

17. WATER RESOURCES

17.01 Regional Overview

A major part of the Region, is used for water harvesting purposes. The Yarra River System upstream of Yering Gorge and parts of Thomson Forest are used as water supply catchments for the Melbourne metropolitan area, Mornington Peninsula and the Region.

Maintenance of high water quality for domestic and other beneficial uses and maintenance of environmental values are primary objectives, and the policies in this section have been developed specifically to achieve that objective. As most of the Region is used as a catchment for Melbourne's water supply the policies reflect this importance.

The policies of the Regional Strategy Plan have been prepared on the basis of a total catchment approach to water resource conservation. Policies in this section concentrate on the waterways and adjacent lands and on issues specifically related to water harvesting.

River systems, including floodplains, are of particular significance because of their role in transferring water in times of flood, the habitat they provide for flora and fauna, and the recreational opportunities they offer. The Yarra River and its tributary streams and creeks are widely recognised as a river system with special values.

Policies for Water Resources and the Yarra River System are included under the following headings, and relate to Map Series 4:

- **Water Harvesting Policies**, which designate the land areas for water harvesting;
- **Water Quality Policies**, which indicate the standards for water quality objectives and specify land use practices conducive to maintenance of high water quality;
- **Water Supply Policies**, which specify the priorities for reticulated water supply systems; and
- **River and Stream Management Policies**, which propose co-ordinated approaches for stream management generally and for the Yarra River and its tributaries in particular.

17.02 Water Resources Goals

The regional goals for the water resource policies are to:

- ensure that the forested catchments used for water production continue to be used solely or primarily for this purpose and maintain this potential;
- ensure that all local water supply catchments identified in Map 4 continue to be used solely or primarily for this purpose and maintain this potential;
- ensure that the catchment of the Yarra River above Yering Gorge retains the potential for water collection for potable purposes;

- ensure that water catchments outside the Yarra River catchment retain the potential to harvest water suitable for various defined uses;
- achieve the water quality objectives as specified by State Environment Protection Policies;
- protect, as far as possible, existing water quality and yield in those catchments subject to changes in land use or land management;
- minimise harmful environmental effects when the collection, harvesting, transporting and using of water is undertaken; and
- promote the use of off-stream water storages in preference to on-stream storages in order to maintain stream flows and to reduce environmental impact on flora and in-stream fauna.

Water Harvesting

17.03 Primary Purpose

The **primary purpose** of the **water harvesting policies** is to maintain the opportunity for high water quality harvesting for domestic and other beneficial uses from the Yarra River and other catchments within the Region.

17.04 Melbourne Water Catchments

All catchments, storages, diversion, and transfer works under the control of Melbourne Water except for those areas already used and managed by Melbourne Water, may continue to be used and managed solely for water harvesting and production purposes.

Catchment management measures undertaken by Melbourne Water should ensure that conservation and environmental values of these catchments are recognised and protected.

Any expansion of recreational activities, particularly at Sugarloaf Reservoir, must be carefully monitored by Melbourne Water, in order to protect both the catchment and the surrounding environment.

17.05 Local Catchments

All local water supply catchments may continue to be used for water harvesting purposes, as required. On the advice of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, planning authorities and Melbourne Water must carefully control uses and activities within local catchments, which may have detrimental effects on water quality and yields.

Water Quality

17.06 Primary Purpose

The **primary purpose** of the **water quality policies** is to ensure that all land uses are managed in a manner compatible with water quality objectives as determined by the Government in State Environment Protection Policies.

17.07 Regional Policy

All land uses and development of Public and private land must be managed so as to maintain water quality objectives for the Region as determined by the Government in State Environment Protection Policies.

17.08 Timber harvesting in closed catchments

Timber may only be harvested in Melbourne Water's closed catchments as a management tool for maintenance of water yields and/or quality, as part of forest hydrology experiments or to salvage fire damaged timber.

17.09 Land use management

All land use and development within the Yarra River catchment upstream of Yering Gorge must be carried out in accordance with the need to maintain and improve water quality and yields for potable purposes.

In addition to the specific land use controls and provisions contained in other policies of the Regional Strategy Plan, Government Departments, Public Authorities, Councils and planning authorities must ensure the:

- containment of urban growth;
- provision of appropriate waste water management facilities to all residential, commercial and industrial development;
- provision for special policy areas along significant watercourses, where appropriate, and the protection of all watercourses and their environs against inappropriate use;
- promotion of good agricultural resource management techniques on rural lands, in order to protect the soil and water resources, including attention to the responsible use and application of fertilisers and biocides, cultivation techniques and the recycling of waste water;
- delineation, where appropriate, of land liable to flooding and specification of suitable land uses;
- maintenance of adequate stream flow to ensure protection of the biota and the aesthetic quality of the Yarra River and stream system;
- retention of riparian vegetation and the protection of the aquatic environment, and appropriate revegetation of these areas;
- sympathetic design of buildings, roads and other infrastructures, the employment of sensitive development practices to minimise run-off and the prompt revegetation and stabilisation of disturbed surfaces, in order to minimise run-off and erosion; and
- revegetation with appropriate native species of denuded and degraded stream banks, and enhancement of the existing native vegetation along watercourses.

Water Supply

17.10 Primary Purpose

The **primary purpose** of the water supply policies is to ensure continuation of supply of high quality domestic water for the Melbourne metropolitan area and the Region.

17.11 Water Reticulation

Investment in new or improved reticulated water supply systems must be directed to serve Township Policy Areas, Landscape Living Policy Areas and designated Special Study Areas and must be co-ordinated with the provision of waste water management facilities and must recognise the need for fire fighting purposes.

River Management

17.12 Primary Purpose

The **primary purpose** of the **river and stream management policies** is to provide for co-ordinated multi-purpose management of each of the stream systems in the Region, to ensure efficient use of resources and to protect the riparian environment.

17.13 Coordination policy

The Yarra River and its tributaries in the Region must be recognised as a single system with multiple functions, and its management must be co-ordinated.

Further research into the Yarra River and its tributaries, particularly the Yarra Valley wetlands, including measures for protection and rehabilitation of natural habitats and systems, should be encouraged.

17.14 Multiple use of streams and waterways

Other than those waterways in catchments managed by Melbourne Water, all streams and waterways must be managed to retain the potential for multiple use and take account of water harvesting requirements, demands for recreation, environmental protection and enhancement of cultural values and landscape aesthetics.

Government Departments and public authorities responsible for river and catchment management are encouraged to:

- liaise and share information to ensure consistent and co-ordinated policies and management for water resources, environmental protection and enhancement, and use of waterways; and
- recognise that rivers, streams and watercourses within the Region are natural ecosystems, which must be used and managed so as to ensure that their ecological processes, native species and features of scientific, cultural or scenic significance are protected and enhanced.

Relevant river and catchment management authorities must be encouraged to implement policies which will ensure the co-ordinated multi-purpose use of rivers and streams within the Region, consistent with the Regional Strategy Plan.