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Vic Catchments Forum Newsletter | Issue 21 | December 2022



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COMMUNIQUÉ

Message from the Chair

Over the last couple of months many of our regions have experienced significant flooding and we are reminded of the risk floods pose to life and property. CMA staff have been involved in the flood response supporting the VICSES in Incident Control Centres, providing flood information to the community and assessing damage.

As the flood response ramps down, our people will become more involved in recovery, hand-in-hand with other authorities and the communities. We wish all those communities that have been impacted, a speedy recovery and hope that the weather gives us some respite over summer.

Despite the disruption of the floods, CMAs are working hard to continue to deliver their services for integrated catchment management outcomes for our regions.

In November some of our CMA Board members and staff attended the NRM Regional Australia Knowledge Conference in Margaret River. This provided a great opportunity to share knowledge with our interstate colleagues and hear and discuss the emerging challenges and opportunities for our industry. More detail later in this Communiqué.

We were pleased that we could have our November Vic Catchments meeting face-to-face in Melbourne. Covid-19 has taught us that we can effectively operate online, but face-to-face contact is critical to building our team. We have agreed to use a combination of approaches throughout the year.



We note the Victorian Election has returned the Andrews Labor Government and we look forward to working with the new ministry.

As 2022 comes to an end I would like to acknowledge all the hard work of the Boards and staff from our CMAs and Melbourne Water. It has been another year of uncertainty and challenges, however, with the support of our partners and communities, we continue to get things done.

In closing, please have a safe and enjoyable festive season and we will see you in 2023.

Peter Hilbig



Vic Catchments Meeting

Our 17 November 2022 meeting was the last face-to-face meeting for the year and highlights are outlined below. Our next meeting will be held online on 24 February 2023. The 2023 meeting schedule is included later in Communiqué.

Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEWH)



We were joined by our MOU partners from VEWB - Chris Chesterfield (Chair), Jennifer Fraser (Commissioner), and Beth Ashworth (CEO) - who are embarking on the development of a 10-year strategic plan.

2021 marked 10 years since the VEWB was established and this prompted reflection within the VEWB on how Victoria's environmental watering program and its context have evolved and where they would like it to be in 10 years time.

The 10-year Strategy is a direction-setting document focusing on the VEWB's strategic obligations and priorities to evolve the environmental watering program, where the VEWB has a role to lead, influence and partner. It complements Vic Catchments' shorter-term strategic planning cycles and operating environment as described in the Corporate Plan.

Vic Catchments committed to providing feedback to the draft strategy.

Landcare Victoria Inc (LVI) - Andrew Maclean

Landcare Victoria and Vic Catchments have an MOU which complements our strong strategic relationship.

CEO, Andrew Maclean, said LVI established a strategic plan a year ago to look at what Landcare needs to do to be successful for the next 10-20 years given contextual challenges such as climate change, pathways to investment and supply chain challenges. The first phase was a consultation round, the product of which is on their website now. Brooke Herman's firm, Projectura, has been contracted to move that forward to the next phase and will be in contact with CMAs for further consultation. The goal is for LVIs' strategic direction to reflect the cares of Landcare communities.



The Advancing Landcare project with funding from ARI, The Ross Trust and DELWP is looking at building capacity with a focus on committees and facilitators - work that needs to be coordinated closely with CMAs.

Areas where LVI and CMAs can continue to work together were explored.

Andrew and Vic Catchments Executive Officer, Tony Baker, were key participants in the National Statement of Collaboration Principles. The Victorian model of collaboration was a model for this

national approach.

Vic Catchments agreed to support LVI in the development of the Victorian Landcare Plan and will attend their workshop on the 8th of December.

Floodplain Management

Mike Jenz from DELWP joined us to discuss the current flood situation.

Some areas we discussed for further consideration included:

- Converting flood studies to planning scheme amendments.
- Flood development policies and standards.
- Flood recovery – which CMAs will be coordinating for waterway health.



Victorian My Waterways survey

Lisa Rankin, Strategic Engagement Manager, DELWP, gave an overview of the *Victorian My Waterway* survey which was conducted earlier this year to test and understand the community's connection to waterways. It builds on baseline data from the previous survey conducted in 2009. It will inform the new Vic Waterway Management Strategy, including the development of a new community vision.



The full report contains a breakdown for each catchment region, outlining regional differences in attitude, usage and perspective. This will also be useful in informing the development of the next version of Regional Waterway Strategies.

Women In Water Directors Network (WWDN)

Nicola Hepenstall, Co-Chair of Women in Water Directors Network, gave an overview of the work WWDN is doing to influence water organisations to improve gender balance at all levels. While women are well represented in the water industry at Director level, there is more work to do in the “frozen middle”. Looking at annual performance, the water industry is strong on flexible work but can do more in other targets like gender balance. Tier 2 managers have declined to 38% female and Tier 1 managers have declined from 46% to 37% female.



WWDN run 3-4 panel discussions and events during the year. The March event looks at the benefits of cultural diversity and the way it can bring new thinking to organisations. Nicola would love to see more people from CMAs there and more CMA Allies.

NRM Knowledge Conference - Margaret River

In early November many CMA and Melbourne Water board members and staff attended the 2022 NRM Knowledge Conference in Margaret River, WA. Normally run every two years, this was the first conference since Wodonga in 2019, due to Covid-19 restrictions.



There were many highlights from the conference but two sessions in particular stood out for Vic Catchments to consider:

- The Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists National Case for Repair.
- Natural Capital Accounting and Environmental Accounts.

Vic Catchments is working with NRM Regions Australia and the other States and territories to further explore these topics.

Partnerships and collaboration

WaterAble

Vic Catchments continues to engage with WaterAble which is a group seeking to support people with disabilities in the government water sector. We attended the WaterAble workshop on the 9th of September. There are several priority actions stemming from the workshop that will be shared with CMAs and water corporations.



Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability

Vic Catchments continues to support the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability in the development of the State of the Environment Report by collating feedback and case studies from CMAs.

NRM Regions Australia

We continue to meet with NRM Regions Australia and other jurisdictions fortnightly. The last meeting included a brief from Steve Costello from the Australian Government's Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.



LVI

We have held one of our regular meetings with the with LVI Chair, Jane Carney, and CEO, Andrew Maclean. Key points discussed included Australian Government priorities, engagement between CMAs and LVI, and our commitment to our MOU.



A Stronger Industry

Weeds of National Significance Program



Vic Catchments contributed to the peak body round table on the National Established Weeds Priority Framework. This is a process to reinvigorate the Weeds of National Significance program. While not a funding program, it will set priorities for actions at both the weed level and landscape level.

Australian Drought Response, Resilience and Preparedness Plan

Vic Catchments developed a response to the Australian Drought Response, Resilience and Preparedness Plan. We highlighted the work CMAs and Melbourne Water have done in this space and suggested we could do more through the regional model if funding was available.

National Soils Action Plan

We also developed a response to the Australian Government's National Soils Action Plan. The Action Plan sits under the National Soils Strategy and outlines a series of focus areas rather than a commitment from government. It will potentially guide future investment in soils by the Australian Government.



Reforming Victoria's Biosecurity Legislation

Vic Catchments made a submission to the Victorian Government on the discussion paper – Reforming Victoria's Biosecurity Legislation. We highlighted the need to create enabling legislation that allows the community to participate in biosecurity efforts as efficiently and effectively as possible.



Vic Catchments Future Meeting Schedule

Friday, 24 February 2023 – Online

Thursday, 18 May 2023 – Melbourne

Friday, 25 August 2023 – Online

Thursday, 16 November 2023 - Melbourne



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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*