

Victorian Waterway Management Strategy

Information sheet on the development of the new Victorian Waterway Management Strategy



What is the Victorian Waterway Management Strategy?

The existing Victorian Waterway Management Strategy was released in 2013, providing a detailed policy framework for managing the health of Victoria's rivers, wetlands, estuaries and floodplains (referred to collectively as 'waterways').

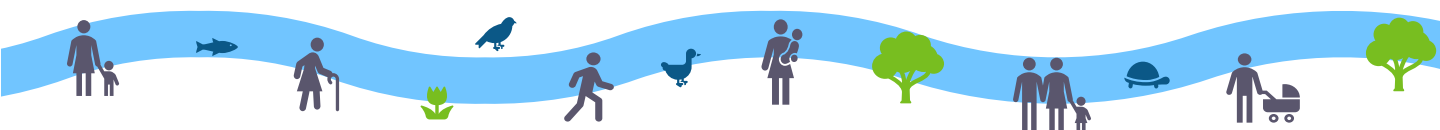
This existing Strategy has reached the end of its lifespan. A new Victorian Waterway Management Strategy (the Strategy) is needed to ensure we have policies in place for managing Victoria's waterways, particularly in the face of our changing population and climate conditions. A key focus of the new Strategy will be to increase Traditional Owner self-determination and decision-making in waterway management.



What is 'waterway management'?

Waterways play a vital role in promoting peoples' physical and mental well-being. Waterways also provide a home for many plants and animals. Healthy waterways help to create happy communities.

The existing Strategy provides guidance on who manages what part of Victoria's waterways and guides how decisions are made about where money is invested to help care for them. The Strategy promoted a program of activities for improving waterways. It guided 10 regional-level waterway strategies across the state. Victoria's water management agencies oversee these strategies. Many different departments, agencies, organisations and individuals play a role in caring for waterways across Victoria.



Considerations for the new Strategy may include:

- How we can continue to support the health of Victoria's waterways.
- How we will adapt to climate change.
- An increased role in decision-making for Traditional Owners in waterway management.
- Helping communities to enjoy and care for waterways.
- Guidance for developing the next regional waterway strategies.
- Considering any other areas or opportunities that come from your feedback.



Victorians value their waterways

Rivers, wetlands, estuaries and their floodplains are the lifeblood of many Victorian towns and communities. From cool mountain streams in alpine areas to popular estuaries along the coast - waterways underpin the well-being and productivity of individuals, communities and regional economies.



The [2022 My Victorian Waterway Survey](#) of 6,240 Victorians found that waterways are visited every day for a variety of reasons, such as relaxation and peace, recreation and fun, commercial and economic activities, a space for exercise, a place to engage with nature, experience personal mental health benefits, and for family and social connections.

Underpinning various reasons to visit and use our waterways, is the important role that they play for individuals, families, and communities. Almost all respondents said that waterways nurture their own wellbeing (94%), and that healthy waterways are important for continued community needs (84%) and for use by future generations (83%). Additional findings from this study will be used to inform the new Strategy.

For countless generations, Traditional Owners have cared for country including its waterways, sustaining connections to place, each other, animals, ancestors, and culture. Traditional Owners want to take a lead role in caring for waterways, now and into the future.

The new Strategy will link with the Victorian Government's commitments to self-determination for Traditional Owners, including [Water is Life – Traditional Owner Access to Water Roadmap](#). The Strategy will play an important role in increasing Traditional Owner roles in decision making in the management of waterways, delivering benefits for all Victorians.

Rivers, estuaries and wetlands are important as they support diverse populations of animals and plants.

Waterways and surrounding riparian land provide habitat for thousands of species of fish, insects, birds, mammals, and plants – all dependant on healthy, thriving waterways.

Waterways and floodplains play a part in the movement and cycling of sediment and nutrients and underpin the rich agricultural soils across the state. We need to care for our water environments and biodiversity, particularly as we adapt to the impacts of climate change.



What's involved in the new Strategy development?

The Strategy will be developed in close collaboration with Traditional Owners, catchment management authorities and other project partners, with input from key stakeholder groups and the broader Victorian community.

A community consultation process will take place to explore opportunities and improve our understanding of the key challenges our waterways face. A new vision will be developed to guide the way our waterways are managed.

Project timeline



How can I get involved?

We will be working closely with a range of key stakeholder groups and we will invite input from the broader Victorian community through the formal public consultation processes.

If you'd like to know more or be added to our list to receive project updates, please get in touch via

Vic.WaterwayStrategy@delwp.vic.gov.au

Information will be regularly updated to the project page at www.water.vic.gov.au/vwms.



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