



APPLIED AQUATIC ECOLOGY RESEARCH HUB

strategic plan

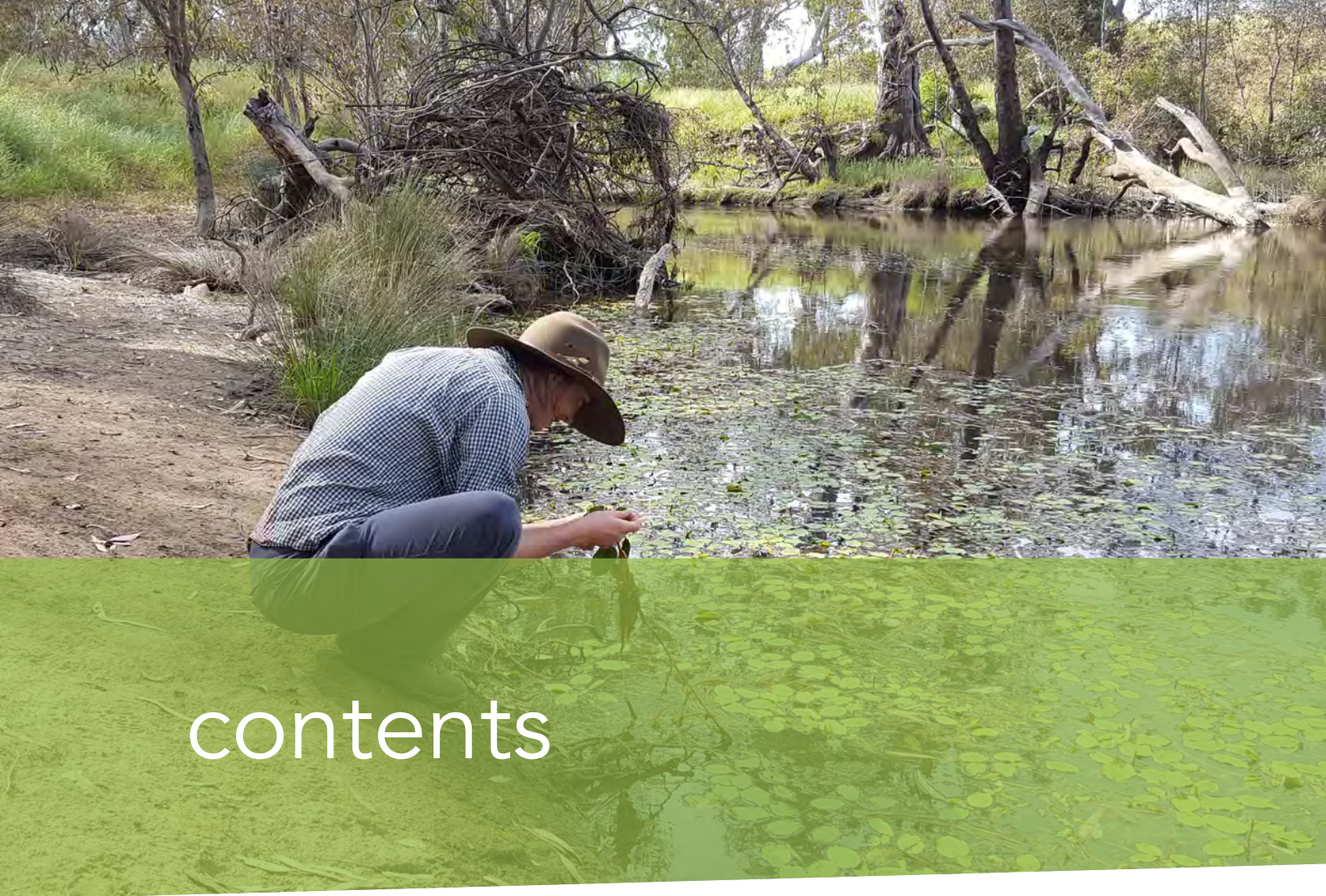
2017-2020

our collaboration

OUR VISION

Divisions within the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEWH) and Victorian Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) have recognized the potential mutual benefits and efficiencies in creating a collaborative Applied Aquatic Ecology Research Hub (The Hub). The Hub is dedicated to supporting the Victorian Government's current and future aquatic research and monitoring needs.

Healthy aquatic environments supported by informed decisions and adaptive management that is based on effective and efficient research and monitoring.



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why have a Hub?

getting the best outcome collectively

The Victorian Government is committed to ensuring that management interventions to improve waterway health and co-ordinated, strategic monitoring and research have positive outcomes for Victorians. The government is also striving to ensure that we have knowledge to support adaptive management and that the outcomes from our investments are more clearly demonstrated to communities.

To this end, Divisions within the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), the Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEWH) and Victorian Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) have recognised the potential mutual benefits and efficiencies in creating a collaborative Applied Aquatic Ecology Research Hub (The Hub) – dedicated to supporting Victoria’s aquatic research and monitoring needs. Collectively these organisations form the “Hub Partners” that will grow in number over time. The Hub model represents a cost-effective solution for research investors to plan for and deliver the necessary evidence to support key government management investments and policies from a coordinated platform.

The Hub aims to improve connection, sharing and collaboration within DELWP and between DELWP, the VEWH and CMAs when identifying strategically important research needs (i.e. questions within a scientific and management context). This approach will minimise duplication and improve the utilisation of research contributions. The Hub will support the collective planning, delivery and evaluation of such research and monitoring efforts and enable the outcomes to be integrated with knowledge from other domains such as local, organisational and indigenous knowledge. The Hub will capitalise on Hub Partner research expertise as well as broader research networks to ensure that Partners can better utilise and leverage available research funds.



Figure 1. Hub Partner knowledge needs

our principles and goals

The Hub's primary purpose is to support the needs of the Hub Partners by facilitating and supporting improved coordination, delivery and sharing of new and existing monitoring and research knowledge of aquatic systems. This will assist Partners to set and revise the research and monitoring agenda. This is based on four core principles:

- **Cooperation** – The Hub will operate under a collaborative governance model.
- **Autonomy** – The Hub will ensure continuation of autonomy for partner investors and researchers and respect the Victorian policies and investment contexts in which they operate.
- **Good Governance** – The Hub seeks to ensure the collaborative governance processes are sound and adequately manage Hub operations. The Hub will operate consistent with the public sector values and principles.
- **Good project management** – The Hub is supported by corporate financial and project management systems and annual work plans.

These principles support the Hub's five goals that will enable the Partners to achieve their environmental objectives.

- 1 Improved coordination of aquatic ecology research and monitoring in Victoria
- 2 Improve communication among researchers, investors and managers to adaptively improve management decisions
- 3 Improved knowledge sharing and communication among Hub Partners
- 4 Improved return on investment in aquatic ecology research and monitoring outcomes
- 5 Improved alignment of research and monitoring with Victorian Government policy direction



cooperation autonomy
project management
governance

research and monitoring themes

Hub monitoring and research includes current key areas of investment and activity of the partner organisations represented by eight themes. Five of these reflect key aquatic assets – river channels, wetlands and floodplain, estuaries and riparian zones. In addition, themes that represent key Victorian waterway management issues and activities are included – environmental water, cultural values and knowledge and citizen science. Making use of existing structures is an effective and efficient use of Hub resources. Over time, the Hub will adapt to new priorities and the themes will adapt to reflect this.



Key areas of Partner investment and activity



river channels

Projects that support river channel management and restoration – The river channel includes instream habitat for biota and activities that improve river health



wetlands and floodplains

Projects that support wetland management and restoration – including assessments of values, threats and condition, development of guidelines for appropriate wetland management and adaptive management of wetland interventions through monitoring



estuaries

Projects that support estuary management – including an estuary condition method and baseline information



riparian zones

Projects that support riparian zone management and restoration – including assessments of values, threats and condition, development of guidelines for appropriate riparian management and adaptive management of riparian interventions through monitoring



aquatic biota

Projects that support an understanding of the ecology of aquatic biota including underpinning and assessment of species of conservation significance and impacts of invasive species



environmental water

Projects that support environmental water (e-water) management – including monitoring the response of aquatic assets to e-water delivery and identifying best proactive e-water management practice



cultural values and knowledge

Projects that support the recognition of the values that water has for Aboriginal people



citizen science

Engaging the community to be part of aquatic research and monitoring and providing multiple lines of evidence to support best practice management

the Hub supports Government policy

The Hub's purpose, goals and objectives supports key jurisdictional plans and strategies whilst identifying efficiencies between them. These include but are not limited to:

- The Murray Darling Basin Plan
- The Victorian Government's *Water for Victoria*
- Commonwealth and Victorian environmental watering strategies and plans
- Victorian and regional waterway and coastal management strategies
- The Victorian Government Biodiversity Strategy *Protecting Victoria's Environment Biodiversity 2037*
- The Victorian Government's Target One Million Plan for recreational fishers



The government will establish a waterway research hub to support more coordinated, strategic research and monitoring both within DELWP and across relevant government stakeholders and research providers..."

Action 3.9 Water for Victoria, Water Plan



where does the Plan fit?

The Strategic Plan is a key element of the Hub strategic and operation framework – including a robust governance framework, impact framework, engagement strategy and collaboration tools.



governance framework

Describes the Hub's governance principles, structure and operating charter



strategic plan

Guides the strategic direction of the Hub, as approved by the partner group. The Strategic Plan will inform the development of an annual Work Plan



impact framework

Processes and procedures for demonstrating the contribution of research knowledge to broader social, cultural, environmental and economic outcomes



engagement strategy

Outlines the processes and procedures for engagement and communication



tools for collaboration

Database of research projects in each thematic area, fact sheets, research gap analysis database, processes for knowledge transfer, Hub website

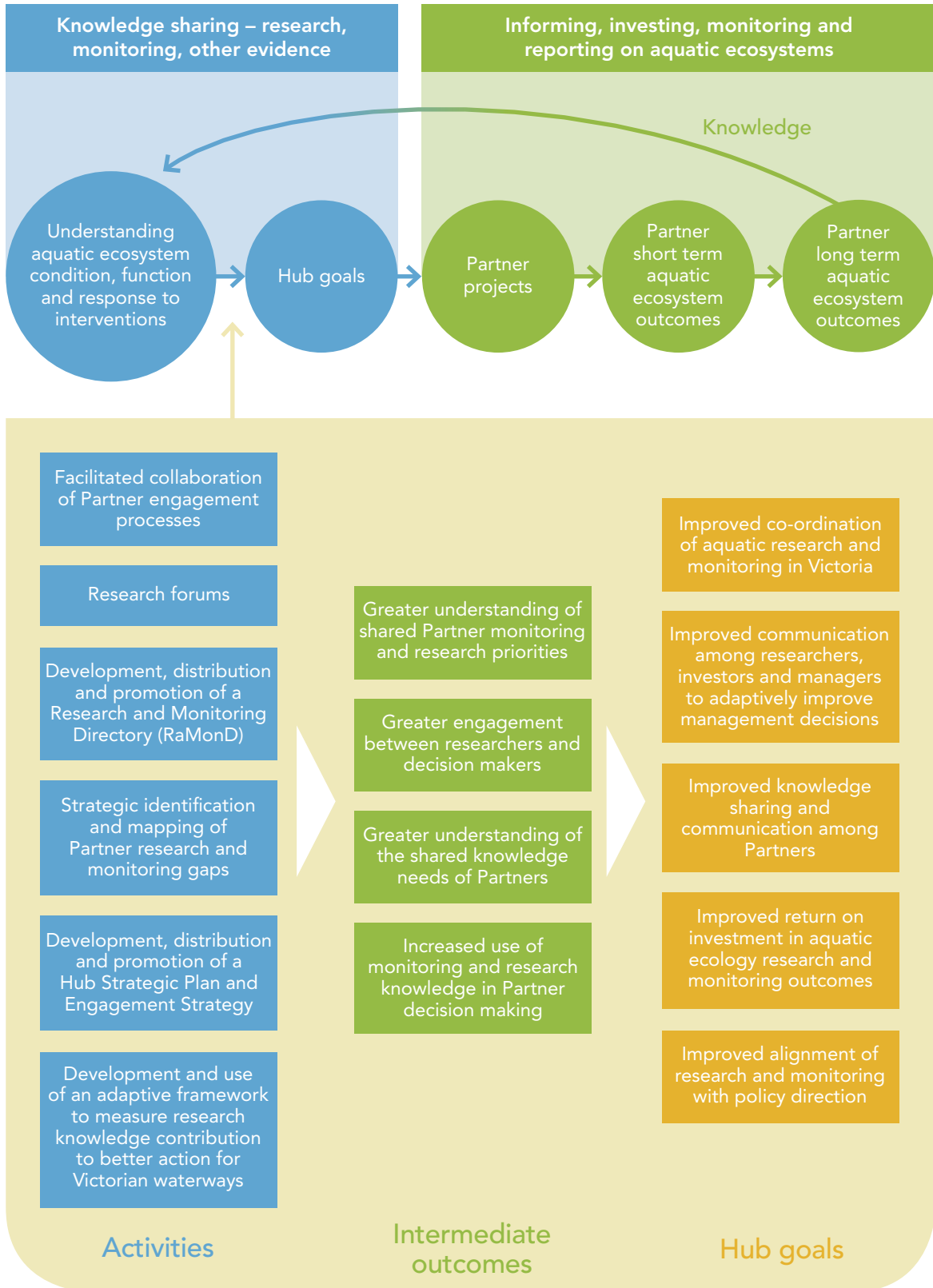
implementing the Plan

The Strategic Plan is guided by a model which articulates the relationships between the Hub goals and the activities needed to achieve these goals – as shown below.

Hub Goals	Activities (2017/18)
1 Improved co-ordination of aquatic research and monitoring in Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify shared knowledge gaps• Map the 'research landscape' to demonstrate alignment of current activities with key needs and drivers
2 Improved communication among researches, investors, and managers to adaptively improve management decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to update the Hub Engagement Strategy• Develop and distribute information products to more effectively communicate research findings between policy and researchers• Coordinate research forums
3 Improved information sharing and communication among Hub Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a Research and Monitoring Directory (RaMonD)• Facilitate existing knowledge sharing processes between Partners• Determine the most appropriate evidence source for policy and program needs• Coordinate research forums
4 Improved return on investment in aquatic ecology research and monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop and implement a behaviour change model to measure changes in Partner decision making and contribution to impact
5 Improved alignment of research and monitoring with policy direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify and prioritise current research and monitoring gaps• Improve processes for incorporation of 'citizen science' into planning frameworks

As shown in the model below, achievement of the Hub goals will enable the Partners to undertake more informed planning and implementation of projects assisting partners in achieving their short and long term aquatic ecosystem outcomes. The Hub therefore facilitates an adaptive improvement cycle.

Figure 2. Hub implementation and outcome achievement



influencing our stakeholders

Activities of the Hub aim to influence the behaviour and decisions of the Hub Partners.

Collectively the Hub Partners aim to influence a range of secondary stakeholders – including universities, other research organisations, other government agencies, the public and Indigenous groups, as shown in the outer influence ring in Figure 3.

This influence aims to affect the processes, practices and behaviours of these stakeholders. It is most critical that the early stages of the Hub achieve these behaviour changes among Hub Partner will have an influence on the other stakeholders.





Figure 3. Hub stakeholder influence model

aiming for impact

The Impact of the Hub can best be described as a process where the Hub's inputs, activities and outputs can be shown to contribute to the long term social, cultural, environmental and economic outcomes that are desired by the Hub Partners. As discussed above, this contribution will be measured in influencing achievement of the Hub's intermediate and long term goals.

To do this the Hub will be aiming to measure behaviour change within the Hub Partners from those involved with the setting of research agendas through to those that develop and disseminate research knowledge and the end users who are typically policy and management decision makers.



measuring our performance and improvement

It is important to measure the effectiveness of the Hub in achieving progress towards its goals. This is important for continuous improvement and will be done by using the following key performance measures:



behaviour change

Changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills, awareness of Hub Partners and beneficiaries



evidence based decisions

More robust, evidence based and defensible management decisions, informed by new evidence or decision tools or existing core evidence that is better shared



evidence based investment

More efficient, transparent, evidence based investments made



knowledge adoption

Greater engagement and knowledge adoption by policy makers and NRM practitioners



collaboration

Increased collaboration among researchers, decision makers and NRM practitioners



“ sharing and improving together ”





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