



# ***Effectiveness of Catchment Management Authorities***

Tabled 17 September 2014

## Background

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- Victoria's natural landscape is unique and diverse but difficult to maintain.
- Victoria's 10 catchment management authorities (CMA) have a central role in maintaining and enhancing long-term land productivity while also conserving the environment in these catchment areas.



*On farm irrigation upgrade project completed through the Farm Water Program. Photo courtesy of Goulburn Broken CMA.*

## Background – *continued*

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- Since 2009–10, CMAs received:
  - **\$487 million** from the Victorian Government
  - **\$233 million** from the Commonwealth Government
  - **\$100 million** from other sources.
- Various other bodies contribute to catchment management.
- CMAs administer environmental funding.

## Audit objective

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### To assess:

- The effectiveness of CMAs in performing their legislative functions.
- How Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) supports and monitors CMAs in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.

### Focused on:

- Catchment management planning, monitoring and reporting at the regional level.
- The statewide catchment management framework.

## Audit scope

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Four CMA regions  
assessed:

- East Gippsland
- Goulburn Broken
- North Central
- Wimmera.



*Lake Eppalock, 2010.  
Photo courtesy of DEPI.*



## Conclusions

- Existing approaches to catchment management are inadequate.
- The audit concluded that:
  - statewide catchment condition is poorly understood
  - the statewide approach is short-term, fragmented
  - regional planning is long term, but constrained.

## Conclusions – *continued*

- DEPI and CMAs are working to address these issues.



*Before and after works on the Cann River.  
Photographs courtesy of East Gippsland CMA.*



## Key findings – planning

- Roles and responsibilities need further clarity.
- There remains no long-term overarching strategy for integrated catchment management.
- DEPI and CMAs are now working to address this gap.
- CMAs' 2013–19 regional catchment strategies promote long-term approaches and are legally compliant.



## Key findings – planning – *continued*

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However:

- DEPI's expectations were inconsistently met.
- Accountability is poor.
- Funding is short-term focused.

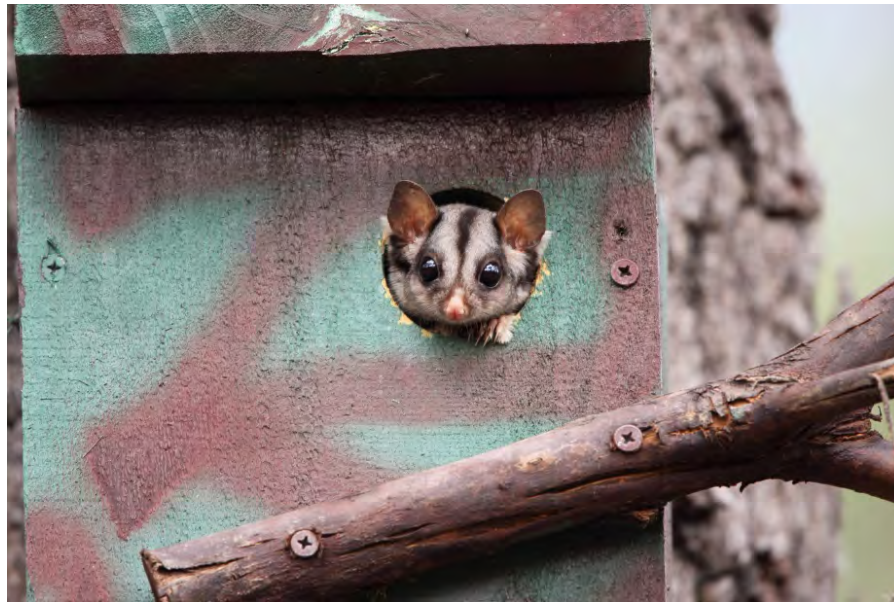
Development of CMAs' latest regional waterway strategies has been satisfactory.



*Before and after works on the Nicholson River.  
Photograph courtesy of East Gippsland CMA.*

## Findings – monitoring and reporting

- Significant limitations in catchment condition monitoring and reporting.



*Monitoring fauna that makes a home in nest boxes installed by the Goulburn Broken CMA.  
Photo courtesy of Russell Jones.*

## Findings – monitoring and reporting – *continued*

- DEPI and CMAs are developing an improved approach.
- Monitoring and reporting on strategy delivery is expected to improve.
- CMAs use varying information systems.
- DEPI oversight of CMA boards is satisfactory.

## Recommendations

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**Accept**

That DEPI and CMAs improve planning by:

- |    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | developing an overarching strategy for integrated catchment management.   | ✓ |
| 2. | developing mechanisms to enhance the accountability of regional partners in delivering regional catchment strategies.   | ✓ |
| 3. | revising or replacing the statements of obligations under the <i>Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994</i> and the <i>Water Act 1989</i> .                   | ✓ |
| 4. | clearly linking funding bids to priorities and actions in the regional catchment strategies and the overarching strategy for integrated catchment management. | ✓ |

## Recommendations – *continued*

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		Accept
That DEPI and CMAs improve monitoring and reporting by:		
5.	developing a consistent approach to monitoring and reporting on catchment condition, strategy delivery and investment outcomes.	✓
6.	developing processes to support the Victorian Catchment Management Council in collating the data it needs to develop its five-yearly statewide catchment condition reports	✓
7.	assessing the costs and benefits of adopting shared information systems to support regional monitoring and reporting on catchment management activities, catchment condition and strategy delivery.	✓



## Final comments

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Broader implications for future audit topics relating to natural resource management and agricultural production:

- *Biosecurity (2014–15)*
- *Enhancing food and fibre productivity (2015–16)*
- *Implementation of the Victorian coastal strategy (2016–17 / 2017–18).*



## Contact details

For further information on this presentation please contact:

Victorian Auditor-General's Office

[p] 8601 7000

[w] [www.audit.vic.gov.au/about\\_us/contact\\_us.aspx](http://www.audit.vic.gov.au/about_us/contact_us.aspx)