



Annual Achievements Report

2023-24



Contents

About VicWater	3
Our organisation	3
Our strategy	3
Our achievements	4
Our sponsors	8
Our supporters	8

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 2023-24 we farewelled board directors Naomi Cleary and Russell Anderson and welcomed new directors Ishara Saldin and Helen Symes.

We launched our new website in March 2024, creating a more streamlined user experience for our members and stakeholders.

We continued the integration with the Intelligent Water Networks (IWN) program, resulting in strengthened governance arrangements and improved operational efficiencies. Elisa Bourke (IWN Deputy Program Director) joined the VicWater team on a permanent basis, ending her secondment from Melbourne Water.

Our strategy

During 2023-24, we worked to implement our 'Better Together' five-year Strategic Plan. This plan provides clarity on our strategic focus and boundaries, and identifies opportunities to create value and have impact across our four priority areas:

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

These strategic priorities inform every project we undertake and every event or program that we run, to ensure we continue to deliver value for our members.



Our achievements

Advocacy

Advocacy strategy

During 2023–24 we developed an Advocacy Strategy to provide a high-level outline of VicWater’s objectives, principles, approach and methods for our advocacy work. The issues that we advocate on range from short term, immediate issues which require a quick response from the water sector through to medium- and long-term issues which require a greater level of investigation and/or more sustained effort. We also developed an advocacy dashboard to provide regular reporting to our board and members.

Regulator engagement

VicWater undertook regular engagement with the key sector regulators Essential Services Commission (ESC), Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and Department of Health (DH), as well as with Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action (DEECA), Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF), Department of Government Services (DGS), Energy and Water Ombudsman of Victoria (EWOV) and other agencies, to communicate members’ views on a range of policy and regulatory issues impacting the sector.

Water Act amendments

VicWater set up a legal working group to identify potential amendments to the *Water Act 1989* aimed at resolving issues that are hindering the efficient operation of water businesses, and/or causing unfavourable outcomes for water corporations (and by extension, their customers and community). DEECA has taken one of the recommended amendments forward to the Government’s legislative agenda, with others to be submitted at an opportune time.

Collaboration

Carbon offsets

During 2023-24 VicWater continued to work with our members on a collective approach to the carbon offsets market to help meet water corporations’ net zero targets. A formal Expression of Interest was released to the carbon market to help inform water corporations’ decision on whether to form special purpose vehicle to procure carbon offsets through a diversified portfolio of projects.

Workforce readiness

VicWater convened a project working group to investigate solutions for the Victorian water industry in response to the current Australia-wide shortage of Registered Training Organisations who can provide training in the National Water Package. VicWater has also represented the sector through membership of the Victorian Skills Authority’s industry advisory group, and participation in national skills forums with Buildskills Australia.



Safety and wellbeing

VicWater's Safety Executive Group continued to embed the ethos of 'safe and thriving' across the sector. We supported the OHS Network to hold a hybrid one day forum which focused on driving safety, and ran a second successful round of the executive health and safety course which challenged participants to think about safety differently.

Diversity and inclusion

With the assistance of VicWater's Diversity & Inclusion Steering Committee, we published the fifth and final annual performance report against the *Water Industry Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2019-2023*, and released the refreshed 2024-28 Strategy. We formalised WaterAble as a program of VicWater to help support its national expansion. VicWater staff also participated in the Midsumma Pride March 2024 and other events to support and celebrate LGBTIQ+ employees.



Cybersecurity

With increasing cybersecurity threats, our members are focused on the protection of assets and data. This year VicWater partnered with DEECA to deliver a sector wide cybersecurity exercise with over 60 people in attendance, working through two distinct scenarios.

IWN

The IWN program continued to deliver significant value to the industry. A new 'hub and spoke' operating model was rolled out to formalise a program working group structure, and new programs were established in Circular Economy, Contaminants of Concern and Safety Innovation. In November 2023, IWN won the AWA Victorian R&D Excellence Award with Barwon Water and partners for the Biochar to Batteries project.



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.



Insight: Executive Leadership for Women in Water

In 2023-24 VicWater took on the management of the Insight: Executive Leadership for Women in Water program from DEECA.

This year sees a third cohort of 13 executive women undertaking this program, which offers both self-development and the opportunity to build a collaborative, supportive network for women seeking to make a difference.



2023 Board appointments

With new board directors joining the sector in October 2023, we supported their induction with a New Director Introduction webinar held in partnership with Vic Catchments. We also ran our Director Masterclass Program 1 (delivered by Monash Sustainable Development Institute), providing 30 participants from water corporations and catchment management authorities an opportunity to learn more about the Victorian water sector and build their professional network.

Events

VicWater Annual Conference, September 2023

The two-day conference was attended by senior leaders from the Victorian water sector including board chairs, directors and executives across all 8 Victorian water corporations. The conference theme looked at adapting to economic challenges in the water sector and provided new strategic insights for critical thinking to assist leaders in their roles. Nicki Hutley and Mick Liubinskas gave keynote presentations, and there were several panel sessions which took a closer look into the economic challenges and opportunities for the sector.



Water Minister's Climate Innovation Challenge (WMCIC), December 2023

The winners of the inaugural round of the WMCIC were announced at this IWN event, with \$135,000 being allocated to support four strategic projects that will enable the water sector to collectively accelerate climate action opportunities.

Director Development Forum, February 2024

We partnered with DEECA and Vic Catchments to deliver this biennial forum, designed to meet the needs of both newly appointed board directors as well as our more experienced leadership cohort. Stream sessions covered cyber risk management, psychosocial workplace safety, emergency management and transition to net zero. Anders Sorman-Nilsson provided the keynote address on megatrends and AI technology, and the forum finished with an empowering session on Traditional Owner self-determination.



International delegations

During 2023-24 VicWater hosted international delegations from China, United Arab Emirates and Canada interested in learning about economic regulation, environmental management, and innovation and technology in the Victorian water sector.



Our sponsors

VicWater would like to thank our sponsors for their generous support during 2023-24.

Program Partners



Media Partner (*Inside Water* publication)



Event Sponsors



Our supporters

We are grateful to collaborate with so many passionate and dedicated individuals who are committed to driving positive change in the Victorian water sector.

Our sincere thanks go to all our members, sponsors and partners for their ongoing support, and for contributing their time, energy and expertise to VicWater's continuing success.

