

## Lock in targets for sustainable water use

### The problem

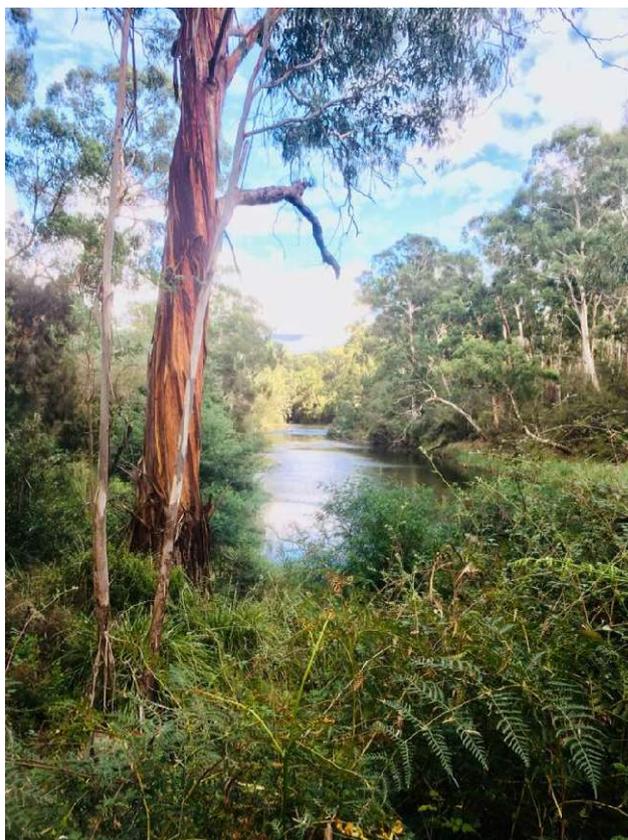
Southern Victoria's rivers are in poor health. The more water we take for human needs, the more our rivers suffer. Flow patterns are disrupted, water quality declines and river critters are starved of food. Combined with the impacts of climate change, some rivers are heading into a degraded state from which they will not recover, with localised extinctions already happening.

Aquifers are faring little better. The Victorian Auditor-General has found that we have no way of knowing if our use of groundwater is sustainable in the long-term. What we do know is that during dry times groundwater use increases and this means less water flowing through springs, creeks and rivers.

### The solution

If our rivers are to have a future as rivers, living entities connected from source to sea, we must take less water from them and reduce extraction to a sustainable level. We call on the next Victorian government to:

- **Develop a mechanism to reduce bulk entitlements** held by water corporations as other supply options are developed to guarantee the return of water to rivers and reduce extraction to long-term sustainable levels.
- **Reform caps on extraction and diversion limits across southern Victoria.** Caps on extraction are set through an outdated methodology that is not designed to protect the environment and does not prepare for climate change impacts. There is no existing methodology for setting groundwater caps.
- **Establish a comprehensive program to manage the degrading impacts of interception activities,** especially farm dams, using a full suite of tools including water supply protection measures, targeted decommissioning and education.
- **Set science-based targets to preserve water landscapes.** Rivers need flow targets that consider system resilience and Indigenous cultural knowledge. These can serve as the basis for identifying environmentally sustainable levels of take.



*The Concerned Waterways Alliance is a network of community groups from across southern Victoria from Gippsland to the Otways, united in our desire to see our rivers functioning as they should, as whole living entities, resilient and flourishing in the face of climate change.*

*Authorised by: The Waterways Network, 1a Foam St, Merricks Beach, VIC 3926*