Ken Stewart works with Indigenous stakeholders across northern Victoria to ensure Aboriginal knowledge, cultural values and perspectives are incorporated into the The Living Murray program.

The two Icon Sites that Ken works on are among the most culturally significant in Victoria – the Hattah Lakes Icon Site and the Victorian component of the Chowilla Floodplain (Lindsay-Wallpolla Islands) Icon Site. The involvement of Indigenous people is vital for the success of The Living Murray program in northern Victoria.

What is The Living Murray program?
The Living Murray program is an initiative of the Murray Darling Basin Commission and is Australia’s largest river restoration project. The first stage of the program focusses on six Icon Sites:

- Hattah Lakes
- Chowilla Floodplain (Lindsay-Wallpolla Islands)
- Barmah-Millewa Forest
- Gunbower-Koondrook-Perricoota Forest
- Lower Lakes, Coorong and Murray Mouth
- River Murray Channel

Why he does it
The Living Murray program aims to show respect for Indigenous stakeholders and their culture by working with them to protect these Icon Sites and restore them to better health.
Plan to be developed to guide the implementation of The Living Murray program at this site.

**Hattah Lakes**
The 21 lakes of this Icon Site need to have both wet and dry periods to be healthy. River regulation has caused many of these lakes to be either permanently dry or permanently inundated, or to flood less frequently. This means plants and animals that rely on water to complete their life cycle are struggling to survive.

Under The Living Murray program, the Mallee CMA is working in partnership with Indigenous stakeholders to plan the best way to return water to the floodplains and wetlands, while respecting and protecting the large number of culturally significant sites at Hattah Lakes.

The first of many ongoing meetings between the Mallee CMA and Indigenous stakeholders were held in July and August, 2008. More meetings are planned for the future to enable a full Cultural Heritage Management Plan to be developed to guide the implementation of The Living Murray program at this site.

**Lindsay & Wallpolla Islands**
Extensive planning has been invested into ways to return better health to Lindsay and Wallpolla Islands under The Living Murray program.

Options such as environmental regulators are being assessed as a way to control and mimic natural flooding patterns.

Very early discussions have been held with Indigenous stakeholders, but many more thorough meetings are expected in the future to ensure cultural sites are protected and Indigenous perspectives are included in the implementation of The Living Murray program at this site.

**Mulcra Island**
Works planned for Mulcra Island under The Living Murray program include the installation of structures, such as environmental regulators.

These structures will be used mimic natural flooding patterns by filling the island’s wetlands during late winter and spring, then allowing them to dry through summer and autumn. The majority of water used will be returned to the Murray River.

A number of Indigenous stakeholders have been involved in the development of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan for Mulcra Island, which is expected to be approved by late 2008.

**Mallee Indigenous Natural Resource Management Reference Committee**
This committee will play an integral role in ensuring the Mallee CMA effectively works with Indigenous stakeholders to develop programs and report back to the community.

It will act as in an advisory capacity for the Mallee CMA to ensure the ongoing co-operation and discussion. The role of this group will be to foster two-way communication between the Mallee CMA and Indigenous stakeholders. It will value trust, co-operation and transparent communication between all parties involved.

Nominations are in the process of being finalised and it is expected this body will be operating by late 2008 or early 2009.

**Find out more**
For more information, contact Ken Stewart on (03) 5051 4376 or 0428 147 153 or via email: ken.stewart@dpi.vic.gov.au

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**Project Partners**

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Published 2008

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