

VicWater Director Masterclass Program



DEEPEN YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND STRENGTHEN YOUR
STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE SKILLS TO
**CREATE A LEGACY OF HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE
WATER SYSTEMS AND COMMUNITIES**



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Our waterways and water systems are essential for life, critical for economic activity, vital for social and cultural wellbeing and central to environmental health. Water corporations and catchment management authorities play a crucial role in securing these benefits on behalf of communities.

But, they face a growing set of complex challenges, driven by environmental change, rising social expectations, technological developments, regulatory complexity and fiscal constraints.

Directors of water corporations and catchment management authorities need opportunities to gain insight into contemporary governance issues and ways of thinking to deliver public value and ensure healthy and sustainable water systems and communities.

The VicWater Director Masterclass Program is designed to meet this need.

WHO IS IT FOR?

This program is designed for Directors of Victorian Water Corporations and Catchment Management Authorities (water sector directors) who want to develop:

- deeper **insight** into the sector and ways of thinking to strengthen governance and leadership skills.
- a strategic mindset for providing **oversight** that goes beyond compliance to create a legacy of healthy and sustainable water systems and communities
- greater **foresight** and ways of thinking to address the emerging trends and forces shaping the future of the sector and prepare for long-term success.

The program complements AICD and DEECA (ex DELWP) Director Development Programs and deals specifically with the unique challenges of the water and catchment management sector.

WHAT YOU WILL GET?

Learn from respected water sector facilitators

The program has been designed by Monash Sustainable Development Institute (MSDI) for VicWater. MSDI combines deep practical knowledge of the water sector and academic rigour with extensive experience in developing tailored leadership courses. The Masterclass facilitators are recognised leaders with vast experience in a variety of senior roles and can bring to life the mindsets and ways of thinking required for long-term success.

Learn with peers

The program is designed to draw on the experience of participants to enhance learning. An explicit focus of the program is to foster dialogue and sharing of knowledge and strengthen networks that will help you to achieve your leadership development goals.

Learn about new ways of thinking

This program explores ways of thinking that support collaborative and future-focused decision making. These skills will help you to support and influence your organisation to create a legacy of healthy and sustainable water systems and communities.

STRUCTURE

The VicWater Director Masterclass Program consists of two, 1-day, in-person Masterclasses. The Masterclasses are complementary but can be taken independently depending on what's most relevant to you.

The Masterclasses allow for a deep dive into key themes, focus on ways of thinking and will draw extensively on the experience of the facilitators, speakers and participants.

Each Masterclass will be in-person in the Melbourne CBD and run over an afternoon (12:30 – 17:30), followed by dinner (18:00 – 21:00) and a morning on the next day (9:00 – 13:30). This structure allows for deeper engagement and accommodates participants travelling from outside Melbourne. The dinner will include a panel discussion with invited speakers.

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Masterclass: Contemporary ways of thinking:
sector governance and leadership



This Masterclass focuses primarily on the ‘oversight’ and ‘insight’ role of directors. It will touch on aspects of governance, compliance, regulation, strategy and leadership in an integrated way.

Dates for Masterclass 1 for 2026 are to be announced. Please check our website for the latest information.

Masterclass: New ways of thinking:
addressing long-term challenges



This Masterclass will focus on the ‘foresight’ role of directors. It will explore the responses and capacities required to adapt to change including climate, indigenous water justice, sustainable development and diversity and inclusion and some tools and frameworks to influence long term outcomes.

March 24th & 25, 2025

The cost to participate in each Masterclass is \$1980 (inc. GST).



“The Masterclasses were challenging, informative and a wonderful opportunity to strengthen relationships with colleagues.” Stephen Angus, CMA director

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Masterclass: New Ways of Thinking: Addressing Long-Term Challenges

This Masterclass will focus on the ‘foresight’ role of directors. It will explore the responses and capacities required to adapt to long term challenges including climate change and indigenous water justice. There will be a strong focus on new ways of thinking about the sector drawn from sustainability transitions research and indigenous knowledge systems and practices.

This will be delivered through:

- insights from leading researchers and indigenous leaders.
- reference to models, frameworks and case studies of water sector transformation.

- exploring how the sovereignty and water rights of Traditional Owners can be strengthened as part of water governance frameworks and become an enabler of water system transformation
- opportunities for reflection and discussion with sector leaders and program participants.

An evening dinner will include a panel discussion with invited guests.

DATE:

March 24th & 25, 2025

COST:

\$1980 per person (inc. GST).

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FACILITATORS



Chris Chesterfield

Chris is a Professor of Practice at MSDI with a focus on water sector governance and leadership. He held roles as General Manager at Melbourne Water and CEO of the Office of Living Victoria before joining Monash University. He has contributed to advancing water and urban planning practice through a number of other recent roles including as chair of several Ministerial advisory committees that have led to significant planning and legislative reforms. He was a Commissioner and Chair of the Victorian Environmental Water Holder for 8 years and is currently a Director of Barwon Water and Chair of the Birrarung Council, a bicultural statutory body which acts as the 'voice for the Yarra River'.



Associate Professor Briony Rogers

As the Director of MSDI Water with the Monash Sustainable Development Institute, Briony leads cross-faculty research and enterprise initiatives, bringing together Monash's water expertise to support progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. She is also the CEO of Fire to Flourish, a five-year transdisciplinary program working at the intersection of disaster resilience and community development. She was formerly the Chief Research Officer for the CRC for Water Sensitive Cities and prior to entering academia, worked as an engineering consultant on water infrastructure projects in Australia and Vietnam.



Dr Erin O'Donnell

Dr Erin O'Donnell is a Senior Lecturer and ARC Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne Law School. Erin is a water law and policy expert, and she is recognized internationally for her research into the legal rights for rivers and Indigenous rights to water. Since 2018, Erin has been a member of the Birrarung Council, the voice of the Yarra River in Melbourne. In 2022, Erin was seconded to DEECA as the lead author of the Victorian Government's Aboriginal water rights policy, Water is Life, as part of a majority Traditional Owner writing team.



Bhiamie Williamson

Bhiamie is a Euahlayi man from north-west NSW and a leading Indigenous academic and consultant trainer in Indigenous governance. He specialises in translating research into practical outcomes to support communities, Care for Country, and address injustice. He is currently a Research Fellow at Monash University with Fire to Flourish, a significant \$50 million research initiative partnering with communities across NSW and Victoria affected by the 2019-20 bushfires and leads the 'National Indigenous Disaster Resilience Project', embedding Indigenous knowledge and insights into disaster responses and recovery and foster resilient Indigenous communities.

PRESENTERS AND PANEL MEMBERS

The dinner panel for the masterclasses will be drawn from experienced directors and leaders from the sector. Past panellists have included Dr Gillian Sparkes, Cheryl Batagol, Rob Skinner, Rueben Berg, Jane Doolan, and Sue O'Connor.

"The Masterclass enabled an insightful look at the historical context of our current approach to water governance. With this background, directors could recognise opportunities for government policy and community engagement to improve water and catchment planning, and how to make this happen in a contemporary context. A positive, forward thinking approach challenged directors to return to their boards with enhanced foresight and open minds, particularly about sovereignty and climate change." Peter Hilbig, CMA chair

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Masterclass: Contemporary ways of thinking: sector governance and leadership

This Masterclass focuses primarily on the ‘oversight’ and ‘insight’ role of directors. It will touch on aspects of governance, compliance, regulation, strategy and leadership in an integrated way and explore:

- the evolution of water and catchment management sector governance and policy goals
- the director’s dual role of Board governance and sector governance
- the concept of public value related to the sector
- the characteristics of exemplary Board leadership in the sector.

This will be delivered through:

- reference to models, frameworks and case studies that are most relevant to water sector boards
- insights from sector governance and leadership specialists and fellow workshop participants.
- opportunities for reflection and self-assessment

An evening dinner will include a panel discussion with with invited guests who have shaped the sector over several decades.

DATE:

Dates for Masterclass 1 for 2026 are to be announced. Please check our website for the latest information.

COST:

\$1980 per person (inc. GST).

“The Director Masterclass was relevant and extremely useful for my work as a Director with Wannon Water. The facilitators were engaging, knowledgeable, provided insight and ensured sessions were working alongside our Catchment Management Directors ensured a richer learning environment and emphasised the importance of our collaborations. This was a very well organised event and I look forward to the next one.” Neil Plummer, Wannon Water

“The best board governance and leadership program I have attended! Thank you!”
Victor Perton, Director of Yarra Valley Water

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