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# Chair's Message

By Trevor Hodson

Another year has drawn to a close and with it has come the great news that our calls for getting more protection for the rivers from harmful development have been considered via Planning Amendment VC201. Significant Landscape Overlays, gazetted recently, now include all rivers of the Barwon. The next step for FOTB will be to write to all relevant Councils and Shires, as has the People for A Living Moorabool, to ask how they will incorporate these measures in future planning decisions. This Amendment has come about from the work of the Concerned Waterways Alliance and also our input to the Barwon Ministerial Advisory Committee, that at the time seemed to mount to little. The SLO's should help with determinations around inappropriate developments like the Motorcycle Facility at Fyansford and the proposed development at De Goldis Road.

We should also be encouraged by responses to the Open Letter sent out to candidates in the recent State election reminding them of the many issues relating to our rivers.

Our immediate task is the rescheduling of the AGM on 22nd February. Barwon Water Managing Director, Tracey Slatter, will be speaking and we hope Greg Robertson from the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation WTOAC will also be available to speak. The venue will be the Jeff Sykes Rowing Centre on the Barwon River.

I recently attended and presented on FOTB's behalf at the Wettenhall Landscape Restoration Workshop. FOTB is the only group not undertaking on-ground works. Nevertheless, there was genuine interest from the Trustees about our work.

I have followed up with DELWP and CCMA regarding benchmark fish surveys in the Upper Barwon; in particular, Blackfish. CCMA have advised that some information may be available about some other species from the Platypus eDNA project.

I also responded to Golden Plains Shire to comment on their Domestic Wastewater Management Plan.

I recently met with a local farmer on Boundary Road in Forrest to discuss matters arising from the breakdown of a sump that is causing a major diversion of the West Barwon and damage leading to closure of the Boundary Road. This has been referred to Colac Otway Shire and the Corangamite CMA who are part of a multi-agency working group.

We have lodged our Deductible Gift Recipient application and put forward FOTB committee member, Lach Gordon, as the Barwon Water Environmental Advisory Committee representative.

In closing, I would like to thank all Committee members for their contributions last year and take this opportunity to thank Liz for the work she is doing on our behalf.

# At Last! - Some Protection for our Local Rivers

By Lach Gordon

Friends of the Barwon welcomes the Victorian Government announcement of new interim planning controls for our rivers.

## The Announcement

In late December 2022 DELWP advised the gazetting of Planning Scheme Amendment VC201. The amendment delivers stronger planning policies and landscape controls to protect the Rivers of the Barwon, Waterways of the West and all rivers and creeks across Victoria. The amendment responds to short term planning actions associated with the Victorian government Rivers of the Barwon Action plan and Waterways of the West Action plan.

## How did it happen?

Protection of the riparian zone of our local waterways was a primary aim of our group at our launch in 1998.

The passing of the Yarra River Act (December 2017), followed by permanent planning controls for the entire Yarra River in June 2020, demonstrated that community led advocacy could deliver protection for urbanised waterways.

We recognised the risks from inappropriate development and emphasised these in a discussion paper '*Protecting and Restoring the Rivers of the Barwon System (2019)*' developed in conjunction with Environmental Justice Australia and delivered to the Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) established by then Minister for Police and Water, Lisa Neville.

The Rivers of the Barwon Action Plan was finalised by the MAC in December 2021.

Over the last few years many inappropriate riparian development proposals have come to our attention and we have opposed them, sometimes successfully.

It's no secret that land developed on waterways attracts a premium sale price around 30% higher than other land nearby - essentially a windfall profit. Constant attempts of developers to reduce lot sizes (sometimes unsewered), remove riparian vegetation and increase water extraction prompted FOTB to request (unsuccessfully) the then Planning Minister, Richard Wynne for a Moratorium on Development (February 2021).

In November 2022, the Government announced that new planning controls would apply to the Yarra River, and twelve key rivers and creeks in Melbourne (including the Maribyrnong), but this excluded the Werribee River.

The Werribee Riverkeeper organization was then able to convince the government that it should be included in the new controls.

Once this had taken place FOTB jumped to action because the Waterways of the West action plan and the Barwon action plan were developed contemporaneously under Water Minister, Lisa Neville. We moved rapidly to brief local politicians and parliamentarians that the Rivers of the Barwon should not be excluded from the amended planning controls.

Finally, the Concerned Waterways Alliance requested that these controls be applied to all Victorian rivers, and this concerted action from many groups has now resulted in gazetting of the new amendment.

### **A Word of Caution**

The new controls apply only until 2026 and will need our support.

Nevertheless, it is a good start, and provides leverage for Shires and City Councils to reject voracious riparian development.

FOTB will be informing local governments on their obligations to comply with the new controls.

*Photo: Barwon River near Inverleigh*



## Save the Date for our AGM

Our Annual General Meeting (AGM) has been rescheduled to Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February (6-8pm). The venue will be the Jeff Sykes Rowing Centre, 8 Barwon Terrace South Geelong.

An invitation and agenda for the AGM will be circulated in the next couple of weeks.

Please save the date and email Liz at [friendsofthebarwon@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofthebarwon@gmail.com) if you are planning to attend.

*Photo: FOTB Committee Members at Lake Connewarre*



## Concerned Waterways Alliance (CWA) New Website

**By Liz Hamilton**

The Concerned Waterways Alliance (CWA) is a network of community and environment groups from Gippsland to the Otway's who “*share a deep concern about the degraded state of southern Victoria’s rivers, wetlands and aquifers and are committed to improving their health for the benefit of current and future generations*”. The CWA launched their [new website](#) last October.

In recent times, the CWA have responded and expressed their concerns about various [issues including:](#)

- Essential Services Commission Water Price Review 2023



- The State governments' Groundwater Management Strategy (GM2030).

They have also produced some great [statements/resources](#), including:

- Water leadership in the climate crisis
- Lock in targets for sustainable water use
- Measure and monitor all the water we take from rivers and aquifers.



## Concerning findings regarding unlicensed dams on the Moorabool River

By Liz Hamilton

An article about the widespread occurrence of unlicensed dams along the flow-stressed Moorabool River recently made the [front page of the Geelong Times](#). The article outlines the findings of the [People for a Living Moorabool](#) (PALM) who recently conducted a study of dams in the Moorabool River catchment.

PALM spokesperson, Cameron Steel, told the Times that “preliminary results show an upsurge in private dam development, many on DELWP designated water courses, which appear not to have gone through a SRW (Southern Rural Water) licensing process”. As Cameron notes “it should not be up to groups like PALM to monitor Victorian catchments for unauthorised dam construction.”

For the Moorabool River, this responsibility lies with SRW. The full article can be accessed [here](#)

*Photo: A farm dam beside the Moorabool River. Courtesy of PALM*



## Barwon Water Update

### Boundary Creek remediation

The most recent update on activities concerning Boundary Creek can be found in Barwon Water's annual report from October 2022. Here is a link to the full [media release](#) outlining the key points about remediation works with a link to their more comprehensive annual report.

The Remediation Working Group will be meeting again in March to provide another update on 2023 activities.

### Annual Water Outlook

Barwon Water published their 2022 [Annual Water Outlook](#) in December which gives an update on the region's water supply systems over the coming two years. A summary of the Outlook can be found via Barwon Water's [media release](#).

# Corangamite Catchment Management Authority Update

## Kitjarra-dja-bull Bullarto Langi-ut (Place of Many Stories)

Corangamite Catchment Management Authority issued their [December update](#) on the [Kitjarra-dja-bull Bullarto Langi-ut](#) project, which is developing a masterplan for the Lower Moorabool River corridor south of Meredith and the Lower Barwon River corridor through Geelong to Barwon Heads.

## Barwon and Moorabool Flagship Waterway Projects

The CCMA's most recent [Barwon Flagship update](#) and [Moorabool Flagship update](#) can be subscribed to or found on the CCMA website.

## Upcoming Events

### Webinar: Platypus Monitoring in Melbourne and Great Australian Platypus Search

Find out about the health of platypus populations across Melbourne by joining Melbourne Water and wildlife ecologist Josh Griffiths via webinar on Thursday, **January 19** from 12 pm – 1 pm.

Josh is a senior wildlife ecologist for CESAR/EnviroDNA, with extensive professional background in platypus biology and ecology. Josh was the senior scientist who led and published the Environmental DNA (eDNA) assessment of platypus distribution in the Middle Barwon River. Josh will discuss how his team have been monitoring platypus and some of the key findings from their research. This includes:

- the results of the Great Australian Platypus Search
- our Urban Platypus Monitoring Program
- community eDNA monitoring program

Registration for this online event is free: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/.../platypus-monitoring-in...>

### Webinar: Recruiting new volunteers and inspiring young people to volunteer

Learn ways to recruit new volunteers and to inspire and engage young people in your organisation through this webinar being held by Landcare Victoria on Tuesday, **7 February from 5:30pm - 7.30pm**.

Tickets are free for members and volunteers from Landcare Victoria Member Groups or \$10 for non-members.



Spaces are limited, so please register as soon as possible.

For more information and to register, please visit <http://ow.ly/wSe450Ma7h2>.

### **BCN's Environmental Volunteering Calendar**

Plenty of opportunities to get attend a range of great environmental events or to volunteer with organisations in our region can be found on the involved Bellarine Catchment Network's '[Bellarine and Geelong Environmental Volunteering Calendar](#)'.

Furthermore, you can find out more about each of BCN's network [groups and organisations](#) and the kind of work they get involved in.

*Photo: BCN Environmental Volunteer Calendar*



## **Ongoing opportunities to get more involved with Friends of the Barwon**

Our committee continues to put a great deal of voluntary time and effort into FOTB in our fight for a healthier river system. We would love to get more of our Friends actively involved with our work and there are a range of ways that your skills can be put to good work.

We are looking for Friends with skills including;

- computer,
- website and social media management,
- photography,
- research and involvement with relevant advisory committees.

If you would like to get more involved as a Committee member or in other ways that could help, please email Liz Hamilton at [friendsofthebarwon@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofthebarwon@gmail.com) or ring 0400 780680 and briefly outline what skills and time commitments you may be able to provide as well as your contact details.

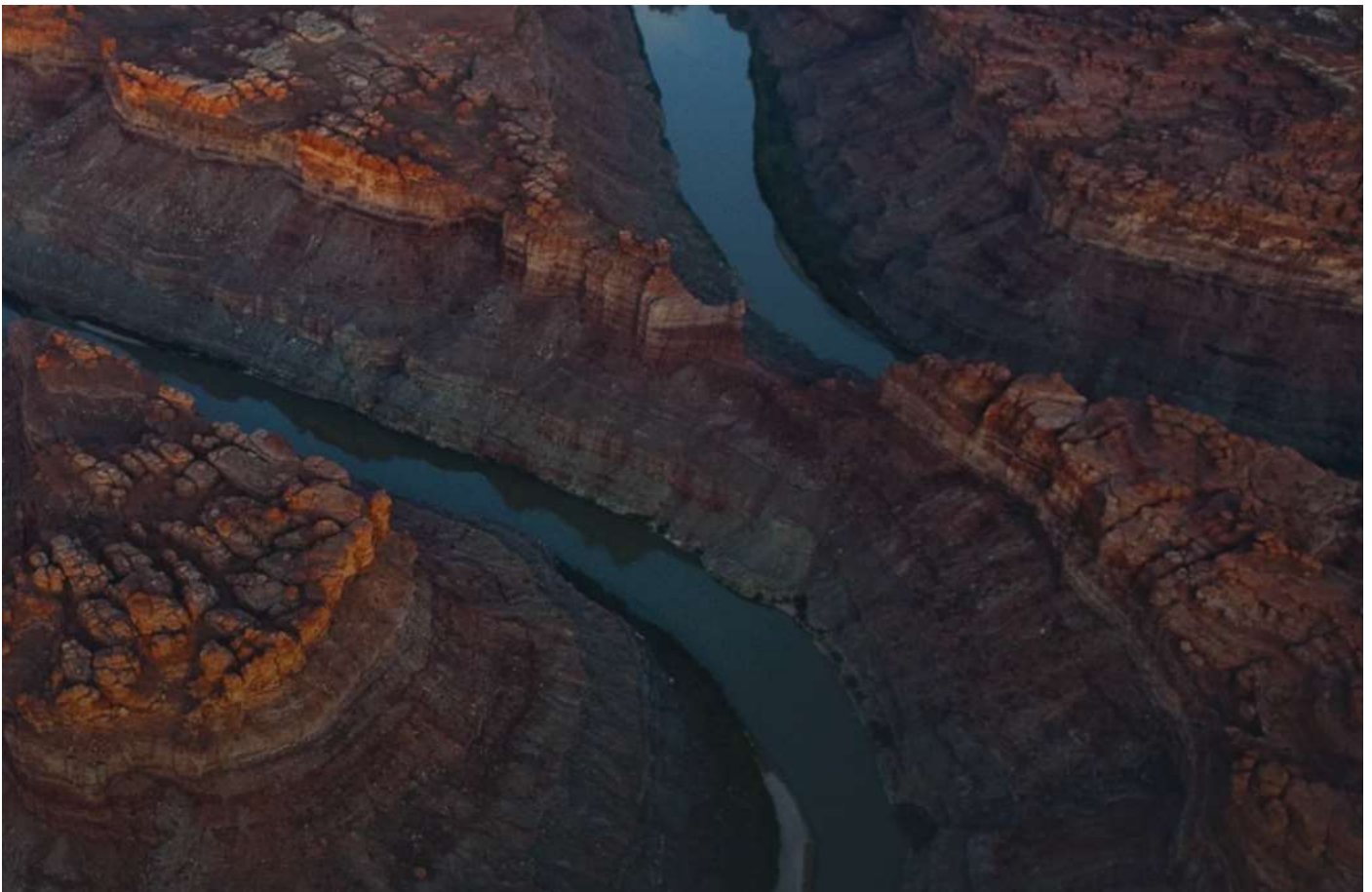
## River – the documentary

*“The lives of our rivers now, will determine the destiny of our future generations to come.”*

Sage words from this beautiful documentary aired recently on ABC TV. "River" tells the story of the beauty and vulnerability of rivers across the globe, told through the most remarkable cinematography, quotes and narration with music by the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

One of the most beautiful and profound documentaries that I've seen in recent times, 'River' can be watched through [ABC IVIEW](#) until February.

*Photo: Courtesy ABC TV*



# FOTB Membership Renewal and Your Donations Will Soon be Tax Deductible

Membership to FOTB is still only \$10 per annum. You can sign-up again via our website link: [Membership \(friendsofthebarwon.org.au\)](http://friendsofthebarwon.org.au)

Because FOTB is now a Financial Landcare Victoria Incorporated (LVI) Member, FOTB will soon be able to use the Landcare Victoria Fund - a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) Fund - to support our fundraising activities.

When you donate, you will need to leave a comment requesting that the funds be used to support FOTB. Donations made to FOTB will be distributed in accordance with the DGR Fund procedures.

All donations over \$2.00 will be tax deductible.

Details will be posted on our website.

## FOTB Contacts

Chair: Trevor Hodson, E: [trevor.hodson@friendsofthebarwon.org.au](mailto:trevor.hodson@friendsofthebarwon.org.au)

Deputy Chair: Sarah Brien

Treasurer: Hugh Stewart

Secretary: Stewart Mathison

Committee: Lach Gordon (Spokesperson)

Kaye Rodden

Andrea Montgomery

Phil Bade

Peter McCracken

Executive Officer: Liz Hamilton, Email: [friendsofthebarwon@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofthebarwon@gmail.com)

FOTB Website: [www.friendsofthebarwon.org.au](http://www.friendsofthebarwon.org.au)



Photo: Kayaking the Barwon - Courtesy Dave Keellings



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