



# Lake Wellington Land and Water Management Plan

Are you an irrigator in the Lake Wellington catchment? We need your feedback on the new Land and Water Management Plan.

## A new Plan for irrigation land and water management

We are preparing a new 10-year plan for sustainable irrigation in the Lake Wellington catchment. It paves the way for us to be a highly productive and sustainable irrigation community that protects its natural and cultural assets.

The Lake Wellington Land and Water Management Plan (LWMP) is a collaboration with irrigators, government agencies, industry representatives, Traditional Owners and community members. It outlines priorities for sustainable irrigation and recommends ways to help irrigators achieve them. The Plan will help irrigators to be future-focused, productive, efficient and more connected with each other.

A consultation paper on the Lake Wellington LWMP has been released by the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA) and can be downloaded from [www.wgcma.vic.gov.au](http://www.wgcma.vic.gov.au)

This document summarises key points from the consultation paper. WGCMA is seeking your feedback on the Plan's objectives and program so that we can do what we can to meet the needs of irrigators across the catchment.

Lake Wellington catchment has rich soils, a favourable climate and secure water supplies. It supports one of Australia's premier irrigation regions. The Plan is about making sure the catchment continues to be a highly attractive irrigation region and that its highly valued environmental and cultural features are protected.



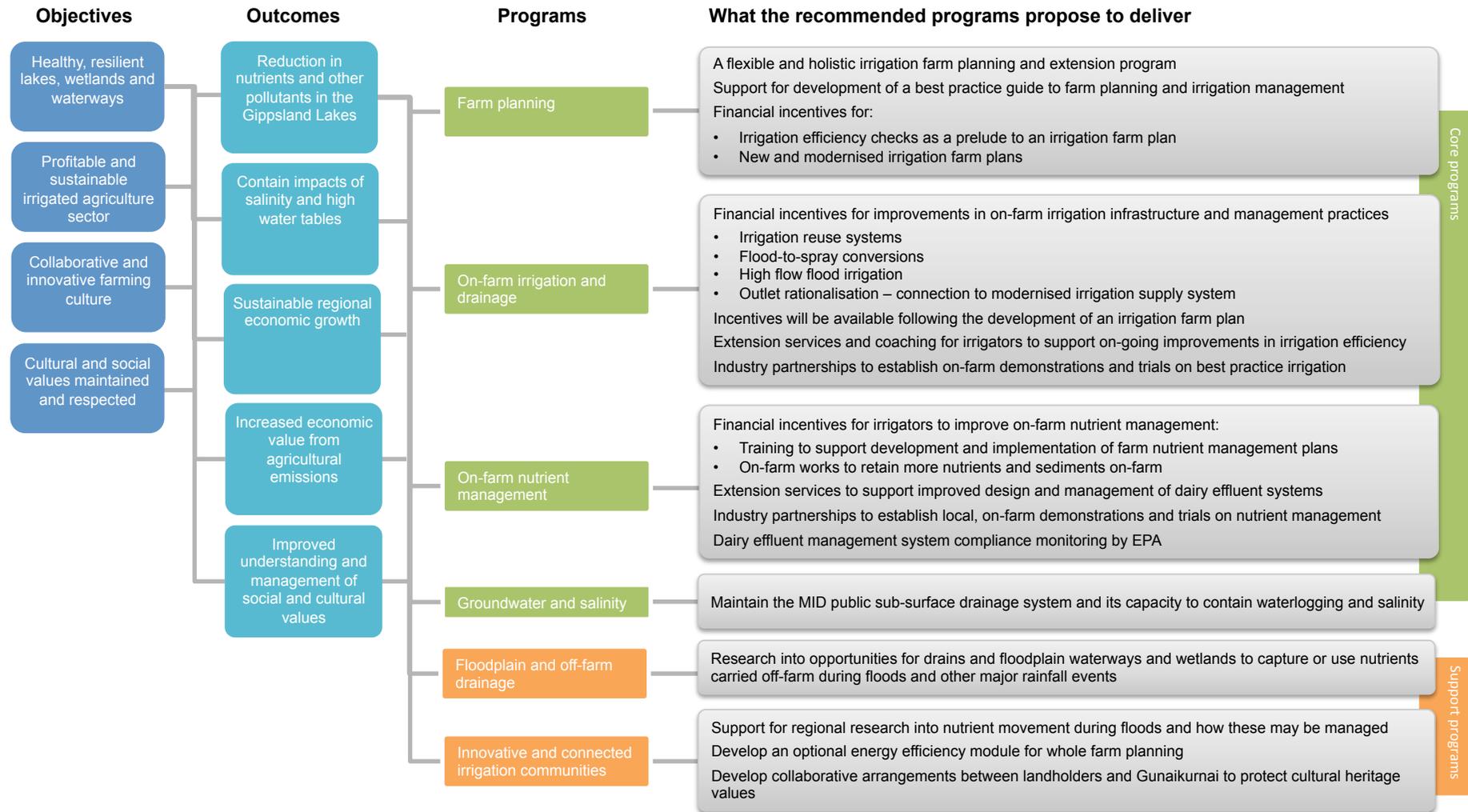
The Lake Wellington catchment

Key points about the Land and Water Management Plan

- It will involve irrigators from across the catchment in programs that save water, increase productivity and retain nutrients and soil on farms.
- It will build on more than 20 years' successful work in the catchment by irrigators, agencies and the community, through the *Macalister Land and Water Management Plan* and *West Gippsland Salinity Management Plan*.
- It aims to improve water quality in our rivers and wetlands and prevent algal blooms in the Gippsland Lakes – these can cost our region millions of dollars in lost fishing and tourism revenue.
- It has been expanded to include the entire Lake Wellington catchment, reflecting the importance of irrigation outside the Macalister Irrigation District (MID) and the growing investment in new irrigation developments.

## Lake Wellington Land and Water Management Plan at a glance:

**Vision: a highly productive and sustainable irrigation community that values and protects its natural and cultural assets**



Core programs

Support programs

*The final programs and financial incentives will be subject to funding agreements with the Victorian Government*



## What's new about the Plan and its programs?

The new Plan will continue to support successful programs, including the improvement of irrigation efficiency and connection with Southern Rural Water's modernised irrigation supply infrastructure. It also has several new features, including:

- Opportunities to participate in irrigation farm planning that are open to all farmers and vegetable growers throughout the catchment with irrigation licences. A new irrigation farm planning framework has been developed and will be supported by the Plan.
- There is increased emphasis on nutrient management on farms, including: nutrient budgeting, fertiliser use, dairy effluent management and the prevention of soil erosion.
- Initiatives for on-farm energy efficiency improvement.
- Development of industry partnerships to establish on-farm trials and demonstrations of good practice in irrigation and nutrient management
- Support for local research and monitoring to understand how to improve the health of local waterways and the Gippsland Lakes.

Government funding for natural resource management programs are finite, and need to be allocated according to priorities and identified public needs. The recommended programs and activities have been assessed and prioritised based on their potential contribution to the Plan's objectives, benefit-cost ratio and likely adoption by irrigators. Financial incentives for farm planning, improved irrigation efficiency and better nutrient management have been recommended to continue, but may change.

## Setting and meeting targets

A new target is being set by the Victorian Government for the amount of phosphorus entering Lake Wellington from irrigated land. Achieving this target will improve the health of local waterways and Lake Wellington, and reduce the risk of algal blooms. The target is ambitious, particularly given the likely expansion of irrigation within the catchment. It can only be achieved through a strong collaborative effort, which the Plan will foster.

Targets will also be set for the Plan's other four outcomes, and progress will be reported to the catchment community and Victorian government.

## A renewed irrigation farm planning framework

The farm planning program has successfully helped farmers plan for farm development to improve irrigation efficiency and productivity. We're looking at improving the program by:

- Broadening the scope of farm plans to consider issues such as nutrients, vegetation, shelterbelts, cultural heritage, soil movement and energy use.
- Making it flexible, enabling farmers to tailor the plan to best meet their needs and goals.
- Making it available to all irrigators – farmers and vegetable growers – throughout Lake Wellington catchment.





The flexible farm planning approach will offer:

- A simple **irrigation efficiency check** with recommendations on low cost actions to improve irrigation efficiency and (for dairy farms) effluent system operation and management.
- Support from an extension officer to work with the irrigator to define the **goals and strategies** that help set directions for the concept plan and irrigation farm plan.
- A **concept plan** which describes on-farm assets (of all kinds), features of the landscape in which the farm is located (e.g. vegetation, waterways, drains), risks and opportunities. The concept plan will include map overlays for native vegetation, flooding, high water tables, waterways, irrigation and drainage systems, cultural heritage, etc. It may also define energy efficiency improvement opportunities.
- A detailed **topographic survey** will be undertaken by a farm planner to support the development of an **irrigation farm plan** (IFP). The IFP will help to manage risks and opportunities associated with irrigation supply and layout, earthworks, irrigation reuse, drainage and nutrient management.

## We want to hear from you

This document and the consultation paper have been developed to encourage discussion about the new Lake Wellington LWMP. Some suggested feedback points are provided below.

1. Please share any overall comments you may have on the Plan or the programs as described here.
2. Are there barriers that prevent significant groups of irrigators from improving water use efficiency? If so, what do you think they are and how may they be overcome?
3. What do you think are the best opportunities to improve the efficiency of nutrient use on farms? How can these be incorporated into the on-farm nutrient management program?
4. What do you think about the proposed changes to the irrigation farm planning framework? Are there particular components you would like to have access to?
5. What do you think should be the focus of local, on-farm demonstrations and trials of best practice irrigation and/or nutrient management?
6. How important is it that MID's sub-surface drainage infrastructure is maintained to manage on-going salinity risks?
7. Can you suggest some practical measures to improve recognition and respect for Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural and social values associated with irrigation areas?
9. How important is it to you that irrigators play an on-going role in guiding the Plan's implementation and directions? In what ways do you think this should happen?

**Comments are welcomed on these questions or any other issue related to irrigation land and water management within the Lake Wellington catchment by 15th March. For more information please visit [www.wgcm.vic.gov.au](http://www.wgcm.vic.gov.au)**

## All enquiries and feedback should be directed to:



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*Images by Craig Moodie, courtesy of DELWP*