

Strategic Plan 2022-27

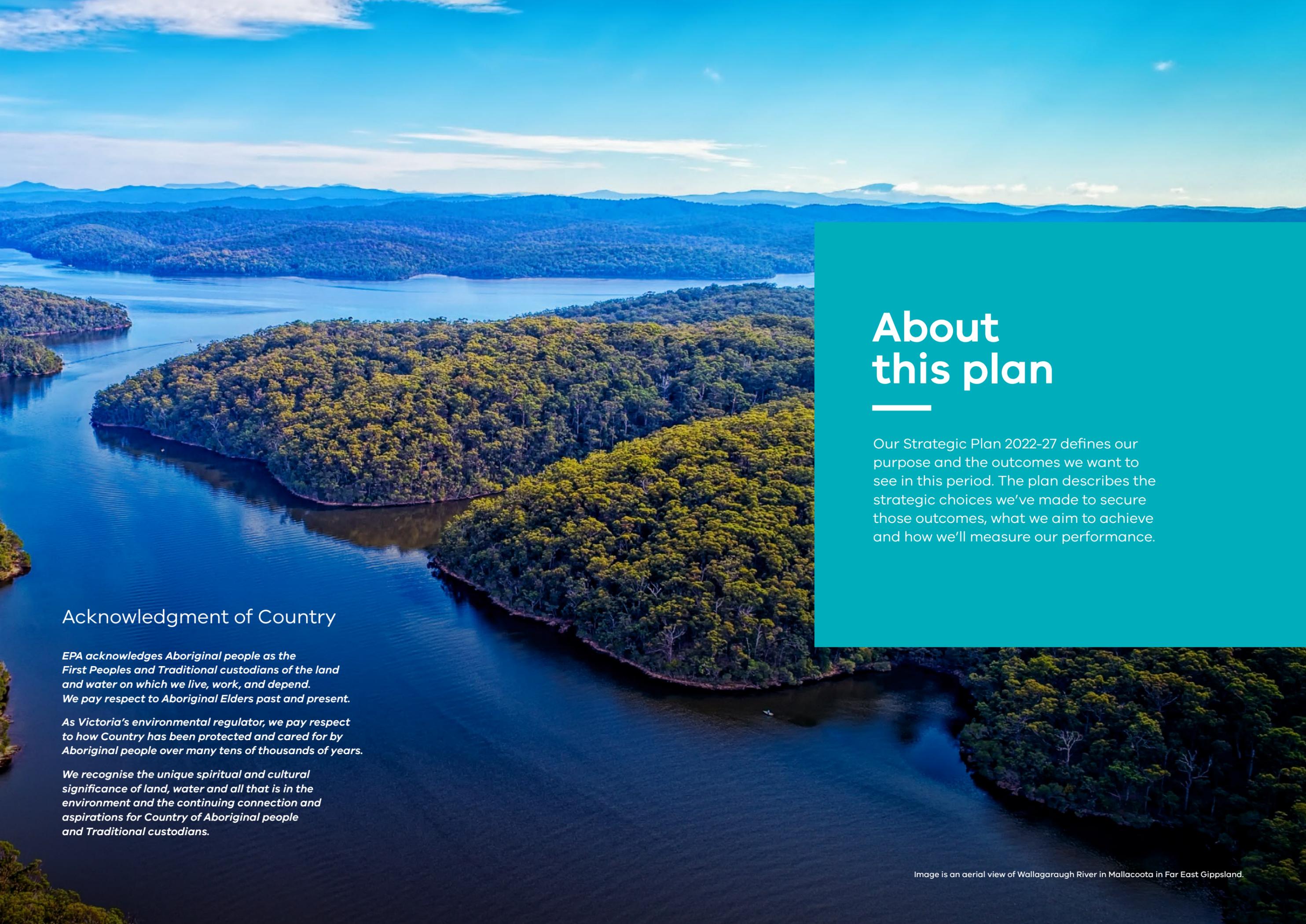
Environment Protection Authority Victoria



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About this plan

Our Strategic Plan 2022-27 defines our purpose and the outcomes we want to see in this period. The plan describes the strategic choices we've made to secure those outcomes, what we aim to achieve and how we'll measure our performance.

Acknowledgment of Country

EPA acknowledges Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Traditional custodians of the land and water on which we live, work, and depend. We pay respect to Aboriginal Elders past and present.

As Victoria's environmental regulator, we pay respect to how Country has been protected and cared for by Aboriginal people over many tens of thousands of years.

We recognise the unique spiritual and cultural significance of land, water and all that is in the environment and the continuing connection and aspirations for Country of Aboriginal people and Traditional custodians.

About us

Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) was established in 1971 as Victoria's environmental regulator.

EPA is an independent statutory authority, with a Governing Board appointed by the Governor-in-Council on the recommendation of the Minister for Environment and Climate Action.

EPA's role is to prevent and reduce the harmful effects of pollution and waste on Victorians and the environment.



Our purpose

Protecting the health of our communities and environment.

Our values

Every member of the EPA team, in all aspects of our work, live the organisational values of:



Integrity

We do the right things and encourage others to do the same.



Courage

We re empowered to step up to our purpose.



Connection

We re unified, inclusive, transparent and open.



Excellence

Doing the very best we can is our priority.



Tenacity

We re focused, determined and accountable.

We'll also model the Victorian Public Sector values of responsiveness, impartiality, accountability, respect, leadership and human rights.

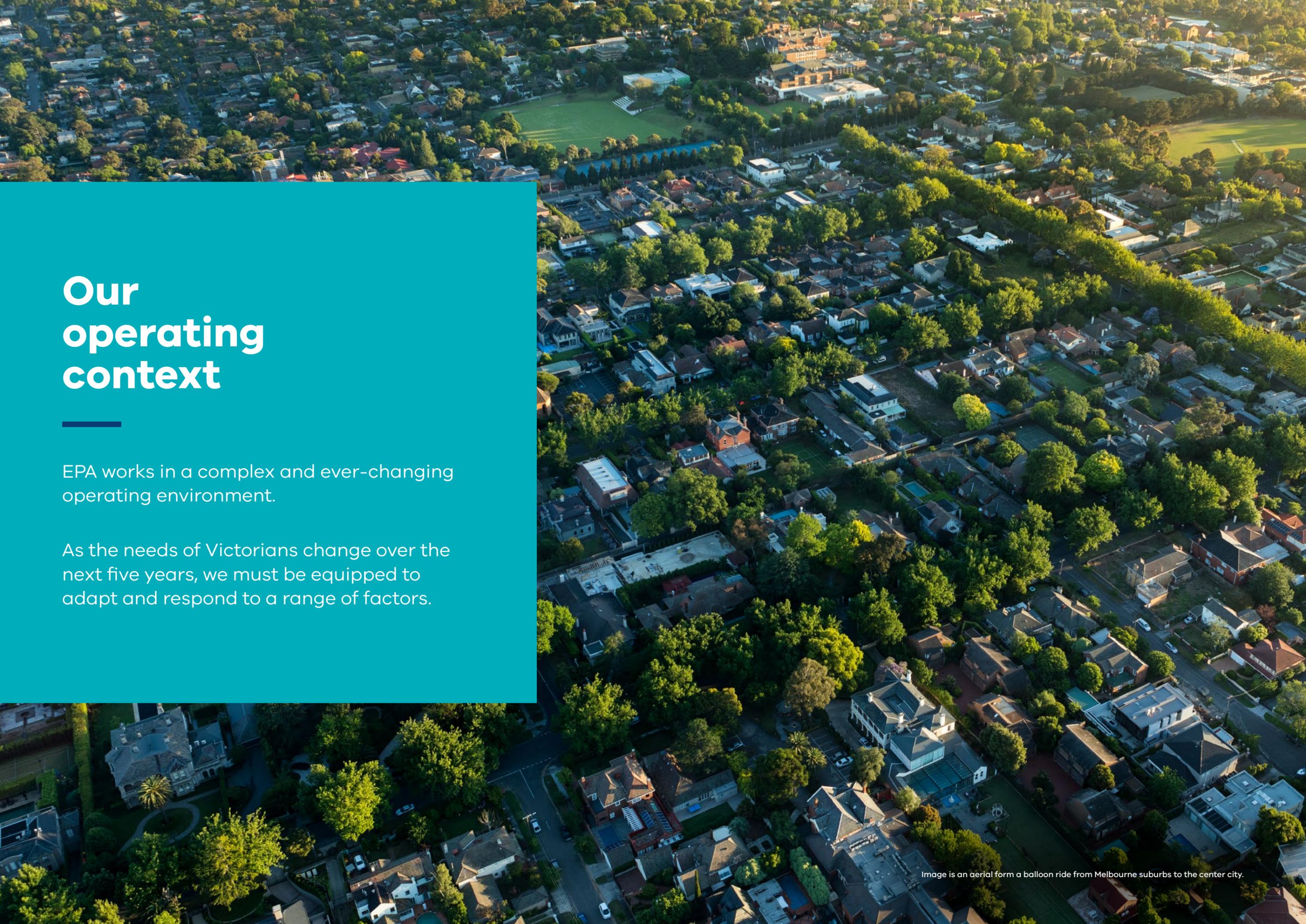


Alignment to Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were set up in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly to provide a blueprint for achieving a better and more sustainable future for all.

While we contribute to all 17 SDGs, our work at EPA mostly aligns to the following global goals:

3. Good health & well-being 	6. Clean water & sanitation
7. Affordable & clean energy 	9. Industry, innovation & infrastructure
11. Sustainable cities & communities 	12. Responsible consumption & production
13. Climate action 	14. Life below water
15. Life on land 	

An aerial photograph showing a dense residential area with many houses, trees, and streets. In the background, a large green field and some larger buildings are visible, suggesting a transition from suburbs to a city center. The lighting is bright, indicating a sunny day.

Our operating context

EPA works in a complex and ever-changing operating environment.

As the needs of Victorians change over the next five years, we must be equipped to adapt and respond to a range of factors.

Climate change

Climate change is a global challenge - with rising temperatures and more extreme weather events. In Victoria, this means a warmer and drier future with more frequent and intense heatwaves, bushfires and storms.

These events often create significant pollution and waste issues that can also impact on the health of communities.

The Victorian Government has legislated a long-term target of net zero emissions by 2050, and through its Climate Change Strategy, has set interim targets for 2025 and 2030. Achieving these targets is a shared responsibility across all sectors of the economy - governments, industry and the community.

EPA expects effective action and is committed to playing its part in implementing the Victorian Government's direction on climate change. While EPA doesn't regulate all the sources that contribute to climate change, we have a responsibility to consider the effects in our regulatory decision making and must act to ensure the harm from industrial emissions - including greenhouse gases - is eliminated or minimised as far as reasonably practicable.

The economy

A clean environment and healthy communities are critical to Victoria's economy, and the nature and sources of environmental harm are changing as the economy evolves. Pollution and waste will increasingly arise from different sources, with the impacts of new and emerging industries and production techniques not yet fully clear.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has also had a significant impact on the Victorian economy since early 2020. Government investment in services and infrastructure continues to support the economy, while private spending is increasingly driving economic growth, with business investment recovering strongly.

With significant investment underway, EPA's permissioning processes (the use of tools like licences and permits) must be timely and effective in supporting economic growth while preventing harm to communities and the environment. EPA's expert and scientific advice on land use planning and developments will also be important to reducing the impacts of pollution and waste.

Aboriginal self-determination

Traditional Owners are recognised in Victoria as the First Peoples, through a range of legal and policy instruments that support self-determination and their continuing responsibilities to care for Country.

The Victorian Government is working in partnership with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians to advance a treaty or treaties that will provide a foundation for a new, positive relationship, and enable true self-determination for Victoria's First Peoples.

EPA must continue to build partnerships with Victoria's Traditional Owners and ensure our work is founded on the principles of self-determination. In doing so, we need to make sure that our staff are culturally competent, and that Traditional Owner cultural knowledge is part of how we protect our communities and environment from the harmful impacts of pollution and waste.

Digital disruption and transformation

Technologies such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, connected devices and robotics are rapidly reshaping our world.

These new technologies can impact traditional markets and the way regulation is performed, bringing both risks and opportunities for the management of pollution and waste.

These changes will require EPA to expand our ability to investigate and manage the risks of emerging chemicals and new technologies, while effectively influencing environmental standards to keep pace with new opportunities and threats.

At the same time, EPA must take advantage of new technologies to improve our reach and effectiveness, including the timeliness of our decision making and increasing our ability to monitor and communicate risks to communities and the environment.



Population change and urbanisation

While Victoria's population fell in 2020-21 due to the impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the state's population is projected to reach 7.9 million people in 2032, growing by an average of 120,000 people each year - a rate of 1.6 per cent per annum.

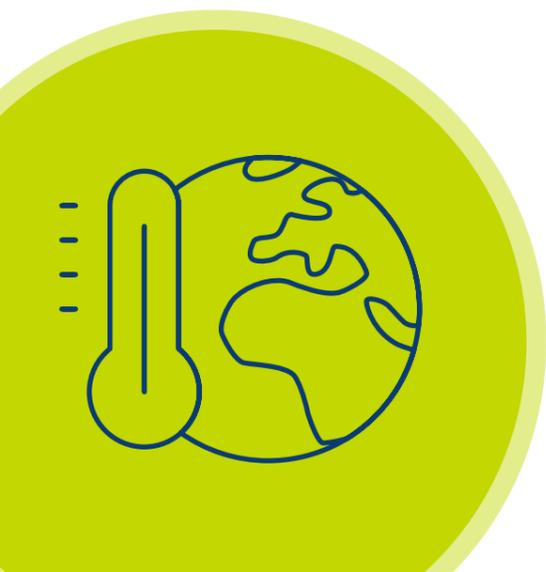
Greater Melbourne is expected to grow by about 1 million people, with Victoria's regions expected to grow from 1.5 million to 1.75 million by 2032.

This growth will place greater pressure on our environment, as well as demand for housing, transport and consumer products that will generate higher levels of emissions and waste.

EPA will need to work with communities, industry, all levels of government, co-regulators and other partners to ensure population growth doesn't cause unacceptable risks, and that appropriate controls are put in place to protect communities and the environment from pollution and waste. This includes strengthening the circular economy and enabling appropriate infrastructure development.



Greater Melbourne is expected to grow by about 1 million people by 2032



The outcomes we want to see

By 2027 we want to see the following outcomes:



Our environment is cleaner and communities are healthier



All Victorians reduce their environmental risks



We have impact and influence



The choices we've made

Recognising our operating context and drawing on science and our regulatory expertise, we've made strategic choices to set us on the path to the outcomes we want to see:



We focus on air, water, land, and noise pollution that causes the greatest risk of harm and we drive meaningful improvement.

We work to understand and respond to current and emerging issues through science, data and intelligence.

We'll be practical and solution focused to ensure we have the right approach for each circumstance.



We embed the environment protection framework, ensuring the general environmental duty and other duties are widely understood and implemented.

We're consistent, transparent and proportionate in holding polluters to account.

We work with communities, industry and businesses so they act to prevent harm to the environment and human health.



We build effective partnerships that amplify our knowledge, reach and presence.

We respect the knowledge and cultural values of Traditional Owners. We seek to learn from and include Traditional Owner cultural values as part of our work.

We employ our full range of regulatory capabilities to prevent harm by location and sector and at scale.



What we're aiming to achieve

To see the outcomes we want by 2027, we're aiming to achieve the following:



- ✓ Improved air and water quality.
- ✓ Reduced land contamination and noise pollution.
- ✓ Businesses have appropriate permissions in place.



- ✓ Increased understanding among communities and businesses of their environmental obligations.
- ✓ Increased adoption of environmental and human health risk controls.



- ✓ Industrial waste disposed at a lawful place.
- ✓ Reduction in repeat polluters.
- ✓ Increased proactive detection of environmental crime.
- ✓ Effective internal review and assurance processes that drive continuous improvement.





Image is an aerial shot of the Yallourn Power Station in Gippsland, Victoria.

The drivers of our success

To meet our purpose and deliver for Victorians, we'll draw on key strengths of our organisation:

- ✓ Our people are our most valuable asset. We prioritise their safety and wellbeing, creating a positive culture and a great place to work.
- ✓ We're clear about our role and accountable for our actions.
- ✓ We use science, data and intelligence to inform our actions.
- ✓ We engage early, often, and respectfully with those affected by our decisions, seeking to understand their aspirations and concerns.
- ✓ We're a learning organisation, committed to continuous improvement.
- ✓ We use technology to be effective and efficient in our work.
- ✓ We're agile and responsive, leaning into challenges.
- ✓ We build appropriate partnerships with industry to achieve compliance with the environment protection framework.

Our performance measures and targets

To monitor our progress in achieving the outcomes we want to see, we've established performance measures and targets.

We'll continue to improve these measures and targets over time.

Performance measure	2022 baseline	2024 target	2027 target	Notes
 Number of days that the maximum concentration standards for one or more of nitrogen dioxide, ozone, PM10 and PM2.5 is exceeded	15	0	0	1
Percentage of monitoring sites that meet long-term microbial water quality standards	69%	83%	93%	2
Percentage of high risk contaminated land sites under active management	15%	50%	95%	3
Number of premises required to take remedial action because of noise	50	42	35	4
 Percentage of pollution reports requiring a field response by EPA due to possible human health and/or environmental impacts	9%	7.2%	4.5%	5
Percentage of permissioned businesses that have appropriate risk controls implemented at their site or premises	70%	90%	95%	6
Percentage of the Victorian community that know about the general environmental duty	16%	60%	80%	7
 Percentage of the Victorian community that are aware of EPA	56%	75%	95%	8
Percentage of the Victorian community that trust EPA	51%	70%	90%	9
Number of citations of EPA science	850	935	1,275	10

Notes:

- Maximum concentration standards are defined in the National Environmental Protection (Ambient Air Quality) Measure. Measured by EPA's general condition monitors and local condition monitors and excludes incident air monitors which are set up to respond to a major pollution event.
- Based on measurements undertaken at 36 monitoring sites in Port Phillip Bay in 'dry weather'. Long-term microbial water quality standards are defined in the Environmental Reference Standard and are for primary contact recreation.
- Measured by assessment of notifications received by EPA from a person in control or management of 'notifiable contaminated land' as defined in Part 2.1 of the Environment Protection Regulations 2021. High risk means CLARA Triage Score Category 5 or 6. Active Management means have appropriate management and/or regulatory controls in place.
- Based on remedial notices issued following an EPA inspection of a site. Remedial notices issued for non-compliance with the general environmental duty, unreasonable and aggravated noise provisions in the *Environment Protection Act 2017*.
- Based on a three-year rolling average of the proportion of pollution reports received by EPA that are categorised as Priority 3 (planned response), Priority 4 (field response with 24 hours) or Priority 5 (immediate response) triage categories.
- Based on assessments undertaken by EPA authorised officers. Permissioned business means sole trader or company issued a license or permit by EPA.
- Measured by The RepTrak Company sentiment survey where respondents that are aware of EPA reported a high level of knowledge of the general environmental duty.
- Measured by The RepTrak Company sentiment survey where respondents were familiar with EPA at a level beyond name recognition.
- Measured by The RepTrak Company sentiment survey where respondents that are aware of EPA strongly agree (score 6 or 7) with the statement 'EPA is an organisation I trust'.
- Citations in scientific publications over a five year period as measured by Google Scholar.

How we'll implement our Strategic Plan



Performance measurement

Budget Paper 3 (BP3) provides an overview of the priority goods and services funded by the Victorian Government and delivered by departments and agencies to support the government's strategic objectives. EPA's performance is reported against the measures and targets in the BP3 service output 'Statutory Activities and Environment Protection'.

To complement these output measures and targets and monitor our progress against the outcomes we want to see in the next five years, we've also identified outcome measures and targets. We'll improve these outcome measures and targets over time.

Working with others

We work collaboratively with others to achieve our purpose and contribute to broader initiatives that improve our communities and environment.



Victorian communities

We work with communities so they understand the condition of their local environment by providing information and involving them in citizen science programs. We actively seek information from the community to assist us in targeting illegal activities and value community input into issues of concern and decisions that could impact them.



Industry, business and workers

We join with industry, businesses and workers to achieve environmentally safe and sustainable economic growth, and to identify best practice approaches to prevent harm from pollution and waste.



State and federal governments

We work with governments to identify emerging issues and provide advice on national standards, policy options, land use planning and major projects to address risks of harm to human health and the environment.



Universities and other research institutions

We partner with universities and other research institutions to expand our scientific knowledge base and ensure our regulatory decisions are underpinned by the best available science.



Co-regulators

We work with other regulators and enforcement agencies to identify and eliminate risks of harm to communities and the environment, improve our regulatory practice and reduce burden on regulated entities by being more connected and efficient.



Local Government

We team up with local government to address local environmental and public health issues, including through the Officers for the Protection of the Local Environment (OPLE) program.



Non-government organisations

We engage with non-government organisations and other interest groups to understand and gain insights about environmental and human health issues to inform our work.

Annual planning and reporting

Each financial year, EPA produces an Annual Delivery Plan describing what we plan to deliver that year, aligned to our strategic outcomes and priority initiatives. We publish our Annual Delivery Plan on our website.

We report on our performance each financial year in our Annual Report, which is tabled in the Victorian Parliament and published on our website.



Image is an aerial view of Tooradin boat ramp, on the foreshore of Victoria's South Gippsland.



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