

LAKE BOLAC RESTORATION COMMUNITY FORUM

REVITALISING LAKE BOLAC: BUILDING A HEALTHY LAKE SYSTEM FOR COMMUNITY, ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT



Community collaboration and sustainable practices at the heart of restoration efforts

The Lake Bolac Restoration Community Forum took place on Saturday, March 22, to discuss the revitalisation of Lake Bolac. This event highlighted the significance of collective action and sustainable practices in preserving this essential ecosystem. It brought together residents, government representatives, and traditional owners to examine strategies that harmonize ecological conservation with human activities.

The morning session featured a welcome to country by Uncle Brett Clark from the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation. Presentations included insights from Peter Gell on Lake Ecology, Dr. Ayesha Burdett on Wetland Restoration by Nature Glenelg Trust, and Dennis O'Brien, CEO of Winton Wetlands, who shared his experiences in establishing the Winton Wetlands.

These presentations enriched attendees' understanding of the complexities and potential solutions involved in the restoration initiatives at Lake Bolac. In the afternoon, facilitated by Kim Boswell from Forever Agenda, participants envisioned the future of Lake Bolac. They were encouraged to write postcards from the future, describing their ideal vision for the lake.

The collective vision included

- Better managed nutrient & water flow
- Fresh drinkable water (stock & human)
- Low turbidity
- Low salinities
- Bike path
- Healthy ecosystems
- Catchment restoration
- Indigenous grasslands
- Indigenous rangers' role
- Passive recreation
- Stepping stones
- Flora & fauna
- Community benefits
- Farm productivity
- Farmers' market
- Vegetated
- Technical expertise
- Waterfowl
- Vegetated riparian zones
- Vibrancy of region
- Thriving local town
- Tourism
- Education
- One informed management body

This was followed by the community conversations, which invited participants to join a topic for discussion, these topics included engineering solutions, caring for the community, caring for the Lake, recreating recreation, caring for the catchment, and managing the water levels. Below is a summary of the key themes which emerged from the afternoon session on day.



Community Involvement and Engagement

The forum emphasised that community involvement and engagement are key to the successful management of Lake Bolac. Participants recognised that the community's commitment is crucial to the long-term sustainability of the lake. By fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility, local residents can help ensure that management efforts are effective and enduring.



Collaboration with Local Authorities

Successful restoration of Lake Bolac requires collaboration with local authorities such as the council, Parks Victoria, and the Catchment Management Authority (CMA). These partnerships are essential for both environmental conservation and the development of sustainable recreational opportunities. This collaboration ensures that actions align with community needs and broader environmental objectives.



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Sustainable Practices and Environmental Management

The forum highlighted the need for sustainable practices and environmental management that integrate ecological preservation with human activity. Plans for Lake Bolac's restoration must engage traditional owners, respecting their knowledge and cultural connections to the land. By balancing these elements, the community can support both the environment and the social and economic needs of the area.



Education and Knowledge Sharing

Education and knowledge sharing initiatives were identified as essential components of fostering sustainable practices. Ensuring that community members understand their role in environmental conservation is critical. Participants highlighted the need for educational programs and workshops to disseminate information about best practices in sustainability, helping the community make informed decisions that benefit Lake Bolac.



Balancing Human Activity with Environmental Protection

One of the forum's key discussions centred on balancing human activity with environmental protection. Participants explored ways to enjoy the lake's recreational opportunities without compromising its ecosystems. Strategies such as designated activity and biodiversity zones are options to maintain this balance.



Permits and Regulatory Approvals

Permits and regulatory approvals are central to all restoration actions at Lake Bolac. Compliance with existing laws and regulations ensures that projects are sustainable and legally sound. Forum participants stressed the importance of adhering to these requirements to protect the environment and ensure that development projects align with conservation goals.



Buffer Zones and Water Management

Buffer zones and effective water management are critical for protecting Lake Bolac's water quality and surrounding ecosystems. The forum underscored the necessity of implementing these measures to safeguard the lake against pollution and degradation. By maintaining healthy buffer zones, the community can help preserve the natural beauty and biodiversity of Lake Bolac.



Mural of Lake Bolac created by Lake Bolac College students

The forum highlighted the multifaceted approach needed to protect this cherished natural resource. Through collaboration, education, and sustainable practices, the community can work together to ensure that Lake Bolac thrives for generations to come.

Over the coming months, the Beyond Bolac Catchment Action Group and interested community members will continue discussions around restoring Lake Bolac and what action is needed to move forward. If you have any questions or thoughts you would like to share, please contact Jileena Cole, BBCAG Facilitator on 0428 341 869 or email beyondbolac@outlook.com.

