

# Regional Catchment Strategy Guidelines 2011



## Foreword

On behalf of the Victorian Catchment Management Council, I am pleased to release these guidelines to assist the Catchment Management Authorities in the preparation of their new Regional Catchment Strategies.

The guidelines provide a minimum set of requirements for the Regional Catchment Strategies to receive endorsement from the Minister for Environment and Climate Change and the Minister for Water. However, the Victorian Catchment Management Council recognises that each region has its own unique history, landscapes, community and aspirations and these differences should be reflected in the Strategies.

This should not mean that the strategy for each region is developed in isolation. Specific reference is made in the guidelines to a common approach on cross-boundary issues, but I wish to urge all Authorities to consider issues where a common approach can be taken, and importantly, articulated in each Regional Catchment Strategy. In particular, matters related to DSE, DPI, local government, coastal authorities, water authorities and Landcare (to name but a few) could be considered from this perspective.

This is a great opportunity for the Catchment Management Authorities to interact with their agency partners and with the broader community in setting the direction of how each region's land, water and biodiversity resources should be managed. This requires better relationships across the spectrum of organisations and community groups involved in integrated catchment management, in the broadest sense.

We all play a part in managing the State's land, water and biodiversity resources. The Regional Catchment Strategies are an important building block in improving the condition of those resources over time, thus serving the community well both now and into the future.



Mick Murphy OAM  
Chair

## Role of the Victorian Catchment Management Council

The Victorian Catchment Management Council (Council) issues these guidelines under the provisions of the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*, (CaLP Act) Schedule 2, Clause 2(2), which states that 'A management plan must be prepared in accordance with any guidelines established by the Council'. Here a management plan means a regional catchment strategy (RCS).

## Purpose of the Regional Catchment Strategy

The RCS is the primary integrated planning framework for land, water and biodiversity management in each of the ten catchment management regions of Victoria. The RCS is also the overarching strategic framework for action, under which are found a range of sub-strategies and action plans for each region.

Catchment management is defined in the Act as: '...the co-ordinated management of land and water resources, using catchments as a basis'. The marine component of the RCSs for the coastal Catchment Management Authorities should focus on catchment-based risks to marine natural assets.

## Role of the Catchment Management Authorities

A role of each Catchment Management Authority (CMA) is to prepare a regional catchment strategy for the region and to co-ordinate and monitor its implementation (*CaLP Act* s.12 (1) (a)).

## Requirements for RCS

The following requirements for each RCS are currently described in the *CaLP Act*, s. 24.

The RCS must:

- a) assess the land and water resources of the catchments in the region and how they are used; and
- b) assess the nature, causes, extent and severity of land degradation of the catchments in the region and identify areas for priority attention; and
- c) identify objectives for the quality of the land and water resources of the catchments in the region; and
- d) set a program of measures to promote improved use of land and water resources and to treat land degradation; and
- e) state the action necessary to implement the strategy and who should take it; and
- f) specify procedures for monitoring the implementation of the strategy, achieving the land and water resource quality objectives and assessing the effectiveness of the program set under paragraph (d); and
- g) provide for the review of the strategy.

The *CaLP Act* states that a strategy may also provide for all or any of the following:

- a) research;
- b) educational programs;
- c) land use planning;
- d) the establishment of land management advisory services; and
- e) incentives for better land management.

## Other requirements in legislation regarding consultation

Other requirements for RCS preparation include the provisions for consultation in Schedule 2, Clause 2(3) that:

'In preparing a management plan the Authority must consult with—

- a) any Minister or public authority whose interests the Authority considers are likely to be affected by the management plan; and
- b) land owners in the area affected by the plan; and
- c) any other people whose interests the Authority considers are likely to be affected by the management plan.'

The minimum community consultation requirements in (b) and (c) above are set out in Schedule 2, Clause 2(3) as follows:

- a) 'making the management plan available for inspection by the public for at least 4 weeks after its preparation; and
- b) publishing a notice in a newspaper circulating generally in the area affected by the plan stating where and when the management plan can be inspected, and inviting public comment by a set date; and
- c) considering any comments made by the set date; and
- d) making any appropriate changes to the management plan.'

Note that Schedule 2, Clause 2(5) provides discretion for CMAs to go beyond the minimum requirements, as follows:

'An Authority may take any other steps it thinks appropriate to involve the community in the preparation of a management plan.'

## Objectives and Outcomes for RCS

The following are the objectives of the *CaLP Act* that are relevant to the RCS:

- a) to establish a framework for the integrated and co-ordinated management of catchments which will—
  - i. maintain and enhance long-term land productivity while also conserving the environment; and
  - ii. aim to ensure that the quality of the State's land and water resources and their associated plant and animal life are maintained and enhanced;
- b) to establish processes that can be used to assess the condition of the State's land and water resources and the effectiveness of land protection measures;
- c) to establish processes to encourage and support participation of land holders, resource managers and other members of the community in catchment management and land protection.

## Approval of Regional Catchment Strategies

The *CaLP Act* requires CMAs to submit RCSs to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change and the Minister for Water for approval. The Act states that the Ministers must consult with any other Minister whose interests are likely to be affected by the RCS.

Relevant legislation, policies, strategies and frameworks include 'Caring for our country' program, Victorian River Health Strategy, Victorian Biodiversity Strategy, Victorian Coastal Strategy, State Environment Protection Policy, Victorian *Catchment and Land Protection*

*Act 1994, Water Act 1989, Planning and Environment Act 1987, Climate Change Act 2010, Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*; plus appropriate regional and local strategies and plans should be taken into account.

When the Ministers publish notice of approval in the *Government Gazette*, the RCS becomes operational on that date, or on any later day stated in the RCS.

### **Timelines**

The final RCS needs to be submitted to the Ministers one year from the time that new CMA Boards are appointed. There should be provision for a review three years from that date.

### **Consistency across the State**

Consistency in the RCSs across the State is desirable in some aspects including:

- assets-based approach, where assets include land, water and biodiversity; and
- monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

It is expected that CMAs have been involved in the development of consistent approaches to these topics, approaches which have been produced by DSE, and that these approaches will be incorporated as far as is timely and practicable into the RCS and its implementation.

### **Minimum requirements approach**

Note that the following criteria form the minimum requirements for approval. It is expected that the RCS will be developed as a strategic and succinct document, possibly web-based, with reference to more detailed supporting documents where appropriate. The criteria for approval will ensure improved consistency in standards across the State.

If CMAs wish to provide other innovative material or go into additional detail, they may do so, subject to available resources.

**CRITERIA**

<b>Contents</b>		<b>Criteria for Approval</b>
A	Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Succinct regional vision</li> </ul>
B	Regional Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Description of the region, from environmental, social, cultural and economic viewpoints. Note that a whole-of- landscape approach is needed, including private and public land, and coastal and marine areas (to three nautical mile limit) where relevant</li> <li>▪ Links to relevant Federal and State legislation, policies and strategies</li> <li>▪ Links to relevant regional policies, strategies and action plans, including provision for dealing effectively with cross-boundary regional issues. A diagram could be used to show where the RCS fits</li> </ul>
C	RCS Development Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Summary of the key findings of the most recent RCS reviews</li> <li>▪ Summary of the RCS development process</li> </ul>
D	Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identification and description of the region's assets, comprising those of international, national, state and regional significance. These land, water and biodiversity assets, and other landscapes, will be defined and mapped at a scale that is appropriate for strategic regional planning</li> </ul>
E	Condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assessment of current condition of land and water resources. This may include reference to ecological processes underpinning the healthy condition of the resources</li> </ul>
F	Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identification and evaluation of significant risks to assets. These risks include external processes and factors such as potential climate change impacts or demographic trends, interpreted at the regional scale</li> </ul>
G	Setting Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High-level objectives for significant assets, using SMART objectives where possible</li> </ul>
H	Management Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cascading from the processes used in reaching conclusions in D-G, prioritise the objectives</li> </ul>
I	Management Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Set measures to achieve the priority objectives</li> </ul>
J	Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reference to regional sub-strategies and action plans which specify the actions and who is responsible</li> </ul>
K	Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Description of the process for performance and catchment condition reporting, including monitoring the implementation of the RCS, achieving the priority management objectives and for assessing the effectiveness of the RCS</li> </ul>

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L	Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Identification of priority partners across management of public and private land and their roles in the implementation of the RCS</li><li>▪ Outline of range of other important groups and individuals and their roles in the region</li></ul>
M	Stakeholder and Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Description of the stakeholder and community engagement process in the development of the RCS (note that this section could be combined with Section C)</li><li>▪ This process must be consistent with the requirements of the CaLP Act and consistent with resourcing for this process</li><li>▪ Brief description of the process for engagement and communications once RCS has been approved</li></ul>
N	Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Describe the provisions for the review of the RCS</li></ul>

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