Goulburn-Murray WATER

Operational Changes to the Victorian Mid-Murray Storages

Community engagement summary

September 2026

Water for a thriving northern Victoria

Acknowledgement of Country

GMW recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia and as the proud representatives of the world's oldest living culture.

GMW respectfully acknowledges Elders past, present and emerging as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters and the rich cultural connections First Peoples have across our region.

Operational Changes to the Victorian Mid-Murray Storages

Community engagement summary

Recap of the changes

From 1 July 2026, within the existing operational rules, Goulbourn-Murray Water (GMW) is changing how and when water is stored and released from the Victorian Mid-Murray Storages.

The Victorian Mid-Murray Storages include Lake Boga, Kangaroo Lake, Lake Charm and Ghow Swamp. The ongoing operation of Ghow Swamp is being considered as part of a separate process.

The primary purpose of the Victorian Mid-Murray Storages is to provide a reliable water supply for water entitlement holders and to support essential water delivery throughout the region.

As a result of the operational changes, there will likely be some impacts on the water levels (more fluctuations) and improved salinity concentrations (salt levels) of the lakes of the Victorian Mid-Murray Storages. At times, the changing water levels are likely to impact some recreational activities at the lakes. In particular, the operational changes are expected to impact the recreational use of Lake Boga. This is because the water levels in the lake might fluctuate more often.

Our commitment to communities

GMW recognises how important the lakes of the Victorian Mid-Murray Storages and their surrounds are as places of community recreation. We also understand how important the lakes are for supporting local tourism and for general community wellbeing. As such, we are committed to:

- Balancing community needs with the need to deliver water to entitlement holders.
- Keeping you informed before changes happen and as they occur.
- Listening to your concerns and working with you to manage the impact.

GMW is committed to upholding the recreational usage of the lakes in the Victorian Mid-Murray Storages as much as possible, noting we must also make sure we maintain a reliable and secure source of water for entitlement holders.

Community engagement

As part of our efforts to uphold our commitment to communities, GMW engaged the community before the changes came into effect from March to April 2026. The community engagement program included an in-person community information session at the Lake Boga Community Centre on Saturday, 21 March 2026. It also involved the collection of community feedback through a printed and digital feedback survey.

40+ attendees at March 2026 community information session

4 feedback surveys received in person

10 feedback digital surveys received on Your Say website

From these activities, GMW wanted to gain a better understanding of the perspectives of community members about the changes, including any potential impacts or concerns the community has about the changes which they would like GMW to consider. Additionally, we aimed to understand how GMW can best support members of the community with navigating the changes as they come into effect.

Key insights

Recreation

Feedback overview

We heard overwhelmingly that the recreational use of the lakes is a key priority for the community. Many community members raised concerns about the possibility of very low water levels or more frequent fluctuations occurring in a way which would disrupt recreational activities.

We heard some comments from the community about the need to consider safety and the importance of upholding a safe environment, especially for those who use lakes recreationally, as the changes come into effect. In particular, some community members expressed the importance of maintaining a safe environment for the families and children who regularly use the lakes for recreation in the event that water levels fluctuate significantly or become so low that potentially hazardous materials or objects become exposed.

We received many comments about the value of recreational enjoyment of the lakes, including through activities like fishing, swimming, water skiing, boating, walking and sailing. Additionally, we heard about the importance of continuing the many annual recreational events which are hosted on the lakes.

Your comments

“We live on the lake and use the lake regularly for recreation. We would not want to see that interrupted again.”

“Based on what was said today it seems that the impact will be minimal. We were told the intention is not to stop skiers, not to impact swimmers or boating.”

“Reported several broken pipes sticking out of lake and under water line that could cause a severe accident…”

“Lake Boga should be preserved for recreational boating and fishing and tourism only…”



Water quality

Feedback overview

We received a lot of feedback around the water quality of the lakes. Many community members expressed concern around the relatively high salinity concentrations (salt levels) in the lakes, the impacts of blue-green algae and the high presence of sediment in the water.

Your comments

"…I don't want to see water levels drop and become salty due to poor management…"

"I'm happy to hear about the water levels going up and down, sure this will help with salinity levels and algae…"

"…More flies as lake lowers? More Blue Green Algae?"

"…Lake Boga is an amazing part of our community and we want to keep it in the healthiest condition possible…"



Local economy

Feedback overview

We heard from many locals about the role the lakes play as a valuable source of income for local businesses in the tourism and recreational industries and that maintaining this is important for the local economy.

Some members of the community raised concerns that any changes to the lakes would result in reduced visual amenity for local properties, which might in turn reduce their value in the housing market.

Your comments

"I would expect that reduced recreational activities will impact surrounding businesses that service tourism, which could have flow on impact to community population and property prices."

"If Lake Boga's storage is allowed to drop it will affect tourism in the area. All businesses in Lake Boga will be affected and this will also reach Swan Hill."

"…Lake Boga relies on the lake being full for recreation and tourism and you will watch the town turn into a ghost town it will also devalue many properties…"



Water supply

Feedback overview

Community members raised concerns around the need to uphold access to a reliable supply of water from the lakes. In particular, for local properties that pump water from the lakes for stock and domestic purposes or for agricultural use.

Feedback also highlighted the deep awareness among the community of the role that the Lakes play within the broader water supply system, both in the Torrumbarry Irrigation Area and Goulburn Murray Irrigation District.

Your comments

"…availability of water, irrigation requirements and GMW operating priorities…"

"…but this proposal has the ability to decrease the pressure for IVTs [intervalley transfers] to be delivered via other vulnerable streams, eg the Goulbourn River."

"As an irrigator upstream of the lakes I believe the impact will be positive to a modest degree as it will reduce the likelihood and impact of shortfalls in delivery of irrigation water…"



Flood management

Feedback overview

Some community members asked questions and raised concerns about the potential impacts of the changes in relation to flooding and flood management.

In particular, we heard questions about the role of GMW in relation to flood management and comments about the need to consider the changes in the context of future flood events.

Your comments

Flood management, better management required…

Flood events, what relationship GMW have…

Concerns around the potential impacts of the changes in relation to flooding coupled with recent increases in housing developments.



Vegetation management

Feedback overview

Some feedback from community members expressed concerns around vegetation and the need to manage weeds and invasive species in and around the lakes.

Your comments

"My main concern re Lake Boga (is) weed control…"

Weed control around Lake Boga and issues with reeds…



Native fish habitat

Feedback overview

Feedback received highlighted concerns about the potential impact of changes, particularly in the summer months, in water levels at the Victorian Mid-Murray Storages on native fish populations. Lake Boga was identified as an important habitat supporting native species, including Murray Cod, Golden Perch and Silver Perch.

Your comments

“Lake Boga has important native fish populations that require minimum water levels during summer months…”

“…Fish survival minimum will be retained in Lake Boga and all other noted water storages…Ghow Swamp, Boga, Racecourse, Charm and Kangaroo Lakes.”



Regular communication

Feedback overview

We heard lots of feedback suggesting that regular communication would be a key way for GMW to assist community members with navigating the changes.

Members of the community expressed different preferences for how they would like GMW to communicate with them, but overall, we heard that regular updates about the changes and what to expect, using a variety of channels, would be useful and helpful.

Your comments

“Updates on planned water out of lake and for how long.”

“A formal communication strategy is important I suggest that you have an email distribution list…”

“Better understanding of how far lake levels may be reduced, what impact on salinity. How often could it occur, how long would they be reduced.”

Next steps

Feedback collected through community engagement provided several important insights about the lakes of the Victorian Mid-Murray Storages and what matters most to the community. This feedback is currently being considered by GMW and will be taken onboard as much as possible as the changes start to occur and into the future.

GMW will work with you to keep you informed as the changes occur and as they come into effect, and we will provide you with regular updates about what to expect.

For further information, to ask a question, or raise a concern, please contact us by calling 1800 013 357 or by emailing communications@gmwater.com.au.