

## Vic Catchments Forum Newsletter | Issue 31 | June 2025



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# COMMUNIQUÉ

## Message from the Chair

Welcome to our 31<sup>st</sup> Vic Catchments communique.

As we come out of autumn and on our way to winter, we are desperately looking for rain across Victoria but particularly in the west. Many parts of the State have been declared drought areas. Some landholders have been carting water and buying feed for stock for many months. Others are contemplating not sowing crops this year. The dry conditions are also impacting the environment with reduced flows in waterways and significant stress on vegetation particularly in areas that were subject to fire earlier in the year.

Vic Catchments is advocating for drought funding to support our regions during this tough time. We are looking to help build resilience in our farming systems, communities and environment so they can bounce back quickly when conditions improve.

You may have seen that the Victorian Government is providing further support to farmers across Victoria impacted by drought and difficult seasonal conditions [Backing Farmers With More Drought Support | Premier](#)

Vic Catchments recently completed our triennial review. This provided us with a clear picture that we are performing well as a group and there is great value in our collaborative

approach. It also identified areas where we can enhance our efforts. These will be things we will work on over the next three years. One thing we are mindful of is the current CMA Board reappointment process. Many Board members including Chairs are up for reappointment and some have indicated they will not be going around again. This will create some change within Vic Catchments, and we are preparing to engage and induct new Chairs when they begin in October.

Our May meeting was face to face which was another great chance to connect amongst CMAs and our partners. More information about our meeting is outlined below.

Happy reading.





# Vic Catchments Forum

## Vic Catchments Meeting - 15th May 2025

Our May Vic Catchments meeting was held face to face in Melbourne. Our next meeting will be online on 29th August 2025.

### DEECA Water and Catchments

Lisa Lowe A/ Executive Director Catchments and Communities



Thanks to Lisa for joining us and we were grateful as always for the update from our DEECA colleagues.

#### CMA Board positions

Lisa explained that there were approximately 40 vacancies, and 175 applications were received. Interviews for the positions will be conducted over May, June and appointments notified in September and announced likely early October. Lisa outlined that there has been good feedback on Aboriginal associates and youth delegates program, and it has resulted in some board applications in the current round.

#### Review of Victorian Floodplain Strategy

Lisa explained that there is a plan to review and refresh the Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy in response to the Inquiry into the 2022 flood event. The review will support a strengthened framework, with technical workshops in June/ July and regional workshops later in year.

#### State Election advice

The next Victorian election will be held on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2026, and caretaker guidance will be issued in June/ July 2026, with caretaker convention enacting in mid-October 2026. CMAs are reminded that staff should adhere to public service code of conduct and particularly relevant in lead up to election. [Guide for employees during election periods - VPSC](#)

### Victorian Environmental Water Holders (VEWH) MOU and update

Julie Miller Markoff (Chair) and Sarina Loo (CEO)

Sarina and Julie outlined the aim of the VEW/ Vic Catchments relationship in supporting each other to achieve high quality environmental outcomes and develop common understanding of collaborative programs and projects.

CMAs are key project partners in the development and delivery of the environmental water program, and it was timely to refresh the MOU. The MOU shows a public acknowledgement of this partnership.

It was agreed that there have been many successes because of the relationship including:

- Development of water sector exchange program: DEECA, CMA, VEWH and VicWater. Great success for secondments across the sector and building capability of staff
- Invitation to CEO forum, peer support, and reduces duplication and efficiencies
- VEWH invitation to Strategic Directions forum, hearing strategic prospective to alignment of CMA
- Collaboration work on Victorian Waterway Management Strategy (VWMS) – combined feedback and position to DEECA

The revision of the MOU will include updating background and objectives and commitment to an action plan which may include:

- Continued collaboration on the draft VMWS
- Regional Waterway Strategy (RWS) development – VEWH working closely with CMAs
- Working together on Treaty and Water is Life

Vic Catchments endorsed the updated MOU. The VEWH will review the MOU later.



Sarina explained that the VEWH held a Streamlining workshop late in 2024 with DEECA and CMAs and there will be discussion at the next working group meeting in July and follow up on actions from the workshop.

One item from the feedback, has seen the VEWH move to an attestation approach for the endorsement of seasonal watering proposals. In the past all parties would need to sign, which could cause delays, now only the CMA signs off and holds evidence of partner support. The next stage will be to look at developing multiyear approaches.

In February, the VEWH released guidelines for seasonal water proposals from Traditional owners corporations. They are working with five TO groups in a pilot and have received two proposals which have been developed collaboratively with CMAs.

Julie thanked CMAs and MW. To make environmental water a success is a challenging space and only works because of collaborative work of CMA. The partnership is highly rewarding and provides social licence for environmental water, is a credit to work with CMA/ MW staff and witness their level of professionalism. The willingness to find solutions to complex problems can be found because of partnerships with CMA and confidence of what we are collectively doing. Julie asked for thanks to be passed on to CMA staff.

Cath reflected the words back and the success of partnership and relationships especially in the Traditional Owner space and looks forward to continuing to work collaboratively with VEWH.

## **Landcare Victoria Inc update**

Claire Hetzel (CEO) and Paul Foreman (Deputy Chair)

Claire and Paul presented on the updated Landcare Victoria Incorporated ((LVI) Strategic Plan.

**Their goal is to empower 120,000 Victorians to collectively build more resilient, biodiverse and productive landscape by 2027.**

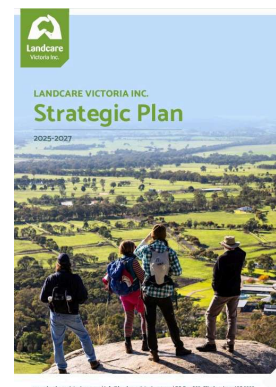
*Three Strategic actions:*

1. *Strengthen the support we provide to Victorian Landcarers*
2. *Do more with others*
3. *Make the case for community-led action*

Landcare Vic Strategic Plan 2025-27.pdf – copy of plan available on LVI website. Claire explained that

given there is currently 60,000 volunteers, the goal is doubling participation.

Claire explained that LVI believe that there are more than 60,000 currently involved and that improvements in data collection and reporting will show an increase as well as increasing people involved through a range of activities.



## Vic Catchments Statewide Projects

Our CEOs provided us with updates on our Statewide projects, including:

### Fire Management Project - Bec Hemming



Vic Catchments is exploring risks and impacts of large-scale high intensity fires to Victorian water and catchments, community and biodiversity. We are exploring CMAs role in community collaborative approaches to support DEECA in its function. We are also looking at how plans such as Regional Waterway Strategies can play a role in identifying assets at risk from fire and the actions required to mitigate these threats. Bec and our consultant have developed a draft directions statement which has been shared with CMAs and stakeholders.

We hosted the very successful *'Risks and impacts of fires to Victorian catchments and communities workshop* on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March in Melbourne. It was a fantastic workshop and a great model for how we might tackle big integrated catchment management issues in the future.

*Photo: Fire workshop organisers and presenters:*

### Water Cycle Adaptation Project - Adam Bester

Funding has been allocated to Vic Catchments via DEECA to support the implementation of CMA-led on-ground, practical projects that both responds to current CMA adaptation priorities and progresses water cycle adaptation outcomes for Victoria. Current CMA adaptation priorities have been established through the statewide gap analysis, and current water cycle adaptation outcomes are identified in the 2022-2026 Victorian Water Cycle Adaptation Action Plan. This project will invest \$1.15M for CMAs to implement water cycle adaptation projects. All the water cycle adaptation projects have been approved and contracts in place. They are due for completion in September 2026.

### Natural Capital Approach Project - Brad Durst/ Carl Walters

Vic Catchments are leading a project to explore future roles and opportunities for Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) in natural capital, natural capital accounting, and nature markets. The projects is funded by DEECA Water and Catchments and DEECA Biodiversity. Consultants have been engaged to assist with delivery of the project.

CMA project directors have conducted interviews with all CMAs to understand the current state of play (i.e. existing work in this area and views on issues and opportunities) and interviews with DEECA are underway. The outcomes of this background information gathering, along with the research conducted by our consultants will be presented in a paper prior to a planned workshop.

The workshop has been scheduled for 11 June 2025, hosted at Melbourne Water. Invitations have



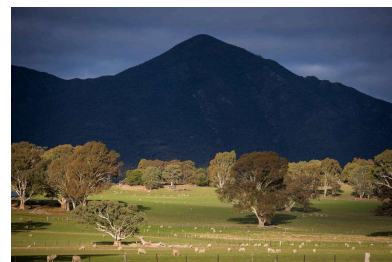
been sent to staff representatives within each CMA. The workshop will bring together research and focus on identifying opportunities for CMAs individually and collectively.

## Agriculture projects

### Carbon Farming Outreach Program

Funded by the Australia Government, Vic Catchments (via CMAs), in partnership with Agriculture Victoria and Landcare Victoria, is delivering training programs that ensures that farmers and land managers across Victoria have access to free and trusted information and resources on carbon farming, including:

- What is carbon farming?
- Carbon farming benefits and risks
- Sources of on-farm emissions and options to reduce emissions and store carbon
- Calculating emissions and carbon storage for your property
- Planning, reporting and monitoring carbon farming activities
- Understanding carbon credit markets and opportunities from carbon credits.



Workshops are being held. Despite a strong start numbers are now lower than expected, due to dry conditions. We are looking at opportunities for rebranding to help increase numbers.

### National Soils Monitoring Program - David Brennan

Vic Catchments has partnered with CSIRO for CMAs to carry out the field component of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's (DAFF) National Soil Monitoring Program (The Project). This includes soil sampling, soil characterisation, collection of site information, land use land management practices and Landholder engagement. The purpose of the Project is to monitor agreed national soil health indicators and to use the data to help understand soil condition and trend. The data will support stakeholders to make evidence-based decisions to improve soil health at a range of scales. This will also empower farmers to prioritise their soil health and strengthen their soil knowledge and capability, increasing stewardship of their land and providing the tools to restore, improve and maintain soil health. CMAs will sample 406 sites across Victoria as part of a national sampling program across 3000 sites.

Training has kicked off, with the first session with five CMAs. There has been positive feedback and CMAs have started to deliver the program, with all equipment being purchased.

## Partnerships and collaboration



### Landcare Victoria

Vic Catchments attended the Landcare Victoria Landcare Showcase on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of March at Parliament House. This provided an opportunity to meet with members of parliament and also promote CMAs.

We have had ongoing meetings with Landcare Victoria to update our joint action plan. This relationship is very strong, and we have completed a number of key actions aimed at improving the profile and performance of Landcare.

Vic Catchments presented to Landcare Victoria's Collaborative Members Council on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May. The Council is an advisory group to the Landcare Victoria Board and includes a mix of Directors and members. The Council were interested in our current priorities but also our involvement in the development of the Victorian Waterway Management Strategy.

## Environmental Protection Authority (EPA)

Vic Catchments recently met with the EPA who are developing guidance material for duty holders to minimise pollution and waste risk in a changing climate. After the initial discussion the EPA is now working with the CMA floodplain management group.



## Department of Treasury and Finance

The Department of Treasury and Finance has reached out to Vic Catchments. They are leading the delivery of a statewide Insurance Consumer Awareness Campaign for Victorian homeowners.

As part of this initiative, they are developing a portal to help homeowners better understand their natural hazard risk and home insurance options. This work will be progressed through the CMA floodplain managers.

## NRM Regions Australia

Vic Catchments attended a national gathering on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April in Canberra involving the NRM Regional Australia Board and state and territory NRM representatives. The goal of the workshop was to discuss how the NRMRA strategy for 2025-30 will be progressed and understand our individual and collective roles in achieving the strategies objectives and goals. The agenda included sustainable investment and diversification, the operating model, external influences, and strategic challenges.



# A Stronger Industry



## 2024 Vic CMAs Actions and Achievements Report

Our Actions and Achievements report has been approved by the Minister and is available on our website. [Vic Catchments | Publications](#) . T

The website also has new case studies from the A and A report

## Victorian Biosecurity Strategy

Vic Catchments attending three Agriculture Victoria Workshops in May to discuss the implementation of the Victorian Biosecurity Strategy. This provided a great opportunity to advocate for our regional model regarding regional planning and on ground action. There is an opportunity for CMAs to play a greater role in the Strategies implementation.



# Our People

## **Peter (Brooksy) Brooks**

We are saddened by the passing of our colleague, Peter (Brooksy) Brooks. Brooksy, has been a staff member of the East Gippsland CMA since its inception, 27 years ago and before that in his role with the former East Gippsland River Management Board for 14 years. His unparalleled knowledge and passion for the rivers of East Gippsland will be forever missed.

Our condolences are extended to his wife Janine, children Lisa, David and Kerry, and the extended Brooks family, and friends and work mates.



## Upcoming Events

9th NRM Knowledge conference 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> of September, Cairns [9th NRM Knowledge conference dates announced! - NRM Regions Australia](#)

## Vic Catchments Future Meeting Schedule

**Friday 29th August 2025, online**

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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*