

# Media Release

The Hon Lisa Neville MP

Minister for Water

Minister for Police and Emergency Services



**DELIVERING  
FOR ALL VICTORIANS**

Friday, 28 June 2019

## OPENING UP HABITAT FOR NATIVE FISH IN NORTHERN VICTORIA

Thousands of native fish will freely move between the River Murray and the rich habitat of Gunbower Creek thanks to a funding boost from the autumn sale of water for the environment.

Minister for Water Lisa Neville today welcomed the Victorian Environmental Water Holder's (VEWH) successful sale of 10 gigalitres of Murray River environmental water allocation in the northern Victorian water market.

VEWH determined that the water was not required this year or needed to be set aside for next year and sold it back to irrigators – using the proceeds to enable fish passage on the Koondrook weir on Gunbower Creek.

Construction of a fishway at Koondrook will deliver long term environmental benefits, opening up prime habitat for Golden Perch and Murray Cod.

Fish studies have found masses of native fish in the Murray River are unable to get through the Koondrook weir into Gunbower Creek, preventing migrating spawning events and denying them habitat in the internationally recognised Gunbower Forest system.

The project will also install 'fish friendly' gates to allow fish to more safely move from Gunbower Creek into the Murray River, giving them access to the 2,225 kilometres of fish passages in the Murray River.

VEWH holds, manages and uses Victoria's environmental water entitlements to protect the health of the rivers, waterways and landscapes that people love and use.

Water set aside for the environment has strict rules governing its sale. Any trade by the VEWH must protect the environment, be in the public interest and have no adverse impacts on the community.

The Koondrook fishway project is expected to cost \$4.5 million and will be delivered in partnership between VEWH, North Central Catchment Management Authority, Goulburn-Murray Water and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Water Lisa Neville

*"This is a win-win – putting water on the market for farmers at a time critical for autumn watering and using the proceeds to build a permanent structure to connect fish habitats and support native fish populations."*

*"As well as improving native fish numbers and helping them move between waterways, this project will be a big boost for the region's anglers."*

### Quote attributable to Victorian Environmental Water Holder Chairperson Denis Flett

*"The Koondrook fishway is an example of how we can sell unused water for the environment and use the revenue generated to boost native fish populations through investing in infrastructure."*