



**GOULBURN  
BROKEN**  
CATCHMENT  
MANAGEMENT  
AUTHORITY

# ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17 SUMMARY



## 2016-17 HIGHLIGHTS

There were many highlights and milestones during the past 12 months as we celebrated 20 years of integrated catchment management across Victoria.

- We led development of the Victorian Government's Catchment Carbon Offsets Trial. This involved putting up a "virtual" case study of options for generating catchment carbon offsets. Jacobs was engaged to support the trial's development and evaluate implementation of possible formats for future "real" catchment carbon offsets projects.
- The Australian Government-funded Creating Biodiverse Carbon Landscapes project wrapped up – over the four years of the project more than 150 farmers protected more than 3000 hectares of private land.
- Completed reports on changes to land and water use, and water security and supply in the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District. The findings of the reports will no doubt be reflected in the Murray Darling Basin Authority's evaluation of socio-economic and environmental impacts of Basin Plan implementation in the southern Basin, which is due to be released later this year. Our reports found that despite the many challenges faced by the region, our farmers and communities remain resilient and resourceful.
- After a very dry 2015/16 the picture quite suddenly changed – it started raining in July and did not seem to let up much for the next few months. Minor and moderate flooding were experienced along some stretches of the Goulburn and Broken rivers during this period but fortunately infrastructure and landholders were spared from significant impact through some good inter-agency planning and community action.
- Two environmental flows were cancelled in spring due to heavy rain and the resulting natural flooding. In January another challenge was faced – a blackwater event in the Goulburn River. This was caused by heavy rain washing leaf litter and other organic debris in to Goulburn River tributaries. Combined with warm air and water temperatures, this led to a rapid drop in dissolved oxygen levels, which sadly caused significant native fish deaths. Thanks to good inter-agency relationships, we worked with GMW to deliver a flow from Goulburn Weir that helped dilute the blackwater, limiting the fish deaths to the stretch between Mooroopna and Undera.
- The Goulburn Broken Biodiversity Strategy was reviewed and updated to ensure it continues to align with local, regional, Victorian and Australian strategies and plans such as the state's Biodiversity 2037 plan. We are the only CMA to have its own biodiversity strategy. This means we can show our landholders, partners and investors that our decisions and priorities around what works are done, where they're done and why they're done, are based on years of best practice and good science, with strong input from our community.
- Since 2008, we have worked with landholders to fence more than 1,100 kilometres of waterways and planted more than 2,000 hectares of riparian vegetation. Since 2011, we have placed more than 2,650 snags and other habitat structures in waterways in our region with funding from the Recreational Fishing Licence Grants Program and the Waterway and Catchment health initiative.
- In a first for the Murray Darling Basin, we led co-ordination of flow releases in the Goulburn and Campaspe rivers that were timed to coincide with an environmental flow in the Murray River, which was then followed up with a flow in the Loddon River. Co-ordinated flows aimed to encourage native fish (particularly silver and golden perch) to move between rivers.



# WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING ACROSS THE CATCHMENT?

## AG FLOODPLAINS

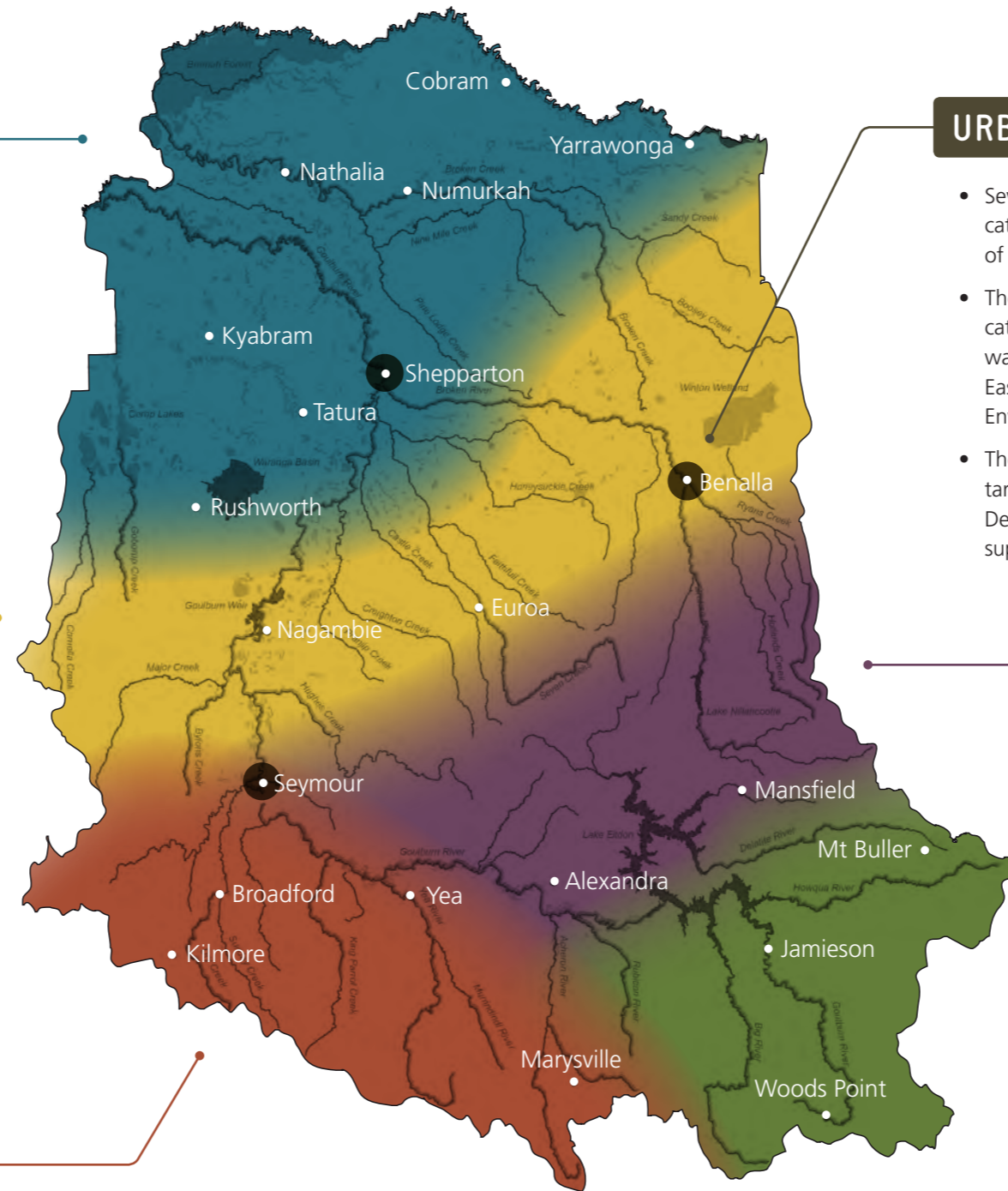
- More than 600 individual irrigator projects worth over \$160 million have now been funded since the Farm Water Program started in mid-2010. Innovative approaches to improve farm irrigation efficiency, including solar-powered pumps to reduce energy costs and sprinklers that can adjust the amount of water applied to suit the soil type, are among the 98 projects worth around \$35 million funded through the latest (fifth) round of the program.
- The first year of the Our Catchments Our Communities project Linking the Lower Goulburn got under way. The first year involved revegetation, pest control, rubbish removal, weed management, fencing removal and repair and watering on public land.

## PRODUCTIVE PLAINS

- A community event was held at Glenrowan in October to celebrate installation of 150 specially designed nest boxes, 80 hectares of revegetation and 4 kilometres of remnant vegetation fencing completed as part of the Turquoise Parrot project. A booklet *Turquoise Country – Communities caring for the threatened Turquoise Parrot* was also launched at the event.
- The Healthy Hectares booklet was developed in partnership with the Euroa Arboretum to help small landholders to create productive and environmentally sustainable properties. This project was funded through the Beyond SoilCare project thanks to funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

## COMMUTING HILLS

- In Kilmore due to population growth, the demand for water and the need to manage the associated increase in the volume of sewage is pressing as the current water recycling method is becoming obsolete. Goulburn Valley Water, who provide the town's water and sewerage services, has developed the Kilmore Water Quality Offsets Pilot Project. This involves returning treated water to the local Kurkurac Creek. We will undertake works along the creek, which involves excluding stock, revegetation and erosion and weed management, to offset any related water quality issues.
- A significant milestone in terms of protecting local, regional, state and national social and environmental assets was marked in April after VCAT ruled against expansion of a mine of the Goulburn River floodplain at Seymour. We had pursued this matter because of the potential serious consequences on the Goulburn River floodplain and associated major local, regional and national infrastructure if the expansion went ahead.



## URBAN CENTRES/CATCHMENT WIDE

- Seventeen community information sessions were held across the catchment during January and February as part of development of the Regional Floodplain Management Strategy.
- The first on-farm trial of virtual fencing was conducted on a cattle farm near Tumburumba in NSW. Funding for this project was coordinated through the Goulburn Broken CMA, North East CMA, Murray Local Land Services and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.
- The Codference, a conference focusing on Murray cod and targeting recreational anglers, was held in Shepparton in December. The event was hosted by Fisheries Victoria and supported by the Goulburn Broken CMA.

## UPLAND SLOPES

- The Our Communities Our Catchments Bogies & Beyond project involved communities in identifying the environmental and social values they believe make the area (extending from near Euroa to around Mansfield), so special. This community-led planning identified protecting water resources through water bore monitoring and support for landholders to understand the productive and environmental benefits of the region's large paddock trees as priorities for future on-ground works.
- More than 70 people attended a community forum in Mansfield in September run by Upper Broken Landcare Group and Up2Us Landcare Network, on behalf of the Goulburn Broken CMA, addressing concerns about increasing populations of deer and some native animals. The audience heard from Vic Police, DELWP, Game Management Authority and the Deer Shooters Association about existing laws, Government programs and practical actions landholders could take to address their concerns.

## SOUTHERN FORESTS

- Taungurung Whole of Country Plan was completed with Elder approval. This was a two-year journey and a major output for the Building Traditional Owners Capacity and Participation Project funded by the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.
- Goulburn Broken CMA presented to over 200 trout anglers at the Wild Trout Conference in Mansfield in November where a strong focus on riparian and instream habitat was the key theme.

## ACHIEVEMENTS DURING 2016-17

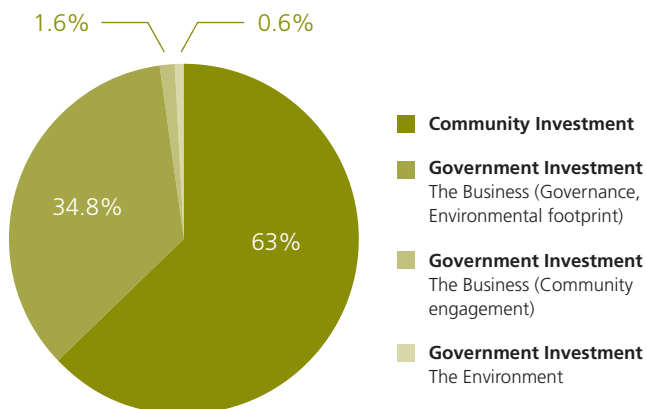
Output <sup>i</sup>	Achieved	Target <sup>ii</sup>
Remnant vegetation fenced, hectares	1,127	451
Wetlands fenced, hectares	137	25
Rivers and streams fenced, hectares	294	-
Riparian land fenced, hectares	431	25
Long-term conservation agreements, hectares <sup>iii</sup>	18	60
Indigenous revegetation planted, hectares	487	196
Irrigation drains built, kilometres	-	-
Reuse systems installed, numbers	5	5
Laser levelling, hectares	4,460	9,972
Groundwater pumps installed, numbers	-	-
Weeds treated, hectares	8,529	6,377
Rabbits and foxes treated, hectares	10,423	10,398
Environmental water use, megalitres	479,164	-
River or stream bed and bank protection actions, kilometres	1.24	-
Fishway structures installed and barriers modified, numbers	-	-
Threatened species projects, numbers	-	-
Whole farm plans prepared, numbers	74	180

i. Please see more detail in the Annual Report.

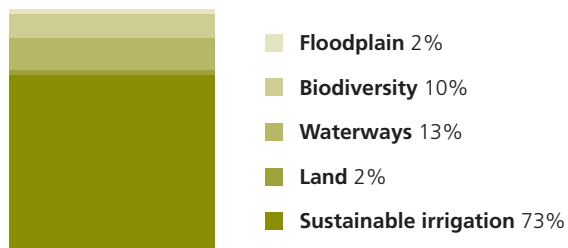
ii. Targets are determined by considering levels of government funding as at 30 June 2016 and any subsequent adjustments over the financial year.

iii. These are shown as 'Binding management agreements' in the detailed outputs in the Annual Report. This target will only be reported once covenants are on title, which takes more than 12 months.

## GOULBURN BROKEN INVESTMENT SHARE



## GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT - THE ENVIRONMENT



## WHAT'S NEXT?

- Continued implementation of the Climate Change Adaptation Plan.
- Community engagement and partnerships continue to be priorities through activities such as:
  - implementation of projects aligned to Our Catchments Our Communities and implementation of statewide guidelines
  - implementation of the Goulburn Broken Indigenous Participation Plan
- The Strathbogie Streams Regional Riparian Action Plan project will continue to work with landholders and other stakeholders to improve the health of waterways.
- Opportunities for multiple uses of environmental water will continue to be explored with neighbouring CMAs, the Victorian and Commonwealth Environmental Water Holders and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority.
- A FLOWS study will be prepared for the lower Broken Creek. The study will develop a set of environmental objectives for the management of water dependent values (eg native fish, aquatic plants and physical habitat) and identify flow recommendations to meet the environmental objectives.
- Finalisation of the new Goulburn Broken Regional Floodplain Management Strategy.
- Strengthening of Conservation Management Networks, Landcare networks and other groups to play a major role in delivering effective partnerships and on-ground works across private and public land.
- Continue to build Indigenous skills, knowledge and capacity to deliver works, contribute to natural resource management planning, traditional ecological knowledge and undertake Indigenous projects on country.
- Report on progress towards soil health targets (pH, soil organic carbon, ground cover) across the Goulburn Broken Catchment.
- Source funding to review the pest plant and animal strategy to recognise current issues such as deer. In the interim, the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources will continue to work with community-based natural resource management groups and the Goulburn Broken CMA to identify priority areas for managing established invasive plants and animals.
- Develop and implement the hybrid drainage system model, using natural flow-paths and removing obstructions to restore natural flows. Five priority catchments are under development: Upper Deakin, Corop Lakes, Guilfus-Congupna, Murray Valley Drain 11 and Mosquito.