



RESILIENT
WATER
PROGRAM

Third Reedy Lake Bypass Project
EPBC 2016/7760

Approval Conditions Compliance Report

2026

Document Control

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Background

Approval to proceed with the Third Reedy Lake Bypass Project was provided by the Commonwealth Government, subject to conditions, after assessment in accordance with the *Environment Effects Act 1978* and *Bilateral Agreement 2014* (Ref 2016R03 and EPBC 2016/7760).

Implementation of the action commenced on 24 January 2019.

Condition 8 of the EPBC approval requires that:

"Within three months of every 12 month anniversary of the commencement of the action, the approval holder must publish a report on their website addressing compliance with the conditions of this approval over the previous 12 months, including implementation of any management plans. Non-compliance with any of the conditions of this approval must be reported to the Department at the same time as the compliance report is published. Unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the Minister, this condition applies for the life of the approval".

This Approval Conditions compliance report covers the period 24 January 2024 to 23 January 2025.



Project Update

In March 2019 the GMW Connections Project successfully completed construction of works to achieve water savings associated with the Third Reedy Lake Bypass Project. This work saw the construction of a bypass channel and associated infrastructure around Third Reedy Lake to remove the Lake from the irrigation distribution network and reinstate a more natural watering regime to enhance environmental values. One small piece of work (rehabilitation of the inlet regulator) remains to be completed.

As part of the approvals, a requirement of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* 1999 conditions is the preparation of an Operational Environmental Management Plan (OEMP). The OEMP was prepared and approved by the Secretary of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) on 6 March 2019.

The OEMP provides the operational arrangements required to minimise impacts to the Kerang Wetlands Ramsar Site and to the three fish species listed in the conditions of approval. Furthermore, the OEMP also provides the operational arrangements required to maximise the likelihood of restoring Third Reedy Lake and achieving the longer-term management goal:

“Achieve projected water savings whilst providing a watering regime that restores Third Reedy Lake to a deep freshwater marsh wetland type (dominated by Intermittent Swampy Woodland (EVC 813)) able to support recruitment of River Red Gums and promoting a diverse and extensive range of habitat suitable for a variety of waterbirds”.

The 2023 Approval Conditions Compliance Report noted that rehabilitation works at the lake were interrupted after widespread flooding in the whole of the Murray River system in October 2022.

The lake slowly drew down through 2023, and although not completely dry, the re-planting of red gum seedlings was able to recommence in December 2023 and planting within the lakebed completed in September 2024. Weed monitoring and treatment activities commenced in the second half of 2024 and remained a focus in 2025, including for Typha monitoring and management as required.

A follow-up acid sulfate soil survey was then commissioned and finalised in July 2024. The Jacobs report concluded that the previously identified potential risk of acid sulfate soils, to both surface and groundwaters in the drying of the lake, has not eventuated. The study found that whilst acid sulfate soils were present in lakebed sediments, the inherent buffering capacity of the soils was likely to neutralise the acidity generated during the drying of the lake. No further action for monitoring of acid sulfate soils has been recommended.

The final construction activity, the upgrade of the inlet regulator, which was delayed by the October 2022 flood event, is complete. The design includes a screen to stop large-bodied fish from entering when environmental water is supplied to Third Reedy. This is expected to ensure that future drying phases will not see large-bodied fish stranded and dying as the water recedes.

Construction of the Inlet Regulator, Flood Gates and Fish Screens commenced in mid-2025 and was completed in late 2025. The automated gates have been tested and commissioned and can be operated remotely utilising the existing GMW SCADA network.

Assessment of Compliance

The table in Appendix A lists all conditions associated with EPBC Approval 2016/7760 and assesses compliance against these conditions.



Conclusion

It is concluded that all relevant conditions have been complied with (refer Appendix A).

Appendix A

Assessment Table & EPBC Approval 2016/7760 Assessment of Compliance

Condition	Compliance Evidence	Assessment of Compliance
1. To minimise adverse impacts to the Kerang Lakes Ramsar Site, the approval holder must ensure that the construction environmental management plan for the proposed action:	The construction environmental management plan (EMP) was prepared. The Connections Project prepared an Addendum to its existing approved EMP which addressed Condition 1 of the approval. The EMP is approved by the Secretary of the Victorian Department of Environment, Water, Land and Planning. The Addendum covers items specific to the Third Reedy Lakes Bypass Project including Matters of National Environmental Significance. The EMP and the Third Reedy Addendum are on the Goulburn- Murray Water Connections Project web page: https://www.g-mwater.com.au/policy-and-projects/connectionsproject (under 'Resources')	Compliant
i. Includes a commitment to implementation of measures to identify any matters of national environmental significance within the project area during construction. Any matters of national environmental significance that were not identified in the Environment Report must be reported to the Department within 14 days of their identification.	Commitment to implement measures to identify any matters of national environmental significance within the project area during construction are included in the existing EMP and Addendum. No additional matters of national environmental significance have been identified.	Compliant
ii. Includes contingency measures to minimise impacts to matters of national environmental significance identified within the project area during construction and, when the contingency measures are implemented, evaluate and report their effectiveness to the	Contingency measures to minimise impacts to matters of national environmental significance identified within the project area during construction were included in the existing GMW Connections Environmental Management Plan (EMP) and the Addendum prepared for the Third Reedy Lake bypass project. No additional matters of national environmental significance were identified during construction. Major construction works were completed in March 2019. The final	Compliant

Condition	Compliance Evidence	Assessment of Compliance
Department within three months of implementation.	construction activity, the upgrade of the inlet regulator, which was delayed by the October 2022 flood event, was completed and commissioned in 2025. No other contingency measures have been implemented.	
iii. Includes a commitment to implementation of weed management measures in accordance with best practice techniques.	A commitment to implement weed management measures is included in the existing EMP and the Addendum. The Addendum documents specify measures required to address weed identification, noxious weeds, weed disturbance, traffic movement, vehicle clean-down and soil sourcing and movement. The Resilient Water Program Team is continuing to work with the Wetland Revival Trust to take all efforts to manage weed growth and improve the condition and cover of indigenous plants. The delivery of environmental water into Third Reedy Lake would further assist with weed management.	Compliant
iv. The approval holder must provide the Department an electronic copy of the draft construction environmental management plan for comment prior to seeking approval of the plan from the relevant state authority.	This condition was complied with in 2018 and is no longer relevant.	No ongoing relevance
v. Is provided to the Department within 14 days following approval by the relevant state authority.	This condition was complied with in 2019 and is no longer relevant.	No ongoing relevance
2. To minimise adverse impacts to the Kerang Lakes Ramsar Site, the approval holder must ensure that the operational environmental management plan for the proposed action:	The operational environmental management plan (OEMP) was prepared. The OEMP is available on the Goulburn- Murray Water Connections Project web page: https://www.g-mwater.com.au/policy-and-projects/connectionsproject (under 'Resources')	Compliant
i. Includes a commitment to monitoring of water quality, with trigger levels for the implementation of contingency measures	Section 6.1 specifically addressed Conditions 2i, 2ii, 2iii. OEMP Section 3.9 and Section 5 provide details of the adaptive management approach to managing a range threats and associated risks, including salinity, and outlined the monitoring and contingency measures (i.e. management response risk).	Compliant

Condition	Compliance Evidence	Assessment of Compliance
in the event of increased salinity, reduced dissolved oxygen and increased acidity.	The trigger levels, monitoring and contingency measures to specific items identified in the Approvals Conditions 2i are summarised in Table 6-1. The issues described in Table 6-1 did not arise when they lake dried in 2024. A follow up Acid Sulfate Soil Survey was undertaken by Jacobs in April 2024 which concluded that no further assessment is recommended at this time. The conclusion is based on the following results: 'A review of the potential risks to soil, surface water and groundwater that were identified by Jacobs (2017) during lake drying has found that: • The risk to soil pH associated with unidentified high concentration Acid Sulfate Soils can be revised from moderate to low as these have not been identified through soil sampling at 37 locations (more than 3 times the number recommended in relevant guidelines). As such, the identified risks to soils during the drying of Third Reedy Lake are considered low. • The risk to surface water pH in Third Reedy Lake associated with lake drying can be reduced from moderate to low, as many assumptions used during the initial risk assessment appear to be overly conservative (including the self-neutralising capacity of soils, the nature of drainage towards the centre of the lake, the number of flushing events during lake drying and the mass of soils available for acidic leaching into surface water). • The risks to groundwater quality underlying Third Reedy Lake are expected to be lower than initially assessed by Jacobs (2017), due to the self-neutralising properties of the soils and the number of flushing events that have occurred during lake drying. Given this, the risk to groundwater quality remains low' Ongoing monitoring will be undertaken in connection with future environmental water deliveries.	
ii. Where contingency measures are implemented, the approval holder must evaluate and report their effectiveness to the Department, including commitments to adaptive management measures if the contingency measures are determined not to be effective, within three months	The OEMP commits GMW to evaluating and reporting on the effectiveness of contingency measures if triggers levels are exceeded within three months of implementing the contingency measures. The report will include commitments to adaptive management measures (e.g. through investigations and review of contingency measures) if the currently identified contingency measures were determined not to be effective.	Compliant

Condition	Compliance Evidence	Assessment of Compliance
of implementing the contingency measures.	No relevant contingency measures have been required to be implemented in 2026.	
iii. Includes a commitment to monitoring and adaptive management of invasive flora and fauna species to prevent any increase in their presence within the Project area.	The OEMP (Section 5) provided details of the adaptive management approach to managing invasive species; monitoring and contingency measures (management response) are summarised in Table 6 2. For all potential invasive flora and fauna species, the approval holder will review effectiveness of contingency measures if implemented and through adaptive management refine contingency measures if they are determined not to be effective. No relevant adaptive management measures have been required to be implemented in 2026.	Compliant
iv. The approval holder must provide the Department an electronic copy of the draft operational environmental management plan for comment prior to seeking approval of the plan from the relevant state authority.	This Condition was complied with in 2019. It is no longer relevant.	No ongoing relevance
v. Is provided to the Department within 14 days following approval by the relevant state authority.	This Condition was complied with in 2019. It is no longer relevant.	No ongoing relevance
3. To minimise adverse impacts to the Flathead Galaxias, Murray Hardyhead and Silver Perch the approval holder must:		
i. Monitor fish exit from Third Reedy Lake during exit flows before the regulator is closed or until the water level drops to a level such that the lake is not connected to the bypass.	Fish exit report completed in 2023 - not required in 2026 drying phase.	Compliant (n/a for reporting period)
ii. Within three months of the completion of monitoring, the approval holder must provide a written report to the	Fish exit report completed in 2023 - not required in 2026 drying phase.	Compliant (n/a for reporting period)

Condition	Compliance Evidence	Assessment of Compliance
Department of the fish exit monitoring results.		
iii. The written report must list any presence of and death or harm to the Flathead Galaxias, Murray Hardyhead and Silver Perch. The report must list adaptive management measures that will be implemented to minimise further death or harm throughout future drying cycles.	Fish exit report completed in 2023 - not required in 2026 drying phase.	Compliant (n/a for reporting period)
iv. Following a report of death or harm to the Flathead Galaxias, Murray Hardyhead or Silver Perch, subsequent reports must evaluate the success of adaptive management measures and, where measures were unsuccessful, propose further measures to minimise death or harm throughout future drying cycles.	Fish exit report completed in 2023 - not required in 2026 drying phase.	Compliant (n/a for reporting period)
v. Continue the monitoring and reporting for the life of the approval unless permission to cease monitoring and reporting is provided in writing by the Minister.	Monitoring and reporting to date has been completed. Monitoring and reporting will occur as required over the life of the approval.	Compliant
4. Within 14 days following commencement of the action, the approval holder must advise the Department in writing of the actual date of commencement.	The action commenced on 24 January 2019 and the Department was notified by email on 30 January 2019 of the date of commencement. This condition was complied with in 2019 and is no longer relevant.	Not relevant
5. The approval holder must maintain accurate records substantiating all activities associated with or relevant to the conditions of approval and make them available upon request to the Department. Such records may be subject to	Records of activities undertaken in association with the approval are maintained in the Goulburn-Murray Water document management system – Objective ECM.	Compliant

Condition	Compliance Evidence	Assessment of Compliance
audit by the Department or an independent auditor in accordance with section 458 of the EPBC Act, or used to verify compliance with the conditions of approval. Summaries of audits may be posted on the Department's website or publicised through general media.		
6. If the approval holder revises a management plan approved by the relevant state authority, as referred in Conditions 1 and 2, the revised management plan must be provided to the Department within 14 days following approval. Information confirming compliance of the new management plan with the requirements of Conditions 1 and 2 relevant to minimising impacts to the Kerang Lakes Ramsar Site must be provided with the revised management plan.	The approved management plan (Third Reedy Lake Operational Environmental Management Plan (OEMP)) has not required revision. An OEMP review was commenced as scheduled in 2023 however no changes were required; OEMP implementation was delayed following the discovery of the Southern Purple Spotted Gudgeon in 2019 and with state-wide flood impacts in 2022 drowning the planted red gums in the Establishment Phase.	Compliant
7. Unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the Minister, the approval holder must publish all plans referred to in these conditions of approval on their website within one month of being approved by the relevant state authority.	The OEMP, EMP and Addendum are available on the Goulburn- Murray Water Connections Project web page: https://www.g-mwater.com.au/policy-and-projects/connectionsproject (under 'Resources')	Compliant
8. Within three months of every 12 month anniversary of the commencement of the action, the approval holder must publish a report on their website addressing compliance with the conditions of this approval over the previous 12 months, including implementation of any management plans. Non-compliance with any of the conditions of this approval must	The report assesses compliance with conditions of approval over the past 12 months.	Compliant

Condition	Compliance Evidence	Assessment of Compliance
be reported to the Department at the same time as the compliance report is published. Unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the Minister, this condition applies for the life of the approval.		
9. Upon direction of the Minister, the approval holder must ensure that an independent audit of compliance with the conditions of approval is conducted and a report submitted to the Minister. The independent auditor must be approved by the Minister prior to the commencement of the audit. Audit criteria must be agreed to by the Minister and the audit report must address the criteria to the satisfaction of the Minister.	The Minister has made no direction.	Not relevant
10. If, at any time after three years from the date of this approval, the approval holder has not commenced the action, then the approval holder must not commence the action without the written agreement of the Minister.	The action has commenced.	Not relevant