

Part B

A Vision for Our Waterways

5 Vision

The vision of the Victorian River Health Strategy (2002) is to achieve healthy rivers, streams and floodplains that meet the environmental, economic, recreational and cultural needs of current and future generations.

Rutherford *et al* (2000) state that a good vision should have two elements. First, it should have some sense of an end-point, or a clear target. Second, it should be inspiring. People will give up their weekends to pursue this vision.

It is not necessary for the vision to be absolutely achievable. It is the 'beacon on the hill' – a reference point to head towards rather than a necessary place to land.

To steer the development and direction of the Corangamite River Health Strategy, a Vision Setting Workshop was held with the Waterway Management Implementation Committee which included representatives from both rural and urban communities throughout the Corangamite region as well as representatives from water authorities, DPI and EPA. The results from this workshop are detailed in Appendix A and summarised below.

Our waterways will be treasured as multi-purpose public assets, managed by the community for the community. They will connect the coast and plains to timbered headwaters, providing opportunities for prosperous farms, resource conservation and recreation. Together, we will reverse the trend of degradation.

6 Goals

To head towards this Vision, a series of goals were also determined at the workshop. These goals relate to specific aspects of river health, namely:

- Water quality and quantity;
- Instream habitats;
- Streamside vegetation;
- Physical form; and
- Community.

6.1 Quality and Quantity of Water

Our waterways will have the benefit of clean water and adequate flows that meet both human and environmental needs.

6.2 Instream Habitats

Our waterways will host a range of native fish species, making them popular and sustainable fishing spots. Frogs will be widespread and our wetlands restored, teeming with birds.

6.3 Streamside Vegetation

Our waterways will flourish with continuous reaches of local indigenous vegetation radiating out to link with the broader catchment. Weeds and vermin will be managed to retain the natural quality of the landscape.

6.4 Physical Form

Our waterways will be significantly protected from accelerated erosion by controlling the movement of stock.

6.5 Community

Our communities will be the foundation that ensures the sustained health of our waterways.

7 Sharing the Vision

To ensure that the vision and goals for river health in the Corangamite region are met, it is essential that all stakeholders are given the opportunity to be involved. If stakeholders are not given this opportunity, there is a risk that actions will not be integrated and the vision and goals will not be attained.

To ensure stakeholder involvement occurs as an integral component of the Strategy, a set of guiding principles have been applied based on the Victorian River Health Strategy (2002).

7.1 Guiding Principles

7.1.1 Integrated Catchment to Coast Management

Decisions affecting river health will be made within an integrated catchment management context:

- recognising the integral relationship between rivers and their catchments, their position within broader landscapes, and their linkages with and importance to estuaries and coastal systems;
- addressing problem causes rather than merely treating symptoms; and
- balancing environmental, social and economic needs.

7.1.2 Integrated River Health Outcomes

Management programs will aim to deliver the best possible river health outcomes across the range of management activities within the waterways and catchments.

7.1.3 Community Involvement

Communities and stakeholder groups will have the opportunity to be involved in all the major phases of planning and implementation of programs affecting river health.

Details of current and proposed community engagement processes are detailed in Section 27.

7.2 Key Stakeholders

In the development and implementation of any strategy, the roles of all stakeholders need to be clearly articulated if communication and implementation of action are to be successful. This is particularly important where one of the stakeholder groups is 'the community', where the community is defined as any person entered in or affected by aspects of river health management. We have

learnt from past experience that without careful definition and planning of roles and tasks, community participation can be seen as tokenistic, can be poorly attended and can fail to fulfil expectations. (DNRE, 2002a)

The roles and responsibilities of these stakeholders are outlined below and detailed in Appendix B.

7.2.1 Corangamite CMA

Specifically, with regard to river health, the CMA has the following roles and responsibilities:

- Community Caretakers of River Health and Water Resources.
- Develop, in partnership with the community and other stakeholders, the Regional River Health Strategy and other action plans which define the vision for the catchment and set targets for land and water management.
- Provide advice to the State Government on both Federal and State resourcing priorities at a regional level.
- Develop and implement measures for river protection and restoration (including management of the Environmental Water Reserve).
- Encourage community involvement in river and catchment management.
- Undertake floodplain management in accordance with the Victoria Flood Management Strategy.
- Develop partnerships between resource managers in the catchment, and coordinate activities impacting on river health.
- Coordinate water quality management.
- Provide a focus for regional investment in river and catchment management.
- Monitor and report on the condition and management of the river and water resources in their region.
- Provide community education.
- Act as a communication conduit between regional communities and Government on issues relating to river and water management.
- Prepare annual works and activity programs for the protection and enhancement of river systems.

7.2.2 Regional Resource Managers

Department of Sustainability and Environment

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is the principal NRM department, responsible for administration and management of Victoria's natural resources and public lands. The department aims to deliver the State Government's vision of positioning Victoria as a world leader in sustainability, and delivers programs for Crown land, coasts, biodiversity, forest management, public land fire prevention and

suppression and oversight of local government planning schemes.

DSE programs are delivered in the field through either the DSE Regional Services Division, or through the Department's environmental research institutes. Catchment management and water resources management programs are also administered by DSE. The Catchment and Agricultural Services (CAS) Division of the Department of Primary Industries provides service delivery for these programs.

Department of Primary Industries

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) promotes the sustainable development of primary industries, including Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Earth Resources in the public interest. To support this function DPI provides policy advice, extension programs, delivers research and technical advice across these industry areas. DPI works to strengthen the capacity of rural industries and communities to anticipate and respond to change.

Parks Victoria

Parks Victoria is responsible for the management of environment and recreational services in the Region's parks and reserves network, and for Ramsar wetlands.

Regional Coastal Boards

In Victoria, the Victorian Coastal Council and Regional Coastal Boards are responsible for the coordination of coastal strategy development and implementation. The Western Coastal Board, Central Coastal Board and the Victorian Coastal Council all provide advice on coastal issues and action plans.

Water Authorities

Water planning is effected through bulk water allocations and licensing processes administered by Southern Rural Water under the *Water Act, 1989*. Three large water utilities, namely Central Highlands Water, Wannon Water (formerly South West Water) and Barwon Water, are involved in water resource management through Bulk Water Entitlements, planning and implementation of water supply augmentations, wastewater services and water demand management.

Environment Protection Authority

The Environment Protection Authority's primary role is to protect air, water and land from pollution, control industrial noise and minimise waste generation. The *Environment Protection Act (1970)* provides a range of tools to accomplish this including development and enforcement of statutory policies (SEPPs) which set standards for environmental quality in Victoria, licensing of significant discharges to the environment, enforcement tools, and partnerships tools. Monitoring and research work support these activities.

- Participate (as partners) in the development and implementation of the regional RHS.
- Undertake all activities which can potentially impact on rivers to best practice.
- Recognise their dependence on a healthy resource base and their potential impact on it.
- Develop and support partnerships with other resource managers in the catchment to enhance project coordination and implementation.

7.2.3 Local Government

Specifically, with regard to river health, local government has the following roles and responsibilities:

- Work in partnership with CMAs to set priorities and implement the regional RHS.
- Incorporate river restoration and catchment management objectives, priorities and actions into statutory planning processes.
- Undertake floodplain management and flood warning in accordance with the Victoria Flood Management Strategy.
- Develop and implement urban stormwater plans.
- Manage land adjoining waterways under Committees of Management.
- Manage rural drainage schemes where appropriate.
- Facilitate local industry involvement in river restoration and catchment management activities.
- Provide local support for local action groups.
- Undertake all activities which can potentially impact on rivers to best practice.

7.2.4 Industry

Specifically, with regard to river health, industry has the following roles and responsibilities:

- Manage in accordance with the principles of ecologically sustainable development.
- Minimise their impact on the environment by the implementation of best management practices.

7.2.5 Individuals and Groups

There is an extensive network of community groups and non-government organisations with an interest in river health. In the Corangamite Region these include local indigenous communities and a range of community interest groups, which have the capacity to deliver significant improvements to asset condition, as well as enriching the social capital within their local communities.

Indigenous communities, as traditional owners, play a vital role in natural resource management in the Region. A combination of effective consultation, community awareness and opportunities for partnerships will ensure that the cultural values of indigenous communities in land management are respected.

Community Interest Groups

These include:

- community environmental groups (Landcare, Bushcare, "Friends of", Waterwatch, Committees of Management for public land reserves, Coast Action/ Coastcare, Fishcare);
- recreational groups (angling, boating, Field and Game, Scouts etc.);
- plant nurseries supplying indigenous species;
- community associations (e.g. Victorian National Parks Association, Rotary, Lions, Area associations);
- educational institutions;
- industry groups, includes Southern Farming Systems, Westvic Dairy; and
- non-government organisations such as Greening Australia, Trust for Nature, Victorian Farmers Federation, Seafood Industries Victoria, VRFish, Conservation Volunteers Australia and several industry groups that are committed to a community environmental role.

Specifically, with regard to river health, community groups can:

- Participate in regional planning, priority setting and the implementation of work programs related to river management and restoration.
- Monitor river health and undertake restoration projects in priority areas.
- Manage their own enterprises and actions in ways that acknowledge their 'duty of care' and their role in the stewardship of natural resources.

7.2.6 Commonwealth Government

Specifically, with regard to river health, The Commonwealth government has the following roles and responsibilities:

- Contribute funding to States, regional authorities, groups and individuals to achieve national objectives for river restoration and catchment management.
- Facilitate national or interstate coordination where this is necessary.
- Invest in the development of better management principles, tools and systems.

- Improve the knowledge base through strategic research and development.
- Provide incentives in areas of Commonwealth responsibility.
- Ensure that the wider Australian community is well informed about natural resource management issues.
- Facilitate the monitoring of the effectiveness of natural resource management at appropriate scales.
- Oversee the implementation of relevant Commonwealth legislation including the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.
- Ensure that Australia meets its obligations under international agreements.
- Identify issues of national significance.

7.2.7 State Government

Specifically, with regard to river health, State government has the following roles and responsibilities:

- Set statewide policy and strategic directions for river restoration and for catchment and environmental protection.
- Establish legislative frameworks.
- Establish effective and efficient catchment/regional institutional arrangements.
- Provide funding to achieve State and regional priorities.
- Provide relevant advice, and undertake research and monitoring, planning, extension, on-ground works and some referral and enforcement functions to support regional communities.
- Participate in effective intergovernmental processes and national approaches where necessary, and implement State responsibilities under nationally agreed strategies.

7.3 Strategy Involvement

A key component of the development of the Corangamite River Health Strategy was consultation and involvement that ensured:

- the community and other stakeholders were engaged at the most advantageous level; and
- both the CCMA and community were informed with the best available knowledge and information.

The consultation process for developing the Corangamite River Health Strategy is detailed in Section 8.

8 Consultation Process

As stated in Section 5, the development of the Corangamite River Health Strategy was overseen and steered by the Waterway Management Implementation Committee. This committee included representatives from both rural and urban communities throughout the Corangamite region as well as representatives from water authorities, DPI and EPA.

All major milestones in developing the River Health Strategy were discussed and approved by this committee.

The broader community consultation was undertaken through specific workshops and individual meetings with Landcare Networks and Regional Resource Managers.

Landcare Networks were pivotal in providing information to assist the verification of data used in the RiVERS database, particularly in regard to social and economic assets where limited datasets were available. In addition, the Networks, representing individual Landcare groups and the broader community, provided the real litmus test as to what actions and activities were appropriate and acceptable to the community.

Regional Resource Managers (such as DSE, DPI, Water Authorities, Parks Victoria, EPA, Coastal Boards) were briefed on the process to develop and identify high value waterways. All agencies were supportive and encouraged by the open and transparent approach to identifying the high value waterways and developing actions using a risk-based approach. Moreover, utilising the key documents and plans of these agencies in managing these high value waterways was well supported.

Indigenous issues relating to protection of cultural heritage associated with waterways in the Corangamite region were identified and, through a series of workshops, a separate project entitled "Guidelines for Management of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage during CMA-Funded On-Ground Works" is in development.

Throughout the consultation process, the following key messages were presented:

- river health is an issue for all stakeholders;
- protecting river health relies on integrated catchment management;
- river health strategies are based around asset protection rather than threat management;
- threats to assets are best determined through risk assessments; and
- strong partnerships between stakeholders are required to ensure effective outcomes.

The draft Strategy was released in November 2004 with submissions closing at the end of January 2005. Seventeen submissions were received.

Since this time, consultation has focussed on addressing comments within the submission and meeting with various stakeholder groups to further discussions on management actions, specifically roles and responsibilities, cost shares and activities.

The final draft Strategy was released in May 2006. Nine submissions were received.

Table 8.1 summarises the consultation process described above.

It should be noted that community engagement is an on-going process and the consultation process undertaken in the development of the Corangamite River Health Strategy represents only a small fraction of the broader community consultation that occurs:

- as part of the development of the many strategies and plans utilised in the formulation of the Corangamite River Health Strategy; and
- on a daily one to one basis with agencies and the general public in the delivery of river health outcomes since the inception of the Corangamite CMA.

Table 8.1 –Consultation Process to Develop the Corangamite River Health Strategy

Key Activity	CCMA Board	Waterways IC	Regional Resource Managers	Landcare Networks	State Government	Local Government	Indigenous Communities	General Community
Vision Setting Workshop		X						
Populating RIVERS database		X						
Verifying RIVERS Data				X				
Determining High Value Waterways Workshop		X						
Update on Determining High Value Waterways	X			X	X			
Risk Workshop		X						
Determination of Community Consultation Required		X						
River Health Strategy Briefing	X		X		X			
5 yr and 10 yr Target Setting		X						
River Health Strategy Update	X				X			
Benefit Cost Analysis		X		X				
Works Program Discussion (MATs and RCTs)			X	X				
Risks to Cultural Heritage Workshop							X	
Draft Strategy	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Works Program Discussion (MATs and RCTs)			X	X	X	X		
Final Strategy	X		X	X	X	X	X	