



The *Winton Wetlands@Benalla Master Plan* (referred to as the Master Plan), outlines the vision for the future development of tourism, recreation, community, education and research facilities at the Wetlands. The Master Plan contains implementation plans and high-level financial analysis of various proposals for a potential \$57 million development project in the Wetlands over ten years.

The Master Plan balances the *Restoration & Monitoring Strategic Plan*, which describes how the wetland environment will be restored and allowed to regenerate for the enjoyment of future generations, a core function of the Winton Wetlands Committee of Management (WWCoM).

With the planned infrastructure and amenities of the Master Plan put in place, the Wetlands is imagined to evolve to be an major attraction for bird watchers, star gazers, bush walkers, cyclists, campers, wildlife lovers and photographers, as well as people wishing to experience the vastness and beauty of the location.

► Development Planning

To fulfil its potential as a destination that many people will want to visit, the Winton Wetlands clearly needs enhancement and infrastructure to provide both natural attraction and the amenities and which together create a major nature-based tourism destination. The *Winton Wetlands@ Benalla Master Plan* is a two-stage guide for the development of the Winton Wetlands over ten years.

► Stage 1

The first stage involves the development of recreational facilities for local and regional communities, with the construction of infrastructure at key locations around the Reserve. This will include shade structures; camping grounds; picnic and BBQ areas; lookouts; access to key locations within the Wetlands; access to areas of water; development of a general hub store/cafe and major children's playground; interpretive/ educational signage and structures; walking trails, and bike paths.

Significantly, there will be a key connection point into the Winton Wetlands with the proposed Inlet Channel bicycle trail. This bicycle trail will effectively extend from Benalla into a network of bike trails within the Wetlands site, and in turn

link externally into the existing high country bicycle network, including the popular Murray to the Mountains Rail Trail.

► Stage 2

The objective of the second stage is to create the major tourism destination for nature-based activities in North East Victoria. The Winton Wetlands is envisioned as the backdrop for a range of tourist activities such as guided tours of the Reserve, concerts and events, tethered balloon rides, night canoeing, guided fauna tours, a centre for culture and history, sound and light shows, local food and wine as well as a range of accommodation options. There are many other activities that may be considered depending upon the available resources and community interest in future years.

A significant element of these visitor experiences is the telling of stories that convey the rich cultural heritage of this place including Indigenous, post-European settlement and the pioneer era. For example, the Yorta Yorta Nation has expressed its desire for Indigenous cultural values to be given prominence in future development of the Reserve, and involvement in the curating and sharing of Indigenous stories. Another example is Ned Kelly's story, in which many people are interested.

► Funding and Investment

It is estimated that Stage 1 will utilise \$5 million of the funding held by the WWCoM, and an additional \$2 million sourced through partnerships, funding and co-investment. Stage 2 is budgeted to consume a further \$9 million of funding held by the WWCoM as development capital, which the Committee plans to leverage to obtain up to \$16 million in matching funding or investment capital.

The Committee acknowledges that execution of the Master Plan is a series of substantial challenges. However, with the ongoing support of project stakeholders and strong local community support, the Committee are confident that the Winton Wetlands will achieve its vision for a major nature-based tourist attraction within a five-year period. The key to its success is project partnerships with the local community and with governments – local, state and federal – as well as those to be developed with commercial investors. The WWCoM encourages everyone to get involved in this exciting and unique restoration project which is happening in our own 'backyard'.