

SECTION 6: Further information

6.1 Acronyms and abbreviations

AHD	Australian Height Datum (also see Glossary entry)
BGLC	Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
CEWH	Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder
CMA	Catchment management authority
DDAC	Duduroa Dhargal Aboriginal Corporation
DEECA	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
eDNA	Environmental DNA
EMAC	Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation
EVC	Ecological Vegetation Class
FPMMAC	First People of the Millewa-Mallee Aboriginal Corporation
GL	Gigalitre (also see Glossary entry)
GLaWAC	Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation
GMTOAC	Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation
GWMWater	Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water
IVT	Inter-valley transfer
ML	Megalitre (also see Glossary entry)
MLDRIN	Murray Lower Darling River Indigenous Nations
RAP	Registered Aboriginal Party
RFMF	Restoring Flows to the Mallee Floodplain (project)
SCBEWC	Southern Connected Basin Environmental Watering Committee
TLaWC	Taungurung Land and Waters Council
VEWH	Victorian Environmental Water Holder
WMPP	Wimmera-Mallee Pipeline Project
WTOAC	Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation
WWAC	Wamba Wemba Aboriginal Corporation
YYNAC	Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation

6.2 Glossary

Acid sulphate soils – Naturally occurring soils with high quantities of iron sulphate. These soils are stable when inundated but can generate sulphuric acid and severe environmental impacts when exposed to air.

Adaptive (management, watering) – An iterative decision-making process based on continuous learning that aims to improve outcomes over time. Also known as ‘learning by doing’.

Allocation water – The specific volume of water made available against a water entitlement in a given water year. Allocation water is water that is actually available to use or trade in any given year, including new allocations and carryover.

Australian Height Datum (AHD) – Height above sea level.

Azolla – A native aquatic fern that grows in waterways. Its presence in dense patches usually indicates high nutrient levels.

Bank erosion – The wearing away of the banks of a stream or river, as distinct from erosion of the bed.

Bank slumping – When a coherent mass of loosely consolidated materials or rock layers that form part of the riverbank moves a short distance down a slope. Bank slumping is usually associated with bank erosion.

Bankfull flow, fresh – A flow or fresh of sufficient size to reach the top of the riverbank, with little flow spilling onto the floodplain.

Biocultural knowledge – Knowledge that connects people, language, culture and their relationships with their environment. It reflects the interconnected, holistic nature of Indigenous Knowledge and its role in caring for Country.

Biodiversity – The variety of plant and animal species in a particular habitat or environment.

Biofilm – A slimy film of bacteria, other microbes and organic materials that covers underwater surfaces, including rocks and snags.

Blackwater – A natural occurrence caused by the breakdown of organic matter in a waterway, leading to discolouration. Sometimes, the breakdown of organic matter can deplete oxygen in the waterway. When the depletion is severe, the water is called ‘hypoxic blackwater’, and fish and other animals that breathe underwater can die.

Brackish (wetland, herbland) – Water that is moderately salty but not as salty as seawater. It may result from the mixing of seawater with freshwater, as in estuaries.

Carryover – Allows entitlement holders to keep ownership of unused water allocated or purchased from the current season into the following season, according to specified rules.

Catchment management authority (CMA) – A Victorian statutory authority responsible for the integrated planning and coordination of land, water and biodiversity management in a designated catchment and land protection region. Victoria’s CMAs are listed in **section 6.3**.

Cease-to-flow – The period in which there is no discernible flow in a river and partial or total drying of the river channel.

Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH) – The environmental water holder and associated staff that manage water entitlements recovered by the Commonwealth Government through investments in water-saving infrastructure, water purchases and other water recovery programs. The CEWH holds the entitlements.

Community – In the context of this plan, a group of people who live in the same geographical area or have a shared background, interest, affiliation or membership. ‘Community’ is also capitalised when Traditional Owners in submissions for this plan have done so to identify their Aboriginal community as distinct from the general community.

Confluence – The point where a tributary joins a larger river (called the main stem) or where two streams meet to become the source of a river of a new name.

Consumptive water – Water owned by water corporations or private entitlement holders held in storages and actively released to meet domestic, stock, town and irrigation needs.

Country – Aboriginal culture revolves around relationships to the land and water. For Traditional Owners, Country is a part of who they are, just as they are a part of it. Country must be respected. Traditional Owners of Country are authorised to speak for Country and its heritage.

Diadromous fish – Fish that migrate between freshwater and saltwater to complete specific parts of their life cycle.

Drawdown – Water released or allowed to evaporate from a dam, reservoir or wetland to lower the water level. Drawdowns in storages are usually carried out for operational or maintenance purposes and may be conducted in wetlands to support specific environmental outcomes.

Ecological vegetation class – A standard unit for classifying vegetation types in Victoria based on floristic, structural and environmental features.

Environmental DNA (eDNA) – is genetic material shed by organisms into their environment, found in water, sediment, soil, or air. eDNA monitoring involves collecting environmental samples and analysing the extracted DNA against reference libraries to identify which species are or have been present. This method is valuable because it enables detection without direct observation or capture, and can be repeated frequently at relatively low cost.

En route (water) – Water that has been released from a storage and is moving downstream to meet an urban, irrigation or operational need.

Entitlement (to water) – The right to a volume of water that can usually be stored in a reservoir and taken and used under specific conditions, and the right to receive allocation water, depending on resource availability.

Environmental flows study – A scientific study of the flow requirements of a particular river and/or wetland system used to inform decisions about managing and allocating water resources.

Environmental objective – A measurable environmental outcome sought from deliberate management actions (such as the delivery of water for the environment) in a particular system. Achieving an environmental objective may take years or even decades.

Environmental water – Water available under environmental entitlements that is actively managed to maintain the health of rivers and wetlands.

Environmental watering – The active delivery of environmental water to support particular environmental objectives by altering the flow in a river or the water level in a wetland.

Environmental water entitlement – A legal right to take and use water to maintain the Environmental Water Reserve or improve a water ecosystem's environmental values and health. It covers an environmental entitlement, an environmental bulk entitlement, a water share and a section 51 or take and use licence or supply agreement.

Environmental water management plan – A plan developed by a waterway manager setting long-term environmental objectives and the necessary water regime to support those objectives.

Environmental watering program – The overarching Victorian program for planning and delivering water for the environment, and involving all program partners.

Estuary – A partially enclosed body of water along the coast where freshwater from rivers and streams meets and mixes with saltwater from the sea.

Expected watering effect – A physical, chemical, biological or behavioural effect expected from a potential watering action. Each potential action will have one or more expected watering effects.

Fishway – A structure built to enable fish to travel past an artificial obstruction like a dam or weir.

Fledging – The stage at which a young bird grows feathers, becomes independent and can fly and leave its nest.

Flow component – A component of a river system's flow regime that can be described by its size, timing, frequency and length, for example, cease-to-flow and overbank flow.

Fresh – A small increase in the size of a flow over a short length of time within a river. A fresh can occur in any season and usually lasts from several days to a few weeks.

Geomorphology – The scientific study of landforms and the processes that shape them.

Gigalitre (GL) – One billion litres of water or a thousand megalitres.

Groundwater – Water held underground in the soil or in pores and crevices in rock.

Headwater – A tributary stream of a river close to or forming part of its source.

Headworks – A collection of water storage infrastructure (such as reservoirs, diversion weirs and channels) that supports the harvest and distribution of water within one or more catchment regions.

Held environmental water – A component of the Environmental Water Reserve that is 'held' in storage to allow water holders to plan for its use and delivery, as opposed to a component of the Environmental Water Reserve that is not held in storage (such as passing flows and unregulated flows).

Heritage river – A river listed under the *Heritage Rivers Act 1992* and part of a river and river catchment area in Victoria with significant nature conservation, recreation, scenic or cultural heritage attributes.

High-reliability (allocation, water shares) – A legally recognised, secure entitlement to a defined share of water. Water shares are classified by their reliability, defined by how often full seasonal allocations are expected to be available. Allocations are made to high-reliability water shares before low-reliability shares.

Hydrology – The study of the properties of water and its movement in relation to land.

Inter-valley transfer – The transfer of water between river systems to meet demands due to water trade between river systems.

Irrigation release – The release of water for irrigation purposes.

Juvenile – A stage of life at which an animal or plant is not yet fully mature.

Land manager – An agency or authority responsible for conserving natural and cultural heritage on public land, including parks and reserves (such as Parks Victoria and DEECA).

Low flow – A relatively stable, sustained flow in a river, generally being its minimum natural level for that season.

Managed release – A deliberate release of stored water for the environment to deliver a potential watering action and associated environmental outcomes.

Megalitre (ML) – One million litres of water.

Midden – A site of cultural significance where Aboriginal people left the remains of their meals and other domestic waste.

Millennium Drought – The Millennium Drought of 1997 to 2009 was the most severe drought experienced in Victoria since European settlement. The drought broke in 2010, the fifth-wettest year on record, and severe flooding occurred in the summer of 2010-11.

Operational (release, delivery, flow) – A release of water from a storage to support the operation of the water distribution system or make water available to consumptive water users.

Overbank (flow, flood) – A flow event that exceeds the capacity of the river channel and inundates neighbouring floodplains.

Passing flow – A release of water from a storage to operate a river and distribution system, often to help deliver water for environmental or consumptive uses, maintain environmental values and provide other community benefits. Inflows to the storage generally determine the volume of a passing flow.

Potential watering action – An environmental flow component identified for a particular system in a particular year.

Program partner – An organisation responsible for delivering part of the environmental watering program. The VEWH's program partners include Victoria's waterway managers (catchment management authorities and Melbourne Water), Traditional Owner groups, DEECA, other environmental water holders, storage managers and land managers.

Pulse – Water released to increase the size of a flow for a short length of time, usually to cue an environmental response like triggering the movement of fish.

Ramsar-listed (site) – A site (such as a wetland) listed as internationally significant under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971.

Reach – A section of a river, generally defined in an environmental flows study.

Recreational values – The objectives and benefits that recreational users and community members associate with using waterways for recreational activities. They include wellbeing and enjoyment derived from social interaction, physical activity and relaxation associated with activities like sporting events, fishing, waterskiing, rowing, paddling, camping, walking and gathering with friends and family.

Recruitment – The process by which individuals are added to a population, such as when plants and animals mature from their early life stages to breeding ages.

Regional catchment strategy – A long-term environmental strategy for a catchment management region developed to guide the collective efforts of government, organisations and communities to protect and improve the health of the land, water and biodiversity resources. Catchment management authorities lead the development of these strategies, but the planning belongs to the community.

Regional waterway strategy – An eight-year strategy prepared by a waterway manager for the rivers, wetlands and estuaries in its catchment. It is the single regional planning document for waterways in the area.

Remnant vegetation – Patches of native trees, shrubs and grasses remaining after disturbance (such as by land clearing).

Return flow – The part of a delivery of water for the environment that flows back into the river channel or out of the end of a river system and is available for use further downstream. Return flows may be captured and stored for later reuse, but they are more commonly used as the water moves downstream.

Riffle – A shallow section of a stream where water flows at a higher velocity, turbulence increases and the surface is disturbed.

Seasonal watering plan – The VEWH's annual operational document describing potential actions to deliver water for the environment across Victoria in the coming water year.

Seasonal watering proposal – An annual proposal outlining priorities for using water for the environment in each water year that a waterway manager, Traditional Owner group or a partnership between the two submits to the VEWH to consider for the seasonal watering plan.

Seasonal watering statement – A statement by the VEWH to allow a CMA or Melbourne Water to apply water from specific environmental entitlements to deliver the watering actions specified in the seasonal watering plan.

Self-determination – The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples defines self-determination as the ability of Indigenous peoples to freely determine their political status and to pursue economic, social, and cultural equity based on their values and way of life. This means that Traditional Owners have the right to make choices that best reflect their journey toward self-determination and self-governance.

Shared benefits – Benefits achieved when water is managed primarily to meet the needs of the entitlement holder, but secondary environmental, cultural, recreation or social benefits are also provided without requiring additional water.

Slackwater habitat – An area of a river or stream with little or no current. The area may be immediately downstream of an obstruction like a rock or at the margins of the channel, and it is often an important place for waterbugs, fish larvae and small-bodied fish.

Social and recreational values and uses – see Recreational values.

Spawning – The process of fish releasing eggs and sperm to reproduce.

Stakeholder – An organisation, group or individual with an interest in the environmental watering program. Program partners engage with stakeholders when planning or delivering water for the environment or reporting on watering outcomes.

Storage manager – An authority appointed by the Minister for Water to operate major water storages in a river basin to deliver water to entitlement holders.

Streamside vegetation – Plants that grow along the banks of waterways, in the zone between the waterway and the land next to it. Streamside vegetation is often referred to in technical terms as riparian vegetation or the riparian zone.

Terrestrial – Land-based.

The Living Murray program – The intergovernmental program that holds an average of 500,000 ML of water for the environment each year to use at six iconic sites along the Murray River.

Tier 1 – Potential environmental watering actions that can be achieved with the predicted supply (including actions expected to occur without managed environmental water releases) and are required in the coming year to achieve the stated environmental objectives, given the expected conditions of each scenario.

Tier 2 – Potential environmental watering actions that might be delivered if opportunities arise. These actions can and should be delivered if more water becomes available through increased allocation, water trade or transfers or if Tier 1 actions are achieved with less environmental water than expected.

Trade – see Water trading

Traditional Ecological Knowledge – the cumulative body of knowledge, practice and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including people) with one another and with their environment.

Traditional Owners – People who, through membership of a descent group or clan, are responsible for caring for particular Country. A Traditional Owner is authorised to speak for Country and its heritage.

Tributary – A smaller river or creek that flows into a larger river.

Unregulated (entitlement) – An entitlement to water declared during periods of unregulated flow in a river system, usually when high rainfall causes river flow to exceed consumptive and system storage demands.

Unregulated flow – A natural streamflow that cannot be captured in a major reservoir or storage.

Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEWH) – The independent statutory body responsible for holding and managing Victorian water for the environment entitlements and allocations.

Water Act 1989 – The legislation that governs water entitlements and establishes how Victoria's water resources are managed.

Water allocation – See Allocation (of water).

Waterbug – An aquatic animal without a backbone that can be seen with the naked eye. Worms, snails, mites, bugs, beetles, dragonfly larvae, shrimps and freshwater crayfish are all referred to as waterbugs.

Water for the environment – Water available for environmental purposes, including entitlements held by the VEWH, passing flows and unregulated flows.

Water trading – The process of buying, selling or exchanging rights to water. A water trade can be a permanent transfer of ownership of a water entitlement or the trade of annual allocation water. The Minister for Water sets rules for water trading in Victoria. The term 'trade' in the seasonal watering plan refers to the purchase, sale or transfer of annual allocation water.

Water year – The twelve-month period from 1 July to 30 June used for allocating, managing and reporting the use of water entitlements.

Waterway manager – The agency or authority (regional CMAs or Melbourne Water) responsible for the environmental management of a catchment or waterway.

Waterway – A river, wetland, creek, floodplain, estuary or other body of water.

6.3 Contact details

For further information about the *Seasonal Watering Plan 2026-27*, please contact the VEWH.

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