

Vic Catchments Forum Newsletter | Issue 34 | November 2025



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COMMUNIQUÉ

Message from the Chair

The publication of this communique marks the end of a very busy and productive period for Vic Catchments.

We gathered in Melbourne on the 12th and 13th of November for a series of events including a meeting of our Chairs where we welcomed our new Chairs and appointed our new Executive members.

I am grateful to be appointed as Chair and we are delighted to have Belinda Nave, Chair of West Gippsland CMA as our Deputy Chair. In recognition that we have had seven new Chairs join Vic Catchments, these appointments will be in place for 12 months, after which time we will consider new appointments for the future. We have also nominated Sarah Parker, Chair of Goulburn Broken CMA, for the Victorian Director position on the NRM Regions Australia Board. NRM RA is our national peak body.

We were also grateful that our CMA Chairs and our Executive Officer were asked to meet with the Minister for Water, the Hon. Gayle Tierney. It was a fantastic opportunity for us to outline our collective priorities and for each CMA to talk about some of the big issues in their catchments and highlight the good work we are doing.

Other events that took place during our visit to Melbourne included:

- Our quarterly Vic Catchments meeting.
- Dinner with guests including the recognition of our outgoing Chairs
- Our annual Strategic Directions Presentation.



More details on these events are included below.

As this will be our last communique for 2025,

I would like to acknowledge all our CMA people and their hard work during the year. Our people working hand in hand with our communities is what CMAs do and is the reason why #CMAsgetitdone.

I would also like to wish you a safe and happy festive season and look forward to working with you in 2026.

Peter Hilbig
Chair
Vic Catchments



Vic Catchments Forum

Chairs Meeting - 12th November



Our Chairs took some time to meet and get to know each other before they met with the broader Vic Catchments forum. It also provided an opportunity for our Executive Officer, Tony Baker, to explain the operating environment for Vic Catchments and the services that Vic Catchments provides for CMAs.

We had two presentations:

DEECA Water and Catchments (Water Sector Strategy and Partnerships) Grant Breheny, Andrew Wood and Helen Morrongiello

We were grateful for a presentation from the DEECA team about the relationship between CMAs and the Victorian Government and DEECA. It was a fantastic opportunity to build a relationship between Chairs and the DEECA staff that will be supporting our Boards.

NRM Regions Australia – Kate Andrews, CEO.

We were pleased Kate Andrews from NRM Regions Australia could join us online. As our National peak body, it was very timely to have an explanation of the national operating framework for NRM groups and also the priorities for NRMRA over the next 12 months.

Chairs Meeting - Minister for Water Hon. Gayle Tierney MP



Extract from Minister Gayle Tierney's MP Facebook page

"This week I welcomed Chairs of Victoria's Catchment Management Authorities to Parliament.

We met to find solutions to key water security challenges. As the climate changes and our state grows - our need to support households and irrigators grows with it. Victoria's precious water supply starts at the catchment - the land over which water flows and is collected.

Our Catchment Management Authorities do incredible work in coordinating land, water, and biodiversity to ensure the long-term viability of our natural resources"

Vic Catchments Meeting 12th Nov

We were pleased to hold our November meeting face to face in Melbourne. This meeting was shortened to accommodate our meeting with the Minister for Water, Hon. Gayle Tierney MP.

The meeting confirmed the appointment of

- Peter Hilbig, Chair of Wimmera CMA, as Chair of Vic Catchments
- Belinda Nave, Chair of West Gippsland CMA as Deputy Chair of Vic Catchments
- Sarah Parker, Chair of Goulburn Broken CMA, for the Victorian Director position on the NRM Regionals Australia Board.

DEECA Water and Catchments update –Lisa Lowe (Director Catchment Programs and Rural Policy), Andrew Fennessy (Executive Director Water Security and Resilience), Rob Considine (Director Resilience and Emergency),

Lisa explained that a new Branch within Water and Catchments has been established to oversee the development of the Western Sustainable Water Strategy. The branch will also be responsible for drought programs related to the water and catchment portfolio.

Rob and Andrew gave an overview of the new State-led approach to floodplain management and planning policy.

- The presentation covered, the history of the flood reforms and where the State was at and looking to the future
- Importance of flood studies and impact on communities
- Flood studies and connection via planning schemes amendments
- Flood studies: at present there are many studies that have been completed but need to be in planning schemes
- Hazard rating – Focus to improve new integrated engagement process
- CMAs will take a leadership role in the implementation for the new approaches including leading flood studies and related planning scheme amendments
- There is expected to be a two-year transition period, and CMAs are represented on a steering committee

Vic Catchments is grateful for the trust that the Victorian Government has placed in CMAs to take on these new roles, and

we will be working with DEECA, the Department of Transport and Planning and local government to ensure a smooth transition.

Annual Strategic Directions Presentation

Each year Vic Catchments and the ten CMAs present on the statewide and regional strategic priorities for the next 12 months. The event is supported by DEECA and this year over 100 DEECA, partner organisations staff and CMA leaders attended in person and online.

Together we showcased the value for working collaboratively in achieving our work. We also highlighted the success of CMAs and the mechanisms that driver this success including our trusted relationships built through 28 years of working with local communities.



Partnerships and Collaboration

Thank you to all our partners



Natural Resource Management (NRM) is the integrated management of the natural resources that make up Australia's natural landscapes, such as land, water, soil, coast, plants and animals. That is, our land, water and biodiversity assets.

[NRM Regions Australia](#) is the representative group of the National NRM Chairs' Forum.

Australia has [54 regional Natural Resource Management \(NRM\) organisations](#) that cover all of Australia. They are a mix of government agencies and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) that get national priorities for natural resource management delivered on the ground.

[The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action \(DEECA\)](#) creates liveable, inclusive and sustainable communities. Part of the role of DEECA is to manage Victoria's groundwater, catchments and waterways, infrastructure,

water saving and re-use projects, flood management, governance and water legislation, in partnership with a network of government agencies and water authorities.



[Home - Landcare Victoria Inc.](#) represents community Landcare in Victoria. They are an influential voice for the Victorian landcare movement, supporting landcare communities to achieve integrated sustainable agriculture and environmental outcomes.

[VEWH](#) Victorian Environmental Water Holder has an MOU with Vic Catchments. The relationship is focused on supporting each other to achieve high quality environmental outcomes and developing a common understanding of collaborative programs and projects.



[VicWater | Victoria's peak industry association](#) is Victoria's peak industry association representing Victoria's 18 water corporations and a number of other water sector organisations.

Our purpose is to unite the water sector to deliver better outcomes for Victorian customers, community and the environment.

Vic Catchments works with a range of partners throughout the year, too numerous to list them all here. Please check back issues of our communiques for how we are working with numerous partners.

Vic Catchments Statewide Projects

Vic Catchments works collaboratively across the State to support and deliver cooperative projects.

Current projects are:

Fire Management Project

Vic Catchments is exploring risks and impacts of large-scale high intensity fires to Victorian water and catchments, community and biodiversity. We are exploring CMA's role in community collaborative approaches to support DEECA in its function.

Natural Capital Approach

Vic Catchments is leading a project to explore future roles and opportunities for CMAs in natural capital, natural capital accounting, and nature markets.

Water Cycle Adaptation Project

Supporting 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.

National Soils Monitoring Program

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 purpose is to monitor agreed national soil health indicators and to use the data to help understand soil condition and trends.

Carbon Farming Outreach Program

In partnership with Agriculture Victoria and Landcare Victoria Inc, Vic Catchments is delivering training programs that ensure farmers and land managers across Victoria have access to free and trusted information and resources on carbon farming.

For our November updates and more details about the projects and to keep up to date with their progress, please visit the priority project page on our website: <https://viccatchments.com.au/priority-projects/>

People

Our Catchments Our Communities Leadership Development grants

A highlight of the Strategic Directions session was the presentation of the DEECA Our Catchments Our Communities Leadership Development grants. The program, running since 2017, supports early and mid-career individuals in the natural resource management sector—helping them grow as leaders and shape the future of catchment stewardship in Victoria. The year's grant recipients are:

Women in Leadership

Alayka Naidu – Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation for mentorship and training in nursery management, native plant propagation, and ecological restoration at the 2026 Australian National Plant Association Conference.

Dr Jaclyn Harris – Macedon Ranges Shire Council for mentoring and structured professional development focused on leadership in ecology and integrated catchment management.

Aboriginal Leadership

Kai Lane – Eco Warriors Australia to deliver workshops for the Tyipen Kwe Youth Group with Barapa Barapa Elder Uncle Ron Galway, teaching weaving techniques for Yedibila Habitat Pods—refuges for aquatic and semi-aquatic wildlife.

Innovation

Elizabeth Hebdon and Sam Russell – Urban Guerillas to develop ecological skills through targeted training and advance innovative approaches to increase youth participation.

Congratulations to all the recipients, it is wonderful to see such talent in our up and coming leaders.

The future of NRM is in good hands !

Communique

The Vic Catchments communique is produced quarterly following our Vic Catchments Meeting, it aims to keep you up to date with what is happening with Vic Catchments, priority projects, partnership projects and links to key updates.

If there are other people who would like to receive the communique, please direct them to the communique page on our website [Vic Catchments | Communiqués](#), for past issues and to sign up.

Or send Belinda an email: belinda.brennan@viccatchments.com.au and she will be happy to add you to the list.

Vic Catchments Website

If you are wanting to know more about Vic Catchments, our people, our projects, our partners and our achievement, please check out our website [Vic Catchments | Home](#)



Upcoming Events

6th Feb 2026: CEO Forum - online

27th 2026: Vic Catchments Meeting - online

18th Mar 2026: Director Development Session hosted by DEECA and VicWater In person event

CONTACT US

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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