



Waterways

A summary of Melbourne Water's
Operating Charter for waterway management
in the Port Phillip and Westernport region

Waterways Operating Charter

From cascading streams high in forested mountain and rural areas to urban creeks, wetlands and our major rivers and estuaries, waterways are the lifeblood of our landscape and our community.

There are significant threats to the health of our waterways and water resources, including the continuing drought, potential climate change impacts and expectations for future growth throughout the Port Phillip and Westernport region.

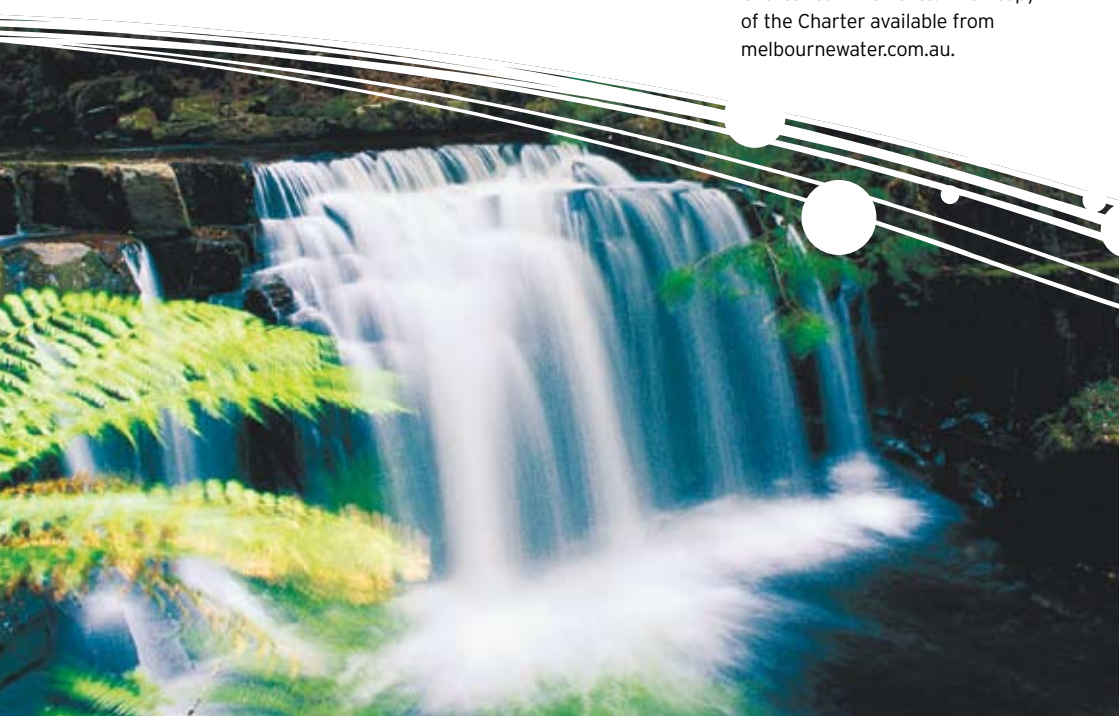
In this context, long-term planning is critical to ensure that our waterways remain healthy and vital and continue to contribute to our sense of community wellbeing.

Melbourne Water has prepared a Waterways Operating Charter that outlines our commitment to our stakeholders and the community in relation to managing waterways, drainage and floodplains.

The Charter outlines programs to improve the health, water quality, amenity and understanding of our waterways, to manage environmental flows and urban development, to provide an appropriate level of flood protection for communities, and to involve and engage with stakeholders and the community.

It sets out long-term aims, 10-year goals, and specific targets and measures for 2008-2013 - all independently audited each year. It also defines the works and services required to achieve the Charter's 10-year goals, and sets out how we will work with government agencies, community, local councils, rural landholders, developers and other stakeholders to achieve these goals.

This is a brief overview of our Charter commitments. A full copy of the Charter available from melbournewater.com.au.



Who we are, what we do

Melbourne Water manages Melbourne's water supply catchments, removes and treats most of Melbourne's sewage, and manages rivers and creeks and major drainage systems throughout the Port Phillip and Westernport region.

Melbourne Water is owned by the Victorian Government has an independent Board of Directors responsible for governance. The responsible Minister is the Minister for Water. We are a significant business, managing \$8.7 billion in water supply, sewerage and drainage assets.

The Victorian Government in its *Our Water Our Future* action plan designated Melbourne Water as caretaker of river health with responsibility for waterways, drainage and floodplain management, the management of the Environmental Water Reserve, and water quality monitoring throughout the Port Phillip and Westernport region.

Our role as caretaker of river health

As caretaker of river health, we strive to:

- Manage our rivers, creeks and drainage systems to improve waterway health and the wellbeing of the community
- Provide a safe level of flood protection for communities
- Show leadership and work collaboratively with stakeholders and the community
- Provide opportunities for community involvement to strengthen connections with waterways and encourage contribution to river and creek health
- Make long-term decisions based on the best available science by undertaking or supporting collaborative research and an extensive monitoring and investigations program
- Take an integrated and sustainable approach to our work by balancing social, economic and environmental outcomes
- Evaluate our performance in a transparent manner that promotes our achievements and identifies areas for improvement.



The Port Phillip and Westernport region

Melbourne Water's operating area encompasses the 12,800 square kilometre Port Phillip and Westernport region, which takes in the Werribee, Maribyrnong, Yarra, Dandenong and Westernport catchments. It extends from high up in the Yarra Ranges, across to Ballan in the west and from the Mornington Peninsula and Phillip Island to Lancefield in the north.

About 23% of the region is urbanised. Extensive clearing for agriculture and urban and industrial development have resulted in significant loss of environmental values, with waterways providing important areas of remnant native vegetation and valuable community open space.



There are approximately 8000 kilometres of rivers and creeks in the region and \$2.7 billion in drainage and waterway-related assets directly managed by Melbourne Water.

The wide variety of landforms and ecosystems support more than 1860 species of native plants and 600 species of native animals.



Over 550 volunteer community groups undertake activities related to catchment and waterway health. The region's urban rivers and creeks are important areas for recreation and a major contributor to Melbourne's 'liveability'. Over 50 million visits each year are made to waterways in the region with the Yarra River the focus of many community events and celebrations.

Rivers and creeks continue to be a vital part of regional Aboriginal culture and community identity. A range of European and Aboriginal heritage values exist along the region's waterways, including the Cobbledick Ford Reserve on the Werribee River, Dights Falls on the Yarra and the Edithvale Seaford wetlands on the Mornington Peninsula.

Challenges for management

- **Urban development** - The region's population is expected to increase by more than 800,000 people by 2030. We must protect existing environmental values and waterway health while providing services for urban growth.
- **Climate change** - Research suggests increased average and summer temperatures, reduced rainfall and more intense storms. Potential impacts will need to be taken into account in managing river health and flood protection.
- **Managing flood risks** - There are more than 100,000 properties identified at risk of flooding. With an increase in households and possible climate changes, flood and drainage management will need to anticipate and adapt to changing circumstances.
- **Building on our knowledge** - We must always strive to fill gaps and reduce uncertainty in the science and knowledge underpinning our work.
- **Managing competing interests** - While implementing our programs, we often need to manage competing interests - for example, when working to protect river health, while ensuring that urban development does not adversely affect our capacity to protect from flooding.
- **Working with our stakeholders and communities** - In a region with 3.8 million people and 38 local councils, we need to be able to understand and respond to the needs and expectations of a diverse range of communities.

Platypus are an indicator of the health of rivers. Surveys conducted by Australian Platypus Conservancy biologist Geoff Williams, show that "Platypus are occurring in larger numbers along the Yarra in Melbourne's middle suburbs... with sightings in Fairfield and Kew."



Waterways Operating Charter programs and goals

This is a summary of programs and goals from the Waterways Operating Charter. The Charter also contains detailed implementation targets to be achieved over the five years from 2008/09 - 2012/13.

Community and stakeholder engagement and involvement

Building trust and strengthening working relationships is a key part of Melbourne Water's community and stakeholder engagement and decision making processes. Working in partnership with others, we can enhance our knowledge, better understand and meet expectations and achieve shared goals for managing waterways, drainage and floodplains.

Programs in this area include:

- In conjunction with the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority, provide grants to individuals, community groups and agencies to improve river health

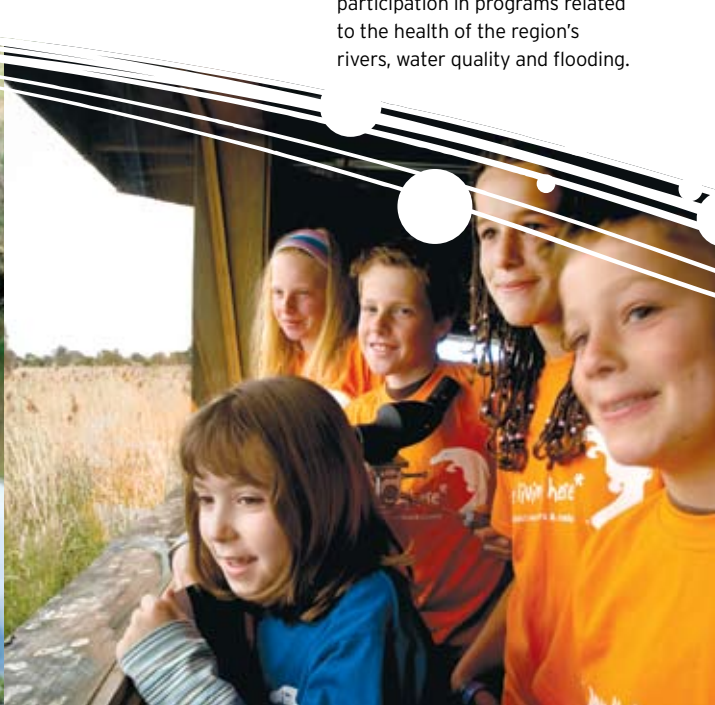
- Ensure our works and programs respect Indigenous and European cultural heritage
- Understand community and stakeholder expectations of waterways
- Share our information and expertise on waterways, drainage and flooding
- Involve students and the community our waterways and education programs such as Waterwatch and Frog Census.

Long-term aim

To build trust and strengthen working relationships with key stakeholders and the community.

10-year goal

To achieve a high level of community and stakeholder understanding and active participation in programs related to the health of the region's rivers, water quality and flooding.



Managing waterways

As the caretaker of river health, Melbourne Water works with others to achieve healthy rivers, creeks, estuaries, wetlands and floodplains that enhance community enjoyment.

With 25% of waterways currently in good or excellent condition (according to the Index of River Condition), we are working towards meeting our goal of all waterways in good or better condition by 2025.

Specific programs include:

- Controlling weeds and revegetating along waterways to improve river health
- Removing fish barriers
- Stabilising bed and banks of waterways
- Undertaking works to improve in-stream aquatic habitat.

Long-term aim

To ensure that Melbourne's rivers and creeks are healthy, with increased numbers of native fish, platypus and plant life.

10-year goals

To have 50% of rivers and creeks in good or excellent condition by 2015 (as measured by the Index of River Condition).

Managing environmental flows

In partnership with government agencies, industries, landowners and the community, Melbourne Water works towards ensuring sufficient environmental flows to support river health and protect a wide range of beneficial uses of waterways. We also manage the Environmental Water Reserve set aside for a number of rivers in the region.

We are

- Undertaking studies to understand the flow requirements needed for different rivers to be healthy
- Working with the community, other agencies and water managers to find the best ways to meet these requirements
- Licensing private diverters in the Yarra catchment and parts of the lower Maribyrnong and western catchments.

Long-term aim

Waterways are managed to ensure sufficient environmental flows to support river health and protect beneficial uses.

10-year goal

Significant progress is made towards implementing Environmental Water Reserve recommendations of the *Central Region Sustainable Water Strategy* and *Our Water Our Future* action plan.



Managing water quality

Melbourne Water is working to provide leadership and direction to improve the quality of stormwater and catchment runoff entering our waterways and bays.

Programs in this area include:

- Working with local government to improve urban water quality management and building capacity
- Addressing point source pollution 'hotspots'
- Working with developers to offset pollutant loads if they aren't treated at the source
- A new focus on improving rural water quality.

Long-term aim

In collaboration with others, to achieve objectives for water quality in accordance with state environmental protection policies and targets set out in the *Regional River Health Strategy* and *Waterways Water Quality Strategy*.

10-year goal

In collaboration with others, protect and improve water quality to significantly counteract the effects of growth in greater Melbourne and achieve a net reduction in pollutant loads for the Port Phillip and Westernport region.

Flood management and drainage

Melbourne Water undertakes mapping of floodplains and overland flow paths, carries out flood mitigation works and provides flood warning services to help plan and provide a safe level of flood protection for the community.

Priorities include:

- Identifying areas at risk of flooding
- Working with stakeholders to develop programs to eliminate or reduce risks to an acceptable level
- Managing residual risks through improving community awareness, understanding and preparedness.



Long-term aim

To minimise all currently known intolerable flooding risks to public health and safety, property and infrastructure and increase community understanding and preparedness for floods.

10-year goals

- Implement flood protection measures to reduce currently known intolerable flood risks by 30% by 2018
- Implement a community flood awareness and preparation program
- Support the preparation of Municipal Emergency Management Plans to ensure local government and communities understand flood risks and are prepared for flood, and to coordinate flood mitigation actions with Melbourne Water.

Managing urban growth

Melbourne Water aims to ensure urban development achieves appropriate standards of flood protection while providing infrastructure in new growth areas that can protect water quality and the environment and contribute to community wellbeing.

Work in this area includes:

- Developing schemes that provide for the orderly provision of infrastructure in growth areas (such as underground drains, wetlands, and stormwater treatment) to ensure urban development does not adversely impact on levels of flood protection, river health or stormwater quality
- Assessing planning permit applications for development in flood prone areas and placing appropriate conditions on them
- Providing updated flood information to councils and the community.

Long-term aims

- Ensure urban development achieves appropriate standards of flood protection, protects waterway health and is sensitive to the environmental and social values of waterways

- Deliver an efficient service and provide accurate, timely and reliable information to the development industry and community.

10-year goals

- Improve transparency and streamline and facilitate improved access to information for the development industry, community and other interested parties
- Ensure appropriate standards of flood protection and environmental performance are consistently and equitably achieved for all urban development
- Benefit the local community through the provision of drainage and waterway assets that integrate with the urban infrastructure and open space
- Achieve improved sustainability of urban development by implementing water sensitive urban design and facilitating increased stormwater reuse
- Manage the potential impacts of increasing redevelopment activity on levels of flood protection service in established areas of Melbourne
- Find cost-effective strategies for servicing growth that minimise impacts on housing affordability.



Monitoring, investigations and research

Melbourne Water undertakes extensive monitoring, investigations and research to develop a comprehensive base to support our activities and report on progress to government, stakeholders and the community.

We monitor and investigate water quality, streamflow, fish, threatened and flagship species, weeds, sediments, litter and physical stream condition.

We also research the impacts of climate change and urbanisation on stream ecology, methods of urban stormwater treatment, and understanding links between the catchment and estuarine and marine receiving waters.

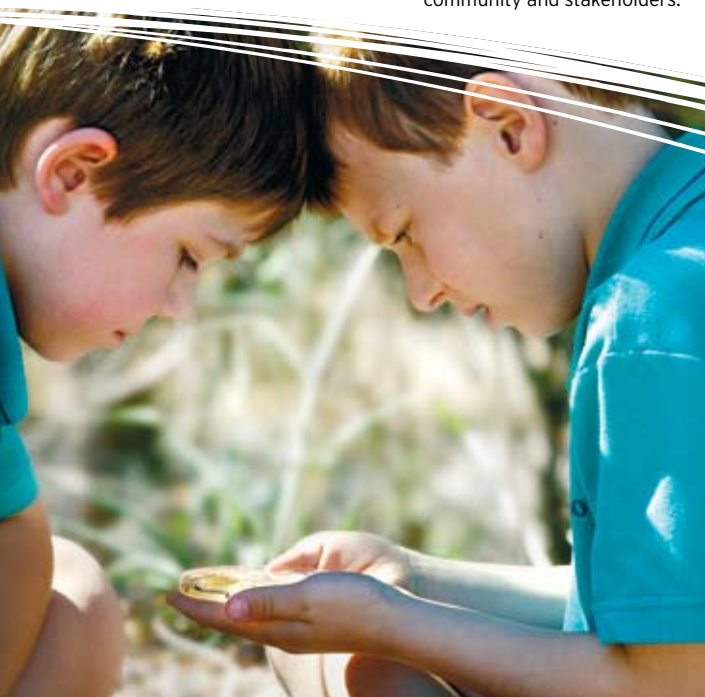
Long-term aim

To build a comprehensive knowledge base relating to waterways, drainage and floodplains to improve decision-making and evaluation of progress.

10-year goals

To undertake monitoring, investigations and research on rivers, creeks, wetlands, floodplains, estuaries and bays in order to:

- Better understand their condition
- Measure progress towards management targets
- Identify and understand threatening processes
- Improve effectiveness of management activities
- Inform Government, community and stakeholders.

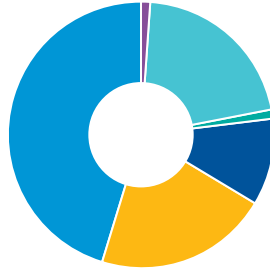


Students from Ashwood School participating in Waterwatch activities near Gardiners Creek in Burwood, take a closer look at some of the creatures found in the water.

Funding to achieve our goals

Our ambitious, but achievable, targets require significant commitment and resources. The figure below shows capital and operating expenditure allocated to each of the main work areas in the Waterways Operating Charter over the next five years.

The Operating Charter was prepared in consultation with the Waterways Advisory Committee, which oversees Melbourne Water's management of waterways, drainage and floodplains. Copies can be downloaded from our website at melbournewater.com.au or you can call 131 722 for copies or further information.



Capital and operating expenditure 2008/09 to 2012/13 (\$ millions)

- Community and stakeholder \$11.58M
- Managing waterway improvements \$175M**
- Managing environmental flows \$9.8M
- Managing water quality \$87.3M*
- Flood and drainage management \$179.6M*
- Managing urban growth \$380.5M

* includes funding for monitoring, investigations and research projects (under Monitoring, investigations and research section).

** includes funding for monitoring, investigations and research projects and some waterways community projects such as stream frontage management grants.





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