

The benefits of recovering additional water for the Maribyrnong River

The Maribyrnong River and its key values

The Maribyrnong River valley has been home to the Wurundjeri and Bunurong peoples for at least 40,000 years, and they continue to care for and have a deep connection to the lands and waterways of the region. The Maribyrnong River flows for 160 km through agricultural land, townships and suburbs such as Lancefield, Gisborne, Sunbury, Keilor and Sunshine.

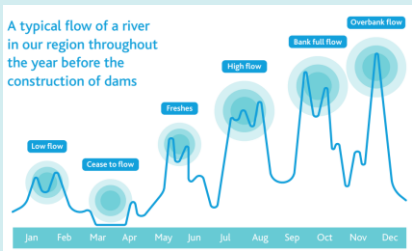
The Maribyrnong River supports a range of native fish species, such as the threatened Yarra Pygmy Perch, as well as platypus and a diverse waterbug community. In addition, the river provides water for productive agriculture, and recreational opportunities like kayaking, fishing, bird watching, picnicking and walking.



What is “water for the environment” and why does the Maribyrnong River need it?

“Water for the environment” is water managed to improve or maintain the health of rivers and wetlands – including the plants and animals that depend on them. This includes ensuring that water is released at the right location, volume, timing, frequency, duration and quality.

There are a range of types of flows present in a natural flow regime which we try to replicate through the use of “water for the environment”. However, because water is taken out of the river for drinking and farming, there is not enough water at the right time for native animals and plants to be healthy.







How much water does the Maribyrnong River need now and into the future?

The Maribyrnong River currently does not have an environmental water entitlement. However, it needs more water now, and it will need even more water into the future due to the impacts of climate change.

The Victorian Government’s target by 2032 is to recover 7 gigalitres of water (or almost 3,000 Olympic sized swimming pools) to use each year to benefit the Maribyrnong River’s values. This will be a step in the right direction towards ensuring that the health of the Maribyrnong River and its social, cultural and economic values are protected to support and enhance liveability for future generations to come.

What are the environmental benefits of additional water for the Maribyrnong River?

The following table shows what will happen to key environmental values of the Maribyrnong River in the future. With no environmental water entitlement, these values will not be protected from climate change. However, with an additional 7 gigalitres per year, fish and waterbugs can be protected from the worst of climate change, and platypus can be maintained in their current condition.

What will happen to these values in the future with...	No additional water for the Maribyrnong River	Additional 7 gigalitres per year for the Maribyrnong River
Fish 	Not protected from climate change	Protected from the worst of climate change
Platypus 	Not protected from climate change	Maintained in its current condition
Waterbugs 	Not protected from climate change	Protected from the worst of climate change
Plants 	Not protected from climate change	Not protected from climate change

Recovery of smaller volumes of water also benefits the Maribyrnong River. For example, just 1 gigalitre can deliver enough flow to prevent drying of refuge habitat for platypus and sustain their food source during summer, and 2 gigalitres can also provide freshes in summer to allow fish to move downstream past barriers. However, more than 7 gigalitres of water is needed now and into the future to improve all values.

To find out more about Water for the Environment visit:
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