

2021-22 Achievements





VicWater proudly acknowledges the rich culture of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and pays respect to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First Peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely.

We recognise and value the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and

communities to Australian life and how this enriches us. VicWater recognises the role that Aboriginal people play in keeping our waterways and systems healthy and sustainable and continue to support efforts by water corporations to improve culturally sympathetic management.

VicWater continues to embrace the spirit of Reconciliation and working towards an equal voice for Traditional Owners.



The new normal! This year was a year of two halves, with the first half seeing the continued impacts of Covid-19 and the second half saw us moving into a new era of living alongside Covid-19. The second part of 2021 had us in and out of lockdowns once again with the Annual Conference falling victim to being postponed, not once but twice. The theme of the conference could not have been more apt with our members showing ongoing readiness and resilience to deal with what was thrown at them!

As we entered 2022, we cautiously emerged and settled into our new normal with hybrid meetings, flexible working and virtual events becoming a normal part of life. The highlight of the year really was finally being able to hold our Annual Conference in June 2022 virtually and in person. It was so wonderful to get out of our pyjama pants and see people in the flesh for the first time in two years! Notwithstanding this happy event, 2022 has not been without its challenges. As we settled into our new way of working, increased economic uncertainty and cost of living challenges have been at the forefront of our minds.

This review brings you a summary of VicWater highlights beyond the conference, as we settle into our new way of life. In a world that the only certainty is uncertainty, VicWater remains a steady and consistent voice advocating for the Victorian water sector.

VICWATER – Who We Are

VicWater is the peak industry association for water businesses in Victoria. VicWater plays an important role in the Victorian water industry with our purpose being to influence government policy, provide industry forums on priority issues, and disseminate news and information to members and stakeholders.

Our Vision

To lead an innovative water industry that manages water resources sustainably and creates partnerships that focus on the needs of the community, stakeholders and the environment.

Our Mission

To be the leading advocate for Victorian water businesses in their interaction with government, its agencies and the community.



Why We Are Different

Here at VicWater, we often get asked how we are different from other industry associations within the water sector. First and foremost, we are the **peak body** for the Victorian water sector. Some industry bodies have a national focus, whereas VicWater exists to service and advocate for the **Victorian water industry** only.

We are a member-based organisation, with our members consisting of all 18 Victorian water corporations and some catchment management authorities (CMAs). We do not offer individual or private sector memberships, which ensures that we operate with a broader sector focus. There are no other Victorian-based industry bodies that operate with the same mandate as VicWater.

Advocacy is at the heart of what we do, with a strong focus on water-related policy and regulation. We facilitate industry collaboration on strategic issues that are common across the sector, bringing our members together through a number of key forums and groups and through innovation programs like Intelligent Water Networks (IWN). We also provide regular development and networking opportunities for the director and executive cohort to support strengthen the leadership and governance of the sector.



Our Organisation

In March 2022 we farewelled CEO Peter Morison as he left to take up a new position with Melbourne Water. Peter commenced with VicWater in May 2019 and made many significant positive impacts during his almost three-year tenure. Jo Lim stepped in as Interim CEO, and was subsequently appointed to the CEO role in July 2022.

2021-22 marked a significant changeover in VicWater Board membership, with former Chair Jo Plummer, Gabrielle Bell, Steve McKenzie, Robyn McLeod, Peter Quigley and David Schultz all departing during the year. In May 2022 we welcomed Russell Anderson, Nicola Hepenstall, David Middleton, Victor Perton, Charmaine Quick and Therese Tierney joining continuing directors Naomi Cleary and Andrew Jeffers. David Middleton and Therese Tierney commenced their respective roles as Chair and Deputy Chair in June.

Our Strategy

At VicWater our work is driven by a set of strategic results areas that each feed into four quadrants: Finance & Risk, Diversity & Inclusion, Leadership & Innovation, and Policy & Environment. These four quadrants inform every project we undertake, every submission we make, every event or program that we run. We believe these four quadrants are what the Victorian water sector needs to remain at the forefront of the industry. As the peak body for the Victorian water sector, our job is to make sure that water corporations have the information, support and advocacy they need to deliver on their core business – which is providing clean, safe water services to the people of Victoria.

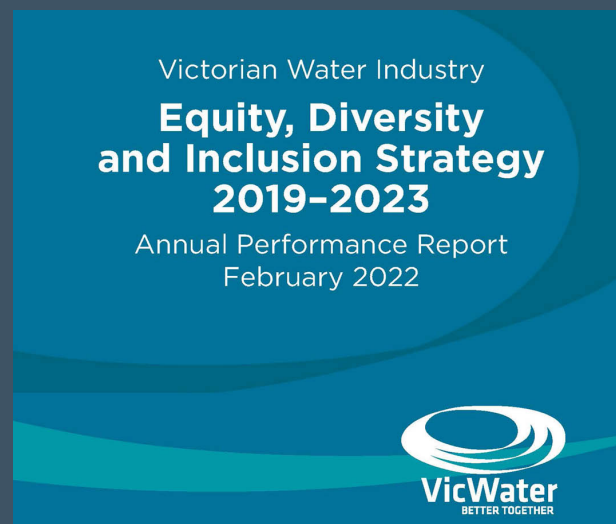
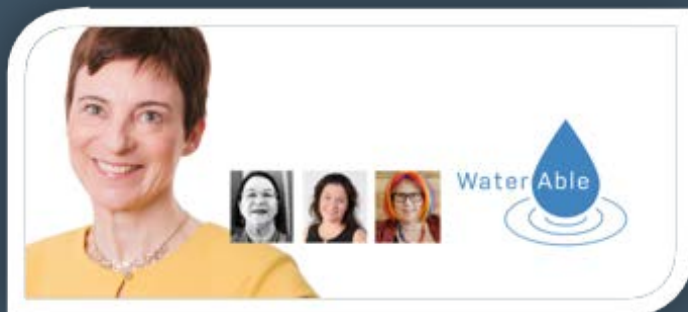
Each quadrant has its own set of goals that feed into the broader needs of the sector, which collectively we all aspire to. Each quadrant dovetails to another, working together to provide a strategically driven peak body agitating for the greater good of the industry.

Diversity & Inclusion

Diversity & Inclusion continues to be a key strategic results area for VicWater and we are proud to be supporting under-represented groups to have more of a voice, and to be seen and valued within the water sector. We published the third Victorian Water Industry Equity, Diversity Inclusion Annual Performance Report in March 2022 which included a number of case studies highlighting the positive outcomes that are being achieved for individual employees and workplace culture within the industry.

VicWater continued to provide support for the WaterAble network for people with disability and their allies, which increased its reach and held a number of events across the year, including an online event in December 2021 to celebrate International Day of People With Disability and an Hour of Optimism event in June 2022 which provided belly laughs for all participants and left us asking “what makes us optimistic?”

We also supported the Women in Water Directors Network (WWDN) in running some fantastic events including 'Insights into the Gender Equality Journey' with Gender Equality Commissioner Dr Niki Vincent ;, a panel session at the DELWP Directors Development Forum on being an Ally for women in the water sector; and rounding out the year at our Annual Conference with 'Getting Rid of Glass Ceilings and Sticky Floors' with industry panelists talking about the challenges for women to progress from middle management into senior executive roles within the water sector



Finance & Risk

Finance and Risk help define some of our key strategic results areas and VicWater continued to work hard to deliver in this space. An assessment of compliance obligations for the water sector found that both the number of obligations and the cost of meeting them has increased significantly over the past five years, with the introduction of more than 30 new or amended obligations contributing to an overall compliance cost of \$60m across the sector. VicWater has commenced a program of work with members and government agencies to address some of the issues arising from the review.

VicWater provided valuable assistance to our members through two projects which will result in improvements to the financial status of water corporations: revised modelling for New Customer Contributions (developer charges); and seeking ATO approval of changes to the tax treatment of gifted assets.

Recognising the significant threats around cyber security, VicWater continued to support an uplift in cyber governance and capability in the sector in partnership with the Department of Premier and Cabinet and Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

Leadership & Innovation

Members continued to access a range of professional development and thought leadership events delivered by VicWater.

An industry first, we convened an Industry Introduction session for new water corporation and CMA directors in November 2021. Over 80 people attended to learn about the role of VicWater, Vic Catchments and the ways in which we support industry collaboration and innovation.

Also in November 2021 we successfully ran a Regulators Forum involving leaders from the Department of Health, the Environmental Protection Authority, and the Essential Services Commission. Members had the opportunity to put their questions to the panel and learn about their expectations and priorities for the sector.

Our major event highlight for the year was our Annual Conference in June 2022. More than 200 delegates joined us in person and virtually, and we heard from a range of expert speakers and panellists who helped us unpack what being 'resilient and ready' means for the water sector. The conference wrapped up on the second day with an interactive workshop where delegates were asked to think about the barriers to the Victorian water industry being more resilient and ready and what VicWater and our members might do to overcome those barriers.



New Directors Introduction Session



Regulators Forum



The Annual Conference 2022

Policy & Environment

We worked to strengthen the policy reform agenda by consistently advocating for members across the sector on issues of strategic importance, as well as coordinating industry responses to various policy and regulatory reviews that occurred during the year.

We worked with our members to review the EPA's recycled water guidelines; produce guidance material to support the implementation of the General Environment Duty; draft new construction procurement contracts to comply with Victorian Government purchasing reforms; make submissions to WorkSafe Victoria regarding workplace exposure standards for airborne contaminants; provide input to the Victorian Skills Authority on the on the draft Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services industry report; advocate for the introduction of director indemnities for water corporation boards.

The VicWater Policy Platform, launched in 2020, continues to provide the foundation for our policy advocacy work, and several VicWater projects and activities also complement and contribute towards the action plan.



Our Sponsors

VicWater would also like to thank our sponsors for their generous support during 2021-22.

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VicWater's work, especially the achievements outlined in this report, would not be possible without the active support and contribution of our members. We warmly thank and acknowledge all the people who have volunteered their time, effort and expertise through membership of VicWater's committees and working groups, input to submissions and reviews, and participation at our events.



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