



**VICTORIAN MURRAY FLOODPLAIN
RESTORATION PROJECT**
HEALTHY LANDSCAPES, STRONG COMMUNITIES

MEDIA RELEASE

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COMMUNITY CENTRAL TO NEXT STEP - ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

VICTORIA'S effort to restore and protect nine areas of high-value Murray River floodplain through the Victorian Murray Floodplain Restoration Project (VMFRP), will prioritise community engagement and consultation, as it moves into the formal environmental assessment process

The nine projects are part of Victoria's obligations under the Murray Darling Basin Plan and will bring substantial financial investment into the region, creating jobs, attracting tourism and helping local economies.

The VMFRP aims to reconnect 14,000ha of wetlands and floodplains to the Murray River at priority sites from Gunbower in northern Victoria, to Lindsay Island near the South Australian border.

The VMFRP will actively approach key stakeholders, including Traditional Owners and the community throughout this process to ensure they are included, so these projects not only deliver environmental, socio-economic and community outcomes, but also respect cultural values.

The VMFRP plans to remove blockages that stop water flowing into creeks and implement options to manage water effectively and efficiently on the floodplain across the nine areas. This water will bring new life and help these ecologically significant floodplains survive and cope with future dry conditions, so they can continue to be enjoyed by future generations.

The work aims to secure the future health of these floodplains, which are in serious ecological decline due to river regulation, drought and climate change while at the same time respecting the cultural values and views of Traditional Owners on the best way to deliver these projects

Following the submission of project information, the Victorian Minister for Planning (under the *Environment Effects Act 1978*) decided that an Environment Effects Statement (EES) will be required for four of the projects, and the remaining five projects will require an Environment Report (ER).

The projects have been grouped according to location and similarity of impacts and will be assessed via two EESs and two ERs as follows:

- Wallpolla and Lindsay Islands – EES
- Belsar–Yungera and Hattah Lakes North – EES
- Gunbower and Guttrum and Benwell – ER
- Burra, Nyah and Vinifera - ER

Each of the nine projects has also been determined as a 'controlled action' under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). Assessment for the purposes of the EPBC Act will occur via the EES/ER process.

These rigorous processes will ensure that the consultation is done thoroughly.

Further information on the Victorian decisions for all nine projects are available on the government website at www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/referrals-and-decisions

"Community consultation and advice will be a significant part of the assessment process, because that is critical to ensuring these projects deliver the environmental, cultural and social benefits that are important to us all", Project Director, Josh White said.

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“The environmental assessment process allows us to be certain about the ecological benefits of the projects and appropriately manage any impacts on the floodplains during any works and operation”.

Comprehensive community consultation plans are now under development to ensure all communities will have every opportunity to be involved in this stage of the project’s development.

Detailed information on consultation activities will be made available over the coming weeks online at www.vmfrp.com.au

The Victorian Murray Floodplain Restoration Project (VMFRP) is being implemented as part of Victoria’s obligations under the Murray Darling Basin Plan in partnership with Lower Murray Water, Goulburn Murray Water, Mallee CMA, North Central CMA, Parks Victoria and the Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning (DELWP). The VMFRP Program is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment.

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