



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

VMFRP GUNBOWER FOREST STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY GROUP

DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. BACKGROUND

Gunbower Forest is one of the few remaining river red gum floodplain systems in Victoria, making up almost 9,000 hectares of significant ecological importance in the Murray Darling Basin. It is a prime example of remnant floodplain, and the remaining habitat has high conservation value, providing refuges and hotspots for biodiversity. The VMFRP Gunbower Forest project aims to enable water for the environment to be delivered efficiently and effectively into the forest and return water savings to the consumptive pool.

The VMFRP recognises the value of community involvement in delivering successful projects that benefit both the environment and the community. The VMFRP Gunbower Forest Stakeholder Advisory Group (“the group”) provides an important opportunity for community members, user groups, relevant government agencies and VMFRP to work collaboratively towards the development and implementation of projects that will benefit the Gunbower Forest and the people who value these floodplains.

2. PURPOSE

The group has been established to facilitate community and key stakeholder input into the VMFRP Gunbower Forest project and accompanying complementary works. The group will play an important role in ensuring the development and implementation of the project is undertaken with respect to local experience and knowledge, the various uses, and values of the floodplains. Community participation in the group will enable local community members to have a better understanding of the proposed VMFRP Gunbower Forest project and to help share project ideas, progress, and outcomes with the broader community. Additionally, the group can assist in the development of complementary works initiatives being proposed and delivered in and around the Gunbower Forests in connection to the VMFRP project.

The purpose of the group is to:

- facilitate community and key stakeholder input into the project. The group will allow members to increase and share their understanding of the project to the community, provide community ideas and feedback to VMFRP and land managers, and receive information and updates that can be shared with the wider community.
- provide advice and experience to assist the VMFRP team to make decisions that are in the best interests of the project.
- provide a forum for VMFRP to share decisions that are made about the project.
- Recognise that these floodplains have a multitude of uses and values, so the membership range needs to be diverse. The group itself is not and can't be a decision-making group.



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3. FUNCTIONS

The functions of the group are to:

- Provide a forum for the VMFRP, government agencies and community-based group members to discuss the detail of the project including investigations, limitations, decisions and issues;
- Provide opportunities for local knowledge, historical activities, stakeholder and technical information and perspectives to be heard, discussed, debated, and taken into consideration;
- Provide guidance and work collaboratively to resolve project-specific issues and risks;
- Broaden exposure of the VMFRP Gunbower Forest project in the local community to increase community knowledge and understanding;
- Build positive and productive relationships between the local landholders, communities, forest users and key stakeholders with VMFRP staff and partner agencies;
- Provide local knowledge to inform decision making on design and operation of the projects;
- Contribute to the design and development of a complementary works program that enhances the Gunbower Forest VMFRP Project; and
- Advocate for the project amongst their community networks, user groups and relevant industries.

4. TERM OF THE GROUP

The group is being formed to assist VMFRP through the design, regulatory approvals and construction* periods of the VMFRP project life cycle. The group will be dissolved at the completion^ of the project.

*subject to regulatory approvals and funding

^ project may be constructed or abandoned depending on the regulatory approval decision

5. COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

The VMFRP will engage an external, impartial facilitator or representative to act as Chair for the group.

6. MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the group will include people who live or work in the region or who regularly use the forests, and are:

- Knowledgeable about the environmental, social or economic values of the Gunbower Forest;
- Passionate about achieving good environmental and community outcomes for the Gunbower Forest;
- Committed to understanding the VMFRP Gunbower Forest project and sharing that knowledge with their community;
- Interested in strengthening relationships between agencies responsible for designing and delivering the project and the community; and



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- Interested in assisting the design and development of a complementary works program to manage community issues and take advantage of opportunities in connection to the Gunbower VMFRP Project.

Membership is not considered exclusive and may change over time. Adding or removing members will be at the discretion of the Chairperson and VMFRP in consultation with the group. A list of current members is attached at Appendix 1.

Members will be removed from the group if they:

- Voluntarily resign;
- Do not act within these terms of reference;
- Are replaced as their organisation's or community group representative; or
- Are removed by way of consensus.

7. RESPONSIBILITY OF MEMBERS

All group members will:

- Support a collaborative working approach through:
 - showing respect for other group members and VMFRP;
 - participating in open and honest discussions; and
 - working together with all group members.
- Encourage innovative thinking and be open to different ways of resolving issues;
- Treat sensitive issues discussed within the group with respect;
- Comply with specific requests from the group Chairperson and VMFRP to maintain confidentiality outside the group (where considered necessary);
- Direct any requests for comment from the media to the group Chairperson and VMFRP;
- Make every effort to attend all meetings in person or via technological means; and
- Do not invite guests or send a proxy to the meeting without prior approval from the Chairperson and VMFRP.

Community-based members of the group will:

- Provide knowledge, guidance and advice that informs design and delivery of the VMFRP Gunbower Forest project and complementary works programs, including helping to identify any constraints or opportunities;
- Provide advice on community engagement approaches and opportunities;
- Provide local knowledge on existing and emerging community issues or concerns relevant to the projects; and
- Communicate project objectives, designs and updates to their local communities and relay any community suggestions/concerns back to the group and VMFRP.

VMFRP East Project Team staff members will:

- Provide administrative support for the group;
- In consultation with the Chairperson, plan meeting dates, develop meeting agendas, record minutes of meetings and action lists;



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- Provide the group with at least 2 weeks advance notice of any proposed meetings or otherwise by majority agreement from group members;
- Provide VMFRP project updates for each meeting;
- Listen and learn from local community members about local issues and local community expectations of their respective organisations;
- Retain accountability for project design and delivery; and
- Ensure all members have meaningful opportunity to participate in meetings either in person or via technological means.

DELWP, Parks Victoria and Council group members will:

- Provide at least 1 and a maximum of 2 appropriate delegate(s) to participate in the group and provide representation on behalf of their organisations;
- Attend meetings and actively contribute to their areas of responsibility;
- Provide knowledge of their organisation's obligations and local area issues;
- Listen and learn from local community members about local issues and local community expectations of their respective organisations; and
- Provide updates on their organisations response and potential opportunities in relation to the VMFRP project and share ideas for future capital works and/or maintenance activities as part of complementary works programs.

8. MEETINGS

The date, time and location of meetings will be a decision of the Chairperson in consultation with VMFRP and group members. A draft agenda will be circulated 1 week prior to each meeting.

It is anticipated that meetings will be held every two to three months and will be no longer than 2-3 hours in length unless a field trip.

Minutes of meetings (including any actions) will be taken by VMFRP staff and circulated within 2 weeks of the meeting.

The group is an advisory group and therefore will not require a quorum for meetings to proceed. Meetings will proceed with the attendees available or deferred at the discretion of the Chairperson.

9. GUESTS

External expertise or local community members may be invited to assist the group where necessary, however the attendance of all guests at meetings must be coordinated through and approved by the Chairperson and VMFRP prior to the meeting.

10. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

While it is recognised all members have an inherent interest in the project and therefore wish to be involved in the group, all members of the group will be required to declare any actual or perceived conflict of interest that may affect their role in providing advice to the group.



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This declaration will not preclude members from participating in the group but will ensure any actual or perceived conflict of interest can be managed appropriately. For any declarations provided, group members will follow the direction of the Chairperson.

11. CONFIDENTIALITY

In the event that confidential information is dealt with/presented to the group, confidentiality must be observed by members and such information must not be used to obtain any advantage, whether direct or indirect, for members or for any other person or body.

Confidential information available to members must be used only in ways that are consistent with the obligations of members to act impartially, with integrity and in the public interest.

Where confidential information is provided to a group member, care must be taken to ensure that the information is kept secure, and that numbers of copies are kept to the minimum necessary. If such information is to be disposed of by a group member, it must be destroyed.

12. REMUNERATION

Community members of the group will participate in a voluntary capacity. However, any costs associated with venue hire, catering, or costs associated with site visits will be paid for by VMFRP.

There may be some cases where it is appropriate to reimburse reasonable and unavoidable expenses of group members incurred to participate in group meetings or site visits. In this instance, community members and unpaid representatives will be reimbursed consistent with North Central CMA's *Reimbursement and Remuneration of Community Members Policy* (North Central CMA reference 'FIN094').

Reimbursement will generally extend to the issuing of fuel cards to recognise travel costs and the reimbursement of any other reasonable and unavoidable expenses (e.g. accommodation, meals). All potential expense claim reimbursements should be discussed with the Chairperson prior to incurring the expense.



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ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix 1 – Committee Membership

Version Control:

Version	Status	Approved by
Version 1 – 17/02/2021	Draft for review	Tim Shanahan – Project Manager – VMFRP East Projects

END TERMS OF REFERENCE





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APPENDIX 1 – GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Last updated: 17 February 2021

Role	Incumbent	Contact Details
Committee Chairperson	TBC	TBC
VMFRP Project Manager East	Tim Shanahan	tim.shanahan@vmfrp.vic.gov.au 0438 320 944
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) Member(s)	Nick Whatley	nick.whatley@delwp.vic.gov.au 0428 692 175
Parks Victoria Member(s)	Leeza Wishart	leeza.wishart@parks.vic.gov.au 0427 886 956
Campaspe Shire Council	TBC	TBC
Additional members to be confirmed via a public Expression of Interest process		

Support Officers

VMFRP Administrative Support	Shaun Morgan	shaun.morgan@vmfrp.vic.gov.au 0439 554 186
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