



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

VICTORIAN MURRAY FLOODPLAIN RESTORATION PROJECT ENVIRONMENT EFFECTS STATEMENT DRAFT SCOPING REQUIREMENTS FAQ

What is the purpose of the scoping requirements?

The Victorian Murray Floodplain Restoration Project (VMFRP) is preparing an Environment Effects Statement (EES) for the proposed floodplain restoration work at Hattah Lakes North and Belsar–Yungera.

The EES scoping requirements set out the matters to be investigated and documented within the EES. The scoping requirements have been developed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) with input from the VMFRP and advice from government agencies represented on a Technical Reference Group.

What is an EES?

An EES describes a project, its benefits and its potential environmental effects. It enables stakeholders and decision-makers to understand how the project is proposed to be implemented, the likely environmental benefits and effects, and how the effects are to be managed. The EES is an assessment process, not an approval process. The Minister's assessment is considered by decision-makers to inform decisions required under Victorian law for the project to proceed.

An EES has two main components:

- **EES main report** – an integrated, plain English document that assesses the potential benefits, and impacts of the project and examines avoidance, mitigation or other measures to reduce the environmental effects. The main report draws on technical studies, data and statutory requirements such as specific limits for surface water and groundwater quality and waste discharge to the environment and should clearly identify which components of the scope are being addressed throughout.
- **EES technical reports** – specialist studies, investigations and analyses that provide the basis for the EES main report. These reports will be exhibited in full, as appendices to the main report.

Why is an EES required for these projects?

An EES enables a single integrated and transparent assessment of a project's potential environmental benefits and effects, and provides opportunity for consultation with stakeholders and the community to inform statutory decision-making.

On 6 December 2020, the Victorian Minister for Planning determined that the Hattah Lakes North and Belsar–Yungera Floodplain Restoration Projects are to be assessed through the preparation of a single EES under the *Environment Effects Act 1978*. The reasons for this decision can be found on the [DELWP Planning website](#).

What studies will the VMFRP do to investigate the potential environmental effects of the project?

The investigations and assessments are to include feasible project alternatives and design refinements (e.g. alternative project layouts, siting of infrastructure, management measures, project staging and timing and/or extent of inundation events) to avoid, minimise and manage effects, particularly for:

- effects on biodiversity and ecological values within and near the project area, including effects of threatening processes, on native vegetation, listed threatened ecological communities and protected species



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- intended ecological benefits and how they relate to the predicted adverse effects on specific biodiversity values
- effects on Aboriginal and historic cultural heritage values
- potential effects on water environments and related beneficial uses
- effects on groundwater that may result in changes to groundwater dependent ecosystems
- effects on the socioeconomic environment, including recreational and commercial (apiary) activities in the Murray-Sunset National Park and River Murray Reserve
- effects on existing landscape values
- potential cumulative effects with particular regard to currently operating, approved and proposed environmental watering projects in the region.

Why do draft scoping requirements go out for public comment?

The set of matters to be investigated and documented in an EES are tailored to the project and its potential environmental outcomes.

DELWP exhibits the draft scoping requirements for 15 business days to give stakeholders and the community an opportunity to raise key issues and concerns related to matters that they would like to see covered in the EES.

Where can I find the draft scoping requirements?

The draft scoping requirements will be available from 23 April on the Engage Victoria platform at <https://engage.vic.gov.au/hattah-lakes-north-and-belsar-yungera-floodplain-restoration-projects>

How do I give feedback on the draft scoping requirements?

The draft scoping requirements are open for public comment on the [Engage Victoria platform](#) from **23 April until midnight on 14 May 2021**.

Comments can also be emailed to environment.assessment@delwp.vic.gov.au or submitted by post to:

Impact Assessment Unit, Planning
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
PO Box 500, EAST MELBOURNE, VIC 8002

What other opportunities for engagement will I have?

The EES is expected to go on exhibition for public comment in the second half of 2022. Detailed arrangements for exhibition and associated engagement activities will be determined closer to the time. The public comment period is expected to be 30 business days. The diagram overleaf sets out the EES process, approximate dates and opportunities for public consultation.

A range of engagement activities will be used to keep people informed about the EES investigations and highlight opportunities for involvement while the EES is being developed. A public consultation plan will be published on the DELWP Planning website by mid-2021 setting out how and when the VMFRP plans to engage throughout the EES process. Alternatively, you can visit www.vmfrp.com.au for recent news and to register for updates.



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THE EES PROCESS AND TIMING

Environment assessment referrals	VMFRP refers projects to the Victorian Government under the EE Act		Mid to late 2020
Scoping requirements	Minister for Planning determines that an EES is required and sets scoping requirements		Early 2021 Community and stakeholder feedback
Prepare EES	VMFRP prepares EES including detailed assessments in response to the minister's scoping requirements		By end of 2021 Community and stakeholder feedback
Public exhibition	VMFRP exhibits EES (along with Planning Scheme Amendment). Minister invites public comments		Early to mid-2022 Community and stakeholder submissions
Independent inquiry	Independent 'Inquiry' considers EES and public submissions		Early to mid-2022
Minister for Planning's assessment	Minister for Planning makes a formal assessment based on EES process		Mid 2022
Approval decision	Planning and environmental approval decision-makers consider the Minister for Planning's assessment to inform approval decisions		Mid to late 2022





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What happens to my submission?

Any comments received will be considered by DELWP during the finalisation of the scoping requirements and will be treated as public documents. Your comments will also be considered by the VMFRP in the preparation of the EES.

Personal details and identifying features (e.g. names, addresses and contact details) will be removed before your submission is shared with VMFRP. You must provide written consent for DELWP to provide your name and address to the VMFRP.

Once the final scoping requirements have been issued, the VMFRP will start with the necessary information-gathering and investigations to inform the EES. This is expected to take at least several months.

What is the VMFRP?

The VMFRP plans to get much needed water back onto nine high-value floodplains along the Murray River. Without this water, these iconic landscapes will continue to decline – along with the many native trees, animals and plants that depend on them.

Floodplains and wetlands have been increasingly disconnected from the Murray River over the years with population growth and river regulation. The VMFRP plans to remove blockages that stop water flowing into creeks and implement options to manage water effectively and efficiently on the floodplain at the nine sites.

Hattah Lakes North and Belsar–Yungera are two of the nine VMFRP sites.

Hattah Lakes North project

The Hattah Lakes are located in the Hattah-Kulkyne National Park, 75 km from Mildura. The project at Hattah North builds on works that have already been completed and will include building 3 regulators, 1.3 km of levees, and a causeway along with infrastructure to support temporary pumps to allow for the proposed flooding of 1,130 hectares of the floodplain.

These works will further protect and restore the productivity and health of floodplain vegetation and its capacity to support floodplain fauna.

The proposed works complement the existing environmental infrastructure at Hattah Lakes built under The Living Murray program between 2006 and 2015.

Belsar–Yungera project

Located 25 km southeast of Robinvale, Belsar–Yungera is valued for its flora and fauna habitats and provides breeding opportunities for wetland species, including fish, frogs and waterbirds.

The proposed project at Belsar has four areas of work, including Narcooyia Creek, Lake Powell, Lake Carpul and upper floodplain waterways and wetlands. The project will involve building 3 main regulators, 13 containment regulators, 1.2 km of raised track and 2 km of low-pressure pipeline allowing for 2443 hectares of inundation.

The project will help to protect and restore the key native species and habitat of Belsar–Yungera by providing the water needed for their growth and health and will include watering of Lake Powell and Lake Carpul.



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Photo 1: An example of an existing regulator and spillway at Lake Wallawalla West (Credit: Mallee CMA)

Where can I find more information?

For more information on the EES process, visit planning.vic.gov.au/environmental-assessment or contact the Impact Assessment Unit on (03) 8392 5503 (Monday to Friday).

For more information on the VMFRP, visit www.vmfrp.vic.gov.au or email info@vmfrp.vic.gov.au

vmfrp.com.au

