

## Lake Wendouree Master Plan

*Importance of community engagement when IWM planning*

Ballarat, Central Highlands, Victoria



### Key Messages

- Engage with the community before developing an IWM plan to understand community values.
- Gather feedback in a variety of formats to maximise the reach of engagement.
- Maintain transparency and credibility in decision-making by appointing an expert panel or independent organisation to review community feedback and make recommendations.
- Take a flexible approach by evaluating and adapting the engagement process to suit local community needs.

### Project Overview

Lake Wendouree is widely regarded as Ballarat's "Jewel in the Crown". It has a proud history and is integral to Ballarat's identity and to the community's health and wellbeing. A Master Plan for Lake Wendouree was first developed in 1994. Since then Ballarat's population has grown considerably, creating increasing development opportunities and pressures on the lake. In response to the 2015 Ballarat Strategy, the City of Ballarat has started the process of developing a new Master Plan for Lake Wendouree. The Plan aims to set out a long term vision to help guide the management of Lake Wendouree toward 2040. The Plan builds on previous work by the City of Ballarat to protect and enhance the lake's water supply resilience through integrated water management. Currently, there are more than \$20 million of potential projects proposed by community groups for the Lake Wendouree precinct. The Master Plan process will review these projects, identify and address issues relating to the Lake and environs, and create a strategic plan for the future development of the Lake Wendouree precinct.

### The Master Plan Process

The Master Plan is being developed in four stages with community consultation and feedback being a critical component to the process and to the overall success of the project.



### Community & Stakeholder Consultation

Stage 1 involved a four month community and stakeholder consultation process from August to December 2016. This included open house drop in sessions, an online survey, and walk and talk sessions around the lake. This stage was considered the most important in the planning process. Conducting consultation prior to the development of the Plan removed any preconceived ideas the Council had about what the community wanted and maintained transparency in decision-making. The lake survey established the community's values by asking them to consider why they value the lake, these values were then front and centre in community's minds when asked to identify key issues and respond to a number of proposed community projects in the lake precinct.



*Community Engagement*

The projects were presented in an unbiased and transparent way, clearly outlining their costs and benefits. The survey had over 1,800 responses providing Council with a clear picture of the community's values, responses to potential projects and priorities for the lake.

### **Expert Panel Review**

In December 2016 an Expert Panel, made up Council staff, master plan consultants, landscape architects and tourism representatives from the Ballarat community, was formed to review community feedback and provide strategic recommendations and directions for the preliminary draft of the Master Plan. This included the development of a suite of criteria for the assessment of the Master Plan proposals taking into account the Council's policies and priorities (for more information on the expert panel's recommendations visit the <http://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au>).

*“Everyone in Ballarat is a stakeholder. Everyone has an opinion about the lake and loves the lake”*

### **Preliminary Draft Master Plan**

Stage 2 involved the preparation of a Preliminary Draft Master Plan. The Plan considers and includes the community feedback received during Stage 1, as well as the strategic recommendations and directions of the Expert Panel. Receiving feedback on the draft plan is critical and is currently underway. Once feedback is received, the Plan will be reviewed, after which Stage 3 and 4 of the process will commence (for more information on the Preliminary Draft Master Plan visit the <http://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au>).

### **Lessons Learnt**

- Investing in consultation is valuable for any major planning project. Consulting the community before developing a plan allows community values to be established and considered before decisions are made.
- Conducting an online survey enabled responses to be quickly aggregated and quantified.
- The extensive consultation and review process helped Council manage political interests and community group expectations, particularly those of groups proposing projects to be included in the Master Plan.
- The expert panel review process helped community groups understand the need for projects to be considered holistically at a precinct scale and encouraged them to accept the panel's recommendations.
- Consultation processes need flexibility. Consider the following – Have we chosen the right methodology? Do we need to consult more? Have we given the community enough opportunity to respond? Do we have enough evidence to move forward?

### **More Information**

For more information visit the resource library on the Clearwater website <https://www.clearwater.asn.au>

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