Opening Tarago Reservoir for on-water recreation

March 2026 engagement summary



Acknowledgement to Country

Melbourne Water respectfully acknowledges the Bunurong, Gunaikurnai, Taungurung, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land and water on which we rely and operate.

We pay our deepest respects to their Elders past and present. We recognise and respect the continued cultural and spiritual connections that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the land and water they have cared for and protected for thousands of generations.

We acknowledge that Tarago Reservoir is located on land without a Registered Aboriginal Party, where multiple groups including Bunurong, Gunaikurnai, Kurnai and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung, have an interest and connection. We demonstrate our ongoing commitment to reconciliation through our partnerships with Traditional Owners and the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as we work together to manage land and water now and into the future, while maintaining and respecting cultural and spiritual connections.

Contents

Executive summary **4**

Project overview **5**

Engagement objectives **5**

Stakeholder identification **6**

Engagement approach **7**

Overview *7*

Scope of influence and rationale *7*

Key frameworks and consultation requirements *7*

Engagement delivery and activities **9**

Activity selection *9*

Digital engagement *9*

Community and landholder engagement *9*

Media and public notice *11*

Public engagement and social media *12*

Stakeholder engagement *12*

Traditional Owner engagement *12*

Engagement timeline *13*

Participation and reach **14**

Formal submissions *14*

Community engagement *15*

Public engagement and social media *16*

Traditional media and public notice *16*

Key issues and themes **17**

Draft Recreational Area Management Plan *17*

Waterways Rules *19*

Broader Tarago project *20*

Influence and project response **23**

Evaluation of engagement **24**

Next steps **25**

Further information **25**

APPENDIX **26**

Executive summary

In March 2026, Melbourne Water led a targeted program of community and stakeholder consultation to inform the development of the Opening Tarago Reservoir for On-Water Recreation project, henceforth referred to as the Tarago project. This period of consultation followed previous rounds of community and stakeholder consultation undertaken in 2024 and 2025.

The primary purpose of the March 2026 consultation was to inform interested individuals and groups on the proposed management framework required to open Tarago Reservoir for limited on-water recreation. This governing framework has been developed in the form of two key documents:

1. The draft Recreational Area Management Plan, the proposed guiding framework for managing recreational activities at Tarago Reservoir while minimising impacts on water quality, the environment and water assets and operations, and
2. The proposed Waterway Rules, which provides rules related to water safety including speed limits, the type of vessel permitted and exclusion areas.

The March 2026 consultation program also informed the community on project developments, including the proposed construction schedule.

Broadly, key issues raised by community and stakeholders during the March 2026 consultation for the project included security and compliance with proposed rules; access for broader recreational groups; the size of vessel or motor permitted on the reservoir; business and investment opportunities for the community of Neerim South; and appreciation and preservation of Tarago Reservoir as an important environmental asset in Victoria.

Feedback received during this consultation has been documented and considered in line with statutory obligations and internal consultation policies.

Project overview

Located in West Gippsland, Tarago Reservoir is managed by Melbourne Water and is an important part of greater Melbourne and Gippsland's drinking water supply system.

Tarago Reservoir was built in 1967 to service drinking water needs of the south-eastern parts of Melbourne, however access to the reservoir for fishing and boating was closed in 1978 to protect drinking water quality. Despite this, the reservoir has remained of interest to the community, particularly among recreational fishing groups due to the presence of wild brown trout in the reservoir.

The project is part of the Victorian Government's $96 million Go Fishing and Boating Victoria plan to improve recreational fishing, boating, piers and aquaculture.

The Opening Tarago Reservoir for On-Water Recreation project is being delivered by Melbourne Water with project partners Better Boating Victoria (BBV).

Engagement objectives

The objectives of the March 2026 consultation program were to:

- Meet regulatory requirements under the Marine Safety Act 2010 (Vic) by undertaking a compliant and transparent consultation process to support the proposed Waterway Rules.
- Meet Melbourne Water and Department of Energy Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) expectations for consultation on the draft Recreational Area Management Plan (RAMP) by providing stakeholders and the broader community with clear, accessible information about the proposed management framework, and offering meaningful opportunities to provide feedback to inform finalisation of the plan prior to submission for approval.
- Update the community, stakeholders and nearby landholders on the progression of the project, including communicating the upcoming project schedule and project constraints. This aimed to build awareness and acceptance of the project, manage expectations regarding what aspects of the project and its management could be influenced, and support transparency with Melbourne Water's and its project partners' delivery of the project.

Stakeholder identification

There are several stakeholder groups who have an interest in or may be impacted by the Opening Tarago Reservoir for On-Water Recreation project.

These stakeholders were mapped at the beginning of the project and added to iteratively through the Project Stakeholder Engagement Plan. Stakeholders were identified in several ways, including drawing on existing stakeholder knowledge and databases within Melbourne Water and its project partners; and early outreach to community groups and key stakeholders such as industry bodies and government to validate and refine the stakeholder list.

The key stakeholders for the project include:

- Landholders adjacent to Tarago Reservoir
- Traditional Owners and Aboriginal organisations
- Townships near the reservoir (Neerim, Neerim South, Jindivick)
- Community groups
- Fishers (local and non-local)
- Other recreational users
- Peak fishing bodies and VFA
- Baw Baw Shire Council
- Traders, business and tourism operators
- Environmental groups
- Emergency services
- Media
- State Government departments and agencies
- Gippsland Water
- Project partners – Better Boating Victoria

The list of stakeholders involved in the Tarago Project is considered iterative. It has been and will continue to be adjusted based on community and stakeholder feedback.

Engagement approach

Overview

The engagement approach for the March 2026 consultation program – primarily focused on seeking feedback on the draft Recreational Area Management Plan and proposed Waterway Rules – was guided by the *Inform* and *Consult* levels of the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation.

At the *Inform* level, the program provided clear, consistent and accessible information to support community understanding of the project context, key constraints, and proposed management settings. At the *Consult* level, stakeholders and the broader community were invited to provide feedback on the draft plans and rules, ensuring local knowledge and community perspectives were captured and considered in refining the final outcomes.

Scope of influence and rationale

The selection of these participation levels reflects the sensitive nature of the Tarago project and its governing frameworks. While there were opportunities to shape elements of the draft Recreational Area Management Plan and proposed Waterway Rules, many rules and parameters within these management frameworks were constrained by considerations relating to water quality, public safety and regulatory requirements.

As such, the engagement approach was designed to be transparent about what could and could not be influenced, while still providing meaningful opportunities for input where some negotiable options existed.

Finally, while being separate frameworks to consider, Melbourne Water chose to combine consultation on both documents due to their interrelated nature. This was done to avoid confusion in the community and with stakeholders and avoid consultation fatigue on the project.

Key frameworks and consultation requirements

Engagement for the March 2026 consultation program was undertaken to seek feedback on two key proposed frameworks for the project: the Tarago Recreational Area Management Plan and the proposed Waterway Rules.

Tarago Recreational Area Management Plan

The purpose of the Tarago Reservoir Recreational Area Management Plan is to provide clear guidelines for managing recreational activities at Tarago Reservoir while

minimising impacts on water quality, the environment, and Melbourne Water and Gippsland Water assets and operations.

The plan provides a high-level practical framework for Melbourne Water to manage on-water recreational activities at Tarago Reservoir in a way that protects the natural environment, maintains water quality, and supports safe enjoyment by visitors.

Public feedback was sought in the March 2026 consultation period on the draft Tarago Reservoir Recreational Area Management Plan, in addition to ongoing engagement with project partners, key stakeholders and Traditional Owners, in order for Melbourne Water to finalise the proposed framework prior to opening the reservoir for on-water recreation.

Waterways Rules

Melbourne Water is the waterway manager for Tarago Reservoir under the *Marine Safety Act 2010*. Vessel Operating and Zoning Rules (VOZR), or Waterways Rules, were drafted to support the intended use of Tarago Reservoir.

The Waterways Rules regulate how vessels operate to ensure safe and orderly use of any waterway, and manage safety by setting limits on vessel speed, access, and permitted activities.

Consultation for the proposed Waterway Rules was undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Marine Safety Act 2010 (Vic). The minimum statutory consultation steps for permanent changes to a set of Waterways Rules includes:

- Publishing a notice of intention to request a rule change
- Undertaking public consultation for a minimum of 4 weeks
- Inviting submissions from the public and stakeholders
- Considering all submissions received
- Preparing a summary/list of submissions as part of the application to Safe Transport Victoria (STV), the approving body.

In addition to meeting these statutory requirements, the engagement approach was agreed to include targeted consultation with key stakeholder groups via emails, briefings and meetings. Advice was provided to submit feedback in written form only to form part of the consultation report and recommendations made to STV.

All feedback received was required to be documented, considered and summarised in a consultation report to support the submission to STV, demonstrating how stakeholder input informed the final proposed rules and ensuring a transparent decision-making process.

Engagement delivery and activities

Activity selection

A mix of digital and in-person engagement activities were chosen for the March 2026 engagement program to maximise accessibility and participation, recognising the varied interests and geographic locations of the stakeholder groups.

The selection of engagement activities was also designed to reflect the scale and constraints of the project; to meet regulatory requirements; and the diverse interests and needs of local and non-local stakeholders and the broader Victorian community.

Digital engagement

Digital engagement was led through the Melbourne Water Let's Talk – Opening Tarago Reservoir for Online Recreation webpage. The webpage provided:

- Project information, including schedule and links to the concept design of the Tarago boat ramp and supporting infrastructure (a BBV-led design)
- Draft Tarago Reservoir Recreational Plan and proposed Waterway Rules
- Online survey – focused on receiving feedback on the draft Recreational Area Management Plan
- Online feedback forms - focused on receiving feedback on the proposed Waterway Rules, where feedback must be provided in writing
- Fact sheets and FAQs
- Visual summaries of key information in the draft Recreational Area Management Plan related to proposed permitted and non-permitted activities.

Community and landholder engagement

Pop-up stall at Rokeby Market

Melbourne Water attended Rokeby Market on Saturday 14 March. Rokeby Market is a monthly community and farmers' market located in the township of Rokeby, a short drive south-west Tarago Reservoir.

Four personnel from Melbourne Water, including community engagement staff, an author of the draft Recreational Area Management Plan and a senior manager attended the market.

Project materials were handed out to interested individuals and easels hosted maps of Tarago Reservoir, outlining the proposed concept design for the boat ramp and facilities, exclusion zones and other project information.

Approximately 100 conversations were held with market attendees. Key themes and feedback of these discussions were recorded and summarised on paper to inform the

next draft of the Recreational Area Management Plan, hear feedback on the proposed Waterway Rules, collate feedback on the boat ramp and amenities design to provide project partners including Better Boating Victoria, as well as consider feedback on the broader project and Melbourne Water investment in the area.

Attending the market was extremely beneficial to the project in terms of gathering direct feedback and community sentiment, building local knowledge and better understanding history and sentiment in the area in relation to the management of Tarago Reservoir; and engaging hard to reach or previously unengaged individuals or groups.



(image: Melbourne Water marquee and information stall at Rokeby Market).

Online information sessions

Two hour-long online information sessions were held over March 2026 to provide an update on the Tarago project and present the draft Tarago Recreational Area Management Plan and proposed Waterway Rules.

Senior Melbourne Water managers and subject matter experts (SMEs) provided presentations on the project's schedule and the Recreational Area Management Plan

and Waterway Rules content, ways in which feedback could be provided, and next steps for these documents.

The information sessions were hosted as a Microsoft Teams webinar and attendees were able to engage with presenters by using a private Q&A function, where questions were answered privately with contribution, if required, from a SME.

The information sessions were promoted digitally via the Let's Talk webpage; physically via the placement of flyers with details of the sessions in several locations in Neerim South and a letter drop to 550 residents and flyers handed out at the Rokeby Market pop-up stand; and via word of mouth and emailed promotion to community contacts including the Neerim District Progress Association.

Hard copy material placement in community

Hard copy versions of the Recreational Area Management Plan survey and Waterway Rules feedback forms were placed in several locations in Neerim South. Placement of these materials intended to provide a more accessible option to engage on the Tarago project, while also increasing community awareness of the project's progression.

These materials, along with submission boxes, flyers promoting the online information sessions and directions and a QR code to the Tarago Reservoir Let's Talk webpage, were placed in four locations:

- Neerim South Post Office
- Neerim South Community Hall (Algie Hall)
- Neerim South IGA
- Neerim South Medical Centre.

Submitted forms were collected and submitted to Melbourne Water at the end of the consultation period.

Landholder emails

Recognising landholders adjacent to the Tarago Reservoir as high impact stakeholders, emails were sent to landholders leading up to the formal consultation period to outline ways in which to engage.

Direct landholder engagement will continue outside of the formal March 2026 engagement period.

Media and public notice

A public notice was published in the *Warragul Gazette* on Tuesday 3 March. The *Gazette* has a print circulation of 1000 in Warragul, Neerim South, Drouin and surrounding townships, with additional circulation provided in the online edition of the newspaper. A copy of the public notice was also placed at the North Jindivick boat ramp site and

Tarago Reservoir Park. A copy of this notice is provided in the appendix of this document.

Further to the public notice, several media articles on the Tarago project and consultation period were published in the *Gazette* in the March 2026 period.

A media release was also issued to media and the general public on 3 March, publicising the formal consultation period and feedback opportunities.

Public engagement and social media

To reach the broader Victorian public, who may not have been engaged through place-based or stakeholder-specific channels, organic and paid social media posts and advertising were delivered via Melbourne Water's Meta (Facebook and Instagram) accounts during the formal consultation period in March 2026. See appendix for a copy of paid posts within the Meta campaign.

The paid campaign was designed to raise awareness of the consultation period and direct users to the project webpage, where detailed information and feedback opportunities were available.

Targeted advertising was used to extend reach beyond the immediate local Gippsland area, ensuring that recreational water users, interest groups and other potential users of the reservoir were made aware of the proposed changes. Messaging focused on communicating the consultation period and how to participate or provide feedback.

Stakeholder engagement

Engagement with project partners and key stakeholders has been undertaken on an ongoing basis for the Tarago Project. However, written submissions on the draft Recreational Area Management Plan and proposed Waterways Rules were sought from key stakeholders in the formal March 2026 consultation period in order to be considered in statutory and departmental review processes.

Traditional Owner engagement

Engagement with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal organisations was undertaken separately from the formal March 2026 consultation program and was led by DEECA, with support from Melbourne Water. This engagement commenced prior to the public consultation period and is ongoing, reflecting the importance of maintaining respectful, continuous relationships rather than limiting engagement to defined project milestones.

Tarago Reservoir is located on land without a Registered Aboriginal Party, where multiple Traditional Owner groups and Aboriginal organisations have cultural interests and connections, including the Bunurong, Gunaikurnai, Kurnai, and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples. Engagement has been guided by a commitment to recognising and

respecting these connections, and to ensuring that their perspectives are considered in recognition of Traditional Owner and Aboriginal people's rights to self-determination in the involvement of the planning and management of Tarago Reservoir.

This approach supports ongoing dialogue with Traditional Owners as the project progresses, acknowledging their cultural and spiritual relationship with land and water and Melbourne Water's commitment to working in partnership to manage these values now and into the future.

Engagement timeline

The timeline of key public engagement activities conducted for the Tarago March 2026 engagement period, specifically seeking feedback on the draft Recreational Area Management Plan and proposed Waterway Rules, is provided in Table 1.

This table of activities does not include ongoing stakeholder and Traditional Owner engagement activities.

Table 1: Formal consultation period activities - community and public engagement March 2026

Timeline	Activity
Monday 2 March	Formal engagement period opened • Tarago Let's Talk webpage updates made live, including Recreational Area Management Plan survey and Waterway Rules feedback forms, FAQs, fact sheets and link to BBV's webpage • Hard copy versions of the survey and feedback form, as well as the public notice and flyers promoting information sessions placed in four Neerim South locations
Tuesday 3 March	Public notice placed in Warragul Gazette Media release issued from Melbourne Water website
Wednesday 11 March	#1 online information session • Presentation on Waterway Rules • Presentation on Rec Area Management Plan • Live Q&A with Melbourne Water engagement and SMEs

Friday 13 March – 31 March	Social media posts • Paid Meta (Facebook and Instagram) advertising campaign • Initial targeted postcode campaign, followed by whole-of-Victoria postcode campaign. • Organic post on Melbourne Water's Facebook and Instagram channels targeting account followers
Saturday 15 March	Attendance at Rokeby Market • Four Melbourne Water personnel – two community engagement, one environmental adviser who co-wrote draft RAMP, one senior Melbourne Water representative – attended. Information materials distributed, maps of reservoir and project presented on easels to community.
Tuesday 17 March	#2 online information session • Presentation on Waterway Rules • Presentation on Rec Area Management Plan • Live Q&A with Melbourne Water engagement and SMEs
Tuesday 31 March	Formal consultation period concluded at 5:00pm • Hard copy consultation materials (surveys, feedback forms, public notices and flyers) removed from locations in Neerim South. • Digital surveys and feedback forms closed on Let's Talk webpage.

Participation and reach

Formal submissions

The March 2026 consultation program strongly encouraged feedback and formal submissions relating to the draft Recreational Area Management Plan and proposed Waterways Rules. In total there were:

- 30 submissions on the draft Recreational Area Management Plan
- 34 submissions on the proposed Waterway Rules.

Submissions were received from members of the public and stakeholders.

The formal submissions were received via the online survey and feedback forms hosted on the Tarago Let's Talk webpage; by direct email to Melbourne Water; and hard copy submissions into submission boxes in Neerim South and by hand at Rokeby Market.

Some of the submissions provided feedback on issues relating to both the draft Recreational Area Management Plan and Waterways Rules.

Three direct emails to Melbourne Water during the consultation period were marked as complaints about the project, with concerns relating to security and water quality.

A summary of the key themes and issues within the submissions is provided in Section 7 of this document.

Community engagement

Online information sessions

Attendance for the two online information sessions were:

- Wednesday 11 March: 16 attendees.
- Tuesday 17 March: 20 attendees.

A total of 16 questions were asked and answered in the live, private Q&A function in Microsoft Teams. Some questions were followed up by Melbourne Water after the information sessions where more detail from subject matter experts was required.

Rokeby Market pop-up

Melbourne Water's pop-up stand at Rokeby Market attracted approximately 100 visitors, demonstrating high community interest in project. Four Melbourne Water personnel were present to provide an update on the project, listen to and record concerns and feedback on the project, and present detailed project information in the form of maps and concept designs on easels to interested individuals.

Sentiment on the day was broadly supportive towards the Tarago project, but with some clear themes and concerns emerging. The key themes are summarised in Section 7 of this document.

Demographics of those who attended the pop-up stand at Rokeby Market was skewed towards an older demographic (age 50-75), with approximately 65% of all conversations held with individuals in that age bracket.

Broadly, there were three prospective user groups who visited the pop-up stand. These included:

- Local landholders
- Fishers
- Locals interested in other recreational opportunities.

Public engagement and social media

The paid Meta campaign, published on Melbourne Water's Facebook and Instagram pages, reached 87,188 people in 19 days, indicating good exposure to the target audience within a relatively short duration.

The frequency – the average number of times each person saw an ad during the campaign – of 3.24 is another positive indicator of the campaign, allowing for a message to be reinforced without fatiguing the audience with over-exposure.

Even though the campaign was optimised for reach (not traffic), it still generated 3,520 clicks, suggesting the audience was interested in learning more about the consultation.

The social media campaign notably reached a younger audience. The highest performing age group was 25-34 where the March 2026 Meta campaign reached 14,961 (17%) men and 10,181 (12%) women. The lowest performing age group was 65+ where we reached 3,546 (4%) men and 4,094 (5%) women.

Traditional media and public notice

The coverage of the Tarago Project and the placement of the public notice in the *Warragul Gazette* reached a local west Gippsland print circulation of 1000, with significant additional readership online.

Additional news items in the *Gazette* assisted in generating awareness of the project and the consultation program.

Key issues and themes

Feedback received during the March 2026 consultation period was analysed and grouped into key themes based on recurring topics raised by stakeholders and the community. For the purposes of this report, the key themes have been categorised according to their relevance to the:

a) The draft Recreational Area Management Plan
b) The proposed Waterway Rules
c) The broader Tarago project.

Further, the key themes identified for each component of the Tarago project have been assigned a rating of 'high', 'moderate' and 'low'. Ratings were determined based on the frequency with which the issue was raised during consultation activities and the level of concern expressed by stakeholders and the community. This rating approach has been applied as:

a) A 'high' rating meant that the issue was raised more than 50% in both formal and informal feedback settings.
b) A 'moderate' rating meant that the issue was raised more than 20% but less than 50% in both formal and informal feedback settings.
c) A 'low' rating meant that the issue was raised less than 20% in both formal and informal feedback settings.

Draft Recreational Area Management Plan

Feedback on the draft Recreational Area Management Plan was received by formal written submissions, verbal feedback and questions received in community, stakeholder and public engagement activities.

Security, compliance and enforcement

Concerns relating to security, compliance and enforcement were one of the most frequently raised issues across the consultation period. A significant proportion of formal submissions on the draft Recreational Area Management Plan highlighted uncertainty regarding how rules would be monitored and enforced, with many stakeholders referencing historical issues such as littering and non-compliance within the reservoir.

These concerns were predominantly raised by local stakeholders, including landholders and residents, as well as individuals with a strong interest in protecting the reservoir's environmental, cultural and amenity values. Feedback in this area was often expressed with a high level of concern, reflecting a lack of confidence that increased access could be effectively managed without appropriate enforcement mechanisms.

More detail was also requested to be included in the draft Recreational Area Management Plan regarding how rules will be enforced.

Education and online booking system

There were a number of mitigation measures suggested by the community to manage rules enforcement, the most frequent of which was the development of an online education and registration module that must be completed in order for users to gain access to Tarago Reservoir.

Access and equity, additional recreational opportunities

Residents, landholders and prospective recreational users raised the restriction on users who do not have a vessel to use on the reservoir. Several individuals noted the value they would receive from gaining access to the reservoir to walk or run around, or just to appreciate the environmental and cultural amenity of the reservoir.

Further, questions were raised about the inclusion of disabled toilets and carparking in the concept design by BBV, to improve accessibility and ensure the reservoir can be visited by disabled users.

A list of all raised issues and themes across the March 2026 consultation period is listed in Table 2.

Emergency services

There were several concerns raised about emergency management at Tarago Reservoir. This included questions regarding consultation with emergency authorities; whether the reservoir would be accessible during Total Fire Ban (TFB) days, and how emergency vehicles would access the reservoir on TFDs.

Table 2: Key issues and themes – Recreational Area Management Plan

Stakeholder group	Key issues and themes	Rating
Landholders, residents	Security at the reservoir and compliance with rules by visitors; commitment to ongoing funding for security	High
Residents	Maintaining water quality, managing environmental concerns	Moderate
Nearby townships, business and tourism stakeholders	Support for opportunities unlocked by project, including tourism and small business support	Moderate

Additional recreational users	Access concerns and equity; opening up future recreational opportunities at the reservoir	Moderate
Emergency services	Access concerns, coordination with authorities regarding emergency management	Moderate
Disabled users	Accessibility and inclusion in relation to concept design (toilets, parking)	Low
All stakeholders	More detail required in Recreational Area Management Plan	Low

Waterways Rules

Feedback on the proposed Waterways Rules was received via formal, written submissions received in the March 2026 consultation period.

Vessel and motor size, speed limit

Seven submissions related to the proposed electric engine size, six of which indicated that they felt it was insufficient to propel an average size vessel with more than one or two occupants. They requested a significant increase in engine size (e.g. 80lbs thrust) or removal of the rule - allowing the 5-knot speed limit to restrict vessels size and output.

One submission queried the exclusion zone distance from the dam wall, requesting it be reduced to allow access to 2 arms of the reservoir. Five submissions related to vessel type and size, concerning the banning of drone fishing, allowing inflatable vessels or ski boats.

Signage, rules enforcement

Other questions raised by fishers and recreational users were around placement of signage and enforcement of the Waterways Rules. Some scepticism was raised in verbal conversations in relation to recreational users avoiding body contact with water while accessing the reservoir.

Petrol-powered vessels

No concerns were raised about the prohibition of petrol-powered vessels.

A summary of the key issues and themes in relation to the proposed Waterways Rules is provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Key issues and themes – Waterways Rules

Stakeholder group	Key issues and themes	Rating
Fishers (including peak body, VFA)	Vessel and motor size	High
Fishers	Restriction of 5 knot speed limit	High
Fishers	Vessel type, including expanding permitted vessel type (i.e. inflatable vessels, jet skis)	Moderate
Fishers	Ability to fish from bank of reservoir	Moderate
Other recreational users	Enforcement of rules as it relates to managing water quality and safety; presence of signage to indicate exclusion zones	Moderate

Broader Tarago project

There were several key themes raised in the consultation period that fell outside of the direct scope of the draft Recreational Area Management Plan and proposed Waterway Rules, but relevant to the broader Tarago project.

Melbourne Water has carefully considered all feedback received to better understand community perspectives, expectations and concerns regarding the overall project. Feedback relating to broader project matters has been documented and shared with relevant project partners, including Better Boating Victoria, to inform ongoing project planning, coordination and decision-making, where appropriate.

Proposed boat ramp design and car parks at Tarago Reservoir

A dominant theme raised by many stakeholder groups and community members in the consultation period was regarding the number of carparks proposed in BBV's design for the amenities and parking area surrounding the boat ramp.

In both formal submissions and verbal feedback received in public engagement, many individuals – local and non-local – articulated that the number of carparks would be

significantly inadequate for the number of prospective fishers travelling from across Victoria.

This feedback was of particular concern to landholders and residents, who were concerned about traffic and parking overflow onto the North Jindivick Road. Landholders and residents noted that the road is narrow and unsealed, making it inadequate for large vehicles towing vessels. Further it is noted that parking is not permitted on North Jindivick Road, leading to the issue that those who may have travelled long distances and planned to visit the reservoir may have to return home due to lack of parking.

Boat ramp location

A small number of residents, including those living in Neerim South and Jindivick, questioned the rationale for the location of the boat ramp at North Jindivick Road.

Tourism and business opportunities

Some landholders and residents in Neerim South provided positive feedback in public engagement regarding the tourism opportunities that may be felt by opening Tarago Reservoir.

Further, community groups and council welcomed Melbourne Water's renewed investment in Tarago Reservoir and upgraded water facilities and hoped to see further coordinated government investment in the Neerim South area.

Environmental and amenity

Several residents and landholders raised some concerns in formal submissions and public engagement around the proposed tree removal required for the boat ramp and car parking construction. The issue of tree removal was discussed in parallel with concern over littering and environmental degradation that may occur should recreational users not comply with the proposed rules and avoid enforcement by proposed security at the reservoir.

However, several residents and landholders were satisfied with the level of security proposed to monitor recreational activities at Tarago Reservoir, and were pleased to be provided access to appreciate this local environmental asset in their community.

Fishing

Several residents and landholders raised the proposed prohibition of shoreline fishing, citing equity concerns and the ability to visit the reservoir being restricted to people who owned a vessel.

However, other residents and broader individuals spoken to in public engagement activities acknowledged and agreed with the reasoning behind the shoreline fishing

prohibition, acknowledging water quality concerns and compliance with rules. Further, some residents familiar with the reservoir commented on the steepness of the banks around the reservoir and that this would practically limit onshore fishing.

Several fishers raised comments about the proposed fishing rules and were keen to see bait fishing prohibited and size limits imposed to encourage sustainable practices.

Table 4: Key issues and themes – broader Tarago project

Stakeholder group	Key issues and themes	Rating
All stakeholders	Concern regarding the proposed number of carparks and vehicle overflow onto North Jindivick Road	High
Residents	Environmental concerns and protection of water quality	Moderate
Nearby townships, business and tourism stakeholders	Tourism and business opportunities in Neerim South and broader area	Moderate
Community groups, residents	Potential additional investment in Neerim South community facilities	Moderate
Fishing	Concern about proposed fishing rules allowing bait fishing and no size limits	Low
Landholders, nearby townships, residents	Boat ramp location	Low

Influence and project response

As of April 2026, Melbourne Water is actively assessing all feedback received during the consultation program to inform decision making and meet regulatory requirements.

The formal March 2026 consultation program, and prior feedback received by stakeholders and community on the broader project, will be considered in a revised version of the Recreational Area Management Plan. Certain elements may be altered based on stakeholder feedback, yet some elements will be restricted from change due to water quality and operational considerations.

Elements of the Waterways Rules, including vessel and motor size, may be influenced. Written feedback received on the Waterways Rules will be submitted as part of a report to Safe Transport Victoria and considered as part of statutory decision-making processes. A decision on the Waterways Rules will be published in late 2026.

Feedback related to the design of the boat ramp, car parks and toilets has been provided to Better Boating Victoria. Feedback relating to North Jindivick Road has been provided to Baw Baw Shire Council and feedback relating to fishing rules has been provided to the Victorian Fisheries Authority.

This multi-faceted approach ensures that the final project outcomes appropriately balance community input with regulatory requirements and operational constraints.

Evaluation of engagement

Melbourne Water undertook an evaluation of the March 2026 consultation program to assess the effectiveness of engagement activities, the extent to which engagement objectives were met, and compliance with statutory consultation requirements. The evaluation considered both quantitative measures, such as participation levels, social media engagement and how many formal submissions were received, and qualitative insights, including the diversity of stakeholders engaged, the quality and relevance of feedback received, and the level of community understanding demonstrated through submissions and engagement interactions.

Overall, the engagement program was effective in meeting its primary objectives. The consultation achieved broad reach across both landholders and residents, and also trying to reach a wider Victorian audience through digital engagement and social media.

Feedback received from landholders, residents, community groups and stakeholders demonstrated a strong level of awareness of the project and its constraints, as well as an understanding of the purpose of the draft Recreational Area Management Plan and proposed Waterway Rules. However, it is noted that the delineation of both frameworks was blurred for many stakeholders and community, which was made clear in both conversations during the engagement period, and also due to the mixed nature of issues raised in formal submissions.

Ongoing evaluation was undertaken during the consultation period by the Tarago project team to ensure the engagement met the both requirements of the *Marine Safety Act 2010* (Vic) for proposed Waterway Rules, and Melbourne Water and DEECA requirements for the draft Recreational Area Management Plan under the Water Recreational Area Regulations 2023.

A review of engagement activities identified that the use of online information sessions and in-person engagement supported accessibility and inclusivity, allowing stakeholders to participate in a manner that suited their preferences. Targeted engagement with key stakeholders complemented broader public consultation, ensuring that both local perspectives and broader user interests were captured. The use of paid social media was effective in extending reach to the broader Victorian community, including a younger audience not reached through public engagement activities.

Opportunities for improvement were also identified. These included the potential for earlier communication of project constraints and negotiable items to manage community expectations, and consideration of additional ways to support participation from stakeholders less likely to engage through digital channels.

Next steps

The next steps for the Tarago management frameworks include:

- The submission of Melbourne Water's final proposed Recreational Area Management Plan to DEECA for review and noting. This must be submitted prior to the project opening for on-water recreation.
- The submission of the consultation summary and recommendations report for the proposed Waterways Rules to Safe Transport Victoria. The determination of the Waterways Rules for Tarago Reservoir must be made prior to the project opening for on-water recreation.
- Publication of Melbourne Water's response to consultation and feedback.

For the broader Tarago project, the next steps include:

- Finalisation of the boat ramp and supporting infrastructure (carparks, toilets and gates) design, a process led by Better Boating Victoria.
- Award of the construction tender to construct the boat ramp and supporting infrastructure.
- Construction focused engagement commencing with landholders, residents and key stakeholders.
- A public awareness campaign to update stakeholders and the broader Victorian community on the project.

Melbourne Water will maintain ongoing contact with stakeholders and community through updates to the Tarago Let's Talk webpage and targeted emails and meetings with key stakeholders, including landholders and nearby communities, over the remainder of 2026.

Further information

If you would like further information on the contents of this report, please contact Melbourne Water on:

- Phone: 131 771
- Email: enquiry@melbournewater.com.au

Appendix

Public notice – 3 March 2026 Warragul Gazette



Expressions Of Interest

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST
SCHOOL MAINTENANCE PERSON

Drouin West Primary School is seeking a Maintenance Person to undertake tasks such as basic carpentry, minor repairs, painting and gardening on a invoiced/as required basis.

Suitable person must meet the Department of Education's WWCC and insurance requirements and hold a current ABN.

Enquiries to drouin.west.ps@education.vic.gov.au OR 5625 1971.

Previous similar experience/references desirable.

Public Notices

Melbourne Water — PUBLIC NOTICE

Have your say on the draft Recreation Area Management Plan and proposed Waterway Rules for Tarago Reservoir.

Project background

As part of an election commitment, the Victorian Government has announced that Melbourne Water will open Tarago Reservoir for on-water recreational use, specifically for fishing. To support this, Melbourne Water has prepared a draft Recreational Area Management Plan to provide clear guidelines for managing recreational activities at Tarago Reservoir while minimising impacts on water quality, the environment, and Melbourne Water and Gippsland Water assets and operations.

Another important component of the opening of the Tarago Reservoir to fishing and on-water recreation is the implementation of Waterway Rules. These rules, also known as the Vessel Operating and Zoning Rules (VOZR) have been drafted to support the intended use of the waterway.

The proposed rules at Tarago Reservoir include:

- A 5 knot speed limit;
- Areas that are 'Prohibited to Vessels' around infrastructure in water or protruding into the waterway;
- Prohibition of vessels equipped with combustion engines;
- Prohibition of vessels equipped with electric engines exceeding 40 pounds of thrust, 1 horsepower, or 750 watts;
- Prohibition of activities that increase the risk of primary contact with the water (e.g. personal watercraft, sailboards and other wind powered vessels, stand up paddle boards, float tubes and Soft Inflatable Boats or similar).

Aids to navigation, signage and educational materials will be produced to support the rules and assist in raising awareness for users of the waterway.

Public Consultation

Melbourne Water is inviting feedback on the draft Recreational Area Management Plan and the proposed Waterway Rules. Public consultation will be open from Monday 2 March to Tuesday 31 March 2026. Interested parties can access the proposed rules and draft Recreational Area Management Plan and submit feedback by visiting: www.letstalk.melbournewater.com.au/recreation-tarago-reservoir

All feedback must be received in writing by close of business 31 March 2026. You may use the feedback form on the above listed webpage; complete a hard copy feedback form available at Algie Hall, 213 Main Neerim Road, Neerim South, 3831 or the Neerim South Post Office, 123 Main Neerim Road, Neerim South; or provide a written submission to: Melbourne Water, PO Box 4342, Melbourne VIC 3001.

More information

If you would like more information on the draft Recreational Area Management Plan or proposed Waterway Rules, you can contact Melbourne Water:

-Phone: 131 771
-Email: enquiry@melbournewater.com.au

Public Notices

Monthly Support Group
West Gippsland

Jesuit Social Services — Support After Suicide

For those who have lost a loved one to suicide

This is a support group providing a space to connect with others bereaved by suicide who understand and care.

Meets first Thursday of each month

The Courthouse Restaurant, Warragul.
7-9pm
Next meeting: March 5.

For more information contact Chris Hobbs 0424 258 466 or David Hobbs 0427 235 470.

ALL WELCOME

Situations Vacant

Apply Now!

St Paul's

St Paul's Anglican Grammar School is seeking applications for the following positions;

English / Humanities Teacher
Warragul Secondary School
Part-time, ongoing contract

School Psychologist – Also suitable for Counsellor, Social Worker, Youth Worker
Warragul or Traralgon Campus
Part-time, fixed term contract

See full position descriptions and apply at stpaulsags.vic.edu.au

Wanted To Rent

ACCOMMODATION REQUIRED

Health professional (semi retired).

Country gent seeks farmhouse in a lease or caretaker role (non smoker) for permanent residence in Warragul, Drouin, Trafalgar or Neerim areas. Thank you!

Phone Mike on 0406 356 822.

Situations Vacant

NOTICE TO EMPLOYMENT ADVERTISERS

A great deal of unnecessary hardship and difficulty can be caused to job seekers by misleading advertisements placed in the employment section. Placing misleading job ads is also an offence against the Trade Practices or Fair Trading Acts

Please give a job title, clear description of job and basis on income.

Situations Vacant

Warragul & District Specialist School

Teachers Wanted

Warragul and District Specialist School is currently seeking passionate and dedicated Casual Relief Teachers and Classroom Teachers to join our supportive and dynamic team.

We are looking for educators who are committed to making a genuine difference in the lives of students with diverse learning needs. Special education experience is not essential; however flexibility, a willingness to learn and a positive attitude are a must. Both Primary and Secondary teachers are welcome to apply.

Please email all enquiries and CV to: warragul.district.ss@education.vic.gov.au

Situations Vacant

Administration Officer

Applications are invited from suitably experienced persons for the part time 0.32 FTE (Thursday & Friday) ongoing position of **administration officer** to commence on 26/03/26 (negotiable). This is an Education Support Employee Category B Level 2 position under the Victorian Catholic Education Multi Enterprise Agreement 2013.

The successful applicant will have a demonstrated commitment to Catholic education and to the safety and wellbeing of children.

The successful candidate will be appropriately qualified and/or experienced, demonstrate enthusiasm and ability to provide the appropriate expertise in a range of administrative abilities and be able to provide assistance to the Principal whilst supporting and respecting the ethos of the school and its environment.

The successful applicant will be subject to a Working with Children Check and a National Police Record Check. Training in First Aid is preferable but not necessary.

How to apply:

A detailed position description and application requirements are available by accessing the St. Joseph's School Trafalgar website at **www.trafalgar.catholic.edu.au**.

Applications close: 12/03/26.

St Joseph's School community promotes the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all children.

Situations Vacant

Want to employ a local?

Advertise your Situation Vacant in the Gazette Classifieds.

Phone: 5623 5666
Email: admin@warragulgazette.com.au

97 Queen Street, Warragul

Situations Vacant

Orbost Regional Health

Situation Vacant
Residential Care Nurse Unit Manager
Full Time

Orbost Regional Health is seeking applications from individuals to fulfil the position of Residential Care Nurse Unit Manager. The Residential Care NUM will provide leadership in all aspects of partnering with residents in their care, including; client relations, staff scheduling, oversight of the delivery of safe and high-quality systems, ensuring compliance with current residential care governance, assistance in staff development and performance review and response to complex issues that arise in the residential care facility.

Successful applicants must possess:

- Registered Nurse with current AHPRA registration
- Postgraduate Diploma in gerontology nursing or equivalent (or working towards)
- Demonstrated relevant management experience, including sound financial, human resource and strategic management skills.

If you are interested in applying for the position of **Residential Care Nurse Unit Manager**, please download the appropriate position description form at www.orbostregionalhealth.com.au/employment-careers or contact the Human Resources Department (03) 5154 6651; email: humanresources@orh.com.au

You must address the key selection criteria as set out in the Position Description when preparing your application.

Contact Kylie Foltin, Director Clinical and Aged Care Services on 5154 6629 for further information regarding this position.

Your application **MUST** include the following:

- A letter of introduction with your full name, address and contact details, job title as listed in the advertisement and address the key selection criteria as set out in the position description.
- A copy of your current curriculum vitae including qualifications, professional affiliations, registrations, employment history, immunisation status, police check, working with childrens check, driver's licence and the names and contact details of at least two current/recent professional referees.

Closing date for applications: 20th March 2026

Orbost Regional Health values: Respect, Integrity, Compassion, Excellence and Community.

ORH is an equal employment opportunity employer. We strive for an inclusive working environment for employees from a variety of backgrounds. We welcome applications from Aboriginal people, workers of all ages, people with disability, people who identify as LGBTQIA+ and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Public Notices

Baw Baw Prostate Cancer Support Group

A safe and confidential opportunity for men to share their prostate cancer journey.

- Share experiences of treatments and managing side effects
- Discuss the possible impact on partners, family, and work
- Learn from guest speakers including Medical Professionals
- Find reassurance and fellowship in an easy going, friendly environment
- Learn from those who may have already experienced what you are currently going through
- Assist men & partners on the journey

Meet second Wednesday of the month 2.00pm

Warragul Sporting & Social Club
55-57 Victoria Street
Warragul Vic 3820

For more information contact:
Linton Blackwell Convenor
0419 582 665
parrolin@gmail.com

Proudly affiliated with Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia

CHOOSE YOUR FUTURE

Don't settle for ordinary. Earn while you learn.

Start your career in automotive TODAY.

APPLY NOW

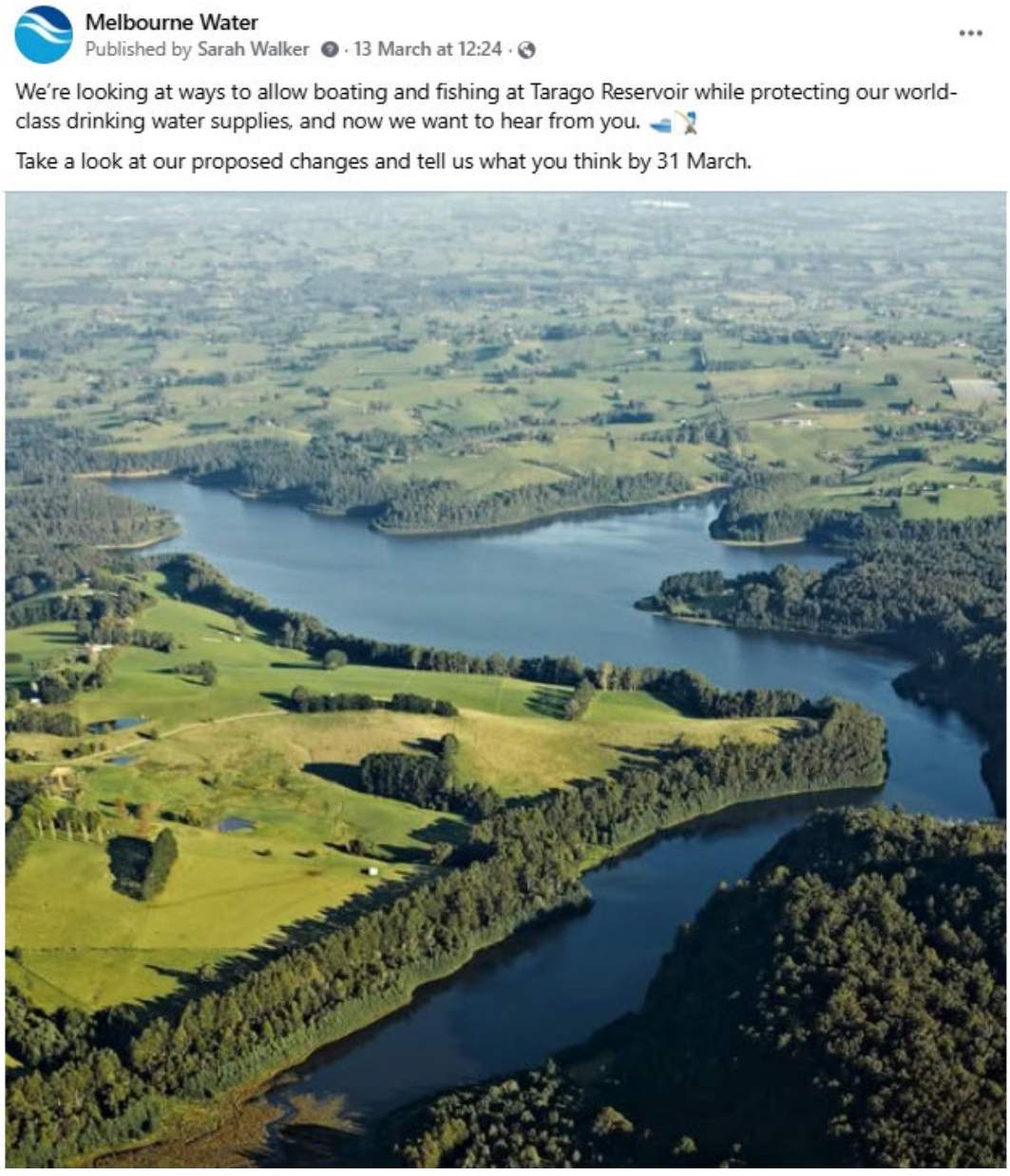
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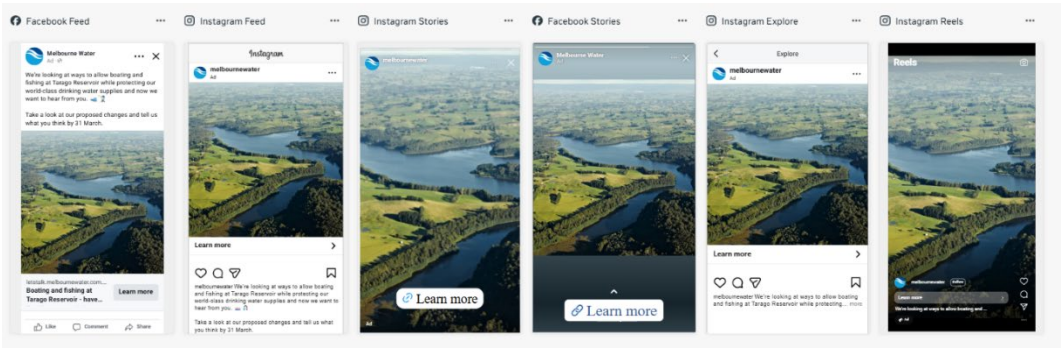
autoapprenticeships.com.au

Page 58 WARRAGUL AND DROUIN GAZETTE March 3 2026

Social media

Meta - Facebook and Instagram paid campaign





Community engagement at Rokeby Market

