



**Port Phillip and Westernport**  
CATCHMENT AND LAND PROTECTION BOARD

Our Ref: BRD/07  
Date: 1<sup>st</sup> May 2002

Project Manager - VRHS  
Catchment and Water Division  
Department of Natural Resources and Environment  
PO Box 500  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Sir/Madam

**Comments on Draft Victorian River Health Strategy**

Thank you for the opportunity for the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment and Land Protection Board to comment on the draft Victorian River Health Strategy (VRHS). The following comments have been developed by the members and staff of the Board.

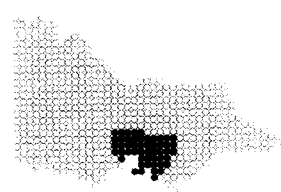
This policy is obviously very closely linked to the work of the Board, in particular with the Regional Catchment Strategy that the Board has now started to review and renew.

The Board is, in general, very supportive of the VRHS. There has been a clear need for a document of this type that can bring together the many aspects of river and waterway management and focus them on an agreed strategic direction.

The Board particularly supports the proposed conceptual regional management framework outlined diagrammatically as Figure 5.1 on page 55, which highlights the importance of the Regional Catchment Strategy as an overarching document bringing together various components of sound catchment management into an integrated and regional vision.

However, the Board has concerns at how the conceptual framework will be put into practice in the Port Phillip and Westernport Region, particularly in the short term. These concerns are addressed in part by Section 11.1.3 beginning on page 121 but the Board believes amendment is required in some of the wording, including:

- reference to this region as the “metropolitan region” when in fact only around 15% of the region is urban and the remainder is mainly forest, native vegetation or extremely productive rural land;
- reference to the Werribee and upper Maribyrnong catchments currently having no waterway manager but no mention of the similar inadequacies in management arrangements for the Mornington Peninsula and the Bass catchment;



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- the region contains all or part of 38 councils, not 31;
- the proposed action should mention Western Port in addition to Port Phillip Bay;
- the proposed action should replace the word “explored” with “developed and presented to Government”; and
- the proposed action should note the CALP Board as having the lead role in partnership with and supported by Melbourne Water and NRE.

It is obvious that the catchment management arrangements are more difficult to explain for this region than for other regions due to having a CALP Board structure rather than a CMA plus the absence of a designated waterway management authority for some areas. However, it is important to have all statements correct and complete to avoid unnecessary confusion to readers. The Board would be happy to consult further on the exact wording regarding this matter.

In regard to Section 11.3.2 beginning on page 124, the Board is concerned that the VRHS does not outline an adequate mechanism to provide State funding for the areas where there is no designated waterway management authority. Areas of this region that are potentially affected are the Werribee and upper Maribyrnong catchments, the Mornington Peninsula and the Bass catchment. For the short term, it is suggested that a specific reference be made to the CALP Board coordinating programs for these areas in conjunction with councils and local community groups.

In regard to Section 13 beginning on page 133, the Board supports the conceptual “adaptive management framework” and its key requirements. However, the Board again has concerns that the implementation of the framework in this region is not adequately addressed, especially for the parts of the region with no waterway management authority. For example, it is unclear how the action on page 135 regarding CMAs reporting on stream condition will be undertaken for the Werribee and upper Maribyrnong catchments.

On a different matter, particularly regarding Section 6 beginning on page 60, the Board asks that consideration be given to acknowledging the supply of water for human consumption as an ecological function of rivers. For example, while water harvesting is acknowledged as a factor affecting river health, perhaps drought should be acknowledged as a factor affecting the ability of rivers to maintain their health as sustainers of human life (by provision of water for human consumption).

In regard to titles for the Board and this region, it is suggested that the region should be referred to as the “Port Phillip and Westernport region” and the Board referred to as the “Port Phillip and Westernport CALP Board” (please note that “Westernport” is used as a single word when referring to the catchment area). However, when referring to the well-known water body itself, it is suggested to use the two-word term “Western Port”.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to comment. The draft VRHS provides a clear and logical basis for improving river health across Victoria and is a significant step forward in catchment management for this State. The Board trusts that its comments will be useful in the finalisation of the VRHS, and looks forward to integrating the concepts and targets of the VRHS into the renewed Regional Catchment Strategy for the Port Phillip and Western Port Region.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Buntine". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of a horizontal dashed line.

**David Buntine**  
Executive Officer  
Port Phillip & Westernport CALP Board