

Wetlands: YOUR LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

In Australia and around the world, wetlands are now recognised as some of our most valuable ecosystems. They are a distinctive part of Victoria's Western District and are protected by legislation.

How are wetlands protected by law?

It is an offence to damage or destroy wetlands under Local, State and Federal Government laws. These laws exist to protect wetlands, their water assets and natural features, and the native species which reside in them. The type of wetland and its significance will determine the level of protection.

Local and State legislation protecting wetlands:

- *Environment Protection Act 1970*
- *Planning & Environment Act 1987*
- *Flora & Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*
- *Water Act 1989*
- *Catchment & Land Protection Act 1994*
- *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (updated 2018)*

Federal legislation protecting wetlands:

- *Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*
- *Water Act 2007*

Threats to wetlands

Some of our wetland systems are no longer working naturally because human activity has changed the way water flows in or out of them. They are often threatened by a lack of water, physical change from development, pollution, and poor or uninformed land management decisions.

DAMAGING A WETLAND CAN RESULT IN FINES UP TO \$150,000 AND A REQUIREMENT TO REINSTATE THE IMPACTED AREA.

ACTIONS WHICH MAY HAVE LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- ✗ CROPPING A WETLAND
- ✗ DRAINING AND/OR EXTRACTING WATER
- ✗ PHYSICALLY CHANGING A WETLAND WITH MACHINERY
- ✗ DUMPING WASTE MATERIAL
- ✗ DIVERTING ADDITIONAL WATER INTO A WETLAND

HOW TO AVOID BREAKING THE LAW

Do not undertake any work in an area which may be a wetland until you have checked all the details!

- ✓ CHECK WITH YOUR LOCAL COUNCIL
- ✓ CHECK WITH GLENELG HOPKINS CMA
- ✓ CONSULT WITH DELWP
- ✓ USE ONLINE MAPS AND AERIAL PHOTOS
- ✓ USE LOCAL INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE

Did you know?

Migrating water birds visit Australia's wetlands every year from as far away as China and Alaska

Wetlands have profound significance and cultural value for Aboriginal people



Wetlands: ARE PROTECTED BY LAW

- Seasonal herbaceous wetlands are critically endangered
- International agreements exist to protect wetlands and the migratory birds which use them
- Diverting additional water into a wetland can be just as detrimental as draining water out of a wetland
- Wetlands are protected by the same range of legislation that protects remnant vegetation and native forests
- Wetlands are protected for their natural, environmental and cultural values



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