



# Annual Achievements Report

2022-23





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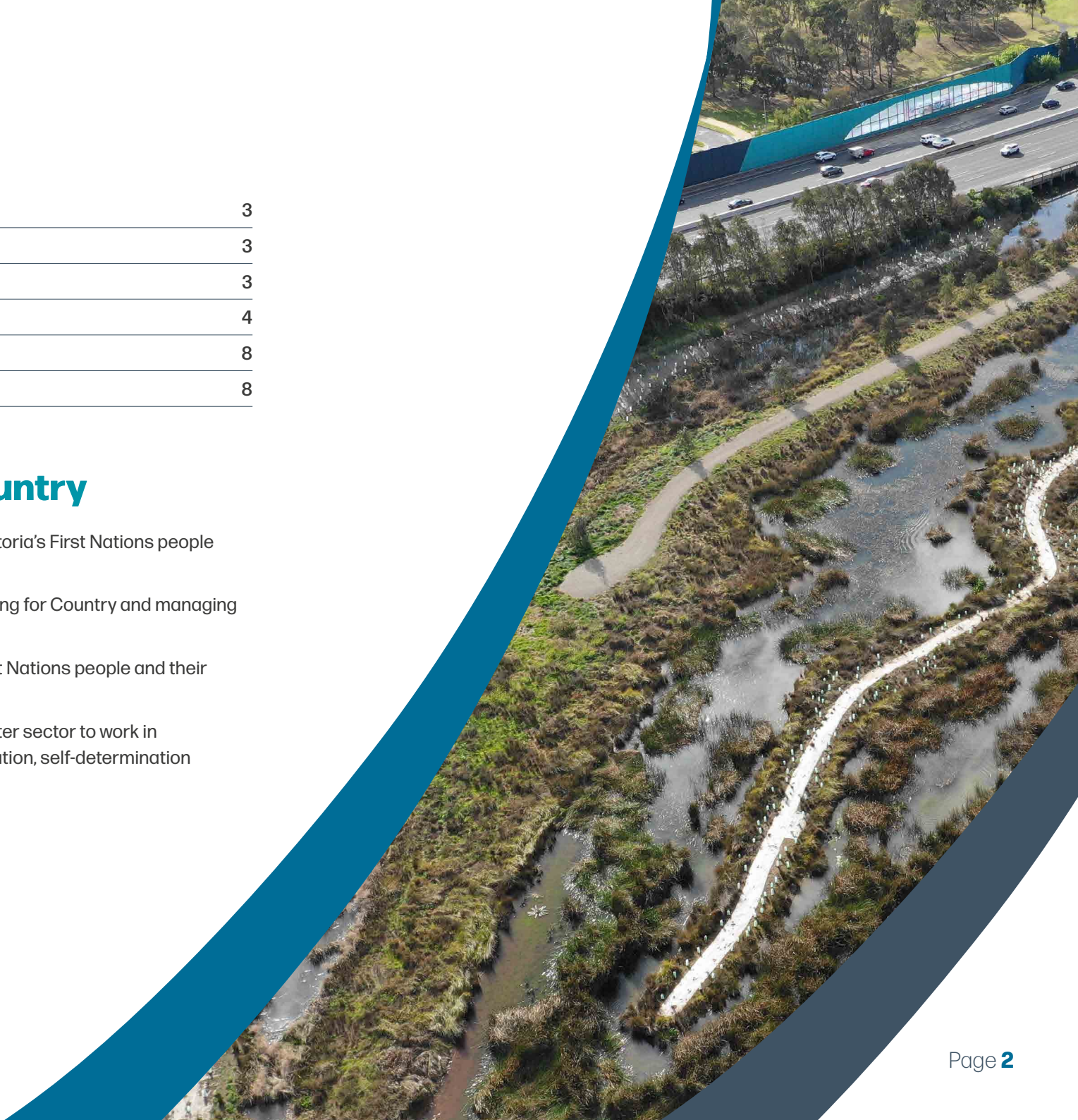
## Acknowledgement of Country

VicWater proudly acknowledges the rich culture of Victoria’s First Nations people and pays respect to their Elders past and present.

We recognise that First Nations people have been caring for Country and managing water resources sustainably for thousands of years.

We value the wisdom, knowledge and resilience of First Nations people and their ongoing contributions to the Victorian community.

VicWater is committed to supporting efforts by the water sector to work in partnership with Traditional Owners towards reconciliation, self-determination and restorative justice.



# About VicWater

We are Victoria's peak industry association representing all 18 Victorian 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.

We understand that collaboration lies at the heart of what we do.

We know that our members are 'better together', united to influence policy and regulation, plan for future challenges, generate shared value, promote best practice and build an innovative and robust water industry.

## Our organisation

In 2022-23 we welcomed new staff members Tara Daniel (Chief Operating Officer) and Stuart Craven (Policy & Regulation Manager).

We commenced a closer integration with the Intelligent Water Networks (IWN) program, to strengthen governance arrangements and improve operational efficiencies in finance, IT, communications and reporting. As part of this integration, we welcomed IWN program staff Jason Cotton (Program Director) and Elisa Bourke (Deputy Program Director) to the VicWater team.

## Our strategy

During 2022-23, we undertook extensive engagement with our members and stakeholders to develop a new five year Strategic Plan. It was an important opportunity for us to understand their perceptions of VicWater's value proposition and how we can meet their needs and expectations into the future. The strong message that came through was that they have seen significant improvements in VicWater's performance over the past few years and would like to see us continue on the same trajectory.

Our ['Better Together' Strategic Plan 2023-2028](#) provides clarity on our strategic focus and boundaries, identifies opportunities to create value and have impact, details the initiatives we will undertake and explains how we will measure and report outcomes.

The plan outlines the four strategic priorities that VicWater will focus on over the next five years:

- Advocate to influence the regulatory environment
- Facilitate sector collaboration
- Advance member capability and performance
- Promote Victoria's water sector

# Our achievements

## Advocacy

### Director indemnities

Until recently, non-executive directors of Victorian water corporations did not have a general indemnity against all liabilities or legal costs incurred in their capacity as director, raising concerns about their potential personal exposure and risk profile. With the backing of water corporation Chairs, VicWater led successful advocacy efforts with the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) and the Minister for Water to allow water corporations to indemnify their own directors.

### Financial issues

VicWater supported our Finance Issues Steering Committee with projects to improve the financial status of water corporations, including revised modelling for New Customer Contributions (developer charges), a submission to the Australian Taxation Office for more favourable tax treatment of gifted assets, and an industry position regarding state budget efficiency payments.

### Regulator engagement

VicWater undertook regular engagement with the key sector regulators Essential Services Commission, Environment Protection Authority and Department of Health, as well as with DEECA, Department of Treasury and Finance, Worksafe Victoria and other agencies, to communicate members' views on a range of policy and regulatory issues impacting the sector.

## Collaboration

### Carbon offsets

All water corporations need to meet net zero targets by 2030 and 2035, and while emissions reduction is the primary focus, carbon offsets will also need to be part of the solution. VicWater continued to work with all our members to confirm the feasibility and value proposition around bringing water corporations together to access the carbon offsets market and leverage the sector's collective demand.



### Safety and wellbeing

VicWater's Safety Executive Group undertook extensive consultation and a co-design process to develop a Safety and Wellbeing Commitment for the Victorian water industry. All water corporation Managing Directors (MDs) endorsed an implementation plan which focuses on enhancing leadership across the sector and fostering a culture of transparent and genuine learning at all levels.



## Diversity and inclusion

With the assistance of VicWater's Diversity & Inclusion Steering Committee, we published the fourth annual performance report against the Water Industry Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy. We continued to provide support to the WaterAble network, running industry workshops and events to raise awareness and identify actions to improve disability inclusion. We also participated in events hosted by the Pride in Water network including Wear It Purple Day 2022 and Midsumma Pride March 2023.



## IWN

The IWN program continued to deliver significant value to the industry through a number of successful technology trials in program areas including biosolids and resource recovery, pipeline intelligence, asset management and optimisation and digital metering. Volunteer participation in IWN programs provided leadership and professional development opportunities for more than 60 employees across the sector.



## Leadership

### Chairs and MDs Forums

As the senior leaders of our industry, water corporation Chairs and MDs are an important part of VicWater's authorising environment. We facilitated regular meetings of these groups during the year to discuss strategic, sector-wide issues and to provide guidance and oversight of VicWater's activities.

### Women in Water Directors Network (WWDN)

VicWater's ongoing support for the WWDN provided an important touchpoint with the non-executive director cohort, aligning with our other activities in the diversity and inclusion space.

This year WWDN hosted an event on 'top sharing' (job sharing in senior roles) and a joint workshop with the Insight Executive Leadership for Women in Water program to explore how boards and executives can work together to support a diverse and positive culture."

### Director Masterclass Program

This year we launched our new Director Masterclass Program, delivered by partners Monash Sustainable Development Institute and supported by DEECA.

The program provides non-executive directors of water corporations and catchment management authorities with knowledge and tools to strengthen their strategic leadership and governance skills. More than 40 directors participated in Masterclass Programs 1 and 2 and their feedback indicated they found much value in coming together from across the broader water and catchment management sector to connect and learn from each other.



## Events

### Audit & Risk Symposium, September 2022

Hosted by Pitcher Partners in Melbourne, this one day event was targeted at board directors and executives working primarily in finance, audit and risk fields, and attracted 60 people in person and online. Sessions covered workforce risks, cybersecurity, risk reporting and presentations from Treasury Corporation Victoria and the Victorian Auditor-General's Office.



### IWN Knowledge Sharing and Collaboration Conference, October 2022

This event was delivered in a hybrid format across three physical locations around the state, and provided an opportunity for IWN participants to network and share project learnings with each other.

### People Summit, May 2023

Also hosted by Pitcher Partners in Melbourne, this one day event was themed around safety, culture and leadership and featured Julia Banks as keynote speaker. Panel discussions focused on psychosocial impacts in the workplace and leadership of the future, and attendees also heard updates from VicWater's Safety Executive Group and Diversity & Inclusion Steering Committee.



### IWN Conference, May 2023

Around 200 people from across the Victorian and Tasmanian water sector joined in person at Deakin Downtown in Melbourne and online for a day focused on the power of positive disruption. The Minister for Water opened the conference and keynote speakers included Professors David Halliwell and Svetha Venkatesh from Deakin University, Centre for Optimism Founder Victor Pertou, and Tane Hunter from Future Crunch.

# Our sponsors

VicWater would like to thank our sponsors for their generous support during 2022-23.

## Program Partners



## Media Partner (*Inside Water* publication)



## Event Sponsors



## IWN Sponsors



# Our supporters

The achievements outlined in this report rely on a lot of voluntary effort and good will from the industry, and we are very fortunate to work with so many passionate and purposeful people who genuinely want to make a positive difference.

We warmly thank all our members, sponsors and partners for their continued support and willingness to contribute their time, effort and expertise to VicWater's activities.



