



# VIC CATCHMENTS

A Collaboration of CMAs

## COMMUNIQUE 11 – DECEMBER 2019



Chairs and NRM Group representative at the National Chairs meeting at Wodonga in November.

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### Message from the Vic Catchments Chair

There has been a lot happening since our last Communique. We have a new Acting Executive Officer, Tony Baker, who will be working with us until we formally recruit to the position. We thank John Riddiford for all his hard work and wish him well as the new CEO at Corangamite CMA.



We attended a wonderful NRM Australia Conference in Wodonga, which coincided with a Vic Catchments meeting and national Chairs meeting.

We have recently signed an MOU with the VEWB and we have begun the early stages of forming a strong relationship with the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability.

I was also pleased to speak on behalf of Vic Catchments at the River Basin Management Society awards. As a major sponsor, it was a great opportunity to showcase how #CMAsGetItDone and it was exciting to see so many CMA projects being recognised on the night.

In this edition, we detail some of our recent activities and how this might influence our strategic direction in 2020.

*Sharyon Peart*

## Strategic partnerships

Vic Catchments is making a concerted effort to form strategic partnerships with several organisations that play a critical role in CMA business. This allows for discussions and collaboration on State-wide topics of interest.

We already have an MOU with Landcare Victoria and we will be discussing Landcare Victoria's role in the upcoming RCS development and challenges facing our volunteers.

In December, we signed an MOU with the VEWH. One of our first activities will be to work to adapting processes to ensure we achieve maximum shared benefits through the delivery of water for the environment.



*Vic Catchment Chair Sharyon Peart and Chair VEWH Chris Chesterfield.*

We are continuing to work with the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability. We are represented on the Commissioners Reference Group and the Technical Advisory Groups for Marine and Coastal Environments and Water Resources.

We are also progressing discussions with Zoos Victoria and Victorian Fisheries Authority about how we might work together for mutual benefit.

These are important initiatives as they make it easier for these organisations to work with our industry on broad State-wide strategic issues.

## NRM Regions Australia Conference and National Chairs meeting

In November NRM Australia ran its 7<sup>th</sup> NRM Knowledge Conference in Wodonga. Well done to the North East CMA for coordinating the event. Especially to Katie Warner and her team. It was a massive effort and the conference was of a very high calibre. It was another showcase of how #CMAsGetItDone with Victorian CMAs dominating the programme.

The conference was well attended and well represented by CMAs. The theme of the conference was *Creating Resilience through NRM – how do we do it?* At our Vic Catchments forum that week, we reflected that there were some consistent messages observed through the week, including:

- don't be afraid (think big, look outwards not inwards, partner with unlikely groups)
- a feeling it was time to think about transitioning or transforming NRM systems to cope with climate change rather than just protecting what we have
- in many ways Australia and Victoria is seen as a leader.
- We are better together.

The Vic Catchments Forum agreed on several actions. Some of these involved investigating relationships with some key groups that are proactively acting on climate change.

Following the conference, the National Chairs met. Amongst other things, the meeting discussed a *Call to Action* as a result of the themes discussed and workshopped at the Conference. This is still to be finalised by NRM Regions Australia and circulated for further comment. A resolution was also passed unanimously that 'NRM Regions Australia become a legal entity as a company limited by guarantee and that a draft constitution for NRM Regions Australia be drafted'. While the legal details are still to be finalised, it was agreed that this should be pursued as soon as possible. The rationale for this is that if we are to have the capacity to influence National policy and seek funding for large National projects, we need to have appropriate legal governance structures in place as a professional sector.

*NRM Regions Australia Chair Emma Jackson presents to delegates*





## Sustainable Agriculture

At our Vic Catchments meeting in November we were given a presentation from Jay Cummins from IAD Consortium on the Vic Catchments Sustainable Agriculture project.



The aim of the project is to identify a range of project opportunities that can form part of a sustainable agricultural project delivery portfolio in which Victorian CMAs can actively lead and participate. The project has been led by David Brennan with assistance from John Riddiford.

Jay has identified that the CMAs value proposition consists of:

- Our ability to provide a bridge between identifying and promoting sustainable agriculture practice on farm through engaging with farming communities; and
- Our projects are underpinned by sound evidence-based knowledge; with practice change strategies developed that aim to reduce the impact of the farming on the environment through restoring soil health, enhancing soil quality and fertility.

The next steps are to:

- Develop a project concept for consideration that has a clear understanding of investor priorities and required partnership approaches.
- Meet with key stakeholders including Landcare Victoria, Ag Vic and VFF.
- Develop a potential proposal outlining regional sustainable agriculture practices that aligns with the objectives of the national Future Drought Resilience Fund.

A project brief will be presented at the February Vic Catchments meeting.

## Future Drought Fund.



The Australian Government's Department of Agriculture have released a draft Drought Resilience Funding Plan for comment. Feedback is requested by 13 December 2019.

The Plan's, Future Drought Fund, aims to provide secure continuous funding for drought resilience initiatives, to Australian farms and communities to prepare for the impacts of drought.

The Fund begins with an initial credit of \$3.9 billion. Earnings will be reinvested until the balance reaches \$5 billion (expected in 2028-29). From 1 July 2020, \$100 million will be made available each year to support Australian farmers and communities. They will use these funds to prepare for, and become resilient to, the effects of inevitable future drought.

Funding will be for projects or activities that enhance the public good by building drought resilience. The types of things that could be funded may include:

- Restoring native vegetation for soil or water regeneration
- Financial and business planning for primary producers to improve ability to manage through lower income periods caused by drought
- Training and information for primary producers in areas such as finance and business planning, managing climate risk and sustainable stock management
- Training and information on local climate variability and advice on climate risk applied to specific locations
- Research in drought resilience
- Improving data on fodder and impacts from drought, including market trends.

Vic Catchment have submitted a response to the draft Plan. We have put forward a positive response and suggested that CMAs are well placed to assist in delivering the fund because of our regional NRM planning, our partnerships, our expertise and strong governance arrangements.

## Other priorities

Our Executive have attended several meetings to progress our strategic relationships and to raise the profile of Vic Catchments including:



- Met with the VEW's CEO to finalise arrangements for the finalisation of our MOU.
- Met with Helen Vaughan and Karen Lau to discuss EC5 planning, communication on environmental water in a dry period, RCS renewal and the Board of Directors meeting in March.
- Met with Landcare Victoria to discuss our focus for 2020 including an invitation to the February Vic Catchments meeting.
- Met with Gillian Sparkes, Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability, and staff to discuss our involvement on the Commissioners' Technical Advisory Groups.

Our next Vic Catchments meeting will occur on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2020. This meeting will be focussing on our strategic direction. We will be reengaging with our formal partners, reviewing our performance and reassessing our strategic priorities and actions. I encourage all our Chairs and Board Directors to consider this prior to the meeting.



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*We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the country we work on and pay our respects to them and their elders: past, present and future.*