



Media release

Thursday 29 January 2026

WORLD FIRST FOR RARE MUSSELS

Offspring from an Australian-first Glenelg Freshwater Mussel conservation program have been released into the Crawford River in southwest Victoria in world-first restocking of the species in its last remaining population today.

The release is the first ever undertaken for the critically endangered species only found in waterways in south-west Victoria and is a significant milestone in a recovery project being undertaken by Glenelg Hopkins CMA, Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA), the Arthur Rylah Institute and Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation.

The *Building (Glenelg Freshwater) Mussels* project is funded by the Australian Government's Saving Native Species Program and is a two-year \$490,000 project which is delivering on-ground works around habitat waterways and a captive breeding program in the VFA's Snobs Creek Conservation Hatchery to reverse the decline of the species.

The release today of juvenile captive-bred mussels and adult mussels collected as part of the project from the Crawford River last year, was undertaken by Budj Bim Rangers from the Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation, VFA and Glenelg Hopkins CMA.

"It's really very exciting to get a point in this project where not only have mussels been found and taken into captivity, but they have been successfully bred in the conservation hatchery, and now those offspring can be returned to their native waterways where we have undertaken revegetation, fencing and sediment control works to ensure a healthy environment for them to return to and hopefully thrive in," Glenelg Hopkins CMA CEO Adam Bester said.

"Our Snobs Creek Conservation Hatchery was the first to breed these precious mussels last year, so it's exciting to see the offspring from those efforts boosting numbers in the wild," VFA CEO Travis Dowling said.

"By 2035 we aim to have seeded three new self-sustaining populations of these mussels in different parts of the system, to boost their genetic diversity and protect the species from the ongoing threat of bushfires, floods, siltation events, and introduced carp," Mr Dowling said.

Glenelg freshwater mussels live for up to 10 years, including an early-life stage spent as a parasite living on the fins and gills of small-bodied native fish, enabling their movement through the river system. They are only found in the sandy riverbeds of waterways in southwest Victoria and as filter feeders, their greatest threat to survival is sedimentation of those waterways through river-bank erosion, and fire ash deposits.

The Glenelg freshwater mussel is a part of the VFA's 10inTen plan to stock and recover ten threatened aquatic species in as many years, in partnership with the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action's Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research.

To find out more about the Glenelg Freshwater Mussel project visit www.ghcma.vic.gov.au for more information about the 10inTen plan, visit www.vfa.vic.gov.au/10inten



ENDS

Glenelg Hopkins CMA media contact: Liz Mecham 0436 631 740
VFA Media contact: Nick Talbot 0438 615 458

CAPTION:

Releasing the baby Glenelg Freshwater Mussels in the Crawford River in a world-first for the critically endangered species (L-R) Lashay Blurton, Budj Bim Ranger from Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation; Sam Fawke, Senior Technical Officer at the VFA Snob's Creek Conservation Hatchery; and Tim Covey, Senior Waterways Officer, Glenelg Hopkins CMA.

