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Vic Catchments Forum Newsletter | Issue 28 | September 2024



VIC CATCHMENTS

A Collaboration of CMAs



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COMMUNIQUÉ

Message from the Chair

As we move into spring we continue to hope that we haven't seen the last of the rain. It has been a relatively dry period for many parts of Victoria. The weather patterns have been unstable and while rainfall has been sparse there have been storms which reminds us all that the next flood could be just around the corner.

Our last meeting was online and provided an opportunity to connect with some of our interstate partners. Details of our meeting and other actions are outlined below.

It's been a busy time for our CMAs as they look to wrap up contract arrangements with our Victorian and Australian Government partners. They have also been finalising end of Financial Year reports, both contractual and as part of our annual report process to government. In addition, they have been inducting their Aboriginal Delegates and Youth Associates onto their Boards and Vic Catchments has been working closely with VicWater to build appropriate support networks for the inductees. This is an exciting program that will provide great capacity building for potential future directors.

It's also been a busy time for Vic Catchments, with a number of new projects being instigated and a number of new partnerships forming. Of particular note is our work regarding Natural Capital, fire management for catchment outcomes and water cycle adaptation. It was also very pleasing to sign our revised MOU with Landcare Victoria, and we look forward to continuing to work together as we establish our joint action plan.



I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of Chris Cumming, CEO Goulburn Broken CMA, and Chris Cunningham, Chair North East CMA, who recently stepped down from their positions. Both have had significant input into the direction and culture of Vic Catchments and we are grateful for their insights and enthusiasm.

More details are included below.

Happy reading.

Cath Jenkins



Vic Catchments Meeting

Our August meeting was online. Our next meeting will be face to face on the 13th of November 2024.

NHT and Emergency Preparedness

Glenn Block (DCCEEW) and Kristie Logus (DAFF)

National Heritage Trust (NHT)

We welcomed Glenn Block and Kristie Logus, to provide an update on the Australian Government's NHT program.



Kristie gave a brief overview on the status of the Sustainable Ag Facilitator (SAF) Network which is now active, with SAFs employed in all regions and co-design commenced with all the regional partners in Victoria. These positions take on some of the old Regional Agriculture Landcare facilitator (RALF) roles, along with a number of new functions.

Regional Soil Coordinators have been established and will connect to SAFs soon. In addition, funding has been provided to support the National Landcare Network and also to enhancing the soil information system through Australian National Soil Information System (ANSIS). DAFF will be sending a range of information to farmers about opportunities in the program. If CMAs would like to be looped into SAF-related communications, they should let Kristie know.

Glenn provided an update on Department of Climate Change Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) NHT Environment activities. Glenn reported that all the projects in Victoria are under way and he thanked CMAs for their assistance.

Emergency Preparedness Plans

Each NRM region has developed a plan that outlines actions for preparing for, responding to, and recovering from, emergencies that impact Australian Government priorities for the environment and agricultural assets. Glenn explained that they are already seeing excellent outcomes from the project, and we agreed to share more stories about this success with the Australian Government. DCCEEW is keen to do some analysis and generate case studies that might be drawn to the attention of the senior officials group responsible for environmental policy.

It was also suggested that CMAs could provide case studies that demonstrate excellent outcomes from NHT funding, via our Communications Forum. Kristie said a big focus for the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program is to get better data and greater amounts of it to provide evidence of what the funding achieves.

Kate Andrews CEO NRM Regions Australia

We were grateful to have Kate Andrews join us to provide an overview of what is happening at the national level with NRM Regions Australia.

Kate is working with Secretaries of both departments to get support for NRMs being represented on panels such as emergency services and regional development.

A great deal of work is happening behind the scenes on advocacy. Kate emphasised that our sector needs to demonstrate the relevance of what we do



and how it links to government policy.

NRM RA have contracted Michelle Lauder, who previously worked in NHT, to do some high-level messaging on what the NRM regional model has achieved over the last 25 years.

Next year is the anniversary of 25 years of regionalisation across the country. Kate and her team are assessing whether to promote a 25-year celebration as an opportunity to explain why the regional model is so important in the face of climate change and emergency preparedness. Vic Catchments agreed to provide support for this process.

Kate reported that the Minderoo Project, now called the Nature-Led Resilience Project, is based on a \$5M donation by the Minderoo Foundation of which \$3M will go to three regions to fund landscape-scale trials on building resilience. The aim is to provide an evidence base and to seek innovation and learning that can be translated between regions. The remainder of the funding is to go to 10 regions for project enhancement. The goal is to build a portfolio with the assistance of private investment and philanthropists so further landscaping trials can be conducted.

[Learn more about NRM Regions Australia...](#)

DEECA Water and Catchments –

Melinda Knapp (Executive Director), Leonie Duncan (Director)

As always, we were joined by Melinda Knapp. Melinda (right) thanked CMAs for their feedback on the partners draft of the Victorian Waterway Management Strategy. She said the team was working on improving it based on CMAs comments. DEECA is seeking a product that provides CMAs with good insight and is a resource with longevity. Conversations with Vic Catchments and CMAs will continue.



DEECA Water and Catchments Group has instigated a change process. It will consider the environmental issues that face DEECA and how to support CMAs into the future. There are likely to be changes, but Melinda emphasised efforts would be made to minimise disruption to CMAs.

Leonie spoke about the Parliamentary Committee Inquiry which was held into the 2022 flood events in Victoria. Over 18 months they heard 800 submissions with 13 days of public hearings. The final report, tabled on 30 July, had 90 findings and 73 recommendations. Of those recommendations, 21 relate to water and catchments. The response to those is due in six months' time.

Leonie stressed that the department had been proactively acting in partnership with CMAs and Melbourne Water to address issues in the two years since the floods, and many of the recommendations are already in train.

Partnerships and collaboration

Landcare Victoria

Vic Catchments was pleased to re-sign our MOU with Landcare Victoria at a small informal ceremony in Melbourne in July. We are now working on the development of a joint action plan that will support the implementation of the MOU and the Victorian Landcare Plan.



VicWater



Vic Catchments continues to work with VicWater on several initiatives aligned to our MOU, which itself is in the process of a review. CMAs will participate in the upcoming VicWater conference. Adam Bester, Glenelg Hopkins CEO, will be representing CMAs on a conference panel to discuss initiatives focused on tackling climate change.

Aboriginal Director Network (Water)

We are also supporting VicWater on the Aboriginal Directors' Network project that DEECA has funded them to coordinate. The "Aboriginal Director Network (Water)" is a proposed framework for meetings to support the participation and professional development of Aboriginal directors and delegates in fulfilling their roles on water sector boards. Specifically, it is focused on supporting the cultural needs of individuals. Vic Catchments is represented on a project committee that will oversee the project. Other members include DEECA, VEWH and VicWater. The first meeting of the committee was on the 12th of August. The network will generally have autonomy to manage their program and set their direction. The Project Committee will ensure that the direction of the network aligns with the contractual arrangement with DEECA.

Banksia Foundation



Vic Catchments attended a Banksia Foundation meeting of winners of the 35th awards. We were asked to make a short presentation on Vic Catchments and CMAs. The Alumni provides another great opportunity to to seek out potential areas of collaboration.

A Stronger Industry

Meeting with the Minister

Vic Catchments will be Meeting with Victorian Water Minister, Harriet Shing, on the 17th of September. The Minister is always generous with her time with Vic Catchments and we are looking forward to hearing from her and explaining some of the work we are doing. This comes on the back of a number of meetings with the Minister's staff.



Actions and Achievements Report

Work has commenced on the development of the 2023-24 Actions and Achievements report. West Gippsland is again coordinating the delivery of the report and has been working with the CEOs, through Vic Catchments, to agree on the format and focus for the report. This year we will celebrate the achievements of the EC5 funding.



Infrastructure Victoria

Members of Vic Catchments met with Infrastructure Victoria, who are developing a 30-year strategy, and in parallel, recommendations for its priorities for the next 5 years, including what the State's role should be in this. We discussed flood mitigation and priorities for investment, including planning scheme amendments and the delay in turning flood studies into planning overlays. We shared some

thoughts around a centralized approach to planning scheme amendments and Brad Drust also shared the NCCMA response to the Flood Inquiry.

Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry

We also attended a meeting of State and Territory NRM representatives and DAFF staff to discuss the DAFF soils information framework. This was largely a brainstorming session where DAFF were keen to understand the soil data capture we have in Victoria.

CES

Vic Catchments has been supporting the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Office with the review of the Marine and Coastal State of the Environment report. We have been liaising with relevant CMA staff to coordinate data and feedback.



Vic Catchments Projects

Vic Catchments is currently coordinating a number of projects on behalf of all CMAs. These include:



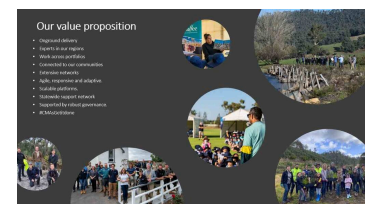
Fire management for catchment outcomes: Led by EGCMA, this project seeks to improve fire management on state land to deliver better outcomes for integrated catchment management, including water quality and quantity. We are currently working with DEECA to investigate how these values can be considered in the fire management framework.

Natural Capital: Vic Catchments is conducting a scan of work that has been done at a national and state level on approaches to Natural Capital. We will also be assessing the opportunities and barriers of CMAs' involvement in Natural Capital approaches. This project is supported by funding from DEECA and will be completed at the end of 2024-25.

Water Cycle Climate Change Adaptation: Led by GBCMA and funded by DEECA, this project will close knowledge gaps and assist CMAs to make decisions related to water in a changing climate.

Strategic Directions Presentation

Vic Catchments is working with DEECA to prepare for its annual strategic directions presentation. Scheduled to be held on Thursday the 14th of November, CMAs will present to DEECA and other partners on the focus areas of integrated catchment management across Victoria. If you have any queries about the presentation, please contact our Executive Officer.



Our People

We acknowledge the service given to Vic Catchments by Chris Cunningham and Chris Cumming, who are standing down from their roles with their CMAs.

Chris Cunningham, NECMA

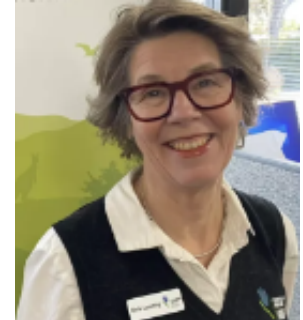
Chris Cunningham was Chair at North East CMA from 1 October 2021. Chris joined our industry with significant governance experience, being a Board member of many high-profile entities. During

her time as Chair, she made significant improvements to the governance processes at NECMA and was always an important contributor to Vic Catchments by ensuring our focus was well thought out and strategic.



Chris Cumming, GBCMA

Chris Cumming joined Goulburn Broken CMA as CEO in 2019. Chris saw GBCMA through the Covid-19 pandemic and oversaw the development of its new Regional Catchment Strategy. Chris was an active champion of Vic Catchments and was integral to taking the climate change portfolio to the next level, which has ultimately realised increased Victorian government investment to support CMAs in planning and decision making.



Upcoming Events

National NRM CEOs forum, Canberra 4-5 September 2024

VicWater Conference, Melbourne, 10-12 September 2024

National Chairs Forum Canberra 19-20 November 2024

NRM Knowledge Conference North Queensland 2-4 September 2025 – Location to be confirmed

Vic Catchments Future Meeting Schedule

Wednesday, November 13, 2024 (face-to-face)



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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