



The Hon Richard Wynne MP

Acting Minister for Water

Thursday, 20 May 2021

KEEPING OUR WATERWAYS HEALTHY AND PROTECTING LOCAL JOBS

The Andrews Labor Government is protecting the health of our state's iconic rivers, wetlands and creeks – and backing the farmers, families, communities and jobs that rely on them.

The *Victorian Budget 2021/22* invests almost \$44 million to ensure Victoria's waterways will be protected, preserved and enjoyed by families across the state for generations to come.

The centerpiece of this investment is a \$24.5 million package for work to help regional economies in East Gippsland and North East Victoria recover from the pandemic and the devastating bushfires.

Works will be funded at eight Flagship Waterway sites including the Mitchell, mid-Goulburn, Hopkins, Mitta Mitta and the lower Wimmera rivers, the Murray and Loddon system, Kings Billabong and Corner Inlet and its tributaries.

These works are expected to create around 90 jobs in regional areas over three years.

As part of this \$24.5 million investment in regional areas, the Government is providing \$7.5 million to support community-led projects designed to boost the health of the iconic Gippsland Lakes, along with \$5 million to improve Victoria's internationally recognised Ramsar wetlands.

This year's Budget provides \$8.4 million to help manage water flows in irrigation districts and boost projects that deliver water infrastructure – supporting local farmers and local communities.

Further funding of \$8.5 million will be provided to manage contaminated groundwater in Bendigo and support work on a sustainable, long-term solution for Bendigo's Historic Mine Workings.

A \$2.5 million investment will strengthen compliance and enforcement when it comes to water-theft, supporting our zero-tolerance approach.

This year's investment builds on the \$224 million announced last year's Budget to protect waterways in regional Victoria with better management and monitoring, including new fencing, more pest control, revegetation projects and coordination of catchments and Ramsar sites.

The Labor Government is investing in every aspect of Victoria's waterways – including health and infrastructure, expanding the water grid and modernising irrigation systems across regional and rural Victoria.

By protecting this precious natural resource, we'll protect local economies and protect local jobs.

Quotes attributable to Acting Minister for Water Richard Wynne

"An investment in our waterways is an investment in the future of our state – we cannot take these gifts from nature for granted. We must continue to protect them in every way we can."

"Victoria's waterways drive eco-tourism, support farmers and underpin local economies. By protecting our waterways, we're supporting local communities, their quality of life and their livelihoods."