

# Water's role in Healthy Environments

Regional cities and towns are connected to healthy aquatic and terrestrial environments that support local biodiversity. Resilient ecosystems support productive landscapes that in turn support regional communities.

## Place-makers and Healthy Environments

Many professions contribute to the creation of Healthy Environments through their role in place-making. People with roles in strategy and planning, urban design, engineering and environment, community development, and others, all contribute to healthy urban environments connected to healthy regional environments. They implement strategies and plans that protect and preserve our natural assets. They use regulatory tools to manage the human impacts of urban development, industry and agriculture, and restore degraded waterways through targeted interventions. They also play an important role in facilitating community connection with nature by creating access to green spaces in and around urban centres.



Strategy & Planning



Urban Design



Engineering & Environment



Community Development



### How does water support Healthy Environments?

#### Water is integral to healthy ecosystems.

Water sustains catchments and waterways, and supports terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity. Water underpins healthy and productive landscapes that contribute to the viability of our drinking water catchments and regional agriculture. Water supports the forests, plants and animals that form the unique character of our regions.

Place-makers work with each other and with community to achieve the opportunities water brings to creating healthy urban and regional environments. Bringing together different skills and disciplines makes these possibilities a reality by leveraging resources, skills and knowledge.

These pages articulate the connection between water and healthy environments, and your role as a place-maker in collaborative and integrated planning to deliver this outcome.

# How can I contribute to creating Healthy Environments?

This could be achieved by doing things like:



**Place-makers** take a holistic approach to managing urban and rural impacts on natural ecosystems.  
Helps achieve Council Plan, Council Health and Wellbeing Plan, Regional Catchment Strategy

# Healthy Environments: Case Studies

## Environmental benefits through offsets in Kilmore



Goulburn Valley Water needed a sustainable, environmentally positive solution for sewage treatment in Kilmore. Instead of upgrading existing facilities at significant cost, they developed an offsets scheme to reduce the nutrient loads and allow treated sewerage to be safely discharged into the Kilmore Creek, bringing flows to a more natural state.

This is the first scheme of this type approved by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA). It was the most cost-effective option, provides a sustainable, long-term solution for Kilmore's population growth and offers the opportunity to enhance a local asset. This initiative will significantly improve the ecological condition and restore flows of the currently degraded Kilmore Creek.

**Daniel Flanagan**  
Regional Operations Manager, Goulburn Valley Water

"Our traditional approach to managing sewerage doesn't have an environmental benefit. This scheme allows us to improve the health of the Kilmore Creek through flexible offsets such as fencing, riparian zone improvement or stormwater management and discharging recycled water to the creek to mimic natural flows.

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**"There was a focus at the start on what we could do to get the creek back to a more natural state."**

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Initially, we spoke with the EPA and got a positive response so we engaged RMCG and several fresh water ecologists to give us expert advice. We sought feedback from community groups and went through a lengthy Ecological Risk Assessment to discuss the values of the Kilmore Creek and the risks to those values. There was a focus at the start on what we could do to get the creek back to a more natural state."



## Enhancing the Gippsland Lakes through better farm management

The West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA) oversees projects to encourage farmers to become more water efficient and reduce nutrient runoff to protect the health of local waterways and the Gippsland Lakes. The longest running is the Macalister Irrigation District (MID) Irrigation Efficiency Incentives Program. It involves working with farmers to develop individual farm irrigation plans, establish reuse systems and convert irrigation systems from flood to spray irrigation.

To date, WGCMA have assisted farmers to develop irrigation farm plans for around 70% of the MID which represents 37,000 hectares of land. Prevention of nutrients entering waterways has improved water quality in wetlands, rivers and the Gippsland Lakes and helped reduce the threat of salinity in the catchment.

**Shayne Haywood**  
Land Team Leader, West Gippsland CMA

"About 18 years ago, the Gippsland Lakes Taskforce were chartered with developing the Gippsland Lakes Nutrient Reduction Plan. It identified that the MID constituted about 16% of the catchment area, but contributed about 40-50% of the phosphorous loads into the Gippsland Lakes. From that, it was determined the best bang for buck was to support farmers to better plan their farms, have the most appropriate irrigation for their soil type and use water as efficiently as possible and thereby reduce runoff from farms.

Overall, we have seen an improvement in the lakes and this has broad-ranging environmental and economic benefits."

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# Why Integrated Planning?

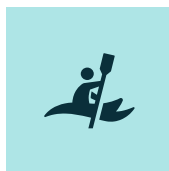
An integrated approach to water planning and management can provide multiple benefits to communities beyond water supply, sewage and drainage services, such as:



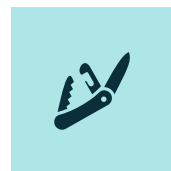
Green and cool streetscapes



Healthy waterways and habitat



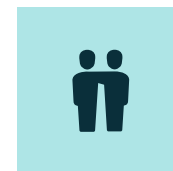
Water for sport and recreation



Multipurpose assets



Supply security



Engaging places for community connection

In order to realise those benefits of an integrated approach to water planning and management in an efficient and cost-effective way, we need to bring all our place-makers together. Even though they may not see themselves as associated with water, professionals in strategy and planning, urban design, engineering and environment and community development can all help achieve these broader benefits in the local context through early planning, collaborative decision-making and considering the whole system.

This document highlights the benefits of working beyond operational and organisational silos so that all place-makers contribute to Healthy Environments through the way water is managed. Healthy Environments is one outcome from a list of five – the others are Healthy Communities, Economic Opportunity, Vibrant Centres, Climate Resilience - that all characterise the best of regional Victoria.



Want to know more?

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