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Vic Catchments Forum Newsletter | Issue 19 | June 2022



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COMMUNIQUÉ

Message from the Chair

As we move into winter we are pleased to see some good rainfall across Victoria. Our farmers are smiling, snow is falling in the high country and some of our rivers are running.

We celebrated getting back together at our recent Vic Catchments meeting in Melbourne at the end of May. This was the first face-to-face Vic Catchments meeting since February 2020. It was timely, as we have just completed a review of Vic Catchments and one of the high priorities for us was to re-engage face-to-face as it is very clear that the best way to build our team is in person.

We also took the time to recognise two of our previous CMA Chairs who have made significant contributions to Vic Catchments (more on that later).

The 2020-2021 Actions and Achievements report has been released and we again thank the Minister for Water for supporting this product. We acknowledge the hard work of North Central CMA who produced the report this year. It is a wonderful product that explains the extensive work that our CMAs deliver with their communities. The report can be found at <https://viccatchments.com.au/resources/publications/>.



Peter Hilbig

Vic Catchments Meeting

VicWater

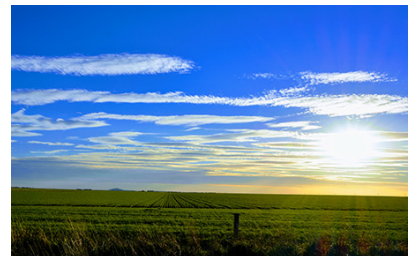
We welcomed Jo Lim, Acting CEO of VicWater, to our meeting. This was the first meeting to take place since we signed our MOU with VicWater and Jo provided us with a brief overview of their current activities relating to CMAs including:



- Their strategic partnership with Monash Sustainable Development Institute which is working to develop specific governance training for water sector directors, including CMAs.
- Market analysis of carbon emissions offsets. As Water Corps have a net zero target to meet and are restricted to only buying Victorian offsets, VicWater is assessing whether supply will meet demand and if not, what steps will need to be taken. CMAs are key stakeholders in this and VicWater is therefore working closely with CMA State-wide Climate Change Coordinator, Jason Mullins.
- Support for WaterAble who will be holding a workshop in the coming months with Water Corps and CMAs to discuss opportunities to increase the employment of people with disabilities in the water sector.
- Supporting the Women in Water Directors Network which has expanded to include CMAs.

Victorian Agriculture Sector Pledge

Wimmera CMA CEO David Brennan presented a paper on the Victorian Agriculture and Climate Change Statement. The Statement is one of four actions under the Victorian 2021 Agriculture Sector Pledge.



The other actions include:

- Research trials.
- On farm action plan pilot.
- Spatial data and tools.

The Statement aims to develop a shared vision and pathway for agriculture's net zero emissions and climate-resilient economy. David is part of a high-level working group that is working with Agriculture Victoria (Ag Vic) to finalise the statement. Ag Vic aim to release the statement in June.

NRM Regions Australia



After working on the structure and governance of the organisation to build its foundation over the past two years, Emma Jackson, Chair of NRM Regions Australia, is very excited to advise a shift to a more outward-looking focus.

The Federal election result represents quite a big change for NRM RA but the messaging is consistent: the importance of regional resource management, relevancy, and building climate resiliency. NRM RA has built very strong relationships with the people below Ministerial level and

will look to build on those relationships.

A showcase by Kate Andrews to Andrew Metcalfe and 120 of his DAWE staff, was extremely well received and the fact that so many staff were asked to attend sent a clear message that NRM is important.

The relationship with the National Landcare Network (NLN) is being fostered through regular meetings with Jim Adams and their Chair. Emma felt it was important to share knowledge and be loyal to each other with the aim of demonstrating to the Federal government that NRM RA and NLN are partners, not competitors.

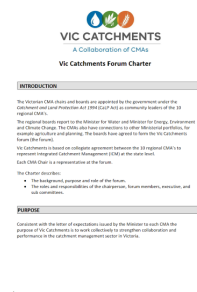
It is a busy year for NRM RA with the national CEOs forum in Canberra in July and the National Knowledge Conference being held in Margaret River 31 October – 2 November followed by the Chairs' Forum to be held on 3-4 November.

Helen Reynolds is the Vic Catchments representative on NRM RA and is available to flag issues at those meetings on behalf of CMAs/Vic Catchments.

Vic Catchments Review

Consistent with our Charter, Vic Catchments conducts a review of its performance every three years. Chair, Peter Hilbig, presented a paper outlining the results of the review, which included surveys and exit interviews of outgoing Chairs.

Now that the necessary focus on governance has been completed, there will be a stronger shift to an outward focus on advocacy and networking.



Partnerships and collaboration



Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability (CES)

During March we continued working with the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Victoria (CES) and DELWP on an agreed process for how the CES office request data for the development of the State of the Environment Report. It was agreed that initial requests should be to DELWP and, where necessary, DELWP will liaise with CMAs. Vic Catchments will coordinate feedback on report drafts.

VicWater

We have been working with Jo Lim, Acting CEO VicWater, in line with the MOU finalised recently. Jo and Vic Catchments Executive Officer, Tony Baker, have been discussing the VicWater Director Development Program, carbon offsets and joint positions.



WaterAble

WaterAble is a group that is looking to promote the employment of people with

disabilities in the water sector. Tony attended their last meeting where opportunities for CMAs to get involved in annual events were discussed.



Environment and Climate Change Minister's Office

Peter Hilbig, Chris Cumming, Adam Bester and Tony Baker are continuing to hold meetings with the Environment and Climate Change Minister's Office. A major topic of discussion is the data that is available to report against Biodiversity 2037.



Agriculture Biodiversity Stewardship

The Executive Officer attended a briefing session on the Agriculture Biodiversity Stewardship Marketing Bill run by the Australian Government. The Bill was introduced into the House of Representatives on 9 February 2022 but lapsed when Parliament was prorogued (and before any further consideration/debate could occur). Reintroduction of the Bill will be a matter for a future government.



MTIA and Arthur Rylah Institute

Tony Baker continues to liaise with the Major Transport Infrastructure Authority (MTIA) and Arthur Rylah Institute in relation to the timber reuse MOU. The MOU is designed to facilitate the use of timber, removed for roads projects, to be used in waterway rehabilitation.

Tony has provided MTIA with a list of sites for timber reuse that have been identified by CMAs. We are seeking a list of road project sites where there is likely to be timber available. Recently a webmap was published of projects including their delivery phase: <https://bigbuild.vic.gov.au/projects/major-road-projects-victoria/all-mrpv-projects> It gives a useful picture of upcoming project locations under the 'planning' category.



It is assumed that timber will be available from all these projects, although the volume and type will vary.

A Stronger Industry

Biosecurity Statement for Victoria



Vic Catchments was represented at an Ag Vic workshop to discuss the Biosecurity Statement for Victoria. The Statement will be a shared narrative for Victoria's biosecurity system and set the expectations for the 2023 Biosecurity Strategy for Victoria.

It will outline why biosecurity is important to Victoria's industries, environment, economy, and people and why we need to work together for a stronger system. It will also include agreed principles to guide reform and priority areas for the Biosecurity Strategy. The Biosecurity Statement is expected to be finalised mid-year.

Ag Vic



Vic Catchments has been liaising with Ag Vic on the development of the Victorian Climate Change and Agriculture Statement.

The Statement is one action under the 2021 Agriculture Sector Climate Change Pledge. It aims to develop a shared vision and pathway for agriculture's net zero emissions and climate-resilient economy. The aim is to release it in June.

On the road...



Our Chair, Peter Hilbig and Tony Baker, Executive Officer, recently met with the West Gippsland CMA Board. Following this they went on a tour with West Gippsland CMA and East Gippsland CMA. They ended with a series of meetings in Melbourne with Landcare Victoria, DELWP and VicWater, prior to the Vic Catchments meeting.

It was an opportunity to reconnect and understand some of the current challenges and opportunities across Victoria.

Regional Catchment Strategies

Vic Catchments has progressed an analysis of common issues stemming from the Regional Catchment Strategies. While there is more work to do, the main issues that have been identified so far include:

- Changing demographics – Population declines in rural areas meaning we can't deliver projects and programs the same way. Population increases in and around cities putting pressure on the environment and our statutory functions.
- Water availability and deliverability – changing climate and competitive markets creating tensions across Victoria.
- Landuse change – land values increasing, competing uses and engagement with more diverse landholders.



Website updates...



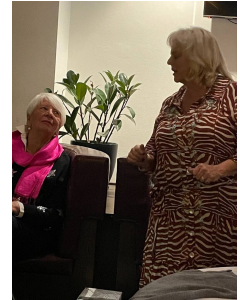
We have made some amendments to the VicCatchments.com.au website such as promoting Insight: Executive Leadership for Women in Water on the Home page.

We have also published our new Charter and the latest Actions & Achievements Report. Ongoing updates recognising Melbourne Water as a part of Vic Catchments, are also being made – please bear with us as we refresh the site.

Our People

Vic Catchments Dinner

At our recent Vic Catchments meeting in Melbourne we were able to recognise the contribution to Vic Catchments of two of our outstanding leaders, Alice Knight and Sharyon Peart, pictured (right) at an informal dinner.



Alice Knight

Alice Knight represented Victoria at NRM Regions Australia for several years. She played an integral role in establishing NRM RA as a legal entity and was a strong advocate for Victoria at the national level. Alice was also a very strong advocate for Vic Catchments and was a superior communicator and relationship builder for our industry.



Sharyon Peart

Sharyon Peart was Chair of Vic Catchments for two years and also spent time as Deputy Chair. Sharyon led Vic Catchments through the worst of Covid-19 and despite the limitations of the pandemic restrictions was able to strengthen existing relationships and form new ones with many organisations. Sharyon oversaw the formation of the MOU with the Victorian Environmental Water Holder.

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Vic Catchments

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the country we work on and pay our respects to their elders past, present and emerging