

### Message from the Chair

Welcome to 2021. We hope that it is a happy and productive year for everyone.

The uncertainty around coronavirus (COVID-19) seems to linger but we hope that with the vaccine rolling out that things may slowly becoming more certain.

The uncertainty did impact Vic Catchments. It was unfortunate that we could not hold our February meeting in Queenscliff but we felt it was too risky in the circumstances. We did manage to redesign our agenda and it was full and meaningful (more details later). I'd like to acknowledge the hard work by Kate Gorman from Corangamite CMA and our administration officer Carmel who organised and reorganised our event without a hiccup. We are keen to play our small bit in stimulating the regional economy and we will attempt to go face-to-face in May but will keep an eye on things.



At our February meeting we were lucky enough to have visits from some very high-profile guests including the newly appointed Parliamentary Secretary for Water, Harriet Shing. We also honoured a legend of natural resource management Angus Hume. We have been striving to farewell Angus for over 12 months since his retirement from the Victorian Catchment Management Council. While we could not do so in person, we were able to recognise him with humour and respect.

This period sees the release of the [CMAs' Actions and Achievements report for 2019/20](#). This report again showcases the amazing outcomes and actions delivered by our CMAs with the support of government and the community. I encourage you all to take the time to read it. It is another example of how #CMAsGetItDone.

Sharyon Peart

## **Vic Catchments meeting February 25-26**

In recognition of the fatigue that occurs with online meetings we split our meeting over two days.

### **February 25**

The first day of our meeting was designed as an update of our activities since November 2020 and where we are heading in 2021.

We were grateful for briefings from DELWP, significantly the Sustainable Waterway Strategy for the Central and Gippsland region of southern Victoria which will be the focus of the department for the year ahead. It focusses on challenges with availability and water quality for consumptive and environmental purposes and the decline in long-term water availability due to climate change. This will be a major policy driver for Victoria.

We also heard more about the Nature Restoration for Carbon Storage – the BushBank program. This is a significant investment program for biodiversity in Victoria. Vic Catchments will continue to engage with DELWP and Trust for Nature to further explore how CMAs can assist with this exciting program.

We reflected on our good work preparing ourselves to take advantage of funding in agriculture and it was pleasing to hear how CMAs have three of the 12 projects across Australia funded under the Australian Government's NRM Drought Resilience program. We also heard about the power of collaboration in developing a very strong partnership proposal for the Australian Government's Future Research Hub.

We also discussed CMAs' potential role in carbon offsets. There are risks and opportunities within this emerging industry and our CEOs will be working together to explore these in more detail.

Vic Catchments also received a brief on our progress towards delivering our strategic plan. Despite COVID-19 there has been a lot happening and our CEOs with the Executive Officer have been working on an action plan.

**February 26 - guest presenters**

On Friday we heard from guests about emerging areas that may influence our business.

**Harriet Shing**

We were joined by Harriet Shing, the recently appointed Parliamentary Secretary for Water. This was Harriet's first official function in her new role. Harriet paid tribute to the work that has been done by CMAs to translate government funding into enduring outcomes on the ground. The CMAs are looking forward to welcoming Harriet face-to-face in the regions and talking through their priorities.



**Angus Hume**

Harriet joined us in honouring Angus Hume. A special presentation was made to Angus who retired as Chair of the Victorian Catchment Management Council 12 months ago. Angus has had a long and expansive career in the water industry which was recently recognised with the presentation of a 2021 Member of the Order of Australia medal. Details of Angus's accomplishments are included at the end of this communique. There was acknowledgement that he is a supreme influencer, one who brings his relationship building skills to calm the waters and make sure everyone works together to achieve the best outcome. His generosity in sharing knowledge and ability to relate to people at all levels with warmth and humour are outstanding. On behalf of Vic Catchments Marty Fuller presented Angus with a piece of artistic glassware designed and manufactured by a fully-owned co-op of the Wadawurrung Traditional Owner group.



**Ruben Berg**

Rueben wears many hats in the water industry, including as a Commissioner with VEWH and as a board member of Westernport Water Corp but at our meeting he spoke in his capacity as a member of the First People's Assembly of Victoria. Rueben shared his own views on the Victorian Treaty with First Nations People and how CMAs might assist with the process and how it might influence our business. We look forward to being involved as things progress.

**Adam Fennessy**

Adam is well known to Vic Catchments as the former Secretary of DELWP. Adam is now the Victorian Public Sector Commissioner and he presented on how the public sector moves forward under COVID-19. Adam explained that COVID-19 has taught us there is no certainty and that we must draw upon resilience to maintain our capability. The priority for the public sector in a COVID context is the management of the very significant investment in fiscal recovery for Victoria to reach as many parts of the economy as possible. It involves determining how to deliver on these multi-billion-dollar investments, how to access skills, and continue that reinvestment into landscapes and communities. Adam also explained that there were many lessons from working in lockdown and that we can change our workplaces to take advantage of the positive aspects.



**Emma Jackson and Kate Andrews**

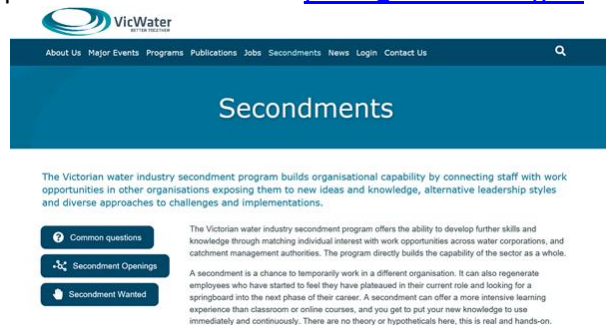
Emma (Chair - left) and Kate (CEO - right) presented an overview of NRM Regions Australia outlining the evolution of the organisation and that it is now a legal entity with its own constitution and draft strategic plan. They explained how the organisation has responded to member requests to become more professional and expand its vision, and to do so requires additional resources provided by its members. It was acknowledged that the knowledge sharing, information and skills uplift and leverage, and the credibility gained through a collective that can tap into national and international opportunities is extremely valuable.



## Recent activities

### Partnerships and collaborations

A partnership between Vic Catchments, VEWH and Vic Water has resulted in the development of a water industry secondment portal on the [Vic Water website](#). This follows a report developed in 2018 assessing the challenges and opportunities of secondments across the industry. For queries please contact Jo Lim via [jo.lim@vicwater.org.au](mailto:jo.lim@vicwater.org.au).



Vic Catchments and Landcare Victoria are working on a joint action plan aimed at driving the outcomes of our MoU. We continue to meet with our other MoU partner, the VEWH, and we have had a series of meetings with Trust for Nature to explore partnerships.

### A stronger industry

We have recently coordinated responses to several initiatives including:

- Feedback on the Murray Darling Healthy River program guidelines. (The first round of the small grants program has recently been released).
- Survey on the National Soils Strategy.

### Our people

With CMAs still waiting for confirmation of funding from the Victorian Government over the next three years the decision has been made to extend Tony Baker's acting arrangement as the Executive Officer position until the end of July 2021.

### **Honouring NRM legend Angus Hume**

Below is an edited extract from the nomination for Angus' Australia Day award. We are very proud that one of our own has been recognised.

*Angus Hume has excelled in his contribution to the community; at local, regional, state and national levels including being a senior adviser to a Minister for Agriculture (2009-2010). His collective knowledge is outstanding and is shared with all in a warm and humble manner. His contribution to regional, state and national organisations and boards is revered. The respect is enhanced by the warmth and the humbleness of his manner and his friendship is a treasure. He has been involved in policy and delivery of natural resource management at the national level and with the states and his judgement and advice is truly valued. Angus excelled in NRM policy and management and became Chair of Chairs of the 57 NRM Regions in Australia and currently is Chair of the Victorian Catchment Management Council. Angus was Chair of the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority and on his retirement received the Lyrebird Award. Current Chair Peter Jennings OAM said; "It's hard to find a bigger advocate for catchment management than Angus Hume".*

*The diversity of Angus' skills and knowledge is outstanding and note he is currently involved in the development of the Centre for Excellence in Environment Practice and Investment at Churchill, Gippsland.*

