



The Hon Lisa Neville MP
Minister for Water

Tuesday 24 November 2020

PROTECTING OUR WATERWAYS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Protecting our precious natural resources matters more than ever before. This year's Budget will improve the health of Victoria's rivers, creeks and wetlands, preserving these iconic locations for families to enjoy as well as ensuring water security for farmers, towns and industry.

The *Victorian Budget 2020/21* invests \$562 million to make our rivers healthier, improving precious native habitat and helping secure the future of our waterways – and the Victorian businesses and jobs that rely on them.

The centrepiece of this investment is a \$224 million program to improve the management and monitoring of our rivers, creek and waterways – protecting them for Victorian families now, and for generations to come.

This includes everything from new fencing, pest control and revegetation to better coordination and management of our catchments and Ramsar sites – which are some of the most unique and important wetlands sites in the world.

An additional \$65 million will go towards improving our iconic urban waterways and protection for the Yarra and Barwon Rivers and Melbourne's western waterways. This will improve access and the environmental health of waterways to support recreational activities including walking, boating and fishing, and creating community green spaces.

This investment will also see development of new plans and improved governance to encourage alternative water sources such as recycled water and stormwater.

To help Victorians save more water, the Andrews Labor Government will invest \$5 million to continue the Schools Water Efficiency Program, giving schools greater understanding about their water use – and helping students appreciate this precious natural resource.

Nearly \$4 million will go towards fixing leaks and improving water efficiency at community housing properties, saving water and saving residents money.

The Budget will also support 23 Aboriginal Water Officers to assist Traditional Owners in improving the management of waterways across the state – building on our landmark *Water for Victoria* reforms that recognise Aboriginal water values in law.

To support the efficient delivery of water, create jobs and protect rural communities, \$59 million will be invested to support sustainable irrigation and infrastructure projects to increase regional water security and efficiency and develop the water grid, supporting compliance while meeting the challenges of drought and climate change.

Nearly \$24 million will help communities prepare for floods through better planning, forecasting and emergency response, with an extra \$3 million to improve the safety of high-risk dams.

Sustainable water strategies – which support regional communities to manage the future of their water – will be renewed and Victoria's contribution to the Murray Darling Basin Plan will continue along with salinity management.

Together with \$50.9 million already provided through the *Building Works* stimulus package, this brings the Labor Government's total investment in water security, protection and infrastructure to more than \$613 million.

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Quotes attributable to Minister for Water Lisa Neville

“This funding will ensure our rivers, creeks and wetlands are protected, preserved and enjoyed by families across Victoria.”

“Water is precious. And investing in our waterways means investing in the communities, livelihoods and local economies that rely on them.”