



Better Together
Strategic Plan

2023-28



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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.

Foreword

Message from the VicWater Chair

VicWater's intent to support and represent our members has never been more focused.

Recognising that our changing landscape will define the next era, VicWater's *Better Together Strategic Plan* outlines our role in building a climate resilient and sustainable future for Victoria's water sector.

The achievements of the previous plan transformed VicWater creating a strong foundation to build upon. We are future ready. This is coupled with renewed member commitment to unite and strengthen our collaboration to secure better outcomes.

Better outcomes mean our members are better positioned to plan and respond to the effects of climate change, to enhance the role of Traditional Owners in water management, and navigate the challenges associated with financial sustainability and industry capability.

Working closely with our members through an unprecedented engagement program, we are confident this plan will deliver significant value not just for the sector but also the Victorian community.

VicWater will provide the right forums for our members to build their capability, to bring their challenges and opportunities forward, to advocate for their needs and achieve a regulatory environment that supports long-term water sector sustainability.

We are proud of our sector's progress in relation to diversity and inclusion and through VicWater's contribution with initiatives like *Water Able* and the *Women in Water Directors Network*. We will continue to shine a light and deliver initiatives that focus on equity.

Through our unity we will advance Victoria's water sector. We thank our members and stakeholders for their continued and genuine commitment to working better together.

We will deliver our *Better Together Strategic Plan* with professionalism, flexibility and enthusiasm for the benefit of all members and our industry.



David Middleton

Message from the VicWater CEO

We are pleased to present the *Better Together Strategic Plan 2023-28*.

With a focus on building expertise and embodying excellence, the plan reflects our understanding of the critical role Victoria's water sector has in providing essential services in an ever changing physical, digital and social environment.

Working seamlessly in partnership with the VicWater Board and our members, we have a clear understanding of what success for Victoria's water sector will be.

Success will be measured by our ability to bring the water sector together, to advocate for a sustainable future, to be a trusted expert advisor, to build meaningful partnerships and to deliver strategic projects and leading edge programs like Intelligent Water Networks that improve sector innovation, capability and performance.

Successful industry collaboration relies on a lot of voluntary effort and good will, and we are fortunate at VicWater to work with so many passionate and purposeful people who genuinely want to make a positive difference to the community.

Thank you to our members who embrace the ethos of being Better Together, by participating in our events and forums, supporting the working groups and initiatives and the genuine commitment to shaping our shared future.

Embracing this transformative and ambitious plan, the VicWater team is ready to serve our members and help them deliver greater outcomes for customers, community and the environment.



Jo Lim

We are VicWater

WE ARE Victoria's peak industry association representing Victoria's 18 water corporations and a number of other water sector organisations.

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.

WE ARE agile and responsive to the needs of our members and the ever-changing environment in which they operate.

WE BRING people and organisations together to identify and deliver targeted projects that result in greater efficiencies and innovation.

WE VALUE strong leadership and strengthen sector governance by delivering development and networking opportunities for the director and executive cohort.

WE PROVIDE an effective vehicle for Victorian water corporations to benefit from shared learnings, investments, experimentation and risk-sharing, achieving real dollar industry efficiencies, and developing a common voice with stakeholders on key sector issues.

The difference we bring

We are unique.

We are Victorian focused.



Better Together



Working Together

Managing Directors Forum

- Collaboration and information
- Developing industry positions
- Overseeing sector projects and initiatives

VicWater

- VicWater Committees
- VicWater Working Groups
- Intelligent Water Networks

Chairs Forum

- Collaboration and information
- Shared strategic issues
- Identifying areas for sector leadership



VicWater unites the water sector to deliver better outcomes for Victorian customers, community and the environment.

About this Strategy

This Strategic Plan, *Better Together 2023–28* defines the future direction and priorities for VicWater. It maintains momentum, building on the 2018–23 strategic plan, while delivering clarity about future priorities. It commits to a shared understanding about VicWater’s role in advocacy, collaboration and leadership.

Our Strategic Drivers

In developing this plan, VicWater engaged with members and stakeholders about what they value and see as future priorities.

RETAIN VALUE

proposition
Better Together
(97% support)

REMAIN FOCUSED

on collaboration
and advocacy
(most valued
by members)

ENGAGE WITH STAKEHOLDERS

and embed VicWater
as a ‘trusted’ advisor
and partner

CREATE EFFICIENCIES

through shared
strategic sourcing
and innovation

KEEP DELIVERING

outstanding
events

PROMOTE

Victoria’s water
sector

Our Drivers for Change

Victoria’s water sector conducts extensive environmental scans which identify global, national and local drivers for change. These are reflected in the shift in strategic priorities for VicWater.

ADDRESSING

water sector
financial sustainability

SUPPORTING

climate resilience
and adaptation
initiatives

ATTRACTING

and retaining a high
quality workforce

CREATING

efficiencies
across Victoria’s
water sector

PROVIDING INSIGHT

and support to meet
changing community
expectations

INVESTING

in water sector leaders

VicWater is critical, it provides a safe place for challenging conversations

The value we deliver

VicWater has delivered exceptional member value over the last five years. While COVID impacted our ability to provide face-to-face forums, we were able to build our capability and use technology more effectively. Our ability to be agile and adaptable resulted in increased member participation, particularly in regional areas.

DELIVERED

21

industry projects
(including IWN)

HOSTED and
supported

42

industry events

MANAGED

16

committees
and working
groups

PREPARED

15

submissions

PUBLISHED

16

industry
reports
and guides

FACILITATED

4

training
courses

REBRANDED

and delivered
a new website

GREW

our social
media
engagement
and
increased
LinkedIn
followers

CONTINUED TO BUILD

partnerships
with Vic
Catchments,
IWA and WSAA

“

We couldn't operate
without VicWater

”

“

Collaboration
is at the
heart of
VicWater

”

Overview

VicWater unites the water sector to deliver better outcomes for Victorian customers, community and the environment.

Strategic priorities

ADVOCATE to influence the regulatory environment

FACILITATE sector collaboration

ADVANCE member capability and performance

PROMOTE Victoria's water sector

Strategic outcome

A regulatory environment that supports long-term water sector sustainability

A water sector that works 'better together' to deliver efficiencies and innovation

A more diverse, informed and engaged water sector that embodies a sense of pride and inclusiveness

A water sector that is valued and supported by the Victorian community

Achieved through an integrated suite of initiatives over 2023–28

- Delivering a contemporary Advocacy Strategy based on agreed member priorities
- Enabling stronger and more productive relationships with key stakeholders (be a trusted partner)
- Maintaining focus on sector financial sustainability and climate change adaptation and mitigation

- Facilitating industry forums, committees and working groups
- Developing productive partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders within and outside the water sector
- Delivering strategic projects that enhance industry performance
- Mobilising to provide 'time sensitive' or issue-related coordination

- Strengthening sector governance and leadership
- Evolving water sector culture, workforce resilience and capability through targeted programs
- Providing knowledge sharing, networking and professional development opportunities
- Supporting members to build meaningful relationships with Traditional Owners

- Showcasing Victorian water sector achievements and capability to Government and stakeholders (e.g. net zero goals)
- Helping to promote the value of water to the Victorian community
- Promoting the sector as 'employer of choice' and 'partner of choice'
- Recognising water excellence and leadership in the community

Supported by annual Business Plan

Detailed Strategic Plan

Advocate to influence the regulatory environment

Strategic outcome

A regulatory environment that supports long-term water sector sustainability

Key initiatives

- Deliver a contemporary Advocacy Strategy based on agreed member priorities, that will:
 - enable stronger and more productive relationships with key stakeholders (be a trusted partner)
 - ensure our members are prepared for future policy and regulatory reform
 - maintain focus on sector financial sustainability and climate change adaptation and mitigation

Key actions 2023-24

- Develop and implement Advocacy Strategy to:
 - understand government and regulator policy priorities
 - engage and build stronger relationships with key stakeholders including Government and regulators
 - coordinate and collaborate with other industry associations to identify shared advocacy opportunities
 - embed a new advocacy model to consider scale and response for each agreed advocacy issue/project
 - communicate with our members so they are prepared for future policy and regulator reform
 - engage our members in the advocacy process and sharing outcomes
 - implement processes for identifying emerging policy and regulation trends

Facilitate sector collaboration

Strategic outcome

A water sector that works 'better together' to deliver efficiencies and innovation

Key initiatives

- Facilitate industry forums, committees and working groups
- Develop productive partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders within and outside the water sector
- Deliver strategic projects that enhance industry performance
- Mobilise to provide 'time sensitive' or issue-related coordination

Key actions 2023-24

- Manage industry forums including Chairs and MDs Forums
- Manage partner and stakeholder engagement initiatives
- Manage VicWater committees and working groups
- Deliver Intelligent Water Networks (IWN) program
- Support special projects - e.g. Mutual Aid Program
- Manage subscription projects - e.g. carbon offsets

Advance member capability and performance

Strategic outcome

A more diverse, informed and engaged water sector that embodies a sense of pride and inclusiveness

Key initiatives

- Strengthen sector governance and leadership
- Evolve water sector culture, workforce resilience and capability through targeted programs
- Provide knowledge sharing, networking and professional development opportunities
- Support members to build meaningful relationships with Traditional Owners

Key actions 2023–24

- Deliver Director Masterclass Program
- Deliver events (including Annual Conference)
- Implement key programs, including:
 - Diversity and Inclusion Program
 - Safety and Wellbeing Program
 - Traditional Owner Program
- Partner with other industry associations – e.g. IWA, WIOA, WSAA, Vic Catchments
- Review role of VicWater associate membership

Promote Victoria's water sector

Strategic outcome

A water sector that is valued and supported by the Victorian community

Key initiatives

- Showcase Victorian water sector achievements and capability to Government and stakeholders
- Help to promote the value of water to the Victorian community
- Recognise water excellence and leadership in the community

Key actions 2023–24

- Update VicWater's Communications and Engagement Strategy to include focus on showcasing the strength and capability of Victoria's water sector (e.g. net zero goals)
- Participate in external events that promote the water sector
- Engage with Government to identify shared communication and education opportunities
- Promote the sector as 'employer of choice' and 'partner of choice'
- Work with Government to inform potential community campaigns

“
Our customer's expectations are changing, VicWater can play a role in preparing us to meet these changing expectations
”

Delivering the Strategy

Measuring success

VicWater will evaluate its success in realising the Strategic Outcomes of *Better Together 2023-28* by measuring the extent to which we deliver the Strategic Priorities:

ADVOCATE to influence the regulatory environment

FACILITATE sector collaboration

ADVANCE member capability and performance

PROMOTE Victoria's water sector

VicWater's success is ultimately a reflection of member perceptions of performance, this can be measured by retaining

100%
water corporation membership.

VicWater's annual Business Plan will feature specific KPIs that are formulated based on this Strategic Plan, and we will measure and report our performance against these KPIs each year in our Annual Achievements Report. VicWater will measure success through a range of initiatives, including:

- Annual Member Survey
- Member event surveys
- MDs and Chairs Forum feedback
- Regular member and stakeholder engagement

Assumptions

- No proposed changes to funding model
- Water corporations will continue to make available staff to support working groups and projects
- Subscription projects are separately funded on a case by case basis
- Retain current VicWater staffing



