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COMMUNIQUÉ

Message from the Chair



The last quarter has again been a very busy period for Vic Catchments, and one that has resulted in new relationships, meaningful conversations and productive outcomes.

Many of our CMAs are still working with their communities on fire recovery efforts. This work is diverse, challenging but rewarding. CMAs local presence make us a key player in emergency management recovery as we listen to and act on the needs of our communities.

We welcomed incoming Victorian Water Minister, Hon. Harriet Shing, at a meeting with our Chairs in April. Minister Shing is not new to us, having been Water Minister from 2022 to 2024.

We are pleased to hear that Minister Shing was enthusiastic about taking on the portfolio again and the value she places in the role of CMAs.

The CMA Chairs recently gathered in Canberra as part of the annual NRM Regions Australia National Chairs Forum. We were treated to some fantastic speakers including Federal Minister for Water and Environment Hon. Murray Watt, Bureau of Meteorology CEO Stuart Minchin and National Farmers Federation CEO Mike Guerin.

We were also able to engage with Australian Government staff who will be developing the next iteration of the NHT program. Most importantly we were able to engage with our peers and learn from and support each other.

Of note was the celebration of Kate Andrews who is departing as NRM-RA CEO. Kate is a force of nature and we are grateful for her support and friendship over her many years of service. We also welcomed Marnie Lassen, who will take on the CEO role. Marnie has a wealth of knowledge and experience in the NRM industry and we look forward to working with her.

Following this we gathered in Melbourne for our May Vic Catchments meeting. More details from our meeting are included below.

Happy reading.

Peter Hilbig
Chair
Vic Catchments



Vic Catchments Forum

National Chairs Forum 19-20 May 2026

During May eight of our Chairs and Executive Officer attended the NRM Regions Australia led National Chairs Forum. This annual event provides an opportunity for NRM Group Chairs to connect with each other, gain insights into innovations and industry development and to inform the strategic direction of NRM-RA.

Some of the key insights from the two days included:

- Hon Murray Watt – Minister for Environment and Water, reinforced the commitment to support the regional NRM model. Minister Watt also outlined some of the government’s environmental agenda including extending the saving native species program and EPBC act reforms.
- Presentations about the need to be prepared for Avian Influenza and other biosecurity threats.
- Opportunities to participate in the Future Drought Fund discussions
- BoM CEO, Stuart Minchin, information on BOM, presentation on the role of BoM, the success of their programs and messages about climate change implications.
- Culturally significant entities – acknowledging first nations culture and significance Eg: recognition of Birrarung Marr
- Private public partnership models; something to watch for future considerations

Vic Catchments Meeting - 21st May 2026



This Vic Catchments meeting was our first face to face meeting for 2026, and it was well timed given all that has been happening at a local, State and National level.

DEECA Water and Catchments, Catchments and Communities , Executive Director, Melinda Knapp

We were grateful for an update from Melinda regarding the DEECA Water and catchments team. Melinda explained that DEECA have been engaging with new Water Minister Hon. Harriet Shing and that the Minister has already reached out to Federal Water Minister Hon.

Murray Watt and met with Chairs from CMAs and Water Corporations. Melinda thanked CMAs for their efforts in supporting DEECA develop a response to the review of the Murray Darling Basin Plan. DEECA have been assessing CMAs revised Regional Waterways Strategies as they have been submitted and they have been grateful for the presentations from CMAs.

Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Helen Vaughan, Commissioner, and Scott Rawlings Director, Science and Reporting gave an overview of the Commissioner’s role and the relationship with CMAs.

The Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability (CES) for Victoria provides independent scientific reporting to inform policymakers, scientists, and the wider Victorian community on the state’s natural environment and to support ecological sustainable development.

Helen provided an overview of the history / background of Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability, including the Act and relevant legislation. Helen also explained that from 1st July 2026, Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) will transfer to the Commissioner’s Office.

Vic Catchments has a strong relationship with the CES and have been providing data and case studies for inclusion in state of the environment reports for many years.

Helen acknowledged the strong CMA representation at the recent indicator workshops and that she is aiming to have strong catchment indicators, for Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) reporting as part of State of Environment Report. The next report is due at the end of 2027.

Strategic Plan review

Vic Catchments has begun a review of its strategic plan. This was discussed at our meeting with acknowledgement that we will need to consider emerging priorities for example: EC7, Treaty, partnerships and future funding opportunities. We aim to have our new Strategic Plan approved in August 2026.

Our Catchments Our Communities Leadership Development grants

[Our Catchments Our Communities Leadership Development grants 2026](#) support aspiring future leaders in integrated catchment management in Victoria.

The three grant categories are:

- Aboriginal leadership - recognising and supporting Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians as leaders
- Women in leadership - improving diversity and inclusion and the opportunity for women to lead
- Innovation - new approaches and knowledge to address contemporary issues in integrated catchment management.

Each year, grants of up to \$10,000 are awarded to early to mid-career professionals in the natural resource management (NRM) sector. Applications are open and close on the 15th of June.

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. Landcare Victoria Inc and Vic Catchments have an MOU and joint action plan.

[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.



Our purpose is to unite the water sector to deliver better outcomes for Victorian customers, community and the environment. Vic Eater and Vic Catchments have an MOU.

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.

Vic Catchments coordinates several statewide projects with the support of the CMAs. At each meeting we receive updates on these projects.

For our June 2026 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

Thank you to outgoing Mallee CMA CEO - Jenny Collins



We would like to acknowledge outgoing Mallee CMA Chief Executive Officer, Jenny Collins. Jenny will leave the CMA in early September 2026.

Jenny has led the Mallee CMA over the past 20 years during a period of significant change for the region and the broader Murray Darling Basin and Victorian Water Sector. Through this period Jenny's leadership has been significant in driving change and creating positive outcomes.

Jenny has also provided great leadership to Vic Catchments. Jenny was Chair of our CEOs forum for several years and was also a member of our Executive Committee. Jenny's foresight, wisdom and mentorship have been a critical element in establishing Vic Catchments as the effective collaborative organisation it has become. We are grateful for the contributions Jenny has made and wish her well for her next endeavours.

Congratulations - Bryana Bisset



Wimmera CMA Project Management Officer, Bryana Bisset, was selected as a finalist in the Floodplain Management Australia IAG Young Floodplain Manager of the Year category for the FMA National Conference 2026 Excellence Awards in April.

This recognition places Bryana among the leading practitioners in flood risk management across Australia and New Zealand.

Well done Bryana.

Thank you to outgoing NRM RA CEO - Kate Andrews

At the National Chairs forum we took the opportunity to recognise Kate Andrews who is departing NRM-RA, after 6 years in the CEO role. Kate was also part-time Executive Officer prior to being appointed as CEO.

During her time Kate has been working to ensure the essential contribution of regional NRM organisations and their partners is recognised, resourced and scaled-up. Kate is a master of building trusted relationships with the many and varied partners involved in the NRM industry.

She has steered the ship as NRM-RA has become a legal entity and facilitated the growth of NRM-RA without forgetting that the NRM Group members are at the heart of our success. We thank Kate for her dedication, support and ongoing friendship and wish her well in her next endeavours.



Welcome to incoming NRM RA CEO - Marnie Lassen



We welcomed Marnie Lassen as incoming CEO.

Marnie has worked in the environmental sector for over 20 years. Her previous roles include Sector Development Lead at the Australian Land Conservation Alliance, CEO of Natural Carbon, Executive roles at Trust for Nature (Victoria) managing regional operations and environmental markets, and consulting to several Australian environmental organisations.

Marnie originally trained as a lawyer, and practised law in both Victoria and California. She is passionate about nature and her family proudly owns a bush with resident platypus that they permanently protected in Victoria's beautiful Otway Ranges.

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

Friday 21st August 2026: Vic Catchments Forum- online

15th and 16th September 2026: Adapt NRM Climate Forum

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