

ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

A healthy Wimmera catchment where a resilient landscape supports a sustainable and profitable community.



Wimmera CMA



VICTORIA
State
Government

Report profile

Wimmera Catchment Management Authority (Wimmera CMA) was established under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (VIC) (*CaLP Act*). The responsible Minister for the period from 1 July 2024 to 19 December 2024 was the Hon Harriet Shing MP, Minister for Water and from 19 December 2024 to 30 June 2025, the Hon. Gayle Tierney MP, Minister for Water.

The 2024-25 Annual Report of Wimmera CMA is prepared in accordance with all relevant Victorian legislation. This index has been prepared to facilitate identification of the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) compliance with statutory disclosure requirements.

Other Wimmera CMA information is available from the Wimmera CMA office and website:

- Previous Annual Reports
- Wimmera CMA Corporate Plans
- Regional Catchment Strategy

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Front cover photo: Little Desert National Park – post fire

Abbreviations

ACSC	Australian Cyber Security Centre
BGLC	Barengi Gadjin Land Council
<i>CaLP Act</i>	<i>Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994</i>
CMA	Catchment Management Authority
CRC	Cooperative Research Centre
DEECA	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
DELWP	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
DRP	Drought Resilience Plan
eDNA	environmental DNA
EMAC	Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation
EWR	Environmental Water Reserves
FOI	Freedom of Information
FRD	Financial reporting direction
FRR	Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal
FTE	Full-time equivalent
HUL	Horsham Urban Landcare
NRM	Natural resource management
PDSP	Protective Data Security Plan
<i>PID Act</i>	<i>Public Interest Disclosure Act 2012</i>
<i>PAA</i>	<i>Public Administration Act 2004</i>
RCS	Regional Catchment Strategy
RDRP	Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program
RTW	Return to work
SAF	Sustainable Agriculture Facilitator
SPF	Social Procurement Framework
<i>The Act</i>	<i>Freedom of Information Act 1982</i>
VEWH	Victorian Environmental Water Holder
VICSES	Victorian State Emergency Service
VFF	Victorian Farmers Federation
WCAAP	Water Cycle Adaptation Action Program
WSMD	Wimmera Southern Mallee Development
WSMCACR	Wimmera Southern Mallee Climate Adaptation Community Resilience Group

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YEAR IN REVIEW

Report of operations

Responsible body declaration

In accordance with the *Financial Management Act 1994*, I am pleased to present Wimmera CMA's Annual Report for the year ending 30 June 2025.



Peter Hilbig
Chair - Wimmera CMA Board
31 August 2025



Message from the Chair

On behalf of the Board, I am pleased to present our annual report. We met all expectations as described by the Minister for Water's Letter of Expectations and successfully delivered \$6.8 million of natural resource management projects and outcomes for the community.

Financially the organisation is in a strong position, with internal and external audit results confirming sound processes and our balance sheet is in an excellent position going into 2025-26 and we continue to meet certification requirements for ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management Systems requirements.

Our organisation continues to excel in the People Matters Survey with its diverse and high performing culture.

This year we welcomed two new board delegate members Lillian Hearn and Danae McDonald. Both delegates brought the perspective of youth and a passion about achieving community and environmental outcomes, with each making a significant contribution to the board bringing new thoughts and ideas.

Significant time has been allocated to understand the impacts and opportunities from: mineral sand developments, renewable energy projects and transmission line infrastructure in the region. These large projects represent significant land use change, presenting risks and transformation.

As a Board we engage with and listen to our communities about natural resource management and sustainable rural enterprises, this underpins our decision making and strategic planning.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of fellow board members, staff and volunteers in contributing to a successful year for the Wimmera CMA.

Message from the Chief Executive Officer

Well below average rainfall for the past 18 months has impacted our catchment and community.

For a second year in a row our catchment experienced the full impact of fire. In 2024, Pomonal lost 44 homes and 100's of hectares of bush and farmland whilst the Bayindeen fire impacted the upper Wimmera River catchment. In 2025, a campaign fire in Grampians National Park burnt 135,000 ha, nearly 80% of the park and a fast moving bush fire in the Little Desert National Park burnt more than 95,000 hectares, most of that in a single day. Recovery efforts continue to be a priority.

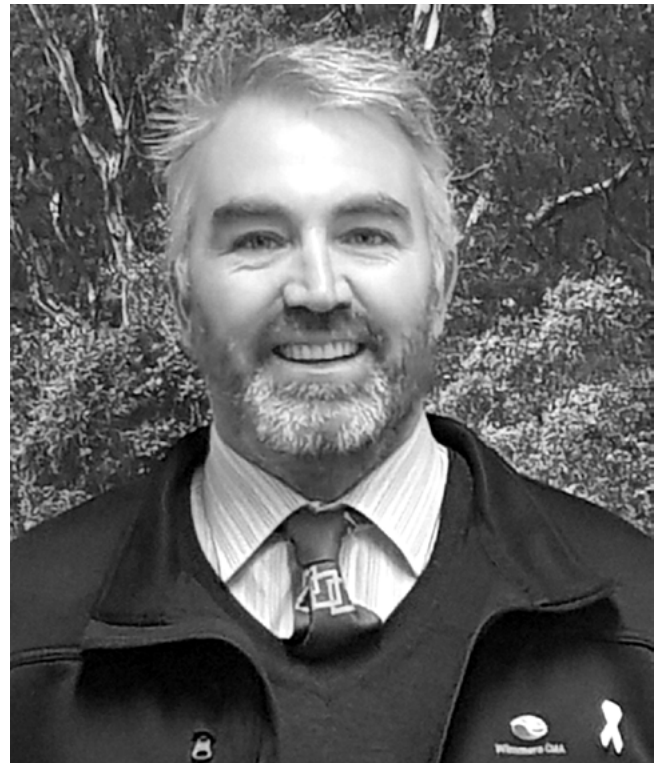
Drought was declared in the southern parts of the Wimmera catchment in September and the mid-section in May, as waterbodies across the catchment receded and soil moisture profiles diminished. Reduced environmental water allocations focused on delivering water to drought refuge areas in many parts of the catchment. For the first time since the Millennium Drought, we translocated fish from drying creeks into more suitable habitat and evidence of tree canopy die back and senescing occurred across much of the landscape.

Funding was received from DEECA via the water adaptation project to accelerate work with community and GWMWater to deliver in-stream watering points along the MacKenzie River and Burnt Creek system via pipeline connection to use water in the most efficient manner and create additional drought refuge.

We worked closely with Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal (FRRR) and Agriculture Victoria to implement priorities in the Wimmera Drought Management Plan. This included the identification of "green spaces" across the Wimmera and a review and expansion of the Wimmera CMA weather station and moisture probe network.

We continued to work closely with First Nations people to deliver meaningful, cultural, social, economic and environmental improvement. A highlight of our partnership was the Black Fish project, that involved capturing these elusive fish and sending them to Snobs Creek fish hatchery. In an Australian first, Fisheries staff at the hatchery were able to successfully breed the fish, this allowed both Barengi Gadjin Land Council (BGLC) and Wimmera CMA staff to reintroduce Black Fish into the catchment. Based upon this breeding success we have developed a three-year project to expand reintroductions right across the Wimmera.

Our Catchments, Our Communities Program continued to deliver highly valued community projects. Our most high-profile project has been working with the Horsham Rural City Council, Wimmera River Improvement Committee, BGLC and landholders on completing a long-term riparian walking track that links the Horsham weir and the old Dooen weir.



As a member of the Soils CRC, in partnership with Federation University Australia we co-supervised two PhD students whose research is digitally mapping soil organic carbon. This exciting project uses machine learning and artificial intelligence to quantify and account for changes in soil carbon levels. Pleasingly, during these 12 months, three peer reviewed papers were published. Our strong interest in soils health resulted in the Wimmera CMA being awarded a contract from CSIRO for the delivery of Victoria's contribution to the National Soil Monitoring Program.

As Chair of the Integrated Water Management (IWM) forum we have commenced planning for the refresh of the Strategic Direction Statement in late 2025, the statement articulates key priority projects and community aspirations.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the commitment and dedication of staff during the past 12 months, support and leadership from the Board and various community members and partners that have offered advice, assistance and expertise. I look forward to delivering more community and environmental outcomes across our catchment.

David Brennan
Chief Executive Officer

Manner of establishment

Wimmera Catchment Management Authority (Wimmera CMA) commenced in July 1997 by order of the Minister for Agriculture and Resources, taking over the functions and obligations of the Wimmera Regional Catchment and Land Protection Board.

Responsible Minister

Wimmera CMA is established under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (VIC) (*CaLP Act*). The responsible Ministers for the period from 1 July 2024 to 19 December 2024 was the Hon Harriet Shing Minister for Water, Hon Gayle Tierney Minister for Water 19 December 2024 to 30 June 2025.

Objectives, functions, powers and duties

The objectives, functions, powers and duties of Wimmera CMA are largely contained within the following Victorian Acts:

- *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*
- *Water Act 1989*
- *Financial Management Act 1994*
- *Audit Act 1994*
- *Freedom of Information Act 1982*
- *Information Privacy Act 2000*
- *Public Administration Act 2004*
- *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012*

The functions, powers and duties of Wimmera CMA under Section 12(1) – (4) of the *CaLP Act* are:

Each Authority has the following functions in respect of the region for which it has been appointed, to —

- Prepare a Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) for the region and to coordinate and monitor its implementation.
- Prepare special area plans for areas in the region and to coordinate and monitor their implementation.
- Promote the cooperation of persons and bodies involved in the management of land and water resources in the region in preparing and implementing the RCS and special area plans.

- Advise the Minister and, if requested by any other Minister, that other Minister on —
 - Regional priorities for activities by and resource allocation to, bodies involved in the management of land and water resources in the region; and
 - Guidelines for integrated management of land and water resources in the region; and
 - Matters relating to catchment management and land protection; and
 - The condition of land and water resources in the region.
- Promote community awareness and understanding of the importance of land and water resources, their sustainable use, conservation and rehabilitation.
- Make recommendations to the Minister about the funding of the implementation of the RCS and any special area plan.
- Make recommendations to the Minister and the Secretary about actions to be taken on Crown Land managed by the Secretary to prevent land degradation.
- Advise the Minister and provide information to the Minister on any matter referred to it by the Minister.
- Carry out any other functions conferred on the Authority by or under this Act or any other Act.

Each Authority has power to do all things that are necessary or convenient to be done for or in connection with, or as incidental to, the performance of its functions, including any function delegated to it.

Subsection (2) is not to be taken to be limited by any other provision of this Act that confers a power on the Authority.

Each Authority has the duties conferred on it by or under this or any other Act.

The Authority has additional objectives, functions, powers and duties for waterway management, floodplain management and regional drainage conferred under Part 7 and Part 10 of the *Water Act 1989*.

Nature and range of services provided

Our vision

Our vision is for a healthy Wimmera catchment, where a resilient landscape supports a sustainable and profitable community.

Our philosophy

We aim to achieve a triple-bottom-line approach to all areas of our business, in the absence of any firm government policy or objective.

Our mission

Wimmera CMA's mission is to bring out the best in our staff, community and environment.

To achieve this mission, we have an organisational culture that is dynamic, diverse, inclusive, accountable and promotes wellbeing.

Our approach

To assist in delivering our objectives we apply a framework of 'simpler, streamlined, smarter, stronger'.

Our role

Wimmera CMA's role is to deliver outcomes by working closely with the community, key stakeholders and government agencies. This includes developing plans, priorities and actions that increase opportunities environmentally, socially and economically whilst reducing risks to our key natural assets:

- Native vegetation
- Threatened plants and animals
- Wetlands
- River and streams
- Soils

Wimmera CMA sets out to mitigate threats and increase the quality, extent and connectivity of Wimmera's natural assets as described in the RCS and accompanying Action Plans.

Who we are

Wimmera CMA is a statutory body that works with the community to achieve a healthy and sustainable environment. Wimmera CMA provides advice to the Australian and Victorian Governments about environmental conditions, directions and priorities in the Wimmera region.

Currently seven community representatives make up the Wimmera CMA Board. The Board sets the organisation's strategic direction, ensures that Wimmera CMA meets statutory and financial responsibilities and that its activities reflect community values and expectations.

Our values and behaviours

The values and behaviours at Wimmera CMA represent an understanding between all staff about how they conduct themselves both professionally and personally. Staff members expect these values and behaviours to be demonstrated internally and externally. This will ensure that staff act professionally and courteously and, as an outcome, the organisation is respected through the demonstration of these values.

Wimmera CMA staff values

Commitment to the organisation, demonstrated by:

- Doing what we say we are going to do
- Representing the organisation in a proactive, fair and positive manner
- Adapting to organisational needs

Integrity, by:

- Acting impartially, treating all parties fairly and equally
- Behaving transparently and openly, free from pretence or deceit

Respect, by:

- Treating people with consideration and understanding, having regard for their feelings, wishes and rights

Teamwork, by:

- Striving to bring the best out of others by working in a collaborative and positive manner
- Helping each other to achieve a common understanding, outcome or goal

Our region

The Wimmera is in western Victoria and extends from the Pyrenees ranges to the east to Ngalpaktia/Ngelpagutya (Lake Albacutya) and Big Desert National Park to the north and the South Australian border to the west (Figure 1). The region has a population of approximately 50,000 and around one-quarter of its residents rely directly on agriculture for income. The region is predominantly made up of cleared agricultural land.

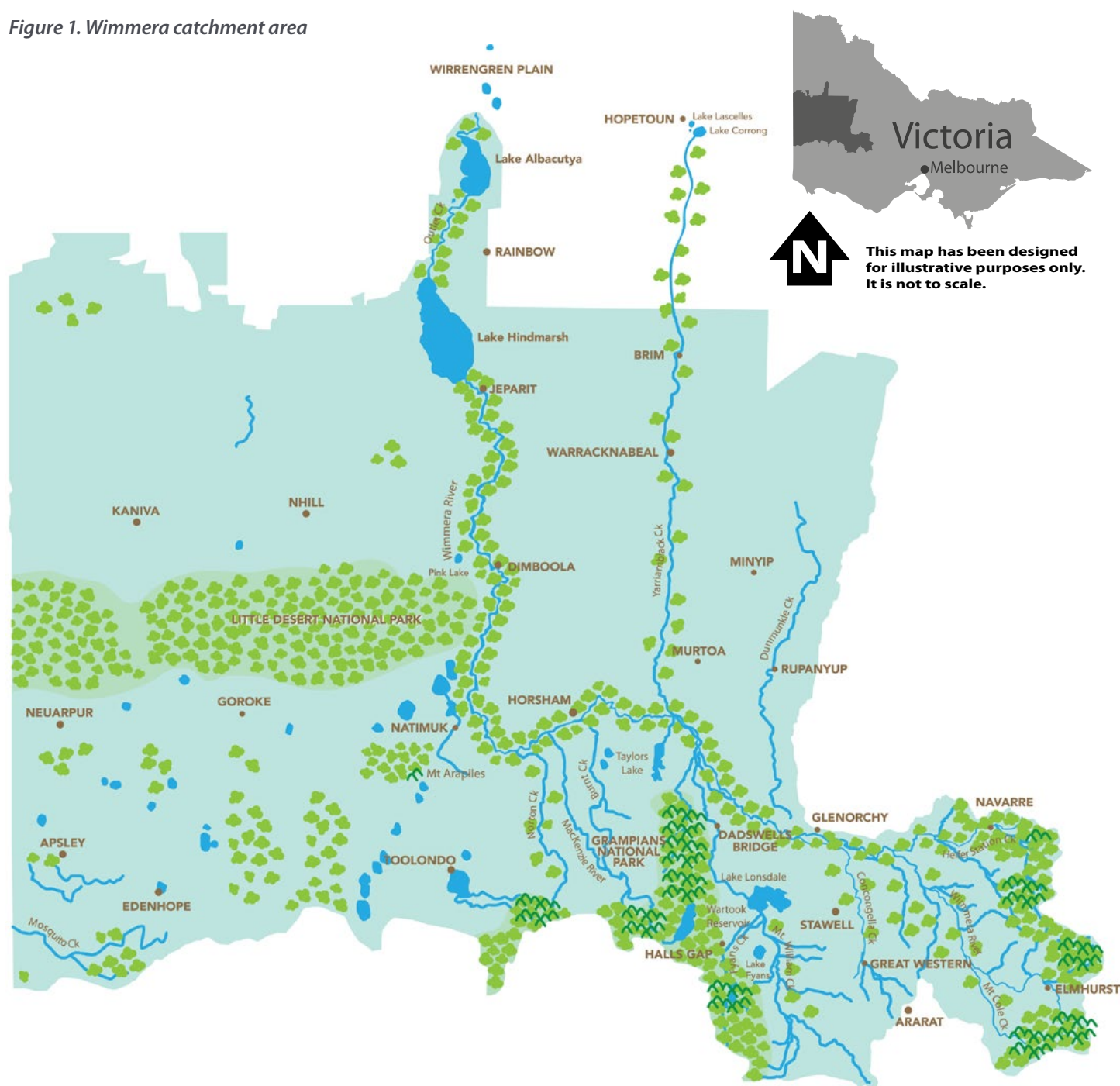
Natural Wimmera features include more than 3,000, or 25% of Victoria's wetlands, Gariwerd (Grampians) and Little Desert

National Parks and the Barringgi Gadyin (Wimmera River) system, which all support a diverse range of plants and animals. The region also has productive agricultural soils and valuable groundwater.

Wimmera catchment includes many cultural and environmental heritage sites. More than 2,000 sites of Indigenous cultural significance are associated with the catchment's reserves, waterways, floodplains and wetlands.

The region is home to approximately 1,500 species of native plants and 420 species of native animals. These include 20 mammals, 40 reptiles and more than 250 bird species.

Figure 1. Wimmera catchment area



Our stakeholders

A commitment from communities, agencies and industries to achieve sustainable natural resource management outcomes in the region is vital.

Wimmera CMA engages a community that is broad and diverse. This includes land managers, First Nations people, local government and Australian and Victorian government investors (Table 1).

Table 1. Wimmera CMA's stakeholders and their characteristics

Group	Characteristics	Relationship
Landholders	Rural property holders, farmers, absentee landowners and corporate farms.	Partners
Government departments and agencies	Victorian Government: Environmental Protection Authority Victoria, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, Victorian Environmental Water Holder, GWMWater, Parks Victoria, Emergency Management Victoria, Victorian Fisheries Authority, Agriculture Victoria, VicRoads, Trust for Nature, Commission for Environmental Sustainability. Australian Government: Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Murray-Darling Basin Authority, Commonwealth Environmental Water Office.	Partners, compliance and investors
Community and Landcare networks, groups and members	Project Platypus, Hindmarsh Landcare Network, Yarrilinks, Kowree Farm Tree Group, Perennial Pasture Systems, Native Fish Australia, Wimmera River Improvement Committee, 'Friends of' groups, Horsham Apex Club 15, Horsham Fishing Competition Committee, Horsham Angling Club, Dimboola Angling Club, Jeparit Angling Club, Edenhope Angling Club, Stawell Angling Club, VR Fish, Centre for Participation, Wimmera Southern Mallee Development, Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Partnerships, Dimboola Boat and Water Ski Club.	Partners, grant recipients, education and capacity building
Local government	Ararat, Buloke, Hindmarsh, Horsham, Northern Grampians, Pyrenees, West Wimmera and Yarriambiack.	Partners, customers and investors
Natural resource management organisations	Victorian No-Till Farmers Association, Birchip Cropping Group, Partners in Ag, Greening Australia, Birdlife Australia, Landcare Victoria Inc, Trust for Nature, Conservation Volunteers Australia and Soils CRC.	Contractors, partners
First Nations community groups	BGLC, Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations, Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Co-Operative.	Partner, advice
Community monitors	River monitoring activities for birds, frogs, water, and fish.	Volunteers
Education sector	Department of Education network, local teachers and schools, Deakin University, Federation University Australia, Charles Sturt University, Southern Cross University, Longerenong College, Wimmera Southern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network.	Education partner, capacity building
Consultants and contractors	Are used when internal expertise gaps exist.	Service providers

Operational performance

Performance targets and measures

Wimmera CMA's performance indicators and targets in Table 2 are based on our commitment to deliver on legislative compliance requirements. These include the *CaLP Act* Statement of Obligations, and the *Water Act* Statement of Obligations, as well as our business objectives identified in the Corporate Plan and Wimmera Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS).

Operational performance is provided against each RCS theme and is reported in the Catchment Condition and Management Report and Initiatives and Key Achievements sections of this report.

Key to performance results:

- ✓ = performance target achieved or exceeded or expected to be achieved
- = performance target not achieved — within 5% variance
- = performance target not achieved — exceeds 5% variance. This is a significant variance that requires an explanation.

Table 2. Corporate Plan - business objectives and outcomes

Strategic domain	Outcome (1-5 year ambitions)	Result	Comments
Improved performance and demonstrating outcomes	- Wimmera CMA is a high performing, well governed and managed organisation. - Innovation is embraced to improve effectiveness of outcomes and service delivery. - Health, safety and wellbeing is a priority. - Demonstrate outcomes of government investment into waterways and catchment health.	✓	- Complied with standing directions of the Minister for Finance – the <i>Financial Management Act 1994</i>. - Clean internal and external audit results. - Implementation of Wide Area Network. - Reduction in carbon emissions throughout the year. - Maintained ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System certification. Maintained ISO 2015 Quality Assurance certification. - No lost days due to staff injuries.
Climate change Provide services that mitigate and adapt to climate change and climate variability.	- Wimmera CMA becomes carbon neutral. - Explore opportunities to strengthen adaptation and mitigation strategies with regional partners. - CMA recognised as a leader in pragmatic climate change solutions and outcomes.	✓	- Wimmera CMA in partnership with Wimmera Southern Mallee Development has advocated for the formation of a Wimmera Southern Mallee Climate Action group aimed at delivering local action. - Continued to implement actions through a sustainability committee towards carbon neutral. - Continue to contribute to the Vic Catchments Climate Change coordinator role and associated projects.
Waterway and catchment health Provide leadership in delivery of programs to improve the health of priority waterways and catchments.	- Wimmera community acting to protect their environment (Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037). - Improve the condition and trend of the Wimmera's waterways. - Implement the region's waterway strategy. - Improve community's water literacy.	✓	- Wimmera Strategic Water Management Working Group met regularly to provide effective governance and advice regarding waterway health, integrated water management and floodplain management. - Continued to provide flood advice, approvals and referral responses. - Continue to assess and condition applications for works on waterways permits. - Supported landholders and community groups to protect and enhance the regions waterways. - Assisted local government to establish new planning schemes. - Implemented Integrated Water Management Strategic Directions Statement. - Developed a set of information resources to help improve water literacy.

Strategic domain	Outcome (1-5 year ambitions)	Result	Comments
Water for agriculture Support a productive and profitable irrigation sector and vibrant and resilient regional communities.	- Agricultural sector is adapting to climate change. - Landholders building capacity to implement actions to maintain or enhance soil resilience.	✓	- Implemented Future Drought Fund project activities. - Continued to develop partnerships to support water for agriculture including Smart Water project with Agriculture Victoria and GWMWater. - Continued to support farmer-driven trials and demonstrations focused on soil moisture. - Continued to support forums aimed at improving support for the agricultural sector. - Continued to partner on Soils CRC activities including Visualising Australasian Soils, led by the Centre for eResearch and Digital Innovation at Federation University Australia. - Leading the Victorian delivery of the national soils monitoring program under the National Soils Strategy.
Community engagement and partnerships All aspects of service delivery will be customer and community centred.	Strengthen community engagement in regional planning and implementation.	✓	- Delivered the latest iteration of Australia's longest running natural resource management (NRM) and landholders longitudinal survey. - Supported consultation with Wimmera Landcare community in relation to challenges and opportunities in the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program. - Supported local NRM practitioners to undertake professional development, including cross-regional training with GHCMA and Mallee CMA. - Established various formal working groups.
Recognise and support Aboriginal cultural values and economic inclusion Recognise and support Aboriginal cultural values and economic inclusion in the water sector.	- Recognising and managing Aboriginal values in water management and planning (Water for Victoria). - Support Victoria's Traditional Owners participation in biodiversity management (Protecting Victoria's Environment—Biodiversity 2037).	✓	- Continued partnership-based activities to rehabilitate and improve access to Country in line with Barengi Gadjin Land Council's (BGLC) Country Plan. - Engaged with BGLC's nursery enterprise. - Supported BGLC and DEECA to continue to engage on a Landcare for Country pilot in the region. - Supported BGLC and Landcare groups to test and build partnerships focused on cultural burning activities.
Recognise recreational values Support the wellbeing of communities by considering recreational values of waterways.	- Recognising recreational values in water management and planning (Water for Victoria). - Increase opportunities for all Victorians to have daily connections with nature (Protecting Victoria's Environment—Biodiversity 2037).	✓	- Constructed visitor facilities including seating, boardwalks, trails and car parks to enhance the visitor experience around our waterways. - Continued to work with HRCC to link over 20km of walking/cycling tracks along the Barraggi Gadyin (Wimmera River). - Conducting a stocktake of recreational value of waterways for inclusion in the new Regional Waterway Strategy.
Resilient and liveable cities and towns Contribute to healthy communities and support resilient, liveable environments.	- Improved waterway health of the Wimmera waterways (Water for Victoria). - Increase opportunities for all Victorians to have daily connections with nature (Protecting Victoria's Environment—Biodiversity 2037).	✓	- Implemented Future Drought Fund project activities. - Continued to develop partnerships to deliver educational and capacity building events with organisations including Agriculture Victoria and industry groups. - Continued to support farmer-driven trials and demonstrations.
Leadership, diversity and culture Reflect the diverse needs of the community.	- Support gender equality (Water for Victoria). - Champion Aboriginal inclusion in the water sector (Water for Victoria) (Barring Djinang). - Promote the use of social procurement organisations. - Maintain a diverse leadership team.	✓	- Maintained 10% of people who identify as Aboriginal people in the organisation. - Provide opportunity to act in leadership roles as and when opportunities arose. - Implemented 'Leading the Way' and used disability service providers when applicable.

Wimmera Regional Catchment Strategy

Wimmera CMA worked with regional stakeholders and the community to implement the Wimmera Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) 2021-27, which was approved by the Victorian Minister for Water in 2021. The strategy is published on the statewide RCS website (rcs.vic.gov.au).

The RCS sets the long-term vision for integrated catchment management in the Wimmera and establishes 20 and 6 year outcomes for water, land, biodiversity and community. The RCS describes the outcomes sought by local communities for the region's five local areas.

There is strong recognition throughout the strategy of the deep and continuing connection of First Nations people to the Wimmera's landscapes. The strategy also recognises the significant role of partner organisations, community groups and individuals in achieving outcomes by collaborating and working together.

The strategy highlights the importance of integrated catchment management for enhancing and underpinning regional liveability, contributing to the health and wellbeing of communities and the regional economy. Several themes are integrated throughout the RCS including community wellbeing, climate change, innovation and stewardship of the land, water and biodiversity.

Addendums were developed for the RCS to explain the regional priorities relating to the Australian Government's programs and the Victorian Government's Biodiversity Strategy.

Wimmera CMA commenced a mid-life review of the RCS due to be completed in September 2025. The findings of the review will inform ongoing implementation of the strategy and the development of the strategy's next iteration.

Initiatives and key achievements

Soils monitoring - CSIRO

On behalf of Victorian CMAs, Melbourne Water and Agriculture Victoria we are leading the delivery of the Victorian component of the National Soil Monitoring Program. The national program being led by CSIRO will take soil samples at approximately 3,000 sites to monitor agreed national soil health indicators and use the data to help understand soil condition and trend.

The data will support stakeholders to make evidence-based decisions to improve soil health whilst empowering land managers to prioritise their soil health and strengthen their soil knowledge and capability to restore, improve and maintain soil resilience.

Green spaces

Wimmera CMA, on behalf of Wimmera Southern Mallee Development (WSMD), has led a Midday at the Oasis – Wimmera Green Spaces project which identified high-priority community green spaces in towns across the region. The project examined municipal green spaces and asked local government representatives to prioritise those they would most likely try to sustain during severe drought. The project analysed gaps and assessed funding and infrastructure needs to ensure all communities across the region could access an 'oasis' in time of drought.

The project was a collaboration with GWMWater, Horsham Rural City Council, Northern Grampians Shire Council, Yarriambiack Shire Council, Hindmarsh Shire Council, West Wimmera Shire Council and Buloke Shire Council.

The project was in response to priority actions outlined in a Wimmera Southern Mallee Drought Resilience Plan (DRP) developed under Agriculture Victoria's Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program (RDRP). This program is part of the National Future Drought Fund, an Australian and Victorian government partnership.

WSMD is leading the Wimmera Southern Mallee DRP implementation.

The project also sits under Wimmera Southern Mallee Climate Adaptation Community Resilience Group (WSMCACR) projects, administered by WSMD.

Drought preparedness

Funded by DEECA and the VEWK work to connect drought refuges in the Lower Wimmera River and Mt Cole Creek is occurring. As part of this work, Wimmera CMA is developing a monitoring program for drought refuges for these sites. The monitoring program also has scope to be made applicable for future drought refuges that are under investigation.

Making use of limited environmental water allocations in times of dry and drought conditions is critical for the survival of ecological values in Wimmera catchment. With climate change, these periods are occurring more often than in the past. The Wimmera CMA is utilising CMA Water Cycle Adaptation Action Program (WCAAP) priority project funding to connect high-value ecological sites on the MacKenzie River and Burnt Creek system to the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline. This project involves the construction of up to 4 outlets from existing GWMWater pipelines and includes the planning, feasibility assessment, approvals, infrastructure design and construction of the outlets.

Soil Moisture Probe Network

Wimmera CMA launched the soil moisture portal in 2023. The portal provides real time soil moisture and weather data across the Wimmera catchment from a network of 80 weather stations. The portal is designed to enhance drought resilience for the farming community through the provision of soil moisture data that can be used to support decision making and risk management.

Through funding from WSMD, Wimmera CMA commissioned a review and analysis into the effectiveness of the portal in achieving drought resilience outcomes. Funding was also used to support the addition of another two weather stations and soil moisture probes to the network in strategic locations.

The review and analysis provided statistics on portal use, an extension plan to increase portal use and data literacy, as well as an exploration of advanced innovation adaptations to the portal that could further support drought resilience.

Usage of the CMA Soil Moisture Probe Network portal has increased year-on-year, with 2,750 page views recorded by the end of May 2025, from 250 registered users, compared to 2,144 at the same point in 2024. This represents a positive year-to-date trend in overall engagement.

Blackfish recovery and research

Wimmera CMA's River Blackfish Recovery Project reached a major milestone in March 2025 with the first cohort of river blackfish bred from captured Wimmera stock released into Wimmera waterways.

The release of 40 juveniles marked a pivotal moment in research efforts to reduce the species' risk of localised extinction. It also represented a worldwide first with aquarists having successfully bred the species under hormone-induced controlled conditions. The success prompted Wimmera CMA to extend support for breeding research at Snob's Creek Conservation Hatchery to three years.

This work is establishing a breeding blueprint for the other species of freshwater blackfish across southeast Australia.

The Wimmera River Blackfish Recovery Program started in 2023 in response to a 2022 Wimmera Native Fish Management Plan, which identified as a priority a need to help diminishing Wimmera populations of river blackfish.

Fish translocation

Wimmera CMA River Blackfish Recovery Project initially involved translocating fish from Mt Zero Channel, an artificial waterway near Laharum where some fish had survived the Millennium Drought, to a nearby habitat-rich reach of the MacKenzie River. The section of MacKenzie River had gone dry during the drought and had lost its blackfish population. But the river has since recovered enough to present opportunities to again support populations of the fish.

Translocations of primarily adult fish proved successful, and the population is now the subject of monitoring and support.

Translocations have also included salvage operations to move other Wimmera small-bodied native fish from drying to more secure refuge sites on MacKenzie River.

Wimmera CMA also worked with Murray Darling Basin Authority and Snob's Creek Conservation Hatchery in a statewide effort to secure populations of Murray Darling Basin species, southern purple-spotted gudgeon and olive perchlet. Despite not being native to the Wimmera system, populations of the threatened species now have surrogate homes in contained Wimmera wetland dams and accessible for a return home when appropriate.

Carbon Farming Outreach Program

Carbon Farming Outreach Program provides independent information and training to Wimmera farmers, helping them make informed decisions about carbon farming.

Delivered in partnership with Agriculture Victoria and Landcare Victoria Inc, the program ensures that farmers and land managers have access to free and trusted information and resources on carbon farming, including:

- What is carbon farming?
- Carbon farming benefits and risks
- Sources of on-farm emissions and options to reduce emissions and store carbon
- Calculating emissions and carbon storage for your property
- Planning, reporting and monitoring carbon farming activities
- Understanding carbon credit markets and opportunities from carbon credits

Wimmera CMA has engaged with 117 land managers across 5 events, with further activities planned for the 2025-26 financial year.

SharePoint migration

We continue to work towards finalising our migration from SharePoint On-Premise to SharePoint Online, with the final stage due for completion in the first quarter of 2025/26. This project has involved the redesign of the structure of the filing system to reflect the changing needs of the business and rolling out training to all staff.

Cyber security

Wimmera CMA has commenced a cybersecurity enhancement project in collaboration with ITC contractors OttoIT, aiming to achieve Level 1 of the Essential Eight maturity model. This initiative aligns with the Minister's Letter of Expectations, and the Australian Cyber Security Centre's (ACSC) guidelines to strengthen our organisation against cyber threats.

It is anticipated that the first stage of this project will be completed in the first quarter of the 2025/26 financial year. The next steps involve us working with consultants, Secure Arc, to document and maintain this information in a live system. The final steps in this project will involve utilising the system to identify new opportunities and next targets to ensure that we are well positioned to continue to enhance and prepare for future advancements in cyber security.

Social media engagement

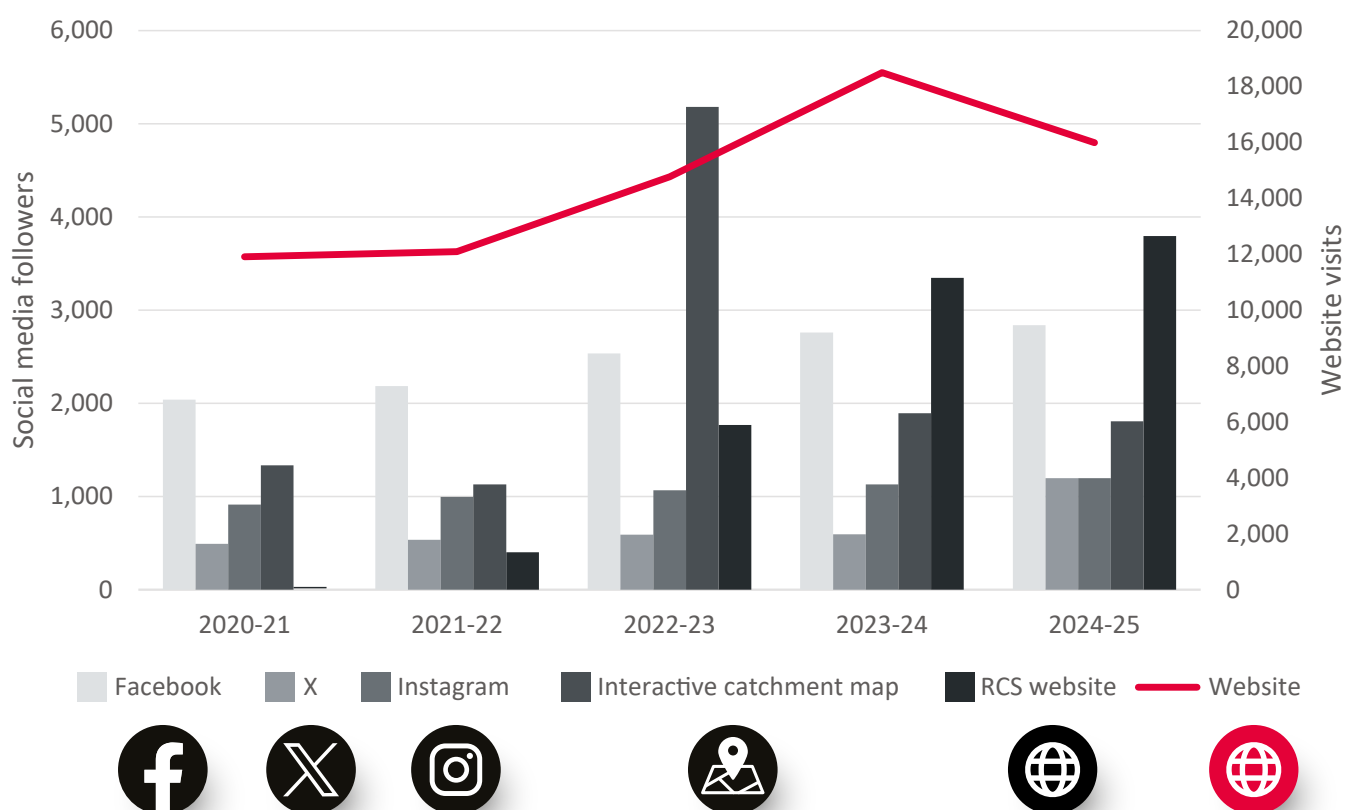
Wimmera CMA online communications are reaching a good audience that is continuing to build.

Our biggest audience reach is still through our website (Figure 2) with our main pages of attraction being the home page and the Wimmera Region, and then Works on Waterways, People and Careers, River Flows Map, and our most popular story was Chicks in the Sticks Returns.

Our Facebook page continues to remain our biggest social media audience, which continues to grow.

In this last year we have decided to discontinue promoting on X/Twitter platform as its performance was not improving or effectively reaching the public. We continue to use our online presence to share and educate the public about our region, our local plants and animals and projects we are involved in, and to promote events of ours and our partners.

Figure 2. Number of participants accessing Wimmera CMA's website and social media pages annually



Catchment condition & management report

This section of the annual report provides an assessment of the condition and management of the region's environment and a reflection on the likely impact of annual scale actions, events, and observed change within the 2024-25 financial year, and two years prior. A key purpose of monitoring changes in the operating context is to help identify opportunities for adapting and improving the way we manage the environment.

The report is structured in line with a state-wide outcome framework that links regional outcomes sought by catchment communities, to the policy outcomes of the Victorian and Australian Governments. These are outlined in the Wimmera Regional Catchment Strategy (wimmera.rcs.vic.gov.au).

Reporting in 2024-25 focuses on assessing Wimmera CMA's contribution to the management of land and water resources. Reporting on condition indicators will be undertaken as part of the mid-term and final reviews of the Wimmera Regional Catchment Strategy.

Introduction

Wimmera CMA monitors catchment condition and management to help identify opportunities for improving the way we manage the region's water, land and biodiversity and engage with regional communities and stakeholder organisations.

This Catchment Condition and Management Report is based around five themes:

1. Water
2. Land
3. Biodiversity
4. Community
5. Integrated catchment management

Each theme section provides:

- A brief description of the theme in the Wimmera.
- An assessment of the condition and management of the theme during 2024-25.
- Evidence of changes to catchment condition brought about by actions and events during 2024-25.
- A summary of catchment and natural resource management actions achieved by Wimmera CMA, partner organisations and groups during 2024-25.

How to interpret this report

The assessment is based on a set of state-wide indicators outlined in the Regional Catchment Strategy Outcomes

Framework, augmented with regionally specific indicators that have been selected based on criteria including availability and quality of data, and the linkages back to regional and policy outcomes.

Three types of indicators make up catchment condition and management reporting:

1. **Contextual indicators** help to identify how external environmental factors such as rainfall, river flows and soil moisture may have influenced program delivery.
2. **Management indicators** assess the delivery of Wimmera CMA's programs and activities. Where appropriate, this report provides a rating (Table 3) based on delivery of planned activities and targets relevant to the catchment theme.
3. **Condition indicators**. Where appropriate, this report provides a condition rating (Table 4) based on the state of the catchment theme during 2024-25. Assessments are based on available science and expert advice, as well as evidence gained during the year. The 2024-25 annual report includes a summary rating for catchment condition building on previous years' assessments.

Reporting on management and contextual indicators is undertaken annually. Reporting on condition indicators is undertaken less frequently, reflecting the timeframes to observe changes in the natural environment and the availability of supporting data.

As much as possible the reporting format attempts to provide a transparent path between the evidence and the assessment. It is not a definitive assessment but an assessment at a point in time, based on the best available evidence.

Table 3. Management indicator ratings

Management rating	Description
Above expectations	The delivery of activities and programs associated with an indicator was above expectations during 2024-25. This applies where most planned activities were delivered, or targets were met or exceeded.
Satisfactory	The delivery of activities and programs associated with an indicator was satisfactory during 2024-25. This applies where targets for some activities were not achieved, or most were almost achieved.
Below expectations	The delivery of activities and programs associated with an indicator was below expectations during 2024-25. This applies where some critical activities or targets were not delivered, or most activities or targets were not delivered.
Not applicable	A management rating is not applicable for an indicator.
Unknown	The rating for an indicator is not known or not assessable.

Table 4. Condition indicator ratings

Condition rating	Assessment criteria
Good	The condition is classified as good.
Moderate	The condition is classified as moderate.
Poor	The condition is classified as poor.
Not applicable	A condition rating is not applicable for this indicator.

The condition trend reflects change in the condition of catchment themes over the short to medium term. The condition trend rating in Table 5 describes the observed change in the environmental asset during 2024-25. A 'positive' assessment indicates a level of optimism about the future direction of condition and a 'concerned' assessment indicates a more pessimistic view of the direction of change in condition.

Table 5. Condition trend rating

Condition rating	Assessment criteria
Positive	 The condition is moving in a positive direction over the short to medium term pending ongoing management and environmental impacts.
Neutral	 The condition is in a neutral state over the short to medium term and is considered stable pending ongoing management and environmental impacts.
Concerned	 The condition is cause for concern over the short to medium term and will continue to decline pending ongoing management and environmental impacts.

Wimmera catchment condition and management summary 2024-25

Climatic conditions strongly influence annual catchment condition. The 2024-25 year ran off 'below average' rainfall from the prior financial year. The year continued to decline to be 'very much below average' negatively affecting catchment condition.

Table 6 provides a summary of catchment condition during 2024-25, trend in condition over the past 6 years and a management rating for 2024-25.

Table 6. Summary catchment condition assessment for 2024-25

Theme	Condition		Management	Summary comment
	Condition rating	6-year trend in condition	Management rating	
Water	Poor	 Concerned	Above expectations	Waterway condition in 2024-25 was poor. The trend during the year was negative as many of the region's waterways continued to be threatened from reduced rainfall. Low environmental flow allocations made for strategic efforts to continue baseflows and 'freshes' to improve water quality and maintain water in the environment. Large lakes, such as Gurru (Lake Hindmarsh), dried out, and drought refuge fish translocations had to occur in the Burnt Creek and MacKenzie River systems. With many shallow wetlands dry, more wetlands are vulnerable to cropping.
Land	Moderate	 Neutral	Satisfactory	Surveys indicate high levels of ground cover in autumn, minimising the risk of soil erosion by wind and water. This was despite very much below average rainfall across the catchment. A sample of 30 paddocks across the Wimmera found similar soil organic carbon (1.3%) and soil pH (6.5) as in 2023-24. Soil organic carbon levels below 1% constrain soil health and yield potential, a pH of 6.5 is suitable for adequate nutrient exchange.

Theme	Condition		Management	Summary comment
	Condition rating	6-year trend in condition	Management rating	
Biodiversity	Moderate	 Concerned	Satisfactory	Biodiversity values appeared to have a declining overall trend, with compounding impacts from drought and severe bushfires in the Gariwerd (Grampians) and Little Desert National Parks. Biodiversity values benefited from late rainfall towards the end of the 2024-25 year. Reduced native vegetation and weed growth was observed from the lack of rainfall. Numerous migratory waterbirds made use of remaining wetland water, emphasising the importance of drought refuges. Pest animals remained of concern; however, the burnt landscape was an opportunity for aerial control in the region's National Parks. Native fish populations appeared strong in target reaches, although exotic carp numbers were also high. One new juvenile female platypus was identified in MacKenzie River with two positive environmental DNA (eDNA) results.
Community	Good	 Positive	Satisfactory	Wimmera CMA observed good participation in events during 2024-25, with more than 3,700 people participating in around 63 events which included Black Snake Productions Wildlife Show presenting at the Horsham Fishing Competition, Perennial Pasture Systems' annual conference, Landcare native vegetation planting events, the Wimmera Biodiversity Seminar, Traditional Owner events and nature-connection field activities with local schools. Participation in Landcare groups remained variable across the catchment. Volunteer fatigue remained a consistent undercurrent and the operating environment for Landcare was also reshaped and complicated by additional emerging, intersecting pressures. Wimmera CMA and Barengi Gadjin Land Council (BGLC) maintained their well-established and strong relationship, working cooperatively to achieve mutual outcomes.
Integrated Catchment Management	Good	 Neutral	Satisfactory	Wimmera CMA's partnerships provided opportunities to work collaboratively with industry, the community and government agencies to achieve integrated catchment management outcomes. Wimmera CMA has well-established partnerships with a range of organisations and groups. Collective forums, individual meetings and agreements provided opportunities to collaborate and progress joint outcomes.

Contextual information

Contextual indicators are tools used to measure and assess progress or performance in a particular area. In this report they are used to identify how environmental factors such as rainfall, river flows, soil moisture, exposed soil and natural extreme events may have influenced catchment condition and program delivery.

Annual rainfall

This indicator looks at the Wimmera's annual rainfall. The amount and timing of rainfall has a big influence on the catchment's land, water and biodiversity. For example, it impacts on agricultural production, water flows and quality, environmental flows, habitat availability, and plant and animal breeding and growth.

The Wimmera's annual rainfall during the 2024 calendar year was moderate and below the annual average since the year 2000 (Figure 3).

The first half of 2025, saw a continuation of the drying climate with the Wimmera's rainfall for the financial year 'very much below average' across the whole catchment (Figure 4) (Bureau of Meteorology, 2025). Approximately half of the region through the mid and northwest had the 'lowest on record'.

Conditions remained dry with 'below average' rainfall during winter 2024 right across the region (Figure 4). Spring 2024 rainfall progressed from being largely 'below average' to average by the end of November.

The majority of the catchment received 'average' rainfall over summer 2025, while progressing more to 'below average' by late February. Autumn 2025 saw a distribution of 'average' to 'below average' rainfall. May saw the most severe monthly rainfall for the year with the whole catchment considered to be 'very much below average'.

June finally saw a break with the whole catchment experiencing 'average' rainfall to start the 2025-26 financial year. Rain was well-received by farmers despite the late start to the growing season.

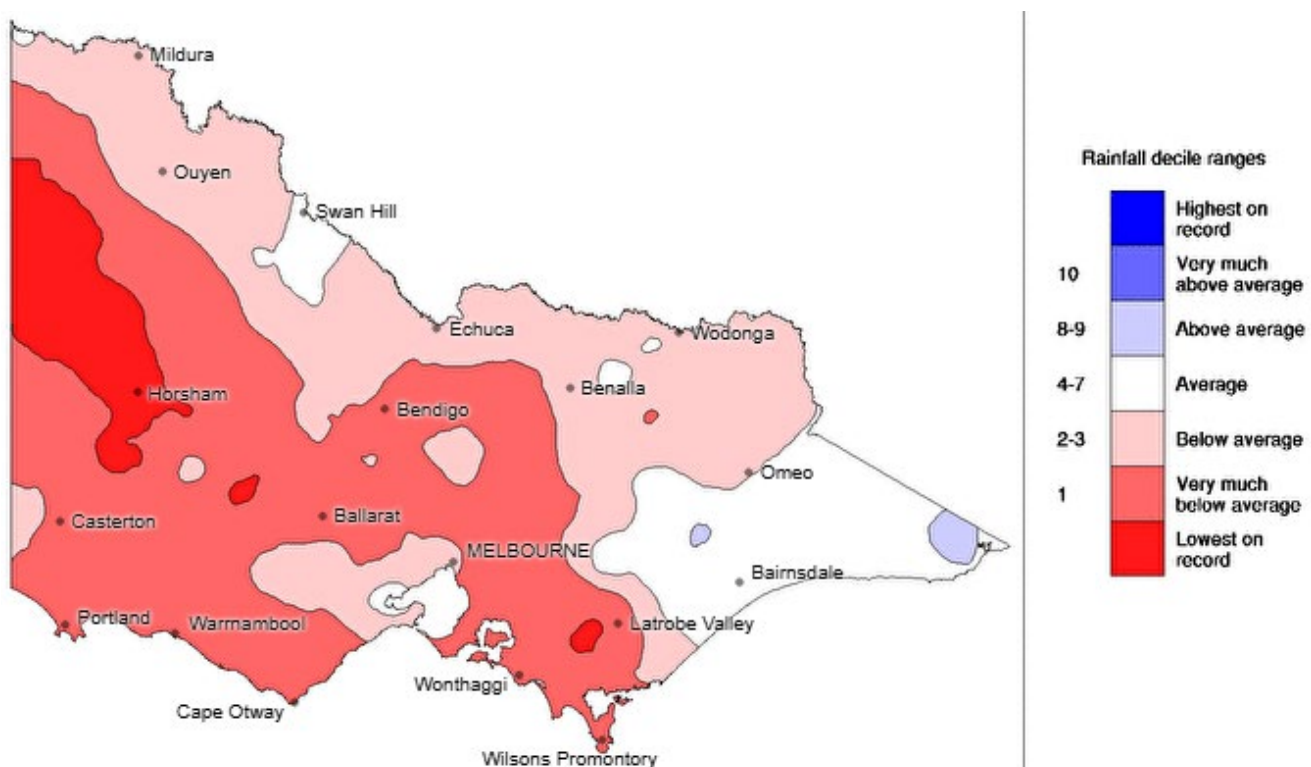
Runoff into wetlands, waterways and storages was reduced due to the prolonged dry conditions. The end of June 2025, saw total water storage down 17.5% compared to levels in June 2024 (GWMWater, 2025). Main storages, Lake Belfield and Lake Wartook, were 20-25% lower compared to the same time last year.

The prolonged below average rainfall promoted high fire danger conditions in addition to 'highest on record' temperatures across the Wimmera catchment and Victoria. Three significant bushfires occurred during December and January in the Wimmera, burning a combined total of 230,000 hectares (VicEmergency, 2025).

Figure 3. Total annual Wimmera rainfall compared against the average by calendar year (Australian National University, 2025)



Figure 4. Victorian rainfall deciles from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025 (Bureau of Meteorology, 2025)



River inflows

This indicator provides estimates of annual Barringgi Gadyin (Wimmera River) inflows for the 2024 calendar year.

Annual inflows to Barringgi Gadyin (Wimmera River) were extremely low, being the fifth lowest since 2000, as the upper catchment and contributing streams in the Gariwerd region received 'very much below average' rainfall (Figure 5).

Annual inflows into headworks storages were the second lowest since records began in 1950 (Figure 6).

Figure 5. Barringgi Gadyin (Wimmera River) inflow. Total annual surface and subsurface runoff into the river, estimated by the OzWALD model-data fusion system (Australian National University, 2025)

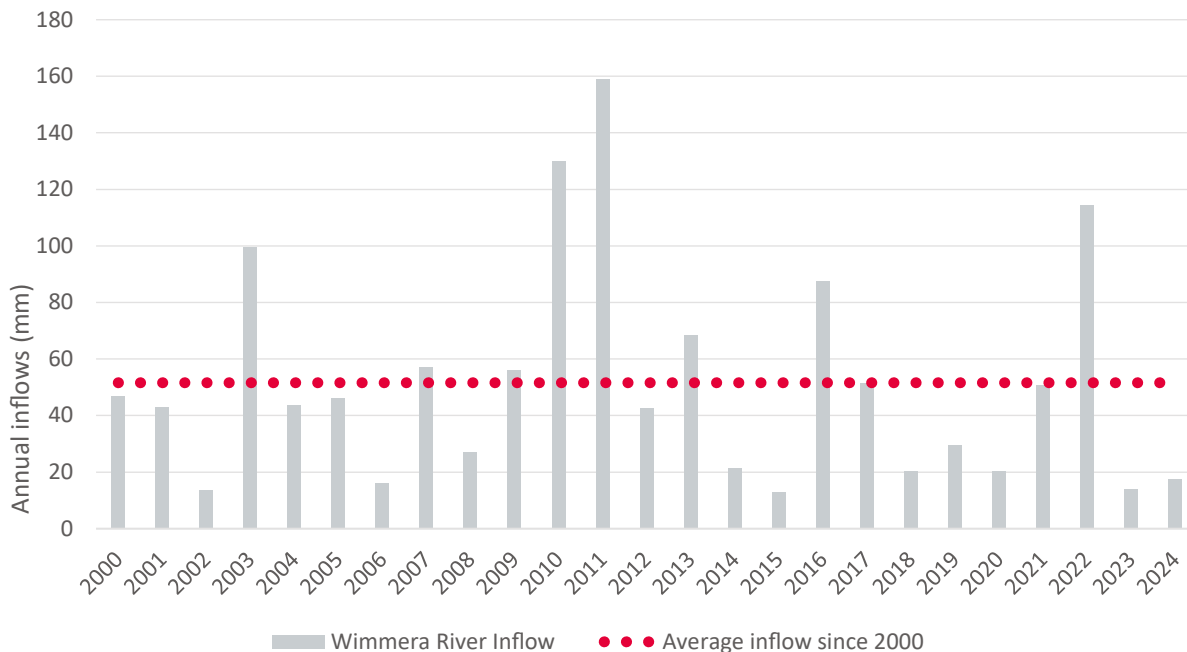
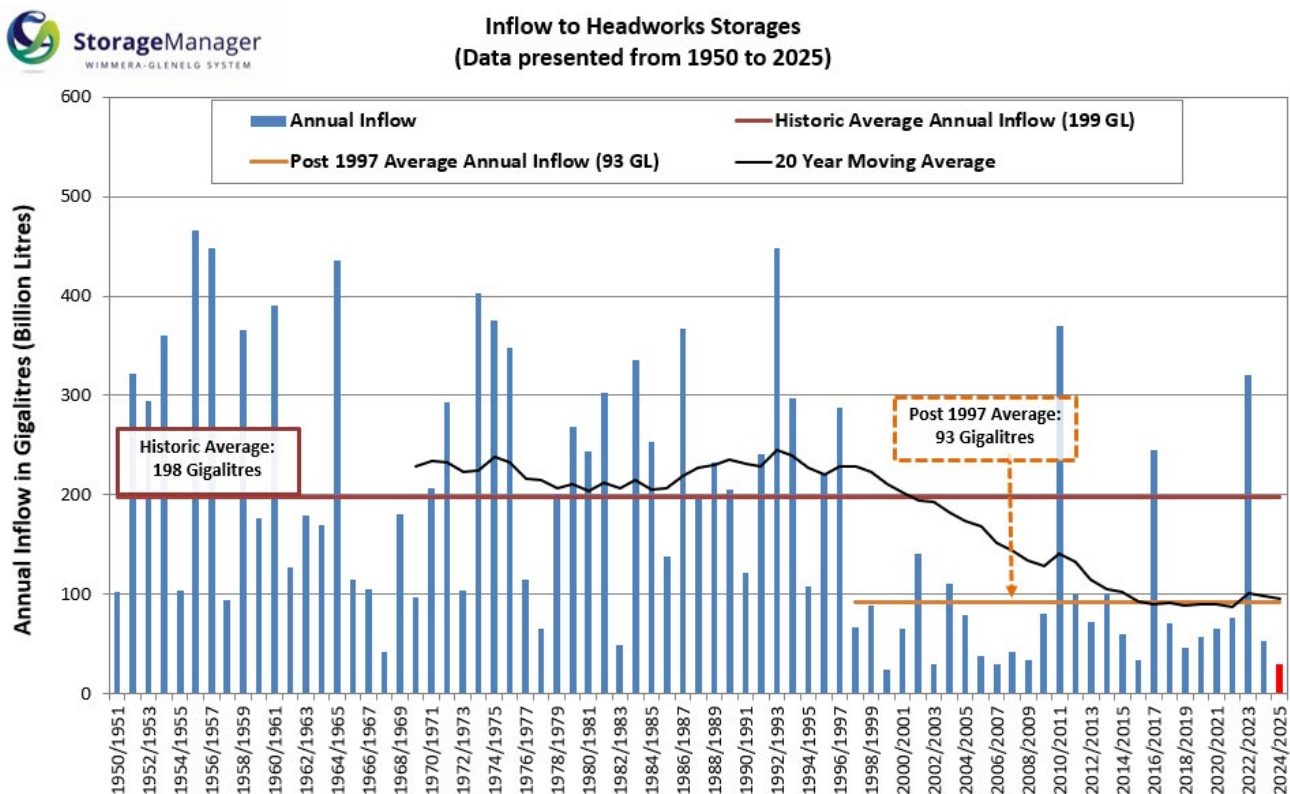


Figure 6. Annual inflows to headworks storages (GWMWater, 2025)



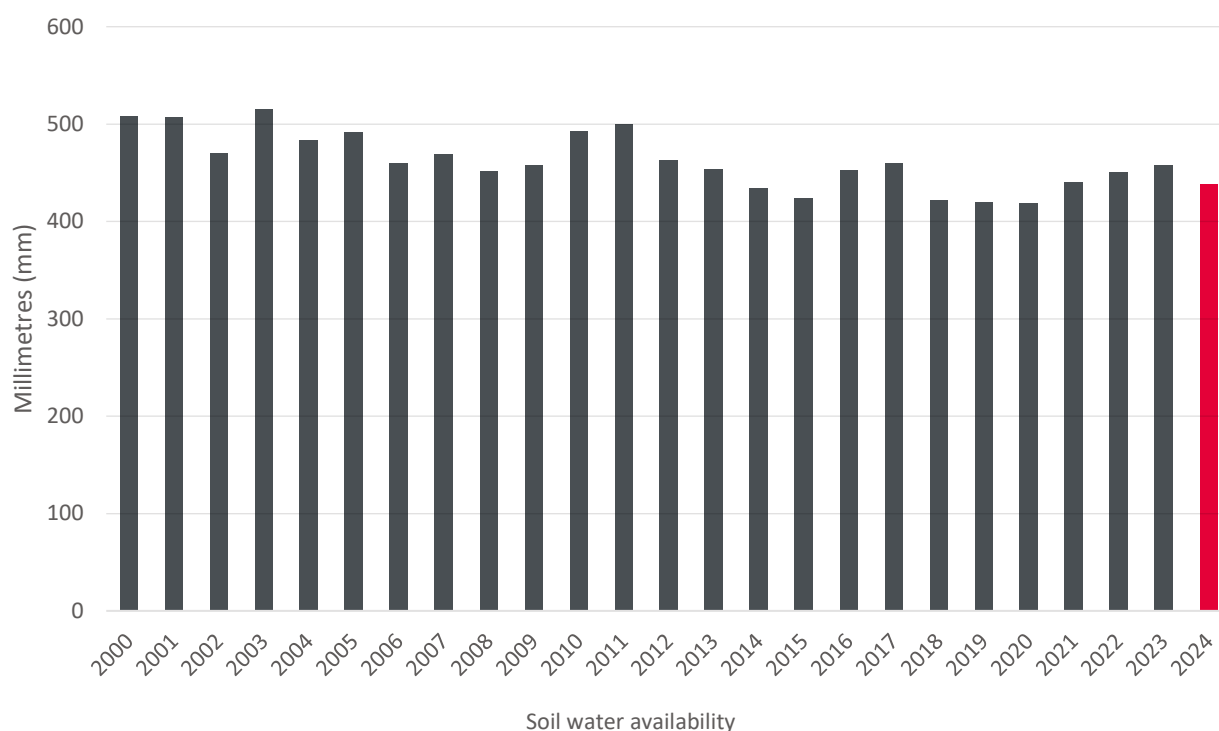
Note: Inflow data excludes Taylors Lake and Toolondo Reservoir.

Soil moisture

This indicator provides an estimate of soil moisture or the amount of water present in Wimmera soils. Soil moisture plays an important role in supporting agricultural productivity, rainfall runoff into waterways, ecological function and condition.

The average amount of water stored in the soil profile during the 2024 calendar year was the sixth lowest since 2000 (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Wimmera soil water availability. Average amount of water stored in the soil profile during the year, estimated by the OzWALD model-data fusion system (Australian National University, 2025)



In 2023, Wimmera CMA added to a network of soil moisture probes and weather stations across the Wimmera. Data collected from these probes shows that the 2024 Wimmera growing season kicked off with moderate soil moisture due to above average summer rainfall. After good summer rainfall, parts of the catchment received very much below average autumn and winter rainfall, resulting in crops that were slow to emerge due to persistent cold temperatures and declining soil moisture. Late rain in October 2024 helped to recover some yield, although it was too late for many growers. As the growing season progressed, soil moisture continued to drawdown at depths where still available.

The region experienced decreasing rainfall averages into summer 2025 and rainfall totals remained very much below average until June 2025, therefore soil profiles were unable to recharge for 2025 winter cropping. Catchment-wide low rainfall resulted in dry sowing of crops and slow germination. Winter and spring rainfall is needed to boost soil moisture levels and ensure crops and pastures reach their full potential moving into the second half of 2025.

Reduced soil moisture may also affect native vegetation growth and regeneration. This will be an added pressure for native vegetation re-establishment post fire. However, anecdotal evidence from Wimmera CMA staff suggests weeds have also been affected with a decline in weed cover observed.

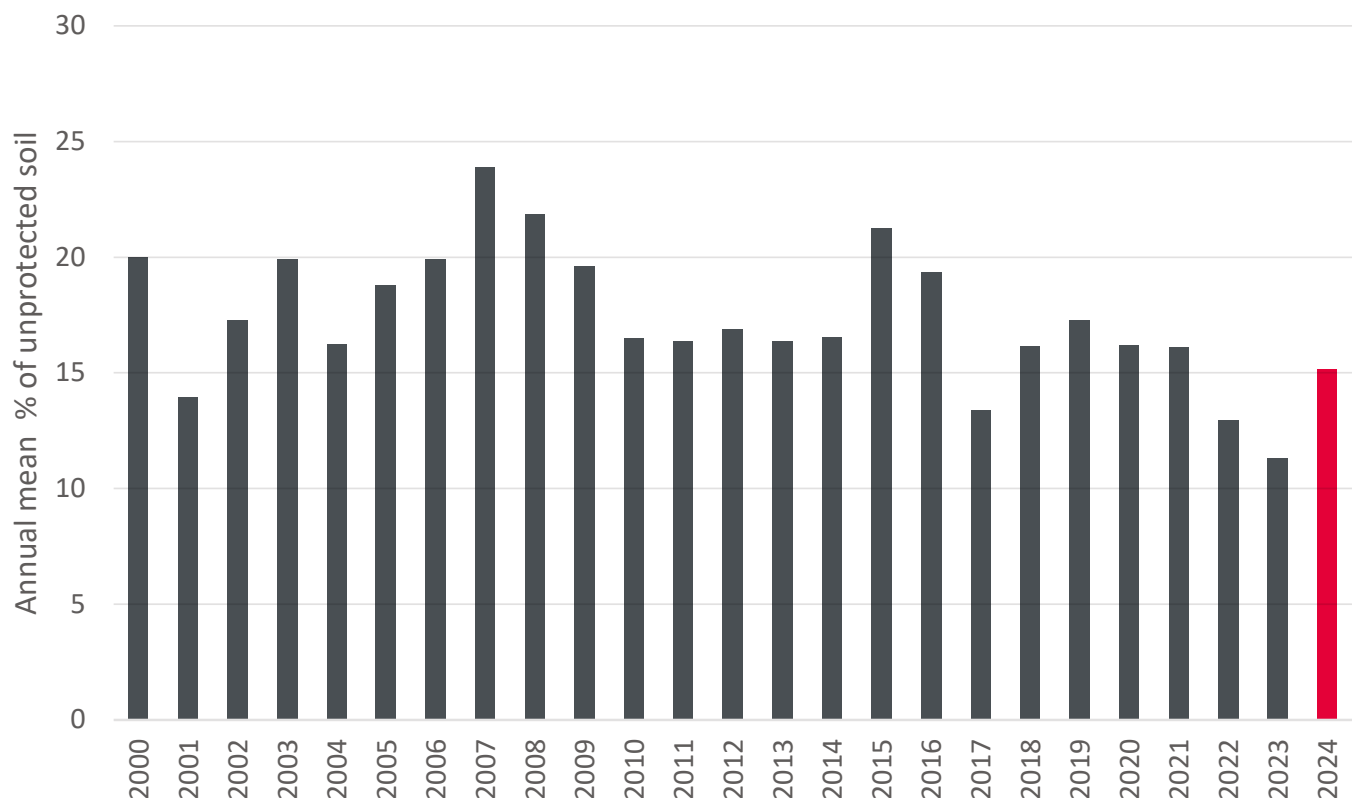
Exposed soil

This indicator looks at the percentage of unprotected soil. Ground cover provided by plants and organic matter protects soil, making it a good indicator of the risk of soil erosion by wind and water. Ground cover also contributes to carbon sequestration, water infiltration, agricultural production and healthy native vegetation.

National ground cover thresholds for preventing erosion on agricultural land recommend 50% cover to control soil loss by wind erosion and 70% cover or greater for water erosion.

The annual mean percentage of soil unprotected by living vegetation or litter during 2024 was around 15% (Figure 8) (Australian National University, 2025). This means that 85% of soil was protected, which is above the minimum cover to control soil erosion. Despite following on from two dry years, soil protection was higher in 2024-25. This may be due to a combination of reduced stock, more landholders using feedlots and other methods implemented from increasing education on the importance of maintaining ground cover during drought.

Figure 8. Annual mean percentage of soil unprotected by living vegetation or litter, derived from MODIS imagery and CSIRO mapping by the OzWALD model-data fusion system (Australian National University, 2025)



Natural or extreme events

This section reports on notable natural or extreme events that have taken place in the region.

Significant bushfires occurred in Gariwerd (Grampians National Park) on 17 December 2024 and 27 January 2025. These 2 mega fires joined to burn 135,000 hectares in total over many weeks. Also on 27 January, a Little Desert National Park fire started and burnt 95,000 hectares while threatening the Dimboola township – most of that was in a single day demonstrating the severity of the burn (VicEmergency, 2025).

The Gariwerd bushfires impacted upper catchment waterways and had a major effect on native habitat and wildlife. A total of forty out-buildings were destroyed, and thousands of hectares of agricultural land were burnt and stock lost.

The Little Desert National Park is home to endangered Malleefowl populations, and the fire impacted a number of known nesting and habitat sites. Wimmera CMA is continuing to work with partners to assess the long-term impacts the fire will have on the populations. The fire destroyed the Little Desert Nature Lodge and one home at Dimboola, not to mention, the extensive native bushland. The intensity of the fire will likely alter the composition of emerging vegetation communities and will slow recovery.

Following the Gariwerd fires, Wimmera CMA worked with GWMWater to monitor water quality in impacted waterways and undertake sediment control works to prevent sediment moving downstream into waterways and key water storages. Wimmera CMA observed no major impacts on water quality during 2024-25, largely due to a lack of large rainfall and runoff events after the fires.

In response to the Little Desert National Park fire, Wimmera CMA worked with partner agencies to undertake emergency response works including the recovery and translocation of two Malleefowl eggs and targeted pest animal control to promote regeneration.

Parts of the region experienced drought conditions, particularly in the south and southwest.

There was no riverine flooding during 2024-25.

Water

Wimmera rivers, streams and wetlands provide valuable recreation and tourism opportunities, water supply for towns and farms, are a base for rich cultural history and habitat for a variety of wildlife and plants.

Many factors influence the environmental condition of the region's waterways. These include water regimes, water quality, pest plants and animals, habitat connectivity, land management practices, recreation, developments and natural events such as drought, floods and bushfires. Climate change poses a major risk due to declines in rainfall and reduced flows. Climate change is also predicted to increase the intensity of rainfall events and floods. Land management practices can also influence localised runoff.

Waterway condition assessment 2024-25

Condition rating for 2024-25	6-year Trend in condition
Poor	Concerned



Waterway condition in 2024-25 was poor. The trend during the year was negative as many of the region's waterways continued to be threatened from reduced rainfall. Low environmental flow allocations made for strategic efforts to continue base-flows and 'freshes' to improve water quality and maintain water in the environment.

Large lakes, such as Gurru (Lake Hindmarsh), dried out, and drought refuge fish translocations had to occur in the Burnt Creek and MacKenzie River systems. With many shallow wetlands dry, more wetlands are vulnerable to cropping

River flows and wetland filling

Since January 2024, well below average rainfall totals occurred across the Wimmera catchment. This impacted inflows with 308,360 ML (55% of storage capacity) held in GWMWater storages on 3 July 2024.

Regulated releases in the Barringgi Gadyin (Wimmera River) commenced from Taylors Lake on the 30 July 2024 with three 'freshes' for the lower Wimmera River delivered after natural flows ceased.

Barringgi Gadyin (Wimmera River) environmental flows ceased in December 2024 to lower turbidity levels and allow for aquatic vegetation to establish. Any low natural flows ceased in early-January Wimmera CMA decided that 2025. Planned flows due to commence in January from Lake Lonsdale would not occur due to blue-green algae being present. This was decided to reduce the risk of creating blue green-algae in lower Mount William Creek and the Wimmera River. The algae prevented any watering from this source until 19 May 2025.

Releases planned to occur after the March 2025 long weekend were halted due to blue-green algae in Taylors Lake. The releases were designed to improve water quality in the lower Wimmera River, where salinity levels were increasing. Flows of 40 ML/day commenced from Taylors Lake in the Wimmera River from 3 April 2025 after levels of blue-green algae in the lake met required standards. A fresh occurred after Easter 2025 to improve water quality along the river to Jeparit. In May, flows from Taylors Lake reached the lower Wimmera River for the first time since February.

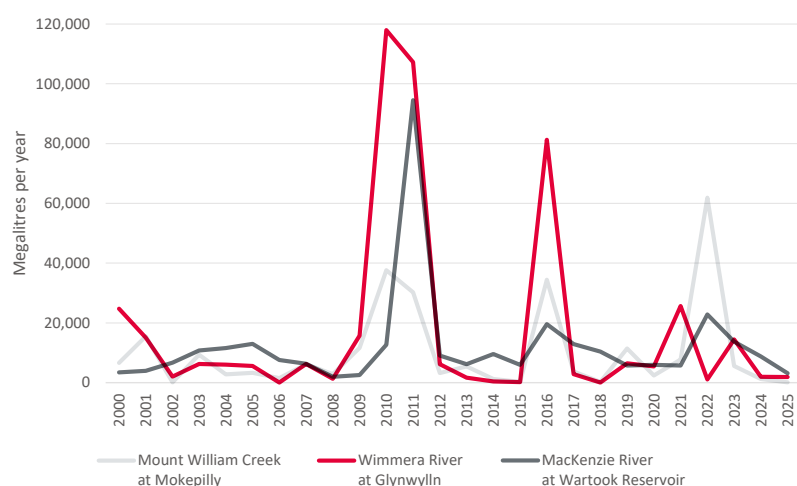
Gurru (Lake Hindmarsh) and Dock Lake continued to hold water from 2022 floods, but receded over the period. No environmental flows entered Dock Lake in 2024-25. Very limited water may have entered Gurru (Lake Hindmarsh) via the Jeparit weir due to leaking, but it was dry by February 2025 and Dock Lake is expected to dry out during the next financial year if high flows do not occur.

No watering at the Ranch Billabong, located on the Wimmera River at Dimboola, occurred during this reporting period as efforts were focused on the installation of the pipeline connecting the billabong to the Wimmera River. The site, including its watering regime, are now managed by BGLC. Water retained at the billabong stimulated local improvements in birdlife and wetland vegetation, particularly canopy condition. The site, however, was impacted by the Little Desert fires in January 2025, complicating management efforts.

A fish kill of mainly carp occurred at the Ranch Billabong on 4 April 2025. BGLC staff notified Wimmera CMA and requested assistance in the removal of dead fish. Wimmera CMA assisted this by providing work equipment such as waders and nets.

The combined affects of below average rainfall and reduced environmental flows resulted in low annual river flows for Barringgi Gadyin (Wimmera River) at Glynwylln in the upper catchment, Mount William Creek at Mokepilly and MacKenzie River at Wartook (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Annual river flow in megalitres per year at three river and stream locations (Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action, 2025)



Environmental water

Opening allocation for the Wimmera River commenced at 3% (1,216 ML) and wetland allocation at 0%. Later in the season Wimmera CMA received two watering statements from the Victorian Environmental Watering Holder – 22,000 ML for the Wimmera system and 74 ML for wetlands. These allocations were used for watering to meet environmental objectives for the year. Passing flows accumulated at Lake Lonsdale to 240 ML, which were used in October 2024.

Very dry conditions and high evaporation losses occurred throughout the year, which led to limited inflows into headworks storages. 2024-25 is currently ranked as the second lowest inflow year of record (1900-2024). The Wimmera River allocation reached 19% (33 ML) and no wetland allocation was received for the year.

Wetlands supplied with water for the environment by the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline continue to provide areas of refuge habitat for local flora and fauna. Eleven of thirteen wetlands received environmental water during 2024-25 in March and May. This meant these sites have high water levels for the commencement of the 2025-26 watering year.

Water quality

Wimmera CMA staff conducted bi-monthly water quality sampling at 22 sites in the Barraggi Gadyin (Wimmera River) and tributaries. This is a change from previous years when monitoring was done monthly. And one less site was monitored during 2024-25 due to it not receiving flows. The data found low compliance of salinity (23%) and dissolved oxygen (27%) parameters, similar to 2023-24, with water quality objectives set out in Victoria's Environment Reference Standard for Water. Wimmera CMA attributes this to the low rainfall and runoff conditions that continued from 2023-24. Wimmera CMA monitors observed moderate compliance for pH (50%) and all sites met water quality objectives for total nitrogen and total phosphorus. And there was an 18% turbidity compliance, an improvement from the 0% during 2023-24, likely to also be attributed to the low rainfall and flows during this time (Wimmera CMA, 2025).

Water management authorities detected blue-green algae in some recreational lakes and water storages, including Taylors Lake, Lake Wallace, Green Lake, Lake Lonsdale and Lake Toolondo (GWMWater, 2025).

Wetland vegetation

Ecology Australia and the Arthur Rylah Institute conducted surveys of pipeline wetlands in 2024-25.

Ecology Australia surveyed all 13 of the Wimmera's pipeline wetlands in October and November of 2024. This was a follow-up from 2012-14 surveys. Five had declined in their abundance of wetland flora, while 3 showed improvement. Threatened flora included Buloke, Buloke mistletoe, Spiny Ligum, Cane Grass, Riverina bittercress and Deniliquin box. However, there was an overall decline in biodiversity from the initial surveys, perhaps due to preceding climatic conditions,

and recency of wetland inundation. Despite consistent water delivery to the sites since 2010-11, the results suggested this water is not reaching their natural wetland areas.

Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research's Wetland Monitoring and Assessment Program team surveyed vegetation at Crow and Carapugna pipeline wetlands in January 2025. However, they were both dry at the time of the survey, as both wetlands stopped receiving environmental water by early November 2024. Therefore, most previously recorded aquatic and semi-aquatic plants were not observed and their response to the watering event could not be assessed.

A small number of wetland species that were persisting as dry or dead plants at Carapugna Swamp included Common Nardoo, Common Spike-rush and Common Swamp Wallaby-grass, but their coverage was generally low. A highlight included finding one single individual plant of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* listed species Chariot Wheels which was recorded in the same plot the species had been previously recorded. No other individuals were sited.

Some water was still present in the dam at Crow Swamp. In the two plots nearest to the dam outlet, the main native wetland species recorded were Rosinweed and Common Nardoo. Introduced species were also growing vigorously in the watered area, particularly Prickly Lettuce and Curled Dock.

Groundwater

Groundwater levels reflect differences between the amount of water flowing into and out of an aquifer. They are influenced by the amount of water extracted for consumptive purposes, such as irrigation and stock and domestic uses, and the amount of recharge from rainfall.

GWMWater's groundwater monitoring indicates that groundwater levels appear to be declining in the shallower aquifers, which is expected due to the dry conditions experienced in the past few years, while the deeper systems appear to be somewhat stable. During 2024-25, groundwater levels were stable in three out of five of the management area's zones. The Neuarpur Zone and Northern Zone/Yanipy Subzone experienced a decline in levels.

Management of Wimmera waterways

Management rating for Wimmera waterways

The overall management rating for water is above expectations as most planned activities were delivered or targets were met or exceeded.

Waterway indicators used in the assessment

The indicator reflects Wimmera CMA's efforts to protect or improve the condition of riparian lands, including fencing, weed control, and revegetation and pest control including rabbits and foxes.

Indicator	Management rating	Comment
Extent of protected or improved riparian land	Above expectations	Wimmera CMA, partner organisations and private landholders worked together to protect or improve almost 2,314 hectares of riparian land.
Fence	Above expectations	Wimmera CMA supported private landholders to construct 10 kilometres of fence to manage stock access to waterways and riparian areas.
Waterway structure	Satisfactory	Two erosion control structures built to protect waterways from eroding and impacting downstream areas through turbidity and sedimentation.
Vegetation	Satisfactory	One hectare of riparian area was planted with native vegetation. Many waterway protection sites had existing remnant vegetation that did not require supplementary planting.
Weed control	Satisfactory	In partnership with Parks Victoria and Project Platypus, Wimmera CMA controlled weeds across approximately 630 hectares. Weed control works were delayed due to contractor availability and the seasonal conditions with the late break.
Management agreement	Above expectations	Wimmera CMA established 18 management agreements with landholders.
Water Act permits	Above expectations	Wimmera CMA assessed and issued 36 works on waterway permits.
Statutory advice	Above expectations	Wimmera CMA provided advice relating to 117 planning referrals and 117 flood advice requests.

Table 7. Management activities for rivers and streams and wetlands carried out in the Wimmera during 2024-25

Wimmera CMA project	Achievements	Funder
Wimmera CMA continued to manage environmental water in the region. Actions included: • Delivering environmental water to wetlands, river and stream reaches in the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline's footprint. • Surveying waterways for native fish, platypuses, waterbirds and vegetation to assess responses to management and inform future actions. • Completed Index of Wetland Condition assessments at the 13 wetlands receiving environmental water. • Developing and submitting Seasonal Watering Proposals for the Barringgi Gadyin (Wimmera River) system and wetlands to the Victorian Environmental Water Holder. • Reviewing the Environmental Water Management Plan for the Barringgi Gadyin (Wimmera River), Yarriambiack Creek and their terminal lakes. • Seasonal review for the Barringgi Gadyin (Wimmera River) system and wetlands to the Victorian Environmental Water Holder. • Seasonal review for the Barringgi Gadyin (Wimmera River) systems to the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder. • Reviewing the Environmental Water Management Plan for the MacKenzie River, Burnt Creek and Bungalally Creek. • Informing the community via an annual forum, quarterly newspaper updates and social media updates. • Supporting Wimmera Southern Mallee Development annual socio-economic assessment of environmental and recreational water in the Wimmera Southern Mallee. • Maintaining partnerships with the Victorian Environmental Water Holder, Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, GWMWater, DEECA and Parks Victoria	• Delivered almost 13,000 ML of water to 8 reaches and 72 ML to 11 wetlands. This was in addition to 240 ML of passing flows. • Surveyed 3 river and stream sites for native fish. • Completed 1 survey for platypus, 1 for native fish, 2 for vegetation. • 13 Ecological reviews on wetlands, 24 at Dock Lake Gurru (Lake Hindmarsh). • 13 Index of Wetland Condition assessments. • 2 Seasonal Watering Proposals. • 2 Seasonal Reviews. • 5 media items and 30 people attended the forum. • 5 partnerships maintained. • 2 Environmental Water Management Plans completed.	Victorian Government's Waterways Investment Framework

Wimmera CMA project	Achievements	Funder
Wimmera CMA delivered 3 projects seeking to ensure Wimmera rivers, streams and wetlands continued to provide substantial economic, social, cultural, recreational and environmental values to Wimmera and Victorian communities. Actions to improve the health and condition of wetland and riparian areas and increase the cover of native vegetation included: • Establishing management agreements with private landholders. • Revegetating areas with native species. • Controlling weeds, rabbits and foxes. • Installing fences to control stock access. • Installing rock chutes to mitigate erosion. • Assessing sites to prioritise future erosion control works.	• Controlled weeds over 383 ha. • Protected 166 ha from grazing access. • Controlled pest herbivores over 173 ha. • Installed 10 km of fencing. • Installed 2 erosion control structures at 1 site. • 1 publication written. • 6 property assessments.	Victorian Government's Waterways Investment Framework
Wimmera CMA, BGLC and Parks Victoria partnered to maintain and improve the ecological character of Ngalpakatia/Ngelpagutya (Lake Albacutya), an internationally significant Ramsar Wetland. Actions included: • Controlling weeds and rabbits to maintain and improve regeneration and recruitment opportunities for eucalypt woodlands. • Developing the 2024-25 Lake Albacutya Ramsar Site Management Plan. • Surveying tree health and the threatened regent parrot population. • Monitoring seedling abundance and regeneration.	• Controlled weeds over 1097 ha. • Maintained 2 partnerships. • Controlled pest herbivores over 340.79 ha. • 1 publication written.	Victorian Government's Waterways Investment Framework
Wimmera CMA delivered its statutory and regulatory obligations under Victorian Government legislation by: • Providing floodplain advice and responding to floodplain and wetland related planning scheme referrals. • Issuing works on waterways permits. • Undertaking water quality assessments. • Engaging with the Wimmera community, including Black Snake Productions Wildlife Show at Horsham's annual fishing competition and a joint forum combining both the Water for the Environment Management Forum and the Victorian Fishing Authority Fishing and Boating Forum. • Maintaining partnerships with DEECA and Victorian CMAs to deliver government policy including the development of the draft Victorian Waterway Management Strategy. • Contributing advice to regional developments such as the West Wind Energy project, Iluka Wimmera mineral sands proposal, Campbells Bridge Windfarm proposal, the Horsham Solar Farm, DMS Mineral Sand development, Burnt Creek Industrial Estate and Horsham Rural City Councils South Precinct Plan. • Contributed to the Wimmera Southern Mallee Climate Adaptation Community Resilience Group, Wimmera Southern Mallee Drought Resilience meeting and leading the Wimmera's Integrated Water Management Forum. • Instigated consultation with stakeholders and data analysis for the next iteration of the Wimmera Waterway Strategy. Progressing implementation of the Wimmera Native Fish Management Plan, including supporting research into fish River Blackfish breeding.	• Responded to 117 requests for floodplain advice and 117 floodplain referrals, completing 99.96% of responses on time. • Issued 36 works on waterways permits, completing 100% of responses on time. • 2 enquiries, with no permit requirements, were completed 100% on time. • Monitored water quality at 23 locations. • Engaged over 500 participants in CMA events. • Maintained 7 partnerships.	Victorian Government's Waterways Investment Framework
Through the Our Catchments, Our Communities project, Wimmera CMA supported public and private land managers and community groups to deliver a range of integrated projects that maintain and improve the water, biodiversity, land health and productivity values of the Wimmera whilst improving the liveability of resilience of the region. This project encompasses the whole catchment and delivers engagement activities and on ground works that promote the concept of 'Catchment Stewardship' by ensuring that the stakeholders, community groups and private landholders have the skills and resources to implement, maintain and manage projects into the future resulting in long-term outcomes. Using leveraging and direct investment, these projects improve management and access for recreation and cultural activities, protect and enhance the social, recreational, cultural and environmental values of Wimmera waterways and improve overall catchment health. These projects include on ground works such as track installation and rehabilitation, fencing, vehicle access management, installation of bollards, signage, bank protection and threat abatement works including pest plant and animal control.	• Maintained 5 partnerships. • Controlled non-woody weeds across 281 ha. • Completed 0.6 ha of sediment removal. • Assessed 225 ha for future weed control works. • Assessed 248 ha of agricultural land.	Victorian Government's Waterways Investment Framework

Wimmera CMA project	Achievements	Funder
Wimmera CMA coordinated the implementation of the Wimmera Regional Floodplain Management Strategy and relevant actions set out in the Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy by partner organisations. Actions included: - Facilitating the Wimmera Strategic Water Management Working Group partnership. - Coordinating implementation of the Wimmera Floodplain Management Strategy's workplan.	- Maintained 1 partnership group. - Held 2 partnership meetings. - Progressed workplan implementation. - Provided input for Wimmera emergency management group, attending 4 meetings.	Victorian Government's Floodplain Management Program - Implementing Victoria's Floodplain Management Strategies
Wimmera CMA collaborated with DEECA and West Wimmera and Northern Grampians shire councils to support development of flood studies for Apsley and Edenhope townships in West Wimmera Shire and Great Western in Northern Grampians Shire. The studies seek to understand the impact of flooding in the townships and guide flood mitigation and response actions.	Consolidated 3 partnerships for flood studies.	Victorian Government's Flood Study Program 2023-27
Wimmera CMA led a Wimmera Southern Pygmy Perch Recovery project involving the translocation of fish from Mt Zero Channel into refuge areas of Mt William Creek.	Successful translocation of 295 Southern Pygmy Perch from Mt Zero Channel to 4 Mt William Creek sites below Lake Lonsdale.	Murray Darling Basin Authority
Fast-tracking council flood planning – Scoping Future Flood Mitigation Infrastructure Plans. Wimmera CMA collaborated with Yarriambiack and Hindmarsh shire councils on business cases for flood-mitigating infrastructure development projects at Whitton Swamp near Warracknabeal and Jeparit Weir, respectively.	Established 2 partnerships with projects underway.	Victorian Government's Fast-tracking council flood planning – Scoping future flood-mitigation infrastructure plans program
Wimmera CMA led activities to protect small-bodied native fish. A primary focus was on recovery efforts for threatened populations of Wimmera species including river blackfish.	- Established 6 partnerships. - Successful translocations, breeding research and releases of fingerling blackfish into Wimmera waterways. 40 hatchery-bred juvenile River Blackfish into MacKenzie River, Burnt Creek, and a pipeline supplied wetland. - Snobs Creek Conservation Hatchery ecologists achieved an Australian first by breeding blackfish under controlled hormone-induced conditions.	Wimmera CMA
Wimmera CMA collaborated with Murray Darling Basin Commission and Fisheries Victoria-Snobs Creek Conservation Hatchery to establish 'surrogacy' or fish-holding waterbodies for non-Wimmera native species under threat in other parts of the basin. These fish included Southern Purple-spotted Gudgeon and Olive Perchlet.	- Established 3 partnerships, maintained 2 partnerships. - Released threatened inter-regional species into five enclosed wetland habitats across the Wimmera.	Murray Darling Basin Authority
Wimmera CMA contracted Ecology Australia to remove pest carp from targeted areas of Burnt Creek, Mount William Creek and MacKenzie River. This was a follow-up, pest-mitigation part of Southern Pygmy Perch translocations and in anticipation of River Blackfish fingerlings arriving from Snob's Creek Conservation Hatchery. This survey helped protect translocated Southern Pygmy Perch and determine sites for River Blackfish release.	- Established 2 partnerships and maintained 3 partnerships. - Carp removed from target areas and noted redfin presence from target waterway sites.	Murray Darling Basin Authority

Land

The land theme reports on how government agencies and the community are working together to protect the state's natural capital while also maintaining long-term agricultural productivity, access and opportunities for recreation and protection of important cultural values.

Wimmera land and soils support the region's economy, agricultural productivity and the biodiversity and vitality of native plants and animals. Ecosystem services provided by land include water infiltration and storage, soil stability, nutrient cycling and availability for plant growth.

Land condition assessment 2024-25

Condition rating for 2024-25	6-year Trend in condition
Moderate	Neutral

Surveys indicate high levels of ground cover in autumn, minimising the risk of soil erosion by wind and water. This was despite very much below average rainfall across the catchment. A sample of 30 paddocks across the Wimmera found similar soil organic carbon (1.3%) and soil pH (6.5) as in 2023-24. Soil organic carbon levels below 1 % constrain soil health and yield potential, a pH of 6.5 is suitable for adequate nutrient exchange.

2024 growing season

2024 growing season presented many challenges to growers. Despite slightly above average rainfall over summer 2023-2024, rainfall during the 2024 growing season was well below average in the Wimmera, with some areas receiving significant deficits. Frost, hail and strong winds at critical times impacted achievable yield. Overall, crop yields varied. However, given the late break, dry winter and spring conditions, in many cases growers managed to achieve average yields. When considering water use efficiency and growing season rainfall, grain yields achieved over 2024-25 harvest indicate the efficiency of the farming systems throughout the Wimmera.

Land use and soil health

Annual transect surveys, as a part of the Wimmera Cropland Management study, sample more than 1,200 paddocks across the Wimmera to monitor ground cover and land use change. These surveys are conducted annually in Autumn and Spring. From the Autumn 2025 report, land use remains largely designated to grain cropping, followed by pastures. Reduced incidence of cultivation is encouraging as growers embrace chemical fallow as a more cost-effective alternative, reducing the risk of wind erosion. Declining seasonal rainfall in conjunction with high intensity rainfall events places increased importance on adequate soil cover to reduce the risk of soil erosion. Twenty-three percent of the region was not protected from water erosion (ground cover less than 70%). Areas of most concern are in the upper catchment where slopes and rainfall can lead to significant erosion. However, it is worth noting this region experienced lower than average rainfall.

Sufficient ground cover to reduce the likelihood of wind erosion occurred over 95% of the area. Areas with lowest ground cover were in the North-West Wimmera and Little Desert regions. Despite the lowest on record rainfall, ground cover still exceeded 2023-24 values (Figures 10, 11,12). Stubble retention continued to be the major stubble management practice in the northern transect survey area (Figure 13). Land managers burnt stubble across 3% of the northern transect area and 4% of the south. Stubble burning is often used as a last resort to manage herbicide resistant weeds, or snail and slug management. Furthermore, the presence of livestock continued to decline with sheep the primary livestock type. Ninety-two percent of paddocks had no livestock (Wimmera CMA, 2025).

The importance of building soil organic carbon through retaining crop residues increases the water holding capacity of soils enabling crops to draw off this moisture during dry spring periods. A slight increase in soil carbon percent was observed in cropping fields in 2025 (1.2%) compared to 2023 (1.1%), with similar soil carbon percentages in pastures as in cropping fields for 2023 (1.1 %) compared to 2025 (1.3 %). However, these levels are considered low compared to Australian soils under rainfed farming, sitting between 0.7% and 4%.

Figure 10. Percent of northern transects with sufficient ground cover (Wimmera CMA, 2025)

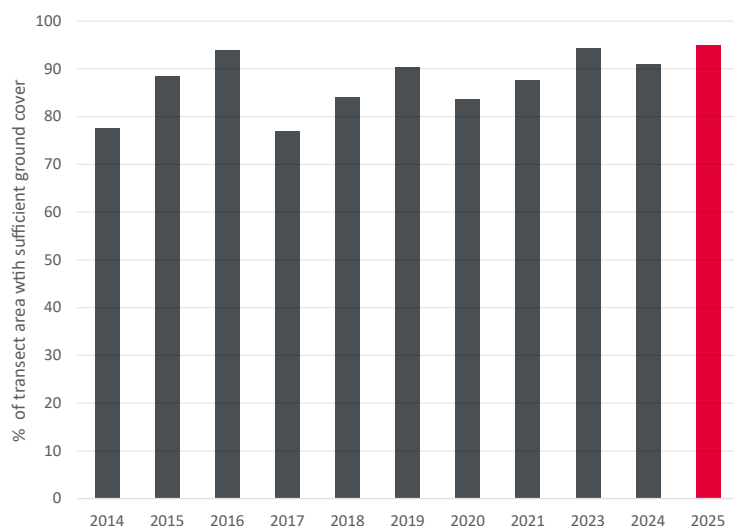


Figure 11. Percent of mid region transects with sufficient ground cover (Wimmera CMA, 2025)

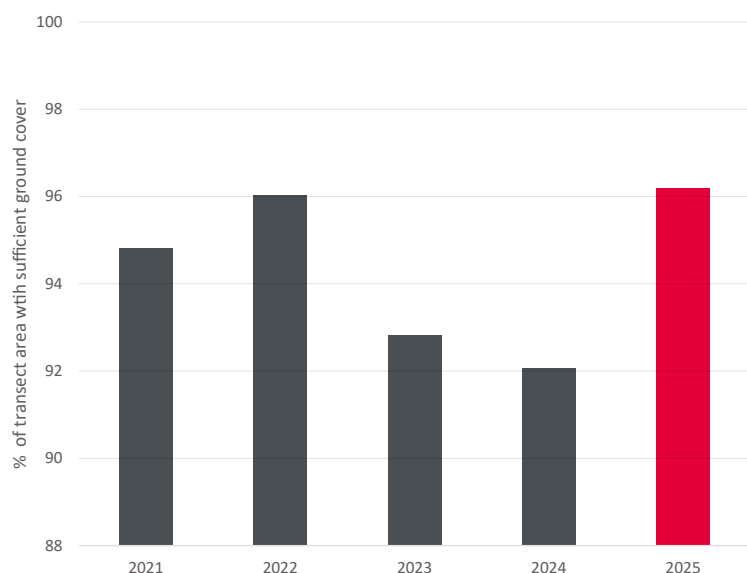


Figure 12. Percent of southern transects with sufficient ground cover (Wimmera CMA, 2025)

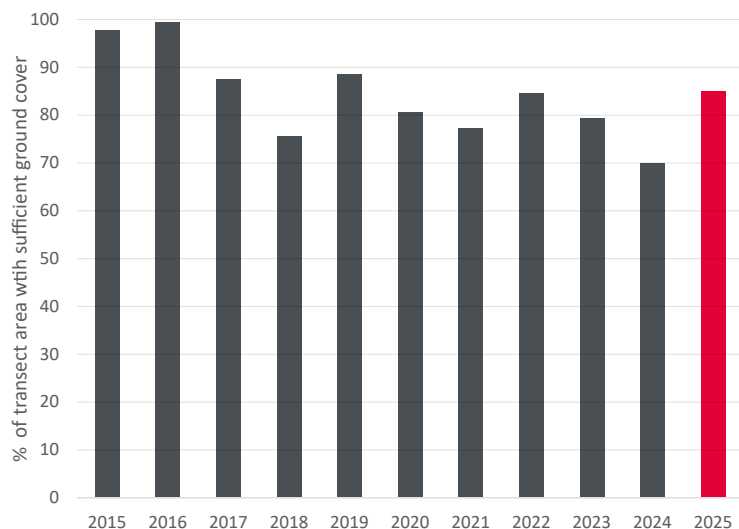
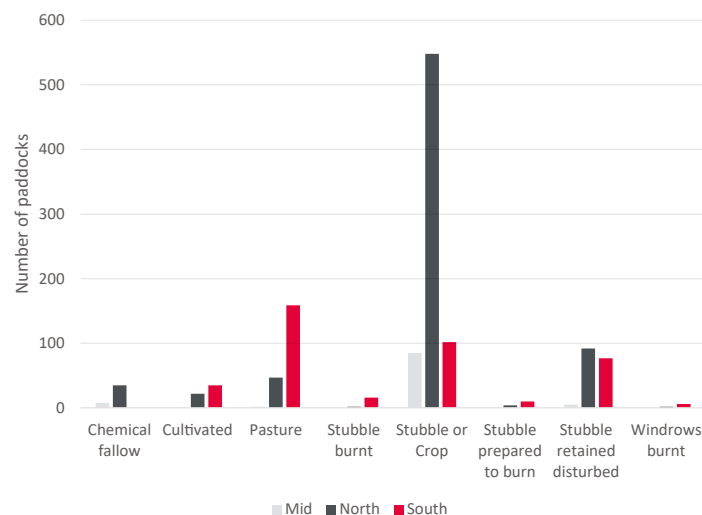


Figure 13. Land management practices (LMP's) for mid, north and south autumn 2025 transects (Wimmera CMA, 2025)



Soil organic carbon

Soil organic carbon is a measure of the amount of carbon in soils derived from organic matter from living organisms. It includes undecomposed plant litter, soil organisms and humus. Soil organic carbon stores important nutrients, stabilises soil structure and feeds soil microbes. Total organic carbon in Australian soils under rainfed farming is typically 0.7 to 4% (Hoyle, 2011). Soil organic carbon levels below 1% can constrain soil health and yield potential (depending on rainfall) (Kay & Angers, 1999). Soil testing by Wimmera CMA of 30 paddocks spread across the region found levels ranging from 0.5% to 2.2%, similar results to 2024. The average across the sites was 1.3%.

Management of Wimmera land

Government agencies, conservation groups, industry groups and community groups worked together to protect the region's land and soils while also supporting a sustainable and profitable community. Industry groups continued to build knowledge and support farmers to build capacity and implement practices that improve resilience in agricultural land.

Management activities led by Wimmera CMA during 2024-25 to benefit Wimmera agricultural land and soils and support farmers are summarised under the Community theme of this report. This includes activities to support Landcare groups and networks.

Management rating for Wimmera land

The overall management rating for land is satisfactory as targets were met or exceeded.

Wimmera CMA continued to promote awareness of the region's soil moisture probe network and monitor land use and management practices via annual transect surveys.

Land indicators used in the assessment

Indicator	Management rating	Comment
Area of improved agricultural practices	Satisfactory	Management of biodiversity and waterways was improved on 360 hectares of private farmland, with Wimmera CMA supporting private land-holders to carry out fencing to manage stock access, weed and pest animal control works and revegetation.
Number of agricultural assessments	Satisfactory	Surveys of land use and management were completed along northern, middle and southern Wimmera transects in spring and autumn respectively, continuing an annual longitudinal survey. Soil moisture probe monitoring was carried out at 80 sites and soil sampling at 30 sites, including soil organic carbon.

Table 8. Management activities for land carried out in the Wimmera during 2024-25

Wimmera CMA project	Achievements	Funder
The Wimmera CMA's Sustainable Agriculture Facilitator (SAF) aims to connect farmers, landholders, community groups and agriculture industries to relevant information and programs on climate-smart, sustainable agriculture practices; facilitate partnerships and connections; and support the delivery of sustainable agriculture projects in their region.	• 1 Wimmera SAF employed. • Attended community events. • Facilitated partnerships with key stakeholders via regular meetings with the Wimmera Partnership Group. • Supported stakeholders with the development of projects and grant submissions.	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
The Carbon Farming Outreach Program supports Australian farmers and land managers to reduce emissions and store carbon.	• 5 events ran with a total of 117 participants. • Planning completed for events scheduled for next financial year.	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
The On Farm Natural Capital and Climate-Smart Communities of Practice project aims to broaden the natural capital knowledge base and promote pathways for improved management of soil and vegetation and negative edge effects in the highly fragmented and patchy Wimmera agricultural landscape.	• 4 communication materials. • 1 baseline dataset synthesised and finalised.	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
The Action Stations project sought to develop a baseline understanding of Wimmera CMA's soil moisture portal usage and implement new data collection points in existing gap areas.	• 1 report completed. • 2 sites added to the network.	Wimmera Southern Mallee Development

Table 9. Management activities led by partner organisations and groups during 2024-25 to benefit Wimmera agricultural land and soils and support farmers

Management activities led by partner organisations	Achievements
Perennial Pasture Systems continued to conduct perennial pasture research and provide information on productive pasture management to its members in the upper Wimmera catchment. Actions included managing demonstration paddocks and disseminating information to member farmers via workshops, paddock walks, annual conference, Girls and Grass Group, case studies, quarterly newsletter and reports.	• Webinars for pasture and livestock management during drought conditions received 164 views. • Provided community information events including farm tours and Girls and Grass. • Implemented the Gra\$\$ to Dollars course. • Completed studies linking the Federation University historical soil test data project and Feed Test Quality study. • Continued quarterly newsletters.

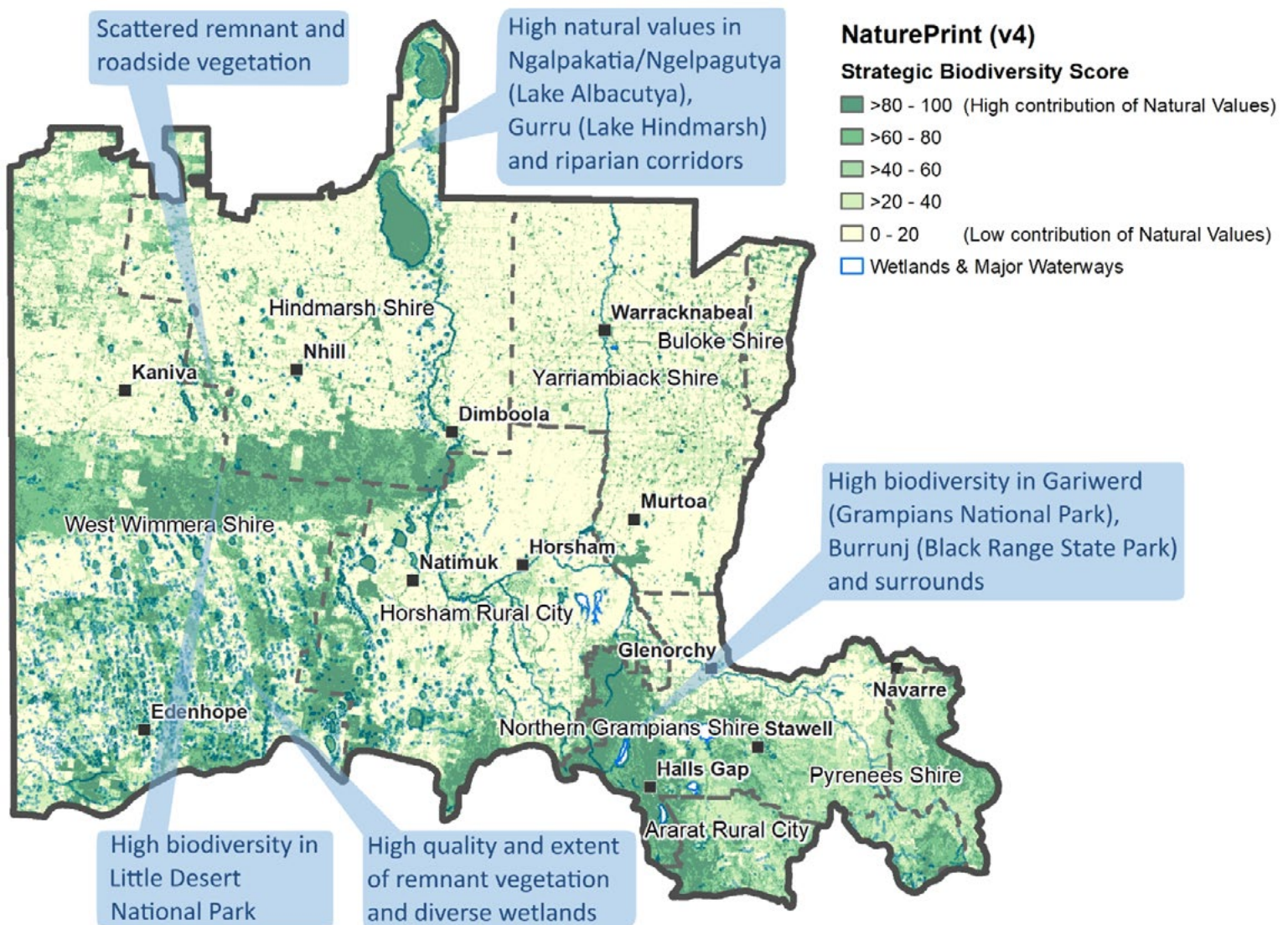
Additional activities, such as Landcare support, are included under the Community theme.

Biodiversity

The Wimmera supports large areas of high biodiversity value, especially northern Gariwerd (Grampians National Park) and Burrunj (Black Range State Park), Little Desert National Park, upper Wimmera catchment area, Gurru (Lake Hindmarsh) and scattered woodland and wetland reserves. The Wimmera is home to Ngalpaktia/Ngelpagutya (Lake Albacutya), recognised as an internationally important wetland under the Ramsar Convention. Riparian corridors along the Barringi Gadyin (Wimmera River), MacKenzie River, Yarriambiack Creek and upper catchment streams provide narrow but important connections through the landscape. The south-west Wimmera retains many patches of native vegetation and wetlands, supporting a diverse array of plants and animals (Figure 14).

Threatened species include the Malleefowl, South-Eastern Red-Tailed Black Cockatoo, Growling Grass Frog and the Wimmera's remnant Platypus population.

Figure 14. Strategic biodiversity values in the Wimmera based on NaturePrint v4.0 (DEECA, 2024).



Biodiversity condition assessment 2024-25

The biodiversity condition assessment reports on the health of native species and native vegetation for the areas where it is monitored and assessed. This assessment also reports on the status of threats to biodiversity, relying on available data, as well as the observations of staff from various natural resource management organisations working in the region.

Condition rating for 2024-25	6-year Trend in condition
Moderate	Concerned



Biodiversity values appeared to have a declining overall trend, with compounding impacts from drought and severe bushfires in the Gariwerd (Grampians) and Little Desert National Parks. Biodiversity values benefited from late rainfall towards the end of the 2024-25 year.

Reduced native vegetation and weed growth was observed from the lack of rainfall. Numerous migratory waterbirds made use of remaining wetland water, emphasising the importance of drought refuges. Pest animals remained of concern; however, the burnt landscape was an opportunity for aerial control in the region's National Parks. Native fish populations appeared strong in target reaches, although exotic carp numbers were also high. One new juvenile female platypus was identified in MacKenzie River with two positive environmental DNA results.

The evidence that follows is derived from areas where we have funding and resources to monitor aspects of biodiversity condition.

Biodiversity indicators

South-eastern red-tailed black cockatoo

The 2025 annual south-eastern red-tailed black cockatoos count saw 206 volunteers record 885 birds across the cockatoo's Victorian and South Australian range. This was 418 fewer than 2024's total of 1,303. south-eastern red-tailed black cockatoos are notoriously hard to find and, although total numbers were significantly lower than in previous years, it is unlikely the population has suffered a mass decline since last year. It is more likely that birds were scattered widely across their range and simply missed on the day.

This year most of the south-eastern red-tailed black cockatoos counted were found in Victoria (663 birds) with the largest concentrations of birds found in the Wimmera (north to north-east of Edenhope) (Perryman, 2024).

Platypus

Prior to the Millenium Drought, platypus were widespread in the Wimmera. Now, however, the MacKenzie River supports the Wimmera catchment's last known platypus population. Wimmera CMA has monitored the population since 2001.

In partnership with BGLC, a survey of MacKenzie River in June found 1 new juvenile female platypus.

Project Platypus conducted an eDNA survey in Spring 2024 in upper catchment streams. Sites included Mount Cole Creek, the upper Wimmera River area above Glenorchy, Mokepilly and upper Mt William Creek. Among 43 samples, none presented any platypus DNA. In June 2025 samples, 2 returned positive for the presence of platypus in the upper MacKenzie River where a known population persists.

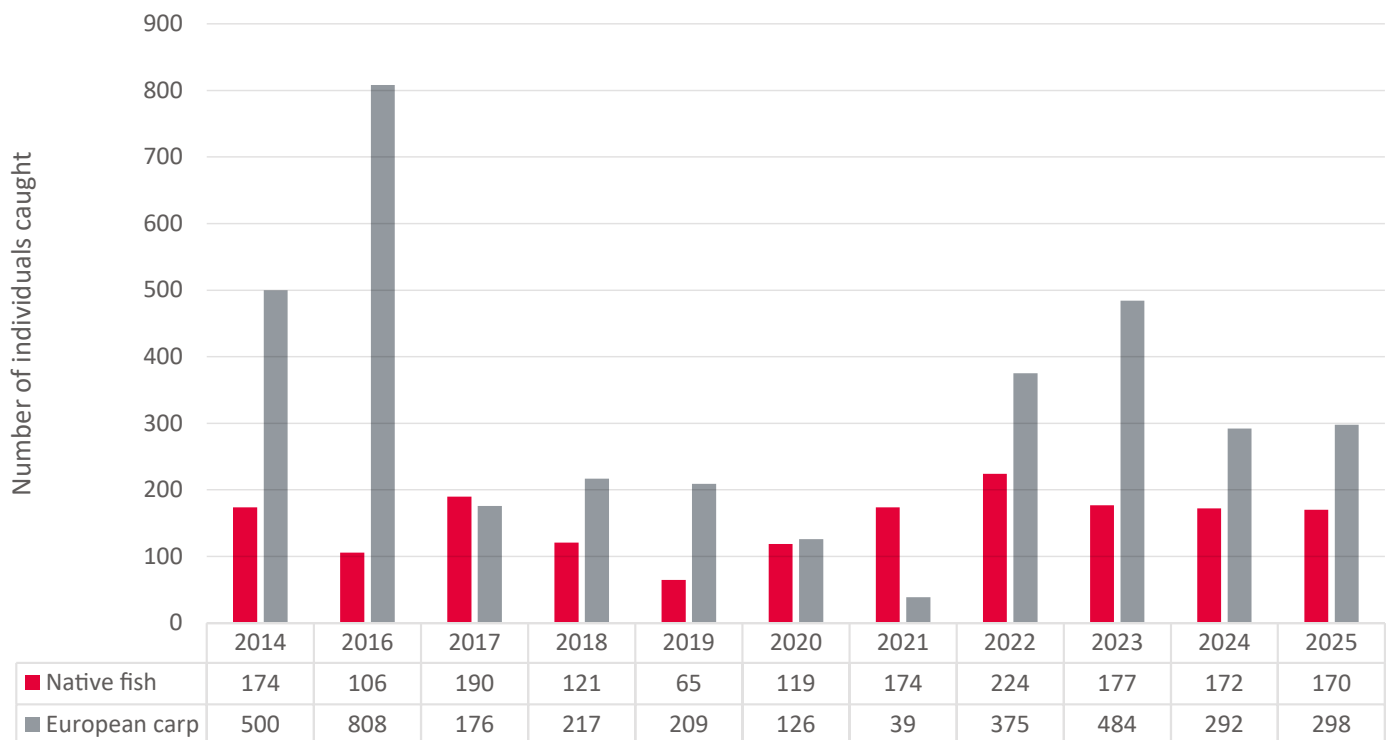
Native fish

Wimmera CMA worked with the storage manager, GWMWater, to increase flows in November 2024 for the second year running when water temperature increased to levels known to provide conditions for golden perch and silver perch spawning. Massing of fish at the Horsham Weir was observed by Wimmera CMA staff, such as golden perch and freshwater catfish, but no spawning was observed.

The Wimmera Native Fish report card in March identified a total of 1,145 fish, where 707 were native species. Focus species are the freshwater catfish (2 individuals) and the golden perch (107 individuals), which both had slightly less observations compared to the 2023-24 surveys. Other species observed included Australian smelt, flat-headed gudgeon, redfin, silver perch, common galaxias, eastern gambusia and murray cod. European carp remained abundant with 210 individuals caught.

Anglers caught 170 native fish and 298 carp in the annual Horsham Fishing Competition in March 2025 (Figure 15). Native fish included 54 freshwater catfish, 1 murray cod, and 58 golden perch. Fish captures totalled 468, 4 more than at the 2024 event. Only marginal changes occurred between the number of native fish and carp caught with 6 more carp and 2 less native fish caught compared to the previous year's numbers. The competition also played a role in environmental conservation efforts, with carp caught eradicated from the river.

In July 2024, Wimmera CMA successfully translocated 295 native southern pygmy perch from an artificial environment in Mount Zero Channel to four Mount William Creek sites below Lake Lonsdale. The translocation reflected a need to move the fish from an 'enclosed' waterway, that presented limited opportunities for dispersal, to a waterway that promoted dispersal throughout the system and enable long-term survival. The same artificial environment and circumstances had prompted earlier translocations of river blackfish from the channel to MacKenzie River in October 2023.

Figure 15. Horsham Fishing Competition results (Horsham Fishing Competition Committee, 2025).

Waterbirds & frogs

Thirteen Wimmera pipeline wetlands were surveyed by Ecology Australia for bird and frog species between October and November 2024. This followed up from surveys from 2012-14. The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* listed species, brown tree creeper, was found at 3 sites. Australian wood ducks were abundant across most of the sites. Pacific black ducks (Carapugna Swamp), Chestnut teals (Crow Swamp), Tree Martins (Fieldings Dam), and Grey Teals (Harcoans Swamp) were also abundant. eastern banjo frogs and growling grass frogs were recorded at Opie's Dam.

Gurru (Lake Hindmarsh) and Dock Lake bird surveys occurred in each month from July 2024 until June 2025 (Starks 2025). The surveys recorded forty-five wetland bird species at Gurru (Lake Hindmarsh). Pobblebonk frogs were also recorded during December 2024. This was less than during 2023-24, possibly due to the lake drying out by March after peak wetland bird observations in January. Species included:

- Four threatened species under the *Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*, including freckled duck, blue-billed duck, great egret and Australasian shoveler.
- Three migratory shorebirds, red-necked stint, sharp-tailed sandpiper and a single eastern golden plover, listed on the *Japan-Australia Migratory Birds Agreement*, *China-Australia Migratory Birds Agreement* and *Republic of Korea Migratory Bird Agreement*.
- Greatest numbers were observed in January 2025, which were largely made up of grey teals estimated at 12,500 individuals. December 2024 followed, with count estimates of 2,850 Australian pelicans, 7,500 grey teals, and 1,900 of an unidentified duck species.

Dock Lake bird surveys recorded three Palaearctic migratory species (red-necked stint, sharp-tailed sandpiper and bar-tailed godwit) which are all listed on international migratory bird agreements. Wetland species, Australian shelduck and silver gull, were recorded breeding at the lake. The observations of a pair of immature, white-bellied sea-eagles at Dock Lake, as well as an adult pair, suggest that this species bred on a wetland nearby.

Malleefowl

During the 2024-25 breeding season, 358 malleefowl mounds were surveyed, which is 88% of all known mounds in the Wimmera. This includes 186 new mounds located from lidar surveys with 38 active mounds identified.

The malleefowl breeding numbers in the 2024-25 season were above the long-term average and amongst the highest on record. The breeding trend at the old Wimmera sites has been strongly positive since monitoring started in the early 2000s, and especially since 2012 when monitoring involved most of the current sites.

The 2024-25 fires severely burnt 95,000 hectares of the Little Desert National Park, which impacted a number of known nesting and habitat sites. We are continuing to work with our partners to assess the long-term impacts the fire will have on the malleefowl population. The fire destroyed the extensive native bushland. The intensity of the fire will likely alter the composition of emerging vegetation communities and it will be a slow recovery.

Threat indicators

Invasive weeds

Wimmera CMA staff reported observations of reduced weed growth across the catchment following very much below average rainfall throughout the whole financial year. Organisations, such as Landcare groups, Parks Victoria, DEECA, Greening Australia, Trust for Nature, and local municipal councils, continued to target and manage weeds across the region.

Foxes and feral cats

Parks Victoria continued to conduct extensive fox and feral cat control. The Little Desert National Park fire provided the opportunity to target pest species, including foxes and cats, via aerial shooting.

Rabbits

Rabbit numbers appeared to be low to moderate across the region. Parks Victoria, stakeholder and community groups continued to conduct rabbit control in their areas of responsibility or interest.

Deer and goats

Parks Victoria continued to control deer and goats across Gariwerd (Grampians National Park) and Burrunj (Black Range State Park). Deer and goats continued to impact native vegetation in other parts of the catchment where control efforts have not occurred.

After the January Little Desert National Park fire, it provided a suitable aerial shooting opportunity for Parks Victoria to target the Park's deer population.

Over-abundant native herbivores

As a result of the extent of bushfires over Summer, anecdotal evidence from staff suggests kangaroos and wallabies appeared more dispersed across the catchment, impacting on the remaining drought stressed native vegetation.

Paddock trees

Wimmera CMA staff observed continued damage to paddock trees due to un-retained stubble burning. This is of concern as repeated burns will likely result in further tree loss from the landscape, significantly reducing biodiversity and productivity.

Fire

Three significant bushfires occurred during the 2024-25 period. The Grampians National Park (Yarram Gap Road) first ignited on the 17 December 2024 and declared under control on the 13 January. Soon after, on 27 January, two fires ignited in the Grampians National Park (Wallaby Rocks) and at the Little Desert National Park. The two Grampians fires merged to total 135,000 hectares burned, while the Little Desert National Park rapidly totalled 95,000 hectares (VicEmergency, 2025).

During this period, extreme wind and temperature conditions, in an already dry landscape, fuelled the rapid and unprecedented behaviour of the Little Desert fire, which threatened the Dimboola township.

There were significant impacts to vegetation and wildlife. Wimmera CMA staff have observed slow recovery of vegetation due to the extreme heat of the fire, and continuing dry conditions.

Going into Winter, the region is predicted to face increased bushfire risk for the 2025-26 fire season (Australian and New Zealand Council for fire and emergency services, 2025).

Management of Wimmera biodiversity

Biodiversity management aims to maintain and improve habitat, restore ecosystems, stabilise populations of native plants and animals and connect people with nature. Wimmera CMA worked with a range of partner organisations to deliver biodiversity outcomes.

Management rating for Wimmera biodiversity

The overall management rating for biodiversity is satisfactory. Some activities were not achieved, or most were almost achieved.

Biodiversity indicators used in the assessment

Indicator	Management rating	Comment
Vegetation	Satisfactory	Wimmera CMA supported Landcare groups and partners agencies to revegetate 260 hectares of terrestrial biodiversity with native vegetation.
Pest herbivore and predator control	Satisfactory	Wimmera CMA supported partner organisations to control rabbits and pest predators across 111,224 hectares. Areas treated include the Little Desert National Park to benefit malleefowl and other species and in south-eastern red-tailed black-cockatoo habitat in the southwest Wimmera.
Weed control	Satisfactory	Wimmera CMA supported Landcare groups to control weeds across 13,237 hectares funded by the National Heritage Trust. An additional 630 hectares of weed control occurred in riparian areas beside waterways.
Additional area of permanent protection through CMA programs	Satisfactory	Wimmera CMA partnered with Trust for Nature to permanently protect 236.8 hectares of high-quality wetlands through covenants.

Table 10. Management activities for biodiversity carried out by Wimmera CMA in 2024-25

Wimmera CMA project	Achievements	Funder
The Securing Girran (SERTBC) Habitat - Now and for the Future delivered in partnership aims to improve the south-eastern red-tailed black cockatoo's (<i>Calyptorhynchus banksia graptogyne</i>) habitat and trajectory of recruitment. The project supported land managers and the community to protect and enhance existing habitat and create new nesting and feeding habitat.	• Maintained nest boxes at 36 sites and installed 6 new nest boxes. • Undertook acoustic monitoring at 15 sites. • Treated 7,900 ha for pest animals. • Weeds controlled over 10,800 ha. • Monitored population size, age structure and food availability. • Engaged more than 65 Wimmera volunteers in an annual flock count. • 159 people engaged in events. • Grazing access management over 76 ha. • 204 ha of vegetation improved • 2 flora and fauna assessments completed.	National Heritage Trust
The Building Resilient Wimmera Mallee Malleefowl Communities project is a large-scale, tenure-blind project delivered in partnership with stakeholders including Parks Victoria, Trust for Nature and the National Malleefowl Recovery Team. The project aimed to conserve malleefowl (<i>Leipoa ocellata</i>) in the Wimmera and improve the trajectory of this iconic species by protecting and improving habitat and reducing the impact of predators.	• Non-wood weed control over 2,390 ha. • Woody weed control over 40 ha. • 103,324 ha of pest animal control. • 1 flora assessment and 2 fauna assessments.	National Heritage Trust

Table 11. Management activities led by partner organisations for biodiversity during 2024-25

Management activities led by partner organisations	Achievements
Agriculture Victoria's Invasives Program worked in partnership with industry and the community to protect agriculture, the environment, the economy, health and the lifestyle of the community by preventing pests and disease from entering, establishing and spreading within the Wimmera catchment. This included: - Inspecting and treating regionally prohibited weeds on 23,303 ha of private land, including serrated tussock at Landsborough, Stawell, Glenorchy and Dimboola, English broom at Stawell and Glenlogie, Noogoora burr at Apsley, Spiny emex at Dimboola and Buffalo burr at Dooen and Haven. - Monitoring and treating areas for 7 state prohibited weed sites across the Wimmera, including water hyacinth at Crymelon and mesquite at Murtoa. - Conducting twice yearly surveillance for tramp ants at Serviceton, Horsham, Halls Gap, Dooen and Nhill - Conducting fortnightly surveillance during summer for exotic fruit fly in Horsham. - Collected fox scalps that were submitted at the Horsham fox bounty collection centre.	- Treated sites to eradicate state prohibited weeds, water hyacinth and mesquite. - Inspected 52 properties for weeds across the Wimmera, ensuring infestations were treated by land managers. - Collected 11,320 fox scalps - Undertook surveillance on 10 sites for tramp ants. - Undertook surveillance on 15 sites for exotic fruit fly. 661.66 km surveyed for regionally controlled/restricted weeds and 22.25 km in total sprayed.
Trust for Nature continued to work with private landowners to protect habitat and wildlife on private land in perpetuity. Trust for Nature delivered a range of projects to protect and enhance the Wimmera's biodiversity values, including: - The Iconic Estates project and Leaving a Land Legacy project, permanently protecting priority Wimmera habitat through conservation covenants. - The Stewardship Program, providing support to existing Wimmera covenant holders. This included augmenting this program, providing additional support to Gariwerd and Greater Grampians covenants to respond to increased demand. - Ongoing maintenance and improvement of Wimmera Reserves with the Mt Elgin Swamp and Snape Reserve Committees of Management, protecting and enhancing biodiversity and enabling local community-based participation and involvement.	- Permanently protected 457 ha of habitat on 8 properties with a conservation covenant throughout the Wimmera. - Supported existing conservation covenants through 25 site visits. - Delivered 1 covenantor get-together - Visited 6, so far, of the 11 covenants impacted by the Little Desert National Park fires. - Delivered 2 educational events and supported 1 further event. - Supported Snape Committee of Management and Zoos Victoria to plant Myoporum species for the Golden-rayed butterfly at Snape Reserve.
Greening Australia continued to achieve long-term responses to restore Wimmera landscapes and to provide strong environmental benefits for future generations through a range of projects. These included: - Continued management of the Bank Australia Conservation Reserve's 2,130 ha of native remnant and restored vegetation to improve condition and protect and enhance threatened species. The management partnership with Trust for Nature, BGLC and Country Fire Authority continued, providing meaningful opportunities for Indigenous co-management. - Management of the Nurcoun Biodiverse Carbon Demonstration Property a demonstration site for a biodiverse carbon project while also improving habitat connectivity for endangered malleefowl. - Planting for the planet project to establish 1 million trees in Australia and Morocco. - As an industry partner, mentored an honours student at Federation University to investigate the benefits of stratification of <i>Callitris gracilis</i> seed.	1,000 ha of weed control. 2,130 ha of rabbit, feral cat and fox control. - Established an ecological thinning trial across 2 ha. - Revegetated 17.8 ha with native species. - Maintained at least 5 partnerships. - Engaged 60 La Trobe University botany students.
Parks Victoria aimed to: Manage threats to native species in the Wimmera by controlling invasive weeds and animals.	- Deer controlled over 64,226 ha. - Domestic cats (feral) controlled over 3,491 ha. - European rabbits controlled over 10,637 ha. - Goat (feral) controlled over 25,698 ha. - Pig (feral) controlled over 9,695 ha. - Red fox controlled over 129,960 ha. - Weeds controlled over 2,592 ha.

Management activities led by partner organisations Achievements

Hindmarsh Shire Council aimed to:

- Achieve an overall reduction in the quantity and type of roadside weeds and rabbits across the municipal area.
- Support rural landholders to plant native species to improve habitat for native wildlife and birds through an annual rural revegetation program.
- Revegetate parts of the municipality with native trees planted by parks and gardens staff.

- 7,600 plants planted across 7.5 hectares south of Nhill.
- 540 rabbit warrens ripped over 220 km between the council and Yanac Broughton VFF Landcare Group.
- 3 weeds targeted via spot-spraying.
- Wetland and woodland bird monitoring at 1 wetland, with 2 surveys completed with 19 woodland and 4 wetland bird species recorded.

Horsham Rural City Council aimed to:

- Achieve an overall reduction in the quantity and type of roadside weeds and rabbits across the municipal area.
- Support rural landholders to plant native species to improve habitat for native wildlife and birds through council's annual rural revegetation program.
- Revegetate parts of the municipality with native trees planted by parks and gardens staff.

- Eradicated 350 rabbit warrens.
- Treated 60 km of roadside for priority weed species.
- Planted 1,000 native trees in the municipal area.

Buloke Shire Council aimed to:

- Continue construction of the Wycheproof Wetlands Precinct with water supply and circulation infrastructure being installed ready for commissioning in 2025-26.
- Establish vegetation surrounding wetlands and landscaping improvements in other areas including tree planting in public parks.
- Continued the pigeon removal program.
- Achieve an overall reduction in the quantity and type of roadside weeds and rabbits across the municipal area.

- Water supply construction to Wycheproof Wetlands continued.
- Vegetation established around wetlands and public areas.
- \$40,000 spent on pigeon control measures.

The West Wimmera Shire aimed to:

- Host a Landcare facilitator to support local environmental initiatives, working closely with schools and community Landcare groups to foster environmental education and stewardship.

- 1 ha of Boobialla planted with school groups, a vital host plant for the endangered golden rayed blue butterfly.
- 5 ha of plant outs conducted with Landcare groups from the north and south of the catchment.
- Engaged school students through the "Cocky for Kids" program through native seed collection and propagation, hands-on learning, and caring for the endangered south-eastern red-tailed black cockatoo
- Organised a series of events aimed at supporting mental health during the challenging dry times, specifically targeting Landcare and producer groups across the shire.

The Northern Grampians Shire Council aimed to:

- Improve weed control via the Road and Pest Program 2024-2025.

- A total of 662 km surveyed for pest weeds and 22 km sprayed.

Natimuk Urban Landcare Group aimed to:

- Improve vegetation along the Natimuk Creek.

- 700 plants (16 indigenous species) planted over 7 ha.
- Community members and Natimuk Primary School were engaged.

The Yarrilinks Landcare Facilitator aimed to:

- Support Landcare groups, landholders and the wider community to participate in natural resource management activities.
- Supported the Yarrilinks Committee and four Landcare groups in Minyip, Lah, Rupanyup and the Wallup Ag Group.
- Promoted Yarrilinks Landcare through community engagement events, meetings, digital promotion through social media, newsletter, blog and website, school engagement and social presence at the Victorian Landcare Awards, Warracknabeal Show and Speed Field Days.
- Maintained Landcare projects by groups and in partnership with NRM bodies, including the Wimmera Rice-flower project with DEECA.
- Partnered with regional Landcare networks to deliver Agriculture Victoria's Partnership Against Pests funding application for workshops about weed management across the region.
- Assisted in delivering Landcare group projects funded by the Victorian Landcare Program including revegetation across private land in Minyip, Rupanyup and Lah, weed management in Minyip and Rupanyup.

- Attended 8 general meetings, 1 annual general meeting and 3 in-person promotions.
- 3 newsletters, 25 blogs and 46 social media posts.
- 6 community engagement events with a total of 84 participants.
- 300 stems planted with schools over 2 tree plantings.
- 20 ha of weed control.
- 16 ha of revegetation 600 stems.

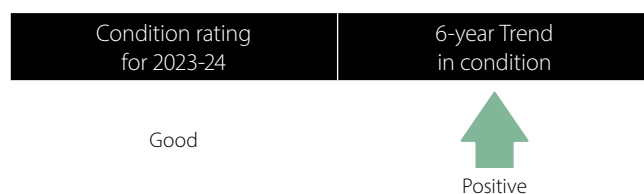
Community

The community theme reports on the community's level of contribution to and participation in environmental management and environment-based recreational activities.

Many Wimmera community members and groups, such as Landcare, are active catchment stewards and participants in environmental activities and events, helping improve the condition of the region's biodiversity, waterways and land.

People derive health and wellbeing benefits from participating in environmental activities and recreation associated with waterways, parks, reserves and other natural areas. The Wimmera's parks, reserves, waterways and lakes attract many visitors to the region annually.

Community assessment 2023-24



Wimmera CMA observed good participation in events during 2024-25, with more than 3,700 people participating in around 63 events which included Black Snake Productions Wildlife Show presenting at the Horsham Fishing Competition, Perennial Pasture Systems' annual conference, Landcare native vegetation planting events, the Wimmera Biodiversity Seminar, Traditional Owner events and nature-connection field activities with local schools. Participation in Landcare groups remained variable across the catchment. Volunteer fatigue remained a consistent undercurrent and the operating environment for Landcare was also reshaped and complicated by additional emerging, intersecting pressures. Wimmera CMA and BGLC maintained their well-established and strong relationship, working cooperatively to achieve mutual outcomes.

Community participation in events

Wimmera CMA observed good participation in meetings and events during 2024-25, with more than 3,700 people participating in around 63 events. Participation numbers were slightly higher than those experienced in 2023-24.

Wimmera CMA and partner organisations continued to support and engage the community with annual events. This included Black Snake Productions Wildlife Show presenting at the Horsham Fishing Competition, Perennial Pasture Systems' annual conference, Landcare native vegetation planting events, the Wimmera Biodiversity Seminar, Traditional Owner events and nature-connection field activities with local schools.

Landcare, community groups and community volunteering

Wimmera CMA staff and local Landcare facilitators observed participation in Landcare groups and environmental volunteering was variable across the catchment.

As with previous years, volunteer fatigue remained a consistent undercurrent in 2024-25, but the operating environment for Landcare was also reshaped and complicated by additional emerging, intersecting pressures. For example, the cumulative impact of large-scale bushfires, worsening drought conditions and intensifying development pressures associated with renewable energy projects, expansion of mineral sand mining and transmission infrastructure, both strained communities and saw people respond in different ways depending on factors like identity, values and economic stakes. This influenced landholder capacity and need, shifted regional priorities and introduced new risks for engagement and government supported Landcare programs that require careful consideration and nuanced, locally informed responses.

Later in the financial year, the introduction of the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund levy also caused major controversy in the region. Together, these overlapping stressors have not only intensified long-standing challenges, but also added new layers of complexity to the context in which Landcare support staff, groups and networks operate.

Throughout the year, substantial time and energy was directed towards supporting facilitators and their host organisations to navigate this dynamic operating environment. Our strong teamwork ethic, flexible and adaptive approach and healthy lines of communication were key achievements throughout the year that enabled us to continue delivering for the community.

The average Landcare group health score for groups in the Wimmera was 3.2 or 'Moving along'. Groups in this category feel they are making progress. They actively seek assistance from a support person, but may still be dependent on a dedicated few.

Positive Landcare outcomes during 2024-25 included:

- Support for the strategic statewide review and improvement of the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program
- Continued delivery and strengthening of the 'Best of the West' cross-regional Landcare facilitator professional development event in Halls Gap, in collaboration with Glenelg Hopkins CMA and Mallee CMA.
- Continuity in hosting arrangements and service delivery for all five Landcare facilitator positions, with skilled and experienced staff in each role, following significant change in hosting arrangements over previous years and some positions experiencing vacancies.

- Wimmera CMA's annual Victorian Landcare Grant process received more high-quality applications from Landcare groups than previous years. This is likely to be due to continuity in the Landcare facilitator positions filled and the skilled and experienced staff in these roles now able to support groups.
- The multi-year Partnerships Against Pests project continued in 2024-25, led by Project Platypus involving a collaboration of Wimmera Landcare Networks. This project is focused on building capacity for community-led pest plant and animal management through planning and training.

In 2024-25, some groups and networks continued to face challenges around governance, limited resources, volunteer burnout and difficulties attracting fresh Landcare involvement. Despite these hurdles, there were also groups who experienced a shift as new members came on board, sparking renewed energy and prompting a reassessment of priorities. Sections of the local Landcare community worked hard to re-establish momentum and begin exploring new directions for their activities, including in relation to biodiversity monitoring and the use of new technology.

All Landcare groups in Victoria continued the process of reviewing their income tax and charity status to meet new Australian Government Tax Office reporting requirements. As with last year, this placed a significant burden on groups, requiring busy volunteers to divert energy to time-consuming administration.

Landcare and environmental community groups involved community members in native vegetation planting events, including Yarrilinks and Project Platypus's annual events. These events had funding support from Wimmera CMA through DEECA's Victorian Landcare Program.

Wimmera projects funded under the Victorian Government's Landcare Grants Program engaged 604 volunteers and landholders in a range of projects such as weed and pest animal management and revegetation.

First Nations people

Wimmera CMA and BGLC maintain a trusting and respectful relationship established over many years of working together to achieve outcomes including on ground works, environmental watering to maximise cultural benefits, cultural surveys, education and training. We meet regularly to discuss BGLC's shifting capacity and priorities and to focus on creating tangible change that people value by working together on long-term planning, co-designing projects and taking a flexible approach to training, employment and on ground action.

For example, Wimmera CMA and BGLC maintained a Water Officer Roles Partnership Statement to support a coordinated approach to Aboriginal Water Officer positions hosted by each organisation and funded by DEECA's Water, Country and Community Program. In 2024-25 Aboriginal Water Officers

continued a long-running partnership, collaborating on high priority actions at the Ranch Billabong near Dimboola to improve access to and the condition of this Special Place for First Nations Peoples. With changes to the Water, Country and Community Program the Wimmera CMA Aboriginal Water Officer position concluded in February 2025 and Wimmera CMA will continue to support BGLC Aboriginal Water Officer positions in future years.

The Ranch Billabong is a flood-runner/anabranch wetland adjacent to the Barringgi Gadyin (Wimmera River) at Dimboola and has received water from environmental flows to help Traditional Owners achieve objectives. Actions during 2024-25 included installing a pipeline enabling BGLC to efficiently and sustainably water the Billabong from the Barringgi Gadyin (Wimmera River), BGLC purchasing a water quality probe to enable them to manage water quality monitoring for the site and sampling to identify aquatic species present at the site.

Wimmera CMA partnered with BGLC on native-fish recovery efforts, with BGLC's Aboriginal Water Officers joining Wimmera CMA staff and Native Fish Australia Wimmera branch members in efforts to translocate threatened River Blackfish and Southern Pygmy Perch.

Wimmera CMA staff continued to support BGLC to engage with DEECA's Landcare for Country Officer statewide pilot program.

Wimmera CMA has supported Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative to deliver community events for many years. This included the 'Try-a-Trade' event during 2024-25.

Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation (EMAC) is the registered Aboriginal party for the south-eastern corner of the Wimmera's upper catchment. Wimmera CMA's relationship with EMAC staff continued to build, particularly through joint activities of the Victorian Aboriginal Water Officer Network and the respective water officer positions. During 2024-25, significant time and energy was directed to support EMAC engagement in the development of the new regional waterway strategy, including joint site visits on Country.

Documentation that demonstrated Wimmera CMA's partnerships with BGLC and EMAC included Country Plans, project plans, the Wimmera CMA and BGLC Water Officer Roles Partnership Statement, Aboriginal Water Officer Network terms of reference, email correspondence, meeting records and agreements and the Wimmera RCS.

Actions supporting the Wimmera community

Wimmera CMA informs, consults, partners with, and empowers the community and supports the region’s natural resource management organisations and community groups.

Management rating for Wimmera community engagement and participation

The overall management rating is **Satisfactory**. The targets for all activities were achieved.

Community indicators used in the assessment

Indicator	Management rating	Comment
Formal partnership agreements with Traditional Owners and First Nations Peoples	Satisfactory	BGLC and Wimmera CMA continued to partner to support cultural outcomes. A highlight of 2024-25 was collaborating to install and maintain the pipeline enabling BGLC to efficiently and sustainably water the Ranch Billabong from the Barringgi Gadyin (Wimmera River). Discussions with both BGLC and EMAC progressed collaborative development of a new Wimmera Regional Waterway Strategy, to be completed in 2025-26.
Participants in engagement events	Satisfactory	More than 3,700 people participated in 63 Wimmera CMA events (Wimmera CMA, 2025). This was slightly higher than 2023-24.
Number of volunteers in Wimmera CMA’s programs	Satisfactory	Landcare and other groups reported 604 volunteers who worked on Victorian Landcare Grant projects.
Total quantum of grants awarded	Satisfactory	Wimmera CMA allocated all available grant funding during 2024-25. This included: • \$303,525 allocated in the 2024 of Victorian Landcare Grant Program funding. • Private landholder incentive programs like habitat protection for threatened species and riparian and wetland protection and enhancement programs.

Table 12. Management activities carried out to support the Wimmera community during 2024-25

Wimmera CMA project	Achievements	Funder
The Wimmera Regional Landcare Coordination 2024-25 project aimed to provide regional level support for Wimmera-based Landcare facilitators employed under the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program, and support Landcare and environmental volunteering groups to build capacity, promote and celebrate natural resource management activities. Achievements in 2024-25: • Supported strategic actions of DEECA and the Victorian Landcare Team, including reviewing and planning for improvements to the Victorian Landcare Facilitator Program. • Hosted the ‘Best of the West’ cross-regional Landcare facilitator professional development event in Halls Gap, attended by 24 participants. • Educated school children and youths, providing opportunities to connect to nature. • Contributed support to the annual Wimmera Biodiversity Seminar educating the community about the Wimmera’s biodiversity. • Supported implementation of annual land use and land management transect surveys. • Presented at the Western Victorian Careers Expo, encouraging students to consider a career in natural resource management. Partners included Landcare, BGLC, DEECA and Agriculture Victoria.	• 6 events supported. • 458 participants engaged.	Victorian Government’s Landcare Program

Wimmera CMA project	Achievements	Funder
Wimmera CMA delivered the Victorian Landcare Grants Program in the Wimmera region. This devolved grant program aimed to provide opportunities for Landcare and environmental volunteering groups to address local priorities through on ground works, education and community capacity building.	• 4.1 km of fencing. • 15.9 hectares of native vegetation fenced. • 55 hectares of revegetation. • 28,982 tube stock planted. • 2,674 hectares of weed control. • 404 hectares of pest control. • 604 volunteers engaged.	Victorian Government's Landcare Program
Wimmera CMA employed an Aboriginal Water Officer in partnership with BGLC to build First Nations community capacity and promote Aboriginal values and participation in water management. Partners included BGLC, Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Co-operative and DEECA. The Aboriginal Water Officer: • Facilitated opportunities to align environmental watering and cultural objectives through on ground works. • Undertook professional development and training. • Supported rehabilitation works at the Ranch Billabong. • Supported the statewide Aboriginal Water Officer Network. • Supported water quality monitoring and upskilling of BGLC staff regarding monitoring tools and techniques.	• 1 Aboriginal Water Officer employed.	Victorian Government's Water, Country, and Community Program
The Yarriambiack Landcare Facilitator supported Landcare groups, landholders and the wider community to participate in natural resource management activities. For 2024-25, the facilitator: • Supported the Yarrilinks Committee and four Landcare groups in Minyip, Lah, Rupanyup and the Wallup Ag Group. • Promoted Yarrilinks Landcare through community engagement events, meetings, digital promotion through social media, newsletter, blog and website, school engagement and social presence at the Victorian Landcare Awards, Warracknabeal Show and Speed Field Days. • Maintained Landcare projects by groups and in partnership with NRM bodies, including the Wimmera Rice-Flower project with DEECA. • Partnered with regional Landcare networks to deliver Agriculture Victoria's Partnership Against Pests funding application of workshops for weed management across the region. • Assisted in delivering Landcare group projects funded by the Victorian Landcare Program including revegetation across private land in Minyip, Rupanyup and Lah, and weed management in Minyip and Rupanyup. • Assisted in the development of projects funded by the Victorian Landcare Program including the Yarrilinks Plant Out, two ecological assessments of wetlands in Lah and citizen science and community engagement events in Rupanyup. The facilitator is hosted by Wimmera CMA.	• 1 Landcare Facilitator employed.	Victorian Government's Victorian Landcare Program Grants Privately funded on private property Natural Heritage Trust Agriculture Victoria Partnerships Against Pest funding

Integrated catchment management

Integrated catchment management is the coordinated management of land, water and biodiversity based on catchment areas. It involves Wimmera CMA, the regional community and other organisations partnering to ensure the long-term viability of natural resource systems and human needs across current and future generations.

Integrated catchment management means working together to look after waterways and water resources, prevent or reverse land degradation, build the resilience of natural ecosystems, minimise damage from flooding and erosion and decrease the impacts of pest plants and animals.

Integrated catchment management assessment 2024-25

Condition rating for 2024-25	6-year Trend in condition
Good	Neutral



Neutral

Wimmera CMA's partnerships provided opportunities to work collaboratively with industry, the community and government agencies to achieve integrated catchment management outcomes. Wimmera CMA has well-established partnerships with a range of organisations and groups. Collective forums, individual meetings and agreements provided opportunities to collaborate and progress joint outcomes.

Partnerships for integrated catchment management

Wimmera CMA's partnerships provide opportunities to work collaboratively with industry, community groups and government agencies to achieve integrated catchment management outcomes. Wimmera CMA has well-established partnerships with a range of organisations and groups, including First Nations organisations, Landcare networks and groups, farmer-led agricultural bodies, biodiversity-focused organisations, local government, nature-based recreation groups and government agencies.

Wimmera CMA maintained strong working relationships with partner organisations and groups by leading and participating in collective meetings and forums, one-on-one discussions and service level or other written agreements for joint projects.

Wimmera CMA-led forums provided opportunities to develop and implement strategies, progress joint projects, collaborate and value-add. Regular forums and meetings included:

- Wimmera Partnerships Forum involving Landcare facilitators, BGLC, government agriculture agencies and farmer-led groups.
- Collaboration meetings with BGLC.
- Wimmera Strategic Water Management Working Group, involving DEECA, VICSES, GWMWater, BGLC and Wimmera municipal councils, whose responsibilities include the Wimmera Floodplain Management Workplan Implementation Committee. It also operates as a practitioner group for Integrated Water Management program in the Wimmera.
- Individual meetings with delivery partners and stakeholders to discuss project proposals.
- Wimmera Southern Mallee Climate Adaptation and Community Resilience Group meetings. Wimmera Southern Mallee Development facilitates this group after Wimmera CMA helped initiate its formation.

Wimmera CMA staff also contributed to stakeholder-led forums related to environmental water management, regional development and major infrastructure projects like mining, water pipelines and wind farms.

Wimmera CMA partnered with stakeholders to facilitate contributions of local knowledge and expertise into the development of the new Wimmera Regional Waterway Strategy, which will be finalised in 2025-26.

Wimmera CMA's strong partnerships leveraged significant investment through cash and in-kind contributions from the organisations and community groups we work with.

Management rating for integrated catchment management in the Wimmera

The overall management rating for Integrated Catchment Management is **Satisfactory**. The targets for most activities were achieved.

Integrated catchment management indicators used in the assessment

Indicator	Management rating	Comment
Partnerships	Satisfactory	Wimmera CMA has well-established partnerships with a range of organisations and groups, including First Nations groups, Landcare networks and groups, farmer-led agricultural groups, biodiversity-focused organisations, local government, nature-based recreation groups and government agencies.

Table 13. Management activities carried out to support integrated catchment management during 2024-25

Wimmera CMA project	Achievements	Funder
Wimmera CMA progressed a mid-term review of the Wimmera Regional Catchment Strategy 2021-27. The review is exploring successes and opportunities for improving the strategy and its implementation.	• Progressed the mid-term review of the RCS.	Victorian Government's Catchment Stewardship Program (Our Catchments, Our Communities)
Midday at the Oasis – Wimmera Green Spaces. Wimmera CMA led this project to assess what qualified or might qualify as priority community Green Spaces in cities and towns across six Wimmera Southern Mallee municipalities. It identified high-priority green spaces municipal councils have selected and considers development opportunities, potential and gaps in these public areas.	• Established 6 partnerships. • Completed the project.	Wimmera Southern Mallee Development via the Victorian and Australian government Future Drought Fund program

Summary of the financial results for 2024-25

Five-year financial summary ('000)

	2024-25 \$'000	2023-24 \$'000	2022-23 \$'000	2021-22 \$'000	2020-21 \$'000
Government Contributions	7,283	6,977	6,934	7,172	9,571
Other Revenue	670	540	361	99	43
Total Revenue	7,953	7,517	7,295	7,271	9,614
Expenses	6,809	6,906	6,842	5,294	7,720
Net Operating Result	1,144	611	453	1,977	1,894
Net Gain/(loss) on Non-financial Assets	(6)	(1)	0	17	34
Comprehensive Result	1,138	610	453	1,994	1,928
Net Increase (Decrease) in Cash & Deposits Held	674	805	617	2,174	1,801
Total Assets	13,977	12,307	11,656	11,191	9,507
Total Liabilities	2,188	1,656	1,614	1,602	1,913
Total Equity	11,789	10,651	10,042	9,589	7,594

Overview

Significant changes in financial position during the year

The Authority was able to secure \$1.2 million of funding in advance, which will be carried over to the 2025-26 financial year. This has increased assets and the net operating result for this period. We also have additional carry forward funds due to receiving funds later than anticipated delaying the delivery of on ground works.

Significant changes or factors affecting performance

There were no significant changes or factors affecting our performance during the reporting period.

Subsequent events

There were no events occurring after balance date which significantly affect Wimmera CMA's operations in subsequent reporting periods.

Capital projects

Wimmera CMA does not manage any capital projects.

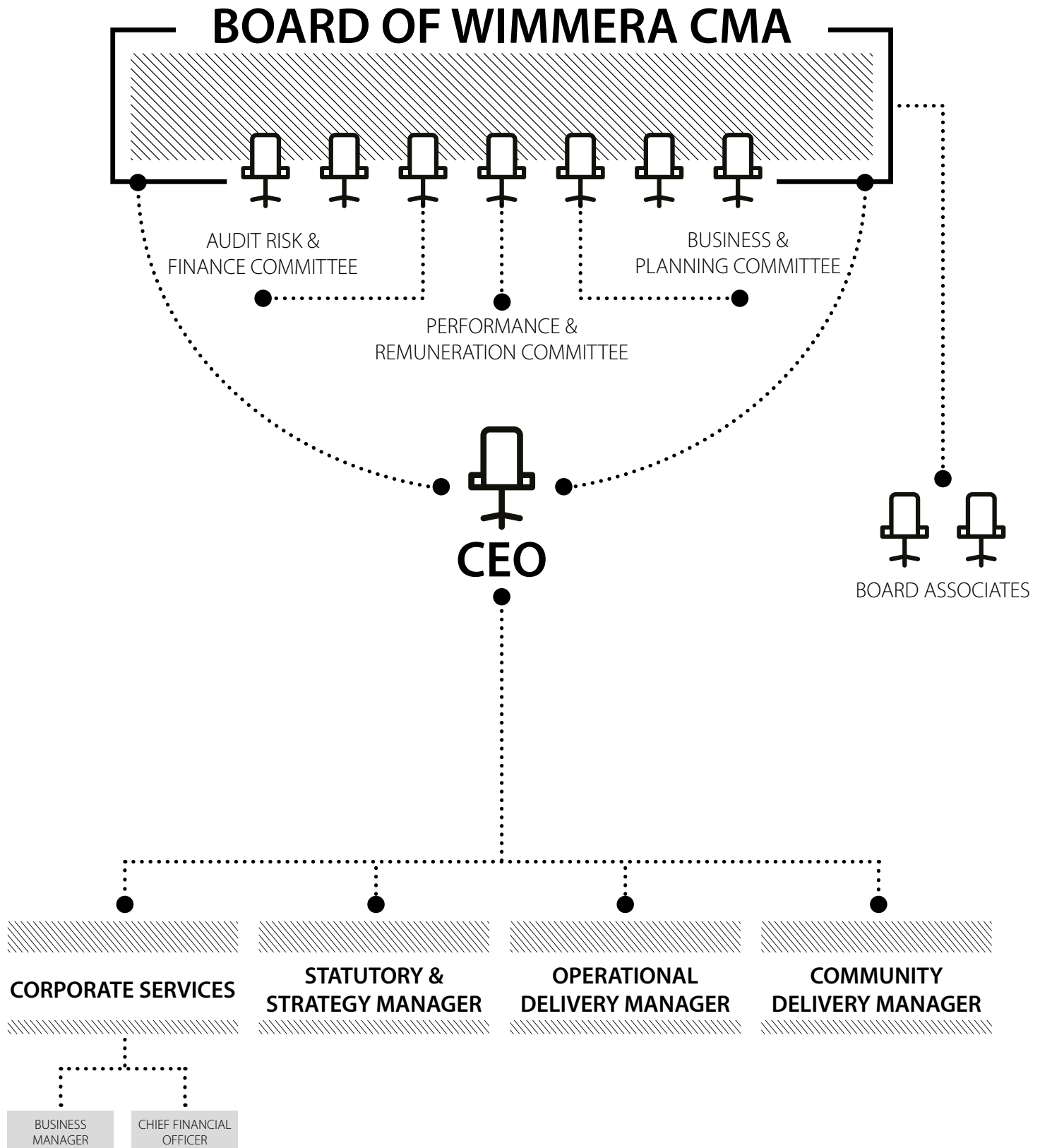
Victorian Landcare Grants 2024-25 successful recipients

Recipient	Project title	Grant amount \$
Jallukar Landcare Group	Pomonal Bushfire Habitat Recovery Project	\$18,490
Yarrilinks Inc.	Revitalising Landcare in Yarriambiack: Reviving the Yarrilinks plantout and a new Landcare group in Warracknabeal	\$14,768
Lah Landcare Group	Environmental water refugia, revegetation, and propagation of a threatened endemic eucalypt	\$7,596
Minyip Landcare Group	Local action and Landcare knowledge exchange linking the Wimmera and the Corangamite Lakes	\$8,593
Halls Gap Landcare Group (under the auspice of Community Association of Halls Gap)	Halls Gap habitat protection, community awareness and engagement	\$16,070
Rupanyup VFF Landcare Group	Nature connection for the residents of Rupanyup	\$6,966
Horsham District Landcare Network	Promoting and monitoring threatened species and supporting Junior Landcare	\$14,500
Stawell Urban Landcare Group	Stawell Urban Landcare works	\$10,236

Recipient	Project title	Grant amount \$
Black Range Land Management Group	Consolidating private landholder partnership with Traditional Owners through cool cultural burning	\$15,600
Project Platypus	A future for Landcare: Collaboration, community and evaluating impacts	\$16,021
Laharum Landcare Group	Northwest Grampians Threatened Species Support Program	\$15,100
Rainbow District Landcare Group	Restoring the Rainbow Rises	\$11,250
Black Range Land Management Group	Improving biodiversity and resilience of the Black Range through consistent and comprehensive volunteer land management	\$15,480
Moyston Landcare Group	Trash Talk	\$8,175
Northern Grampians Landcare Group	Restoring wetlands on farm in the Northern Grampians (Round 2)	\$11,250
Kaniva District Landcare	Revegetation on farms	\$11,200
Crowlands Warrak Landcare Group	Community Weedbusting for our Waterways	\$14,300
Project Platypus	Boosting Biodiversity on Farms in the Upper Wimmera Catchment	\$11,010
Horsham District Landcare Network	Revegetation for wildlife corridors	\$9,000
Project Platypus	Project Platypus Restored Landscapes Community Engagement	\$6,500
Concongella Landcare	Regenerating the Concongella Region	\$11,200
Urimbirra Co-operative Society Ltd	Partnerships for sharing land management knowledge and skills for maintaining critical biodiversity in the Wimmera	\$10,350
Perennial Pasture Systems Inc.	Whose bugging the soil?	\$10,000
Yanac Broughton VFF Landcare Group	Roadside Rabbit Pest Animal Management	\$10,000
Horsham Urban Landcare	Building HUL's brand and strategic vision for greater community engagement	\$7,000
Horsham East Landcare Ag Group	Supporting farmers and threatened species	\$4,200
Elmhurst Landcare Group	Chemical user certification training courses for Landcare	\$4,170
Wonwondah Landcare Group	Wonwondah weather stations maintenance	\$2,000
Natimuk Urban Landcare Group	Support grant awarded	\$500
Arapiles South Ag Group	Support grant awarded	\$500
Wallup Ag Group	Support grant awarded	\$500
Kadnook Landcare Group Inc.	Support grant awarded	\$500
Telopea Downs Agricultural and Landcare Group	Support grant awarded	\$500
TOTAL AMOUNT		\$303,525

Projects funded through the Victorian Landcare Grants process are delivered by Landcare and environmental volunteering groups over a timeframe of up to 18 months in line with Victorian Landcare Program guidelines. Eighty percent of payments have been made with the remaining 20% to be made on completion of projects by December 2025.

Governance and organisational structure



Board

The Wimmera CMA Board is appointed by the Victorian Government's Minister for Water.

Board members have experience and knowledge in land management, water resources management, natural resource management, primary industry, business management and community engagement. The Wimmera CMA Board is accountable for the overall performance of Wimmera CMA. Its role is to guide, govern and provide professional and strategic advice regarding the development of Wimmera CMA's strategic direction for land, biodiversity and water management.

Board member	Term of appointment
Peter Hilbig	Appointed Chair 1 October 2017 – 30 September 2021 Reappointed 1 October 2021 – 30 September 2025
David Drage	14 October 2013 – 30 September 2017 Reappointed 1 October 2017 – 30 September 2021 Reappointed 1 October 2021 – 30 September 2025 Appointed Deputy Chair 1 October 2023
Michelle Graymore	1 October 2017 – 30 September 2021 Reappointed 1 October 2021 – 30 September 2025
La Vergne Lehmann	1 October 2017 – 30 September 2021 Reappointed 1 October 2021 – 30 September 2025
Angela Enbom	1 October 2019 – 30 September 2023 1 October 2023 – 30 September 2027
Duncan Ashby	1 October 2023 – 30 September 2027
Andrew Barton	1 October 2023 – 30 September 2027



Peter Hilbig - Chair

October 2017 – September 2025

Peter Hilbig was initially appointed Chair in October 2017 and reappointed in October 2021. He lived at Halls Gap for over almost 40 years and now resides at Wartook. He has worked locally and in Malaysia and Northern Territory as a teacher and school leader, leadership coach and school reviewer. Peter's interest in the Wimmera and passion for sustainable catchment management developed through six years as manager of Project Platypus - Upper Wimmera Landcare, where he was inspired by the commitment of a diverse range of stakeholders using science to monitor and inform improvement in land and water quality, agriculture and biodiversity.

Peter is a former Chair of Vic Catchments, the peak body for Catchment Management Authorities in Victoria. He is a volunteer firefighter and a Justice of the Peace.

Peter is keen for the Wimmera CMA to engage effectively with all stakeholders to achieve a healthy and sustainable catchment community.



David Drage - Deputy Chair

October 2013 – September 2025

David Drage was appointed to the Board in October 2013 and reappointed for a third term in October 2021. David brings a diverse mix of farming, Landcare, community and waterway experience and involvement to the Board.

David lives on the family farm with his wife and two children. The farm grows winter cereals and legumes and they run a small flock of Merino ewes for wool and prime-lamb production. There is also a strong focus on preserving and conserving the remaining remnant buloke and box vegetation on the farm.

David's long-term goals are utilising his land based resources for food production, and his family's livelihood, while preserving the farm to ensure it is handed on to the next generation in the best possible condition.

David is a member of several community groups including Warracknabeal Rotary Club and Lah Landcare Group.



Andrew Barton

October 2023 – September 2027

Andrew Barton was appointed to the Wimmera CMA Board in October 2023. As a Professor of Water Resource Engineering at Federation University Australia, Andrew brings considerable national and international experience and knowledge across strategic water resource planning, impacts of climate change to water supply, streamflow and water quality monitoring, entitlement and allocation frameworks, and direct operational experience of managing water resources through the extremes of droughts and floods.

Andrew also has extensive executive leadership, strategy and organisational management experience having worked and consulted across a spectrum of industry and university roles. Andrew is currently employed as the Deputy Dean of the Graduate Research School where he strives to develop research strengths and enhance the provision of research training for the University's research students.

Andrew is a Chartered Professional Engineer, an Executive Engineer, a Fellow of the Institution of Engineers Australia, and a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Angela Enbom

October 2019 – September 2027

Angela Enbom was appointed to the Wimmera CMA Board in October 2019. She is a commercial beekeeper operating her own business and enjoys managing a sustainable, small-scale food production farm. As a migratory apiarist, Angela has

worked across a wide range of landscapes and ecosystems, giving her a deep understanding of natural resource management. She is the Chair of the State Apiculture Industry Advisory Committee and President of the Central Victorian Apiary Association.

Angela is passionate about strengthening the resilience of rural communities and supporting their ongoing viability. She is committed to helping regional areas adapt to changing environmental and economic conditions through informed, inclusive planning.

Angela brings to the board a holistic, big-picture perspective, drawing on her background in teaching, primary production, small business and the apiculture industry.



Duncan Ashby

October 2023 – September 2027

Duncan Ashby was appointed to the Board in September 2023. He is currently a lecturer at Marcus Oldham College and has also had extensive experience in the agricultural sector as a farm business adviser and CPA. As a consultant he

specialised in family farm businesses where he engaged with financial management, structuring, and succession planning. This work involved a particular focus on land leasing, share-farming and contract farming and he undertook a Churchill Fellowship in 2014 to study these issues in the USA, UK and Canada.

Duncan has also undertaken corporate governance work with selected companies and has co-authored an AgriFutures Australia (RIRDC) publication on land leasing (Successful Land Leasing in Australia). Other previous experience includes working for the Department of Defence where he held several roles, including working on Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs).

He holds a Bachelor of Commerce from The University of Melbourne with majors in economics, management, and business law; a Graduate Diploma of Arts (Political Science) – also from The University of Melbourne; post graduate qualifications in accounting (CPA) and certification from the Judge Business School at Cambridge University in 'Circular Economy and Sustainability Business Strategies' (2023).

Duncan has a long association with the Wimmera ranging from farm business consulting throughout the region, regular visits to the northern Grampians and Mount Arapiles and outings on the Wimmera River for the Dimboola regatta.



La Vergne Lehmann

October 2017 – September 2025

La Vergne Lehmann was appointed to the Wimmera CMA Board in October 2017. La Vergne lives near Dimboola and brings a broad range of experience including natural resource management, community engagement, research, communications and media and tourism.

La Vergne is now working at Yarriambiack Shire Council, coordinating the waste and sustainability functions of the council.

She is passionate about sustainability and environmental issues in the region and is a regular contributor to several media and social media forums.



Michelle Graymore

October 2017 – September 2025

Michelle Graymore was appointed to the Board in October 2017. Michelle is a non-indigenous environmental sociologist focused on the social dimensions of water system transformation, particularly in rural and regional areas. She has

expertise in understanding the relationship rural and regional communities have with water, particularly how they are connected to, and manage, water from households and farms to businesses and resource managers. Michelle is also interested in the ways the water sector can work with Indigenous people to ensure our watery places thrive and continue to nourish us and future generations.

Michelle's is passionate about the Wimmera and the region's wellbeing, because of her family's connection to the region and having spent four years leading the Wimmera Research Group at Federation University in Horsham. Michelle also brings to the board expertise in sustainability, social change processes, integrated water management, water governance and community engagement. In her role on the board, Michelle aims to use her skills and expertise to contribute to the health and resilience of the Wimmera's waterways.

Board Associates

This year we welcomed Lillian Hearn and Danae McDonald as Associate directors to our board. The initial 12 month appointments were funded by DEECA with the aim to develop future board members through improving their understanding of the water sector, its governance practices and learn on the job with board members through the attendance at board meetings. Danae was appointed for a further 12 months in May.

Board associate	Term of appointment
Lillian Hearn	Appointed 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025
Danae McDonald	Appointed 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2026



Lillian Hearn

Lillian Hearn was appointed as a board associate member in July 2024. As an environmental chemist she is passionate about understanding and supporting resilient landscapes and sustainable agricultural systems. Currently working in the grains industry completing her PhD through a partnership position with the University of Melbourne and Agriculture Victoria Research, Lillian brings experience and knowledge of soil health, nutrient management and atmospheric pollution. Based in Horsham she manages field trials tracing nitrogen loss pathways locally and in the southwest region of Victoria.

Lillian brings experience working across a diversity of landscapes with previous work in Tasmania, Western Australia and Victoria in both agriculture and natural resource management sectors in research and extension officer roles.



Danae McDonald

Danae McDonald is a proud Wotjobaluk Woman who has lived in the Horsham area her whole life. She currently works as a First Nations Hospital Liaison Officer at Grampians Health and is a member of the BGLC.

Danae is very passionate about how we care for the land and waterways on which we operate, and how we keep the land healthy and continue to improve its ability to thrive. Danae brings knowledge passed down from the elders and community members about the historical ways in which Aboriginal ancestors cared for the land and waterways.

Board attendance

Board member	Meetings attended
1 July 2024 - 30 June 2025	
Peter Hilbig	7
Angela Enbom	7
David Drage	7
La Vergne Lehmann	7
Michelle Graymore	7
Andrew Barton	7
Duncan Ashby	7
Total meetings	7

Board associate	Meetings attended
1 July 2024 - 30 June 2025	
Lillian Hearn	6
Danae McDonald	7
Total Meetings	7

As part of increasing the Board’s understanding and knowledge of Integrated Catchment Management and Wimmera CMA projects, it took part in a field tour/ information day. As part of the ongoing strategic planning process, the Board conducts a strategic planning workshop each year.

Board governance committees

The Board has three governance committees: Audit, Risk and Finance, Business and Planning and Performance and Remuneration.

Audit, Risk and Finance Committee

This committee's terms of reference requires they meet at least four times a year.

The committee's role is to monitor, review and make recommendations to the Board regarding:

- All financial matters affecting Wimmera CMA.
- Oversight and management of financial and organisational risks.
- Appropriate investment management arrangements and delegations are in place.
- Relevant policies that fall within the purpose of the Committee are current.
- Financial reporting, compliance with relevant laws and regulations and maintenance of an efficient and effective audit function.

This committee met four times this reporting year.

Committee members

1 July 2024 – 31 December 2024

- **La Vergne Lehmann – Committee Chair**
- Angela Enbom
- David Drage
- Peter Hilbig (Ex Officio)
- *Tim Hewitt - commenced 20 September 2024

1 January 2025 – 30 June 2025

- **Duncan Ashby – Committee Chair**
- La Vergne Lehmann
- Angela Enbom
- David Drage
- Peter Hilbig (Ex Officio)
- *Tim Hewitt

**Independent Member*

Business and Planning Committee

This committee meets as required to meet statutory reporting requirements.

The committee's role is to monitor, review and recommend to the Board regarding:

- Oversight of the development and review of the RCS and the Authority's Annual Report.

- Investment proposals and annual corporate planning including monitoring, evaluation, governance, compliance requirements and strategic alignment to organisational objectives.
- Oversight of the Authority's major communications, community capacity building and engagement activities and strategies.
- Relevant policies that fall within the purpose of the Committee are current.

The committee met once this reporting year.

Committee members

1 July 2024 – 31 December 2024

- **Michelle Graymore – Committee Chair**
- Angela Enbom
- Duncan Ashby
- Peter Hilbig – Ex Officio
- Lillian Hearn (Board Associate)

1 January 2025 – 30 June 2025

- **Michelle Graymore – Committee Chair**
- Angela Enbom
- Duncan Ashby
- Andrew Barton
- Peter Hilbig – Ex Officio
- Lillian Hearn (Board Associate)
- Danae McDonald (Board Associate)

Performance and Remuneration Committee

This committee's role is to monitor, review and make recommendations to the Board regarding:

- Recruitment and appointment of the Chief Executive Officer.
- Performance appraisals of the CEO.
- Performance and development of the board.
- Succession planning.

The committee met once this reporting year.

Committee members

1 July 2024 – 31 December 2024

- **Peter Hilbig – Committee Chair**
- Andrew Barton
- Michelle Graymore

1 January 2025 – 30 June 2025

- **Peter Hilbig – Committee Chair**
- Andrew Barton
- Michelle Graymore
- La Vergne Lehmann
- Lillian Hearn (Board Associate)
- Danae McDonald (Board Associate)

Employment and conduct principles

Our staff

Providing a safe working environment and investing in people and efficient systems is an important part of Wimmera CMA's responsibilities. Wimmera CMA adheres to the employment and conduct principles as contained in the *Public Administration Act 2004 (PAA)*.

Employment principles

Wimmera CMA continues to undertake recruitment to our organisation based upon public sector employment principles where:

- Employment decisions are based on merit.
- Public sector employees are treated fairly and reasonably.
- Equal employment opportunity is provided.
- Human rights as set out in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities are upheld.
- Public sector employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment, with the flexibility to tailor the campaigns to the individual positions.

Training and development

Wimmera CMA strongly advocates for the development of staff to meet the current and forecast business objectives of the organisation.

Professional development, staff training and career goals are incorporated into the Wimmera CMA annual workplan review process. Through this process, individual staff training is discussed and developed to not only ensure that staff have access to training to undertake their role but also the next step in their career progression.

New employees are inducted into the organisation. The content includes safety, public sector Code of Conduct, organisational values and behaviours, organisational policies mandatory training and professional development opportunities.

Whole-of-organisation training provided

We have continued to make online training accessible for all staff through our online training portal. We have also maintained a focus on our training to align with the public sector values and undertaken our Workplace Obligations training covering the key areas including fraud, conflict of interest, code of conduct, gifts and hospitality, OH&S, bullying and harassment, sexual harassment, misconduct, fraud, cyber security, Privacy in the Victorian Public Sector and human rights charter.

This year we ran mandatory training for all staff called "Lean into Conflict" and the Psych Safe Leader. These sessions had a focus around psychosocial safety and aligns with our requirements under the yet to be released guidelines around psychosocial safety.

We also ran training on cyber security with regular sessions that were also recorded so staff unable to attend could catch up. An annual cyber security information session has also been included for the Board each year.

Employment support program

We have renewed our shared contract with three other CMAs with Tellus Health One. This includes professional, confidential counselling services. The employment support program provides counselling and support to employees and managers to manage challenges both within and outside the workplace.

This contract includes access to a shared platform that provides additional support information to all staff, with a range of wellbeing resources and self-help tools. It also includes access to an online app. The support provided continues to be available with specialist services and delivered via phone, face-to-face or virtually.

Conduct principles

The conduct principles mean the public sector values in section 7 of the PAA which are Responsiveness, Integrity, Impartiality, Accountability, Respect, Leadership and Human Rights.

Occupational health and safety disclosure

Wimmera CMA has an internal Occupational Health and Safety Committee (OH&S) which is charged with oversight of the organisation's health, safety and wellbeing policies and procedures.

Ensuring compliance with government obligations and a local risk based approach. We continue to ensure staff needs are supported and considered in the process. We continue to have all staff working from the office, with flexibility maintained to allow for staff to work from home or take leave in consultation with their manager if unwell.

We have partnered with the other CMA's to engage a consultant as part of a statewide project to undertake a review of our policies and procedures to ensure compliance against our obligations and ensure legislative compliance. We are also looking to identify opportunities for collaboration and consistency across the organisations to collectively improve the efficiency of our systems.

Staff have been supported with regards to their health and wellbeing, with annual flu vaccinations offered to all staff. We also worked with a local medical clinic to offer medical checks to all staff that included blood tests, blood pressure and ECG combined with skin checks and a discussion on overall health. Feedback was very positive with the benefit of early detection; a number of staff advising that they had then followed up with their GP. We have 14 staff accredited in level 2 first aid and enrolled in the continuous learning program.

Incident management

We had three incidents and five hazards reported in 2024-25. Five were related to motor vehicles, with one involving hitting a kangaroo. One was office based with a kitchen appliance. Another was ergonomic with the failure of a chair. And one in the field with the verbal abuse of a staff member. One injury was reported with no medical attention required or lost time incurred. This was compared with the previous year when there were five hazards and two incidents reported.

Table 14. Incident report summary

Measure	Key performance indicators	2024-25	2023-24	2022-23
Full-time equivalent		19.63	17.89	19.22
Hazards	Hazards identified	3	5	3
	Rate per 100 FTE	15.29	27.95	15.61
Incidents	Total no. of incidents — staff	5	2	1
	No. of reportable incidents requiring medical treatment — staff	0	0	1
	Incident rate per 100 FTE staff	25.48	11.17	5.20
	No incidents — Employment Programs	0	0	0
	No. of reportable incidents requiring medical treatment — Employment Programs	0	0	0
	Incident rate per 100 FTE — Employment Programs	0	0	0
Claims	No. of standard claims	0	0	1
	Rate per 100 FTE	0	0	5.20
	No. of lost time claims	0	0	1
	Rate per 100 FTE	0	0	5.20
	No. of claims exceeding 13 weeks	0	0	0
	Rate per 100 FTE	0	0	0
Fatalities	Fatality claims	0	0	0
Claim costs	Average cost per standard claim	\$0	\$0	\$763
Return to work (RTW)	Percentage of claims with RTW plan <30 days.	0%	0%	100%
OH&S meetings	Meetings held	11	10	11

Workforce data

The following table discloses the head count and full-time equivalent (FTE) of all active employees of Wimmera CMA employed in the last full pay period in June of the current reporting period, and in the last full pay period in June 2025.

All employees, with the exception of the CEO, are covered by the Wimmera CMA Enterprise Agreement 2024-28 which was approved by the Fair Work Commission 20th March 2025.

We have had an overall increase of 1.74 FTE, with an increase of three staff. This has been brought about by the net result of the creation of a graduate role, the job sharing of a parental leave position, one new position and a resignation in June.

Table 15. Details of employment levels in 2023-24 and 2024-25

Classification	2024-25		2023-24	
	Number (headcount)	FTE	Number (headcount)	FTE
Executive officers	1	1	1	1
Senior managers	5	4.8	5	4.8
Administration staff	2	1.4	2	1.2
Field staff	16	12.63	13	10.89
Total	24	19.63	21	17.89

Workforce inclusion policy

The Wimmera CMA has a balanced working environment where equal opportunity and diversity are valued. As part of the diversity and inclusion policy, Wimmera CMA has a target of maintaining the average percentage of its employees who identify as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) at 10%.

This target was maintained until May 2025 with the resignation of our Aboriginal Water Officer who accepted a role with DEECA's Aboriginal Water Unit. We continue to host this staff member in our office as they transition to their new office in Ballarat.

Table 16. Workforce inclusion details

Workforce inclusion policy initiative	Target	Actual progress in 2024-25	Actual progress in 2023-24	Actual progress in 2022-23
Maintain employees who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander at 10%	Maintain employees who identify as being ATSI at an average of 10%	Employees who identify as being ATSI 8%	Employees who identify as being ATSI 14%	Employees who identify as being ATSI 13%

Other disclosures

Local Jobs First Act 2003

The Victorian Local Jobs First Policy applies to tenders of over \$1 million in regional Victoria. During the 2024-25 reporting period, Wimmera CMA had no tenders of this size.

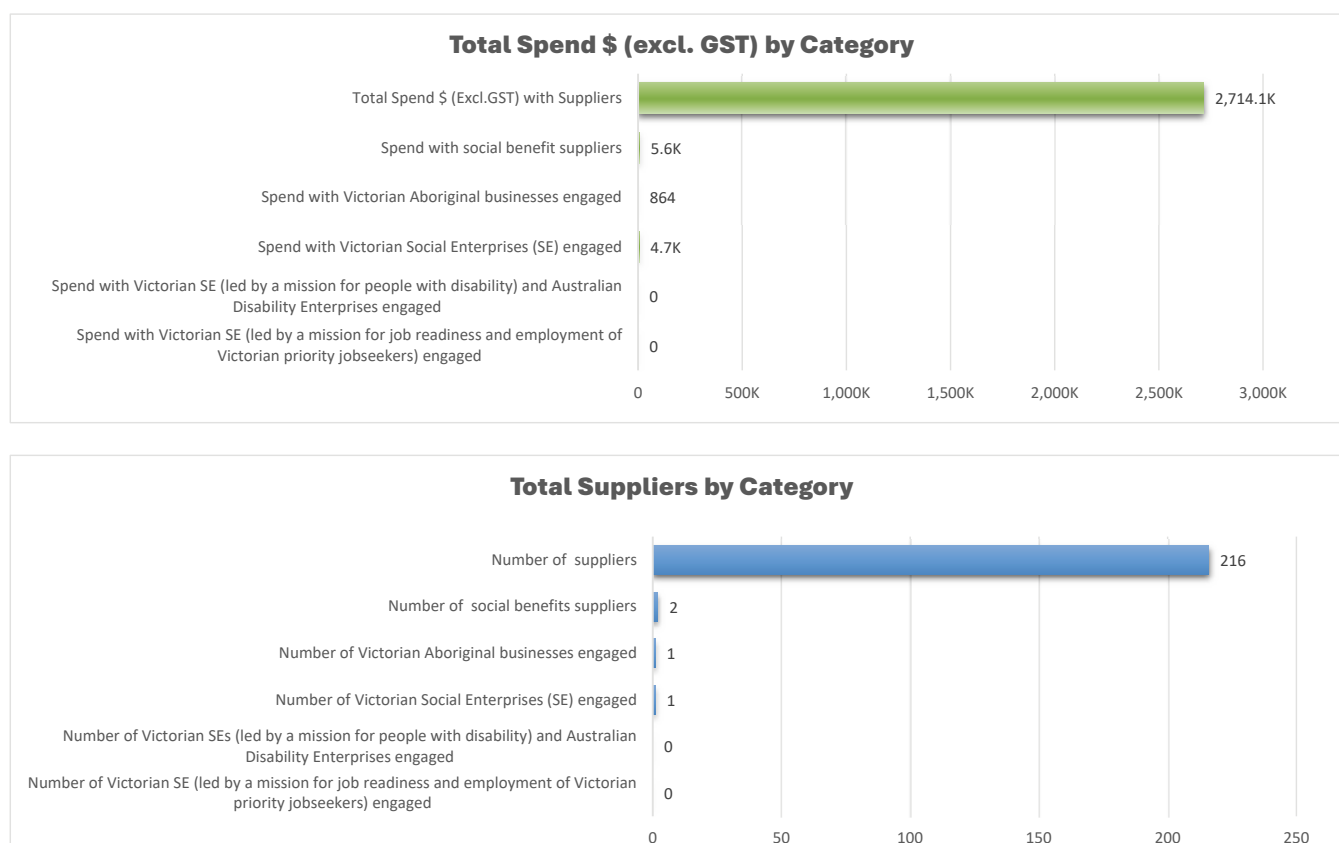
Social Procurement Framework (SPF Reporting Guidelines)

Wimmera CMA continued its commitment to social procurement in 2024-25. Social procurement practices and planning were undertaken to support a range of local organisations and generate social value consistent with Victoria's Social Procurement Framework.

In addition to seeking opportunities for direct purchasing of goods and services from social enterprises, Aboriginal enterprises and other social benefit suppliers including disability enterprises, Wimmera CMA also continued to support capability development. Examples include:

- Continuation of a multi-year partnership project with BGLC to rehabilitate and improve access to the Ranch Billabong which intends to build skills and capability within BGLC to better position the organisation to provide related services to other organisations in future years.
- Ongoing engagement of AXIS Worx in natural resource management project delivery including tree guard services. AXIS Worx is a social enterprise providing supported employment for people with disabilities who are unable to work in the open employment sector.
- Supporting catering services from Horsham Central – a transition to work program designed to support people with disabilities.

Figure 16. ABN wash results 2024-25



Government advertising expenditure

Wimmera CMA's expenditure in the 2024-25 reporting period on government campaign expenditure did not exceed \$100,000.

Consultancies

Details of consultancies valued at \$10,000 or greater:

- In 2024-25 there were five consultancies where the total fees payable to the consultants were \$10,000 or greater. The total expenditure incurred in 2024-25 in relation to these consultancies was \$85,399 excl. GST.

Details of individual consultancies are outlined on Wimmera CMA's website, at www.wcma.vic.gov.au.

Details of consultancies valued at less than \$10,000:

- In 2024-25 there were ten consultancies where the total fees payable to the consultants were less than \$10,000. The total expenditure incurred during 2024-25 in relation to these consultancies was \$51,962 excl. GST.

Reviews and studies expenditure

In 2024-25, there were five reviews and studies in progress which were not commercially sensitive with the life to date (LTD) cost of \$332,966. Details of individual reviews and studies are outlined in Figure 17.

Figure 17. Reviews and Studies Expenditure (\$332,966) LTD

Name of the review (portfolio(s) and output(s)/ agency responsible)	Reasons for review/ study	Terms of reference/scope	Anticipated outcomes	(\$000) LTD cost (excl.GST)	(\$000) Final cost if completed (excl. GST)	(\$000) Publicly available (Y/N) and URL
Connecting high-value ecological sites on the MacKenzie River and Burnt Creek system to the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline	Providing environmental water allocations to MacKenzie River and Burnt Creek wildlife refuge sites in dry conditions is challenging and in drought impossible under current arrangements	The project will explore modifying current pipelines that source supply from Wartook and Moora Moora storages to artificially water high-value ecological sites in the MacKenzie River and Burnt Creek system using existing environmental allocations.	Feasibility and prioritisation study of sites for pipeline connections. Prioritisation of potential sites in the system for upcoming funding to allow for connection to the pipeline.	8	N/A	N
Apsley Flood Study – West Wimmera Shire Council	To assess flood risks to the West Wimmera Shire town of Apsley	To document flood risks, and potential flood-mitigation and flood responses actions for the town of Apsley.	A document for use in flood planning, flood preparation and response for the town of Apsley.	100	N/A	Y
Edenhope Flood Study – West Wimmera Shire Council	To assess and document flood risks to the West Wimmera Shire town of Edenhope	To document flood risks, and potential flood-mitigation and flood responses for the West Wimmera town of Edenhope.	A document for use in flood planning, preparation, action and response for the town of Apsley.	105	N/A	Y
Assessment of Environmental Watering opportunities for the proposed Southern Wimmera Pyrenees Pipeline	The project involves the identification and ecological review of potential drought refuge sites, a feasibility assessment and prioritisation report	To determine potential environmental watering site options in the Upper Wimmera catchment that have high ecological value and the potential for connection to the southern Wimmera and northeast Pyrenees pipeline. After this assessment, consultation to prioritise sites will occur. Some ecological assessments at high priority sites will occur at locations to determine the best options of future watering.	A feasibility report that prioritises sites based upon capability and overall environmental benefits		N/A	N
Great Western Flood Study – Northern Grampians Shire Council	To assess and document flood risks to the Northern Grampians Shire town of Great Western	To document flood risks, and potential flood-mitigation and flood responses for the Northern Grampians Shire town of Great Western.	A document for use in flood planning, preparation, action and response for the Northern Grampians Shire town of Great Western.	120	N/A	Y

Note 1: Table does not include reviews or studies that may be Commercial-in-Confidence or commercially sensitive, or where the release may be detrimental to Government operations (e.g. by pre-empting the finalisation of policy decisions prior to their announcement by Government).

Note 2: Includes feasibility or scoping studies used to inform future management and/or decision making.

Information and communication technology expenditure

Table 17. Wimmera CMA ICT expenditure during 2024-25, totalling \$367,119

All operational ICT expenditure	ICT expenditure relating to projects to create ICT capabilities		
	All ICT operational expenditure (\$000)	Non-BAU ICT expenditure (\$000)	Operational expenditure (\$000)
			Capital expenditure (\$000)
Total	Total A+B	A	B
352	41	26	15

Note: ICT expenditure refers to Wimmera CMA's costs in providing business enabling ICT services within the current reporting period. It comprises Business As Usual (BAU) ICT expenditure and Non-Business As Usual (Non-BAU) ICT expenditure.

Non-BAU ICT expenditure relates to extending or enhancing Wimmera CMA's current ICT capabilities – broken down to Operational expenditure (OPEX) and Capital Expenditure (CAPEX).

BAU ICT expenditure is all remaining ICT expenditure, which primarily relates to ongoing activities to operate and maintain the current ICT capability.

Disclosure of major contracts

Wimmera CMA has not entered into any major contracts during 2024-25.

A 'major contract' is a contract entered into during the reporting period valued at \$10 million or more.

Compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 1982

The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (*the Act*) allows the public a right of access to documents held by Wimmera CMA. The purpose of *the Act* is to extend as far as possible the right of the community to access information held by government departments, local councils, Ministers and other bodies subject to *the Act*.

An applicant has a right to apply for access to documents held by Wimmera CMA. This comprises documents both created by Wimmera CMA or supplied to Wimmera CMA by an external organisation or individual, and may also include maps, films, microfiche, photographs, computer printouts, computer discs, tape recordings and videotapes. Information about the type of material produced by Wimmera CMA is available on Wimmera CMA's website under its Part II Information Statement.

The Act allows Wimmera CMA to refuse access, either fully or partially, to certain documents or information. Examples of documents that may not be accessed include cabinet documents; some internal working documents; law enforcement documents; documents covered by legal professional privilege, such as legal advice; personal information about other people; and information provided to Wimmera CMA in confidence and information that is confidential under another Act.

Under *the Act*, the Freedom of Information (FOI) processing time for requests received is 30 days. However, when external consultation is required under ss29, 29A, 31, 31A, 33, 34 or 35, the processing time is 45 days. Processing time may also be extended by periods of 30 days, in consultation with the applicant. With the applicant's agreement this may occur any number of times. However, obtaining an applicant's agreement for an extension cannot occur after the expiry of the timeframe for deciding a request.

If an applicant is not satisfied with a decision made by Wimmera CMA, under section 49A of *the Act*, they have the right to seek a review by the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner within 28 days of receiving a decision letter.

Making a request

FOI requests can be lodged online at foi.vic.gov.au. An application fee of \$33.60 applies. Access charges may also be payable if the document pool is large, and the search for material, time consuming.

Access to documents can also be obtained through a written request to Wimmera CMA's Freedom of Information Officer, as detailed in s17 of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

When making an FOI request, applicants should ensure requests are in writing, and clearly identify what types of material/documents are being sought.

Requests for documents in the possession of Wimmera CMA should be addressed to:

Freedom of Information Officer

Wimmera CMA
PO Box 479
Horsham, Vic 3402

FOI statistics and timeliness

During 2024-25 Wimmera CMA received no applications from the general public.

Further information

Further information regarding the operation and scope of FOI can be obtained from *the Act*, regulations made under *the Act*, and foi.vic.gov.au.

Compliance with Building Act 1993

Wimmera CMA does not own or control any government buildings and consequently is exempt from notifying its compliance with the building and maintenance provisions of the *Building Act 1993*.

Competitive neutrality policy

Competitive neutrality requires government businesses to ensure where services compete, or potentially compete with the private sector, any advantage arising solely from their government ownership be removed if it is not in the public interest. Government businesses are required to cost and price these services as if they were privately owned. Competitive neutrality policy supports fair competition between public and private businesses and provides government businesses with a tool to enhance decisions on resource allocation. This policy does not override other policy objectives of government and focuses on efficiency in the provision of service.

Wimmera CMA continues to comply with the requirements of the Competitive Neutrality Policy.

Compliance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2012

The *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2012 (PID Act)* enables people to make a disclosure about corrupt or improper conduct by a public officer or a public body.

Wimmera CMA is a public body for the purposes of the *PID Act*.

What is a public interest disclosure?

A public interest disclosure is a complaint of corrupt or improper conduct or detrimental action by a public officer or a public body.

'Improper or corrupt conduct' involves substantial mismanagement of public resources, risk to public health or safety or the environment, or corruption.

Detrimental action is action taken against a person in reprisal for making a public interest disclosure.

How do I make a public interest disclosure?

You can make a public interest disclosure about Wimmera CMA or its board members, officers or employees by contacting IBAC (details below).

Wimmera CMA is not able to receive public interest disclosures.

Wimmera CMA has established procedures for the protection of persons from detrimental action in reprisal for making a public interest disclosure about Wimmera CMA, its board

members, officers or employees. You can access Wimmera CMA's procedures on its website at: www.wcma.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Public-Interest-Disclosure-Policy-IBAC.pdf

Independent Broad-Based Anti-Corruption Commission (IBAC) Victoria

Address: Level 1, North Tower, 459 Collins Street, Melbourne Victoria 3000.

Mail: IBAC, GPO Box 24234, Melbourne Victoria 3001

Internet: www.ibac.vic.gov.au

Phone: 1300 735 135 (10am – 4pm Monday to Friday)

Email: info@ibac.vic.gov.au

See the website above for the secure email disclosure process, which also provides for anonymous disclosures.

Disclosure of emergency procurement

Wimmera CMA did not activate emergency procurement in the 2024-25 financial year.

Additional information available on request

In compliance with the Standing Directions of the Minister for Finance, details in respect of the items listed below have been retained by Wimmera CMA and are available in full on request, subject to the provisions of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*:

- A declaration of pecuniary interests have been duly completed by all relevant officers;
- Details of publications produced by Wimmera CMA about itself, and how these can be obtained;
- Details of any other external reviews carried out on Wimmera CMA;
- Details of major research and development activities undertaken by Wimmera CMA;
- Details of major promotional, public relations and marketing activities undertaken by Wimmera CMA to develop community awareness of the entity and its services; and
- Details of changes in prices, fees and charges.

The information is available from:

The CEO

Wimmera Catchment Management Authority

Phone: 03 5382 1544

Email: wcma@wcma.vic.gov.au

Additional information included in the annual report

Details in respect of the following item have been included in the Wimmera CMA's annual report, on the pages indicated below:

Details of assessments and measures undertaken to improve the occupational health and safety of employees. Also refer to occupational health and safety in this report in 'Occupational health and safety' on page 50.

A statement on industrial relations within the Wimmera CMA, and details of time lost through industrial accidents and disputes. Also refer to employment and conduct principles in this report in 'Employment and conduct principles' on page 49.

A list of Wimmera CMA major committees, the purposes of each committee and the extent to which the purposes have been achieved. Also refer to Board governance committees in this report in 'Board governance committees' on page 48.

Information that is not applicable to Wimmera CMA

The following information is not relevant to Wimmera CMA for the reasons listed below:

- A declaration of shares held by senior officers (No shares have ever been issued by Wimmera CMA).
- Details of overseas visits undertaken (No Board members or senior executives took overseas work related trips)

Procurement complaints

Under the Governance Policy of the Victorian Government Purchasing Board (VPBP) Wimmera CMA must disclose any formal complaints relating to the procurement of goods and services received through its procurement complaints management system.

Wimmera CMA did not receive any formal complaints through its procurement complaints management system in 2024-25.

Environmental reporting

Reporting of environmental data by government entities

Actions in addition to solar panel installation in recent years have included recycling batteries and other e-waste, fluorescent tubes, glass, cardboard and paper, as well as use of energy efficient office lighting, composting, double sided printing and water saving devices.

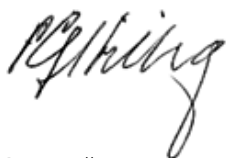
Table 18. Results of the annual waste audit conducted at Wimmera CMA. Full-time equivalent (FTE) based indicators are adopted for monitoring and evaluation purposes

	2024-25	2023-24	2022-23
Full-time equivalent	19.63	17.89	19.22
Electricity consumption kWh (associated with electricity consumption)	1662.75 (5985.9 MJ)	1803.43 (6492.35 MJ)	738.36 (2658.09 MJ)
Estimated greenhouse emissions tonnes	0.46	0.49	0.85
Water consumption kL	13.39	20.07	16.24
Total waste production kg	39.46	34.13	32.37
General waste production kg	10.72	7.22	16.29
Recycling rate %	72.8	78.8	49.7
Estimated greenhouse emissions	0.28	0.19	0.38

Wimmera CMA continues to follow recommendations of Sustainability Victoria as part of our commitment to contribute to Victoria's target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Financial management compliance attestation statement

I, Peter Hilbig, on behalf of the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority Board, certify that the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority has no Material Compliance Deficiencies with respect to the applicable Standing Directions of the Minister for Finance under the *Financial Management Act 1994* and instructions.



Peter Hilbig
Chair Wimmera CMA Board

Financial statements

How this report is structured

The Wimmera Catchment Management Authority (the Authority) has presented its audited general purpose financial statements for the financial year ended 30 June 2025 in the following structure to provide users with the information about the Authority's stewardship of resource entrusted to it.

Financial statements

Comprehensive operating statement

Balance sheet

Cash flow statement

Statement of changes in equity

Notes to the financial statements

1. About this report

The basis on which the financial statements have been prepared and compliance with reporting regulations

2. Funding delivery of our services

Income recognised in respect of Government contributions and other income sources

2.1 Income from transactions

3. The cost of delivering services

Operating expenses of the Authority

3.1 Expenses incurred in delivery of services

3.2 Program delivery expenses

3.3 Other operating expenses

4. Key assets available to support output delivery

Leasehold improvements, plant and equipment, and motor vehicles

4.1 Property and equipment

5. Other assets and liabilities

Working capital balances, and other key assets and liabilities

5.1 Receivables

5.2 Payables

5.3 Other non-financial assets

6. How we financed our operations

Borrowings, cash flow information, leases, carry forward project funding and commitments for expenditure

6.1 Cash flow information and balances

6.2 Carry forward project funding

6.3 Leases

6.4 Commitments for expenditure

7. Risks, contingencies and valuation judgements

Financial risk management, contingent assets and liabilities as well as fair value determination

7.1 Financial instruments specific disclosures

7.2 Contingent assets and contingent liabilities

7.3 Fair value determination

8. Other disclosures

- 8.1 Ex-gratia expenses
- 8.2 Responsible persons
- 8.3 Remuneration of executive officers
- 8.4 Related parties
- 8.5 Remuneration of auditors
- 8.6 Subsequent events

Declaration in the Financial Statements

The attached financial statements for the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority have been prepared in accordance with Direction 5.2 of the Standing Directions of the Minister for Finance under the *Financial Management Act 1994*, applicable Financial Reporting Directions, Australian Accounting Standards including Interpretations, and other mandatory professional reporting requirements.

We further state that, in our opinion, the information set out in the comprehensive operating statement, balance sheet, cash flow statement, statement of changes in equity, and accompanying notes, presents fairly the financial transactions during the year ended 30 June 2025 and financial position of the Authority at 30 June 2025.

At the time of signing, we are not aware of any circumstances which would render any particulars included in the financial statements to be misleading or inaccurate.

We authorise the attached financial statements for issue on 15th September 2025.



Chairperson
Peter Hilbig



David Brennan
CEO and Accountable Officer



Camille Pope
Chief Finance Officer

COMPREHENSIVE OPERATING STATEMENT (a)

for the financial year ended 30 June 2025

	Notes	2025 \$	2024 \$
Income from transactions			
Government/partnership contributions	2.1.1	7,282,728	6,976,465
Interest	2.1.2	479,929	475,726
Other income		190,033	64,450
Total income from transactions		7,952,690	7,516,641
Expenses from transactions			
Employee expenses	3.1.1	2,567,378	2,437,018
Depreciation	4.1.1	186,555	173,548
Interest expense	6.3.5	57,484	18,231
Program delivery expenses	3.2	790,934	1,404,743
Contractors	3.2	2,370,962	2,306,734
Other operating expenses	3.3	835,250	565,739
Total expenses from transactions		6,808,563	6,906,013
Net result from transactions (net operating balance)		1,144,127	610,628
Other economic flows included in net result			
Net loss on non-financial assets (b)	4.1.2	(6,177)	(1,143)
Net result		1,137,950	609,485
Comprehensive result		1,137,950	609,485

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Notes:

(a) This format is aligned to AASB 1049 *Whole of Government and General Government Sector Financial Reporting*.

(b) 'Net gain/(loss) on non-financial assets includes realised gains/(losses) from disposals of all physical assets.

BALANCE SHEET (a)

as at 30 June 2025

	Notes	2025 \$	2024 \$
Assets			
Financial assets			
Cash and deposits	6.1	11,490,728	10,816,313
Receivables	5.1	805,023	547,070
Total financial assets		12,295,751	11,363,383
Non-financial assets			
Property, plant and equipment	4.1.1	347,800	287,304
Property, plant and equipment (ROU)	4.1.1	1,284,687	607,622
Other non-financial assets	5.3	48,424	48,686
Total non-financial assets		1,680,911	943,612
Total assets		13,976,662	12,306,995
Liabilities			
Payables	5.2	186,943	393,536
Employee related provisions	3.1.2	666,480	627,464
Leases	6.3	1,334,266	634,972
Total liabilities		2,187,689	1,655,972
Net assets		11,788,973	10,651,023
Equity			
Accumulated surplus		9,883,719	8,612,452
Committed funds reserve		181,555	314,872
Contributed capital		1,723,699	1,723,699
Net worth		11,788,973	10,651,023

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Note:

(a) This format is aligned to AASB 1049 *Whole of Government and General Government Sector Financial Reporting*.

CASH FLOW STATEMENT (a)

for the financial year ended 30 June 2025

	Notes	2025 \$	2024 \$
Cash flows from operating activities			
Receipts			
Receipts from government		7,024,775	7,102,102
Interest received		479,929	475,726
Goods and services net amount from the ATO (b)		220,309	135,605
Other receipts		190,033	64,450
Total receipts		7,915,046	7,777,883
Payments			
Payments to suppliers and employees		(6,952,149)	(6,703,358)
Interest and other costs of finance paid		(57,484)	(18,231)
Total payments		(7,009,633)	(6,721,589)
Net cash flows provided by operating activities		905,413	1,056,294
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchases of non-financial assets		(231,896)	(201,676)
Proceeds from the sale of non-financial assets		68,943	40,466
Net cash flows (used in) investing activities		(162,953)	(161,210)
Cashflows from financing activities			
Repayment of borrowings and principal portion of lease liabilities (c)		(68,043)	(90,513)
Net cash flows (used in) financing activities		(68,043)	(90,513)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents		674,417	804,571
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year		10,816,313	10,011,742
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	6.1	11,490,730	10,816,313

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Notes:

(a) This format is aligned to AASB 1049 Whole of Government and General Government Sector Financial Reporting.

(b) GST received from the Australian Taxation Office is presented on a net basis.

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY (a)

for the financial year ended 30 June 2025

	Accumulated surplus	Committed funds reserve	Contributed capital	Total
	\$	\$	\$	\$
Balance at 1 July 2023	7,889,673	428,166	1,723,699	10,041,538
Net result for the year	609,485	-	-	609,485
Transfers (from)/to reserves (b)	113,294	(113,294)	-	-
Balance at 30 June 2024	8,612,452	314,872	1,723,699	10,651,023
Net result for the year	1,137,950	-	-	1,137,950
Transfers to/(from) reserves (b)	133,317	(133,317)	-	-
Balance at 30 June 2025	9,883,719	181,555	1,723,699	11,788,973

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Note:

(a) This format is aligned to AASB 1049 Whole of Government and General Government Sector Financial Reporting.

(b) The net amount transferred from accumulated surplus to committed funds reserve consists of carry forward unspent project funds that have been set aside for the purpose of completion of specific projects.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

for the financial year ended 30 June 2025

1. ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Wimmera Catchment Management Authority is a government authority of the State of Victoria, established on 1 July 1997 by the state government.

Its principal address is: Wimmera Catchment Management Authority
24 Darlot Street
Horsham VIC 3400

A description of the nature of its operations and its principal activities is included in the Report of Operations, which does not form part of these financial statements.

Basis of preparation

These financial statements are Tier 2 general purpose financial statements prepared in accordance with AASB 1060 *General Purpose Financial Statements - Simplified Disclosures for For-Profit and Not-for Profit Tier 2 Entities* (AASB 1060) and Financial Reporting Direction 101 *Application of Tiers of Australian Accounting Standards* (FRD 101).

The Authority is a Tier 2 entity in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards - Simplified Disclosures. The Authority's prior year financial statements were general purpose financial statements prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards (Tier 1). As the Authority is not a 'significant entity' as defined in FRD 101, it was required to change from Tier 1 to Tier 2 reporting effective from 1 July 2024.

These financial statements are in Australian dollars and the historical cost convention is used unless a different measurement basis is specifically disclosed in the note associated with the item measured on a different basis.

The accrual basis of accounting has been applied in preparing these financial statements, whereby assets, liabilities, equity, income and expenses are recognised in the reporting period to which they relate, regardless of when cash is received or paid.

Consistent with the requirements of AASB 1004 *Contributions*, contributions by owners (that is, contributed capital and its repayment) are treated as equity transactions and, therefore do not form part of the income and expenses of the Authority.

Additions to net assets which have been designated as contributions by owners are recognised as contributed capital. Other transfers that are in the nature of contributions to or distributions by owners have also been designated as contribution by owners.

Judgements, estimates and assumptions are required to be made about financial information being presented. The significant judgements made in the preparation of these financial statements are disclosed in the notes where amounts affected by those judgements are disclosed. Estimates and associated assumptions are based on professional judgements derived from historical experience and various other factors that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised and also in future periods that are affected by the revision. Judgements and assumptions made by management in the application of AASs that have significant effects on the financial statements and estimates are disclosed in the notes under the heading: 'Significant judgement or estimates', and relate to:

	Note
•determining whether the performance obligations are sufficiently specific so as to determine whether the arrangement is within the scope of AASB 15 or AASB 1058;	2.1.1
•employee benefit provisions;	3.1.2
•useful lives of assets;	4.1
•estimating discount rate when no implicit rate is in the lease;	6.3
•fair value measurements of assets and liabilities;	7.3

Rounding

Unless otherwise stated, amount in the report have been rounded to the nearest dollar. Figures in the financial report may not equate due to rounding.

Compliance information

These general purpose financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the *Financial Management Act 1994* (FMA) and applicable Australian Accounting Standards (AASs) which include Interpretations, issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB). In particular, they are presented in a manner consistent with the requirements of AASB 1049 *Whole of Government and General Government Sector Financial Reporting*.

Where appropriate, those AASs paragraphs applicable to not-for-profit entities have been applied. Accounting policies selected and applied in these financial statements ensure that the resulting financial information satisfies the concepts of relevance and reliability, thereby ensuring that the substance of the underlying transactions or other events is reported.

2. FUNDING DELIVERY OF OUR SERVICES

Introduction

The Authority's overall objective is for the co-ordinated control of natural resource management within the broader catchments of the Wimmera region. The role of the Authority is to ensure effective implementation of the Regional Catchment Strategy. Associated with this role the Authority carries out strategic planning and advises Government.

To enable the Authority to deliver on its objectives, it receives income predominantly through State and Commonwealth Government contributions.

2.1 Income from transactions

Significant judgement: Grants Contributions

The Authority has determined that all grant income is recognised as income of not-for profit entities in accordance with AASB 1058, except for grants that are enforceable and with sufficiently specific performance obligations and accounted for as revenue from contracts with customers in accordance with AASB 15.

2.1.1 Government/Partnership contributions

Grants recognised under AASB 1058

	2025	2024
	\$	\$
State Government/Partnerships	5,887,295	5,946,373
Commonwealth Government/Partnerships	1,395,433	1,030,092
Total Government/Partnership contributions	7,282,728	6,976,465

The Authority has determined that the grant income included in the table above under AASB 1058 has been earned under arrangements that are either not enforceable and/or linked to sufficiently specific performance obligations.

Income from grants without any sufficiently specific performance obligations, or that are not enforceable, is recognised when the Authority has unconditional right to receive cash which usually coincides with receipt of cash. On initial recognition of the assets, the Authority recognises any increase in liabilities, decrease in assets, and revenue ('related amount') in accordance with other Australian Accounting Standards. Related amounts may take the form of:

- * revenue or a contract liability arising from a contract with a customer, in accordance with AASB 15 *Revenue from Contracts with Customers* ;
- * a lease liability in accordance with AASB 16 *Leases* ;
- * a financial instrument, in accordance with AASB 9 *Financial Instruments* ; or
- * a provision, in accordance with AASB 137 *Provisions, Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets*.

2.1.2 Interest

	2025	2024
	\$	\$
Interest on bank deposits	479,929	475,726

Interest income includes interest received on bank accounts. Interest income is recognised using the effective interest method which allocates the interest over the relevant period.

All other income is recognised when the right to receive payment is established.

3. THE COST OF DELIVERING SERVICES

Introduction

This section provides an account of the expenses incurred by the Authority in delivering services. In Section 2, the funds that enable the provision of services were disclosed and in this note the cost association with the provision of services are recorded.

3.1 Employee expenses

3.1.1 Employee benefit expenses in the comprehensive operating statement

	2025	2024
	\$	\$
Salaries & wages	1,798,183	1,709,603
Leave & public holidays	426,434	411,770
Superannuation	255,046	232,237
Other employee expenses	87,716	83,408
Total employee benefit expenses	2,567,379	2,437,018

Employee expenses include all costs related to employment including wages and salaries, payroll tax, fringe benefits tax, leave entitlements, termination payments and WorkCover premiums.

3.1.2 Employee related provisions in the balance sheet

Significant judgement: Employee benefit provisions

In measuring employee benefits, consideration is given to expected future wage and salary levels, experience of employee departures and periods of service. Expected future payments are discounted using a single weighted average discount rate based on market yields of national government bonds in Australia that reflects the estimated timing and amount of benefit payment.

Provision is made for benefits accruing to employees in respect of wages and salaries, annual leave and long service leave (LSL) for services rendered to the reporting date and recorded as an expense during the period the services are delivered.

	2025	2024
	\$	\$
Current provisions		
Annual Leave	188,710	177,357
Long Service Leave	377,347	356,080
Provision for on-costs	46,477	51,430
Total current provisions for employee benefits and on-costs	612,534	584,867
Non-current provisions		
Long Service Leave	48,033	37,219
On-costs	5,916	5,376
Total non-current provisions for employee benefits	53,950	42,595
Total provisions for employee benefits and on-costs	666,484	627,462

Wages and salaries annual leave and sick leave:

Liabilities for wages and salaries (including non-monetary benefits, annual leave and on-costs) are recognised as part of the employee benefit provision as current liabilities, because the Authority does not have an unconditional right to defer settlements of these liabilities.

The liability for salaries and wages are recognised in the balance sheet at remuneration rates which are current at the reporting date. As the Authority expects the liabilities to be wholly settled within 12 months of reporting date, they are measured at undiscounted amounts.

The annual leave liability is classified as a current liability as the Authority does not have an unconditional right to defer settlement of the liability for at least 12 months after the end of the reporting period. Annual leave expected to be taken within the next 12 months is measured at the undiscounted amount while annual leave expected to be settled after 12 months is measured at present value.

No provision has been made for sick leave as all sick leave is non-vesting and it is not considered probable that the average sick leave taken in the future will be greater than the benefits accrued in the future. As sick leave is non-vesting, an expense is recognised in the Comprehensive Operating Statement as it is taken.

3.1.2 Employee related provisions in the balance sheet (cont'd)

Employment on-costs such as payroll tax and workers compensation are not employee benefits. They are disclosed separately, along with superannuation as a component of the provision for employee benefits when the employment to which they relate has occurred.

Long service leave (LSL):

Unconditional LSL is disclosed as a current liability; even where the Authority does not expect to settle the liability within 12 months because it will not have the unconditional right to defer the settlement of the entitlement would an employee take leave within 12 months.

The components of this current LSL liability are measured at:

- undiscounted value - if the Authority expects to wholly settle within 12 months; or
- present value - if the Authority does not expect to wholly settle within 12 months.

Unconditional LSL represents long service leave entitlements accrued for employees with more than 7 years of continuous service.

Conditional LSL is disclosed as a non-current liability. There is a conditional right to defer the settlement of the entitlement until the employee has completed the requisite years of service. This non-current LSL is measured at present value.

3.2 Program delivery expenses

	2025	2024
	\$	\$
Materials	88,953	446,688
Repairs and maintenance	30,060	16,368
Grants paid	534,560	701,434
Contractors	2,370,962	2,306,734
Consultants	137,361	240,253
Total program delivery expenses	3,161,896	3,711,477

Program delivery expenses are recognised as an expense in the reporting period in which they are incurred.

3.3 Other operating expenses

	2025	2024
	\$	\$
Promotions and marketing	172,502	94,734
Business and project administration	568,422	356,639
Travel and vehicle expenses	53,556	72,454
Audit, finance and bank expenses	40,770	41,912
Total other operating expenses	835,250	565,739

Other operating expenses generally represent the day-to-day running costs incurred in normal operations and are recognised as an expense in the reporting period in which they are incurred.

The following lease payments are recognised on a straight-line basis:

• Low value leases - leases with the underlying asset's fair value (when new, regardless of the age of the asset being leased) is no more than \$10,000. Refer Note 6.3 for short term leases practical expedients.

4. KEY ASSETS AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT OUTPUT DELIVERY

Introduction

The Authority controls property, plant and equipment that are utilised in fulfilling its objectives and conducting its activities. They represent the key resources that have been entrusted to the Authority to be utilised for delivery of those outputs.

4.1 Total Property, plant and equipment

	Gross carrying amount		Accumulated depreciation		Net carrying amount	
	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Leasehold improvements at fair value	805,725	805,725	(777,442)	(769,144)	28,283	36,581
ROU building at fair value	1,392,261	1,072,968	(107,573)	(465,346)	1,284,688	607,622
Plant and equipment at fair value	289,764	271,169	(258,241)	(252,488)	31,523	18,681
Motor vehicles at fair value	457,265	448,395	(169,272)	(216,352)	287,993	232,043
Net carrying amount	2,945,015	2,598,257	(1,312,528)	(1,703,330)	1,632,487	894,927

Significant judgement: Fair value measurement

Where the assets included in this section are carried at fair value, additional information is disclosed in Note 7.3 in connection with how those fair values were determined.

Initial recognition:

Items of property, plant and equipment, are measured initially at cost and subsequently revalued at fair value less accumulated depreciation and impairment. Where an asset is acquired for no or nominal cost, the cost is its fair value at the date of acquisition.

The cost of leasehold improvements are capitalised and depreciated over the shorter of the remaining term of the lease of their estimated useful lives.

Right-of-use asset acquired by lessees (under AASB 16 Leases) - initial measurement

The Authority recognises a right-of-use asset and a lease liability at the lease commencement date. The right-of-use asset is initially measured at cost which comprises the initial amount of the lease liability adjusted for:

- any lease payments made at or before the commencement date less any lease incentive received; plus
- any initial direct costs incurred; and
- an estimate of costs to dismantle and remove the underlying asset or to restore the underlying asset or the site on which it is located.

Refer Section 7.3.2 for measurement of fair value.

4.1 Property, plant and equipment (cont'd)

Subsequent measurement:

Property, plant and equipment as well as right-of-use assets under lease are subsequently measured at fair value less accumulated depreciation and impairment. Fair value is determined with regard to the asset's highest and best use (considering legal or physical restrictions imposed on the asset, public announcements or commitments made in relation to the intended use of the asset) and is summarised on the following page by asset category.

Right-of-use asset - subsequent measurement

The Authority depreciates the right-of-use assets on a straight-line basis from the lease commencement date to the earlier of the end of the useful life of the right-of-use asset or the end of the lease term. The right-of-use assets are also subject to revaluation.

In addition, the right-of-use asset is periodically reduced by impairment losses, if any and adjusted for certain remeasurements of the lease liability.

Note 7.3 includes additional information in connection with fair value determination of property, plant and equipment.

Depreciation and amortisation

All buildings, plant and equipment and other non-financial physical assets that have finite useful lives are depreciated. Depreciation is generally calculated on a straight-line basis, at rates that allocate the asset's value, less any estimated residual value, over its estimated useful life. Typical estimated useful lives for the different asset classes for current and prior years are included in the table below:

Asset	Years Useful life
Buildings (right-of-use)	5 to 10
Leasehold improvements	5 to 10
Plant and equipment	3 to 10
Motor vehicles	1 to 5

Estimation of useful lives

All non-current physical assets that have a limited useful life are depreciated. Where assets have separate identifiable components that have distinct useful lives and/or residual values, a separate depreciation rate is determined for each component.

The estimated useful lives, residual values and depreciation method are reviewed at the end of each annual reporting period, and adjustments made where appropriate.

Right-of-use assets are generally depreciated over the shorter of the asset's useful life and the lease term. Where the Leasehold improvements are depreciated over the shorter of the lease term and their useful lives.

Impairment of property, plant and equipment

The recoverable amount of primarily non-cash-generating assets of not-for-profit entities, which are typically specialised in nature and held for continuing use of their service capacity, is expected to be materially the same as fair value determined under AASB 13 *Fair Value Measurement*, with the consequence that AASB 136 does not apply to such assets that are regularly revalued.

4.1.1 Reconciliation of movements in carrying values of property, plant and equipment

	Leasehold improvements at fair value \$	Buildings (ROU) \$	Plant and equipment at fair value \$	Motor vehicles at fair value \$	Total \$
2025					
Opening balance	36,581	607,622	18,681	232,043	894,927
					-
Additions	-	-	18,595	144,358	162,953
Remeasurement	-	767,338	-	-	767,338
Disposals	-	-	-	(6,176)	(6,176)
Depreciation	(8,298)	(90,272)	(5,752)	(82,233)	(186,555)
Closing balance	28,283	1,284,688	31,524	287,992	1,632,487

Fair value assessments have been performed for all classes of assets in this purpose group and the decision was made that movements were not material (less than or equal to 10 per cent) for a full revaluation of FRD 103. The next scheduled full revaluation for this purpose group will be conducted in 2026. Refer to note 7.3 for more information.

4.1.2 Other economic flows included in net result

Other economic flows measure the change in volume or value of assets or liabilities that do not result from transactions.

	2025 \$	2024 \$
Net gain on disposal of non-financial assets		
Proceeds from sale of non-financial assets	68,942	40,466
Less written down value	(75,119)	(41,609)
Total net loss on disposal of non-financial assets	(6,177)	(1,143)

5. OTHER ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

Introduction

This section sets out those assets and liabilities that arose from the Authority's operations.

5.1 Receivables

	2025	2024
Current receivables	\$	\$
Contractual		
Trade receivables	804,226	526,426
	<u>804,226</u>	<u>526,426</u>
Statutory		
GST input tax credits recoverable	797	19,044
Total current receivables	<u>805,023</u>	<u>545,470</u>

Receivables consist of:

- Contractual receivables are classified as financial instruments and categorised as financial assets at amortised cost. They are initially recognised at fair value plus any directly attributable transaction costs. Subsequent to initial measurement they are measured at amortised cost less any impairment.
- Statutory receivables, which do not arise from contracts and are recognised and measured similarly to contractual receivables (except for impairment), but are not classified as financial instruments for disclosure purposes.

Details about the Authority's impairment policies and the calculation of the loss allowance are set out in Note 7.1.

5.2 Payables

Payables

Contractual

	\$	\$
Trade payables	106,983	304,693
Accrued expenses	67,504	76,879
	<u>174,487</u>	<u>381,572</u>

Statutory

FBT payable	10,122	9,604
Group tax	2,335	2,360
	<u>12,457</u>	<u>11,964</u>
Total current payables	<u>186,944</u>	<u>393,536</u>

Payables consist of:

- Contractual payables are classified as financial instruments and are measured at amortised cost. Accounts payable represent liabilities for goods and services provided to the Authority prior to the end of the financial year that are unpaid.
- Statutory payables are recognised and measured similarly to contractual payables, but are not classified as financial instruments and not included in the category of financial liabilities at amortised cost, because they do not arise from contracts.

Payables for supplies and services have an average credit period of 30 days.

5.3 Other non-financial assets

	2025	2024
	\$	\$
Current other non-financial assets		
Prepayments	48,424	48,666
Total current other non-financial assets	<u>48,424</u>	<u>48,666</u>

Other non-financial assets include prepayments which represent payments in advance of receipt of goods or services or that part of expenditure made in one accounting period covering a term extending beyond that period.

6. HOW WE FINANCED OUR OPERATIONS

This section provides information on the sources of finance utilised by the Authority during its operations and other information related to financing activities of the Authority.

This section includes disclosures of balances that are financial instruments, such as cash balances. Note 7 provides additional, specific financial instrument disclosures.

6.1 Cash flow information and balances

Cash and deposits, including cash equivalents, comprise cash on hand and cash at bank, which are held for the purpose of meeting short-term cash commitments rather than for investment purposes, and which are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and are subject to an insignificant risk of changes in value.

The Authority's bank accounts are held in the Central Banking system (CBS) under the *Standing Directions 2018*

	2025	2024
Cash and deposits disclosed in the balance sheet:	\$	\$
Cash on hand	500	500
Cash at bank	11,490,228	10,815,813
Balance as per cash flow statement	11,490,728	10,816,313

6.2 Carry forward project funding

Catchment Management Authorities are responsible for the facilitation and coordination of catchments in an integrated and sustainable manner. This is achieved by undertaking projects funded by Victorian and Australian Government programs. The Authority received funding for specific projects which are guided by the Regional Catchment Strategy and delivered in line with the Authority's Corporate Plan approved by the Minister for Water.

The projects funded by the State and Commonwealth Governments can be undertaken over multiple financial years and funds are received at various stages of the project life based on contractual agreements. At the end of the financial year there are some projects that have not reached completion but will be completed within the contractual terms in future financial periods. At balance date the Authority has cash and cash equivalents that will be utilised to complete these projects in future financial years.

6.3 Leases

Information about leases for which the Authority is a lessee is presented below.

The Authorities leasing activities

Low value lease

The Authority leases Photocopiers which are items of low-value. The Authority has elected to account for these low value leases using the practical expedients. Instead of recognising a right-of-use asset and lease liability, the payments in relation to these are recognised as an expense in profit or loss included in "other operating expenses" (See note 3.3) on a straight line basis over the lease period.

At 30 June 2025, the Authority was committed to low value leases and the total commitment at that date was \$10,815. See note 6.4.

6.3.1 Right-of-use assets

Right-of-use assets are presented in note 4.1.

6.3.2 Expense recognised for short-term leases

The following amounts are recognised as expense relating to short term leases.

	2025 \$	2024 \$
Expenses relating to short term leases	10,815	14,832
Total amount recognised as an expense	10,815	14,832

6.3.3 Recognition and measurement of leases as a lessee

For any new contracts entered into, the Authority considers whether a contract is, or contains a lease. A lease is defined as 'a contract, or part of a contract, that conveys the right to use an asset (the underlying asset) for a period of time in exchange for consideration'. To apply this definition the Authority assesses whether the contract meets three key evaluations:

- Whether the contract contains an identified asset, which is either explicitly identified in the contract or implicitly specified by being identified at the time the asset is made available to the Authority and for which the supplier does not have substantive substitution rights;
- Whether the authority has the right to obtain substantially all of the economic benefits from use of the identified asset throughout the period of use, considering its rights within the defined scope of the contract and the authority has the right to direct the use of the identified asset throughout the period of use; and
- Whether the authority has the right to take decisions in respect of 'how and for what purpose' the asset is used throughout the period of use.

6.3 Leases (cont'd)

Lease Liability - Initial measurement

The lease liability is initially measured at the present value of the lease payments unpaid at the commencement date, discounted using the interest rate implicit in the lease if that rate is readily determinable or the Authorities incremental borrowing rate.

Lease payments included in the measurement of the lease liability comprise the following:

- fixed payments (including in-substance fixed payments) less any lease incentive receivable;
- variable payments based on an index or rate, initially measured using the index or rate as at the commencement date;
- amounts expected to be payable under a residual value guarantee; and
- payments arising from purchase and termination options reasonably certain to be exercised.

Lease Liability - Subsequent measurement

Subsequent to initial measurement, the liability will be reduced for payments made and increased for interest. It is remeasured to reflect any reassessment or modification, or if there are changes in-substance fixed payments.

When the lease liability is remeasured, the corresponding adjustment is reflected in the right-of-use asset, or profit and loss if the right-of-use asset is already reduced to zero.

Short-term and low-value leases

The Authority has elected to account for short-term leases and leases of low-value using the practical expedients. Instead of recognising a right-of-use asset and lease liability, the payments in relation to these are recognised as an expense in profit or loss on a straight-line basis over the lease term.

Below market/Peppercorn lease

The Authority has no below market/peppercorn leases.

Presentation of right-of-use assets and lease liabilities

The Authority presents right-of-use assets as 'right-of-use assets' unless they meet the definition of investment property, in which case they are disclosed as 'investment property' in the balance sheet. Lease liabilities are presented as 'lease liabilities' in the balance sheet.

Future lease payments

	Minimum future lease payments (a)	
	2025	2024
	\$	\$
Not longer than 1 year	133,010	119,995
Longer than 1 year but not longer than 5 years	508,040	463,824
Longer than 5 years	1,393,289	106,606
Minimum future lease payments	2,034,339	690,425
Less future finance charges	(700,073)	(55,453)
Present value of minimum lease payments	1,334,266	634,972

(a) Minimum future lease payments include the aggregate of all base payments and any guaranteed residual.

6.3 Leases (cont'd)

Borrowings refer to interest bearing liabilities raised from lease liabilities.

Borrowings are classified as financial instruments. Interest bearing liabilities are classified at amortised cost unless the Authority elects to irrevocably designate them at fair value through profit or loss at initial recognition. The election depends on the nature and purpose of the interest-bearing liabilities.

The Authority has designated certain financial liabilities at fair value through net result to eliminate or significantly reduce the accounting mismatch that would otherwise arise. All other interest-bearing borrowings and other liabilities are initially recognised at the fair value of the consideration received less directly attributable transaction costs and subsequently measured at fair value with changes in fair value relating to the Authorities own credit risk recognised in other comprehensive income and the remaining amount of changes in fair value recognised in net result. Amounts in other comprehensive income related to credit risk are not subject to recycling in profit loss but are transferred to retained earnings when realised.

6.3.4 Maturity Analysis of borrowings

	Weighted average interest rate (%)	Carrying amount	Nominal amount	Less than 1 month	1-3 months	3 months - 1 year	1-5 years	5+years
2025								
Lease liabilities	4.82	1,334,266	2,034,339	-	35,052	97,958	508,040	1,393,289
Total		1,334,266	2,034,339	-	35,052	97,958	508,040	1,393,289
2024								
Lease liabilities	2.22	634,972	690,425	-	29,998	89,997	463,824	106,606
Total		634,972	690,425	-	29,998	89,997	463,824	106,606

6.3.5 Interest Expense

	2025	2024
	\$	\$
Interest on leases liabilities	57,484	18,231
Total Interest Expense	57,484	18,231

Interest expense is recognised in the period in which it is incurred.

6.4 Commitments for expenditure

Commitments

As at 30 June 2025, the Authority has commitments totaling \$10,815 (2024:\$14,832).

7. RISKS, CONTINGENCIES AND VALUATION JUDGEMENTS

Introduction

It is often necessary for the Authority to make judgements and estimates associated with recognition and measurement of items in the financial statements. This section sets out financial instrument specific information, as well as those items that are contingent in nature or require a higher level of judgement to be applied, which for the Authority relate mainly to fair value determination.

7.1 Financial instruments specific disclosures

Financial instruments arise out of contractual agreements that give rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another entity. Due to the nature of the Authority's activities, certain financial assets and financial liabilities arise under statute rather than a contract, and as such, do not meet the definition of financial instruments.

Categories of financial instruments

Financial assets are measured at amortised costs if both of the following criteria are met and the assets are not designated as fair value through net result:

- * the assets are held by the Authority to collect the contractual cash flows; and
- * the assets contractual terms give rise to cash flows that are solely payments of principal and interests.

These assets are initially recognised at fair value plus any directly attributable transaction costs and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method less any impairment.

The Authority recognised the following assets in this category:

- * cash and deposits; and
- * receivables (excluding statutory receivables).

Financial liabilities at amortised cost are initially recognised on the date they originated. They are initially measured at fair value less any directly attributable transaction costs. Subsequent to initial recognition, these financial instruments are measured at amortised cost with any difference between the initial recognised amount and the redemption value being recognised in profit and loss over the period of the interest-bearing liability, using the effective interest rate method.

The Authority recognises the following liabilities in this category:

- payables (excluding statutory payables); and
- lease liabilities

Contractual receivables at amortised cost

The Authority applies AASB 9 simplified approach for all contractual receivables to measure the expected credit losses using a lifetime expected loss allowance based on the assumptions about the risk of default and the expected loss rates. The Authority has grouped contractual receivables on shared credit risk characteristics and days past due, and selected the credit loss rate based on the Authority's past history, existing market conditions, as well as forward-looking estimates at the end of the financial year.

Under this approach, the expected loss rate for the year ending 30 June 2025 has been calculated at 0%, and as such no loss allowance has been recognised.

7.1.1 Financial instruments - Net gain/(loss) on financial instruments by category

	Carrying Amount	Net gain/loss	Total interest income/(expense)	Fee income/(expense)	Impairment loss
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
2025					
Financial assets at amortised cost					
Cash and Deposits	11,490,728	-	479,929	-	-
Trade receivables (a)	804,226	-	-	-	-
Write-Offs	-	-	-	-	-
Total financial assets at amortised cost	12,294,954	-	479,929	-	-
Trade Payables (a)	106,290	-	-	-	-
Borrowings	-	-	-	-	-
Lease Liabilities	1,334,266	-	57,484	-	-
Total contractual financial liabilities	1,440,556	-	57,484	-	-

Note:

(a) The total amounts disclosed here exclude statutory amounts (e.g. amounts owing from Victorian Government and GST input tax credit recoverable and taxes payable).

	Carrying Amount	Net gain/loss	Total interest income/(expense)	Fee income/(expense)	Impairment loss
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
2024					
Financial assets at amortised cost					
Cash and Deposits	10,816,313	-	475,726	-	-
Trade receivables (a)	526,426	-	-	-	-
Write-Offs	-	-	-	-	-
Total financial assets at amortised cost	11,342,739	-	475,726	-	-
Trade Payables (a)	304,693	-	-	-	-
Borrowings	-	-	-	-	-
Lease liabilities	634,972	-	18,231	-	-
Total contractual financial liabilities	939,665	-	18,231	-	-

Note:

(a) The total amounts disclosed here exclude statutory amounts (e.g. amounts owing from Victorian Government and GST input tax credit recoverable and taxes payable).

7.2 Contingent assets and contingent liabilities

Contingent assets

As at 30 June 2025, the Authority has no known contingent assets. (2024: nil)

Contingent liabilities

As at 30 June 2025, the Authority has no known contingent liabilities. (2024: nil)

7.3 Fair value determination

Significant judgement: Fair value measurements of assets and liabilities

Fair value determination requires judgement and the use of assumptions. This section discloses the most significant assumptions used in determining fair values. Changes to assumptions could have a material impact on the results and financial position of the Authority.

The Authority's property, plant and equipment is carried at fair value.

7.3.1 Fair value hierarchy

In determining fair values a number of inputs are used. To increase consistency and comparability in the financial statements, these inputs are categorised into three levels, also known as the fair value hierarchy. The levels are as follows:

- Level 1 – quoted (unadjusted) market prices in active markets for identical assets or liabilities;
- Level 2 – valuation techniques for which the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement is directly or indirectly observable; and
- Level 3 – valuation techniques for which the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement is unobservable.

The Authority determines whether transfers have occurred between levels in the hierarchy by reassessing categorisation (based on the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement as a whole) at the end of each reporting period.

7.3.2 Fair value determination: Non-financial physical assets

The following methods and assumptions were used to estimate the fair value:

Leasehold improvements

Leasehold improvements are held at fair value and are depreciated over 10 years. As depreciation adjustments are considered as significant, unobservable inputs in nature, these assets are classified as level 3 fair value.

Plant and equipment

Plant and equipment is held at fair value. When plant and equipment or office furniture and equipment is specialised in use, such that it is rarely sold other than as part of a going concern, fair value is determined using the current replacement cost method. As depreciation adjustments are considered as significant, unobservable inputs in nature, these assets are classified as level 3 fair value.

Motor vehicles

Motor vehicles are valued using the current replacement cost method for owned vehicles and market rental value for leased vehicles. The Authority acquires new vehicles and at times disposes of them before the end of their economic life. Leased vehicles are disposed of on completion of the lease term. The process of acquisition, use and disposal in the market is managed by experienced fleet managers in the Authority who set relevant depreciation rates during use to reflect the utilisation of the motor vehicles. As depreciation adjustments are considered as significant, unobservable inputs in nature, these assets are classified as level 3 fair value.

ROU Buildings

For the Authority's buildings, the market rental is used, adjusting for the associated depreciations. As depreciation adjustments are considered as significant, unobservable inputs in nature, buildings are classified as Level 3 fair value.

There were no changes in valuation techniques throughout the period to 30 June 2025.

For all assets measured at fair value, the current use is considered the highest and best use.

Description of significant unobservable inputs to Level 3 valuations

	Valuation technique	Significant unobservable inputs
Leasehold improvements	Current replacement cost	Cost per unit Useful life of leasehold equipment
Plant and equipment	Current replacement cost	Cost per unit Useful life of plant and equipment
Motor vehicles	Current replacement cost	Cost per unit Useful life of motor vehicles
ROU building	Market rental value	Direct cost per square metre Useful life of buildings

There were no changes in valuation techniques throughout the period to 30 June 2025

8. OTHER DISCLOSURES

This section provides additional material disclosures required by accounting standards or otherwise, for the understanding of this financial report.

8.1 Ex-gratia expenses

Ex-gratia expenses are the voluntary payments of money or other non-monetary benefit (e.g. a write-off) that is not made either to acquire goods, services or other benefits for the entity to meet a legal liability, or to settle or resolve a possible legal liability of or claim against the entity.

The Authority had no ex-gratia expenses for the year ending 30 June 2025 (2024: \$0).

8.2 Responsible persons

In accordance with the Ministerial Directions issued by the Minister for Finance under the *Financial Management Act 1994*, the following disclosures are made regarding responsible persons for the reporting period.

The names of the persons who were responsible persons of the Authority at any time during the financial year were:

The Hon. Harriet Shing MP	Minister for Water	01 Jul 2024 to 18 Dec 2024
The Hon. Gayle Tierney MP	Minister for Water	19 Dec 2024 to 30 June 2025
The Hon. Steve Dimopoulos MP	Minister for Environment	01 Jul 2024 to 30 June 2025
Peter Hilbig	(Chair)	01 Jul 2024 to 30 June 2025
David Brennan	(CEO)	01 Jul 2024 to 30 June 2025
David Drage	(Board Member & Deputy Chair)	01 Jul 2024 to 30 June 2025
Michelle Graymore	(Board Member)	01 Jul 2024 to 30 June 2025
Lavergne Lehmann	(Board Member)	01 Jul 2024 to 30 June 2025
Angela Enbom	(Board Member)	01 Jul 2024 to 30 June 2025
Andrew Barton	(Board Member)	01 Jul 2024 to 30 June 2025
Duncan Ashby	(Board Member)	01 Jul 2024 to 30 June 2025

Remuneration

Remuneration received or receivable from the Authority in connection with the management of the Authority during the reporting period was:

Income band	2025	2024
\$0–\$9,999	-	3
\$10,000–\$19,999	6	6
\$30,000 - \$39,999	1	1
\$270,000 - \$279,999	-	1
\$290,000 - \$299,999	1	-
Total number of responsible persons	8	11
Total remuneration \$	435,611	417,218

8.3 Remuneration of executive officers

The Wimmera CMA did not have any executive officers, other than the CEO, to whom the Victorian Government's Public Entity Executive Remuneration (PEER) Policy applies. The CEO is an accountable officer and therefore disclosed under note 8.2 and Note 8.4.

8.4 Related parties

The Authority is a wholly owned and controlled entity of the State of Victoria. Related parties of the Authority include:

- all key management personnel and their close family members;
- all Cabinet Ministers and their close family members; and
- all departments and public sector entities that are controlled and consolidated into the whole of state consolidated financial statements.

Significant transactions with government-related entities

During the year, the Authority received funding from the following government-related entities:

	2025 \$	2024 \$	
Entity			Nature
Dept of Energy, Environment and Climate Action	5,270,716	5,607,378	Service Level Agreement Project Funding
Dept of Energy, Environment and Climate Action	-	11,155	Biodiversity Seminar
North Central Catchment Management Authority	34,329	33,000	Vic Catchments , OCOC
North Central Catchment Management Authority	-	15,500	River Detectives
East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority	34,329	33,000	Vic Catchments , OCOC
Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority	34,329	33,000	Vic Catchments , OCOC
Mallee Catchment Management Authority	34,329	33,000	Vic Catchments , OCOC
Melbourne Water	33,000	33,000	Vic Catchments , OCOC
Trust for Nature	17,908	13,704	Workstation Costs
Corangamite Catchment Management Authority	34,329	33,000	Vic Catchments , OCOC
Goulburn-Broken Catchment Management Authority	234,329	33,000	Vic Catchments , OCOC
North East Catchment Management Authority	34,329	33,000	Vic Catchments , OCOC
West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority	34,329	33,000	Vic Catchments , OCOC
Department of Treasury & Finance	-	40,466	Lease Motor Vehicle Residual
Vic Water	-	636	Training Reimbursement
Parks Victoria	91,039	-	Secondment

During the year, the Authority made significant payments to the following government-related entities:

	2025 \$	2024 \$	
Entity			Nature
Victoria Auditor-General's Office	17,600	17,000	Audit Fee
Goulburn-Broken Catchment Management Authority	51,058	78,369	IT Support/Finance system/EAP
Goulburn-Broken Catchment Management Authority	8,707	17,636	WAN Costs
Goulburn-Broken Catchment Management Authority	90,000	90,000	Climate Change Co-ordinator
Goulburn-Broken Catchment Management Authority	76,686	-	Carbon Farming Project
Goulburn-Broken Catchment Management Authority	29,867	-	NSMP Project
Trust for Nature (Victoria)	75,951	23,864	On Ground Works
West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority	55,000	55,000	Vic Catchment Admin
West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority	76,686	-	Carbon Farming Project
Mallee Catchment Management Authority	-	4,776	Training Forum Partnership
Mallee Catchment Management Authority	76,686	-	Carbon Farming Project
Mallee Catchment Management Authority	57,680	-	National Soil Monitoring Project
East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority	76,686	-	Carbon Farming Project
Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority	76,686	-	Carbon Farming Project
Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority	4,998	-	Best of the West event
Corangamite Catchment Management Authority	54,376	-	Carbon Farming Project
Melbourne Water	76,686	-	Carbon Farming Project
Melbourne Water	-	1,636	Training Reimbursement
Vicfleet	-	17,712	MV Lease

8.4 Related parties (cont'd)

Significant transactions with government-related entities (cont.)

At balance date the Authority had the following receivables outstanding from government-related entities:

	2025 \$	2024 \$	
Entity			Nature
Dept of Energy, Environment and Climate Action	-	5,000	Biodiversity Seminar
Parks Victoria	100,143	-	Secondment

Key management personnel of the Authority includes all responsible persons as listed in Note 8.2.

The compensation detailed below excludes the salaries and benefits the Portfolio Ministers receive. The Ministers' remuneration and allowances is set by the *Parliamentary Salaries and Superannuation Act 1968* and is reported within the State's Annual Financial Report.

Compensation of Key Management Personnel

	2025 \$	2024 \$
Total compensation of Key Management Personnel	435,611	417,218

There were no related party transactions or balances that involved key management personnel, their close family members and their personal business interest.

8.5 Remuneration of auditors

	2025 \$	2024 \$
Victorian Auditor-General's Office for audit of financial statements	17,600	17,000
Total remuneration of auditors	17,600	17,000

8.6 Subsequent events

No matters or circumstances have arisen since the end of the reporting period which significantly affected or may significantly affect the operation of the authority, the results of those operations, or the state of affairs of the authority in future financial years.



Independent Auditor's Report

To the Board of Wimmera Catchment Management Authority

Opinion	I have audited the financial report of Wimmera Catchment Management Authority (the authority) which comprises the: • balance sheet as at 30 June 2025 • comprehensive operating statement for the year then ended • statement of changes in equity for the year then ended • cash flow statement for the year then ended • notes to the financial statements, including material accounting policy information • declaration in the financial statements. In my opinion, the financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the authority as at 30 June 2025 and its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the financial reporting requirements of Part 7 of the <i>Financial Management Act 1994</i> and Australian Accounting Standards - Simplified Disclosures.
Basis for opinion	I have conducted my audit in accordance with the <i>Audit Act 1994</i> which incorporates the Australian Auditing Standards. I further describe my responsibilities under that Act and those standards in the <i>Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial report</i> section of my report. My independence is established by the <i>Constitution Act 1975</i>. My staff and I are independent of the authority in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 <i>Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including Independence Standards)</i> (the Code) that are relevant to my audit of the financial report in Victoria. My staff and I have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.
Board's responsibilities for the financial report	The Board is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards - Simplified Disclosures and the <i>Financial Management Act 1994</i>, and for such internal control as the Board determines is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. In preparing the financial report, the Board is responsible for assessing the authority's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless it is inappropriate to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial report

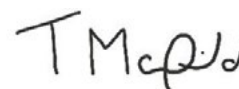
As required by the *Audit Act 1994*, my responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on the audit. My objectives for the audit are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, I exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the authority's internal control
- evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Board
- conclude on the appropriateness of the Board's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the authority's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the authority to cease to continue as a going concern.
- evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with the Board regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

MELBOURNE
19 September 2025



Timothy Maxfield
as delegate for the Auditor-General of Victoria

Appendices

Appendix 1 – disclosure index

Wimmera Catchment Management Authority's Annual Report 2024-25 is prepared in accordance with all relevant Victorian legislation and pronouncements. This index has been prepared to help identify compliance with each of the statutory disclosure.

Report of operations

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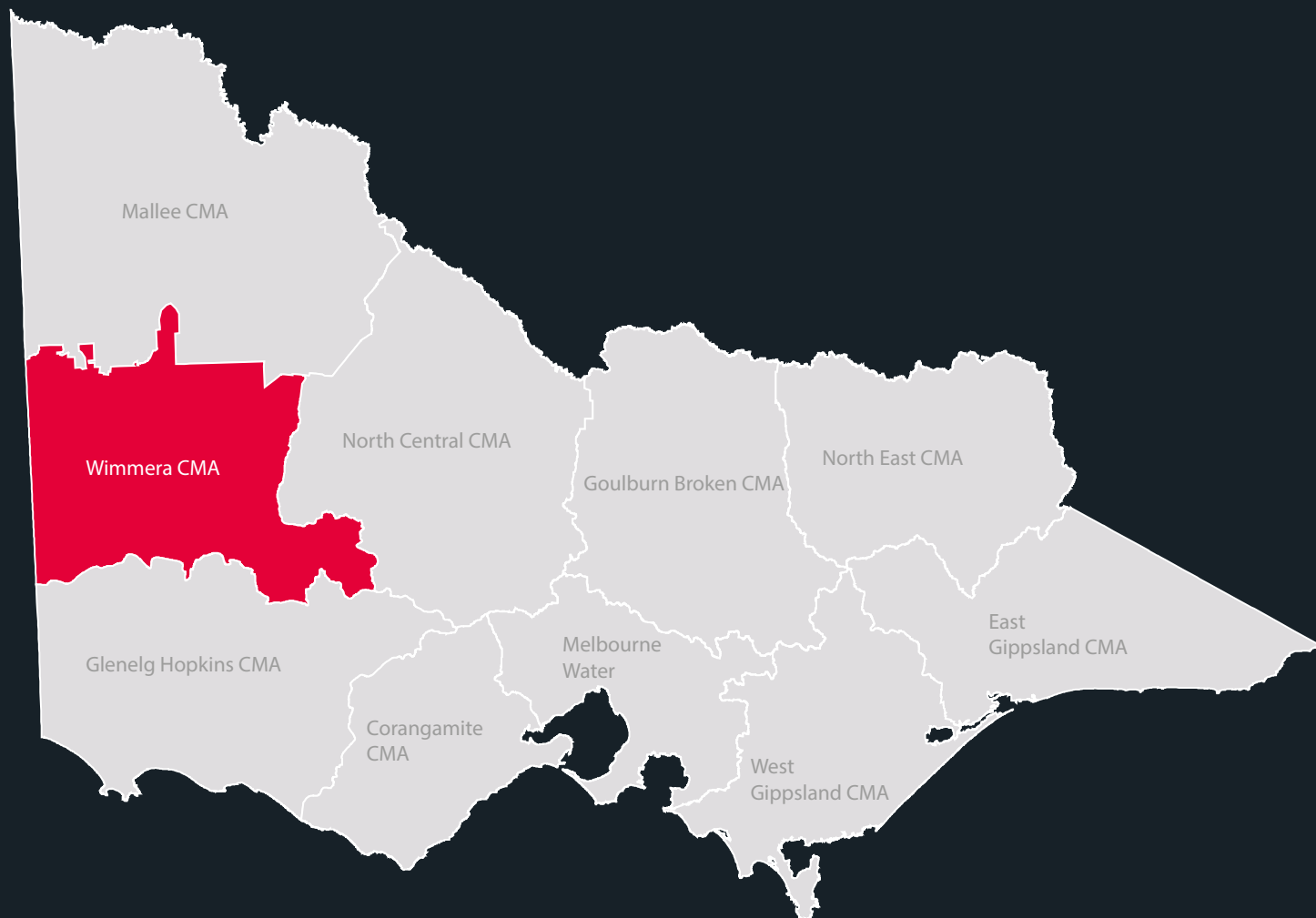
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Wimmera CMA is one of 9 CMAs and Melbourne Water working in Victoria under an integrated catchment management approach to achieve sustainability across the state. Each CMA supports the role that communities and government play in protecting and enhancing local natural environments.



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