

RMCG

FEBRUARY 2021

Lake Wallace Discussion Paper

Final

West Wimmera Shire Council

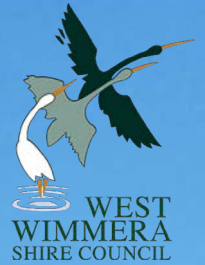


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Community consultation

OVERVIEW

The Edenhope community's views are essential to developing the Lake Wallace Strategic Plan. This Plan will be developed in partnership with the community, working together to achieve shared goals around managing the lake.

Council resolved to set up a Project Control Group and Advisory Group (AG) to gather a range of views to inform the strategic plan. As part of Council's commitment to engaging with the community, the AG comprises community members with a strong interest in Lake Wallace and the town of Edenhope.

The role of this group is to:

- Provide advice about the issues, strategies and actions to be included in the plan through several workshop sessions and meetings
- Be a "sounding board" for ideas and strategies that are being considered for inclusion in the plan
- Provide comments on the Discussion Paper and Draft Plan.

Council has committed to two formal periods of public involvement, during which Council will actively seek input to the development of the plan. Those periods are:

1. Feedback on Discussion Paper and survey – during February 2021
2. Community participation in workshops as input to the draft plan – March 2021.

Stakeholders in the project include: West Wimmera Shire Council, Wimmera Catchment Management Authority, Grampians Mallee Wimmera Water, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Barengi Gadjin Land Council and Fisheries Victoria.

HOW TO HAVE YOUR SAY

This paper will be available for the community's consideration and feedback over February 2021. Feedback on how you are using the lake and ways to protect this valuable asset and improve locals' and visitor experiences are welcome. You can comment on the issues and opportunities raised in this paper in the following ways:

- Directly by telephone to:
 - David Hale, RMCG M. 0428 135 324 or
 - Jencie McRobert, RMCG M. 0427 679 038
- Email comments to:
 - jenciem@rmcg.com.au
- Respond to a brief survey – open until Monday 22 February 2021 5pm.
Click on this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LakeWallace>

Individuals or organisations that wish to provide feedback may address any or all of the questions. All responses are welcome. The responses to these questions and any other feedback provided on the discussion paper will inform the development of the Lake Wallace Strategic Plan.

A workshop will be held in Edenhope for community members to work through the issues raised in this paper and begin to prioritise and plan activities for the Strategic Plan (see Next Steps at the end of this paper).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk peoples as the Traditional Owners of the Country on which this project will be conducted. We recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Moreover, we express gratitude for the knowledge and insight that Traditional Owner and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people contribute to our shared work.

1 Introduction

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

THIS PROJECT

This project is about bringing clarity to decision making about current and future opportunities to make the most of Lake Wallace, a unique natural asset for the Edenhope community.

The purpose of the project is to develop a Strategic Plan for the use and development of the lake. The plan will identify how to diversify and increase use of the lake and at the same time, protect and enhance the lake's natural assets. The outcomes from implementing the plan will contribute to regional economic growth and the future prosperity of Edenhope and surrounding West Wimmera communities. Underlying this, the protection and promotion of the lake will serve as an important driver for community development; deepening Edenhope's identity and the welfare and connection residents have to their community.

The plan should:

- Provide a clear vision for Lake Wallace and its future management
- Integrate the use of the lake's recreation, environmental and cultural values into one document
- Contain operational plans (capital and maintenance) that can be incorporated into the Council plan (every four years)
- Be spatially represented or mapped where possible to provide clarity for the community.

The objectives of the current project are to develop a strategic plan that includes:

- Consideration of the community's preferences for enhancing the lakes built and natural assets
- A clear plan for existing and renewed infrastructure
- Ways to promote and enhance the lake's cultural history and natural values
- Attention to improve landscape amenity and clarity on any outstanding land use planning issues
- Better connecting the lake reserve to other recreational spaces
- Assessment of options to improve water quality management
- Exploration of use and development opportunities arising from different water level scenarios
- Authentic consultation with agency and community stakeholders.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER

This paper is intended to support the development of the Lake Wallace Strategic Plan to capture the initial views of the key issues around Lake Wallace as seen by the Edenhope community and stakeholders.

Potential opportunities to address these issues are also presented for the community's consideration, as part of the development of the strategic plan.

The paper includes:

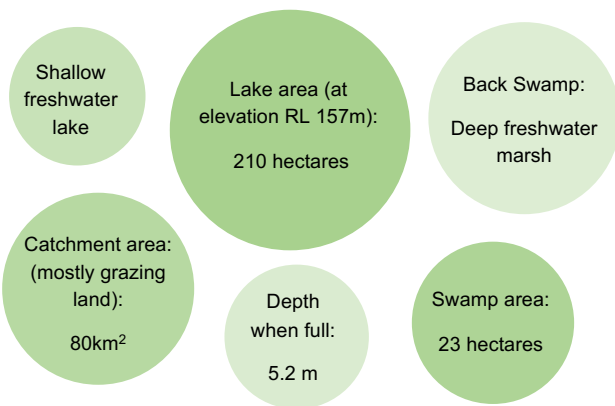
- Snapshot of what's unique about Lake Wallace
- Consultation overview for the Strategic Plan and how to provide feedback
- Key issues, lake values and management
- Opportunities for strategic plan.

1.3 LAKE WALLACE AND SURROUNDS



[Source: West Wimmera Advocate, 2016]

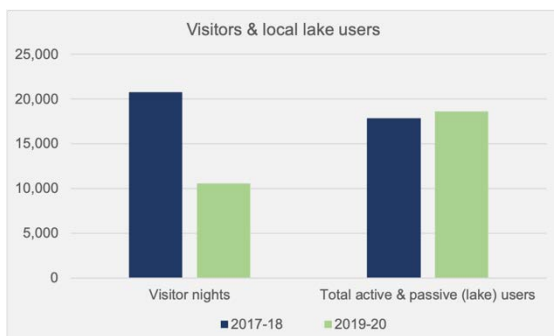
LAKE WALLACE INFORMATION



LAKE USES – ACTIVE AND PASSIVE

- Fishing/Boating
- Walking
- Scooting & cycling
- Picnics & BBQ's
- Bird watching
- Water skiing
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Sailing

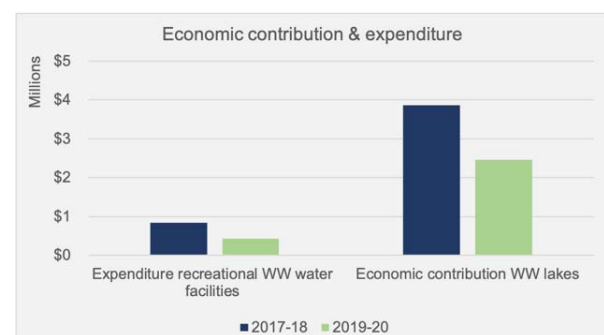
VISITORS



LAKE VALUES

- Cultural heritage** - Aboriginal cultural heritage and European settlement history
- Environmental/natural** – intact habitat areas for native plants and animals
- Recreation** – for locals and visitors
- Amenity** – township views and ambience
- Tourism** – visitor experiences

EXPENDITURE



2 Key lake issues

2.1 OVERVIEW

This project will allow stakeholders to step back and take stock of the values of Lake Wallace and decide on what investment is needed to capitalise on its built, natural and cultural assets.

Some of the main issues to be addressed by the plan have been identified by the project working groups and during earlier consultation with the community (February 2020). Opportunities to enhance community use and development of the lake and surrounding landscapes need to be assessed and communicated into a plan.

These issues and opportunities will be prioritised in the plan and projects will be developed to maximise what Lake Wallace has to offer. Management/operational and funding plans will be developed for the priority actions or projects identified in the plan.

The key lake issues can be considered in the context of **planning zones** (Figure 2-1) and **their values**. The zones are:

- Waterbody (crown land)
- Foreshore (crown land)
- Township
- Farming.

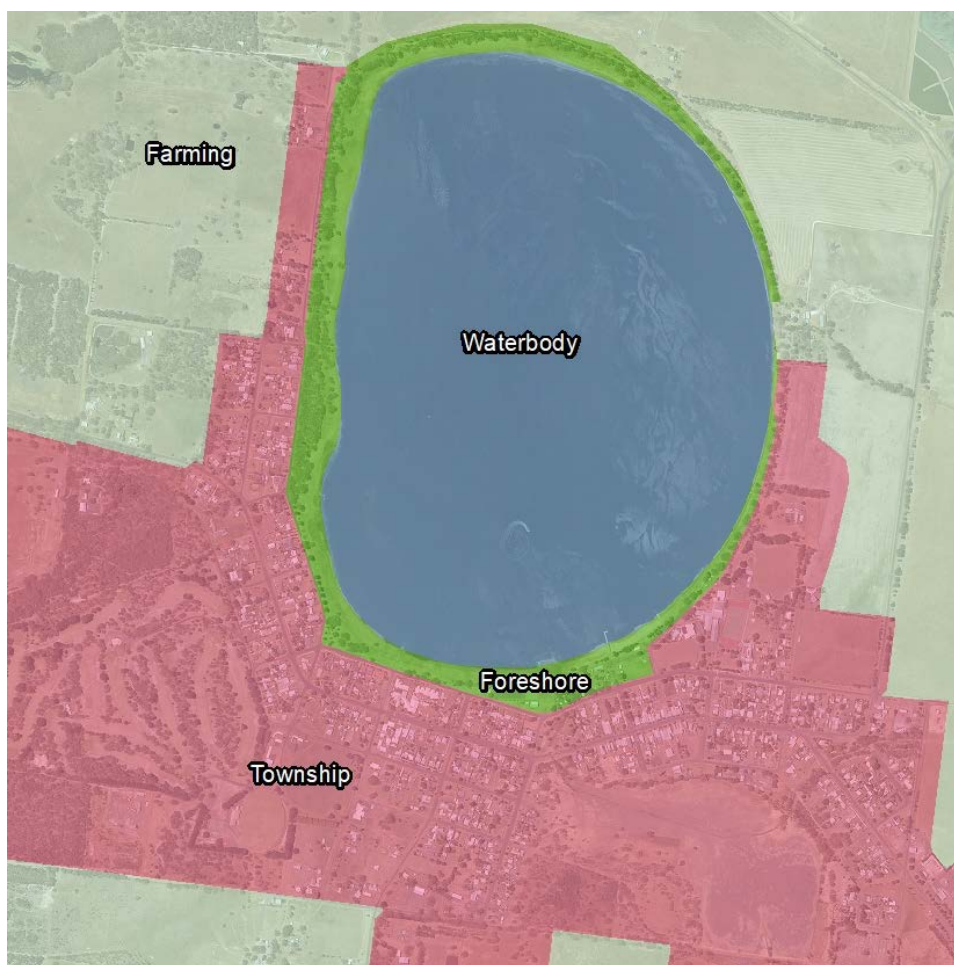


Figure 2-1: Lake Wallace physical and planning zones

2.2 LAKE WALLACE VALUES

The values of the lake and its surrounds include:

- Cultural heritage – Aboriginal cultural heritage and European settlement history
- Environmental/natural – intact habitat areas for native plants and animals
- Recreation – for locals and visitors
- Township amenity – township views and ambience
- Tourism – visitor experiences.

The built assets or facilities on the foreshore and access to the lake, via vehicle or foot, provide social mobility and support the enjoyment of these values¹.

CULTURAL HERITAGE



Traditional Owners include the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk family groups. Lake Wallace was named after William Wallace, the first European visitor in 1843, and later occupied by the Hope Bros, Lake Wallace Station, some 50,000 ha. The first XI Australian cricket team to tour England was an Aboriginal team in 1868, many were station workers who trained on the banks of the lake.

ENVIRONMENTAL/NATURAL



Lake Wallace is a shallow freshwater lake filled by catchment and stormwater runoff, the majority via a constructed drain through Back Swamp wetland. Both ecosystems are part of a network of around 2,000 wetlands in the south west Wimmera. They provide value as wildlife refuge and migratory bird habitat.

RECREATION



The recreation opportunities borne from the lake are vast and include boating, fishing (annual competition), walking/riding, swimming and gathering for picnics and BBQs.

TOWNSHIP AMENITY



The lake is the lifeblood of the Edenhope township providing magnificent views and ambience, for locals and visitors alike.

TOURISM



Lake Wallace is a major drawcard for tourists to Edenhope for both passive and active recreation. Studies have shown that spending by tourists is linked to the water levels of the lake and the number of available activities (Street Ryan for WDA, 2020). Covid restrictions had a negative impact on visitor spend.

¹ Photos provided by West Wimmera Advocate and Shaleigh Mulraney.

2.3 VALUES BASED MANAGEMENT ISSUES

The aim of the strategic plan is to provide a vision for Lake Wallace and its future management, including clear operational plans that will develop and protect the lake’s recreation, tourism, environmental and cultural values.

To ensure that these values are preserved and promoted, the plan will contain principles for determining appropriate lake uses, infrastructure and its maintenance. The development of the strategic plan will take a values-based approach to planning the level of service required to properly manage these values for all to enjoy.

Figure 2-2 (over page) provides a spatial overview of the values of Lake Wallace and its surrounds. These have been mapped as generalised areas only noting that there will be specific values that are not yet identified and / or not mapped due to scale. In particular, there are several known sites of Aboriginal cultural heritage however the whole area has pre-European cultural significance. A Cultural Heritage Management Plan is needed to determine specific sites of higher value. Figure 2-3 provides a larger scale overview of the values in the highest activity (south eastern) part of the lake.

VALUE DESCRIPTIONS

Environmental / natural values	
Objective	Protect and promote key natural values around the Lake.
Issues	Restoration of Back Swamp aquatic and riparian zones. Protection of frog habitat areas including identified “frog zones”. Drainage management and impacts on inflows.
Cultural heritage values – Aboriginal and European	
Objective	Significant cultural sites are identified and protected in the Reserve.
Issues	The reserve is of cultural importance to the Traditional Owners of Country however the number and location of significant Aboriginal cultural heritage sites is unknown. Lack of interpretative information on Aboriginal and European cultural values.
Recreation values	
Objective	Improve and maintain recreation areas, infrastructure and signage to increase recreation opportunities and improve safety.
Issues	The lake offers a wide range of activities that can impact on other values of the lake; these impacts can be better managed. Improvements to amenities and recreation infrastructure will increase use and enjoyment. Pedestrian and vehicle access managed to improve safety and accommodate more users.
Township amenity	
Objective	Maximise available activities around the lake and at the same time, preserve the amenity of the lake reserve.
Issues	Lake levels impact on amenity. There are breaks in connectivity between the town and lake Lake views and ambience can be enhanced.
Tourism values	
Objective	Identify key visitor sites and provide quality visitor facilities and activities in a healthy environment.
Issues	When the water level is high the reserve is a popular place for visitors and brings income to Edenhope; better quality tourism experiences will bring more visitors and greater income.

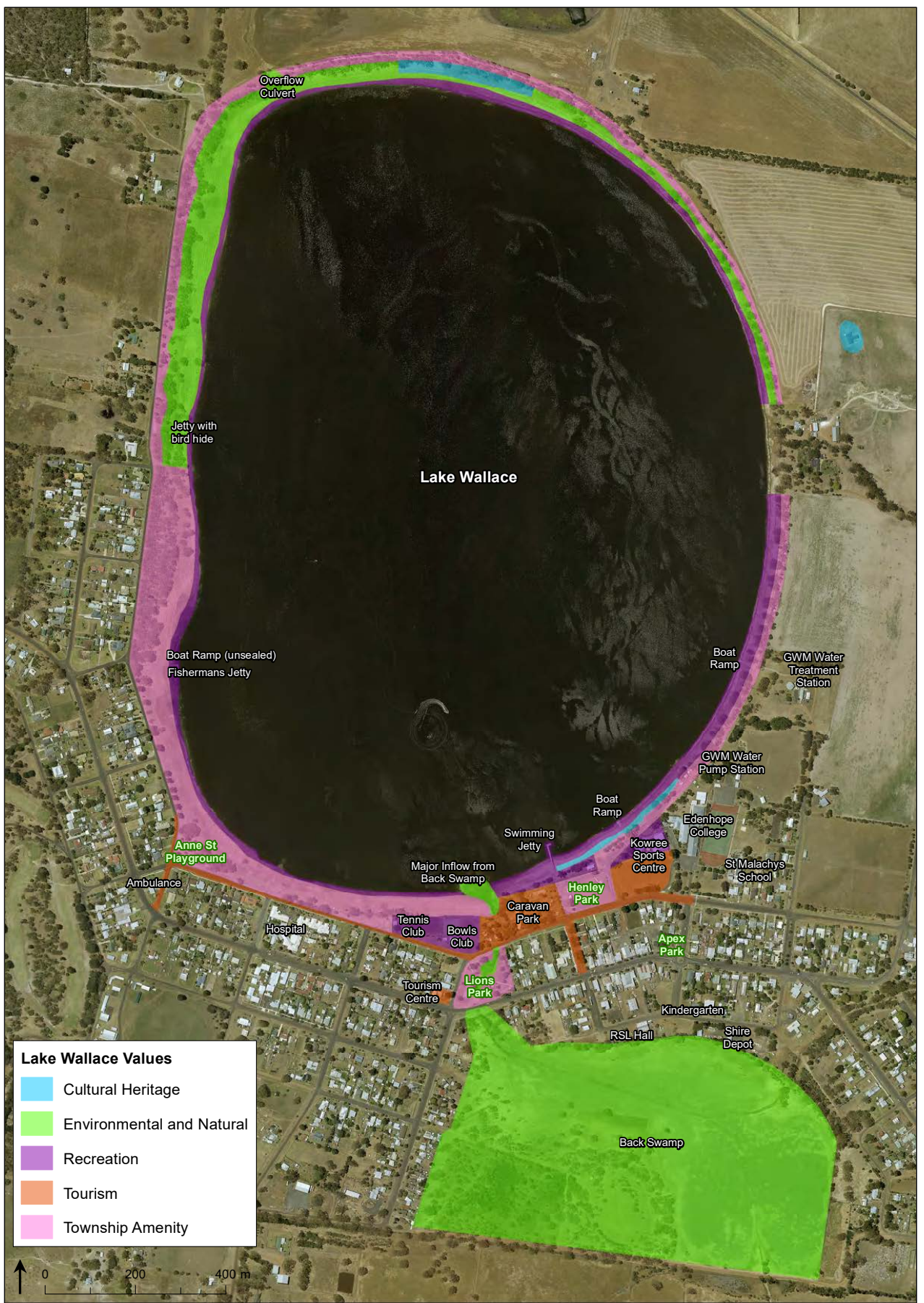


Figure 2-2: Lake Wallace values: overview




Figure 2-3: Lake Wallace values: highest activity south eastern zone


3 Opportunities for strategic plan

Initial discussions with agency and community members have raised several opportunities for improvements in the foreshore area of Lake Wallace and surrounds. These will be investigated, and project concepts developed that can be made operational through the implementation of the strategic plan.

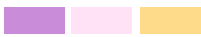
1. Enhanced safety accessing lake

	RECREATION ZONES FOR MIXED USES
Values	
Issues	Safety, vehicle congestion, signs in need of significant upgrade.
Tension/problem	Users competing for space in high use zones, unclear parking and driving signals.
Opportunities	Signage that better delineates vehicle access, parking, competing water sports zones (swimming, boating, fishing).
Specific project example	Design and construct new signage.
Intended outcome from plan	Refreshed signage and improved safety for all lake users.

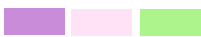
2. Enhanced safety for waterway users

	WATERWAY RULE REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION
Values	
Issues	Unclear/outdated waterway Schedule, putting waterway users at risk of accidents.
Tension/problem	Mixed usage of waterway, inadequate safety precautions in place to delineate space.
Opportunities	Updated waterway Schedule and signage.
Specific project example	Maritime Safety Victoria Schedule amendment.
Intended outcome from plan	Waterway users safer.


3. Improved amenities for locals and visitors

	AMENITIES UPGRADE
Values	
Issues	Run down assets (pier, bbq areas, toilet blocks and play grounds).
Tension/problem	Some amenities outdated and unsafe, insufficient seating.
Opportunities	Review current assets and prioritise for upgrade and renewal.
Specific project example(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and construct new infrastructure (play equipment, seating, bbqs) New pontoons from swimming area Floating pontoon for boat ramp Fish filleting table at jetty.
Intended outcome from plan	Increased amenity usage supports community wellbeing, connection and tourism.


4. Increased social mobility opportunity

	ACCESS TO LAKE
Values	
Issues	Footpaths to lake from township inadequate, regrowth of saplings and fairy grass invasion when lake levels low, inconsistent road and path condition.
Tension/problem	Incomplete footpath network, hindered emergency vehicle access, restoring views of the lake.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A maintained shared path (foot/ride) around the perimeter of the lake Emergency vehicle access to all recreational foreshore areas Construction of footpaths linking township places to foreshore (Anzac Av., golf course, schools).
Specific project example	Upgrade incomplete section of walking/riding trail for lake perimeter.
Intended outcome from plan	A well maintained foreshore according to use and amenity zones.

5. Improved drainage management

	INFLOWS AND DRAINAGE
Values	
Issues	Maintenance and efficacy of drains, inflow and outflow areas.
Tension/problem	Changed hydraulic regimes in the catchment, drain through Back Swamp contributing to water quality problems.
Opportunities	Upgrade road at the outflow.
Specific project example	Back Swamp drainage plan and works program.
Intended outcome from plan	A balanced drainage network that considers water levels and water quality.

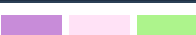
6. Environmental and cultural heritage protection

	MANAGING VALUES FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS
Values	
Issues	Protection of high value sites – environmental and cultural heritage.
Tension/problem	Poor knowledge of Aboriginal cultural heritage values and significant sites.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identification and enhancement of “frog zones” ▪ Updated cultural heritage management assessment ▪ Upgrade bird hide and signage.
Specific project example	Project to begin restoration of Back Swamp ecosystem.
Intended outcome from plan	Greater protection of environmental and cultural heritage.

7. Better quality tourist experiences

	INCREASING VISITOR NUMBERS AND THEIR SPEND
Values	
Issues	Development of tourism experiences, increasing visitor expenditure in the township.
Tension/problem	Low overnight and day visitor spend. Tourism prospects are not being maximised.
Opportunities	<p>More high quality experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nature trail linking lake to flora reserve and golf course ▪ Improved tourist marketing collateral highlighting sites and opportunities ▪ A more prominent cultural heritage trail linking areas of interest.
Specific project example	Project to enhance parkland around the bridge between Lions Park and Back Swamp.
Intended outcome from plan	Better quality tourism experiences, increased visitors and economic contribution.

8. Land use and tenure

	LAND USE ZONING AND CROWN LAND MANAGEMENT
Values	
Issues	Changing land uses in vicinity of lake. Need for guidance on development.
Tension/problem	Balancing lake and foreshore values with land tenures and management responsibilities.
Opportunities	Resolving these with DELWP and other interested parties.
Specific project example	Identifying further rezoning opportunities.
Intended outcome from plan	Agreed lake and foreshore management plan consistent with regulations and constraints of crown land use.

NEXT STEPS

The next step to develop the Lake Wallace Strategic Plan is holding a series of meetings and workshops with the Edenhope community and other key stakeholders in February 2021.

The necessary strategic responses and actions to address the lake issues identified will be developed for the strategic plan. The Lake Wallace Strategic Plan will then be drafted by RMCG, based on the outcomes of these meetings and workshops, and presented to the PCG and AG for review prior to completing the final plan.

This report has been prepared by:

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Document review and authorisation

Project Number: #963

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1.0	Draft outline	25/11/2020	J. McRobert	D. Hale	-	J. McRobert	D. Pietsch
2.0	Draft	14/12/2020	J. McRobert D. Hale	D. Hale	J. Longford	J. McRobert	PCG AG
3.0	Revised draft	07/01/2021	J. McRobert D. Hale	D. Hale	-	J. McRobert	D. Pietsch
4.0	Final draft	11/01/2021	J. McRobert D. Hale	D. Hale	-	J. McRobert	PCG AG
5.0	Final	27/01/2021	J. McRobert	-	-	J. McRobert	D. Pietsch
6.0	Final	09/02/2021	J. McRobert	J. McRobert	J. Belz	J. McRobert	A. Ferguson D. Pietsch