



Hon. Harriet Shing
Minister for Water
Level 16, 8 Nicholson Street,
East Melbourne, Victoria 3002
harriet.shing@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Hon. Harriet Shing

**RE: Further action required in relation to Sustainable Water Strategy
Action 8.1 - Rehabilitate the Moorabool Yulluk at Batesford Quarry.**

The Moorabool Yaluk, known as one of the most flow-stressed rivers in Victoria, has been diverted and lined with concrete twice around Batesford Quarry, resulting in devastating impacts to its health and wellbeing.

The Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC) (with funding from DEECA) recently led the implementation of Action 8-1 of the Central and Gippsland Sustainable Water Strategy, Rehabilitating the Moorabool Yulluk at Batesford Quarry. The reports prepared by Alluvium have been attached with this letter.

The objectives, options, and preferred rehabilitation arrangements in the report were developed with the assistance of a steering committee and working group comprising representatives of DEECA, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, Local Government, Council, Water Corporations, Batesford quarry, Landcare and advocacy groups,

This project highlighted the following existing and future challenges/questions originating from the creation of the quarry:

- The river, due to past channel diversions has significant losses of surface water to the Batesford quarry pit. Water is returned to the river approximately 500m downstream from where water is lost. Consequently, the loss of water results in part of the river with severely diminished habitat availability and fish passage as well as regular fish deaths due to drying of habitat pools.
- Planned cessation of quarry activities will most likely result in the cessation of the pumping regime that returns river flows that are lost to the quarry pit. This will severely impact the flow, health, and functioning of the Moorabool Yaluk, the downstream Barwon River, and the Ramsar-listed lower Barwon wetlands. A previous social-economic analysis identified an existing annual \$4.8m reduction (from \$24.7 million) in the river's estimated economic value due to low flow and algal events.
- Future planned urban development as part of the Geelong Growth area has potential to constrain rehabilitation options for the Moorabool Yaluk. Additionally, the concrete channel will pose significant safety risks and may



not meet Cultural, aesthetic, geomorphic and ecological expectations of an expanding urban community.

- There has been an embedded assumption that a lake will be the final form of the quarry pit. However, a method for filling and maintaining a pit-lake with a sustainable source of water that does not jeopardise the health of the Moorabool Yaluk has not been identified, assessed or approved.

The work led by WTOAC (and delivered by Alluvium) also outlined a detailed phased rehabilitation plan that includes; restoration of the river channel and local groundwater pumping program to return water losses from the diversion channels. It also has a list of recommended work to advance rehabilitation efforts.

One of the main limiting factors identified in the report, is uncertainty around roles and responsibilities on the following:

- Ongoing maintenance responsibilities for the diverted Moorabool River channel, Including implementation of the detailed phased rehabilitation plan developed as part of this project, that includes:
 - o restoration of the river channel,
 - o return of water lost from the river once quarry operations cease,
 - o further investigations critical to advance rehabilitation efforts.
- Future decision on the embedded assumption that a lake will be the final form of the quarry pit (and where the water will come from to fill and maintain that lake), ensuring Cultural, environmental, social, and economic considerations are appropriately considered.

To resolve this, we request the State Government commence and lead a process to clarify roles and responsibilities for the rehabilitation and ongoing management of the diverted Moorabool River. Once this is done, an agreed direction on the future of the river and surrounding Country can be developed, before planned extensive development occurs that could further harm the river.

This part of Country has been neglected and urgently requires management attention to ensure it is protected from impending threatening changes and to rehabilitate and restore values lost to a history of extraction and modification.

This letter has been endorsed by the following members of the project working group; ###

Thanks for your consideration of this request to improve Wadawurrung Country.



Wadawurrung

Traditional Owners

Aboriginal Corporation

Matthew Smith

Chief Executive Officer

m 0429 395 202

e matthew.s@wadawurrung.org.au

Please note, the language spelling of "Yaluk" is the current and correct spelling. Wadawurrung language has evolved from "Yulluk" included in the Central Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy.