



# **Walkers Lake**

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## **2019-29 Management Plan**



# Abbreviations

WLMP	Walkers Lake Management Plan
NGSC	Northern Grampians Shire Council
MP	Management Plan
DELWP	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
IPA	Invasive Plants and Animals
WLAG	Walkers Lake Advisory Group

# Acknowledgements

Northern Grampians Shire Council (NGSC) acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung people as the original custodians of the lands in the Walkers Lake area.

Sincere thanks to those who provided input into this Plan.

Members of the Walkers Lake Advisory Group Prue McAllister, Wayne Robbins, Colin Coates, Michelle Clark, Trevor Baldock, Chad Frost, Steve Jesse, Austin Freeman, Tony Hand, Rob Loats, GWM Water, VR Fish, Avon Plains Banyena Landcare Group, Dja Dja Wurrung and other community members.

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# 1. Executive Summary

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Northern Grampians Shire Council has a commitment to the community through its **social, community and environment strategy**. Council is committed to provide safe and usable assets and services to improve the quality of life for residents. This is highlighted in the 2017–21 council plan with council's aims in enhancing lifestyles and community, boost economic growth and provide sustainable infrastructure. Council is also committed to the health and wellbeing of our community through the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-21 and this Walkers Lake Management Plan directly aligns with specific priorities Active Living and Improving Mental Wellbeing.

This plan has been compiled with support from key organisations and community members, who are also striving to achieve the best outcome for all users, and makes recommendations as to what actions are required to see this facility become sustainable in the future. The three key objectives being a balance between **recreation, cultural heritage values** and the **natural environment**.

The aims of the Management Plan are to provide direction on future management for the Walkers Lake Reserve in the following areas of priority and the aims include a focus on:

- helping council to think strategically and innovatively on how we manage Walkers Lake Reserve over a longer period, particularly in the context of protecting all recreation, cultural and natural values in response to increased population impacts.
- strengthening local community engagement in the development and implementation of this plan.
- enhancing collaboration between key stakeholders to achieve agreed objectives.
- monitoring and reporting of agreed projects, biodiversity and environmental conditions throughout the life of the plan.

The methodology used to prepare the plan included:

- a review of existing information
- site inspections and studies
- consultation with the community, key stakeholders and agencies

## 2. Introduction

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Walkers Lake is a freshwater lake located adjacent to the old Avons Plains School approximately 26 kilometres from Donald, 32 kilometres from St Arnaud and 40 kilometres from Minyip. Walkers Lake and its surrounds are crown land, and was previously purposed for the management of wildlife and preservation of wildlife habitat however this changed in 2014 to **"Public Recreation"** purposes. The reserve in total has an area of approximately 80 hectares of which is split reasonably evenly between either the natural/built environment or the lake itself. The lake has a volume of approximately 900 ML and is approximately 2.5 to 3 metres deep.

The lake receives water supplies from the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline through a recreation water allocation and has an extensive natural catchment during very wet weather conditions. Prior to the recent thirteen year drought it was suggested the lake only dried out completely twice in a period of sixty years however with the recent decommissioning of the channel system the effects on what has previously been considered as natural flows will be impacted.

Decades ago overflows from the Avon River provided water regimes that were of more permanence to the Avon Plains Lakes. The building of Holland's Bank on a shire road in the early 1900's has prevented this natural water regime and this has impacted on natural runoff into the Avon Plains Lakes, including Walkers Lake.

Walkers Lake has provided a freshwater, favourable area to live and camp, and food resource rich area for Dja Dja Wurrung People and other Aboriginal people visiting the landscape. History also identifies that the lake has been utilised for recreational activities for well over 60 years such as camping, fishing, yabbing, swimming, skiing and hunting in season, are currently enjoyed by local, regional and visiting communities subject to suitable water levels. The Donald Angling Club has previously stocked the lake with golden perch and Fisheries Victoria has stocked it with Murray Cod. In the last 3 years VRFish have stocked the lake with Golden Perch and there is also a population of English Perch (Redfin) found in the lake.

Past history also identifies many of our locals and visitors also enjoyed Walkers Lake's recreational values often riding their horses from surrounding locations and enjoying the tranquil lake atmosphere while swimming, and in general enjoying many water-based recreational activities. The Avon Plains Memorial constructed in 1972 on the site of the old Avon Plains State School to commemorate the centenary of the signing of land occupation and to perpetuate the memory of the first settlers of the area. The Memorial still remains in place and is historically and socially significant at a local level. It commemorates the earliest developments of the Avon Plains district perpetuates the memory of the first settlers between 1869 and 1875.

In 2013, following support from many local community members the NGSC placed notices in the North Central News advertising for interested community members regarding forming an interim Advisory Group. This was to identify and progress the identified ongoing support for the utilisation of Walkers Lake as a location to receive pipeline delivered recreation water.

The first meeting was well attended by community members, appointed Advisory Group Members, NGSC Councillors and staff, agencies and interested local community members. The outcome of this meeting supported the immediate progress requesting a pipeline water supply to the lake and further discussions were entered into regarding future management arrangements to potentially ensure the current opportunity for water based recreational opportunities were progressed. It was noted the lake had been subject to many recreational activities for decades when suitable water regimes were available and the lake's current natural attributes are relatively intact.

Thus, the main objective is to foster an environment where the natural and cultural values of Walker's Lake biodiversity are protected and enhanced and opportunities to access and enjoy the lake are achieved in a sustainable way.

High priority management challenges affecting Walkers Lake include:

- the impact of camping and increased use.
- loss of native flora and fauna.
- protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage sites.
- provision of designated public access.
- unauthorised access and activities impacting on environmental and cultural heritage values.
- unmanaged weeds and pests.
- sympathetically designed infrastructure .
- provision of public amenities.
- education and awareness of not only the way we treat the environment but how we all work together for a long term sustainable place that caters for all needs of a natural ecosystem that includes people.

**This plan is a 10 year plan and with the creation and implementation of an action plan it will monitor this activity on an annual basis.**

# 3. Relevant legislation, policies and plans

As part of the review of the management plan, key legislation, policy and strategies relevant to the management of Walkers Lake were reviewed. A broad range of issues are addressed across the documents reviewed with varying levels of relevance to the Walkers Lake Management Plan (WLMP).

Thus, the aim of the review process was to ensure that the WLMP gives effect to and is consistent with the Council Plan, key legislation, policy and strategies to ensure that there is a clear and consolidated strategic direction for the ongoing management of Walkers Lake.

## Council Plan 2017-21

The Council Plan is a comprehensive overview of Council's values, commitments and activities. It includes clear goals and objectives against which Council and its administration measures its performance. Every four years Council prepares a Council Plan after the election of a new Council.

## Crown Land Reserves Act

The Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 is an act to provide for the reservation of Crown Lands for certain purposes and for the management of such reserved lands and for other purposes

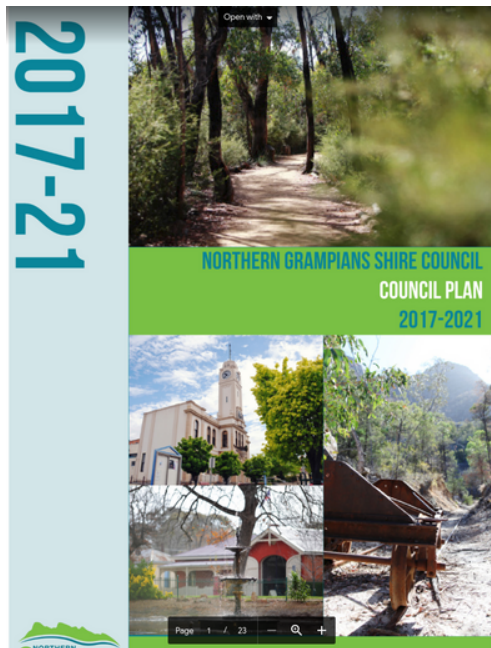
## Marine Safety Act 2010

One of the main purposes of the Marine Safety Act 2010 is to provide for the efficient and safe operation of vessels on State waters as managed by the designated Waterway Manager, NGSC.

## Planning and Environment Act 1987

The purpose of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 is to establish a framework for planning the use, development and protection of land in Victoria in the present and long-term interests of all Victorians.

At a municipal level, planning schemes are established including zones which determine what is permitted and prohibited to implement the State Planning Policy Framework and the Local Planning Policy Framework including the Municipal Strategic Statement and local planning policies.



## **Aboriginal Heritage Act**

The main purposes of the Act are:

- (a) to provide for the protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage and Aboriginal intangible heritage in Victoria; and
- (b) to empower traditional owners as protectors of their cultural heritage on behalf of Aboriginal people and all other peoples; and
- (c) to strengthen the ongoing right to maintain the distinctive spiritual, cultural, material and economic relationship of traditional owners with the land and waters and other resources with which they have a connection under traditional laws and customs; and
- (d) to promote respect for Aboriginal cultural heritage, contributing to its protection as part of the common heritage of all peoples and to the sustainable development and management of land and of the environment.

## **Environment Protection Act 1970**

The purpose of this Act is to create a legislative framework for the protection of the environment in Victoria having regard to the principles of environment protection.

## **Fisheries Act 1995 and Wildlife Act 1975**

Aims to establish procedures in order to promote the protection and conservation of wildlife, the prevention of wildlife from becoming extinct and the sustainable use of and access to wildlife.

## **Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999**

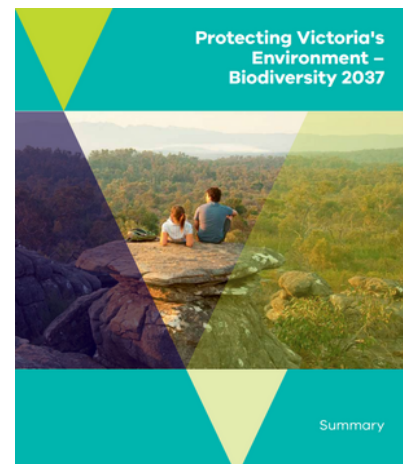
This act requires that an action that is likely to have a significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance requires approval from the Federal Environment Minister.

## **Flora and Fauna Guarantee (FFG) Act 1988**

This is the primary legislation for the protection of flora and fauna in Victoria. The purpose of the Act is to protect and conserve a wide range of species and communities, manage threatening processes, maintain genetic diversity and encourage cooperative management.

## **Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan**

The plan is informed by local health and wellbeing data, the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017–2021 and the Council Plan. The strategic directions of this plan will lay the framework for the development of detailed implementation plans and service plans resulting in a collective impact approach to improving the health and wellbeing of the Northern Grampians



## **National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity 1998**

This strategy relates to the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of its components and the equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilisation of natural resources.

## **Victoria's Biodiversity Strategy 2037**

This strategy is essentially a state analogue of the commonwealth strategy, providing for the conservation of biodiversity in Victoria.

## **Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994**

Aims to set up a framework for the integrated management and protection of catchments and set up a system for the control of noxious weeds and pest animals.

## **Caravan Parks and Mobile Dwelling Regulations 1993**

The Regulations are for reference only however came into effect in 2010. They provide for the health and safety of caravan park users, and set standards for the construction of caravan park cabins.



## **CFA Act 1958**

Country Fire Authority Act 1958 does not contain a section which spells out the purposes or the objectives of the Act. Rather, these must be determined by reference to particular sections of the Act for necessity, statutory interpretation and inference in working out what CFA can and must do, to fulfil its statutory charter.

## **Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010**

The Victorian Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 provides for an out-of-court settlement of native title. The Act allows the Victorian Government to recognise traditional owners and certain rights in Crown land.

## **Land Conservation (Vehicle Control) Act 1972**

An Act to make Provision with respect to Vehicular Traffic on Public Land, the Prevention of Soil Erosion of and Damage to Public Land, to amend the Local Government Act 1958 and for other purposes.



# 4. Management Arrangements

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## Current Management

Whilst Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) will remain the land owner, NGSC is the delegated manager with a local advisory group that provides local dialogue to the ongoing management of the reserve with representation from NGSC, local community and user groups as well as authorities with experience in managing a recreational lake reserve.

## Key Agencies

### **Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)**

Responsible for the management of public land under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978. DELWP do not have direct management responsibility for Walkers Lake, as this responsibility has been delegated to NGSC.

### **Walkers Lake Advisory Group**

The group is formed by council and has no powers conferred to it by council. The committee operates in line with a terms of reference and members are engaged to implement outcomes of the plan through direct involvement including volunteering activities and/or recommending council to action specific projects.

### **GWM Water**

Responsible for all water supply assets connecting Walkers Lake to the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline and are operated by GWM Water staff. GWM Water funded the planning and connection to install the water supply infrastructure and supply water based on a scheduled recreational water regime.

### **VR Fish**

Represents Victorian fishers and annually allocates restocking to Walkers Lake making fishing better for everyone. Their key priorities are to improve fish habitat, create safe, easy and ongoing access, increase participation and promotion of benefits, best practice fisheries management and inform fishers, advocacy and partnerships.



## Dja Dja Wurrung

The key agency for advice on Aboriginal affairs, including areas of NGSC Crown land.

Work to ensure all of our waterways are healthy, with the right water in the right place at the right time to meet the needs of the environment, Jaara people and the broader community. Dja Dja Wurrung have a recognised and legitimate role in water governance, and expect genuine consultation in policy development and a role in decision-making about our waterways. Work to secure adequate and equitable water rights that meet our social, cultural, spiritual, economic and environmental needs and share our creation stories to teach people of how water works in the landscape.

## Landcare

Locally represented by the Avon Plains Banyena Landcare Group who, together with NGSC, partner in activities to increase biodiversity and promote the sustainable management of Walkers Lake.



## Dja Dja Clans Aboriginal Corporation Site Inspection Report



### APPENDIX 2 – DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

Note: All digital photographs in this report were taken on 21 July 2016 by Di Smith using a Panasonic Lumix digital camera.



Figs.1-2: Possible Aboriginal scarred tree – context (west) and detail of dry face.



Figs.3-4: Quartz distal flake – ventral and dorsal views.



Figs.5-6: Quartz pieces embedded in track. Left: Left to right – Prue McAllister, Tori Simson, Fiona Burchell and Kevin Spence. Right: Left to right – Fiona Burchell, Steve Jesse, Tori Simson, Jenny Guthrie and Prue McAllister.

# 5. Vision and Values

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## Vision for Walkers Lake

A key objective of the plan is to establish a progressive vision for Walkers Lake. Through consultation with community groups, key government agencies and the Committee the vision for Walkers Lake was developed. The vision statement describes what NGSC pictures through the implementation of the MP, to foster an environment where the natural and cultural values of Walkers Lake biodiversity are protected and enhanced, and opportunities to access and enjoy the lake for recreational activities are achieved in a sustainable way.

*"The vision is to 'maintain as close as possible the natural attributes of the lake and surrounds whilst providing the local and visiting community a location of high permanence to enjoy the recreational activity of their choice.'"*



# Walkers Lake Values

## Cultural and Recreational

Walkers Lake when holding good water levels attracts local, regional and recreational users from a wide area of regional Victoria. Visitors to the lake enjoy the passive camping experience while relaxing under the lakes shoreline red-gum trees and locals also enjoy bush walking and consider it as a highly regarded water sport location and gathering place.

With adequate water levels, the lake supports a very good yellowbelly fishery and in the past large quantities of yabbies have been caught by local, regional and the visiting fishing public.

Swimming and associated water sports have been enjoyed for decades and most importantly this lake provides local, regional and the visiting public a place to enjoy and relax during the hot summer months of the year. The campers and day visitors all contribute to the local economy and with the towns of Donald, Minyip and St Arnaud only a short trip away the local communities reap the benefit of additional visitors.



Dja Dja Wurrung people have general knowledge that the Avon Plains area on Country holds significance for its historic, archaeological, ceremonial, spiritual, traditional, and contemporary cultural heritage values of association with the Dja Dja Wurrung People. It has shared historic values with neighbouring groups, whose ancestors met with Dja Dja Wurrung People to hold ceremonies and conduct business such as important rituals of exchange and trade.

The three lakes of Walkers, Hollands and Hancocks and their reserves are of high significance to Dja Dja Wurrung people because they connect us with our Ancestors, Country and our Kulin neighbours. Walkers, Hollands and Hancocks Lakes potentially hold high scientific significance in its research potential, for example, to yield information about resource distribution, use, trade and exchange with other Aboriginal groups that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's natural and Aboriginal cultural history. Dja Dja Wurrung people are highly aware of traditional connection, knowledge and lore associated Country. The area is part of a much wider cultural landscape that contains ancient travelling routes, camping and occupational sites, burials and traditional places known to Dja Dja Wurrung people.

The Avon Plains Lakes area of Country holds significance for its values connecting Dja Dja Wurrung people over a period that extends further back in time before the first non-Aboriginal people visited this region. Dja Dja Wurrung country is a cultural landscape that is more than just tangible objects.

Imprinted on it are the dreaming stories, lore, totemic relationships, songs, ceremonies and Ancestral spirits, which give it life and hold significant value to Dja Dja Wurrung People.

## Safe shared activities within the reserve

Walkers Lake is a popular powered and non-powered boating venue. Under the Marine Safety Act 2010 a Waterway Manager is required for the lake. Northern Grampians Shire Council is the current Waterway Manager for Walkers Lake. All vessels are required to travel at a safe speed at all times. All operators of a powerboat must be licensed and must constantly monitor the speed of the vessel to ensure that a safe speed is being maintained. Vessel operators must adhere to the five knot rule (approximately 10 kph) when close to shore, other boats and swimmers, fixed structures (ramps and jetties). Follow signs and buoys (if applicable) marking waterway zones. Council will provide general rules and guidelines for the reserve to ensure the experience is a positive one for all.



## Environment and Biodiversity

*Hollands Lake, Hancocks Lake and Walkers Lake form part of a wetland chain connecting Batyo Catyo (2km north). Historically, these lakes would have been terminal lakes (permanent open freshwater). Although these lakes have been degraded to varying degrees, they have a high conservation value and contain significant habitat characteristics (Egis, 2000). The Avon Plains Lakes are strongly supported by the local community, who are committed to protect and develop the wetlands' ecological and recreational values. Since the construction of Hollands Bank in 1912 the ecological characteristics of the Avon Plains Lakes have been dramatically changed from the natural hydrological regime (Egis 2000). As a result, the ecological integrity of these wetlands has been degraded. The key problem associated with this wetland system is the deprivation of water flow. There are significant environmental, social and also economic benefits in restoring these wetlands to a more natural cycle of wetting and drying. Ecologically, these wetlands are beneficial for a wide variety of flora and fauna, some of which are endangered and internationally important.*

*Walkers Lake supports 4 Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC). These include; Plains Woodlands; Grassy Woodland; Wetland Formation; and Red Gum Wetland.(1)*

At Walkers Lake we need to understand the existing environment and localised native flora and fauna but we do know that pests and weeds threaten native biodiversity due to their invasive ability to change and destroy habitats and ecosystems. Despite significant investment of IPA control throughout the Wimmera region, the impacts require ongoing management with control measures to be more strategic (Wimmera Catchment Management Authority 2015). Invasive species generally affect areas outside the boundaries of the reserve and can readily reinvade from adjoining land. NGSC as the Committee of Management has responsibilities under the Catchment and Land Protection (CALP) Act 1994 to control and/or eradicate pest plant and animal species.

## **Economic and Tourism**

Wimmera Southern Mallee Socio-Economic Value of Recreational Water project has been a joint initiative of Wimmera Development Association, GWMWater, the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority, and local councils. It has been designed to make an initial assessment of the economic and social contribution made by the local weirs, lakes and rivers to the regional economy. This assessment is year one of a longer term annual study. The project encompassed assessments of 24 lakes, weir pools and rivers around the region.

The value of WSM recreational water users' health contribution has been estimated based on the prevention of chronic diseases (such as breast cancer, coronary heart disease, diabetes, bowel cancer and stroke). The mental health benefits are derived from the prevention of anxiety and depression.

The calculated total health benefits from participation at WSM recreational water facilities in 2016-17 include:

- Physical: Annual benefit: \$7,955,132
- Mental benefit: \$618,421
- Total annual health benefit: \$8,573,553

There are no specific clubs or organisations making regular use of facilities at Walkers Lake, but a few host events at the lake from time to time, for example the St Arnaud and Donald Angling Clubs.

Estimated overnight visitors and day trip users of Walkers Lake in 2016-17 are summarised as:

*Recreational water has a total economic contribution of approx \$90,780 to the local economy annually.  
Visit nights/person nights 3,101, Overnight visitors 768, Active Day Users 1,430 and 0 Passive Day Users*

These estimates have been developed through interviews on site and in Donald during March and April 2017, online surveys, and discussions with the Committee of Management.

# 6. Management Areas and Strategies

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This section of the report details management strategies aimed at addressing key issues identified throughout the Walkers Lake Reserve with each strategy categorised under a broad theme to which the strategy relates.

Key management issues and strategies have been presented below that identifies the values, management issue, strategy and priority status. While the issues and associated management strategies have been assigned a priority status, implementation may not occur in that order. An adaptive management approach to implementation will be taken as projects are completed, funding opportunities arise, new information becomes available and new issues and threats emerge.

Council will respond to changing priorities and management strategies in the context of the plans vision statement, with new strategies and actions assessed against how closely they align with the plans objectives.

Management Areas:

- Community, Recreation and Built Environment
- Cultural Heritage
- Biodiversity and Natural Environment
- Tourism and Economic
- Water Supply

Each area will have three key points of reference for the purposes of developing the outcomes and strategies for this plan:

• **Key Values**

• **Key Management Issues**

• **Management Strategies**

# Community, Recreation and Built Environment

## Key Values

- Many recreation activities
- Benefits to mental health and wellbeing
- Social space - shared and individual
- Community volunteering opportunities
- Traditional outdoor experience

## Key Management Issues and Strategies

**Issue:** Poor recreational visitor experience - Inadequate toilets available and cleanliness, no day visitor space or adequate facilities

**Strategy:** Conduct an audit and/or demand analysis of amenities and minor infrastructure, toilets, including picnic tables, weather shelters, rubbish/litter etc. in order to manage future demand including responsibility to supply and maintain.

**Issue:** Inability for council to continue to sustain financial support and resourcing for the management of the reserve

**Strategy:** Council to continue to seek assistance from government and non government sources to assist in managing the reserve financially and/or resourcing

**Issue:** Unsafe for boating, vessels and swimming in a shared environment.

**Strategy:** Review existing rules, consult with Maritime Safety Victoria and key stakeholders to develop a plan to manage the waterway appropriately.

**Issue:** Reserve is currently incorrectly zoned "Farming".

**Strategy:** Make application under a planning scheme amendment to facilitate the rezoning to a more appropriate status such as "public conservation and resource" zone.



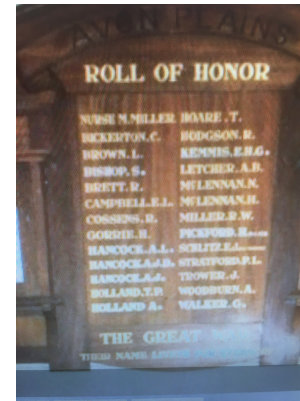


**Issue:** Unregulated and unsafe camping/activities under red gums

**Strategy:** 1. Identify risks and impacts of public safety and infrastructure for the reserve.  
2. Implement appropriate actions such as monitoring program of infrastructure and amenities where hazards are identified.  
3. Conduct a signage audit and address all considerations and issues in the development of relevant signs.

**Issue:** Location of Avon Plains State School Roll of Honour and War memorial Pavilion

**Strategy:** Work with key partners to investigate the location and reference options for the items which are architectural and historically significant to the area.



**Issue:** Fires Management - left unattended, fires near trees, positioned on tree roots and rubbish left

**Strategy:** Liaise with CFA and DELWP to improve fire management and implement State Rules. Investigate the implementation of designated fire places to assist the management of camp fire activities as well as education opportunities.

**Issue:** Protection of Avon Plains Memorial Plaque

**Strategy:** Create a process to monitor and protect the integrity of the structure for future generations.



**Issue:** Continued fish stocking and suitable sustainable environment for aquatic life/fish

**Strategy:** Maintain a close relationship with VRFish, relevant authorities and the community to ensure stocking activities and a healthy environment is maintained for the future.

**Issue:** Managing long term camping

**Strategy:** In consultation with key stakeholders develop rules associated with camping and the timeframe for lengths of stay. Develop signage and an information program to implement rules.

**Issue:** Providing environment for the maximum health and wellbeing of the visitors

**Strategy:** Maintain an environment that best provides a space to encourage health and wellbeing opportunities



**Issue:** Providing adequate Infrastructure for recreational fishing

**Strategy:** Maintain a close relationship with VRFish, relevant authorities and the community to ensure values are considered and needs such as infrastructure, access and awareness is identified for the future of recreational fishing and its associated activities.

**Issue:** Improving visitors experience, camping options throughout the reserve and maintaining relative infrastructure for users

**Strategy:** 1. Review all options for camping such as dispersed and formal activities.  
2. Develop an action plan in terms of realistic timelines and available resources including funds and labour for implementation of management of the sites as identified.

**Issue:** Visitors not aware of the recreational values of the reserve and how to best use the facilities for all in a sustainable way

**Strategy:** Work in partnership with all key partners to create the most effective way/s to communicate to users best practice behaviours relating to visiting Walkers Lake and the values of the lake reserve.

# Cultural Heritage

## Key Values

- Site of Aboriginal cultural significance
- Community awareness and education
- Important site of significance in terms of Aboriginal land use including food supply, ceremonies and celebrations

## Key Management Issues and Strategies

**Issue:** Damage to identified remnants/trees and sensitive sites

**Strategy:** Work in partnership with key stakeholders to identify, monitor and protect sites of Aboriginal cultural heritage.

**Issue:** High impact activities on site

**Strategy:** Investigate the development of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan or Land Use Agreement and options for future potential high/low impact activities at the reserve.



**Issue:** Shallow pits for toilets used rather than existing toilet facilities on site

**Strategy:** In conjunction with built environment activities review of amenities to provide alternative by either fixed facilities close to campers, portable facilities in peak times or rules to bring your own toilet.

**Issue:** Increased numbers of visitors and how to manage sensitive sites

**Strategy:** Work in partnership with key stakeholders to develop appropriate education and awareness activities as well as protective measures.

**Issue:** Visitors not aware of Indigenous values of site and area

**Strategy:** Work in partnership with local Aboriginal representatives from Dja Dja Wurrung and other key stakeholders to enhance the community's awareness, understanding and appreciation for indigenous cultural heritage.

# Biodiversity and Natural Environment

## Key Values

- Significant native grass species, river red gum trees and endangered species
- Destination for passive and active recreation
- Cultural heritage values
- Traditional outdoor experience
- Water supply management, wetland values and fluctuating water level
- Controlling pests and weeds

## Key Management Issues and Strategies

**Issue:** Damage caused by camping and vehicle access

**Strategy:** In consultation with key stakeholders, conduct an audit and demand analysis of designated camping areas, public access tracks, paths and roads within the reserve providing recommendations which assists protection of environmental and cultural values as well as safe public recreation access and linkages is maintained where appropriate.

**Issue:** Undergrowth destroyed and foreshore erosion

**Strategy:** Identify local native species and EVC's, implement native flora & fauna protection and management actions, maximising opportunities to work with partner agencies such as DELWP, Landcare and community groups. This is to be managed in consideration with the reserve status of public recreation.

**Issue:** Managing vermin, pests and weeds

**Strategy:** 1. In consultation with key stakeholders, the community and DELWP develop an action plan for the monitoring and control of feral animals including rabbits and foxes.

2. In consultation with key stakeholders, the community and DELWP develop an action plan for monitoring and control of weeds and pest plants in terms of the Catchment and Land Protection (CALP) Act 1994.



**Issue:** Visitors not aware of values of the reserve

**Strategy:** Continue to support Landcare and friends groups in the management of Walkers Lake reserve and engage the general community in management activities in partnership with key stakeholders.

Implement an education and awareness campaign around the biodiversity and natural environment of Walkers Lake.

**Issue:** Managing native flora and fauna values in a recreational reserve

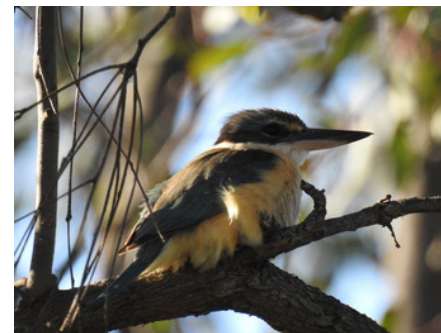
**Strategy:**

1. Undergo an assessment of the site to understand what native species are local to the area and reserve.
2. Create an action plan to establish a planting schedule for appropriate revegetation activities in approved sites.
3. Involve all key stakeholders such as DELWP, Landcare, schools and the community to implement a scheduled plan.

**Issue:** Illegal and unauthorised removal and use of wood for fires and other uses

**Strategy:**

1. Install signs across the site advising penalties and options for wood supplies for fires etc.
2. Monitor wood collection on site and manage in terms of available resources.
3. Education and awareness program to be implemented



# Tourism and Economic

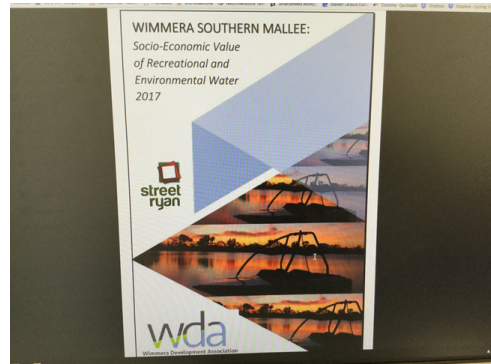
## Key Values

- Economic and tourism
- Cultural heritage values
- Social space, a place to getaway
- Mental wellbeing
- Physical health
- Destination place
- Attractions - fishing, camping, recreation (active and passive)
- Education and awareness

## Key Management Issues and Strategies

**Issue:** Long term sustainability of water supply and infrastructure

- Strategy:**
1. Council to continue to support financially and with resourcing as much as practicable subject to annual budget allocations.
  2. Council to continue to seek assistance from government and non government sources to assist in managing the reserve through funding, resourcing and grant applications.



**Issue:** Marketing of the site to locals and visitors

**Strategy:** Identify, support and implement activities and works that promote and enhance public interactions with the Walkers Lake environment; resulting in an enhanced understanding and appreciation, whilst improving recreational values, attractiveness and usability of open space. This may include youth/student activities, interactive displays, media, website development and improvements to the site/reserve.

**Issue:** Effectively managing increased visitors

**Strategy:** In consultation with key stakeholders gain an understanding usage and the capacity of the facilities and infrastructure to sustain visitors at peak times. This will enable appropriate planning for visitor numbers, temporary facility provision, development of permanent infrastructure, signage requirements, shared need/management challenges and community need.

**Issue:** Providing suitable education and awareness opportunities for visitors

**Strategy:** Continue to support key groups and organisations in the management of Walkers Lake reserve and engage the general community in assisting education and awareness activities.

# Water Supply

## Key Values

- Usable environment for the whole community and visitors
- Recreation benefits
- Impacts on health and wellbeing
- Supporting wildlife habitat
- Economic and tourism
- Managing wetlands and biodiversity

## Key Management Issues and Strategies

**Issue:** Ensuring water security for supply to the lake

**Strategy:** 1. Council to maintain membership with GWM Water Recreation Water Users Group and investigate membership to the Wimmera Mallee Recreational Lakes Alliance.  
2. Council to schedule consultation with GWM Water on a 12 monthly basis to review water supply arrangements and formalise scheduled inflows to the lake and communicate this with the Walkers Lake Advisory Group.

**Issue:** Mitigating Flood impacts

**Strategy:** Monitor and control inflows at times of high rainfall to mitigate impacts on neighbours. In consultation with key stakeholders establish links with key members of the community to navigate/control the small diversion structure at souths creek in times of flood.

**Issue:** Covering cost of supply

**Strategy:** In consultation with the community, GWM Water and key stakeholders investigate options of costs for supply and fundraising opportunities to manage the future costs for supply.

**Issue:** Water supply infrastructure management

**Strategy:** Council to maintain discussions with GWM Water to ensure infrastructure is in good order to provide scheduled inflows to the lake.

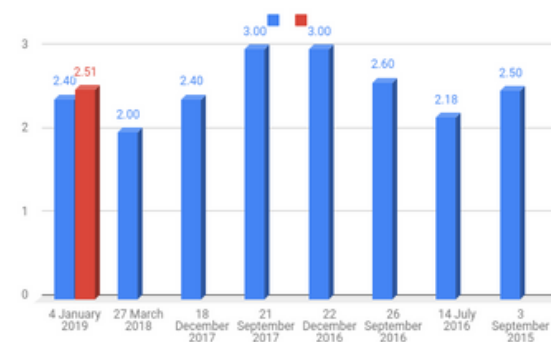
Water supply to WMP supplied recreation lakes is generally undertaken in the winter-spring period. GWMWater receives advice from the Regional Recreation Water Users Committee on the priorities for allocation of recreational water.

### Walkers Lake General Inflow Target Dates and Volume (ML - Megalitres)

Month	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Sub	Total	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Sub Total	Total
ML	0	25	25	75	75	0	200	0	0	50	50	0	100	300	

Recorded Water Levels.

Average Level 2.51m



**Issue:** Maintaining levels for recreation and biodiversity management

**Strategy:** In consultation with GWM Water, North Central CMA and key stakeholders, investigate the creation of a formal inflow and water management regime that will assist the management of water levels with consideration of recreational use, healthy trees and natural environment.

**Issue:** Blue Green Algae

**Strategy:** 1. Identify risks and impacts of public safety and the reserve environment including aquatic life including fish.

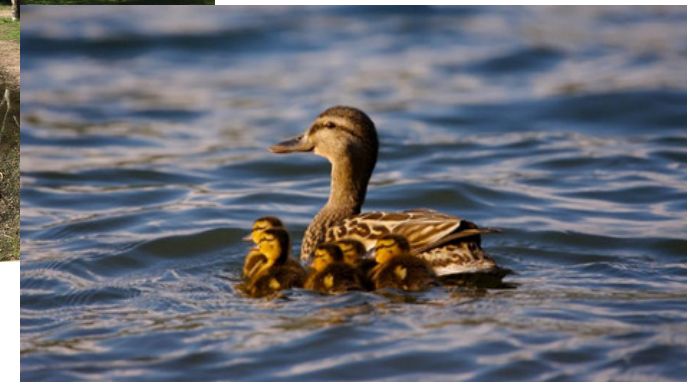
2. Implement a monitoring and testing program of the algae where hazards are identified and implement the process for warning the community when outbreaks occur.

3. In consultation with key stakeholders investigate possible options to proactively manage the water quality to mitigate future outbreaks.

4. Maintain membership with Regional Blue Green Algae Manager (GWM Water) to ensure monitoring and recording of events and updates in regulations are maintained.

**Issue:** Ground water levels and impacts

**Strategy:** Investigate the management and monitoring of bores within the immediate catchment area to enable a sound record of the levels be maintained for future management of the reserve.





# 7. ACTION PLAN

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The Walkers Lake Management Plan has been created through a process of review of the previous plan and relative legislation and input from key stakeholders. This process has been used to develop the 'vision' and management objectives for the plan. The draft Walkers Lake Management Plan will be made available to the public for comment which will be facilitated by NGSC and key steps in the process are as follows:

## **Action Plan and Priorities**

An action plan for all management areas **Community, Recreation & Built Environment, Cultural Heritage, Biodiversity & Natural Environment, Tourism & Economic** and **Water Supply** to be created with **High/Medium/Low** priorities to be set with realistic timelines to be achieved. This action plan will be implemented by council and will be subject to annual budget considerations, funding applications and resource capabilities. The annual budget process is underway between November and June annually.

## **Concept Design**

A "concept design" will be developed to enable a visual map to be created that will provide a detailed overview of the current outline of the Walkers Lake reserve and how it may look into the future.

## **Timeline**

The timeline for key milestones for Council to endorse the management plan will be:

- Draft plan endorsed by Council at its February meeting
- Draft plan presented to the wider community after February 2019

## **Future Monitoring of Action Plan**

- The management plan will be reviewed by council annually by September.
- The action plan will form a part of the responsibilities of the Advisory Group to monitor and make recommendations to council relating to progress and/or changes to priority or scheduled actions.
- Council has the final control of the action plan and activities at the Walkers Lake Reserve.