

connectionsproject

Connections Protocol

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Contents

1.	Definitions	1
1	Purpose and objectives	2
2	Scope and application	3
3	Environmental commitments and performance requirements for Connections.....	4
4	Environmental Documentation Structure	5
5	Approval process for the Connection Protocol	8
6	Project Description.....	9
6.1	Connections Component	9
6.1.1	Connections agreement	9
6.1.2	Connections activities.....	9
6.2	Location	10
6.3	Environmental Context	11
6.4	Legislative Context	11
7	Organisational Roles and Responsibilities	13
8	Site Assessment Framework	15
8.1	Retention of environmental water delivery infrastructure.....	15
8.2	Desktop analysis.....	15
8.3	Site visit	16
8.4	On-Farm Works Construction Manager Trigger	16
8.5	Risk level	17
8.6	Non-Project Managed Works.....	17
9	Connections agreement process and documents.....	19
9.1	Process.....	19
9.2	Documents.....	20
9.2.1	Landholder environmental checklist	20
9.2.2	Connections environmental guidelines	20
9.2.3	Connections Environmental Handbook	21
9.2.4	Landholder agreements.....	22
9.2.5	Landholder Handover Verification Report.....	22
10	Council liaison	23
11	Connections to natural water carriers	24
12	Monitoring, auditing and reporting.....	25

1. Definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following definitions should be used in interpreting descriptions of the Connections Component and associated works.

Backbone: The public irrigation water supply infrastructure that will be retained by Goulburn-Murray Water at the end of the Connections Project.

Co-contribution agreement: An agreement made where a landowner wants to do a significantly different scope of on farm works than that proposed by the GMW Connections Project, and is willing to contribute funds to fund that variation in price between the two. ...

Connections Component: Works undertaken by landholders and/or their contractors on predominantly private land, in association with water supply changes agreed to with the Connections Project (in some instances landholder connection plans involve public or crown land i.e. stock and domestic, supply crossings or siting of ancillary infrastructure such as pump/pump shed or culverts. Relevant land manager consent applies to such works).

Delivery Share: Landholder's share of delivery infrastructure capacity, further defined as a volume and period over which that volume may be delivered.

Landholder: The landowner with consent of lessees and mortgagees where appropriate.

Modernisation: The program of works that will result in an automated backbone, accurate metering and minimisation of water losses.

Project Manager Engagement Agreements: An agreement made where a landowner is funded by the GMW Connections Project to complete an agreed scope of on-farm works necessary for connection to the modernised system

Rationalise: In the context of a backbone infrastructure, rationalise generally means to remove/decommission the structure in question. In the context of all other infrastructure not associated with the backbone (e.g. spur channels), rationalise generally means decommissioning or transfer into private ownership. Where decommissioning occurs and is undertaken by the Connections Project, the works will be managed through the Capital Works Component of the Construction Environmental Management Framework.

Service Points: The works controlling the flow and measurement of water from Goulburn-Murray Water to customers. These include a meter, control device and/or associated pipes or other infrastructure. Service points have a physical and statutory role under the *Water Act 1989*.

1 Purpose and objectives

This protocol refers to the Connections Component of the GMW Connections Project (formerly the Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project (NVIRP)), and will be known as the Connections Protocol.

The purpose of this Connections Protocol is to describe how landholders and their contractors will be guided in managing the environmental approvals for the Connections Component. The Connections Component can be defined as the works undertaken by landholders and their contractors on private land. These farm works include connecting their farm back to public irrigation water supply channels (known as the 'backbone') and/or redesign of the farm to take advantage of the new water supply arrangements.

The Protocol describes the relative roles and responsibilities of the Connections Project, Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW), and landholders and their contractors, as they apply to the connections component of modernisation of the Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District (GMID).

This protocol addresses the relevant requirements of Condition 1 of the Minister for Planning's decisions that an Environment Effects Statement (EES) is not required for the NVIRP; as described in the decision provided on 14 April 2009 and a similar decision on 25 July 2011. The requirements are consistent for both decisions. Table 1 sets out how this Connections Protocol addresses each of the relevant requirements in Condition 1 for both decisions.

Table 1 Requirements in Condition 1 of the Minister's Decision (2009 and 2011)

Condition Number	Requirement	Reference within the Connections Protocol
1(iii) dot point 5	Mechanisms to ensure compliance by landholders and/or their contractors, for all construction activities within both Stages 1 and 2 of NVIRP (2009) Mechanisms to ensure compliance by NVIRP and its contractors, as well as landholders and/or their contractors, for all construction activities within the project (2011)	Section 9

Note: The Minister for Planning's decision to exempt NVIRP under section 20(4) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* from the need for referral of NVIRP (now GMW Connections Project) works under local planning schemes does not apply to the Connections Component.

This Protocol and associated documents will provide guidance to landholders on their obligation to comply with applicable legislation, guidelines and conditions of permits and project approvals, covering the requirements of:

- *Victoria's Permitted clearing of native vegetation* – Biodiversity assessment guidelines 2013
- *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* and *Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2007*
- *Water Act 1989* as it relates to water supply and use in an irrigation district, and
- Other acts and policies as specified.

2 Scope and application

This Connections Protocol applies:

- Where the Connections Project provides financial contribution to landholders to adjust, modernise or alter private water supply infrastructure for Stages 1 and 2 of the Project.
- Where the Connections Project has interface with landholders in implementing connection works conducted under agreement with the Connections Project / GMW.
- Where the landholders and contractors working on behalf of the landholders undertake physical works on private water supply infrastructure and other related farm works as a result of the two dot points above.
- This Connections Protocol is binding on all members of the Connections Project, its employees and contractors, and who must all comply with its requirements.

3 Environmental commitments and performance requirements for Connections

Environmental commitments and performance requirements have been developed to manage the suite of environmental aspects associated with the Connections Component. Table 2 presents these commitments and performance requirements and provides a reference to the management controls in place to address these.

Table 2 Environmental commitments and performance requirements

Environmental issue and commitments	Item	Performance requirements	Reference
1. Manage the connections program to ensure that landholders are informed of their obligation to comply with applicable legislation, guidelines and conditions of permits and project approvals	1.1	Guidelines to be developed, in consultation with relevant agencies, providing information on legal requirements and addressing the potential obligations of landholders/Construction Managers conducting works involving either removal of native vegetation or direct construction impacts on wetlands and waterways. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victoria’s <i>Permitted clearing of native vegetation</i> – Biodiversity assessment guidelines (2013) • Applicable Regional River Health Strategies • Relevant Regional Catchment Management Strategies • Flora and fauna species listed under the <i>Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988</i> and <i>Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> • Cultural Heritage 	Connections Protocol Connections Project Operational Rule: Co-Contribution
	1.2	All landholders to be informed of their legislative obligations prior to entering into an agreement with the Connections Project.	
	1.3	Legal agreements between landholders, Construction Managers and Goulburn-Murray Water to include a clause regarding Construction Managers/landholders’ obligations under the Connections Protocol.	Agreement

4 Environmental Documentation Structure

This protocol forms part of the Construction Environmental Management Framework (CEMF) for the project. Figure 1 shows the structure of the project environmental management documentation, including this Connections Protocol within the CEMF.

Figure 1 Environmental Documentation Structure

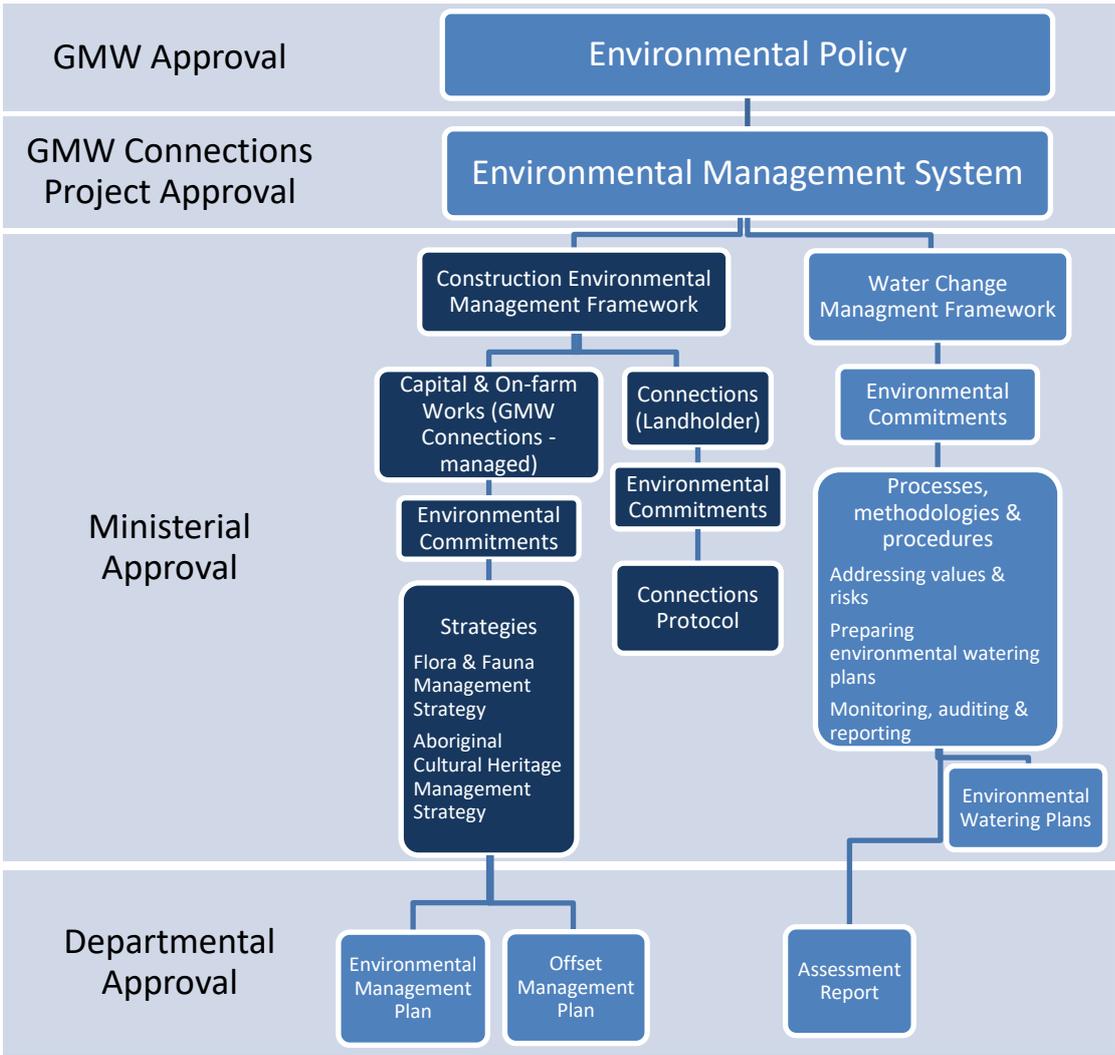


Table 3 sets out the environmental management documentation relevant to the Connections Project’s contribution to connections.

Table 3 Key documents relating to the Connections Project’s contribution to connections

Document	Purpose with respect to connections	Key content	Accountability
Connections Protocol (This Document)	Promote environmental compliance and influence environmental outcomes associated with the Connections Project’s contribution to the connections component	Mechanisms to guide landholders and their contractors	Connections Project

Document	Purpose with respect to connections	Key content	Accountability
Landholder agreements	Formal agreement between the landholder and GMW (Connections Project)	Clause acknowledging that landholders' have been advised of environmental obligations under the Connections Protocol	Connections Project and Landholder
Project Manager Engagement Agreement (PMEA)			
Connections Environmental Guidelines DM#3847256 & Handbook DM#3847215	Facilitating landholders' compliance	Guidelines facilitating landholders' compliance with applicable legislation, guidelines and conditions of permits and project approvals	Connections Project
		Handbook setting out best practice environmental management in constructing connections works. Designed for use by landholders and their contractors	
Landholder environmental checklist	Facilitating landholders' compliance	Checklist that environmental requirements have been communicated to landholder	Connections Project
Landholder permit verification report and works verification checklist	Confirming landholders' compliance	Confirmation by landholder that relevant work approvals have been obtained and compliant works delivered	Landholder
Type 2 Co-contribution Agreement			
Connections Environmental Guidelines DM# 3847256 & Handbook DM# 3847215	Facilitating landholders' compliance	Guidelines facilitating landholders' compliance with applicable legislation, guidelines and conditions of permits and project approvals	Connections Project
		Handbook setting out best practice environmental management in constructing connections works. Designed for use by landholders and their contractors	
Connections Environmental Guidelines DM# 3847256 & Handbook DM# 3847215	Facilitating landholders' compliance	Guidelines facilitating landholders' compliance with applicable legislation, guidelines and conditions of permits and project approvals	Connections Project
		Handbook setting out best practice environmental management in constructing connections works. Designed for use by landholders and their contractors	

Document	Purpose with respect to connections	Key content	Accountability
4455805-Landowner Development Deed Environmental & Planning Review Dm# 4455805	Facilitating landholders' compliance	Checklist to assist the Landowner to determine environmental requirements	Landholder
Landowner Development Deed Permit Verification Report DM# 4489608	Confirming landholders' compliance	Checklist of environmental requirements and acknowledgement of such by the Landowner.	Landholder
Landowner Development Deed Verification Report DM# 4557827	Verification that all on-farm works have been undertaken and completed in accordance with relevant approval and permit requirements	Acknowledgement of completion of works by the Landowner.	Landholder

This Connections Protocol sets out the requirements, processes and methodologies for managing the Connections Project's contribution to the Connections Component.

The Connections Environmental Guidelines (Guidelines) and the Connections Environmental Handbook (Handbook) have been developed and issued as part of the Connections Component and will be updated periodically as required. As part of continuous improvement, the Connections Project will review the operation of this protocol and the supporting documents in consultation with relevant regional authorities. If modification is required, approval will be sought in accordance with Table 4.

5 Approval process for the Connection Protocol

Table 4 shows the approval and associated timing for the Connections Protocol and its subsidiary environmental documentation.

Table 4 Approval of environmental documentation

Document	Initial Approval	Ongoing Approval Requirements	Timing
Connections Protocol (This Document)	Minister for Planning, advised by Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water	Minister for Planning, advised by Minister for Energy, Environment & Climate Change	Prior to landholders (under agreement with Connections Project) commencing any works involving either removal of native vegetation or direct construction impacts on wetlands or natural waterways.
Connections Environmental Guidelines	Secretary DELWP or delegate	GMW Connections Project – Manager Environment	
Connections Environmental Handbook	Secretary DELWP or delegate	GMW Connections Project – Manager Environment	
Landholder environmental checklist template	Connections Project – Project Director	GMW Connections Project – Manager Environment	
Standard landholder agreement template	Connections Project – Project Director	GMW Connections Project – Operations Manager	
Landholder permit verification report template and works verification checklist template	Connections Project – Project Director	GMW Connections Project – Program Delivery Manager and ECI Manager	

6 Project Description

The Connections Project is an irrigation infrastructure modernisation project for the GMID. The project goal is to save 429 GL of water (Long Term Cap Equivalent) by reducing irrigation delivery system losses through a program of renewing ageing infrastructure and rationalising under-utilised infrastructure. Further details are contained in the CEMF.

6.1 Connections Component

The Connections Component involves landholders developing a water supply connection to the backbone with the objective of facilitating farm improvement, reducing the irrigation supply network and generating water savings.

6.1.1 Connections agreement

Incentives are paid to individual landholders or groups of landholders to enable the Connections Project to achieve its objectives under the Connections Component. In most cases more than one property will need to move their Service Point to enable delivery share to shift to the backbone and to capture the benefits of a channel rationalisation. Approval and permit requirements regarding works will be associated with the individual properties on which the works are proposed to be undertaken.

The types of physical works eligible for incentives are:

- Refurbishment of existing channels / drains;
- New channel / drainage works;
- Decommissioning or removal of redundant infrastructure;
- New pipelines;
- Installation of new pump and/or pump sheds;
- Re-lasering of sections of properties;
- Partial or full dry-off;
- Fencing; and
- Reinstatement works e.g. reconnecting stock and domestic water supply, altering laneways.

Prior to making incentive payments, an agreement between the Connections Project (GMW), the Construction Manager, and each landholder is made. Under this agreement, the landholder, with the assistance of the Construction Manager, is responsible for implementing the works, including compliance with planning, cultural heritage and environmental requirements.

Channels and water control structures, to be modified as eligible works, may be situated on Public Land under the control of GMW, or be situated on private land controlled by GMW by way of easement, or by way of agreement between GMW and the landholder. Where it is proposed that works be undertaken on Public Land held under the control of GMW then the land can only be passed to the landholder following a process agreed to by DELWP and GMW. The necessary process is not covered by these protocols, nor do these protocols provide any expectation of transfer arrangements, or that transfer will be agreed by DELWP and GMW (see also Section 9.1 (b)).

6.1.2 Connections activities

Connections works are conducted as a result of relocating the landholder's connection from a spur channel to the backbone or rationalising infrastructure on the backbone (e.g. removing meters surplus to requirements).

It is not possible to identify in advance the specific properties or works that are likely to be part of the connections program. This is because:

- The specific works for each property are agreed in consultation with the landholder, following a site assessment; and
- The proposed works need to meet the Connections Project's cost/benefit threshold for funding projects.

The major types of works that will achieve modern connections are likely to involve individual landholders or groups of landholders developing alternative water supply connections which result in shifting of the service point to the backbone and removal of public water supply channels. The physical works associated with this modernisation by landholders are likely to involve:

- Replacing water supply channels with pipes, or alternative channel supply route;
- Undertaking farm works to make channels obsolete;
- Giving up an existing, unused service point;
- Providing alternative supply connections for a neighbour; and
- Remodelling the existing channel to incorporate it into the farm system.

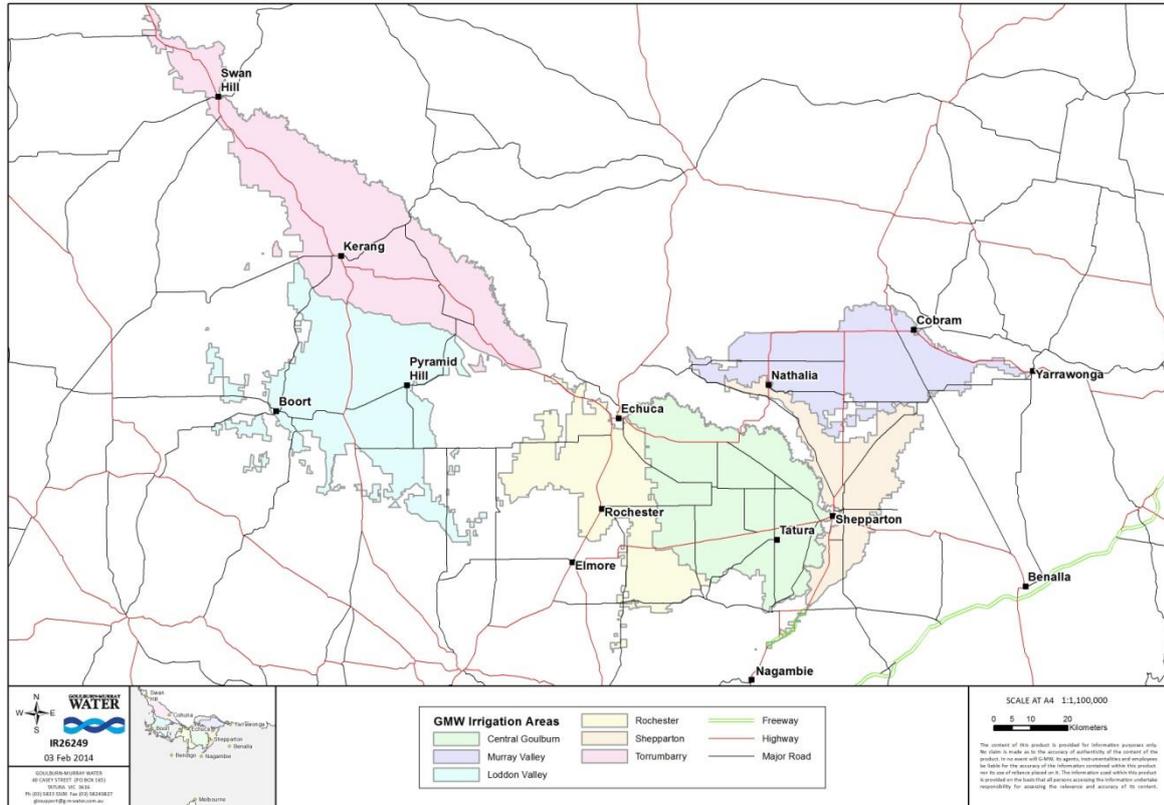
These physical works will be conducted by, and are the responsibility of, landholders. Construction Managers will assist landholders in meeting their environmental responsibilities, with the necessary information addressed through the Connections Environmental Guidelines and ensure works are constructed to approved designs and within any approval conditions.

6.2 Location

The extent of the Connections Project works area (see Figure 2) covers the following irrigation areas:

- Central Goulburn Irrigation Area;
- Rochester/Campaspe Irrigation Area;
- Loddon Valley Irrigation Area;
- Murray Valley Irrigation Area;
- Torrumbarry Irrigation Area; and
- Shepparton Irrigation Area.

Figure 2 Connections Project Works Area



6.3 Environmental Context

The environmental sensitivities related to the Connections Project include the potential impact of some of the physical works on remnant native vegetation.

Due to a long history of irrigation, much of the landscape has been previously degraded by vegetation clearing, grazing pressures, weed invasions, salinity, water logging and increasing urbanisation. However, some high quality remnant habitats remain within the GMID, including many wetlands. It is important that these environmental valuable remnants are not further threatened or damaged. The CEMF contains further detail of the Project’s environmental context.

The GMID was designed to provide irrigation water to large number of farms. There are now many fewer farms than at the time of the construction of the GMID. As in any agricultural area, farm size, layout and management has changed with time and in response to economic imperatives. The Connections Project provides the opportunity to rationalise the number and extent of connections to better reflect the needs of contemporary agriculture. The Connections Program needs to address not only the needs of agriculture but must do so without impacting negatively on the natural environment, drainage or flood management works.

6.4 Legislative Context

The Connections Project is occurring within seven local government areas across the GMID. In order to conduct farm works, landholders must comply with the relevant planning scheme. Where required, approval must be sought from GMW to ensure Water-Use Conditions are being satisfied under the Water-Use Licence associated with the property on which water use changes are proposed.

The specific requirements of each local government vary depending on the works to be conducted. Some local governments coordinate approval of large changes to farm design by certifying whole farm plans, while others issue individual planning permits for individual components of work.

Table 5 Summary of permitting requirements for farm works

Planning Scheme	Permitting requirements
Campaspe*	Certified whole farm plan, or planning permit for minor works
Gannawarra	Planning permit
Greater Bendigo	Planning permit
Greater Shepparton*	Certified whole farm plan, or planning permit for minor works
Loddon	Planning permit
Mildura	Planning permit
Moira*	Certified whole farm plan, or planning permit for minor works

- **Campaspe, City of Greater Shepparton and Moira Planning Schemes share a common certified whole farm plan process.**

Whole farm planning has a long history of promotion by Catchment Management Authorities in the GMID as a method of improving farm practices and environmental outcomes. As a result, nearly 80% of farms in the Shepparton Irrigation Region of the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority area and over 1,000 properties in the North Central Catchment Management Authority area have whole farm plans.

Irrigation development in the GMID is also assessed for appropriateness through the Water-Use Licensing process. The process is a risk based approach aimed at ensuring irrigation development adheres to appropriate standards

7 Organisational Roles and Responsibilities

The Connections Project (known prior to the integration with GMW as NVIRP) was a state-owned enterprise and was assigned responsibility for delivering the Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project. The Minister for Water decided that GMW, the Authority under the Water Act which manages the GMID and the entity which will be the ultimate operator of the modernised system, and NVIRP (which became the Connections Project) should be integrated. This integration occurred on 1 July 2012.

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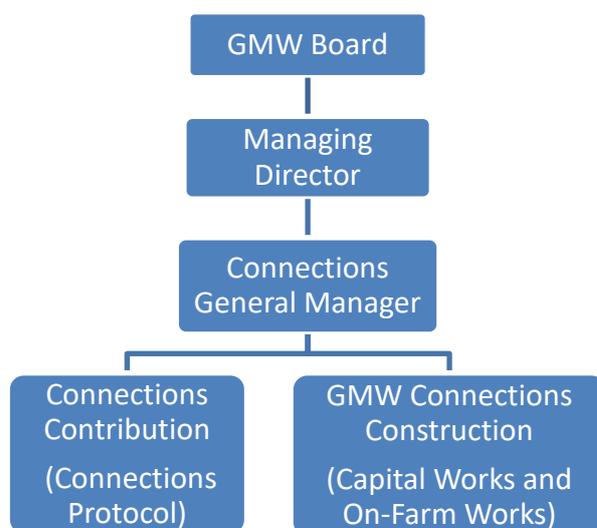


Table 6 summarises the environmental responsibilities of key personnel with respect to contributing to connections.

Table 6 Project responsibilities for connections

Role	Key environmental responsibility
Program Delivery Manager and ECI Manager	Delivery of environmental commitments undertaken by the Connections Project in regards to the connections program, including ensuring that the landholders are aware of their responsibilities under the Connections Protocol.
Farm Irrigation Assessor (Farm Designer)	Conducts initial Farm Irrigation Assessment for Landowner including flagging of potential environmental, cultural heritage or other planning issues. Prepares detailed design.
Engagement Officers	Facilitate, develop and coordinate agreements with landholders.
Landholders	Acknowledge the Connections Environmental Guidelines and Landholder Environmental Checklist. Obtain any planning and environmental approvals required. Act in accordance with the agreement with the Connections Project. Comply with relevant legislation.
On-Farm Works Construction Managers	Review Farm Irrigation Assessment and initial assessment of environmental/planning issues identified by the Farm Designer. Assist Landowner in identifying and obtaining the relevant environmental and planning approvals required (including cultural heritage).
Project Managers (End-to-End) and ECI RP Coordinator	Coordination of and liaison with the roles above to ensure that project timelines and requirements are being met.

Connections Project personnel, farm irrigation assessors (farm designers), Construction Managers, and contractors will be informed of their responsibilities under this Connections Protocol before agreement is reached with landholders, facilitated by those personnel.

8 Site Assessment Framework

All connections proposals are subject to desktop assessment and a site visit prior to Connections Project agreement with the landholder.

8.1 Retention of environmental water delivery infrastructure

Some wetlands in the GMID are maintained by using part of the State's environmental water allocation which is delivered through irrigation channels and service points. Some of this infrastructure may not be on the backbone, therefore the on-going watering needs of the environmental asset must be taken into consideration as part of the Connections Program.

The Connections Project has established a register of irrigation infrastructure that is/could be used to deliver environmental water to wetlands determined by Catchment Management Authorities as a priority for current or future watering. The register has been developed in consultation with the relevant Catchment Management Authorities and includes details of:

- Irrigation infrastructure currently used to deliver environmental water to wetlands;
- Irrigation infrastructure that has a high probability of being used to deliver environmental water to wetlands in the future;
- The wetland and the Catchment Management Authority associated with the management of that wetland;
- The ownership of the wetland (private, public); and
- The Authority responsible for managing public land wetlands.

Where landholders are consulted regarding possible rationalisation of infrastructure listed on the register, the relevant Catchment Management Authority or DELWP will be consulted and included in negotiations about the future of the infrastructure. Where infrastructure is no longer required for irrigation water delivery, and no other practicable water supply arrangement can be identified for the wetland, control of the infrastructure may be transferred by agreement to the relevant Catchment Management Authority or the appropriate public land manager.

The Water Change Management Framework will consider any relevant management and mitigation measures that may be required to protect relevant environmental values of wetlands and waterways.

8.2 Desktop analysis

The desktop analysis involves reviewing existing environmental data to define the potential for native vegetation, listed flora and fauna and cultural heritage to be present, and to determine whether they are likely to be impacted by the proposed works. The considerations of the desktop analysis are:

- Cross check of associated infrastructure against that on the register of environmental water delivery infrastructure (Connections Project to assist).
- The nature of works at the site and the likelihood of those works impacting on native vegetation, native flora and fauna, and/or cultural heritage.
- The nature of works at the site and the likelihood of those works impacting on drainage and flood management infrastructure and capability.
- The nature of works at the site and the likelihood of the works requiring approval under the Water-Use Licensing process.
- Review of specific planning overlays, including:

- Environmental and Landscape
- Environmental Significance
- Significant Landscape
- Vegetation Protection
- Heritage
- Land management
 - Floodway
 - Land Subject to Inundation
 - Erosion Management
 - Salinity Management
- The conservation status of flora and fauna identified within specific areas, including species and ecological communities listed under the:
 - FFG Act
 - EPBC Act
 - Advisory List of Rare or Threatened Plants in Victoria 2005 or Advisory List of Threatened Vertebrate Fauna in Victoria 2007 (collectively referred to as VROTS).
- The existence of vegetation communities for specified areas.
- Review of specific site data against:
 - Cultural Heritage Sensitivity areas
 - Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register (VAHR)
 - Registered Aboriginal Places; and
 - Registered Aboriginal Parties boundaries.

Potential data tools that can be used in the desktop assessment are the Land Victoria maps, Planning Maps Online, Flora Information System, Native Vegetation Information Management tool (DELWP), Wildlife Atlas of Victoria, Birddata, biodiversity Action Plans, Bio-maps and the Protected Matters Search Tool (DoE), or others that may be relevant.

The potential environmental sensitivities are initially identified on the Landholder Environmental Checklist (desktop component).

8.3 Site visit

Relevant Farm Irrigation Assessor personnel will update the Environmental Checklist as required post site visit as part of the FIA process.

During the site visit, the Farm Irrigation Assessor will conduct the Farm Irrigation Assessment and whether native flora and fauna are likely to be impacted by the proposed works. The FIA will design alignments around native vegetation where possible. The Farm Irrigation Assessor may provide any relevant information on other environmental aspects such as cultural heritage to the Landholder/Construction Manager.

8.4 On-Farm Works Construction Manager Trigger

As of 1st July 2013, the Construction Project Manager Model came into effect for the Connections Project. This requires that all landowners must be Project Managed unless they have small on-farm works which meet the following three conditions:

- If the landowner property is identified as a Level 1 Environmental Risk (see 8.5)
- There are no statutory OH&S obligations (i.e. works do not require heavy machinery, works will not occur within close proximity of power lines etc.); and

- If on-farm works are not completed, that it will not affect/hold up the channel decommissioning program.

1. There are two types of On-farm works agreements used by the Connections Project under the Connections Protocol:

- Project Manager Engagement Agreement (PMEA) under a payment schedule of 30/40/30 where:
 - 30% of payment is provided at the execution of the Connections Agreement;
 - 40% of payment provided upon the receipt or sighting of all required permits/applications; and
 - Remaining 30% of payment is provided once works are completed and have been verified as being done in accordance with any issued approvals/permits (by the Construction Manager and landowner).

2. A Type 2 Co-contribution Agreement, as documented in the Connections Project Operational Rule Co-Contribution, under a payment schedule of 15/35/50 where, after execution of the Landowner Agreement:

- 15% upon provision of the design of the Landowner’s alternative works;
- 35% upon attainment of required permits and approvals, and evidence of mobilisation to site of construction equipment; and
- 50% upon completion of works to the Landowner’s alternative design (noting that this may be split into multiple payments based on agreed milestones being achieved).

Any on-farm works that are not project managed may then be managed as per 8.6.

8.5 Risk level

The results of the desktop analysis and site visit are identified on the Landholder Environmental Checklist and a risk level assigned in accordance with Table 7. This checklist forms part of the Farm Irrigation Assessment and is completed irrespective of whether a Construction Manager is appointed or not.

Table 7 Environmental risk levels

Environmental risk level	Level 1	Level 2
Desktop review	No overlays or cultural heritage sensitivity identified in the vicinity of the proposed works. No Water-Use Licence amendment required	One or more overlays or cultural heritage sensitivity identified in the vicinity of the proposed works. New or amended Water-Use Licence likely
	AND	OR
Site visit	No environmental assets which may be impacted identified during site visit	Environmental assets which may be impacted identified during the site visit

8.6 Non-Project Managed Works

Where there are no on-farm works and no Construction Manager required, landholders receive 100% of their payment upon signing of the Connections Agreement.

Landowners that meet the criteria stated in Section 8.4 are not required to engage a Construction Manager to assist with their on-farm works.

Projects signed prior to the implementation of the Construction Project Manager Model will be subject to the payment regime contained in the Agreement.

The process described in this section will only be utilised on a small amount of properties that are not Construction Managed.

Any co-contribution projects will have appropriate management and funding arrangements.

9 Connections agreement process and documents

9.1 Process

The general process for reaching agreement with a landholder or group of landholders is outlined below:

- a) An individual project is identified through desktop analysis or contact with a landholder/s and a desktop assessment is completed.
- b) Farm Irrigation Assessor visits the farm (as required) and:
 1. Identifies potential works to minimise modernisation costs.
 2. Identifies whether proposed works are likely to impact on native vegetation, cultural heritage or other environmental assets.
 3. Identifies if:
 - i. works will increase total area irrigated or increase the application rate of water (trigger for Water Use Licence amendment).
 - ii. direct connection or connection to natural water carrier (including pumping) is applicable. If connection to natural water carrier is applicable, additional approvals will be required, in accordance with Section 11.
 4. Identifies if new or amended Whole Farm Plan is required.
 5. Completes Landholder Environmental Checklist, including environmental risk level in accordance with Section 8.
 6. Identifies if the landholder is seeking to purchase land on which GMW redundant infrastructure is situated, and advise the landholders to address their intent with GMW. These Protocols do not cover the process by which the ownership of public land may be transferred to private ownership.
- c) Farm Irrigation Assessor prepares proposal for works, including a preliminary design and costing.
- d) Farm Irrigation Assessor submits Landholder Environmental Checklist and the proposal to the Connections Project.
- e) Connections Project modernisation team reviews the Farm Irrigation Assessment (Landholder Environmental Checklist, and works proposal).
- f) Connections Project modernisation team prepares a business case for the proposal. An incentive level is determined.
- g) The Connections Project discusses the proposal and incentive with the landholder. Verbal agreement may be reached.
- h) If verbal agreement is reached with the landholder/s on the level of incentive and works to be undertaken, Connections Project internal approval is sought.
- i) If the landholder/s and Connections Project agree, a legal agreement is developed as well as a Construction Manager Engagement Agreement where required. The Landholder Environmental Checklist is attached as a schedule to the legal agreement.

- j) Where OFW are required, the Connections Environmental Guidelines and Connections Environmental Handbook are issued with the legal agreement.
- k) The landholder/s may choose to seek independent advice.
- l) The landholder or Construction Manager may provide permit(s), if required, to the Connections Project at this stage.
- m) The legal agreement (including approval of the Landholder Environmental Checklist) is signed by the landholder/s and GMW. In cases where there are several interdependent landholders involved, each agreement will include a condition saying that the contract is binding only after all dependent contracts are signed. Where it applies the Construction Manager Engagement Agreement is signed by the landholder/s, the Construction Manager and GMW at the same time.
- n) An initial payment is made to the landholder/s, in accordance with Section 8.4. Where the Construction Manager Model is not triggered, payment is made as per Section 8.6
- o) The Construction Manager on behalf of GMW arranges for detailed design.
- p) The Construction Manager assists the landholder/s to obtain relevant approvals and permits and coordinates detailed design.
- q) Where payment has been withheld, in accordance with Section 8.4 landholder (through the Construction Manager) demonstrates to the Connections Project that relevant approvals and permits have been obtained (via Landholder Permit Verification Report) and further payment made.
- r) Landholder completes works (usually with the assistance and under guidance of Construction Manager).
- s) The Construction Manager verifies that works have been completed.
- t) Construction Manager and landholder verify that works have been done in accordance with necessary approvals and permits. Signs Verification Works Checklist.
- u) Balance of payment is made to the landholder/s.

Where groups of landholders are involved, the approvals and permits must be determined for each individual property, to ensure each individual landholder within the group is responsible for their own requirements.

9.2 Documents

9.2.1 Landholder environmental checklist

The Landholder Environmental Checklist will provide a record of the outcomes of the desktop analysis and site visit for a particular property (see Section 8). The landholder will acknowledge having received, read and understood the document as part of the legal agreement.

The Landholder Environmental Checklist template will be approved as set out in Table 4.

9.2.2 Connections environmental guidelines

The Connections Environmental Guidelines will set out guidance to landholders on relevant legislation, guidelines and approvals which may be required in implementing the works under the agreement with GMW (Connections Project). The guidelines provide information on legal requirements and the potential obligations of landholders conducting works where either removal of native vegetation or direct construction impacts on wetlands and waterways may occur.

The Connections Environmental Guidelines will include:

- Scope;
- Application;
- Roles and responsibilities;
- Process and management;
- Planning and Water Use Licence requirements, including whole farm plans and Irrigation Development Guidelines;
- Native flora and fauna requirements;
- Listed flora and fauna species and community requirements; and
- Cultural heritage requirements.

The key legislation and policy applicable to the relevant existing approvals processes identified in the Connections Environmental Guidelines are:

- Water Act 1989 and associated Determinations;
- Planning and Environment Act 1987;
- Victoria's permitted clearing and offset policy;
- Applicable Regional River Health Strategies;
- Regional Catchment Management Strategies relevant to the site of works;
- Flora and fauna species and communities listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (Cth) 1999;
- Wildlife Act 1975;
- Fisheries Act 1995; and
- Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 and Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2007.

The guidelines were initially developed in consultation with relevant agencies including:

- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (previously the Department of Environment and Primary Industries);
- Aboriginal Affairs Victoria;
- North Central Catchment Management Authority;
- Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority; and
- Local councils.

Further updates to the guidelines will be approved as set out in Table 4.

9.2.3 Connections Environmental Handbook

The Connections Environmental Handbook will set out best practice environmental management in constructing connections works. It will be designed for use by landholders, Construction Managers, and their contractors.

The handbook will outline generic environmental site controls, including guidance on:

- General site management;
- Native vegetation;
- Fauna;
- Aquatic species;
- Heritage;
- Water quality and sediment control;

- Flooding and drainage;
- Weed and disease;
- Use of vehicles, mobile plant and other equipment;
- Amenity – emissions, noise and vibration;
- Chemicals, fuels and oils;
- Managing materials;
- Waste;
- Fire; and
- Environmental incidents.

The handbook was developed in consultation with relevant agencies. This includes:

- Department of Environment and Primary Industries;
- Aboriginal Affairs Victoria;
- Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority;
- North Central Catchment Management Authority; and
- Local councils

The handbook will be approved as set out in Table 4.

9.2.4 Landholder agreements

The landholder agreements will include a clause confirming that the landholder has received and understood the Connections Environmental Guidelines and Landholder Environmental Checklist.

There are a number of transaction points involving the landholder as explained in Section 9.

The standard template for the landholder agreements will be approved as set out in 4.

9.2.5 Landholder Handover Verification Report

The Works Verification Checklist will provide a record following the completion of relevant works that the Construction Manager and landholder confirm that works have been undertaken and delivered in accordance with relevant approval requirements.

10 Council liaison

Every quarter the Connections Project will convene an Agency Liaison Group (ALG) forum consisting of relevant councils and other government agencies. The purpose of the forum is to provide members with an update regarding the status of the Project's work activities as well to discuss any planning issues and related matters.

The ALG may determine to alter the meeting frequency as required. Reporting requirements to the ALG will be set out in the relevant approved Incorporated Document or as requested via the ALG forum.

11 Connections to natural water carriers

In some instances, landowners will be connected to natural water carriers rather than the Backbone. In most cases the GMW Connections Project will assist to coordinate the approvals including to:

- Establish where connections to natural water carriers are applicable;
- Identify and obtain all relevant approvals; and
- Engage in discussions with Catchment Management Authorities regarding potential cumulative impacts in order to ensure river health is protected.

Where landholders choose to manage these works themselves, they will be responsible for complying with all relevant legislation and obtaining these necessary additional approvals.

12 Monitoring, auditing and reporting

Monitoring, auditing and reporting requirements for the CEMF, including this Connections Protocol, are set out in the CEMF. Refer to the CEMF for more information.