

Report on how local communities influenced Basin Plan implementation – Victoria

Victoria's annual report on using local knowledge and solutions to implement the Basin Plan (Schedule 12, Item 6)

Reporting context

The success of the Basin Plan and associated water reforms depends on working closely with communities and stakeholders who can provide the necessary local knowledge and solutions to effectively implement the Plan.

The Basin Plan requires Basin States, the Authority and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder to draw on local knowledge and solutions across a range of Basin Plan activities including long-term watering plans, annual environmental watering priorities and water resource plans.

It also requires that the best available knowledge (including scientific, local and cultural knowledge), evidence and analysis be used where practicable to ensure credibility, transparency and usefulness of monitoring and evaluation findings.

The purpose of this report is to monitor the extent to which local knowledge and solutions have influenced implementation of the Basin Plan during 2013-14. The report is a requirement of Chapter 13 of the Basin Plan and relates to Item 6 of Schedule 12.

Indicators for measuring success

The effectiveness of implementation is evaluated using the following indicators:

- Processes used to identify stakeholders from local communities, peak bodies and individuals (**Indicator 6.1**)
 - How stakeholders were engaged (**Indicator 6.2**)
 - How engagement influenced Basin Plan implementation (**Indicator 6.3**)
-

Indicator 6.1: Processes used to identify stakeholders from local communities, peak bodies and individuals

Response

To assist the MDBA in making a Basin scale assessment of activity and progress under the three elements of this Matter, the following is presented by DEPI as short case study examples of approaches used in northern Victoria to ensure that useful local knowledge and solutions were sought and tested as part of developing Victorian responses to give effect to high priority Basin Plan obligations required to be addressed in 2013-14.

Environmental Water Planning

From an environmental water perspective, Victoria's catchment management authorities (CMAs) have an established network of stakeholders from local communities and peak bodies that are engaged on a range of issues, including

Response

the development and implementation of regional waterway strategies. These networks have been established for many years and have been an effective mechanism to engage with local communities. In more recent years, as the environmental water portfolio has expanded, some CMAs have established specific environmental watering advisory groups (EWAGs) through public advertisements, nominations and/or recommendations. In some instances, additional stakeholders have also been identified opportunistically.

Basin Water Trading Rules

In this area, DEPI highlights the efforts undertaken to ensure that Victorian water market users were identified and engaged effectively on the Victorian Government's draft *Water Amendment (Water Trading) Bill*, whose objective was to ensure that Victoria was able to meet its obligations under the Basin Plan's Water Trading Rules.

Constraints Management Strategy

In this regard, DEPI draws attention to the work done to identify key stakeholders in Victoria's Goulburn-Broken catchment region with a material interest in the MDBA's draft Constraints Management Strategy (CMS). DEPI worked closely with the Goulburn-Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA) to identify these stakeholders and engage their interest in participating with the Authority on two sub catchment based community working groups and a catchment level 'leaders' working group.

Indicator 6.2: How stakeholders were engaged

Response

Environmental Water Planning

Victoria is now operating under the 2013 Victorian Waterway Management Strategy and its sub-components, regional waterway strategies. Through these long-term strategies, local communities are consulted about priority waterway sites and values to be targeted for investment and the priority management activities that are subsequently identified, including where possible, environmental watering.

Attachment A shows how community consultation is being undertaken by the CMAs in the Basin.

During 2013-14, Victorian communities were engaged in the development of seasonal watering proposals through the various CMA EWAGs and other community meetings. These seasonal water proposals form the basis of the Victorian Environmental Water Holder's seasonal watering plan (which details the annual watering priorities for Victoria). The groups are also used to input to delivery of environmental water during the year.

As stated for Matter 10, Indicator 10.2, Victorian waterway managers consult with a range of groups and individuals in relation to environmental water planning and use. This consultation varies across the State, and includes engagement with technical advisory groups, established environmental water groups, indigenous stakeholders, land manager agencies, private landholders,

Response

community groups, community members, Committees of Management, water authorities, contractors (for water delivery), and land managers.

Throughout the planning and delivery of environmental water, engagement and coordination between environmental water holders and delivery partners (including land managers, policy makers, storage managers and river operators) occurs on a regular and ongoing basis. This includes annual environmental water planning forums, regular meetings between water holders regarding water commitments, convening of Operational Advisory Groups during the planning and implementation of large-scale watering actions, and other activities as required.

Basin Water Trading Rules

Consultation on the Amendment Bill was undertaken through the comprehensive, state-wide consultation process undertaken on the major Victorian Water Act Amendment Bill in 2014. The draft *Victorian Water Act Amendment Bill 2014* included the amendments made to the Water Act 1989 by the Water Amendment (Water Trading) Act 2014.

Public consultation on the draft *Water Amendment Bill 2014* was explicitly designed to be extensive and state-wide to ensure all Victorians had the opportunity to comment and provide feedback through a public submission process which opened on 18 December 2013. Additionally six targeted forums and 12 key stakeholder meetings were held in January and early February

The public submission process closed on 14 February 2014, and the Water Amendment (Water Trading) Act 2014 was tabled in the Victorian Parliament on 4 February 2014. The Water Trading Amendment Act was tabled in the Victorian Parliament prior to the closing date of submissions on the Water Amendment Bill 2014, to ensure that Victoria was able to meet its obligations under the Basin Plan's Water Trading Rules, which were to commence on 1 July 2014.

Constraints Management Strategy

In the lead-up to finalisation of the MDBA's CMS in November 2013, extensive consultation was undertaken in Victoria's Goulburn-Broken catchment to both inform local communities about the emerging CMS and in return, seek local knowledge and input to inform its final content.

To achieve this outcome, three community based working groups were established in the catchment, supported by the MDBA and the Goulburn-Broken Catchment Management Authority. Since then, these working groups have continued to operate as an informed consultation forum, to assist the MDBA in its work during 2014, to prepare its 2014 CMS Annual Report to the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council (due in November 2014).

Indicator 6.3: How engagement influenced Basin Plan implementation

Response

Environmental Water Planning

Response

During 2013-14, feedback and ideas provided through the engagement of Victorian communities have formed the basis of CMA seasonal watering proposals, which ultimately inform the VEWH's seasonal watering plan.

Similarly, outcomes from the engagement of Victorian communities in the development of northern Victoria's Regional Waterway Strategies has resulted in strategies with a strong focus on community-identified assets, values and actions.

Basin Water Trading Rules

The Victorian Parliament passed the Water Amendment (Water Trading) Act 2014 in April 2014. This Act amended the Water Act 1989 to ensure Victoria was operating consistently with the Basin Plan water trading rules when they commenced on 1 July 2014.

Constraints Management Strategy

These three community based working groups continue to offer an important conduit for both community input to assist the MDBA and in return, for communities to access the information necessary to enable individuals to make informed judgements about any emerging CMS proposals in the Goulburn-Broken catchment.