

Appendix 1

Regional Land Partnerships Evaluation Plan: Outcome 1

By 2023, there is restoration of, and reduction in threats to, the Ecological Character of Ramsar sites through the implementation of priority actions

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this evaluation plan is to provide advice on how to prepare to evaluate the Regional Land Partnerships (RLP) program. This plan is tailored specifically to Outcome 1.

The evaluation plan is presented in three main components:

- Program logic
- Program and outcome specific Key Evaluation Questions
- Monitoring plan.

2 Evaluation plan

2.1 PROGRAM LOGIC

The Outcome 1 program logic forms the basis of this evaluation plan (see Figure 2-1). The purpose of program logic is to describe the anticipated cause-and-effect relationships between project activities, outputs and outcomes or its 'theory of change'. Program logic also documents the **assumptions** that are critical to the transition from one level of the logic to the next and **indicators** that can be used to measure progress against each level of the logic over time. These two important elements of a logic are explained further below.

ASSUMPTIONS

Between each level of the logic, assumptions are specified. Assumptions help explain how one level of the logic links to the next. There are generally two types of assumptions:

- i. Knowledge-based assumptions that draw on research, literature or previous experience to describe expected changes (e.g. completing management actions in line with best-practice as described in a Threat Abatement Plan will result in a reduction of a given threat).
- ii. Assumptions that relate to conditions or circumstances that are beyond the control or influence of the project or program (e.g. rainfall is within long-term seasonal averages).

Identifying these assumptions ensures the logic provides a more complete picture of how the actions in a project are expected to contribute to outcomes.

INDICATORS

Indicators have been identified at each level of the program logic. They provide the evidence-base for project teams and the program as a whole, to demonstrate progress. Indicators can include both quantitative and qualitative measures. The timing and frequency of measuring the indicators is specific to each indicator (see monitoring plan). Some indicators might only be measured at the beginning and end of the project, while others are measured annually, or at multiple points in the delivery of the project (e.g. beginning, mid-point and end). It is important that no single indicator is considered in isolation of others. They should be recorded and reported together in order to give a clear illustration of the extent of project progress.

KEY FEATURES OF OUTCOME 1

Specific characteristics of the Outcome 1 program logic include:

- At the Short-Term Outcomes level, measures and indicators aim to demonstrate that management actions have resulted in positive biophysical changes within the project area. If there is a reasonable expectation that a bio-physical change can be detected within the life of the project, that change should be measured directly.

- At the Medium Term Outcomes level, measures and indicators aim to demonstrate that those biophysical changes (measured within the life of the project) have contributed to an overall improvement in the ecological character of a Ramsar site. There are two tiers of measures/indicators at this level:
 - The Service Provider is expected to report on project-level indicators of restoration of- or reduction in threats to, the ecological character of Ramsar sites, within the boundaries of their projects. For the purposes of monitoring, we have broken 'ecological character' down to include a range of ecological/biophysical components, processes and services/benefits – and might expect to see positive changes in one or more of these areas.
 - The RLP Program lead is expected to report on program-level indicators of restoration/threat reduction. This would include: the number (or proportion) of Outcome 1 projects demonstrating positive indicators; and the area (or proportion of total area) of a Ramsar site(s) covered by RLP projects. Taken together, these two measures will provide an indication of the overall impact of the RLP program on Ramsar site condition within the areas it is investing resources.
- The difference between the measures at the 'Medium Term Outcome' level and the 'Long Term Outcome' level is that the 'Long Term' measures ask what contribution the RLP program made to the overall ecological character of Ramsar sites. This requires the RLP program to look beyond the direct investment and measure (via indicators) wider trends in Ramsar site condition (e.g. as reported in Ramsar Management Plans, Ramsar Information Sheets, relative to a previous description). Knowing the overall trends in condition enables a contribution analysis i.e. what difference has the RLP investment made to the condition of these assets through its investment.

2.2 KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) represent high-level lines of enquiry to guide an evaluation. KEQs have been prepared for the whole RLP program, across five evaluation themes (effectiveness, appropriateness, impact, efficiency and legacy). Definitions for each of these evaluation criteria are provided in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1: RLP program evaluation themes

EVALUATION THEMES	DEFINITION
Effectiveness	A measure of the extent to which a program, project or initiative has attained, or is expected to attain, its relevant objectives efficiently and in a sustainable way
Appropriateness	A determination made through comparing the program with the needs of the intended beneficiaries using any of the techniques of needs analysis. alternatively, the program could be evaluated in terms of its compliance with process
Impact	A change in the condition of biophysical, social, economic and/or institutional assets. an impact may be positive or negative, primary or secondary, short term or long term, direct or indirect, and/or intended or unintended. Impacts are sometimes realised after the formal project is completed
Efficiency	The notion of getting the highest value out of program or project resources
Legacy	The enduring consequences of past investments, policies or actions that can be captured and/or bequeathed

KEQS FOR EACH OUTCOME

To effectively guide monitoring and evaluation approaches for each of the six RLP outcomes, each KEQ has also been broken down into a series of sub-questions relevant to that outcome. Information and data can be

collected specific to the KEQs for each outcome using various monitoring and evaluation methods. The RLP program and Outcome 1-specific Key Evaluation Questions are outlined in Table 2-2.

The process of developing KEQs at both the program and outcome level was also critical in informing **indicators** (in addition to those identified during the program logic development) that are to be included in the monitoring plan.

2.3 MONITORING PLAN

Monitoring is used to describe an ongoing process of routine data collection. Generating performance data at regular intervals throughout the life of a program is critical for adaptive management and continuous improvement. Monitoring also provides valuable data for evaluation, which can act as a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate a program's contribution to planned outcomes.

A monitoring plan for Outcome 1 has been prepared as a component of the evaluation plan. It is based on the **indicators** and **assumptions** identified during the program logic and KEQ development processes. The monitoring plan identifies the data that should be collected for each **indicator**, by whom and how often.

The aim of the monitoring plan is to provide clear guidance (timing, method) and accountability for monitoring at both the project and program scale over time. The Outcome 1 monitoring plan is provided in Table 2-3.

Program Logic – RLP Outcome 1: Ecological Character of Ramsar Sites

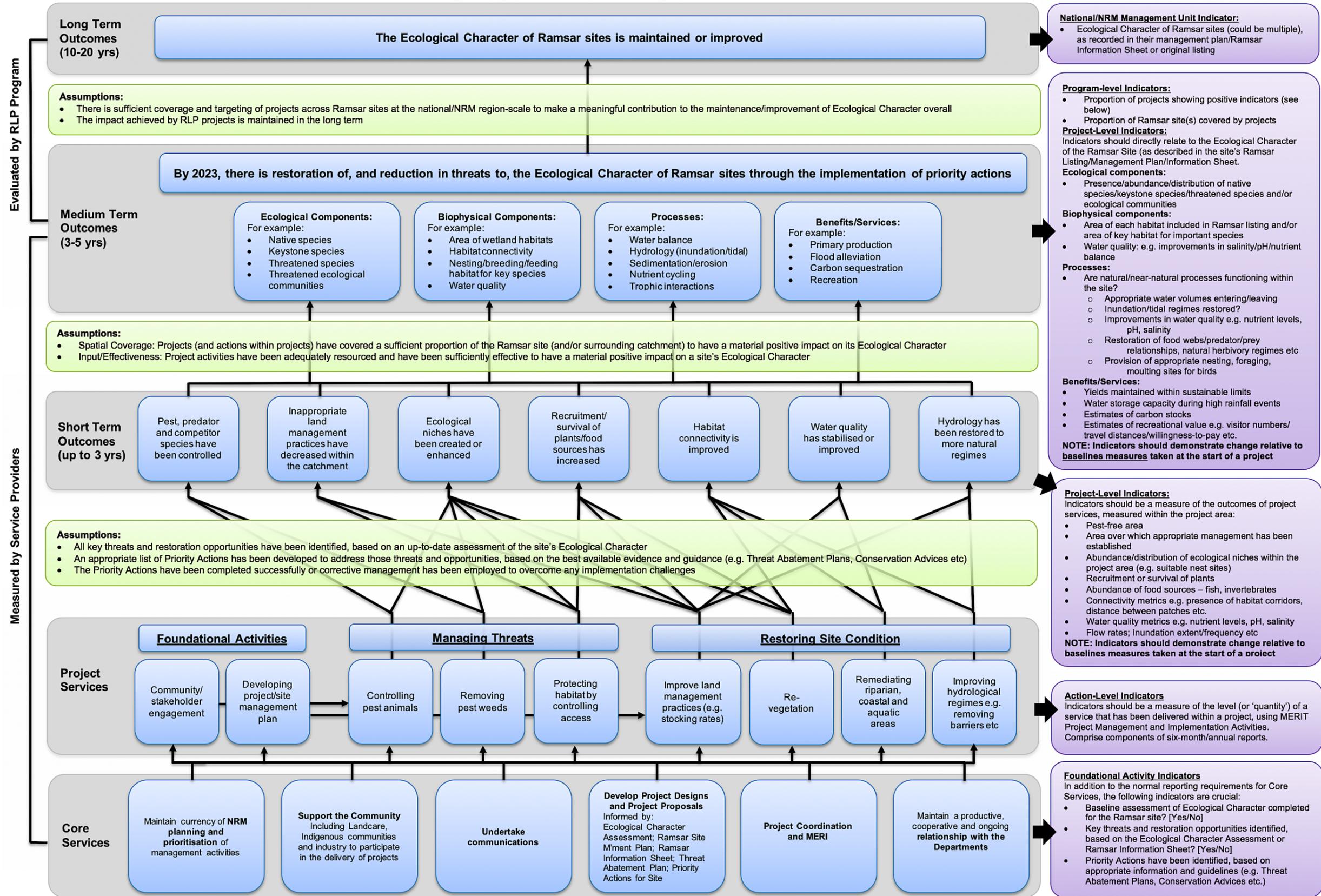


Figure 2-1: Outcome 1 Program Logic

Table 2-2: Outcome 1 Key Evaluation Questions

EVALUATION THEMES	PROGRAM KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS	OUTCOME SPECIFIC KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS	RELEVANT LEVEL OF THE PROGRAM LOGIC
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent have the planned outcomes and outputs been achieved? ▪ Are current delivery approaches and funding mechanisms the best way to maximise impact or are there other strategies that might be more effective? (addressed in appropriateness) ▪ To what extent is the programme attaining, or expected to attain, its objectives and outcomes efficiently and in a way that is sustainable? (addressed in efficiency) 	<p>To what extent have the Core Services (and any associated targets) been achieved?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain currency of NRM planning and prioritisation of management activities ▪ Support the Community including Landcare, Indigenous communities, industry and farmer/grower groups to participate in the delivery of projects ▪ Undertake communications ▪ Develop Project Designs and Project Proposals ▪ Project coordination and MERI ▪ Maintain a productive, cooperative and ongoing relationship with the Departments 	Core Services
		<p>To what extent have the Project Services (and any associated targets) been achieved?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Foundational activities: Community/stakeholder engagement; Developing project/site management plan ▪ Controlling threats: e.g. Controlling pest animals; removing pest weeds; protecting habitat by controlling access ▪ Restoring site condition: Improve land management practices; re-vegetation; remediating riparian, coastal and aquatic areas; improving hydrological regimes 	Project Services
		<p>To what extent have the Short Term Outcomes (and any associated targets) been achieved?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pest, predator and competitor species have been controlled ▪ Inappropriate land management practices have decreased within the catchment ▪ Ecological niches have been created or enhanced ▪ Recruitment/survival of plants/food sources has increased ▪ Habitat connectivity has improved ▪ Water quality has stabilised or improved ▪ Hydrology has been restored to more natural regimes 	Short Term Outcomes
Appropriateness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent is the programme aligned with the needs of the intended beneficiaries? ▪ To what extent is the programme compliant with recognised best practice processes in the field—e.g. the type, level and context of investment and associated activities? 	<p>As a delivery approach, were the foundational activities and management actions to control threats and restore site condition an appropriate way to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Align project delivery with community needs and expectations ▪ Tailor the project to the environmental conditions of each project site, and ▪ Achieve the Medium Term Outcome? 	Short Term Outcomes Medium Term Outcomes
		<p>To what extent were the on-ground management actions adopted informed by/consistent with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Species Recovery Plans ▪ Threat Abatement Plans ▪ Conservation Advices ▪ Ecological Character Assessment of Ramsar site ▪ Ramsar Information Sheet ▪ Ramsar site management plans 	Short Term Outcomes Medium Term Outcomes
		<p>Are there any other methods that should/could have been used?</p>	Short Term Outcomes Medium Term Outcomes
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In what ways and to what extent has the programme contributed to changing asset condition, management practices, and / or effectiveness of delivery? ▪ What, if any, unanticipated positive or negative changes or other outcomes have resulted? ▪ To what extent were the changes directly or indirectly produced by the programme interventions? 	<p>To what extent have the core and project services and short and medium-term outcomes contributed to the restoration of- and reduction in threats to- the Ecological Character of Ramsar Sites</p>	Medium Term Outcomes
		<p>To what extent has the Medium Term outcome contributed to the Ecological Character of Ramsar sites being maintained or improved?</p>	Medium Term Outcomes Long Term Outcome
		<p>What, if any, unanticipated positive or negative changes or other outcomes have resulted?</p>	Medium Term Outcomes

		To what extent were the changes directly or indirectly produced by the programme interventions?	Medium Term Outcomes
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has the programme attained the highest value out of available resources? How could resources be used more productively and efficiently? What could be done differently to improve implementation, and thereby maximise impact, at an acceptable and sustainable cost? 	To what extent did Outcome 1 projects demonstrate 'value for money' through the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of a site selection process which considered the costs and anticipated benefits of works at potential sites Establishment of partnerships for delivering the project (pooling resources, using local knowledge and experience) Coordination of the delivery of activities/works (e.g. with other projects, in geographic locations) Implementation of procurement processes to ensure both quality and quantity from investment, and Leveraging investment from other sources? 	Short Term Outcomes Medium Term Outcomes
		How could have resources been used more productively and efficiently?	Short Term Outcomes Medium Term Outcomes
		What could be done differently to improve implementation, and thereby maximise impact, at an acceptable and sustainable cost?	Short Term Outcomes Medium Term Outcomes
Legacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will the programme's impacts continue over time and after the programme ceases? How should the legacy be managed and by whom? 	What evidence is there that the work completed through Outcome 1 will continue to be maintained?	Medium Term Outcomes
		How likely is it that the outcomes achieved through Outcome 1 will be sustained?	Medium Term Outcomes

Table 2-3: Outcome 1 Monitoring Plan

Level	Outcome/Activity	Indicators	Frequency of reporting	Who is responsible?
RLP Program Outcomes				
Long term Program Outcomes (10-20 yrs)	The ecological character of Ramsar sites is maintained or improved	National/NRM Management Unit Indicator: Long-term impact of RLP investment on Ramsar sites can be evaluated by assessing changes in Ecological Character, as recorded in up-to-date Ramsar Management Plan or Ramsar Information Sheet, based on the Ecological Character Descriptions in their original listing. E.g. "Of the 65 Ramsar sites in Australia, the Ecological Character of X sites has been maintained or improved in the long term. The RLP program targeted Y% of those sites. Of the sites where Ecological Character deteriorated, RLP projects targeted Z%".	End of funding cycle and at 10-20 years	DoEE lead for this outcome
Medium Term Program Outcomes (3-5 yrs)	By 2023, there is restoration of, and reduction in threats to, the Ecological Character of Ramsar sites through the implementation of priority actions	Maintenance or improvement in the Ecological Character of Ramsar sites, is demonstrated by two measures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proportion of projects showing positive indicators (at end of project) and ▪ Proportion of Ramsar site(s) covered by projects E.g. "The RLP program has invested in X projects across Y Ramsar Sites (covering Z% of the total area of those sites). Across all Ramsar projects, x% of projects demonstrated one or more positive indicators relating to an improvement in Ecological Character (Ecological or Biophysical Components, Processes and/or Benefits/Services)."	End of funding cycle	DoEE lead for this outcome
Project Achievements and Progress				
Medium Term Outcomes (3-5 yrs) Reported in: Outcome Report 2	For each component included in Ecological Character Description of the Ramsar Site (or the site's Ramsar Listing/Management Plan/Information Sheet):			
	Ecological Components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keystone species • Native species • Threatened species • Threatened ecological communities 	Changes in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Presence ▪ Abundance ▪ Distribution relative to baseline (at start of project)	At 3-5 years	Service Provider
	Biophysical Components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area of wetland habitats • Habitat connectivity • Nesting/breeding/feeding habitat for key species • Water quality 	Change in area of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wetland habitat ▪ Nesting habitat ▪ Breeding habitat ▪ Feeding habitat relative to the Ecological Character Description of the Ramsar Site or the site's Ramsar Listing/Management Plan/Information Sheet Area of improved habitat quality via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ pest, predator and competitor species being reduced below critical levels or eliminated (pest free area) ▪ site restoration works such as revegetation ▪ changes in connectivity of habitat – e.g. patch proximity change (for particular species) relative to baseline (at start of project) and proportion of required amount of work this represents (as per the Ecological Character Description of the Ramsar Site or the site's Ramsar Listing/Management Plan/Information Sheet) Water quality improvements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ EC (salinity) ▪ pH ▪ nutrient levels (TN, TP) ▪ TSS Or proxies for these improvements such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Frequency of algal blooms ▪ Turbidity changes relative to long term levels (as per the Ecological Character Description of the Ramsar Site or the site's Ramsar Listing/Management Plan/Information Sheet)	At 3-5 years	Service Provider
	Processes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water balance • Hydrology (inundation/tidal) • Sedimentation/erosion • Nutrient cycling • Trophic interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are natural or near-natural processes functioning within the site? (Yes/No) ▪ Are appropriate water volumes entering/leaving the site? (Yes/No) ▪ Have inundation/tidal regimes been restored? (Yes/No) ▪ Water quality improvements e.g. nutrient levels, pH, salinity ▪ Restoration of predator/prey relationships, natural herbivory regimes etc relative to baseline (at start of project) and the Ecological Character Description of the Ramsar Site (or the site's Ramsar Listing/Management Plan/Information Sheet)	At 3-5 years	Service Provider

Level	Outcome/Activity	Indicators	Frequency of reporting	Who is responsible?
	Benefits/Services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary production Flood alleviation Carbon sequestration Recreation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yields maintained within sustainable limits (primary production) Water storage capacity during high rainfall events (flood alleviation) Estimates of carbon stocks (carbon sequestration) Estimates of recreational value e.g. visitor numbers/ travel distances/willingness-to-pay Changes in other specific services relative to baseline (at start of project) and the Ecological Character Description of the Ramsar Site (or the site's Ramsar Listing/Management Plan/Information Sheet)	At 3-5 years	Service Provider
Short Term Outcomes (1-3 yrs) Reported in: Outcome Report 1	Pest, predator and competitor species have been controlled	Area where pressure and impacts from these species have been reduced or eliminated (control versus eradication). Proportion (%) this represents of total area that requires this treatment.	At 2-3 years	Service Provider
	Inappropriate land management practices have decreased within the catchment	Area of land where more appropriate management practices are being used. Proportion (%) this represents of total area that requires this treatment.	At 1 – 2 years	Service Provider
	Ecological niches have been created or enhanced	Increase in abundance and/or distribution (area) of ecological niches within the project area such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suitable nesting sites Feeding sites Refuges or roosting sites Etc. relative to baseline (at start of project)	At 2 – 3 years	Service Provider
	Recruitment/survival of plants has increased	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment rates Survival rates of new plants 	At 2 – 3 years	Service Provider
	Habitat connectivity is improved	Connectivity improvements based on specific metrics such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presence and sizes of habitat corridors Distance between remnant vegetation patches relative to baseline (at start of project)	At 2 – 3 years	Service Provider
	Water quality has stabilised or improved	Water quality improvements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EC (salinity) pH nutrient levels (TN, TP) TSS Or proxies for these improvements such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency of algal blooms Turbidity changes relative to baseline (at start of project) AND/OR: Area of land where management change or treatment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> decreases nutrient or sediment loss changes salinity to more natural levels restores pH to more natural levels Proportion (%) this represents of total area that requires this treatment.	At 1 – 2 years	Service Provider
	Hydrology has been restored to more natural regimes	Measures of hydrological regimes such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flow rates Area and frequency of inundation Etc. relative to natural regimes	At 2 – 3 years	Service Provider
MERIT services – as per contracts				
Services – project and core	Controlling threats: Controlling pest animals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treatment objective/s – eradication, control etc. Total treatment area (Ha) Type of treatment – baiting, exclusion fencing etc. Number of individuals OR colonies killed / removed 	In line with Outputs Reporting requirements	Service Provider
	Controlling threats: Controlling invasive weeds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treatment objective/s – eradication, control etc. Total treatment area (Ha) Type of treatment Species targeted 	In line with Outputs Reporting requirements	Service Provider

Level	Outcome/Activity	Indicators	Frequency of reporting	Who is responsible?
	Improving site condition: Protecting habitat by controlling access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type of structure(s) installed Number of structures installed Access control method used (aim of structure) Area protected by access control structure 	In line with Outputs Reporting requirements	Service Provider
	Improving site condition: Improving land management practices (e.g. stocking rates etc)	<p>Management practice change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industry Area covered by practice change Number of farming entities adopting this practice change Area of land directly benefiting from the practice change Type of agreement mechanism Area under agreement (ha) <p>Livestock management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land management issue being addressed via livestock management Area managed (ha) Grazing practice being used <p>Erosion management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area (ha) or length of stream or coastline (km) eroding (in this project area) Area (ha) of erosion being treated Length of stream/coastline treated (km) Erosion treatment method <p>Fencing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Length of fence Area protected by erected fence Purpose of fence 	In line with Outputs Reporting requirements	Service Provider
	Improving site condition: Improving hydrological regimes	<p>Water management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hydrological regime changed from and to structures in place to manage water at this site Area of catchment in hectares being managed as a result of this management action 	In line with Outputs Reporting requirements	Service Provider
	Improving site condition: Remediating riparian and aquatic areas	<p>Erosion treatment method</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> buffer strips size (length, area) <p>Revegetation</p> <p>Landscape connectivity via riparian link</p>	In line with Outputs Reporting requirements	Service Provider
	Community / stakeholder engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communities or groups engaged <p>Purpose of engagement (informing through to collaboration – IAP2)</p>	Throughout project	Service Provider
	Developing project/site management plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area covered by management plan Species included in management plan 	On Commencement	Service Provider
Core services	Maintain currency of NRM planning and prioritisation of management activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ramsar Ecological Character Description is sufficiently up-to-date to inform the project 	On commencement	Service Provider
	Support the Community Including Landcare, Indigenous communities and industry to participate in the delivery of projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance arrangements and structures engage community in the project delivery (e.g. stakeholder reference groups etc.) 	Throughout project	Service Provider
	Undertake communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications plan for the project developed and implemented 	Throughout project	Service Provider
	Develop Project Designs and Project Proposals Informed by: Ecological Character Assessment; Ramsar Site M'ment Plan; Ramsar Information Sheet; Threat Abatement Plan; Priority Actions for Site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline assessment of ecological character completed [YES/NO] (likely to be part of the process of site designation) Key threats and restoration opportunities identified and documented, based on the Ecological Character Assessment or Ramsar Information Sheet? [Yes/No] Priority Actions have been identified and documented, based on appropriate information and guidelines (e.g. Threat Abatement Plans, Conservation Advices etc.) 	On commencement	Service Provider
	Project coordination and MERI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MERI plan for the project developed (reflecting the program logic and delivery plans) 	Throughout project	Service Provider
	Maintain a productive, cooperative and ongoing relationship with the Departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefings of Australian government officers with responsibility for this project 	Throughout project	Service Provider