



## Environment Report Consultation Plan

Nyah, Vinifera and Burra Creek Floodplain Restoration Projects

July 2021



**VICTORIAN MURRAY FLOODPLAIN  
RESTORATION PROJECT**

HEALTHY LANDSCAPES, STRONG COMMUNITIES

# Contents

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- 1. Introduction .....1
- 2. Why do we need these projects? .....5
- 3. Planned works .....8
- 4. Engagement approach ..... 10
- 5. Stakeholder identification ..... 12
- 6. Consultation to date ..... 16
- 7. Engagement tools and schedule of activities ..... 19
- 8. Recording, monitoring and reporting ..... 24
- 9. More information ..... 26
- Appendix 1: Detailed maps ..... 27
- Appendix 2: Detailed list of stakeholders ..... 30
- Appendix 3: Project factsheet ..... 34

**EES Consultation Plan – Nyah, Vinifera and Burra Creek Floodplain Restoration Projects**  
Authorised and published by the Victorian Murray Floodplain Restoration Project (VMFRP)  
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July 2021  
  
Cover photo: Nyah-Vinifera National Park (Source: Mallee Catchment Management Authority)

# Acknowledgment of Country

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The Victorian Murray Floodplain Restoration Project (VMFRP) acknowledges and respects Traditional Owners, Aboriginal communities and organisations. We recognise the diversity of their cultures and the deep connections they have with lands and waters.

We value our relationships with Traditional Owners, Aboriginal communities and organisations for the health of People and Country.

VMFRP management and staff pay their respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and recognise the primacy of Traditional Owners' obligations, rights and responsibilities to use and care for their traditional lands and waters.

# 1. Introduction

## Purpose of this document

This plan outlines the consultation program and communication and engagement activities that will be delivered as part of the Environment Report (ER) and draft planning scheme amendment (PSA) processes for the proposed works to restore the Murray River floodplains at Nyah and Vinifera Park and Burra Creek under the Victorian Murray Floodplain Restoration Project (VMFRP).

It establishes the overarching principles, objectives and approach to engaging with stakeholders, Traditional Owners and the community as the VMFRP moves through the planning and approvals phase for the Nyah, Vinifera and Burra Creek floodplain restoration projects.

This plan may be modified and updated as the ER process progresses to respond to emerging issues, engagement opportunities, or community preferences. It is supported by an [addendum with a more detailed schedule of planned engagement activities](#).

## Consultation plan objectives

The VMFRP is committed to:

- informing stakeholders, Traditional Owners and local communities about the proposed project and program of environmental studies
- encouraging participation and providing opportunities for local communities, Traditional Owners and stakeholders to be involved in the ER process
- communicating in a timely, clear, accessible and easily understandable manner
- showing how community and stakeholder concerns have been considered in the project and environmental reporting.

## Background

The VMFRP aims to reconnect 14,000 hectares of wetlands and floodplains to the Murray River at nine priority sites in northern Victoria.

The planned works include removing blockages that stop water flowing into creeks and implementing options to manage water effectively and efficiently on these floodplains. This water will bring new life and help these ecologically significant floodplains survive and cope with climate change and future dry conditions, so they can continue to be enjoyed by future generations.

This project is part of Victoria's obligations under the Murray–Darling Basin Plan. It will bring substantial financial investment into the region, creating jobs, attracting tourism and helping local economies, without requiring further water buybacks.

The VMFRP is being implemented through a partnership between:

- Lower Murray Water (the project proponent)
- Goulburn-Murray Water
- Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA)
- North Central Catchment Management Authority
- Parks Victoria

- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).

## Assessing projects for environmental impacts

The VMFRP is targeting nine floodplain sites for restoration, including Nyah, Vinifera and Burra Creek.

In December 2020, the Victorian Minister for Planning an Environment Effects Statement (EES) was not required for the two projects, subject to conditions being met. The Minister's decision requires the VMFRP to prepare an ER (in lieu of an EES) under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* to assess and manage specific potentially significant environmental effects of the Nyah, Vinifera and Burra Creek projects. The reasons for this decision and decisions on the other six projects can be found on the [DELWP Planning website](#).

### Assessment scope

The core scope of the ER is included within the conditions set by the Minister in [his decision on the environment assessment referrals](#). DELWP will prepare a scoping document to help specify these matters needing to be investigated and documented by the proponent in the ER and supporting technical studies.

Investigations will be undertaken to further understand the expected ecological benefits and impacts, potential effects to Aboriginal cultural heritage, potential effects to hydrogeology and groundwater quality, possible project design alternatives, potential for cumulative impacts of these projects and other VMFRP projects and how any potential impacts from constructing and operating the proposed infrastructure will be managed.

Scoping documents will be published on the DELWP Planning website when released in mid-2021 at [planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/browse-projects/projects/nyah-vinifera-and-burra-creek-floodplain-restoration-projects](http://planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/browse-projects/projects/nyah-vinifera-and-burra-creek-floodplain-restoration-projects).

### Public exhibition and finalisation of the ER

Once the ER is prepared and DELWP is satisfied that it meets the requirements of the relevant ER scoping document, the ER and the draft PSAs will be made available for public comment.

An Advisory Committee will consider the ER, draft PSAs and public submissions received, and will then prepare a report for the Minister for Planning.

A revised ER (or addendum to the ER, if requested) will then be prepared and submitted to DELWP.

At the conclusion of the ER process, the Minister for Planning's assessment report is prepared which is then considered by relevant decision makers.

### EPBC assessment

The Commonwealth Minister for the Environment also determined that the project requires assessment and approval under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). Under a bilateral agreement between the Commonwealth and Victoria, the EPBC Impact Assessment will be integrated into the EES process. The Commonwealth Minister or delegate will decide whether the project is approved, approved with conditions or refused under the EPBC Act, after having considered the Minister for Planning's assessment under the EE Act.



## Consultation under the EE Act

The EES process requires the VMFRP to prepare and implement a public consultation plan to provide the framework for consultation during preparation of an EES. This plan also provides the framework for consultation on the draft PSA given that the two processes will run in tandem.

While the preparation of a consultation plan is not specifically required for the statutory ER process, the VMFRP has chosen to prepare a consultation plan (this plan) for the Nyah, Vinifera and Burra Creek projects to reflect a consistent level of consultation and investigation across all nine projects and to align with key stages of investigation.

As part of the ER and draft PSA development, the VMFRP will document the current ecological, social, commercial, recreational, cultural and landscape values, as well as the adequacy of mitigation measures for negative environmental impacts.

During this period, stakeholders and the community will be provided with project and ER updates and opportunities to provide feedback on expected benefits, project design, predicted effects on environmental values, cultural heritage and the PSA process.

This builds on the engagement that has already taken place throughout the life of these projects and in the lead-up to the ER process. This engagement will continue beyond the environment assessment process into the construction and operation phases.

*Section 7: Engagement tools and schedule of activities* outlines the key ER stages and consultation activities planned. Other opportunities for involvement will be further defined during project delivery.

Community and stakeholder feedback will be considered by specialists completing the ER investigations and in ongoing refinement of the project design.

## Planning Scheme Amendment

The projects at Nyah, Vinifera and Burra Creek require planning approval under the Swan Hill Rural City Planning Scheme in accordance with the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. Planning approval can occur via planning permits under the local planning scheme or changes to the planning scheme known as a planning scheme amendment (PSA).

The VMFRP intends to make a request to the Minister for Planning under section 20(4) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* to prepare, adopt and approve a PSA, without notice, to enable the projects to proceed without the need for further planning approval. A draft PSA will be prepared and exhibited with the ER, giving the community and stakeholders a formal opportunity to give feedback on the draft PSA and PSA process.

Stakeholders will have other informal opportunities to give feedback leading up to the exhibition, as listed in *Section 7: Engagement tools and schedule of activities*.

In order to support the request, a report will be prepared detailing the consultation that has occurred on the draft PSA and proposed PSA process.

The report will outline:

- the extent and type of notification
- a summary of key issues raised by submitters
- VMFRP's response to these issues, whether the issues have been satisfactorily addressed by the PSA or are outside the scope of the PSA.

## Cultural heritage assessments

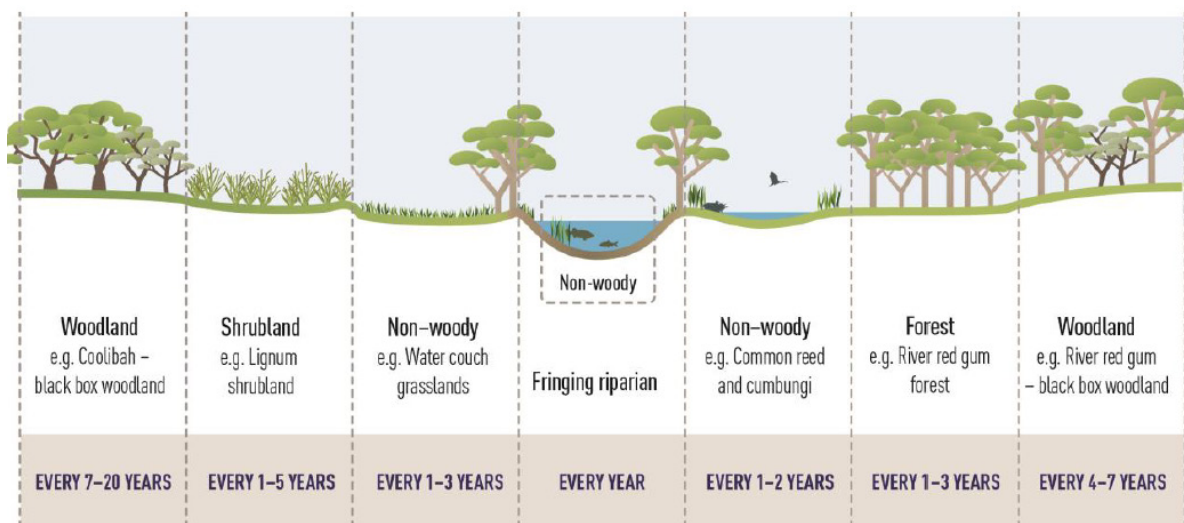
Separate to the ER and EES processes, a Cultural Heritage Management Plan is being prepared for each of the nine VMFRP sites. These plans assess the potential impact of projects on Aboriginal cultural heritage, and outline measures to be taken before, during and after construction to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage.

As part of this process, relevant Traditional Owners have been and will continue to be engaged to ensure significant sites, practices and places of Aboriginal cultural heritage are identified and protected.

## 2. Why do we need these projects?

The floodplains next to the Murray River have evolved to periodically receive water. Historically, the river would spill onto the floodplains as often as 8 out of every 10 years, creating rich, lush landscapes teeming with life.

As our towns, cities, agriculture and industries have grown over time, we have changed the way the river flows to suit our purposes by using weirs and dams. While this has benefited regional communities and economies, water no longer flows naturally as it once did, and the Murray River can no longer water these floodplains often enough to keep them healthy. Figure 1 shows a natural flooding regime and the types of vegetation that benefit from wet and dry cycles at different levels of the floodplain.



**Figure 1: Stylised example of structural groups of vegetation, their position on the floodplain and their watering frequency (source: Murray–Darling Basin Authority, 2014)**

The condition of forests and woodlands of the Murray River floodplains has been declining rapidly over the past two decades. Many of the river red gum and black box communities are stressed, particularly those further away from the river channel, permanent anabranches, creeks and wetlands.

River red gums are often referred to as the ‘ecological engineer’ of the floodplain – everything relies on them to maintain health. The canopy provides a home for bats and birds, fallen limbs provide habitat for snakes and small creatures, and fallen leaves add nutrients to the water. When the river red gums are struggling because they are not receiving water often enough, it indicates that the floodplain is at risk.

The VMFRP aims to return a more natural flooding regime across more than 14,000 hectares of high ecological value Murray River floodplain by removing blockages that stop floodwater flowing into creeks and building infrastructure like flow regulators, channels and containment banks to water the floodplain and hold water there for longer.



This water will bring new life by improving the condition of vegetation communities and providing habitat for native species like fish, birds, frogs and turtles. It will help the floodplains to survive and cope with climate change, future dry conditions and drought, so they can continue to be enjoyed by future generations. Figure 2 shows the difference this water can make.



**Figure 2: Photo point monitoring shows river red gum tree condition improvement as a result of environmental watering at Nyah (Above left: 2010; Above right: 2012) (Source: Mallee CMA)**

## Project benefits

The project will restore the condition of the landscape, protecting threatened vegetation and the ecological and cultural values of the site through improved water quality, flows and inundation.

### Healthier floodplains are good for:

#### **Local wildlife**

Lots of species rely on floodplains for food, habitat and breeding, from microscopic creatures to frogs, fish, birds, bats and other mammals.

We expect to see stable frog and fish populations, improved productivity of wetlands, improved breeding habitat for waterbirds and restoration of populations of species such as the carpet python and the Giles Planigale.

#### **Vegetation**

Flooding brings vegetation back to life, creating habitat, foraging and food for floodplain creatures.

Some flood dependent species like river red gums and black box trees rely on the bigger floods that used to happen every ten years. Animals such as bats and birds nest in the hollows of these trees.

#### **Traditional Owners**

Traditional Owners have cultural, spiritual, and economic connections to land, water and resources through their relationship with Country, having managed land and water sustainably over thousands of generations.

#### **Local communities and visitors**

Healthy floodplains are beautiful places to visit and are great for recreation like boating, fishing, birdwatching, hiking, kayaking and camping.

#### **Local economies**

Projects will bring substantial financial investment into the region, creating jobs and helping local economies. Improving the health and condition of riverine landscapes can also help attract visitors to the region.

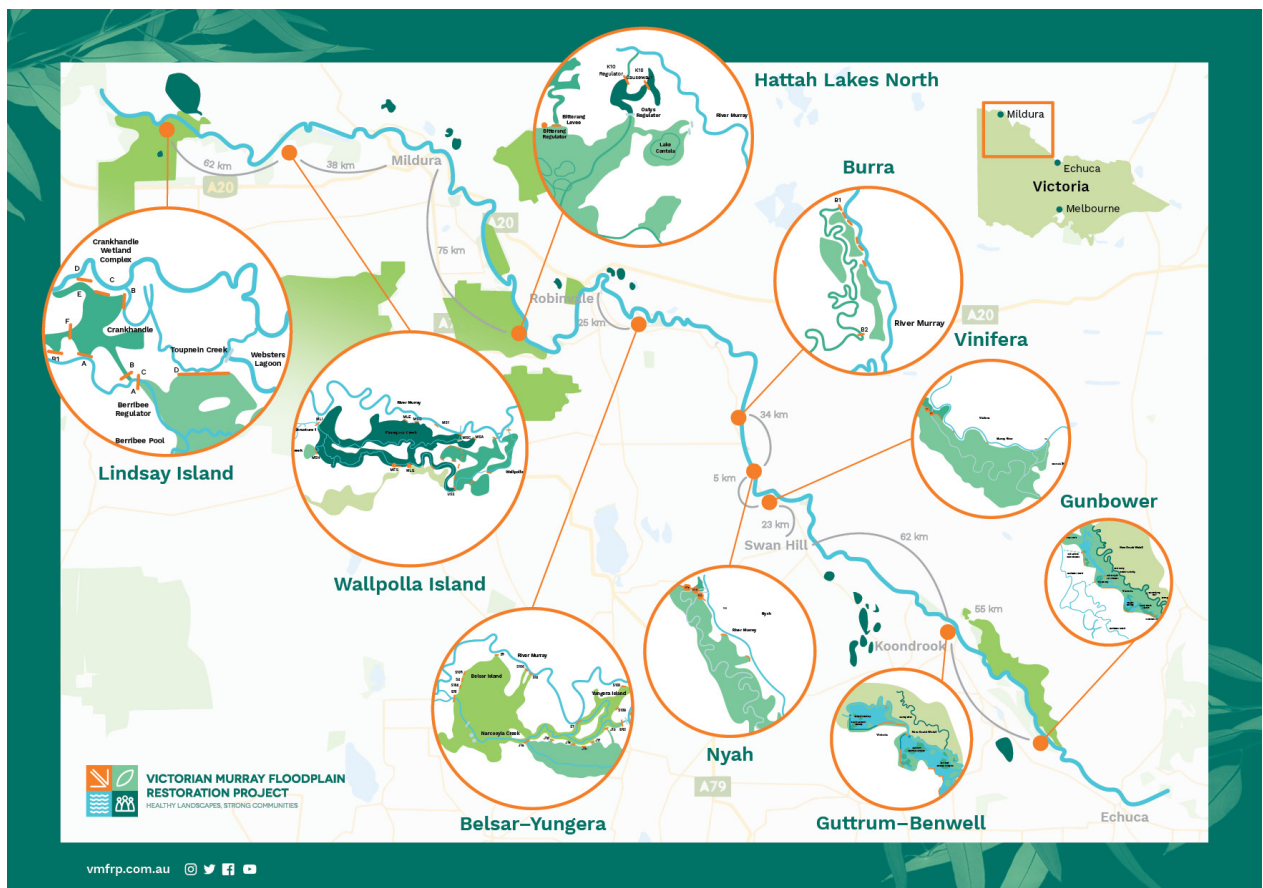
### 3. Planned works

Projects are located northwest of Swan Hill in the northwest region of Victoria.

Nyah and Vinifera are located in the Nyah-Vinifera (Regional) Park, which is managed by Parks Victoria.

Burra Creek is located 34 km upstream of Nyah, between the rural localities of Piangil and Kenley.

Figure 3 shows the VMFRP site locations. More detailed maps can be found in Appendix 1.



**Figure 3: Map of the nine VMFRP sites**

#### Planned works at Nyah

Nyah is a low-lying floodplain area that, under a natural flow regime, was reliably inundated every year from the Murray River and much of this area remained flooded throughout the year.

The Nyah floodplain has an area of 913 hectares of wetland, forest and woodland areas, extending across the Murray Valley Highway to the west, from the township of Wood Wood in the north to the township of Nyah in the south.

The project involves works to support inundation of 488 hectares of regionally and internationally significant floodplain. The main components (five regulators, a series of containment banks, block banks, overflow sills and hardstand) are located near the downstream river connection of Parnee Malloo Creek.

## Planned works at Vinifera

Vinifera floodplain forms an elongate basin aligned parallel to the Murray River. Like Nyah, Vinifera is a low-lying floodplain area that was reliably inundated every spring under natural (without regulation) flow conditions.

The project involves the construction of four regulators, a containment bank and a drop structure to facilitate managed inundation at the Vinifera floodplain. The proposed works would allow flooding of about 350 hectares of floodplain, including river red gum and black box forests and woodlands.

## Planned works at Burra Creek

The work at Burra will restore the connection between the river, creek, wetlands and floodplain by removing two artificial blockages and building three flow regulators and a containment bank.

The aim is to restore a more natural flooding regime and improve ecological condition across about 330 hectares of high ecological value Murray River floodplain at Burra North and a further 73 hectares of anabranch habitats at Burra South.

Floodplain areas at Burra North are largely unmodified and comprise wetlands, forest and woodland. Floodplain areas at Burra South are mainly developed for grazing, irrigated agriculture and dryland agriculture.

## 4. Engagement approach

We need a mix of consultation methods to effectively engage with the spectrum of stakeholders interested in the EES process for these two projects.

The project will promote all engagement activities and provide up-to-date information about the process, so that stakeholders and communities can easily and meaningfully have their say.

A **stakeholder** refers to an individual, group or organisation with a stake or interest in the outcome of a decision. Stakeholders may also have the ability to influence the decision given their role or position.

**Community**, for the purpose of this project, refers to a group of people that has something in common such as identity, behaviours, interests or values. A community often share a sense of place in a given geographical area (e.g. a country, city, town or neighbourhood) or in virtual space through communication platforms.

This Plan acknowledges that groups or individuals may fall across all categories.

### IAP2 Spectrum

We will use the [International Association for Public Participation – IAP2 International spectrum](#) to guide how the community and stakeholders will be engaged during the project planning and approval process. The IAP2 Spectrum is an internationally recognised tool for planning public participation in major projects.

The IAP2 Spectrum will allow us to tailor our approach depending on the different stakeholder groups and their needs. While the full spectrum goes from Inform to Empower, the EES consultation is focused on the first three engagement categories listed in Table 1.

**Table 1: IAP2 Spectrum (inform to involve only)**

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE
<b>Goal</b>	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.
<b>Promise</b>	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will see your feedback on draft proposals.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.

## Consultation and engagement principles

We are committed to meaningful, inclusive and transparent engagement at all times. Our work is informed by the engagement principles in the best practice guidelines in the Victorian Government’s Public Engagement Framework (see Table 2).

Our approach also aligns with the Community Engagement and Partnerships Framework for Victoria’s Catchment Management Authorities, and reflects the intent of the principles to be applied in environmental watering outlined in the Murray–Darling Basin Plan, specifically Principle 7, which states that environmental watering should be undertaken with regard to the view of the local communities and persons materially affected by the management of environmental water.

**Table 2: Engagement principles**

Principles	
Meaningful	Meaningful communication and engagement involves clearly articulating the purpose and objectives, as well as developing a shared understanding of the negotiables and non-negotiables.
Inclusive	Communication and engagement must be inclusive and accessible, both in terms of language and design/delivery. This is a proactive approach to considering and overcoming barriers to understanding and engagement. Asking an individual or group in how they would like to participate and designing the process accordingly demonstrates respect.
Transparent	This means sharing information about the project, its background and rationale. It also means explaining why elements are non-negotiable (cannot be influenced), and why other elements are negotiable (can be influenced) from the outset.
Informed	This principle is particularly relevant to communication. Stakeholders need to receive relevant, tailored and timely information about the projects. They also need to understand their role in the decision-making process, where this is relevant. Community members need to be informed of the opportunities to take part in engagement. They need to understand how their contributions will be considered.
Accountable	This involves addressing concerns/requests; discussing how stakeholder input has affected/or did not affect a decision. This is known as ‘closing the loop’.
Valuable	Value is delivered through the appropriate and efficient use of resources. Value also includes building social licence with the community and reducing financial and reputational risks to government.  Value also applies to participants and their time – community members should always be treated respectfully.



## 5. Stakeholder identification

We have many stakeholder groups with diverse needs and interests as listed in Table 3. Our engagement approach will be tailored to each group based on the IAP2 categorisation in Table 1. A more in-depth list of stakeholders is included in Appendix 2.

We recognise that stakeholder relationships are dynamic, and interest and involvement can ebb and flow across project stages. Our stakeholder list may also expand over the course of the EES and PSA process as awareness grows and to reflect the evolving issues landscape.

The six VMFRP partners work together to deliver these projects and meet monthly through a Project Control Group. Since the projects started in 2010, a stakeholder consultation database has been developed and now contains more than 500 contacts across all nine sites.

Engagement specialists across all project partners organisations were involved in the stakeholder analysis.

The Burra Creek project is located almost entirely in the Rural City of Swan Hill, with the exception of a small portion of the construction footprint associated with the drop structure, which extends down the bank of the Murray River into NSW and the local government jurisdiction of the Murray River Council.

Nyah-Vinifera is located almost entirely in the Rural City of Swan Hill, with the exception of the upgrading of the outfall, which would extend into the banks and bed of the river within the border of NSW

**Table 3: VMFRP stakeholder groups**

IAP2 engagement approach	Group	Needs and interests
Involve	Traditional Owners	Ongoing connection to Country and protection of cultural heritage and values. Environmental impacts and benefits. Basin Plan implementation. Involvement of Traditional Owners in decision-making roles.
	Australian Government	Delivering the Murray–Darling Basin Plan, which includes the nine Victorian floodplain restoration projects. Environmental impacts and benefits (EPBC approvals).
	State government	Cultural heritage, environmental impacts, ER planning approvals. Alignment with NSW watering schedules.
	Local government	Planning scheme amendments, construction impacts, environmental impacts and benefits, tourism impacts and opportunities.
	Aboriginal community/groups	Ongoing connection to Country and protection of cultural heritage and values.
	Landholders – directly affected (need landholder agreements)*	Access to property during construction and/or operation, or impact of water on property during operation. Land dealings, consumptive water use/access, construction impacts – traffic, dust, noise. Environmental impacts and benefits.

IAP2 engagement approach	Group	Needs and interests
Consult	Landholders – adjacent and other (no landholder agreement needed)*	Consumptive water use/access, construction impacts – traffic, dust, noise. Environmental impacts and benefits.
	Research community and natural resource management practitioners	Floodplain health, biodiversity and use of environmental water, environmental impacts and benefits, Basin Plan implementation, preserving cultural heritage.
	Consumptive water users	Consumptive water use/access, environmental impacts and benefits, environmental water allocation.
	Recreational groups	Access to parks and river during construction and operation, visual impact of infrastructure on landscape, preservation of the landscape and ongoing tourism opportunities.
	Environmental groups	Impacts and benefits at project sites including ecological, flora and fauna, surface water, groundwater and hydrology, and landscape. Basin Plan implementation.
	Commercial users of parks and waterways	Access to parks and river during construction and operation, visitor experience and tourism. Preservation of the landscape.
	Peak bodies	Economic, tourism and recreation benefits.
Inform	Local businesses	Economic, tourism and recreation benefits.
	Park visitors / seasonal communities	Access to parks and river during construction and operation. Visitor experience and access to amenities. Preservation of park landscapes.
	Local residents	Project benefits and impacts on local communities, access to parks and river during construction and operation.
	Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities	Project benefits and impacts on local communities.
	Media	Across issues that interest the local community.

\* Directly affected landholders are landholders that will experience impacts on their land during construction and/or operation. These landholders will need agreements, for example, tenure for access, borrow pits, inundation and flood easements. Adjacent landholders may be affected due to proximity to the works, but it will not directly impact their land and no landholder agreement is required.

## Technical Reference Group

DELWP has convened an interagency Technical Reference Group (TRG) to advise the proponent and the department, as appropriate, on scoping and adequacy of the EES studies during the preparation of the EES, as well as coordination with statutory approval processes. TRG representatives are supported by internal experts on specific aspects of the EES studies.

The TRG has been set up to cover the environment assessment process at multiple VMFRP sites, with the following members:

- DELWP – Impact Assessment
- DELWP – Loddon Mallee Region
- Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
- Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions – Earth Resources Regulation
- Department of Transport
- First People – State Relations (formerly known as Aboriginal Victoria)
- Heritage Victoria
- Relevant Registered Aboriginal Parties
- Relevant local councils
- Relevant Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs)
- Parks Victoria
- Lower Murray Water
- Goulburn-Murray Water
- Environment Protection Authority
- NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment

## Community reference group

In late 2019, the VMFRP set up a community reference group to facilitate community, landholder and key stakeholder input into the project. The group has broad representation and members provide feedback to the VMFRP on various aspects of project delivery, particularly in the communications and engagement space and give a diverse local perspective on the project.

## Working with Traditional Owners

Nyah, Vinifera and Burra Creek are located in areas of Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity. Traditional Owners have cultural and spiritual connections to the land, surrounding waters and the plants and animals that live on the floodplains. As part of their culture, their health is intrinsically linked to a healthy landscape.

The ER will include an assessment of cultural heritage, and separate to the ER process, a Cultural Heritage Management Plan is being prepared for each site, as required under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*. These plans assess the potential impact of projects on Aboriginal cultural heritage, and outline measures to be taken before, during and after construction to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage.

The VMFRP is directly engaging with local Traditional Owner groups via face-to-face meetings and site visits in order to:

- ensure each Traditional Owner group understands exactly what is proposed for each site, and to address any concerns prior to the designs being finalised

- better understand the broader Traditional Owner land and aspirations for each site and how the VMFRP can support these through both the project design and the ongoing operations
- determine exactly how each Traditional Owner group would like to be engaged throughout the process
- develop Cultural Heritage Management Plans for each site
- explore how to incorporate Traditional Owner knowledge and science into the environmental assessment process.

The VMFRP will ensure Traditional Owners receive adequate time, appropriate engagement and are able to have meaningful interactions to ensure free, prior and informed consent relating to the project where appropriate.

VMFRP partners have existing relationships with Traditional Owners through their existing work on Country. Where possible, VMFRP will coordinate across the six partners to integrate environmental assessment conversations into their current engagement activities, to avoid consultation fatigue.

## 6. Consultation to date

Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) started working with key stakeholders and interested community groups to develop the concept for the Nyah, Vinifera and Burra floodplain restoration projects as early as 2010.

Business cases for what were then known as the nine Sustainable Diversion Limits (SDL) projects were submitted to the Murray–Darling Basin Authority in late 2014.

Following state and commonwealth approval of the business cases, the VMFRP was proposed as a business model in 2017–18 and engagement began under this model in 2019.

VMFRP communication and engagement activities conducted before the EES process have included:

- more than 200 face-to-face briefing sessions, meetings, presentations, onsite visits and consultations, engaging more than 500 people, which is reflective of the wide range of project stakeholders
- fact sheets, media releases, electronic communication (website, emails, newsletters), brochures and correspondence.

Table 4 outlines the key project milestones with stakeholder engagement to date highlighted.

**Table 4: VMFRP project milestones and consultation to date**

Year	Milestone	Activity
2010	Scope out projects	Mallee CMA and North Central CMA start early planning with support from DELWP.
2013	Basin Plan water-saving projects	Victoria is invited to put forward a package of environmental water projects to be implemented as Sustainable Diversion Limits (SDL) projects under the Murray–Darling Basin Plan.
2014	Develop SDL business cases	SDL business cases developed after extensive consultation with community, Traditional Owners and other stakeholders.
Engagement activities during development of the business cases included briefing sessions, meetings, presentations and field visits, fact sheets, media releases, on-Country visits with Traditional Owners, electronic communication (website, emails, newsletters), brochures and correspondence.		
2017–18	Propose delivery model	Victorian Government prepared a delivery strategy for the nine sites outlining governance, delivery and asset ownership arrangements and proposes to form the VMFRP to deliver works under a partnership model.
2018	Projects incorporated into Basin Plan	36 projects, including the nine VMFRP sites, are incorporated into the Basin Plan.
2019	Form VMFRP	Australian and Victorian governments announced that the nine projects will be delivered as a program of works under the VMFRP. Initial funding of \$29 million provided to start detailed design of the nine projects.
2019–20	Prepare for environmental referrals	VMFRP continued to develop the projects, including preliminary Cultural Heritage Management Plans, fieldwork, engagement, scientific studies and baseline monitoring to prepare for environmental referrals process.
Engagement recommenced in 2019 after funding was received to start the project and has been ongoing since then. Engagement activities to date have included face-to-face engagement, site visits, information sessions, meetings (including a community reference group), phone calls, presentations and project briefings. COVID-19 restricted the format of the engagement activities during 2020. When social distancing restrictions prevented face-to-face engagement, engagement was done online and via phone.		
2020	Submit environmental referrals	Environmental referrals sent to Commonwealth and Victorian governments to get decisions on the assessment process.
2021	Environment assessment process	EES and ER preparation began.

If statutory decision makers decide that the two projects can proceed, construction will start in 2023 with both projects to be operational by mid-2024.



## Issues identification

Stakeholder engagement to date and preliminary technical investigations have helped the VMFRP to understand the existing conditions and key issues for consideration within the project area, as well as stakeholder and landholder concerns. This has helped the VMFRP to develop and refine the project design and alignment.

Table 5 lists the main project concerns raised to date by stakeholders and what the VMFRP is doing to resolve these issues. This list will be continually assessed as the project progresses so that issues can be addressed with the relevant stakeholder groups as needed.

**Table 5 Issues identification and project response**

What we've heard	What we're doing about it
Access to parks and river during construction and operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to parts of the park will be maintained during construction.</li> <li>• All changes to public access during construction will be communicated to the public ahead of time.</li> <li>• Disruption to public access to the parks during operation will be minimised where possible.</li> </ul>
Environmental impacts and benefits and risk of negative environmental impacts such as blackwater and increased salinity, removal of native vegetation and impacts on flora and fauna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VMFRP is carrying out extensive research into the potential environmental impacts during construction and beyond, and how these impacts will be managed. This includes plans for each watering event and plans for monitoring, to reduce the likelihood of adverse environmental outcomes.</li> <li>• VMFRP will expand groundwater and salinity modelling to better understand and mitigate potential impacts. New monitoring bores installed in 2020 to enable collection and use of data to best inform models.</li> <li>• The community will have the opportunity to provide feedback on these studies as part of the EES process.</li> </ul>
Governance structures do not allow for involvement of Traditional Owners in decision-making roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VMFRP is working with Traditional Owners to establish relationships and facilitate meaningful opportunities for input into both project-specific decisions, and future operational decisions (e.g. influencing environmental water deliveries via seasonal watering plans).</li> <li>• VMFRP is engaging on CHMP development. First Peoples – State Relations is the regulatory approver for these CHMPs (formerly Aboriginal Victoria).</li> </ul>
Ongoing connection to Country and protection of cultural heritage and values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensive engagement is under way with Traditional Owners to seek early input and understand landscape values and how the project can support and protect these.</li> <li>• VMFRP is preparing Cultural Heritage Management Plans at all sites with input from Traditional Owners.</li> </ul>
Project benefits and rationale need to be clearly communicated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing targeted communications materials which outline the project benefits and rationale and using various engagement methods to reach different stakeholder groups.</li> <li>• Developing a Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting framework and program which will demonstrate the benefits and how these will be achieved.</li> <li>• Intensive engagement with the community and stakeholders.</li> <li>• Aboriginal Waterway Assessments will be supported to help improve understanding of Traditional Owners' values of each site and how the projects could positively impact these.</li> </ul>
Projects will take water away from irrigators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VMFRP will work closely with landholders to communicate that projects will use existing environmental water entitlements and will protect farmers and irrigators, by improving the environment without need to buy back more water.</li> </ul>

## 7. Engagement tools and schedule of activities

Successful coordination and integration of stakeholder and community engagement, planning and design is critical to the achieving successful project outcomes. We will provide regular updates via email and our website on the outcomes of the engagement, including what feedback has been received and how this feedback has been considered in project planning, design and methodology.

A range of engagement tools and activities will be used to keep people informed about the EES investigations and highlight opportunities for involvement at each stage of the EES process. Feedback will be received in written and verbal form, via digital and traditional channels. All communications will be kept clear, concise and culturally appropriate.

Stakeholder communications will be strategically planned and combined to minimise the risk of consultation fatigue in the community.

### Consultation during COVID-19

If faced with COVID-19 restrictions that prevent face-to-face engagement, all engagement will be delivered online and via phone using alternative methods such as those listed in Table 6.

**Table 6: Consultation during COVID-19 restrictions**

Face-to-face engagement method	Alternative option in the event of COVID-19 restrictions
Meetings	Phone calls and video meetings
Information sessions, briefings and presentations	Webinars and online meetings
Site visits	Virtual site visits using video footage

### Engagement tools

The following illustrates some of the communication and engagement tools and activities that will be used to keep people informed and provide meaningful opportunities or involvement.

#### Project website

The VMFRP website ([www.vmfrp.com.au](http://www.vmfrp.com.au)) provides a central hub of project information and is continually updated with project news. Written materials such as e-updates and printed communication materials and advertising will direct people to the website as a central project resource.

#### Engage Vic portal

DELWP is expected to use the Engage Victoria portal to publicly exhibit the ER and draft PSA for public comment. This gives stakeholders and the community a formal opportunity to have their say on the ER process.

## Community events

VMFRP representatives will attend key community events to promote the projects and get feedback on social values relating to the project sites.

## Community reference groups

A community reference group was set up for Nyah, Vinifera and Burra Creek in late 2019. The group has broad representation from local stakeholders and the community with meetings expected to take place quarterly. Members provide feedback to the VMFRP on various aspects of project delivery and give a local perspective on the project.

## Targeted meetings/workshops

Targeted meetings will be held with stakeholder groups requiring focused and tailored information such as special interest groups, consumer representatives and industry groups, regulators and policymakers and Registered Aboriginal Parties/Traditional Owner Groups. These opportunities allow for targeted conversations on specific interests or issues with technical experts. Meetings and workshops can be held online or face-to-face (where possible), as required.

## Online interactive sessions

Online sessions will be used to give the public project updates and share feedback with key members of the project team and with technical specialists.

## Dedicated project email

A dedicated project email provides a direct contact point for stakeholders and the community to ask key questions and seek support to participate in the EES and PSA process.

## Project e-news

Project e-news will be sent to contacts in the project database and new subscribers that we log via specific engagement sessions or the VMFRP website. Updates will be sent at regular intervals and key project milestones to keep people informed and highlight opportunities to get involved.

## Printed communication materials

Printed materials such as project factsheets, letters and posters will be distributed to key locations and to directly impacted landowners to raise awareness of the project and opportunities to be involved.

## Media and advertising

We will work through key local media outlets, digital channels and social media to provide project updates and raise awareness of opportunities to participate in upcoming engagement. Media and advertising will also seek to investigate opportunities through existing community communication channels where appropriate.

## Hard to reach

Consideration has been given to the following cultural and social factors that may impede the participation of some groups in consultation for the Nyah, Vinifera and Burra floodplain restoration projects. We will use a range of communication approaches to help us communicate more broadly with these groups, as listed in Table 7.

**Table 7: Hard-to-reach stakeholder approach**

Lack of reach	Communication needs	Communication approach
Residents with no internet access	Access to information via non-web-based channels	Send mailouts and printouts to nearby landholders.
Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities	Needs to be determined through engagement with CALD community	Provide tailored information for CALD communities.
Casual park users or visitors from out of the local area	Onsite information	Signage in parks Engage statewide environmental groups to send information onto members outside of the local area. Local tourist information centres will be kept informed of upcoming work.
Workers, such as agricultural workers, who may work outside of standard business hours or be constrained by seasonal activities	Need to access information outside of business hours	Promote online resources such as the VMFRP website as an 'always on' engagement mechanism.

## Landholder engagement

In addition to the public and community stakeholder engagement methods outlined above, targeted one-on-one consultation with directly impacted landowners will continue throughout all project phases. This engagement will focus on face-to-face methods and direct email and phone channels.

## Schedule of activities

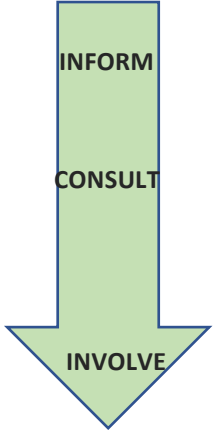
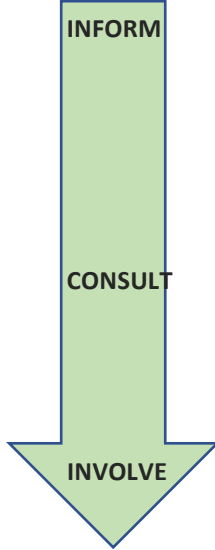
Table 8 lists the engagement and communication methods planned for each stage of the EES and draft PSA process based on the IAP2 Spectrum.

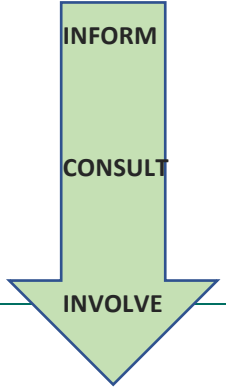
The schedule is focused primarily on the EES process, but it is worth recognising that considerable work has already gone into project planning and engaging with stakeholders and the community on these projects.

After the EES process, if projects are approved to go ahead, the VMFRP will develop and implement a separate communications and engagement plan for the construction phase of the project. We will continue to work with all interested parties to inform them about proposed road, track or park facility closures in a timely and readily available manner to minimise disruption.

This plan is supported by an [addendum with a more detailed schedule of planned engagement activities](#).

**Table 8: Engagement activities (high-level)**

Project phase	Timing	Engagement purpose	Examples of planned activities	Engage level
<p><b>PHASE I</b> <b>Scoping of ER</b></p> <p>Minister for Planning determines that an EES is not required and announces requirement for ER investigations</p>	<p><b>Early to mid-2021</b></p>	<p>Introduce the ER process to run alongside EES. Explain the role stakeholders and communities can play and project timelines (ongoing throughout the ER activity)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish preliminary project and ER information on vmfrp.com.au</li> <li>• Send project updates to registered subscribers and project stakeholders (anyone can subscribe on the VMFRP website) <b>(ongoing throughout ER process)</b></li> <li>• Updates on social media and VMFRP website <b>(ongoing throughout ER process)</b></li> <li>• Advertise key ER stages in the local media (via DELWP)</li> <li>• Email update to stakeholders listed at the 'consult' level</li> <li>• Letter drop to landholders and Traditional Owners</li> <li>• Email and phone enquiries <b>(ongoing throughout ER process)</b></li> <li>• Onsite investigations and cultural heritage assessments <b>(ongoing throughout ER process)</b>.</li> <li>• Contact affected landholders to discuss projects and formal agreements</li> <li>• Improve diversity of the Project Control Group through Aboriginal membership</li> <li>• Seek expressions of interest for Stakeholder Advisory Groups</li> </ul>	
<p><b>PHASE II</b> <b>Preparing the ER</b></p> <p>VMFRP prepares ER including detailed assessments in response to the requirements set out in the Minister's decision. The draft PSA is developed at the same time</p>	<p><b>Mid to late 2021</b></p>	<p>Provide information on the project design, impact assessments, benefits, key design considerations, concepts, constraints and options being considered.</p> <p>Get community feedback to help further refine and shape the project design, inform measures to avoid, mitigate and manage impacts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to update project website with ER information</li> <li>• Signage at parks to inform park visitors</li> <li>• Letter drop to local businesses</li> <li>• Posters and signage for local councils, MP offices, libraries and community notice boards</li> <li>• Continue to produce and publish project materials – FAQ, videos, maps, factsheets, case studies</li> <li>• Media requests/releases</li> <li>• Community reference group meetings</li> <li>• Promote projects at community events</li> <li>• Roadshow at community events to obtain community feedback</li> <li>• Targeted stakeholder site visits and fieldtrips</li> <li>• Briefings and information sessions</li> <li>• Collect and collate feedback from engagement and events</li> <li>• Prepare and share a report on benefits to communities of healthy floodplains</li> <li>• Produce consultation report to show issues raised and how they were addressed by the project</li> <li>• Develop monitoring and evaluation system</li> <li>• Information sessions with environmental and technical specialists</li> </ul>	

Project phase	Timing	Engagement purpose	Examples of planned activities	Engage level
		Identify where consultation and engagement should be modified.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with local government on draft PSA, local impacts and opportunities</li> </ul>	
<b>PHASE III</b> <b>Public review of EES and draft PSA</b> Exhibit ER and draft PSA for public comment.	<b>Early to mid-2022</b>	Release the project design. Present and explain the ER and draft PSA. Explain the next steps in the approvals process.	<b>Continue with activities planned for scope and preparation phase, plus:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publish relevant ER and PSA documents online or provide links</li> <li>Roadshow at community events to obtain community feedback</li> </ul>	
<b>PHASE IV</b> <b>Minister for Planning's Assessment</b>	<b>Mid-2022</b>	Minister for Planning makes a formal assessment based on ER process to inform decision makers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep stakeholders and community informed about assessment status and possible next steps via channels mentioned above such as e-News, website, social media and phone calls</li> <li>Announce Minister's assessment</li> </ul>	



## 8. Recording, monitoring and reporting

### Capturing feedback and closing the loop

VMFRP has a feedback loop process in place to capture all feedback received and to direct it to the relevant section of the project for consideration. When the ER is published for public consultation in 2022, it will include a consultation report which summarises all the issues raised during the ER process and how the project proponent responded, enabling stakeholders to see how their feedback has been addressed.

### Stakeholder management database

VMFRP will maintain a stakeholder management database for the life of the project to retain information relevant to the development of the project. The stakeholder management database, Consultation Manager (CM), will also record enquiries, feedback and complaints raised and details of the relevant response/resolution. CM will be used to record all external communications and stakeholder engagement activities.

### Complaints

VMFRP has established a Complaints Register which is being maintained throughout the life of the Project. The Complaints Register provides a structure for lodging and managing all information in relation to complaints. The VMFRP will register and endeavour to acknowledge it as a complaint within 48 hours of receiving it and provide a timeframe for the follow-up and close-out of any investigation (within 5 business days where possible).

Complaints will be carefully distinguished from adverse project feedback from the community or key stakeholders, or comments given during difficult discussions with owners and occupiers of land – all of which will be recorded in the stakeholder management database and actioned as appropriate.

A complaint may relate to the quality of an action taken, decision made, or service provided by VMFRP or its contractors or a delay or failure in providing a service, taking an action or making a decision by VMFRP or its contractors.

### Media enquiries

All media enquiries are directed to the VMFRP Communications Team responsible for handling media enquiries on behalf of the project.

### Personal information

VMFRP is committed to handling and protecting personal information in accordance with Australian Privacy Principles set out in the *Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988*. Information collected in discussions with landowners will solely be used by VMFRP and its representatives for project purposes.

All other information gathered during the project will be archived securely in accordance with Australian Privacy Principles set out in the *Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988*.

## Measuring engagement

The VMFRP has an engagement evaluation process which will monitor the effectiveness of our engagement approach over time against the key performance indicators listed in Table 9.

We will use this information to progressively improve our consultation activities.

**Table 9: Evaluating our approach**

Objective	How we will measure
Inform stakeholders, Traditional Owners and local communities about the proposed project and program of ER studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number/rate of website visits</li> <li>• Information sent out by letter and email.</li> <li>• Number of participants at events and participant feedback.</li> <li>• Signage installed in parks</li> <li>• Number of media articles and interviews</li> <li>• Number of posters in community areas</li> <li>• Number of email and phone discussions.</li> </ul>
Encourage participation and providing opportunities for local communities, Traditional Owners and stakeholders to be involved in the ER process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website visits and downloads of information documents</li> <li>• Interactions with social media</li> <li>• Number of participants at events and participant feedback.</li> <li>• Feedback from TRG</li> <li>• Number of adverts and media interaction</li> <li>• Number of field trips</li> <li>• Number of meetings/workshops/briefings</li> <li>• Number of working groups</li> <li>• Surveys</li> </ul>
Communicate in a timely, clear, accessible and easily understandable manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of methods used to distribute communications.</li> <li>• Tracking of deliverables against the Consultation Plan</li> </ul>
Show how community and stakeholder concerns have been considered in the project and ER development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring issues/complaints recorded through stakeholder interactions</li> <li>• Demonstrated consideration of community and stakeholder input in project development/decision-making</li> <li>• Final consultation report.</li> <li>• Feedback on how community and stakeholder input was used</li> </ul>

## 9. More information

To learn more about the VMFRP and upcoming consultation activities, visit [vmfrp.com.au](http://vmfrp.com.au).

To find out more about the Nyah, Vinifera and Burra ER process and to read the Minister's decision and original referral documents, visit [www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/browse-projects/projects/nyah-vinifera-and-burra-creek-floodplain-restoration-projects](http://www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/browse-projects/projects/nyah-vinifera-and-burra-creek-floodplain-restoration-projects).

DELWP's planning website also has lots of information on the [EES process](#) and lists [current EES projects](#) including the other VMFRP projects.

Table 10 lists VMFRP's contact information.

**Table 10: Project contact information**

Proponent	Lower Murray Urban and Rural Water Corporation
Project name	Victorian Murray Floodplain Restoration Project (VMFRP)
Office location	PO Box 1438, Mildura VIC 3502
Website	<a href="http://www.vmfrp.com.au">www.vmfrp.com.au</a>
Email	<a href="mailto:Info@vmfrp.vic.gov.au">Info@vmfrp.vic.gov.au</a>
Follow us	<a href="https://twitter.com/vmfrp">twitter.com/vmfrp</a> <a href="https://facebook.com/VMFRP/">facebook.com/VMFRP/</a> <a href="https://instagram.com/vmfrp/">instagram.com/vmfrp/</a> <a href="https://youtube.com/channel/">youtube.com/channel/</a>

### Get involved

Email [info@vmfrp.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@vmfrp.vic.gov.au) to register your interest in the ER consultation process.

## Appendix 1: Detailed maps

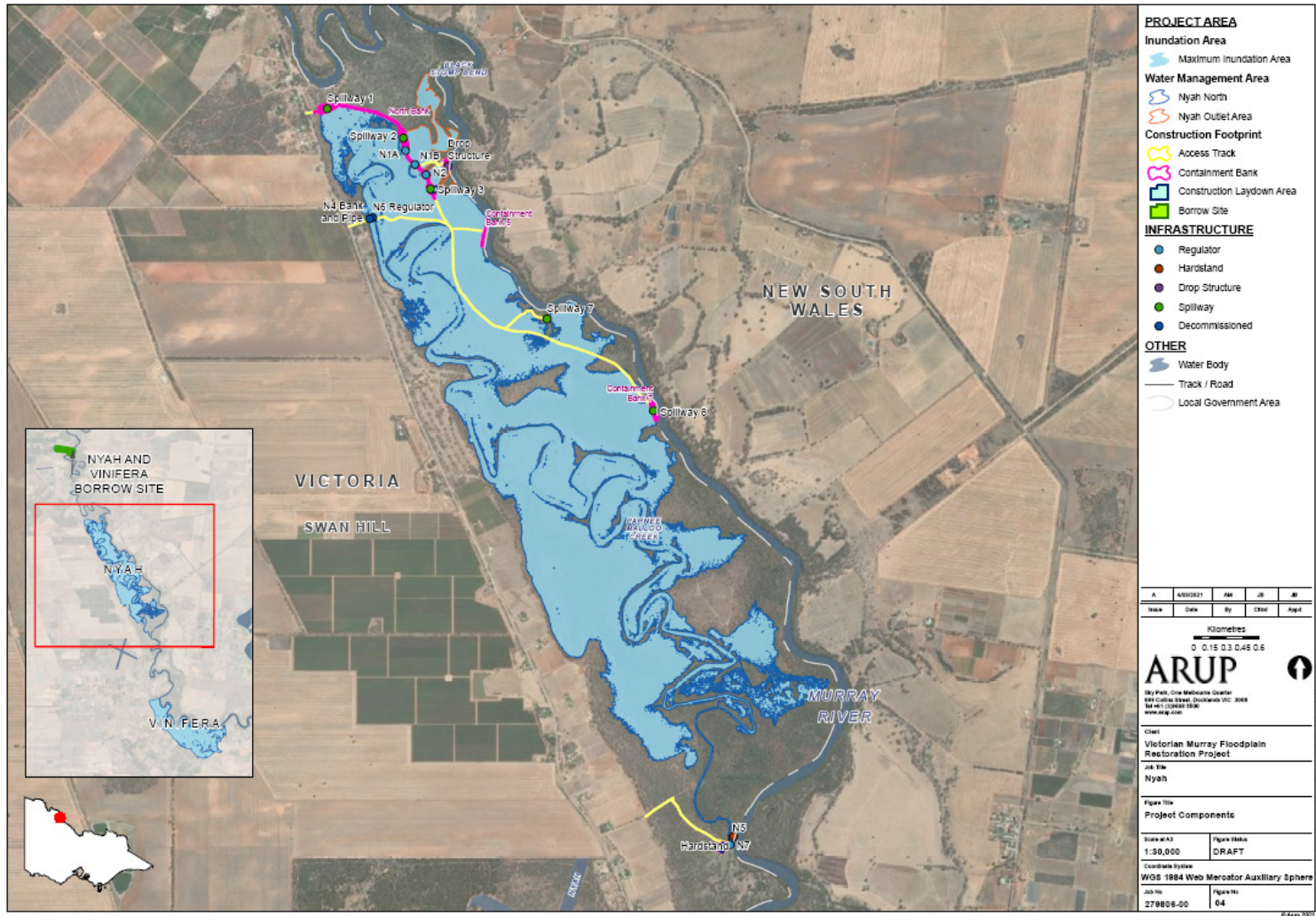


Figure 4: Project area and planned works at Nyah Park (Source: ARUP)



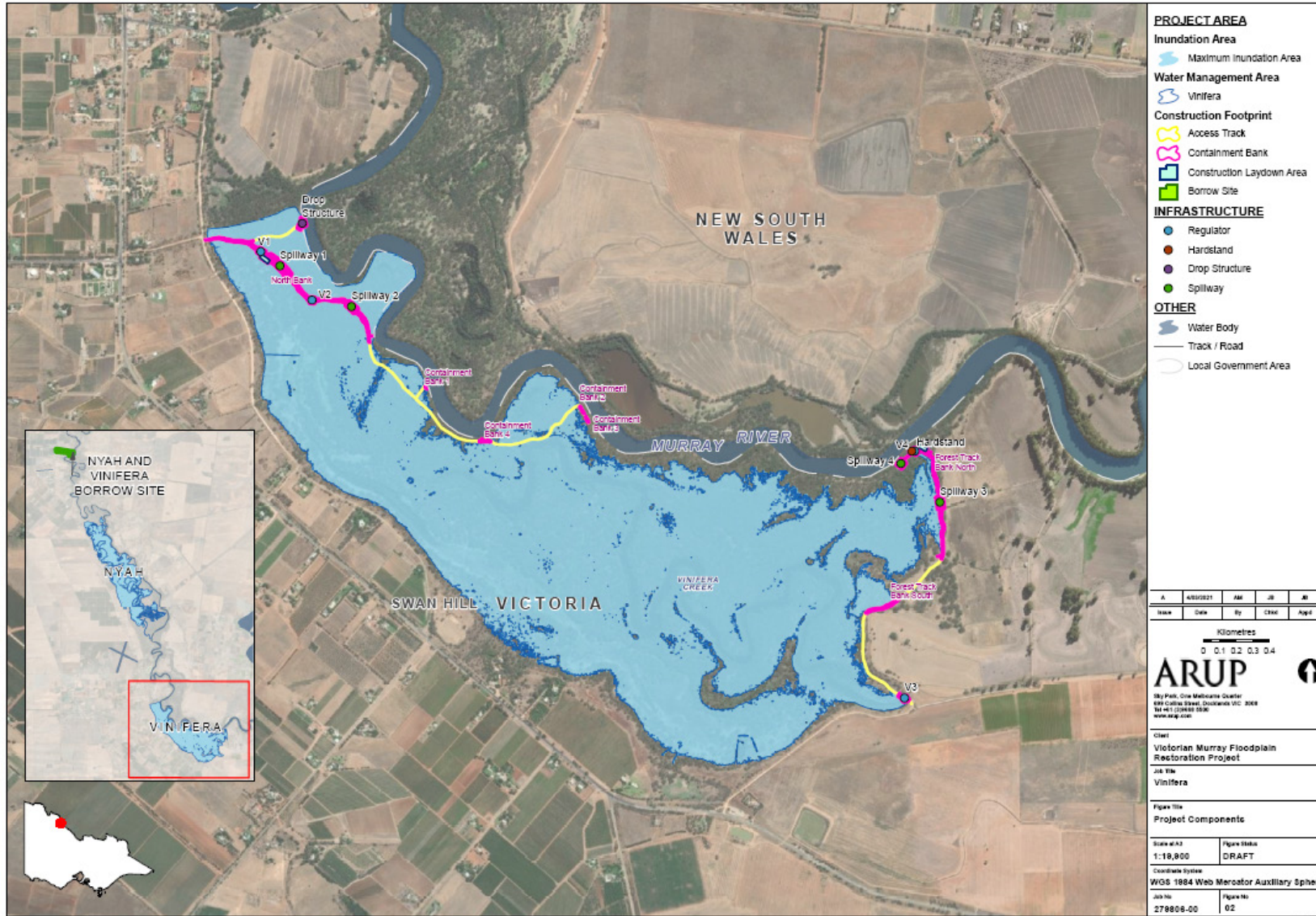


Figure 5: Project area and planned works at Vinifera Park (Source: ARUP)



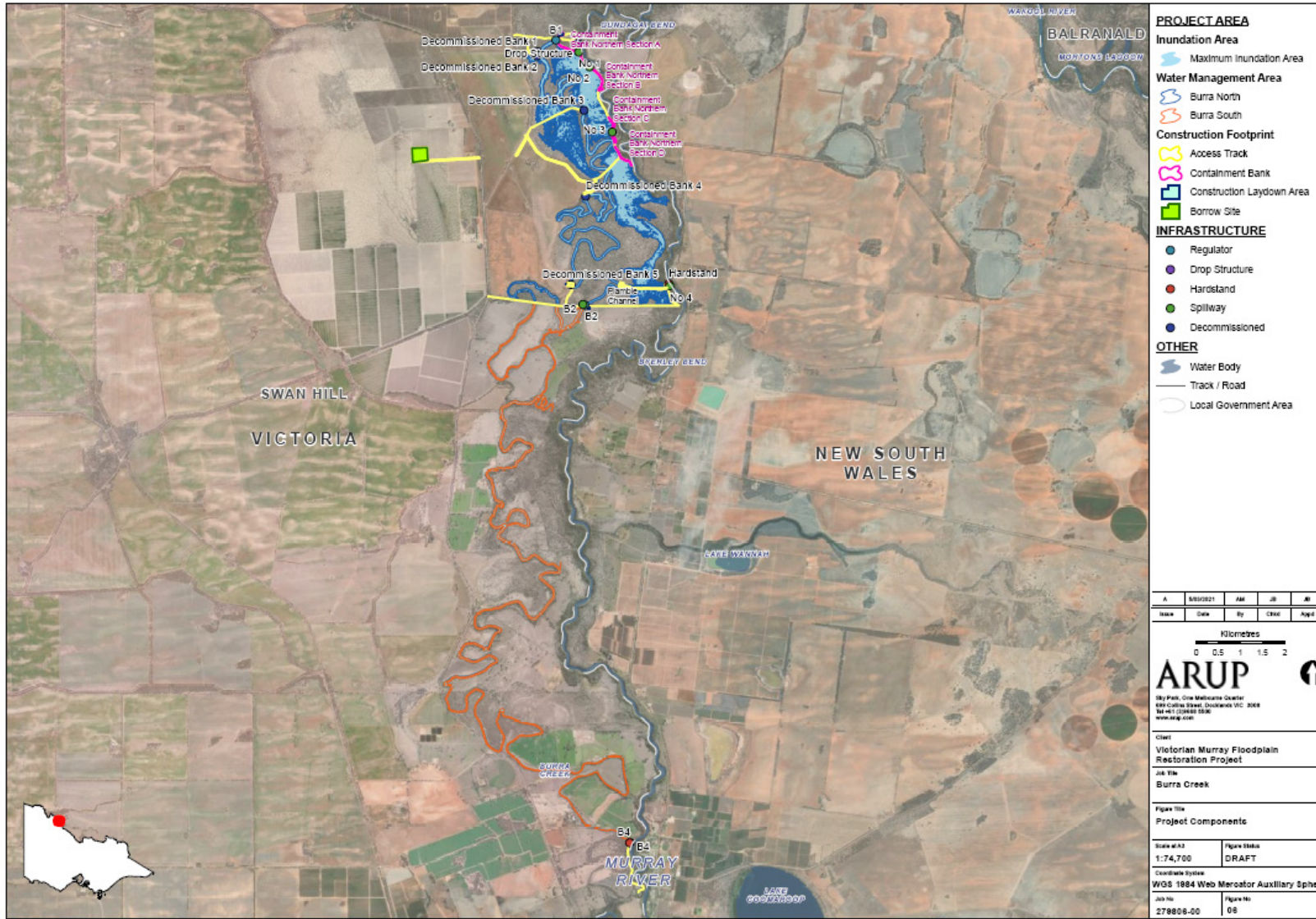


Figure 6: Project area and planned works at Burra Creek (Source: ARUP)



## Appendix 2: Detailed list of stakeholders

Table 11 provides a more detailed list of stakeholders. This list may be incomplete and more stakeholders will be added over the course of the EES and PSA process as awareness grows and to reflect the evolving issues landscape.

**Table 11: Detailed stakeholder list**

Group	Stakeholder
Traditional Owners	Traditional Owner groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN) – representing Ngintait and Latji Latji Nations</li> <li>• Barkandji Native Title Group Aboriginal Corporation</li> <li>• Tar-Ru Lands Board of Management</li> </ul>
Australian Government	Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia – the Hon Keith Pitt MP Federal MP for Mallee – Anne Webster Minister for the Environment and Federal MP for Farrer, NSW – Sussan Ley Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment Murray–Darling Basin Authority Commonwealth Environmental Water Office
State Government	Victorian Minister for Water – The Hon. Lisa Neville, MP Victorian Minister for Aboriginal Affairs – The Hon Gabrielle Williams MP Victorian Minister for Planning – The Hon Richard Wynne MP Victorian Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change – The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP Victorian MP for Mildura – Ali Cupper DELWP, Planning Group DELWP, Forest, Fire & Regions Group Victorian Environmental Water Holder Department of Transport Sports and Recreation Victoria Regional Development Victoria Mallee Catchment Management Authority Parks Victoria Lower Murray Water Invest Victoria Agriculture Victoria Heritage Victoria Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions – Earth Resources Regulation Environmental Protection Authority Victorian Minister for Aboriginal Affairs – The Hon Gabrielle Williams MP First People – State Relations (formerly known as Aboriginal Victoria) Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council SA Water NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment Other prescribed Ministers under the <i>Planning and Environment Act 1987</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Hon. Mary-Anne Thomas, Minister for Agriculture</li> <li>• The Hon Jaclyn Symes, Minister for Resource</li> </ul>
Local government	Rural City of Swan Hill Murray River Council (Burra Creek)



Group	Stakeholder
	Municipal Association of Victoria Murray River Group of Councils Murray Darling Association
Aboriginal community/groups	Mallee District Aboriginal Services Elders groups Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN)
Landholders	Includes directly affected and adjacent landholders and occupiers. Directly affected landholders are landholders that will experience impacts on their land during construction and/or operation. These landholders will need agreements, for example, tenure for access, borrow pits, inundation and flood easements. Adjacent landholders may be affected due to proximity to the works, but it will not directly impact their land and no landholder agreement is required.
Research community and natural resource management practitioners	Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research (ARI) CSIRO MDBA Research programs at universities
Consumptive water users	LMW Private Diverters Irrigation Customer Services Advisory Committee Arahura Farm Nyah Vineyards Pty Ltd Lower Murray Water Private Diverters Irrigation Customer Services Advisory Committee
Recreational groups	Tooleybuc & Piangil District Fishing Club (Burra) Nyah District Lions Club Swan Hill Rotary Club Swan Hill Lions Club Inc. Nyah District Men's Shed Nyah District Action Group Murray Downs Angling Club Inc. Swan Hill Inc. Swan Hill 4WD Club Victorian Apiarists Association Victorian Recreational Fishing Boating Industry Association of Victoria OzFish Nyah Chapter
Environmental groups - local	350 Mallee Climate Action Group Australian Conservation Foundation Community Mildura Australian Plants Society – Mildura Kooloonong Natya Landcare Group (Burra) Sustainable Living in the Mallee (SLIM) Mid-Murray Field Naturalists Inc. Mid-Murray Seed Bank Nyah West Landcare Group Robinvale Indigenous Landcare Group Friends of Nyah-Vinifera Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Ltd Birdlife Australia – Mildura



Group	Stakeholder
Environmental groups - state	Australian Conservation Foundation BirdLife Australia Environment Victoria Environmental Defenders Office Environmental Justice Australia Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Fishcare Victoria Inc – AAA Friends of the Earth Landcare Victoria Nativefish Australia (Vic) People and Parks Foundation Victorian Apiarists Association Victorian Environmental Friends Network Victorian Field Naturalists Victorian National Parks Association Wildlife Victoria Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists
Commercial users of parks and waterways	Murray Offroad Adventures Houseboat Hirers Association Murray Offroad Adventures Gippsland High Country Tours Mildura Paddle Steamers Melbourne, Rothbury and Mundoo Discover Mildura - Day Tours Lock 9 Lodge
Peak bodies	Almond Board of Australia Citrus Australia Dried Fruits Australia Irrigation Australia Mildura Regional Development Murray Regional Tourism Board National Irrigators Council Paddle Victoria Ski Racing Victoria Victorian Apiarists Association – Sunraysia Branch Victorian Farmers Federation VicWater VRFish
Local businesses	Businesses/ suppliers / contractors and trader groups Robinvale Golf Club Hattah Roadhouse Hilltop Resort Robinvale Golf Blue Sky Swan Hill Mildura 4WD - ARB & Markraft Engineering Austrek Adventure Centre - TJM Mildura
Park visitors / seasonal communities	Robinvale Bridge Motel Robinvale Riverside Caravan Park Discover Mildura



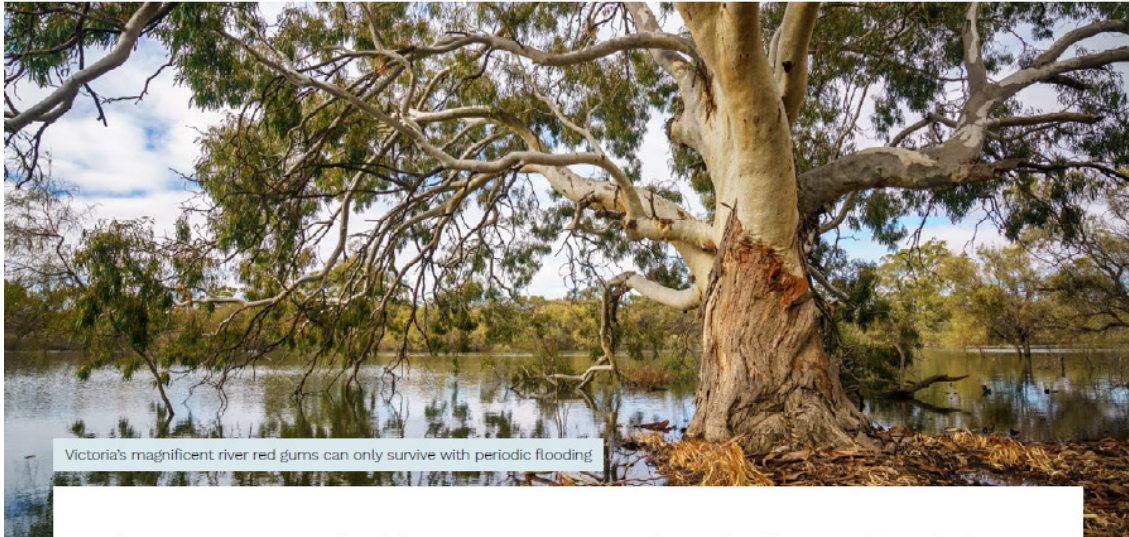
Group	Stakeholder
	Big4 Swan Hill Riverside Big4 Swan Hill Mildura Visitor Information Centre Robinvale Euston Tourist Information Centre Visit Mildura Murray Regional Tourism Board
Local residents	Sunraysia Farmers Market Mildura Senior Citizens Club Red Cliffs and District Historical Society Boundary Bend Progress Association Robinvale & District Lions Club Rotary Club of Robinvale Euston Swan Hill Rotary Club Ouyen Inc. Wemen Progress Association Nangiloc Progress Association Nangiloc / Colignan & District Community Association Swan Hill Lions Club Inc. Swan Hill Farmers Market Nangiloc / Colignan & District Community Assoc. Inc.
CALD communities	Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council (SMECC)
Education centres	Schools
Media	<b>Media – local</b> 3SH radio 5RM ABC Mildura Swan Hill ABC Riverland Country News Mildura Weekly Nine News Central Victoria River 1467 Robinvale Sentinel Sunraysia Daily Swan Hill Guardian The Murray Pioneer  <b>Media – statewide</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly Times</li> <li>• ABC Victoria</li> <li>• WIN TV</li> </ul>



## Appendix 3: Project factsheet

The [project fact sheet](#) is available for download on the VMFRP website.

# Bringing Murray River floodplains back to life



Victoria's magnificent river red gums can only survive with periodic flooding

The Victorian Murray Floodplain Restoration Project (VMFRP) will get much needed water back onto nine high-value floodplains along the Murray River. Without this water, these iconic landscapes will continue to decline – along with the many native trees, animals and plants that depend on them.

### Restoring the floodplains

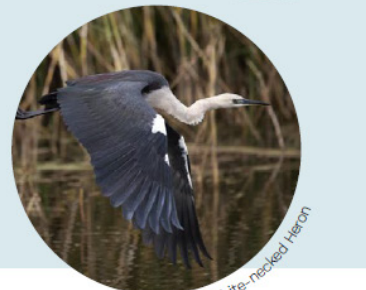
The floodplains next to the Murray River have evolved to periodically receive water. Historically, the river would spill onto the floodplains as often as 8 out of every 10 years, creating rich, lush landscapes teeming with life.

As our towns, cities, agriculture and industries have grown over time, we have changed the way the river flows to suit our purposes by using weirs and dams.

While this has benefited regional communities and economies, water no longer flows naturally as it once did, and the Murray River can no longer water these floodplains often enough to keep them healthy.

The VMFRP will remove blockages that stop floodwater flowing into creeks and build infrastructure like flow regulators, channels and containment banks to water the floodplain and hold water there for longer.

This water will bring new life and help these nine ecologically significant floodplains to survive and cope with future dry conditions and drought, so they can continue to be enjoyed by future generations.



White-necked heron





# Healthy floodplains are teeming with life

Here are some of the species that will benefit from these floodplain restoration projects.

**Healthier floodplains are good for:**

- Local communities and visitors**  
Healthy floodplains are beautiful places to visit and are great for recreation like boating, fishing and camping.
- Traditional Owners**  
Traditional Owners have cultural, spiritual, and economic connections to land, water and resources through their relationship with Country, having managed land and water sustainably over thousands of generations.
- Local wildlife**  
Lots of species rely on floodplains for food, habitat and breeding, from microscopic creatures to frogs, fish, birds, bats and other mammals.
- Vegetation**  
Flooding brings vegetation back to life, creating habitat, foraging and food for floodplain creatures.  
Some flood dependent species like river red gums and black box trees rely on the bigger floods that used to happen every ten years. Animals like bats and birds nest in the hollows of these trees.
- Local economies**  
Projects will bring substantial financial investment into the region, creating jobs and helping local economies.

**Examples of infrastructure**

We'll remove infrastructure that blocks the flow of water through the floodplain, like this small pipe blocking the creek in Nyah Park.

Regulators will help us to move water onto the floodplains and hold it there before opening the regulator to return water to the river. Regulators will include fishways to help native fish on their journey.

**Species and Flora:** Wild flowers at Wallpolla, Roseate Parrot, Murray Cod, Gould's Wattled Bat, Pelicans, Growing Grass Frog, Carpet Python, Gillies' Manigale, Hattah Lakes North, Belsar-Yungera, Burra, Nyah, Vinifera, Swan Hill, Guttrum-Benhwell, Koondrook, Gunbower, Echuca.

**Distances:** Lindsay Island to Wallpolla Island (62 km), Wallpolla Island to Mildura (38 km), Mildura to Hattah Lakes North (75 km), Hattah Lakes North to Belsar-Yungera (25 km), Belsar-Yungera to Burra (34 km), Burra to Nyah (5 km), Nyah to Vinifera (23 km), Vinifera to Swan Hill (62 km), Swan Hill to Guttrum-Benhwell, Guttrum-Benhwell to Koondrook, Koondrook to Gunbower.

**Map Labels:** Lindsay Island, Wallpolla Island, Mildura, Hattah Lakes North, Belsar-Yungera, Burra, Nyah, Vinifera, Swan Hill, Guttrum-Benhwell, Koondrook, Gunbower, Echuca.

**Infrastructure:** A20, A1.

**Other locations:** Mildura, Echuca, Melbourne, Victoria.



### Knowing when to add water

These restoration projects will help return a more natural watering regime at the nine high-value floodplains. We will monitor how often natural flooding occurs and will release water in the years where the environment needs a 'top up' to keep it healthy. We will not release water every year unless the floodplain needs it.

The watering plans at each site will be flexible; each year and each watering event will be tailored depending on things such as the conditions of the floodplain, water availability, river flows and timing since the last flood or watering.

Similar projects have already been successfully implemented under The Living Murray program. Visit [www.mdba.gov.au](http://www.mdba.gov.au) for more information on these sites.

### Delivering the projects

We've been working on these projects for some time already, doing the planning to ensure the infrastructure we build will improve floodplain health.

Moving forward, projects will be rolled out in stages. The regulatory approvals process involves planning and consultation to get approval and funding to go ahead. We aim to start construction in 2023 and will work with local communities during this time to minimise any disruption.



**Have Your Say**

Projects will go through a long period of consultation with communities, Traditional Owners and stakeholders before they get approval to go ahead.

**If you have questions about any of these projects or want to join the community consultation, email us at [info@vmfrp.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@vmfrp.vic.gov.au)**

February 2021

[vmfrp.com.au](http://vmfrp.com.au)

