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Vic Catchments Forum Newsletter | Issue 23 | June 2023



COMMUNIQUÉ

Message from the Chair

With excitement we recently released our 2022 *Actions & Achievements* report. This year we took the opportunity to showcase not only our annual achievements but the legacy of 25 years of work by our CMAs. See more detail below.

Currently our CMAs and Melbourne Water (MW) are awaiting an announcement about our applications to the Australian Government Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) program. We understand that the Australian Government staff are working hard behind the scenes to ensure the successful projects are approved and rolled out into the regions as soon as possible. We have been involved in several workshops to help guide the agricultural sustainability priorities for the NHT program.

We were recently informed by the Victorian Government that there will be no extra funding provided for flood recovery. We recognise the Victorian budget is tight and we will need to look to adapt our current and future funding to deal with the ongoing environmental threats posed by the floods. In the meantime, the Victorian Government has begun its inquiry in to the 2022 floods which we have been supporting through DEECA. We look forward to the findings.

At our May meeting the Chairs elected their new Executive members. The new Executive will begin on 1 July 2023 and includes:

- Cath Jenkins, Corangamite CMA – Chair
- Peter Hilbig, Wimmera CMA – Deputy Chair
- Tony Ford, Glenelg Hopkins CMA – NRM Regions Australia representative.

I would like to thank Helen Reynolds as Victoria's outgoing NRM Regions Australia (NRM RA) representative. Helen has done an outstanding job representing us on the NRM RA Board and making sure our voices are heard.



We also farewell Karen Lau from DEECA who has sat on our Executive for several years. Karen has been a keen supporter of Vic Catchments and we are grateful for the time and insight that she brought to our group. We wish her well in her new role at South East Water.

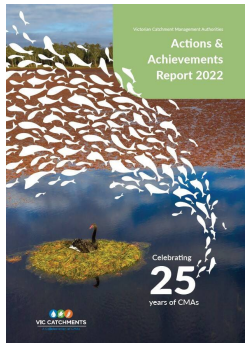
As current Chair, my two-year term comes to an end on 30 June 2023. I would like to thank our Chairs and CEOs for their support and engagement in Vic Catchments. Over the past two years we have re-engaged significantly since the restrictions brought about by the pandemic. It has meant we have been able to connect as CMAs but also connect more meaningfully with our partners. We have continued to build our relationships with key partners and form a new relationship with VicWater.

Once again thank you.

Peter Hilbig



Actions & Achievements Report 2022



Vic Catchments recently released its *Actions & Achievements Report 2022*.

Culminating with the 25th anniversary of the formation of CMAs, this year's

report not only outlines the achievements for the past year but also includes case studies demonstrating the legacy delivered over the last 25 years.

Supported by the Minister for Water, Harriet Shing, this is the ninth Actions & Achievements report developed to showcase the achievements of our CMAs.

[See the Actions & Achievements Report 2022...](#)

This year we have also developed a summary document, which includes all the relevant facts and figures for easy and quick reference.

[See the A&A Report Summary...](#)



Vic Catchments Meeting

Our May meeting was held face-to-face in Melbourne on 18th May 2023. The next meeting is scheduled to be online on Friday 25th of August 2023. The 2023 meeting schedule is included later in Communiqué.

NRM Regions Australia (NRM RA) Update



Kate Andrews, NRM RA CEO, provided a brief overview on what is happening at a federal level.

Kate said the new government has a full agenda and is looking to push things through, so she is engaged with multiple committees and a lot of work is being done across Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Capital Accounting.

Kate was pleased that there was regular reference to National Resource Management in the recent budget. This is a very positive sign that there is acknowledgement that NRM groups are important to government as delivery partners.

VicWater

Vic Catchments has formed a very strong working partnership with VicWater, so it was exciting to have David Middleton, Chair (pictured right), and Jo Lim, Chief Executive Officer, join our meeting after we presented to their Board earlier in the year.

David and Jo provided an overview of VicWater, its aims, membership, structure and current activities.

We discussed the potential synergies between the organisations and areas for information sharing, such as: diversity and inclusion; First Nations people engagement; water and catchment literacy; director induction; and the Environmental Contribution levy. These will be areas for focus via our MOU.



DEECA Update

Deb Brown, Executive Director Governance and Sector Support (right), provided an update on the current Board recruitment process for water corporations, CMAs and the VEW. It was pleasing to hear that the application numbers and diversity are high. The potential for CMA boards to engage Aboriginal delegates has been confirmed since the meeting and guidance is currently being developed.



We discussed the concept of DEECA, Vic Water and Vic Catchments working together to develop appropriate induction and training for new Board Directors. This was supported and plans were made for follow up discussions.

Andrew Fennessy and Mike Jensz gave the forum an update on progress with the Water & Catchments response to the flood inquiry; progress on other flood activities; and some technical assessments on flood mitigation they had commissioned at Lake Eppalock and Lake Eildon.

Natural Capital Workshop Report

The recent NRM RA sponsored Natural Capital Accounting workshop in Canberra was discussed. Natural capital accounting is a method for measuring the health and benefits of nature. At the heart of the method is recognising (i) that nature is an asset and (ii) that the extent and condition of that asset (the stock) underpins the flow of ecosystem services and benefits to the economy and society, both now and in the future.

The workshop was well received but the market is still uncertain about the concept and there is still a lot of work to do to remove the uncertainty. There is an opportunity for CMAs to value add as we have data that is desirable to organisations wishing to invest. It was agreed that it would be important for CMAs to recognise the value of their data, to ensure it continues to have integrity and to retain control over it.



Melbourne Water

Dr Nerina De Lorenzo, CEO of Melbourne Water, provided an update on how the integration of Port Phillip Westernport CMA into Melbourne Water (MW) had progressed. She said transition of staff and processes had now settled and the current focus is on imbedding catchment management as part of MW's identity, along with water management. There are some pilot projects in train to imbed 'integrated catchment and water management' into MW's language and goals.



MW will have a new Chair in October and half the board will change-over.

Kirsten Shelly, EGM Service Futures, was excited to report MW had delivered their first RCS and she shared some examples of the projects coming to life under that.



Partnerships and collaboration

Landcare Victoria

We have been involved in Landcare Victoria's workshops for the development of their Strategic Priority Statement. This provided another chance to assist with the strategy and explain where Landcare can leverage off already existing systems and processes in CMAs and other organisations.



Our Chair and Executive Officer had a series of meetings in Melbourne with several stakeholders on the 4th and 5th of April. This was on the back of an invitation to the VicWater Board meeting. We were able to meet with:

Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEWH)

We discussed with VEWH how our MOU obligations are being met. We also received a brief on the Traditional Owner watering proposal trials. We discussed the upcoming review of the Victorian Waterway Management Strategy and the Regional Waterway Strategies and how environmental water might contribute to the landscape approach CMAs take in delivering catchment outcomes.



Landcare Victoria (LVI)

We discussed the National Landcare Program (NLP) approach to market and the Landcare industry's desire to have some direct funding to Landcare rather than competing with NRMs. LVI acknowledges the need to reference and align with Regional Catchment Strategies both through their strategies and funding proposals.



LVI have commenced their *New Futures for Victorian Landcare* project with support from the Potter Foundation and Natural Resource Conservation League. The core of the project involves the development of investment-ready landscape plans, designed to attract significant investment

from the green finance market to support the ongoing protection and restoration of key landscape values. Again, LVI acknowledged the need to align with RCSs.

VicWater



At a presentation to the Board of VicWater, we outlined the purpose of Vic Catchments, what the partnership with VicWater has achieved and what our next steps might be. This was very well received and there was an eagerness to engage more on topics such as corporate compliance, cyber security, water policy, circular economy, water literacy and Water is Life. The Chair and CEO of VicWater agreed to present at the May Vic Catchments meeting.

A Stronger Industry

Nature Repair Bill

Vic Catchments made a submission to the Australian Government's Nature Repair Bill consultation process. Our submission highlighted the value of our RCSs, the importance of certainty through legislation, and our willingness to help develop the program. We also referenced the more detailed submission made by NRM Regions Australia.

Future Drought Fund Review

Vic Catchments made a submission to the Productivity Commission's review of the Future Drought Fund. We highlighted the generally positive experiences through the grants program and drew attention to potential benefits of having the program aligning or linked with Regional Catchment Strategies. We also pointed out areas for improvements, particularly regarding the Drought Hubs and we referenced the more detailed submission by NRM RA.

We were able to reiterate these comments in more detail at a meeting, arranged by NRM RA, with the Productivity Commission along with other states and territories. There is consensus across the country from the NRM industry that the Hubs need to focus on science and that other organisations should be deployed to perform engagement activities.

Cat Management Strategy

Animal Welfare Victoria (AWV) has begun planning for the development of a State-wide Cat Management Strategy, with engagement beginning in May. This comes on the back of the Victorian Government's announcement in May 2022 regarding a commitment to develop a 10-year strategy funded by \$1.3 million from the 2022/2023 budget. At



the time, the funding was also to support education campaigns and grants to encourage cat containment and promote responsible cat ownership. We participated in an initial workshop with other government agencies. We took the opportunity to outline some of the legal barriers to cat management and the need for investment in innovation and technology given the great impact cats have on biodiversity.

DAFF Sustainable Agriculture Program

We participated in a co-design workshop in May for the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry's (DAFF) Sustainable Agriculture program. DAFF are also interested in working with the NRM jurisdictional representatives across the country. DAFF prepared material that we shared with CMAs in the lead up to develop our position.



Vic Catchments was able to cover everything that was put forward and have provided additional material to NRM RA to use to further advise DAFF, if required.



Our People

Thank you.

We acknowledge the contribution made by outgoing Vic Catchments Executive members Karen Lau and Helen Reynolds.

Vic Catchments Future Meeting Schedule

Friday, 25 August 2023 – Online

Thursday, 16 November 2023 - Melbourne

Friday, 23 February 2024 - Online

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