

2025

# Catch a Carp Day

CASE STUDY



## **Location: Mulcra Island**

Traditional Owners, Mallee Catchment Management Authority and other stakeholders came together with one common goal in mind – improving the health of the waterway.







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**AMONGST the stunning backdrop that is Mulcra Island, located approximately 80 km west of Mildura, a young Aboriginal woman stands by the riverbank, watching intently as an Elder patiently teaches her to bait a fishing hook.**

This is her first time fishing.

“This is actually my first time sitting beside the river fishing, I’ve never done it before, and I never knew how much I liked it,” Traditional Owner Letisha Kennedy Lawson said.

“Being in nature, sitting next to the river... I don’t get to come out on Country often, so when I do, I really love it. It’s very peaceful, and it’s very healing.

“Being out here with the Elders we’re able to learn not only about the river, but about our stories, our ancestors. That’s the knowledge that one day, I’ll be able to pass on to my own children.”

The significance of Mulcra Island reaches far beyond its ecological importance, its relatively untouched beauty or even its status as an Icon Site under The Living Murray river restoration project. The creek has a long and rich cultural history dating back thousands of years, with surveys having found many scar trees, hearths, campsites, shell middens and burial grounds.

For today, Mulcra Island and its main waterway, Potterwalkagee Creek, is the setting for Catch a Carp Day, where Traditional Owners, Mallee Catchment Management Authority (Mallee CMA) and other stakeholders came together with one common goal in mind – improving the health of the waterway.

Mallee CMA Aboriginal Partnerships and Water Officer Kobe Brown, who collaborated with First People of the Millewa Mallee Aboriginal Corporation (FPMMAC) to coordinate the day, said the event was about much more than fishing.





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“Catch a Carp Day is an opportunity to get together on Country and a chance to really listen to what our Traditional Owners want,” he said.

“It’s a way to engage, connect and collaborate in a culturally safe environment, to have conversations about the topics that are important to everyone here and to establish and set goals for working together.

“A big part of what we do at Mallee CMA is centered around engaging with First Nations people, and days like this are a really effective way to do exactly that.

“The turnout today alone is a testament to that – to look around and see 15 or so Traditional Owners of various ages come together for a common goal, to care for Country, shows the value of events like this,” Kobe said.

It’s a sentiment echoed by FPMMAC Program Manager River, Ranges and Water, Mike Gilby.

“Today, we’re using fishing as a medium to engage the community and in this instance, we’re targeting a pest fish in carp,” he said.

“The members and Traditional Owners have aspirations of reintroducing native fish here, and this particular location lends itself to native fish recovery programs, and is probably one of the best Murray Cod fisheries in northern Victoria.

“Carp are introduced predators, and they will wipe out a population of native small-bodied fish with ease, and we want to try to reduce that impact,” Mike said.





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So, what’s the plan to help achieve this goal?

“About 15kms upstream of here is the wetland Musk Duck lagoon, where we (FPMMAC) are doing native fish recovery,” Mike explained.

“Ideally, we reduce the number of carp here and repopulate it with the fish we’re growing at Musk Duck. So effectively, we’re growing our own fish to stock Mulcra with.

“So in this case, when we introduce the native fish to Potterwalkagee Creek, we’re introducing more established, 15cm, 60-gram fingerlings, which will have a huge fighting chance against the carp.

“It’s our lens of culturally-based fisheries. We’re not using artificial hatcheries to grow these native fish, we’re using natural ephemeral systems, one system supporting another. It’s a no-brainer.”

But Mike acknowledges the battle against carp is a long-term one.

“To do this well will take time,” he said.

“We’ll never get rid of the last carp, but if we can reduce their numbers, we can populate our waters with native fish and give them a fighting chance not just through our stocking program, but by allowing them the opportunity to naturally recruit,” he said.

“Through the First Nations lens, (being out on Country) is an effective way of communication between us. When it comes to engaging with us and tapping into what our visions and aspirations are, we can inform you in the boardroom, but we can show you out on Country.

“It’s not about being informed, it’s about being culturally informed, and the only way we can do that is for you to come for a walk with us.”

*\* This event was supported by the Mallee CMA, through funding from The Living Murray program. The Living Murray is a joint initiative funded by the New South Wales, Victorian, South Australian and Commonwealth governments, coordinated by the Murray–Darling Basin Authority.*

*The Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) is a statutory authority established to ensure that natural resources in the region are managed in an integrated and ecologically sustainable way. Its work is based on science and delivered through meaningful partnerships with local organisations such as Landcare, community groups, and government agencies in the Victorian Mallee. For more information visit [www.malleecma.com.au](http://www.malleecma.com.au)*

