



Media release

The Hon Peter Walsh MP

Minister for Agriculture and Food Security
Minister for Water

The Hon Ryan Smith MP

Minister for Environment and
Climate Change
Minister for Youth Affairs

Monday 29 October 2012

Have your say on your local waterway

Victorians are being invited to have their say on the future management of our waterways.

Minister for Water Peter Walsh released the draft *Victorian Waterway Management Strategy* today and encouraged communities to get involved in shaping the future management of their local waterways.

“Rivers, estuaries and wetlands are the lifeblood of many towns and communities,” Mr Walsh said.

“Our waterways are the basis of important recreational activities such as fishing, swimming and boating, while supporting native fish, riparian vegetation, drought refuges and rare or threatened species.

“The Victorian Coalition Government aims to improve the environmental condition of waterways and support the needs of the community, incorporating lessons learned during the drought and extreme events such as floods and bushfires.

“The draft strategy includes guidance on regional decision-making, investment, management issues, and roles and responsibilities of management agencies,” Mr Walsh said.

Once finalised, the *Victorian Waterway Management Strategy* will replace the *Victorian River Health Strategy* (2002), and it will be the policy framework for waterway management for the next eight years.

“Over the past decade our waterways have been through challenging times. This next strategy will include an adaptive and flexible approach to address challenges of drought, flood, bushfire and the potential impacts of climate change,” Mr Walsh said.

Environment Minister Ryan Smith said the new strategy would also focus on strengthening partnerships between the government and the community.

“Government working together with local communities will ensure waterways continue to provide environmental, social and economic benefits,” Mr Smith said.

“This *Waterway Management Strategy* is another example of the Coalition Government’s commitment to continuing better community engagement and agency co-ordination.

“Just like the Coalition Government’s recently-released *A Cleaner Yarra River and Port Phillip Bay – A Plan of Action*, these plans will improve the health and effective management of waterways through a clear plan that articulates the role we all have to play.”

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The draft strategy will be explained at community information sessions to be held in each of Victoria's ten catchment management regions during November 2012.

The first session will be at Horsham on 7 November. Details of all information sessions and how to register can be found at www.water.vic.gov.au or by calling the Department of Sustainability and Environment's Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

If you can't make it to an information session you can find the draft strategy and details about making a submission on the website www.water.vic.gov.au.

The submission period will close on 7 December 2012 at 5pm.

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