

What are the steps to achieve the vision?

1. Provide core information on condition of land and water resources
2. Develop a Victorian Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) Knowledge Strategy
3. Ensure better alignment of natural resource planning and statutory planning
4. Develop and increase investment opportunities through market-based instruments
5. Ensure future catchment condition improvement involves all Victorians, urban and rural
6. Encourage risk management responses, innovation and opportunities associated with change



A positive response to environmental watering at Lindsay Island in the Mallee, from August 2004 - May 2006

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Summary Brochure

CATCHMENT CONDITION REPORT 2007

Victorian Catchment Management Council



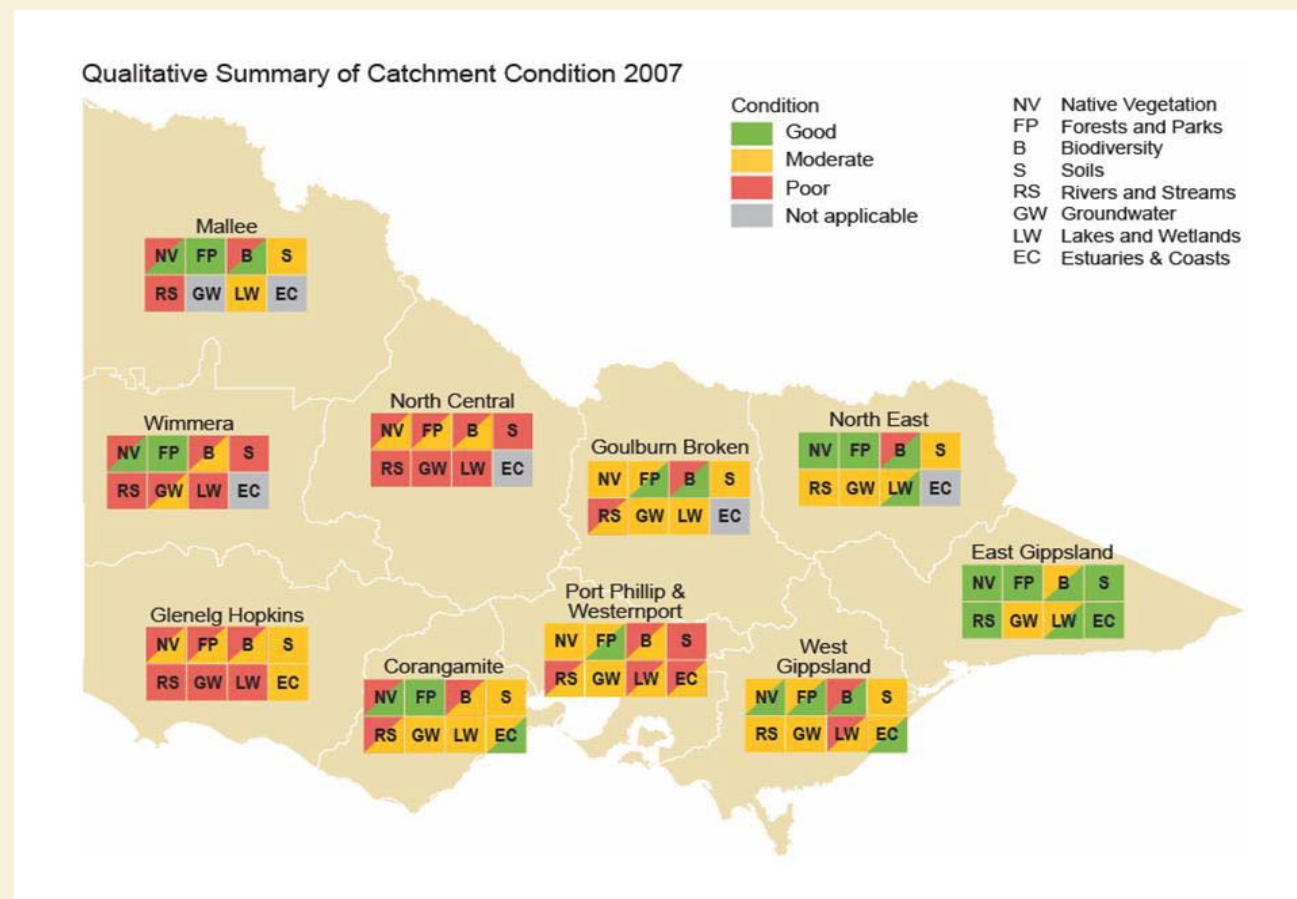
The Council

The Victorian Catchment Management Council (VCMC) is the State's peak advisory body on catchment matters and is required under the **Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994** to report each five years on the condition and management of Victoria's land and water resources. This is the third such report produced by the VCMC.

The Report

The report is arranged into eight themes: land themes are native vegetation; forests and parks; biodiversity; soil; and water themes are: rivers and streams; groundwater; lakes and wetlands; estuaries, coasts and marine areas. Nineteen indicators have been selected to report on these themes. For each indicator, a data quality rating is given and the statewide condition and trends are described. At the theme level, the data quality, statewide condition, trend and the management response are described and assessed, and summarised in a 'Condition Statement 2007'.

The following map shows the VCMC's qualitative assessment of catchment condition for the eight themes.



Key messages include:

- native vegetation is in 'Good' condition in largely intact areas, but in 'Moderate' to 'Poor' condition in the more fragmented and developed parts of the State
- forests and parks are in 'Good' condition, except where they are too small to be ecologically sustainable
- biodiversity is in 'Good' or 'Moderate' condition only at the sub-catchment region level
- rivers and streams are in 'Good' condition in East Gippsland and 'Moderate' to 'Poor' elsewhere; however, their condition has not demonstrably declined over the past five years despite the prolonged drought
- groundwater is in variable condition, with some groundwater resources in decline
- data on environmental condition at the statewide level vary from excellent, such as the Index of Stream Condition data, through to patchy, 'guesstimated' information on soil, lakes and wetlands
- without basic benchmarked data, we do not know and cannot demonstrate what is working (and what is not working) and why investment in activities should continue
- management of the environmental condition of native vegetation, forests and parks, and rivers and streams is generally robust, but is minimal or fragmented for soils, lakes and wetlands, and for estuaries, coastal and marine areas
- levels of activity in managing our land and water resources, and funding levels, are higher than five years ago

A scenario for 2025

In 2025, the State is covered with a mosaic of land uses that match capability. The mosaic includes a mix of intensive agriculture and land formerly used for farming instead producing ecosystem services, supporting rural lifestyles and nature conservation. The continued urbanisation of the State has led to the recognition that there is a credible threat to ecosystems and the services they supply. Urban and peri-urban communities are paying to protect identified environmental assets, and for life-sustaining ecosystem services. The provision of ecosystem services by rural landholders is the newest form of sustainable primary production, underpinning Victoria's social and economic health.

By 2025 the mosaic landscape accommodates 40% coverage of native vegetation in healthy condition across the State. The 20-year strategy has targeted ecosystem and native biodiversity asset protection and restoration works in key areas that presented the best opportunity to rebuild our rural landscapes. At first, the focus was to protect the best remaining ecosystems. Over the past decade we have been able to broaden the rehabilitation efforts to other more modified areas of the landscape.

The mosaic also includes large amenity and lifestyle areas. The quest for knowledge and technical innovation has driven many to provide technology-related services and information to surrounding regional centres and communities. These areas are attracting a variety of urban people for relaxation and recreation, with a proliferation of farm stay businesses, bed and breakfast and ecotourism providers across the State. Key sections of the State are presented as 'wild' landscapes for tourism.



Landscape management decisions are supported by a vast, improved and accessible knowledge base. Consequently our approach is more balanced with emphasis on good science and accurate information. Information about ecological processes is as important as information about resource condition. There has been a real reduction in the extent and severity of our soil health issues due to effective land management programs. New agricultural and technological industries, adapted to low water, energy and nutrient input, have emerged as significant employers to support the innovation and change processes across the landscape.

By 2025, there exist robust climate data to validate 30 years of climate projections. The community's ability to understand and plan for further climate change is greatly enhanced by regionally specific and multi-sectoral projections. Hotter, drier summers and overall reduced rainfall (except in East Gippsland) have led to permanent shifts in water consumption by urban and rural communities and industry and agriculture. Iteration 3 of the successful 'Adaptation to Climate Change' program is being implemented. Funding to plan for and invest in this program, including strategically placed biolinks, is significantly enhanced as a result of greater awareness across Government and the community.