

# Port Phillip Bay Environmental Management Plan 2017-2027 - Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting, and Improvement plan

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## Author

Katelyn McAdams: Marine Spatial Analyst, Biodiversity Division, DEECA

Tessa Mazor: Marine Spatial Analyst, Biodiversity Division, DEECA

Regan East: Marine Policy Officer, Biodiversity Division, DEECA

Kimberley Macdonald: Marine Knowledge Manager, Biodiversity Division, DEECA

Marine Knowledge Unit | Biodiversity Protection and Information | Biodiversity Division | Environment, Climate Action and First Peoples | Department, of Energy, Environment and Climate Action

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We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it.

We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

DEECA is committed to genuinely partnering with Victorian Traditional Owners and Victoria's Aboriginal community to progress their aspirations.



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## List of Acronyms

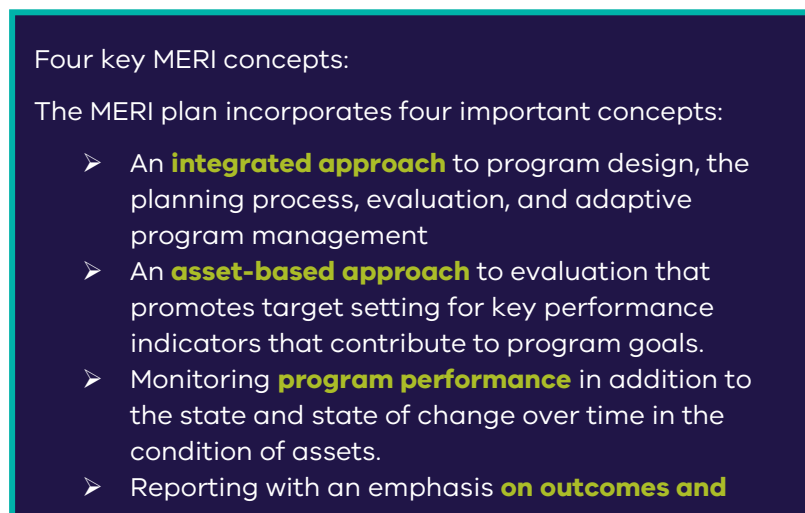
DEECA	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (Victoria)
EMP	Port Phillip Bay Environmental Management Plan 2017-2027
EPA	Environment Protection Authority (Victoria)
ERS	Environment Reference Standard
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MACA	<i>Marine and Coastal Act 2018</i>
MW	Melbourne Water
MERI	Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting, and Improvement (plan)
NRM	Natural Resource Management
PPWP RCS	Port Phillip Western Port Regional Catchment Strategy
VFA	Victorian Fisheries Authority

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose

This document sets out the Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) plan for the Port Phillip Bay Environmental Management Plan 2017-2027 (EMP). The purpose of a MERI plan is to assess a program's performance, in this case the EMP, as well as refine and improve program design and delivery within an adaptive management model. The plan is developed for organisations, individuals and stakeholders that are undertaking actions that contribute to the EMP program and enables the Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action (DEECA) to comprehensively assess the program.

The MERI plan provides approaches to assess the impact, appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, and legacy of the EMP and a process to promote whole-of-government transparency and accountability. This plan is an integral component of the EMP and promotes learning and adaptive management for progressive monitoring and evaluation which enables improvement in program design, ultimately supporting achievement of program outcomes and goals (Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Four key MERI concepts (adapted from the Natural Resource Management (NRM) MERI Framework Commonwealth of Australia 2009).**

## 1.2 MERI framework

An integral aspect of the MERI plan is the MERI framework. The MERI framework is a dynamic tool which is reviewed and updated regularly to ensure it remains consistent with changes to the program direction. The key components of the MERI framework are:

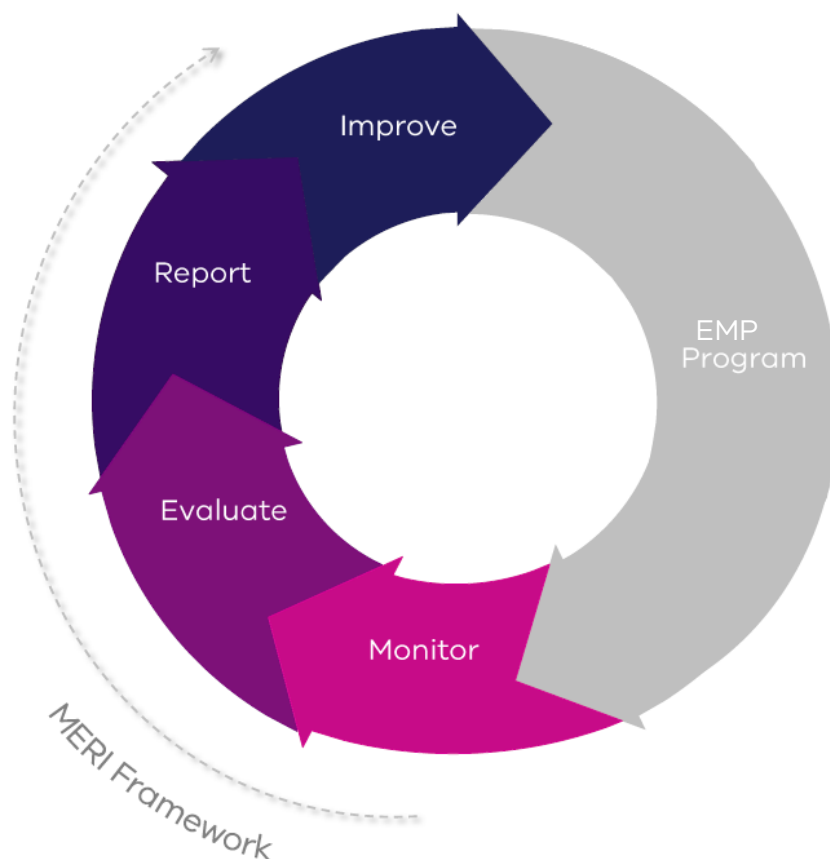
**Monitor** – collection and analysis of information to assist timely decision-making, ensuring accountability and providing the basis for evaluation and learning.

**Evaluate** – periodic assessment of the program in terms of appropriateness, impact, effectiveness, efficiency, and legacy.

**Report** – specific reports that demonstrate progress towards targets and outcomes, documented expected or unexpected impacts at different time intervals, with objective to meet accountability requirements.

**Improve** – continuous review, learning and adaptation that leads to improvements in the efficiency of strategies, investments, and activities.

The figure below (Figure 2) presents the steps in the MERI framework (monitor, evaluate, report, and improve), as well as the linkage to the program, the EMP.



**Figure 2. MERI framework (Monitor, Evaluate, Report, and Improve) and its connection to the program (Port Phillip Bay, Environmental Management Plan) that is to be evaluated.**

### 1.3 Program background

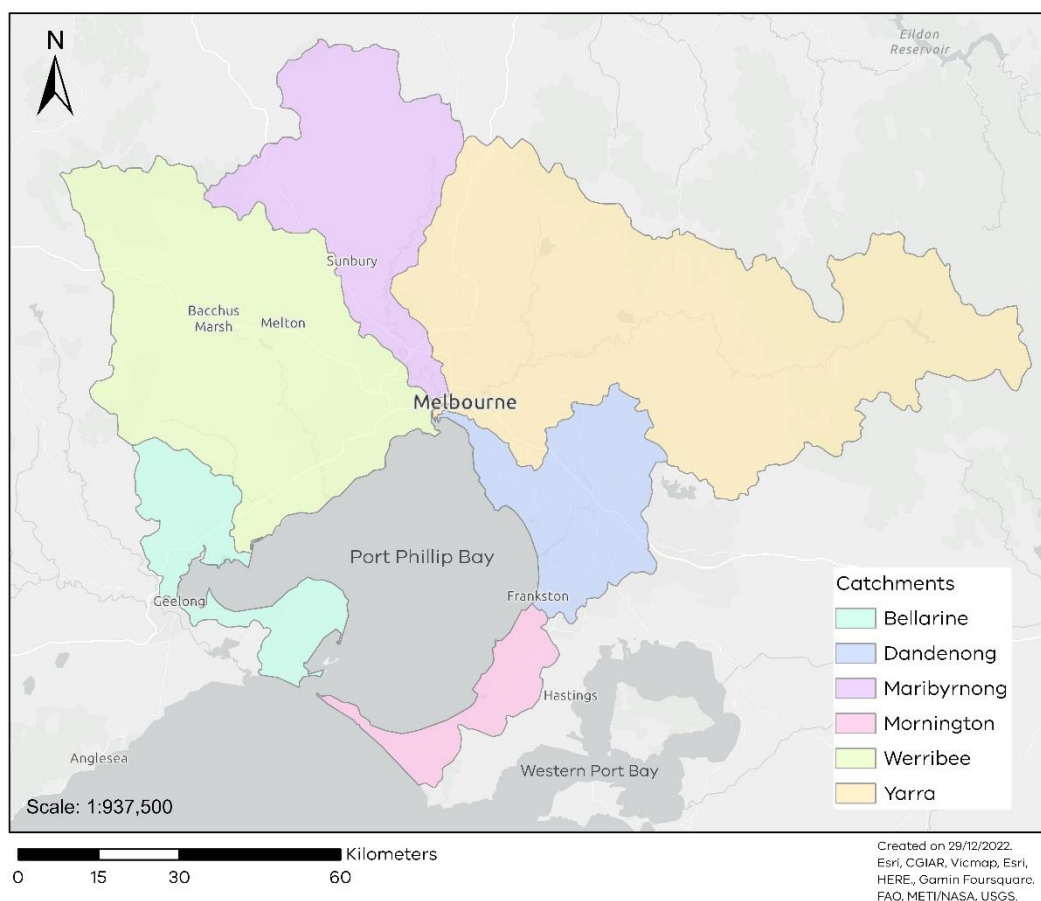
The Port Phillip Bay Environmental Management Plan 2017-2027 (EMP) represents the Victorian Government's ongoing commitment to ensuring that Port Phillip Bay remains healthy and resilient over the coming decade.

The EMP was developed by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) in partnership with Melbourne Water (MW) and the Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA). The EMP and its ongoing implementation is informed by significant contributions from government agencies, local government, industry, community groups, and the broader public.

The *Marine and Coastal Act 2018* (MACA) requires the implementation of the EMP under Section 49 (3). The implementation and reporting of the EMP is consequently now a statutory requirement of the MACA and the Delivery Plan will service as an Implementation Plan under this Act. It provides purpose for integrated and co-ordinated policy, planning, management, decision-making, and reporting across catchment, coastal, and marine areas. The MERI document aligns with the *Environment Protection Act (EPA) 2017*, under the Environment Reference Standard (ERS). We link EMP outcomes with ERS guidelines and objectives which are notably important to the Victorian community. 'The purpose of the ERS is to support the protection of human health and the environment from pollution and waste by providing benchmarks to be used to assess and report on environmental conditions in the whole or any part of Victoria' (ERS, 2017).

This MERI document will ensure the above legislative requirements are met.

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**Figure 3. Port Phillip Bay and relevant catchments.**

The EMP applies to Port Phillip Bay and its catchments as shown in Figure 3. In managing the health of the Bay, the EMP also seeks to influence the management of surrounding and connecting rivers and catchments, and all inputs they bring to the Bay. The vision of the EMP is ‘a healthy Port Phillip Bay that is valued and cared for by all Victorians’ with future action and investment over the 10 years to be guided by the EMP’s three main goals:

1. Stewardship of the Bay is fostered across community, industry, and government.
2. Water quality is improved to ensure environmental health and community enjoyment of the Bay.
3. The Bay’s habitats and marine life are thriving.

The EMP framework in Figure 4 is central to the design of the MERI. It describes the relationships between the EMP goals, strategies, and priority actions. The EMP framework provides a basis for the Delivery Plan and the identification of Key Performance Indicators (KPI). This framework aligns with internationally recognised marine ecosystem reporting such as the Good Environmental Status (GES).

<b>VISION</b>	<b>A healthy Port Phillip Bay that is valued and cared for by all Victorians</b>						
<b>GOALS</b>	Stewardship of the Bay is fostered across community, industry and government		Water quality is improved to ensure environmental health and community enjoyment of the Bay			The Bay's habitats and marine life are thriving	
<b>PRIORITY AREAS</b>	<b>Connect and inspire</b>	<b>Empower action (work together)</b>	<b>Nutrients and pollutants</b>	<b>Litter</b>	<b>Pathogens (human health)</b>	<b>Habitat and marine life</b>	<b>Marine biosecurity</b>
<b>STRATEGIES</b>	Improve appreciation and understanding of Bay values and connections to catchment	Improve collaboration and partnerships across community, industry and government	Ensure nutrient and sediment loads do not exceed current levels and pollutant loads are reduced where practicable	Reduce litter loads to the Bay	Minimise risks to human health from pathogens	Conserve and restore habitats and marine life	Manage risks from marine pests
							
<b>PRIORITY ACTIONS</b>	<b>1.1</b> Work with Aboriginal groups to improve understanding of Aboriginal cultural values and interests in the Bay and support connections to Country	<b>2.1</b> Build capacity and knowledge within community and industry networks	<b>3.1</b> Effectively maintain existing stormwater infrastructure and programs to mitigate loads to the Bay, or secure via equivalent means	<b>4.1</b> Establish a baseline estimate of the volume of litter entering the Bay and support clean up activities	<b>5.1</b> Improve understanding of links between pathogen concentrations and human health for swimming and consumption of shellfish	<b>6.1</b> Monitor indicator species and key habitats at priority locations	<b>7.1</b> Prevent introduction and dispersal of marine pests
	<b>1.2</b> Develop and deliver programs to inspire greater appreciation of the Bay's values	<b>2.2</b> Empower the broader community to get more actively involved in caring for the Bay	<b>3.2</b> Prevent increases in nutrient loads from wastewater systems and where practicable reduce loads of other pollutants	<b>4.2</b> Support capability and capacity building programs that target litter prevention, including reduction of microplastics	<b>5.2</b> Adopt a risk-based approach to mitigate sources of pathogens found in the Bay	<b>6.2</b> Improve understanding of ecological processes, threats and pressures	<b>7.2</b> Monitor priority locations for early detection of marine pest introductions
	<b>1.3</b> Build understanding of management responsibilities and programs for the Bay and its catchments	<b>2.3</b> Support stronger partnerships across community, industry and government to ensure aims and outcomes are aligned	<b>3.3</b> Ensure all urban and rural land use effectively controls impacts from stormwater and runoff, and that controls are in place to manage increases in loads	<b>4.3</b> Identify and prioritise litter sources and pathways, and take actions to prevent litter entering the Bay	<b>5.3</b> Improve monitoring and reporting to better detect and communicate human health risks from pathogens	<b>6.3</b> Improve overall extent and condition of the Bay's natural ecosystems	<b>7.3</b> Respond rapidly to new introductions of marine pests

**Figure 4. Port Phillip Bay Environmental Management Plan (EMP) Framework.**

## 2. MERI in context

### 2.1 Environmental Management Plan implementation program

The EMP is a ten-year program, and the implementation program provides for continuous improvement in its delivery (Figure 5). The implementation program includes:

- The **Delivery Plan** which outlines how the EMP will be implemented. It sets out a schedule of the EMP's priority actions and their subordinate activities, and identifies delivery partners, success measures, governance structure, and monitoring and reporting requirements. The Delivery Plan is a live document, with an updated plan for each year.
- The **Annual Report** which provides a regular update on the progress of the EMP implementation as outlined in the Delivery Plan.
- A 5-yearly review using this **Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement Framework (MERI)**. This regular review cycle will allow for the Delivery Plan to respond to program success and any changes in the Bay's condition. This review will also meet the MACA requirement that the EMP be reviewed no later than five years after the making of the plan.





**Figure 5. Implementation Program includes the EMP IMP (Delivery Plan, Undertaking Activities, and Annual Report) as well as the 5-yearly MERI framework (Monitor, Evaluate, Report and Improve).**

## 2.2 Program logic

The MERI includes a program logic model (Table 1) which shows the rationale behind the EMP program and the cause-and-effect relationships between program activities, outputs, intermediate outputs, and longer-term outcomes. Parameters of the EMP program are defined in a 6-level hierarchy. The components of the program logic are supported by corresponding activities and reflect program design, the following program logic in Table 1 comprises of the following elements:

- **Vision:** A qualitative description of what is desired in the long-term.
- **Goal:** A purpose or aim that is consistent and aligned with the intent of vision, authorising legislation, and other Victorian Government environmental policies.
- **Long-term Outcomes:** Measurable collective contribution of delivering the outcomes to the goal.
- **Intermediate Outcomes:** Impact of planned outputs measured at a midpoint between outputs and long-term outcomes.
- **Outputs:** Tangible products that are direct results of activities.
- **Activities:** An activity that aligns with a priority action ( Figure 4) that is a project, program, or initiative delivering outputs.
- **Inputs:** Effort, materials, equipment, and funds put into natural resources to support activities.

**Table 1. Program Logic for the EMP MERI**

<b>Vision</b>	A healthy Port Phillip Bay that is valued and cared for by all Victorians.		
<b>Goals</b>	1. Stewardship of the Bay is fostered across community, industry, and government.	2. Water quality is improved to ensure environmental health and community enjoyment of the Bay.	3. The Bays habitats and marine life are thriving.
<b>Long-Term Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved appreciation of the Bay across community, industry, and government, Traditional Owner cultural values and interests are understood and connections to Country are supported in Port Phillip Bay.</li> <li>Improved collaboration and partnerships across community, industry, and government.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No net increase in nutrient and sediment loads where ERS (Marine Waters) objectives are met, and pollutant load objectives are reduced where reasonably practicable.</li> <li>Reduced litter loads to the Bay.</li> <li>Water quality meets ERS objectives.</li> <li>Meet ERS and maintain Healthy Waterway Strategy long-term microbial water quality objectives.</li> <li>Improved reporting systems for managing human health risk.</li> <li>Human-induced eutrophication is minimised, especially adverse effects thereof, such as losses in biodiversity, ecosystem degradation, harmful algae blooms, and oxygen deficiency in bottom waters.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Biodiversity is maintained.</li> <li>Improved understanding of ecological processes, threats, and pressures.</li> <li>The population of commercial fish species is sustainable.</li> <li>Over-abundant native species do not adversely alter the ecosystem.</li> <li>Non-indigenous species do not adversely alter the ecosystem.</li> </ul>
<b>Intermediate Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased community engagement.</li> <li>Multi-stakeholder projects increase.</li> <li>Projects are developed with Traditional Owner collaboration and engagement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data to examine water quality, pathogens and nutrients are synthesised.</li> <li>Reporting systems are developed.</li> <li>Litter loads across the Bay are well monitored.</li> <li>Water quality improves across time.</li> <li>Water quality is monitored and reported.</li> <li>Knowledge of the impacts of eutrophication and its sources is well understood.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased data availability to assess biodiversity.</li> <li>Habitat extents are increasing, and conditions are improving.</li> <li>Increase in the population trend and/or status of species and habitats.</li> <li>Over-abundant native species are mitigated and monitored.</li> <li>Data is synthesised and collated to evaluate threats and pressures.</li> </ul>
<b>Outputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marine and Coastal Stewardship Index.</li> <li>Newsletter and website updates.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water Quality Index.</li> <li>Eutrophication Index</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring program reports.</li> <li>Improved habitat mapping.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Litter Index.</li> <li>• Catchment and Bay monitoring reports.</li> <li>• Strengthened standards for urban stormwater management.</li> <li>• Monitoring programs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marine Biosecurity Index.</li> <li>• Marine Biodiversity Index.</li> <li>• Index of estuarine condition.</li> </ul>
<b>Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity building programs</li> <li>• Research and knowledge development</li> <li>• Educational programs</li> <li>• Awareness raising</li> <li>• Restoration projects</li> <li>• On-ground activities</li> <li>• Environmental condition reporting</li> <li>• Communications</li> <li>• Workshops and forums</li> <li>• Pilot projects</li> <li>• Infrastructure upgrades</li> <li>• Audits</li> <li>• Data collection Monitoring</li> </ul>		
<b>Inputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Authorising environment</li> <li>• Guidance, standards, processes, data systems</li> <li>• Decision support tool improvements, policy, regulation, and legislation (incl. updates)</li> <li>• Data collection and analysis</li> <li>• Governance</li> <li>• Relationships and co-operation with partners</li> <li>• Communications</li> <li>• Change management</li> <li>• Staff and staff time</li> <li>• Equipment and supplies</li> <li>• Access to the environment</li> <li>• Research and scientific base</li> </ul>		

### 3. Monitoring and evaluating

Monitoring involves collection and analysis of information to assist timely decision making, ensuring accountability, and providing the basis for evaluation and learning. It is a continuing function; methodical collection of data which provides management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing project or program with early indications of progress and achievement of objectives. Monitoring data informs continual, broad-scale assessment to address the key evaluation questions.

The evaluation framework is used to evaluate how the EMP is achieving its outcomes in conjunction with the overarching program logic. The structure of the evaluation framework is informed by the program logic, and the evaluation framework comprises the following elements:

**Evaluation questions** – specified questions that relate to the impact, appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, and legacy of the program.

**Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** – qualitative and quantitative measures of program performance used to assess evaluation questions.

**Targets** – desired state of the KPI that is intended to achieve.

**Evaluation Data** – Data collection through program-monitoring of activities provides a primary source of information and is supported by indices and other data sources external to the program.

- ❖ Indices - have been created to support data synthesis and information related to each EMP goal.
  - [Marine and Coastal Stewardship Index](#)
  - Litter Index
  - [Marine Biodiversity Index \(MBI\)](#)
  - [Water Quality Index \(WQI\)](#)
  - Marine Biosecurity Index (MBSI)
  - Eutrophication Index (EI)
  - [Pathogens](#)
  - [Index Estuarine Condition](#)
  
- ❖ Annual Reporting - data collection through program-monitoring activities provides a primary source of information and is supported by other data sources external to the program.

**Frequency** – evaluation of the program will occur at set time periods, reflecting the varying timeframes for program outcomes, timeliness of stakeholder communication, complexity of evaluation, and reporting requirements.

**Outcome** – the way evaluation results are used throughout the continuous MERI cycle.

There are two levels of evaluation: 1) at the overall program level, and 2) at the goal level.

### 3.1 Overall program evaluation

The EMP evaluation considers an examination of the overall program vision (A healthy Port Phillip Bay that is valued and cared for by all Victorians) and is inclusive of all program outcomes and goals below. The MERI evaluation questions focus on two themes of the program:

- **Effectiveness** - evaluation of the extent to which the actions and activities have been achieved and extent to which they have contributed to desired outcomes of the EMP.
- **Efficiency** - assessment of the value of the EMP in terms of cost, time, and effectiveness of processes, including a review of what could be done to improve delivery.

The first MERI evaluation will be setting baseline information for each target and the noted KPI target is expected to be achieved by the 2027 MERI evaluation.

**Table 2.** Evaluation framework that addresses the EMP program vision from the program logic in Table 1.

<b>Program Vision: A healthy Port Phillip Bay that is valued and cared for by all Victorians</b>					
<b>Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>Key Performance Indicators (KPI)</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Evaluation Data</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Effectiveness - To what extent were EMP activities achieved?	% of completed EMP activities that have achieved all objectives.	90% of EMP activities	Annual Reporting	1-yearly	Progress in achieving intermediate outcomes of the EMP.
	% of in-progress EMP activities that are on-track to achieve all objectives.	90% of EMP activities	Annual Reporting	1-yearly	Progress in achieving intermediate outcomes of the EMP.
Effectiveness - To what extent were the long-term outcomes of the EMP achieved?	% of overall goal targets met (24 targets – Table A1).	80% of all targets met	Annual Reporting Indices	5-yearly	Progress in achieving long-term outcomes of the EMP.

Efficiency - Were the EMP actions and activities delivered on time, within cost and to the quality expected?	% of EMP activities completed within scheduled timeframe.	60% of EMP activities	Annual Reporting	1-yearly	Continuous improvement of delivery processes.
	% of EMP activities completed within scheduled budget.	80% of EMP activities	Annual Reporting	1-yearly	Continuous improvement of delivery processes.

### 3.2 Goal 1 Stewardship evaluation

The two strategies under this goal focus on fostering a deeper community understanding of the values in the Bay and its management challenges and building stronger partnerships across the Bay’s foundation of community networks to involve volunteers, researchers, agencies, local government, and industries. The evaluation framework for this goal is presented in Table 3.

#### Strategy 1: Improve appreciation and understanding of Bay values and connections to catchment

Consultation in early 2016 highlighted a sense that the biodiversity and cultural heritage of the Bay was under appreciated and that people didn’t understand how their behaviours in the broader catchment impacted on the Bay’s health. The priority actions listed under this strategy will foster deeper community understanding and connections to the Bay and its management challenges.

Traditional Owner input was sought via engagement meetings to produce the evaluation plan for Priority Action 1.1. (Table 4). Due to the strong alignment between the EMP’s Priority Action 1.1 and the Port Phillip and Western Port Regional Catchment Strategy’s (PPWP RCS) Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians theme, MW and DEECA will collaboratively collect data to evaluate the performance of both the EMP’s Priority Action 1.1 and the PPWP RCS Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians theme.

#### Strategy 2: Improve collaboration and partnerships across community, industry, and government

Strong partnerships and collaboration are crucial for successful environmental management programs. With strong partnerships, innovation can flourish, resources can be maximised, knowledge can be shared, and long-term community and organisational networks are built. A strong foundation of community networks already exists, as do partnerships involving volunteers, researchers, and agencies. This strategy supports and further develops these.

**Table 3 3. Stewardship evaluation framework to achieve program outcome. Strategy numbers link to the EMP framework in Figure 4.**

Goal 1: Stewardship of the Bay is fostered across community, industry, and government						
Evaluation Questions	Strategy	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)	Targets	Evaluation Data	Frequency	Outcome

Effectiveness – To what extent were the goals actions and activities achieved?	1 & 2	Percentage of Supporting, Enterprising, Focused, and Comprehensive activities.	Higher percentage/increase in focused and comprehensive activities	Marine and Coastal Stewardship index	1-yearly	(Strategy 1) Improve appreciation and understanding of Bay values and connections to catchment.
	2	Number of groups and organisations actively developing programs to improve the Bay.	Increase or maintain	Marine and Coastal Stewardship Index	1-yearly	(Strategy 2) Improve collaboration and partnerships across community, industry, and government
Efficiency – Has the goal progressed adequately or been met given available resources?	2	Percentage of participants engaged in training events.	Increase	Annual Report	1-yearly	(Strategy 2) Improve collaboration and partnerships across community, industry, and government
	2	Value of investment, volunteer time, other in-kind and cash.	Increase	Annual Report	1-yearly	Improved resource allocation and goal progress.

The table below (Table 4) outlines the Traditional Owner input for Priority Action 1.1. which contributes to strategy 1 *Improve appreciation and understanding of Bay values and connections to catchment.*

**Table 44. Priority Action 1.1 evaluation framework.**

<b>Priority Action 1.1</b> Work with Aboriginal groups to improve understanding of Aboriginal cultural values and interests in the Bay and support connection to Country					
<b>Key Performance Indicators (KPI)</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Evaluation Data</b>	<b>Alignment of the EMP with the Regional Catchment Strategy targets for 2028</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Survey results addressing the indicator support Traditional Owners as the voice for waterways and Country.	TBD following 2024 PPWP RCS survey results	Melbourne Water will seek updated data and complete targeted surveys every two years as part of the PPWP RCS. Scheduled to begin in 2024, DEECA will collaborate with Melbourne Water on this process.	The role of Traditional Owners as the voice for Country is respected and they have significant influence in planning, decision making, and action across the region in land, biodiversity, and water management. The value of Traditional Ecological Knowledge held by the region’s Traditional Owners is respected and becoming increasingly influential in decisions and practices. This RCS target align with the EMP by developing opportunities to educate government, industry and the broader community about Aboriginal cultural values and interests in the Bay.	2-yearly (starting 2024)	Aboriginal cultural values and interests are understood and connections to Country are supported in Port Phillip Bay.
Number of formally registered cultural heritage sites in the region.	TBD following 2024 PPWP RCS survey results e.g. an increase		The number of cultural heritage sites in the region that are formally registered has increased above 9,200 and intact sites are effectively protected. Traditional Owners are increasingly involved in the care and preservation of key sites. This RCS target align with the EMP by supporting opportunities for Traditional Owners to strengthen connections with their cultural values.		
Survey results addressing the indicator support Indigenous representation in	TBD following 2024 PPWP RCS survey results		Traditional Owners are well represented in relevant organisational Boards. All major natural resource management forums and planning processes in this region include Indigenous representation. This RCS target		



natural resource management.		aligns with the EMP by supporting opportunities for Traditional Owner groups to lead on assessments of Aboriginal cultural values and interests (past and present) across different regions of the Bay.
Survey results addressing the indicator increase Indigenous employment in natural resource management.	TBD Following 2024 PPWP RCS survey results. e.g. increased Indigenous employment in NRM	Organisations with major roles in natural resource management in this region collectively have a level of Indigenous employment that is above the public sector average and growing. This RCS target aligns with the EMP by supporting opportunities for Traditional Owner groups to lead on assessments of Aboriginal cultural values and interests (past and present) across different regions of the Bay.

### 3.3 Goal 2 Water Quality evaluation

The water quality goal is split into three strategies: nutrient and sediments, litter, and pathogens. The evaluation framework for this goal is presented in Table 5.

#### **Strategy 3: Ensure nutrient and sediment loads do not exceed current levels and pollutant loads are reduced where practicable**

Research shows nutrients, sediment and other pollutants flowing into the Bay from the surrounding catchment are the main contributors to poor water quality. Without careful management of our stormwater and wastewater, pollution flowing into the Bay will significantly increase as our population expands and our cities and towns become more urbanised.

#### **Strategy 4: Reduce litter loads to the Bay**

Litter has negative impacts on marine life and on community enjoyment, and evidence is growing on the ecological and health impacts of microplastic litter in particular. Litter in the Bay comes from a range of sources, but most flows in from the surrounding drains and waterways. Without strong management actions, litter loads to the Bay are projected to increase significantly as our urban population grows.

#### **Strategy 5: Minimise risks to human health from pathogens**

Pathogens are bacteria or other micro-organisms that can cause disease. High levels of pathogens in recreational waters can increase the risk of illnesses such as gastroenteritis. Pathogen levels can be particularly high during and after wet weather, when stormwater runoff from the catchment is correspondingly high. When pathogen concentrations are high, the public is provided with advice that beaches may not be suitable for swimming. Pathogens can also impact the Bay's aquaculture industry. Research has shown pathogens associated with faecal contamination mainly enter the

Bay from stormwater drains and waterways but can also come from other sources. Targeting the key sources of pathogens and good public communication are powerful tools for minimising risks to human health.

**Table 5.** Water quality evaluation framework to achieve program outcome (program logic Table 1). Numbers link to the EMP framework in Figure 4.

<b>Goal 2:</b> Water quality is improved to ensure environmental health and community enjoyment of the Bay						
<b>Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Key Performance Indicators (KPI)</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Evaluation Data</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Effectiveness – To what extent were the goals actions and activities achieved?	3	Percentage of sites monitored for water quality meeting the minimum sampling frequency per year as per the Environment Reference Standard (ERS).	73%	EPA, MW	1-yearly	(Strategy 3) Ensure nutrient and sediment loads do not exceed current levels and pollutant loads are reduced where practicable.
	3	Percentage of sites monitored for eutrophication returning Eutrophication Index status of Good and Very Good or an improving trend.	Increase or maintain	Eutrophication Index	1-yearly	(Strategy 3) Ensure nutrient and sediment loads do not exceed current levels and pollutant loads are reduced where practicable.
	3	Tonnes of nitrogen (TN) discharged to PPB from the Western Treatment Plant.	Maintain or reduce	MW	1-yearly	(Strategy 3) Ensure nutrient and sediment loads do not exceed current levels and pollutant loads are reduced where practicable.

	4	Litter density in catchments surrounding the Bay.	Decrease	Litter Index	1-yearly	(Strategy 4) Reduce litter loads to the Bay
	5	Percentage of monitoring sites (beaches) that meet long-term microbial water quality standards for primary contact recreation during dry weather.	69% (2022) 93% (2027)	EPA (EPA Strategic Plan 2022-2027)	5-yearly	(Strategy 5) Risks to human health from pathogens minimised.
	5	Percentage of monitoring sites (Yarra) that meet long-term microbial water quality standards for primary contact recreation during dry weather.	Maintain recreational water quality in key recreation areas	MW recreational water quality monitoring	5-yearly	(Strategy 5) Risks to human health from pathogens minimised.
Efficiency – Has the goal progressed adequately or been met given available resources?	3,4,5	Number of litter and water quality initiatives.	Increase or maintain	Annual Reporting	1-yearly	Improved resource allocation and goal progress.
	3,4,5	Value of investment, volunteer time, other in-kind and cash.	Increase or maintain	Annual Report	1-yearly	Improved resource allocation and goal progress.

### **3.4 Goal 3 Habitat and Marine Life evaluation**

The habitat and marine life goal is split into two strategies: the conservation and restoration of biodiversity and the management of risks from marine pests. The evaluation framework for this goal is presented in Table 6.

#### **Strategy 6: Conserve and restore habitats and marine life**

The habitats and marine life of Port Phillip Bay are rich and diverse but are vulnerable to external threats. Research has identified significant risks to the health of the Bay's habitat and marine life from water-borne pollution, litter, and climate change. By tackling these issues and engaging in direct habitat conservation and restoration efforts it is hoped that the Bay's marine life will be resilient and able to prosper through environmental change.

#### **Strategy 7: Manage risks from marine pests**

Risk assessments have indicated marine pests pose a significant risk to the water quality and ecosystems of the Bay. Without proactive management, increased vessel movements (commercial shipping and recreational boating) could result in new marine pests becoming established in the Bay, or those that are already in the Bay being spread elsewhere.

**Table 6.** Habitats and Marine life evaluation framework to achieve program outcome (program logic Table 1). Numbers link to the EMP framework in Figure 4.

<b>Goal 3: The Bay's habitats and marine life are thriving</b>						
<b>Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Key Performance Indicators (KPI)</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Evaluation Data</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Effectiveness – To what extent were the goals actions and activities achieved?	6	Number of key indicator species or habitats included in the Marine Biodiversity Index.	Increase or maintain	Marine Biodiversity Index (MBI)	1-yearly	(Strategy 6) Conserve and restore habitats and marine life.
	6	Status of species or habitats covered by the Marine Biodiversity Index.	Increase or maintain	Marine Biodiversity Index	1-yearly	(Strategy 6) Conserve and restore habitats and marine life.
	6 & 7	Number of research projects.	Increase or maintain	Annual Reporting	1-yearly	(Strategy 6) Conserve and restore habitats and marine life.
	6 & 7	Area (ha) of habitat restored, protected, or conserved.	Increase	Annual Reporting	1-yearly	(Strategy 6) Conserve and restore habitats and marine life.
	7	Number of marine pest arrivals.	Decrease or maintain	Marine Biosecurity Index	1-yearly	(Strategy 7) Manage risks from marine pests.
	7	Status of priority marine pests covered by the Marine Biosecurity Index.	Decrease or maintain	Marine Biosecurity Index	5-yearly	(Strategy 7) Manage risks from marine pests.
Efficiency – Has the goal	6 & 7	Number of research projects.	Increase or maintain	Annual Reporting	1-yearly	Improved resource allocation and goal progress.

progressed adequately or been met given available resources?

6 & 7

Value of investment, volunteer time, other in-kind and cash.

Increase or maintain

Annual Reporting

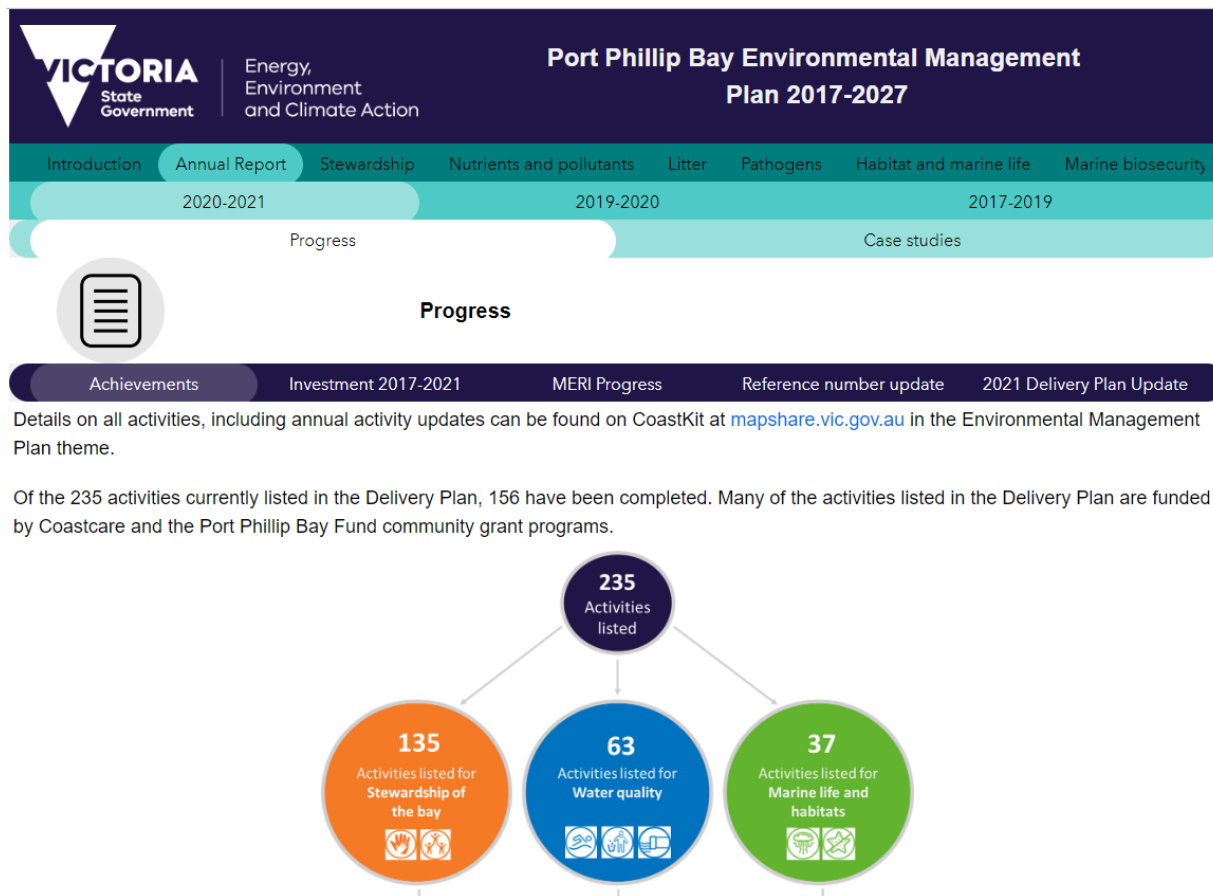
1-yearly

Improved resource allocation and goal progress.

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## 4. Reporting

The Annual Report, annual report cards, and the results of the 5-yearly evaluation will be published online (Figure 6). This innovative approach to reporting enables inclusion of a variety of media (including video, maps, and interactive dashboards) and can further promote uptake and use. Activities that are included in the annual report, are individually displayed on Coastkit for transparency and users to explore.



**Figure 6. Screenshot of the Annual Report available online.**

The results of the Annual Report, annual report cards, and the 5-yearly evaluation will be used to adapt the Delivery Plan. Condition metrics reflecting declining trends, Poor and Very Poor status, and target shortfalls will inform to active adaptation of the Delivery Plan to emerging priorities in the Bay.

Sharing outcomes and progress against the MERI KPIs and targets of the EMP with the community provides the opportunity to further build awareness and connection with the Bay, celebrate successes, highlight emerging priorities, and encourages all Victorians to value and care for the Bay. It is proposed that at the completion of the evaluations, a report will be compiled addressing progress to targets, annual KPIs and any community feedback received. This will be shared and published for public awareness.

External factors such as those below will be considered in the evaluation where data collected for KPIs suggests the current activities are not meeting the stated targets and therefore not achieving EMP outcomes. Research or further data collection may be prioritised to test these assumptions.

- Global economy and the impact on Victoria may reduce available funding for activities from all possible funding avenues, including but not limited to voluntary works.

- Stochastic events such as fire, pest outbreaks, global pandemics etc.
- Levels of support and leadership across the sector and within Government.
- Unforeseen anthropogenic actions causing environmental changes that may impact species decline.
- The effects of climate change may:
  - Change environment quicker than our management can respond.
  - Reduce or override the impact of any management actions.
  - Cause KPIs to change to navigate focus to more pressing issues.

The reporting will also identify significant topics for inclusion in the next (2028-2038) EMP framework, among which, coastal erosion and development has been identified as an essential addition to the EMP framework. To date, climate change and Traditional Owner voice for Country have also been identified as essential pillars, or overarching umbrellas that should support and encompass the entire EMP framework.

Where permissions allow, data collected will be made available through the DEECA data management systems such as Victorian Biodiversity Atlas, CoastKit and the Victorian Government website: [www.data.vic.gov.au](http://www.data.vic.gov.au). Consent or permissions may be restricted for some data, such as species with sensitive requirements.



## 5. Improvement

The MERI will be revised as resources and data become available. Examples of suggested future improvements to existing KPIs and outcomes are listed below in Table 7 and Table 8. Additionally, the MERI will be expanded as new strategies are added to the EMP framework, such as coastal erosion or liveability of the coast. A coastal erosion strategy evaluation could make use of coastal asset management system reporting and the Victorian Coastal Monitoring Program.

In addition to the specific KPIs and outcomes listed in the tables below, increasing alignment between completed activity outcome metrics (currently based on Sustainability Fund Outcomes and Indicators) and the Biodiversity 2037 Activity data standards has already been identified as an area for future improvement. This would require agreement from DEECA, including Port Phillip Bay Fund and Coastcare, EPA and MW, revision of the EMP database and reporting processes. Ensuring consistency in achievement reporting by using both sets would increase the resourcing required for data collection by contributors and processing for reporting, and alternate solutions will be explored.

**Table 7. Potential future additions to the MERI KPIs**

Potential Future KPI	EMP Outcome (potential future outcomes marked with *)	Actions to enable inclusion	Evaluation Data
Percent of activities completed that met or exceed targeted achievement.	EMP activities completed to expected quality* (Within Goal 1)	Expand EMP database to accept targets on addition of new activities. Include this information in new EMP activity reporting.	Annual report
Number of marine entanglements.	Marine litter does not cause harm* (Within Goal 3)	Collect data. Incorporate into the Litter Index or establish another analysis methodology.	TBD
Volume of litter ingested by marine life.			TBD
Coastal erosion indicators.	Identify in collaboration with VCMP team	Expand EMP database to accept targets on addition of new activities.	Victorian Coastal Monitoring Program

**Table 8. Potential future additions to the MERI Outcomes**

Potential future EMP Outcome	Action required to enable inclusion	Source
EMP activities completed to expected quality.	As per Table 7	Annual Reporting
Marine litter does not cause harm.	As per Table 7	Litter Index Connect with a reporting agency
Seafloor integrity ensures functioning of the ecosystem.	Identify KPIs Collect data Establish analysis methodology Report results	Seafloor integrity project
Elements of food webs ensure long-term abundance and reproduction.	Identify KPIs Collect data Establish analysis methodology Report results	Alignment with descriptor 4 of the GES: All elements of the marine food webs, to the extent that they are known, occur at normal abundance and diversity and levels capable of ensuring the long-term abundance of the species and the retention of their full reproductive capacity.
All elements of the marine food webs, to the extent that they are known, occur at normal abundance and diversity and levels capable of ensuring the long-term abundance of the species and the retention of their full reproductive capacity.	Identify KPIs Collect data Establish analysis methodology Report results	Nutrient dispersion modelling (Spatial Zone of Consequence and Zone of Influence) – <i>Bubbles Model</i>

## 6. Glossary

Term	Definition
Activity	The process of using labour and materials to produce outputs.
Effectiveness	Achievement of desired management outputs. Where efficiency refers to the value for the process, effectiveness refers to the quality of the result.
Evaluation	Periodic assessment of policies, programs, and projects against key evaluation questions.
Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	A quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable basis for assessing progress towards outcomes. It is a unit of information measured over time that can help show change in a specific condition. A given output or outcomes can have multiple key performance indicators.
Program Logic	A conceptual model that shows the rationale behind a program or strategy. Outlines the anticipated cause-and-effect relationships between activities, outputs, outcomes, and vision.
Outcome	The impact of planned outputs measured during the time frame specified.
Output	The measurable result (goods or service) of activity over a fixed period of time delivered to a standard.
Program	The project and/or management plan that is being evaluated by the MERI framework. In this document it refers to the Port Phillip Bay Environmental Management Plan 2017-2027 (EMP).
Targets	Quantitative and qualitative, temporarily and spatially bound, predicted outcomes or outputs.

## 7. References

Biodiversity 2037 Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvements Framework (MERF) Version 2.0 (2019) State of Victoria Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning Available at: [https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/462341/Biodiverstiy-2037-MERI-v2.pdf](https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/462341/Biodiverstiy-2037-MERI-v2.pdf)

Environment Reference Standard (ERS) (2021) VIC

NRM MERI Framework, Australian Government Natural Resource Management Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement Framework (2009) Commonwealth of Australia. Available at: <https://www.mdba.gov.au/sites/default/files/archived/proposed/NRM-MERI-Framework.pdf>

Port Phillip Bay Environmental Management Plan 2017-2027 Delivery Plan (2018), State of Victoria Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning Available at: [Port-Phillip-Bay-Delivery-Plan-Dec-2018.pdf](https://marineandcoasts.vic.gov.au/Port-Phillip-Bay-Delivery-Plan-Dec-2018.pdf) (marineandcoasts.vic.gov.au)

## 8. Appendix

**Table A1. Entire evaluation framework for the EMP with evaluation questions, KPIs and targets to achieve program vision, program goals and outcomes.**

<b>Program Vision:</b> A healthy Port Phillip Bay that is valued and cared for by all Victorians							
<b>KPI #</b>	<b>Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Key Performance Indicators (KPI)</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Evaluation Data</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>1</b>	Effectiveness – To what extent were EMP actions and activities achieved?	NA	% of completed EMP activities that have achieved all objectives.	90% of EMP activities	Annual Reporting	1-yearly	Progress in achieving intermediate outcomes of the EMP.
<b>2</b>		NA	% of in-progress EMP activities that are on-track to achieve all objectives.	90% of EMP activities	Annual Reporting	1-yearly	Progress in achieving intermediate outcomes of the EMP.
<b>3</b>	Effectiveness – To what extent were the long-term outcomes of the EMP achieved?	NA	% of overall goal targets met (24 targets).	80% of all targets met	Annual Reporting Indices	5-yearly	Progress in achieving long-term outcomes of the EMP.
<b>4</b>	Efficiency – Were the EMP actions and activities delivered on time, within cost and to the quality expected?	NA	% of EMP activities completed within scheduled timeframe.	60% of EMP activities	Annual Reporting	1-yearly	Continuous improvement of delivery processes.
<b>5</b>		NA	% of EMP activities completed within scheduled budget.	80% of EMP activities	Annual Reporting	1-yearly	Continuous improvement of delivery processes.
<b>Goal 1:</b> Stewardship of the Bay is fostered across community, industry, and government (for Priority Action 1.1 see Table A2).							
<b>6</b>	Effectiveness – To what extent were the goals actions and activities achieved?	1 & 2	Percentage of Supporting, Enterprising, Focused and Comprehensive activities.	Higher percentage/inc rease in focused and comprehensive activities.	Marine and Coastal Stewardship index	1-yearly	(Strategy 1) Improve appreciation and understanding of Bay values and connections to catchment.
<b>7</b>		2	Number of groups & organisations actively	Increase	Marine and Coastal Stewardship index	1-yearly	(Strategy 2) Improve collaboration and partnerships across community, industry and government

			developing in programs to better the Bay.				
<b>8</b>	Efficiency – Has the goal progressed adequately or been met given available resources?	2	Percent of participants in training/events.	Increase	Annual Report	1-yearly	(Strategy 2) Improve collaboration and partnerships across community, industry, and government.
<b>9</b>		2	Value of investment, volunteer time, other in-kind, and cash.	Increase	Annual Report	1-yearly	Improved resource allocation and goal progress.
<b>Goal 2:</b> Water quality is improved to ensure environmental health and community enjoyment of the Bay							
<b>10</b>	Effectiveness – To what extent were the goals actions and activities achieved?	3	Percentage of sites monitored for water quality meeting the minimum sampling frequency per year as per the Environment Reference Standard (ERS).	73%	EPA, MW	1-yearly	(Strategy 3) Ensure nutrient and sediment loads do not exceed current levels and pollutant loads are reduced where practicable.
<b>11</b>		4	Litter density in catchments surrounding the Bay.	Decrease	Litter Index	1-yearly	(Strategy 4) Reduce litter loads to the Bay.
<b>12</b>		3	Percentage of sites monitored for eutrophication returning Eutrophication Index status of Good and Very Good or an improving trend.	Increase or maintain	Eutrophication Index	1-yearly	(Strategy 3) Ensure nutrient and sediment loads do not exceed current levels and pollutant loads are reduced where practicable.
<b>13</b>		3	Tonnes of nitrogen (TN) discharged to PPB from the Western Treatment Plant.	Maintain or reduce	MW	1-yearly	(Strategy 3) Ensure nutrient and sediment loads do not exceed current levels and pollutant loads are reduced where practicable.
<b>14</b>		5	Percentage of monitoring sites (beaches) that meet long-term microbial water quality standards for	69% (2022) 93% (2027)	EPA (EPA Strategic Plan 2022-2027)	5-yearly	(Strategy 5) Risks to human health from pathogens minimised.

			primary contact recreation during dry weather.				
<b>15</b>			Percentage of monitoring sites (Yarra) that meet long-term microbial water quality standards for primary contact recreation during dry weather.	Maintain recreational water quality in key recreation areas	MW recreational water quality monitoring	5-yearly	(Strategy 5) Risks to human health from pathogens minimised.
<b>16</b>	Efficiency – Has the goal progressed adequately or been met given available resources?	3,4,5	Number of litter and water quality initiatives.	Increase	Annual Reporting	1-yearly	Improved resource allocation and goal progress.
<b>17</b>		3,4,5	Value of investment, volunteer time, other in-kind, and cash.	Increase or Stable	Annual Reporting	1-yearly	Improved resource allocation and goal progress.
<b>Goal 3: The Bay's habitats and marine life are thriving</b>							
<b>18</b>	Effectiveness – To what extent were the goals actions and activities achieved?	6	Number of key indicator species or habitats covered by the Marine Biodiversity Index.	Increase	Marine Biodiversity Index (MBI)	1-yearly	(Strategy 6) Conserve and restore habitats and marine life.
<b>19</b>		6	Status of species or habitats covered by the Marine Biodiversity Index.	Increase or maintain	Marine Biodiversity Index	1-yearly	(Strategy 6) Conserve and restore habitats and marine life.
<b>20</b>		6 & 7	Number of research projects.	Increase or maintain	Annual Reporting	1-yearly	(Strategy 6) Conserve and restore habitats and marine life.
<b>21</b>		6 & 7	Area (ha) of habitat restored, protected, or conserved.	Increase	Annual Reporting	1-yearly	(Strategy 6) Conserve and restore habitats and marine life.
<b>22</b>		7	Number of marine pest arrivals.	Decrease or maintain	Marine Biosecurity Index	1-yearly	(Strategy 7) Manage risks from marine pests.
<b>23</b>		7	Status of priority marine pests covered by the Marine Biosecurity Index.	Decrease or maintain	Marine Biosecurity Index	5-yearly	(Strategy 7) Manage risks from marine pests.

<b>24</b>	Efficiency – Has the goal progressed adequately or been met given available resources?	6 & 7	Number of research projects.	Increase or maintain	Annual Reporting	1-yearly	Improved resource allocation and goal progress.
<b>25</b>		6 & 7	Value of investment, volunteer time, other in-kind, and cash.	Increase or maintain	Annual Reporting	1-yearly	Improved resource allocation and goal progress.

**Table A2.**

Priority Action 1.1 Work with Aboriginal groups to improve understanding of Aboriginal cultural values and interests in the Bay and support connection to Country					
Key Performance Indicators (KPI)	Targets	Evaluation Data	Alignment of the EMP with the Regional Catchment Strategy targets for 2028	Frequency	Outcome
Survey results addressing the indicator support Traditional Owners as the voice for waterways and Country.	TBD following 2024 PPWP RCS survey results.	Melbourne Water will seek updated data and complete targeted surveys every two years as part of the PPWP RCS. Scheduled to begin in 2024, DEECA will collaborate with Melbourne Water on this process.	The role of Traditional Owners as the voice for Country is respected and they have significant influence in planning, decision making, and action across the region in land, biodiversity, and water management. The value of Traditional Ecological Knowledge held by the region's Traditional Owners is respected and becoming increasingly influential in decisions and practices. This RCS target align with the EMP by developing opportunities to educate government, industry and the broader community about Aboriginal cultural values and interests in the Bay.	2-yearly (starting 2024)	Aboriginal cultural values and interests are understood and connections to Country are supported in Port Phillip Bay.
Number of formally registered cultural heritage sites in the region.	TBD following 2024 PPWP RCS survey results e.g. an increase.		The number of cultural heritage sites in the region that are formally registered has increased above 9,200 and intact sites are effectively protected. Traditional Owners are increasingly involved in the care and preservation of key sites. This RCS target align with the EMP by supporting opportunities for Traditional Owners to strengthen connections with their cultural values.		
Survey results addressing the indicator support Indigenous representation in natural resource management.	TBD following 2024 PPWP RCS survey results.		Traditional Owners are well represented in relevant organisational Boards. All major natural resource management forums and planning processes in this region include Indigenous representation. This RCS target aligns with the EMP by supporting opportunities for Traditional Owner groups to lead on assessments of Aboriginal cultural values and interests (past and present) across different regions of the Bay.		
Survey results addressing the indicator increase Indigenous employment in	TBD Following 2024 PPWP RCS survey results. e.g. increased Indigenous employment in NRM.		Organisations with major roles in natural resource management in this region collectively have a level of Indigenous employment that is above the public sector average and growing. This RCS target aligns with the EMP by supporting opportunities for Traditional Owner groups to lead on assessments of Aboriginal cultural values and		



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natural resource  
management.

interests (past and present) across different regions of the  
Bay.

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## 9. Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is the Port Phillip Bay Environmental Management Plan MERI?**

The Port Phillip Bay Environmental Management Plan 2017-2027 (EMP) Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) plan provides an overarching framework for the monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of Port Phillip Bay related strategies, regulations, and programs. It is reviewed and updated every five years.

### **Who uses the EMP MERI?**

The EMP MERI was developed for organisations and individuals that are undertaking actions that contribute to the health and wellbeing of the Bay.

### **What information is used in the EMP MERI?**

The EMP MERI directly draws on the vision and goals outlined in the EMP framework. These goals are informed by the latest ecological knowledge and modelling to understand, as much as possible, the impacts and effectiveness of our management actions. The EMP MERI measures progress towards the outcomes through key performance indicators (KPIs). Indicators use information from DEECA's annual reported data and indices developed with scientific and subject matters experts and stakeholders.

### **How does the EMP MERI measure progress?**

The EMP MERI measures progress annually through standard data collection and will produce an annual report on targets and enabling actions. Some KPIs are measured five-yearly and will be reported on as part of the formal evaluation and refresh every five years.

### **When and how will the EMP MERI be evaluated?**

The EMP MERI will be evaluated every five years through a series of internal and external audits. These will assess performance, spending and alignment with goals. This evaluation will focus on if we are headed in the right direction to achieve the vision, targets, and broad outcomes of the EMP.

### **What is the program logic?**

The program logic for the EMP MERI describes the relationships between foundational activities, outputs, intermediate and long-term outcomes and how these are expected to lead to achieving broad outcomes (the goals) and overall vision. It identifies key performance indicators (KPIs), key evaluation questions, and informs adaptive improvements to the implementation of the EMP.

### **How do I contribute to the Key Performance Indicators?**

For the groups and organisations who already report to DEECA, reporting on activities as usual is how your contribution is made. If DEECA requires you to change the way you report, or is requesting new information, you will be contacted as required. Reporting will be collated annually and analysed by DEECA.

**How will progress be reported?**

Progress against MERI KPIs will be publicly reported annually and released on the [Marine and Coastal webpage](#). EMP Annual Reports are made publicly available on the website and the experience builder as well as the annual update of the individual report cards.