

Having trouble viewing this email? [View Online](#)

Vic Catchments Forum Newsletter | Issue 25 | November 2023



[HOME](#) | [ABOUT](#) | [CONTACT](#)

COMMUNIQUÉ

Message from the Chair

It's been another busy period for our CMAs. The east of the state has again experienced the extremes of our climate with fires and floods impacting some of our regions. East Gippsland encountered fires and floods in one day! Other parts of the state are in full swing with hay and crops being harvested. We hope that the weather behaves itself.

At the beginning of October, we had the appointment of new Board members to our CMAs, including two new Chairs in Sarah Parker (GBCMA) and Euan Ferguson (NCCMA). We welcome them to Vic Catchments. We also welcome two new CEOs in Amber Clarke (CCMA) and Bec Hemming (EGCMA). With the inclusion of Amber and Bec, we now have more females than males in our CEOs cohort – a first for CMAs.

Our Chairs and CEOs have been busy, with the Chairs participating in the National NRM Chairs Forum (online) and the CEOs attending their forum in Canberra in November. Both were an opportunity to engage with Federal Ministers and Departmental staff as our CMAs work through their National Heritage Trust Project proposals with the government.

Our Chairs and CEOs also gathered in November for our most recent Vic Catchments meeting and to present our state-wide strategic directions to DEECA staff, with the support of our Executive Officer, Tony Baker.



We are now turning our attention to supporting DEECA in the development of funding proposals under the Victorian Environmental Contribution fund. We will be providing evidence of our delivery of the previous program and the value of investing in CMAs.

As we come to the end of 2023, I would like to make mention of the significant efforts of our Boards and staff from our CMAs. Like the 25 years preceding 2023, we continue to work hand in hand with our regional communities to improve the liveability of our regions.

I hope that you all have a safe and happy festive season and I look forward to seeing you in 2024.

Cath Jenkins



Vic Catchments Meeting

It was pleasing to get together as a group with a face-to-face meeting in November. Our next meeting is scheduled for the 23rd February and will be online. Our 2024 calendar has been finalised and is located at the end of the Communiqué.

DEECA - Water and Catchments

We were grateful that Acting Deputy Secretary, Andrew Fennessy, and Acting Executive Director, Bryony Grice, could join the forum.



Andrew advised that Melinda Knapp has been appointed the new Executive Director of Water and Catchments, effective 4 December. Melinda has a long background in the public sector and over 20 years' experience in the Victorian Water sector. Vic Catchments will welcome Melinda at our February meeting. Andrew also informed us that a recruitment process had begun for the vacant Deputy Secretary position.

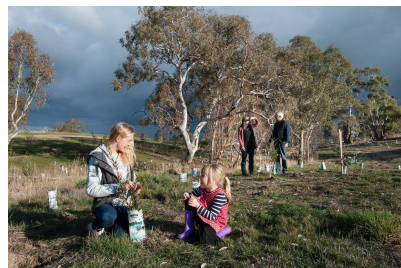
Andrew thanked those who had participated in the Parliamentary Inquiry into the 2023 floods, both as witnesses and those who had worked on preparation for it. He felt the Water sector had presented a very positive image of how it manages floods and how it might learn from last year's events going forward.

Bryony explained that the department is very busy with preparations for EC6 and thanked CMAs for their teams' input to the bids, which meant they could put forward the most compelling argument for funding.

Bryony outlined the process for renewing the Victorian Waterway Management Strategy, which is now 10 years old, and is core to the work of CMAs. A discussion starter in July was followed by six weeks of consultation, including the *My Victorian Waterways* survey. A detailed feedback session was held with the CMA CEOs Forum and more engagement forums with peak bodies and regional partners will begin in the New Year.

Landcare Victoria

We received an exciting update from Jane Carney (Chair) and Claire Hetzel (Acting CEO) on the launch of Landcare Victoria's *Landcare Plan*, on the 20th of November. This is the first plan of its kind for Landcare in Victoria, and it is significant to have a clear mandate from the Landcare community on what its priorities are – the result of a two-year listening process.



Jane and Claire explained that the context in which Landcare operates has changed significantly since its formation in 1986 and with government support unlikely to grow at the scale required, the plan calls for support and collaboration with key partners to achieve its goals. The relationship between Landcare and CMAs is more important than ever and Landcare will be looking at breathing new life into the MOU with Vic Catchments to support collaborative action.

[Learn more about Landcare Plan for Victoria...](#)

NRM Regions Australia

Kate Andrews, CEO, joined the meeting online to report on current and recent activities of NRM RA including the National Chairs Forum (online) and National CEOs Forum (Canberra).



She felt it was a very encouraging sign that Minister Plibersek, Minister Watt and Assistant Minister McAlister participated in the forum.

Kate explained that NRM RA were heavily involved in the discussion around the Nature Positive legislation and are providing input about how NRM Groups and regional planning can add value to it.

Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability (CES)

Commissioner Gillian Sparkes and Scott Rawlings (Director, Science and Reporting) provided an 'entrée' to the State of the Environment (SoE) 2023 report. The Report has been sent to the Minister but has not yet been tabled, so detailed findings could not be discussed. This is the fifth year of the 5-year reporting process and the first since the repealing of the Catchment Condition and Management report and the Victorian Catchment Management Council (VCMC). The report builds on the approach, findings and recommendations of the SoE 2018.



Gillian said engagement with Vic Catchments, CMAs and Melbourne Water has been critical to the development of the report, and CES have found it a very worthwhile process. She hoped CMAs had a similar response and thanked CMA teams for their contributions.

Over half of the 139 SoE indicators relate to catchment condition, so it is highly relevant information for CMAs. Gillian explained the structure of the report and how the Indicator Assessment Dashboard provides a high-level overview. A dedicated website will go live with the data as soon as the report is tabled and she encouraged everyone to have a look at it.

The forum suggested there was an opportunity to link the work of the SoE with the CMAs' Outcomes Framework, thereby working together to fulfil the two sets of obligations. Gillian commented that part of the DNA of CES is to make sure the work they do is useful to the work CMAs do.

[Learn more about CES...](#)



Partnerships and collaboration

VEWH

We continue to engage with our MOU partner the Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEWH). We have included the VEWH CEO, Sarina Loo, in DEECA briefings related to the Victorian Waterway Management Strategy, via the CMA CEOs forum.



NRM Regions Australia

We continue to meet fortnightly with NRM Regions Australia and other States and Territories, particularly in relation to NHT funding. We also provided support to NRM RA with the development of the agendas for the National Chairs' Forum and CEOs Forum held in November.



[Learn more about NRM RA..](#)



A Stronger Industry

2023 Actions and Achievements Report

For over 25 years, Victoria's Catchment Management Authorities have delivered land, water and biodiversity programs that not only enhance and protect our environment but support thriving communities. Our Actions and Achievements Reports highlight these great state-wide outcomes and share stories from across the regions. We are currently working with our CMAs to develop the 2023 Actions and Achievements report which will be released in 2024.



[See the 2022 A&A Report here](#)

Vic Catchments Website

Vic Catchments has recently upgraded its website. We're very excited about its fresh new look and extra content. Please take a look.



[See the updated website here....](#)

VicWater New Directors Induction Program

Vic Catchments recently presented at the VicWater led webinar for new directors on the 2nd of November. This was one part of the broader induction program which DEECA have engaged VicWater to deliver. We outlined the role of Vic Catchments and the benefits of working collaboratively.



We continue to meet with DEECA and VicWater to discuss the Director Development program, including the two-day induction program. We are collaborating on the content of the sessions.

CMA Strategic Directions Presentations

Vic Catchments and CMA CEOs recently presented to CMA Board members and senior DEECA staff on the current strategic focus for our industry. This was an opportunity to share the areas of state-wide focus but also showcase the breadth of work CMAs do in the regions. If you would like a copy of the presentation, please contact Tony Baker (details below).



DEECA (Ag Vic) Biosecurity Strategy Implementation workshop

Tony Baker, our Executive Officer, attended DEECA's (Ag Vic) Biosecurity Strategy Implementation workshop on the 19th of September. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Confirm what implementation success looks like for each of the five strategic goals.
- Establish priorities for focusing implementation efforts over the next 12-18 months.
- Committing to 'ways of working' that will underpin effective partnerships for implementation.



We discussed the value of regional planning, including the work that has already been done by CMAs to plan for biosecurity at a local level. We have been invited to attend the Victorian Biosecurity Round Table on the 29th and 30th of November.



Our People

Welcome

We welcome two new CMA Chairs to Vic Catchments. Sarah Parker to Goulburn Broken CMA and Euan Ferguson to North Central CMA:



Sarah Parker, GBCMA

Sarah holds a Masters in Agriculture and Rural Development and a Bachelor of Leisure Management. She is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, National Farmers Federation Diversity in Agricultural Leadership Program, and the Victorian Climate Smart Agriculture Fellowship Program.

She has experience in executive and management roles in agriculture, extension and research, community development, and education. Sarah has been a partner in an irrigated dairy farm at Undera, in the Goulburn Valley, since 2004. Sarah holds board and committee positions with Australian Women in Agriculture, National Rural Women's Coalition, Australian Dairy Collective, Victorian Farmers Federation, and National Farmers Federation.

Sarah values a sustainable future for agriculture and the environment and is enthusiastic about the next generation becoming more involved in natural resource management.



Euan Ferguson, NCCMA

Euan is a forester and fire/emergency manager with over 40 years of experience. Prior to retiring in 2010, Euan was the Chief Officer of Victoria's Country Fire Authority (CFA) for 5 years (2010-2015); and prior to that, Chief Officer and CEO of the South Australian Country Fire Service (CFS) for 9 years (2001-2010).

Recent executive roles include acting as the Community Recovery Coordinator for the 2019/20 Northern NSW Bushfires; for the March 2018 Tathra (NSW) bushfire recovery and Recovery Coordinator for the April 2017 Northern Rivers (NSW) floods. In 2017, Euan was appointed Special Inquirer into the January 2016 Waroona (W.A.) bushfire which re-framed rural fire management in W.A.

Euan is a former Vice President of the International Association of Wildland Fire; a Director on the North East (Vic) Catchment Management Authority and Chair of NECMA's Audit and Risk Committee; a former Co-Chair of the University of Melbourne's Centre for Disaster Management and Public Safety International Liaison Committee. Euan is a Registered Forestry Professional and sits on Forestry Australia's Forest Fire Management Committee.

Upcoming Events

Director Development Forum 22nd and 23rd of Feb 2024 (VicWater)

Vic Catchments Future Meeting Schedule

Friday, February 23, 2024 (online)

Thursday, May 16, 2024 (face-to-face)

Friday, August 23, 2024 (online)

Thursday, November 14, 2024 (face-to-face)



CONTACT US

Tony Baker
Executive Officer, Vic Catchments
e: executiveofficer@viccatchments.com.au
m: 0407 840 514

Vic Catchments

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