG are to:

* Provide a forum for the North Central CMA and partner agencies to discuss the project’s history, investigations, option, limitations, and governance processes;
* Provide opportunities for local knowledge and perspectives to be heard, discussed and taken into consideration;
* Build positive and productive relationships between the Gunbower Creek community and the North Central CMA and partner agencies.

# Terms of reference

## Membership

The FICG will be comprised of local community representatives across a range of interest areas.

The membership should include people who live and/or work in the Gunbower Creek and Torrumbarry Irrigation Area (TIA) region and:

* Have knowledge of the history and environmental, social and/or economic values of Gunbower Creek;
* Are passionate about achieving positive long-term environmental and community outcomes for Gunbower Forest and Gunbower Creek;
* Are committed to understanding issues relating to the operation of the Gunbower Creek to meet the needs for all water customers including the environment;
* Are interested in strengthening relationships between the agencies responsible for managing and delivering environmental water, local communities and relevant interest groups;
* Are able to motivate and inform others;
* Have a good feel for broader perspectives in the local community and can effectively communicate these in group discussions;
* Are willing to participate and contribute to a candid and respectful atmosphere where issues can be tested.

## Responsibilities of members

FICG members will be asked to:

* Provide knowledge, guidance and advice to the North Central CMA and GMW to enable the delivery and development of the project;
* Provide specific advice on community engagement approaches and opportunities;
* Provide a local perspective, including, historical and technical knowledge on the Gunbower Creek;
* Provide local knowledge of the community and emerging issues;
* Facilitate interaction and communication regarding the project to the wider community, and;
* Provide feedback on proposed future project activities, approaches and investigations.

Members who represent community groups have specific responsibilities including:

* Ensuring that their respective community group are kept up to date regarding the project, and;
* Facilitating interaction between the North Central CMA and their respective community group where necessary.

North Central CMA staff will:

* Retain accountability for project delivery and will use the FICG in an advisory capacity;
* Provide the FICG with at least two weeks’ advance notice of meetings;
* Maintain meeting agendas, minutes and action lists;
* Provide project updates at FICG meetings;
* Keep the FICG informed of project and funding opportunities; and
* Be responsible for all formal communications and media activity relating to North Central CMA projects.

## Expectations of members

Each of the members will be invited to have a seat on the FICG on the basis they:

* Support a collaborative approach through:
  + Respect for all individuals, despite differing opinions
  + Open and honest discussion
  + Working together for the best outcomes for the project and Gunbower Creek;
* Encourage innovative thinking and be open to different ways of resolving issues;
* Acknowledge that difficult discussions may take place and recommendations may need to be made;
* Contribute to a safe and collaborative environment for concepts, issues and knowledge to be shared;
* Treat sensitive issues discussed within the group with respect;
* Comply with specific requests from the Chairperson to maintain confidentiality outside the group;
* Direct any requests for comment from the media to the Chairperson or North Central CMA staff representative; and
* Are punctual and make every effort to attend all meetings.

## Termination of membership

Members will cease to be a member if they:

* Voluntarily resign, or;
* Do not act within the terms of reference, or;
* Are removed by way of consensus.

# Proxies

In the interests of continuity, it is preferred that FICG members only attend the meetings. FICG members are requested to not invite non-members to attend meetings without prior approval of the Chairperson.

# Conflict of interest

All members of the FICG are required to declare any conflicts of interest. The North Central CMA will provide information on managing conflicts of interest at the first meeting.

If there are any declarations, working group members will follow the direction of the North Central CMA.

# Remuneration

Members of the FICG will participate in a voluntary capacity. The North Central CMA will reimburse community members and unpaid representatives from invited special interest groups consistent with its Reimbursement and Remuneration of Community Members policy (FIN094). This will generally extend to the issuing of fuel cards to recognise travel costs and the reimbursement of any other reasonable and unavoidable expenses. The North Central CMA will pay for venue hire and catering costs associated with all scheduled meetings and any relevant costs associated with field days.

# Gunbower Island Community Reference Group and FICG

The FICG is a sub group of the Gunbower Island Community Reference Group (CRG). The CRG was established in 2012 and will continue to be the primary mechanism for engaging the community on the North Central CMA’s environmental projects, which includes the annual Seasonal Watering Proposal for the Gunbower Forest and Gunbower Creek.

At least two representatives of the Gunbower Island CRG will be members of the FICG. These representatives will be responsible for reporting back to the Gunbower Island CRG on discussions held at the FICG.

# Period of operation

The period of operation is currently uncertain. North Central CMA anticipates at least two meetings will be held between approximately May and September 2019. The future course of the Project and the role of the FICG will become clearer following the consultant’s investigations which are expected to be completed by August 2019 at the earliest.

Once the project has progressed to a stage at which the FICG is no longer required, the group will be dissolved, and on-going communication with the community regarding the project will occur through the Gunbower Island CRG.

# Meeting details

FICG meetings will be chaired by a Chairperson appointed by the North Central CMA.

The location and starting time of the meetings will be a decision of the Chairperson upon the advice of the members and North Central CMA. It is anticipated that meetings will be held during normal business hours for up to three (3) hours although may go for longer if required. Meetings may be scheduled after business hours if necessary to accommodate member attendance, on agreement with North Central CMA staff.

A draft agenda will be circulated one week prior to each meeting and members will be invited to submit agenda items for discussion. The date of the next meeting will be confirmed at the end of each meeting.

Minutes of meetings will be taken by North Central CMA staff and circulated within two weeks of the meeting.

The FICG will not require a quorum as it is not a decision making group, therefore meetings will proceed with a minimum number of attendees.