



The Wimmera's Flowing Tale

...going with the flow



All photos by David Fletcher.

The flowing future

Last year's dry spring followed by a long hot summer has led to a heightened awareness throughout the community of the value of water in our rivers, streams, lakes and wetlands.

Passionate debate over water in the dry, arid landscape of the Wimmera will continue as the community and environment are forced to adapt to the 'boom or bust' cycles that are Australia.

The community's appreciation of our water resources is also creating healthy discussions on how water allocations are shared now the Wimmera Mallee and Northern Mallee pipelines are complete.



- Listening to bonking frogs in your local swamp?
- Water skiing at Brim?
- Listening to Country Music at Lake Charlegrark?
- Fishing?
- Or just having a picnic by the creek?

Wimmera CMA wants to know where you make a splash. Why? Because we're developing a new action plan for rivers, streams and wetlands – the Wimmera Waterway Strategy.

Tell us in 150 words or less and you could win a \$500 water prize pack. Splash into the CMA's Field Days site D1-D4 or visit www.wcma.vic.gov.au

Environmental water fast facts

- Environmental water, while critically important, is only a small part of a healthy waterway system.
- The combined actions undertaken by community groups, farmers and Wimmera CMA all play a part in ensuring environmental water is not sent down a barren, lifeless channel but rather a river or stream that teems with life due to healthy riparian vegetation and stable banks for example.
- These actions include fencing off river banks to restrict stock access, providing off-stream watering sites, revegetation work and weed and pest animal control.
- Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) statewide survey data from September last year found 74% of landholders surveyed believed the condition of the waterway had improved as a result of river frontage works.

"If we're improving the health of our patch of river frontage by reducing sediment and erosion through fencing off stock for example, the benefits flow right through to the end of the river system. The more you think about it and think about what's going into the river such as waste from stock – anything we can do to minimise that as much as possible is going to improve water quality and benefit everyone downstream."

Peter and Leanne Jackman, Dadswells Bridge farmers

Looking back over the past decade

When the Wimmera Mail-Times penned an open letter to John Howard, John Anderson and Steve Bracks in the final instalment of the North to Nowhere series in 2002, their message was clear about the value of the Wimmera River and the need to 'pipe or perish'.

"Water savings offer salvation for our waterways, especially the Wimmera and Glenelg rivers. Piping can free on average 83,000 megalitres of water a year for our rivers, and, without a doubt, they need that liquid gold desperately... the Wimmera Mallee needs your help. We need it now – we can't afford to wait and neither can our rivers." February 6, 2002

And for the community, there was a strong understanding the 'status quo was not sustainable'.

"For me, even though I knew my farm would benefit from the pipeline, I was more concerned about seeing the river system return to what it used to be and I saw the pipeline project as the only way to achieve this."

Peter Gosling, Lake Albacutya farmer and songwriter

"People were perhaps a bit sceptical of what the pipeline would be able to deliver, but when the drought started to break in spring 2009 and water started flowing down the Wimmera River to Lake Hindmarsh they were able to make the connection."

Jo Bourke, Wimmera Development Association chief executive and Wimmera CMA board chairperson 2000-2006

Looking forward our vision

For Wimmera CMA, our vision is for a river that flows much of the year with improved water quality.

In turn, this healthy flowing river benefits the community by providing ample opportunities for rowing regattas, family activities, fishing competitions or simply a pleasant walk enjoying the sight of water and the natural beauty of the birds and vegetation that abound along its length. Tourists are also drawn to its beauty.

What's your vision?