

Field in Focus - Land Use, Community & Business

What are we doing?

This project provides infrastructure to deliver water to nine high-value floodplains.

The infrastructure will be used to provide water at a frequency, duration and interval required to support the ecological needs of the floodplain. This water will bring new life and help these ecologically significant floodplains to survive and build resilience to cope with future dry conditions and drought.

We aim to provide positive social and economic outcomes at the local and regional scale, whilst minimising potential impacts on existing infrastructure and open spaces.

This fact sheet is part of the 'Field in Focus' series, covering:

- Surface water, groundwater, and geology.
- Biodiversity.
- Land use, community, and business.
- Cultural and historical heritage.



What are we investigating?

We are investigating the potential changes to land use, community, and businesses resulting from these works.

We are assessing the potential beneficial and adverse effects associated with construction activities (i.e., the building phase) and future environmental watering (i.e., the operations phase).

Our studies address the published Scoping Requirements and are focussed on:

- Agricultural productivity and the socioeconomic impacts offset by these projects by avoiding the need for alternative water purchases.
- Bushfire risks and how these might change as a result of these works.
- Existing and future land uses.
- Landscape values, visual amenity, and recreational, scenic, and open space values.
- Social and business – considering tourism and recreational values.
- Traffic and transport – considering changes to traffic in the local areas during construction and operation of the project.

How are our specialists investigating these issues?

Our specialists carry out their investigations using a mixture of techniques including desktop studies, modelling, and carrying out field studies. The team also undertake risk assessments for each discipline, including how the risks can be mitigated.

Our investigations generally involve:

Agriculture

- Identifying agricultural land use and enterprises in the area local to the project sites.
- Identifying the potential characteristics of these projects which may impact on agricultural land use as a result of environmental watering.
- Identifying the potential implications for communities, land uses and businesses.
- Considering the impacts of alternate additional water purpose on agriculture, which would be mitigated by undertaking these projects.
- Assessing the potential changes, benefits and impacts on agricultural practices resulting from the works and the identification of mitigations.

Bushfire

- Establishing the existing conditions and bushfire management plans for each of the sites.
- Reviewing bushfire risks with consideration to vegetation cover, fire weather, proximity to fire prone vegetation on adjoining lands, spotting/ember attack potential, adjoining land management practices, topography, potential ignition sources, detection of new ignitions, local fire responses capability, and consequences.
- Desktop bushfire hazard landscape assessments and site assessments.
- Assessing the potential change to bushfire risks resulting from the works and the identification of mitigations.

Land Use Planning

- Identifying existing land uses in the area local to the project sites.
- Identifying existing and likely future land uses or land use objectives for the land in the project vicinity that may be affected by the project, including strategic planning documents, local planning strategies and permit applications.
- Reviewing air quality, noise, landscape, and visual inputs to evaluate potential effects on land use.
- Assessing the potential changes to land use planning resulting from the works and identification of mitigations.

Landscape and Visual

- Identifying the key components and activities as a result of the works that may create change in views and the landscape in the surrounding area.
- Identifying the location of sensitive receptors (e.g., nearby houses)
- Site inspections to capture views from key locations.
- Assessing the effects on landscape and visual amenity values in proximity to the project and key public and private vantage points.

Social and Business

- Developing a community profile for the area including facilities and services, places of special interest, significant community activities, and demographic data.
- Developing an economic baseline for the area.
- Identifying and consulting with stakeholders in the local community such as groups and clubs which may be affected by the project.
- Assessing the effects on the public and local community assets and values as a result of the works.

Traffic and Transport

- Traffic surveys of existing traffic movements in the local area of the projects.
- Assessing the potential impacts through construction traffic, travel patterns of workers, parking requirements, track suitability and works, emergency vehicle access, current track users, and public safety.

How will these assessments be used?

These assessments are part of the Environment Effects Statements (EES) and Environment Reports (ER) that inform statutory approvals required for the projects. This includes planning scheme amendments under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and Commonwealth environmental approval under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

You will have an opportunity to make a submission on the EESs, ERs, and supporting approval documents, and your submission will contribute to the statutory decision-making process.



Find out more

To find out more about the impact assessment process, please visit the 'Planning/Approvals' tab at www.vmfrp.com.au.

To provide feedback, email info@vmfrp.vic.gov.au or contact the Communications and Engagement Project Officer on **0428 516 233**.

If your query relates specifically to VMFRP proposals at Guttrum-Benwell or Gunbower, contact the Senior Engagement Officer at North Central Catchment Management Authority on **0439 554 186**.