

## Torrumbarry Weir

Torrumbarry Weir is a very pretty location within a bushland setting with birdlife, fishing, barbecues, playground equipment and a caravan park. Head north-west along the Murray Valley Highway for about 27 km to a signposted turnoff which is about 4 km past the tiny settlement of Torrumbarry. The weir is located 35 km north-west of Echuca and was completed in 1996 creating a dam with a capacity of approximately 35,000 megalitres.

Torrumbarry Weir was constructed to assist navigation of the Murray River and provide water for irrigation. It was designed in such a way that fourteen removable steel trestles could be winched out of the river to allow floods to pass. The Weir operated successfully until 1992 when major damage to its foundations was discovered, indicating deterioration of the ageing structure. Extensive repairs were carried out to enable the weir to continue functioning but a recurrence of the foundation failure could not be discounted and the long-term future of the weir was in doubt. It was then decided that the weir should be replaced with new structure. The new structure was completed over the period 1993 to 1996, at a cost of \$36 million, and comprised 6 hydraulically operated, steel radial gates. The existing lock structure, which allows river traffic through the weir, was retained. Purpose of the Weir Torrumbarry Weir and Lock were originally intended to be the most upstream of a series of weirs and locks extending from the mouth of the Murray to the Port of Echuca, to enable navigation of the river under all flow conditions. Approval for their construction was given in April 1919 by the then recently formed River Murray Commission. The design concept and detailing of the weir were attributed to John Stewart Dethridge, an eminent engineer of the day, a Commissioner of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission of Victoria, and Victoria's representative on the River Murray Commission. Water for irrigation was first diverted from the pool created by Torrumbarry Weir in June 1923. By then the importance of commercial navigation upstream of Mildura had diminished considerably and the ten weirs originally proposed between Euston and Torrumbarry were never constructed. While still enhancing navigability of over a 100 kilometres of the Murray, the main economic value of Torrumbarry Weir was in facilitating irrigation development along the river as far downstream as Swan Hill. It allowed consolidation and extension of irrigation in the Cohuna, Kerang and Swan Hill areas. The Weir Pool now supplies water for the Torrumbarry Irrigation System, which delivers around 500,000 megalitres each year to about 120,000 hectares of irrigated land, yielding agricultural products with a gross value of around \$130 million. It also provides water for the Kerang wetlands, while tourist and recreation facilities based at Echuca benefit as well. Recreation Torrumbarry Weir is a picturesque place amidst the Gunbower Island State Forest. Boating, fishing, camping and walking are just a few of the recreational activities you can do. Please note that the river's currents can make swimming dangerous. Heritage The original trestle weir and lock chamber have been listed as Historic Building No. 993 in Victoria. Major components of the trestle structure have been preserved and a Heritage Display/Information Centre was established.