

# Murray-Darling Carp Action Summit

## Communique

Eighty delegates from Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, Australian Capital Territory and South Australia attended an invitation only Murray-Darling Basin Carp Action Summit (the Summit) on 29 April 2026 at Nagambie. The Summit was co-hosted by the Victorian Fisheries Authority and the Australian River Restoration Centre to drive meaningful, coordinated action on one of Australia's most significant aquatic environmental challenges.

The Summit brought together a diverse alliance of people representing 41 community, farming, fishing, processing, research and natural resource organisations from across the Murray-Darling Basin. It was also attended by State and Federal politicians, local government Councillors and community leaders. The event was covered by ABC regional radio and State television journalists.

## The need for action

Across the Murray-Darling Basin, carp continue to damage river ecosystems, degrade water quality, and impact communities, agriculture, and cultural values. While Australia has invested heavily in carp control research for at least 20 years, including the National Carp Control Plan, progress toward implementation has been slow and uncertain, with no clear national timeline or pathway forward.

There is a growing recognition across communities, industries and environmental sectors that the scale and persistence of the carp problem requires a more urgent, coordinated and action-oriented response. Despite decades of research and investment, progress toward implementation has remained slow, fragmented and uncertain. The Summit was convened to help address this gap and support a stronger pathway from discussion to practical action.

## Formation of a Carp Action Alliance

The Summit brought together community leaders and expertise to build a stronger, more connected movement - one that links science, community knowledge, policy and on-ground action. The goal is not just to share knowledge, but to forge an alliance capable of advocating for and delivering real change. The Summit proposed the formation of a Carp Action Alliance which seeks to:

- ✓ unify fragmented efforts into a coordinated national approach
- ✓ advocate for clear government leadership, accountability and timelines
- ✓ support the immediate release of the Carp Herpes virus.
- ✓ elevate community, cultural and industry perspectives
- ✓ catalyse integrated and practical action at local, regional and national scales

At its core, this Alliance is about moving from awareness to action and ensuring that the health of our rivers is treated with the urgency it demands.

## Key Outcomes of the Summit (summary)

- There was widespread recognition that carp now dominate (~90% of total fish biomass) across the rivers and wetlands the Murray-Darling Basin (and beyond) and are causing major ecological, physical, economic, cultural and social damage to river health and regional communities. These impacts are not being adequately addressed.
- Delegates acknowledged that despite nearly 20 years and \$13 million dollars of research into the carp herpes virus as a biocontrol agent, culminating in the National Carp Control Plan (2022), excuses continue to be made for no action while the basin continues to suffer. The time for action is now. The Virus must be released as a basin wide control measure and supported by complimentary measures like large scale native fish stocking and improved habitat.
- Delegates were concerned that despite the profound impacts of carp over the last 50 years, there are still no coordinated or integrated carp control programs in place to manage carp. This is a major policy gap.
- Despite a limited national focus on carp control action, the Summit revealed examples of localised success in managing carp populations, for example, using wetting and drying wetland cycles, carp screens, native fish stocking and fish habitat restoration.
- There is growing interest from the private sector to view carp as a biomass resource that can be processed (e.g. liquid fertiliser and composting) using local infrastructure to produce agriculture inputs.
- Delegates recognised the considerable collective experience, research, planning, project management expertise and influence of those attending the summit and agreed to work together to form a **Carp Action Alliance** to advocate for more action on carp control.
- Delegates recognised that for the Alliance to be effective, it will require more than goodwill and collaboration alone. A successful Alliance will need clear principles, agreed priority actions, coordination mechanisms and adequate resourcing to underpin sustained effort and collective impact.
- Delegates recognised the Murray-Darling Basin Plan Review as a critical opportunity to elevate carp control as a core river health priority. Delegates noted that carp continue to have significant impacts across the Basin, including degrading water quality, increasing turbidity, damaging wetlands and riverbanks, reducing aquatic vegetation, disrupting native fish breeding and recruitment, and undermining broader biodiversity and river recovery efforts. Delegates agreed that a more coordinated, integrated, adequately resourced and accountable approach to carp control is needed to improve river health and native fish outcomes across the Basin. Delegates also noted that, to date, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority has not effectively addressed the scale and significance of the carp problem.