

Business Plan

2026-27

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 to advance the objectives of Treaty and truth-telling.

About VicWater

The Victorian Water Industry Association (VicWater) is the peak industry association for water corporations in Victoria. It is a not-for-profit industry association under the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Vic)*. All 18 Victorian water corporations are members. We also have an associate member class for other organisations within the Victorian water sector.

VicWater governance

VicWater is governed by a Board of eight directors elected by our members to give a broad representation across the water industry.

Board members at June 2026 are:

CHAIR:

Therese Tierney, Chair, East Gippsland Water

DEPUTY CHAIR:

Stephen Brown, Chair, North East Water

BOARD DIRECTORS:

Nicola Hepenstall, Chair, South Gippsland Water

Tom Mollenkopf, Chair, Gippsland Water

Charmaine Quick, Managing Director, Goulburn-Murray Water

Marcus Stewart, Director, Yarra Valley Water

Dona Tantirimudalige, Managing Director, Westernport Water

Scott Williams, Director, Central Highlands Water

As well as the Board, VicWater's authorising environment includes the Managing Directors (MDs) Forum and Chairs Forum, both of which meet regularly to provide guidance and oversight of VicWater's activities.

Member support and leadership is provided through standing committees and executive groups in some of VicWater's key focus areas: Finance Issues Steering Committee; Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee; Cybersecurity Governance Steering Committee; Safety Executive Group and Intelligent Water Networks (IWN) Executive Group.

We support the non-executive director cohort through opportunities for peer networking and professional development to help strengthen their leadership and governance skills.

In addition, short-term working groups are convened by VicWater to meet industry needs. Examples include carbon emissions offsets, water operator training and climate adaptation.

Strategic Plan 2023-2028

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 outcomes

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

Better Together



Working Together

**Managing
Directors
Forum**

**Chairs
Forum**

**Non
Executive
Director
Networks**

**Finance
Issues
Steering
Committee**

**Diversity
and Inclusion
Steering
Committee**

**Cyber
Governance
Steering
Committee**

**Safety
Executive
Group**

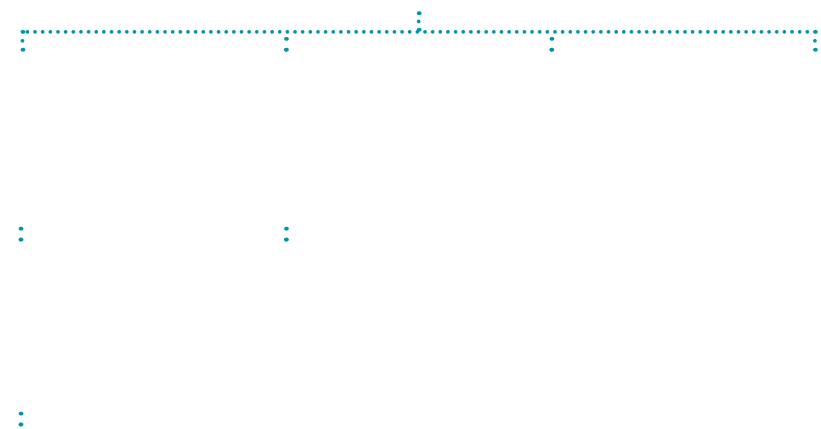
**IWN
Executive
Group**

**WaterAble
Committee**

VicWater organisation

VicWater’s operations are maintained by a small team of staff working across governance and administration, policy and regulation, program/project management and member engagement.

To deliver our priorities for 2026-27, and the other activities outlined in this Business Plan, we will ensure that VicWater’s staffing is at the right level and allocated to the most important business functions to ensure we fulfil our members’ priorities. The office move in late 2024 provides opportunity to further deliver value to our members through the use of our facilities, and the ability to deliver smaller events, such as thought leadership seminars, workshops and training.



Business Plan context

Strategic Plan 2023–2028

This Business Plan represents the fourth year of VicWater’s five year Strategic Plan 2023–2028.

Our key drivers

In developing our Strategic Plan we identified the following drivers for our members and the Victorian water sector more broadly:

Addressing
water sector
**FINANCIAL
SUSTAINABILITY**

Attracting
and retaining a
**HIGH QUALITY
WORKFORCE**

Providing insight
and support to
meet **CHANGING
COMMUNITY
EXPECTATIONS**

Supporting
**CLIMATE
RESILIENCE
AND
ADAPTATION**
initiatives

**CREATING
EFFICIENCIES**
across Victoria’s
water sector

INVESTING
in water sector
leaders

Other relevant drivers that have informed the activities outlined in this Business Plan include:

A strong emphasis on
WATER SECURITY, in the
context of increasingly dry
conditions across the state,
ongoing population growth, and
the emerging demand from new
and expanded data centres

Expectations from
government for greater
**COLLABORATION
AND PARTNERSHIPS**
across the sector

Our plan for 2026–27

In 2026–27 we will:

Advocate for a fit for purpose and sustainable water sector

Provide opportunities for industry networking and knowledge sharing through focused events and initiatives

Facilitate sector collaboration through effective management of our key member forums and groups, programs and projects

Showcase the strengths and capabilities of the Victorian water sector through delivery of our Communications and Engagement Strategy

The following tables provide a detailed account of these activities for 2026–27 aligned to the strategic priorities and outcomes of our Strategic Plan.

In July 2026, the VicWater team will renew our operational plan, which details the responsibilities and specific actions associated with each of the planned activities.

This will ensure we progress and achieve our Business Plan objectives over the course of the year.

Strategic priorities 2026–27

Advocate to influence the regulatory environment

Strategic outcome

A regulatory environment that supports long-term water sector sustainability

Key actions

- Gain agreement of members on top advocacy priorities and actions
- Maintain effective relationships with key stakeholders including government and regulators
- Coordinate and collaborate with other industry associations to identify shared advocacy opportunities
- Communicate with our members so they are prepared for future policy and regulatory reform
- Engage our members in the advocacy process and sharing outcomes
- Engage with political parties on key priority areas ahead of the 2026 election

Key performance indicators

- Advocacy priorities are supported by Board, Chairs Forum and MDs Forum
- Relationships with government and regulators are maintained

Facilitate sector collaboration

Strategic outcome

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

Key actions

- 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, including In-Stream
- Manage member subscription projects – e.g. carbon offsets, workforce readiness

Key performance indicators

- Members actively participate in industry forums, committees and working groups
- The planned outcomes of the IWN program and member-endorsed projects are delivered
- Opportunities for sector collaboration are identified/leveraged

Advance member capability and performance

Strategic outcome

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

Key actions

- Deliver events (including Annual Conference and thought leadership seminars)
- Support Non Executive Director Networks
- Implement key member programs including:
 - Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (including Waterable)
 - Safety and Wellbeing
 - Cybersecurity
 - Finance

Key performance indicators

- Member ratings for events are very good or better
- Members actively participate in VicWater programs
- The planned outcomes of key member programs are delivered

Promote Victoria's water sector

Strategic outcome

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

Key actions

- Maximise use of VicWater's communications channels to showcase the sector's strengths and capabilities, including active collaborations and partnerships
- Participate in external events that promote the water sector
- Engage with government and industry stakeholders to identify shared communication and education opportunities
- Promote the sector as 'employer of choice' and 'partner of choice'

Key performance indicators

- Regular communication and active engagement with members is maintained
- Opportunities for sector promotion are identified/leveraged

Finances

Assumptions and features

The majority of VicWater's income is derived from annual member and associate member fees. The balance needed to fund our lean operating model is raised primarily from events income and sponsorship.

Consistent with best practice, VicWater considers grant funding and other independent income as surplus to our operating budget, specifically linking these funds to projects and maintaining them in a liability account.

The IWN program is managed through a separate budget with oversight from the IWN Executive Group and VicWater Board.

VicWater maintains cash holdings above our minimum in the event of winding up and to absorb any loss in a year if required. This position is based on staff entitlements, office tenancy commitments and capital outlay.

Our 2026-27 budget is modelled to project a modest surplus equivalent to approximately 3% of annual income, which aims at balancing a break-even objective for a not-for-profit organisation with maintaining healthy cash reserves for future financial sustainability.

The key features and assumptions made in determining this Business Plan are:

- 18 members and 1 associate member are retained
- Member fees are increased by CPI (March 2026 quarter)
- Event income comprises 24% of VicWater's core revenue
- Staffing and administrative support for IWN is funded from IWN program fees
- Institute of Water Administration (IWA) pays a service fee to VicWater for events and other administrative support
- Projects outside of VicWater's operational budget are funded on a member subscription basis
- The majority of revenue is received at the start of the financial year and is drawn down during the year
- Staff remuneration increases are in line with market trends
- Chairs honorarium and director fees are paid according to arrangements approved by members at the 2022 AGM
- Unless otherwise known, costs are increased by CPI (March 2026 quarter)
- New capital costs are funded by retained earnings, excluding cash reserves
- The calculated minimum cash holding of \$519,935 is required based on estimated costs to wind up the association

Budgeted income and expenditure

	2026-27	2025-26		CHANGES FROM 2025-26 TO 2026-27	
	Budget \$	Budget \$	Forecast \$	Budget %	Budget to forecast %
Core Income ¹					
Members fees ²	1,170,479	1,130,114	1,119,005	3.57%	4.60%
Events ³	432,500	456,000	452,800	-5.15%	-4.48%
IWN support ⁴	25,000	25,000	25,000	0.00%	0.00%
IWA service fee ⁵	47,070	45,000	45,000	4.60%	4.60%
Interest	95,299	82,780	115,000	15.12%	-17.13%
Total core income	1,770,348	1,738,894	1,756,805	1.81%	0.77%
Core expenses ⁶					
Staff employment ⁷	1,039,689	1,006,474	990,000	3.30%	5.02%
Events ³	225,264	216,815	150,000	3.90%	50.18%
Office and administration ⁸	446,312	431,744	394,000	3.37%	13.28%
Depreciation ⁹	6,000	30,000	6,000	-80.00%	0.00%
Total core expenses	1,717,265	1,685,033	1,540,000	1.91%	11.51%
Net total	53,083	53,861	216,805		

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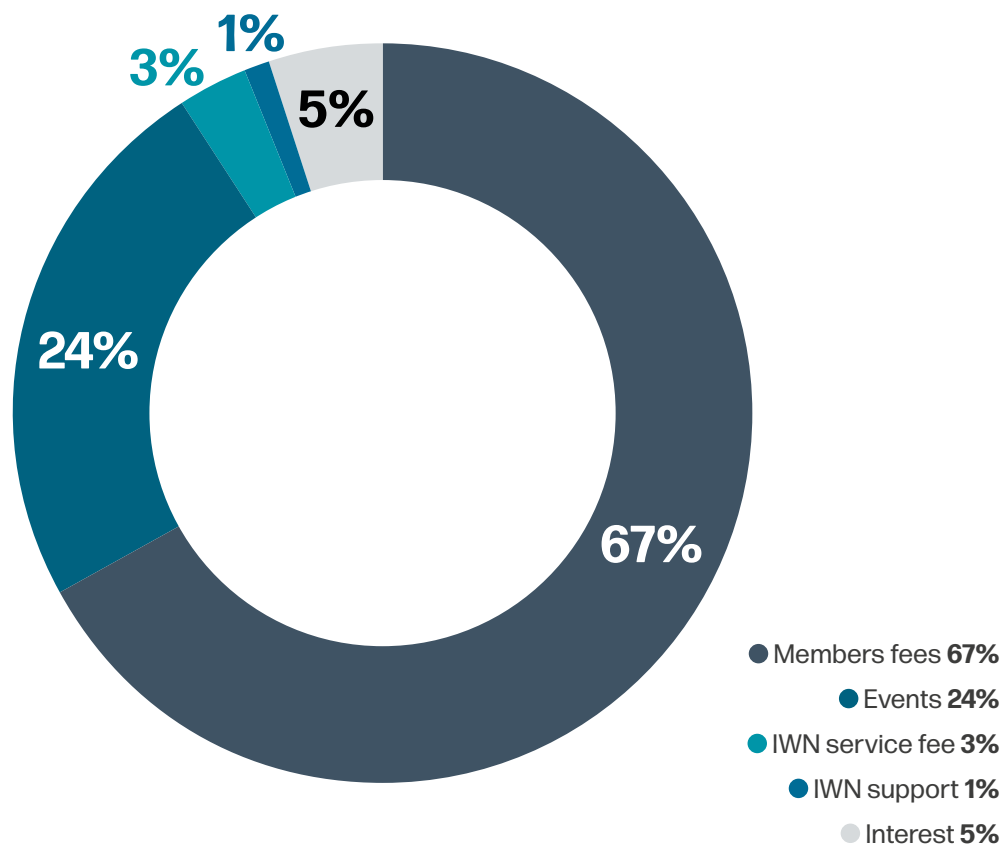
- 1 Excludes IWN program income - refer to IWN finances
- 2 Adjusted for CPI (March 2026 quarter)
- 3 Allowance for Annual Conference and one day symposium
- 4 IWN services agreement annual allocation
- 5 IWA services agreement annual allocation
- 6 Excludes IWN program expenses - refer to IWN finances
- 7 Includes staff salaries (excluding IWN staff), director fees, superannuation (12%) and payroll tax
- 8 Items \$20,000 or more include accounting fees, insurance, IT expenses, contractors and consultants and office rental
- 9 Change in depreciation is due to a large asset write off following the office move in 2024



Income and cash flow

Approximately 67% of VicWater's core income for 2026-27 will be from members fees, which are billed in July. Events income comprising 24% of our core income coincides with the timing of conferences and events.

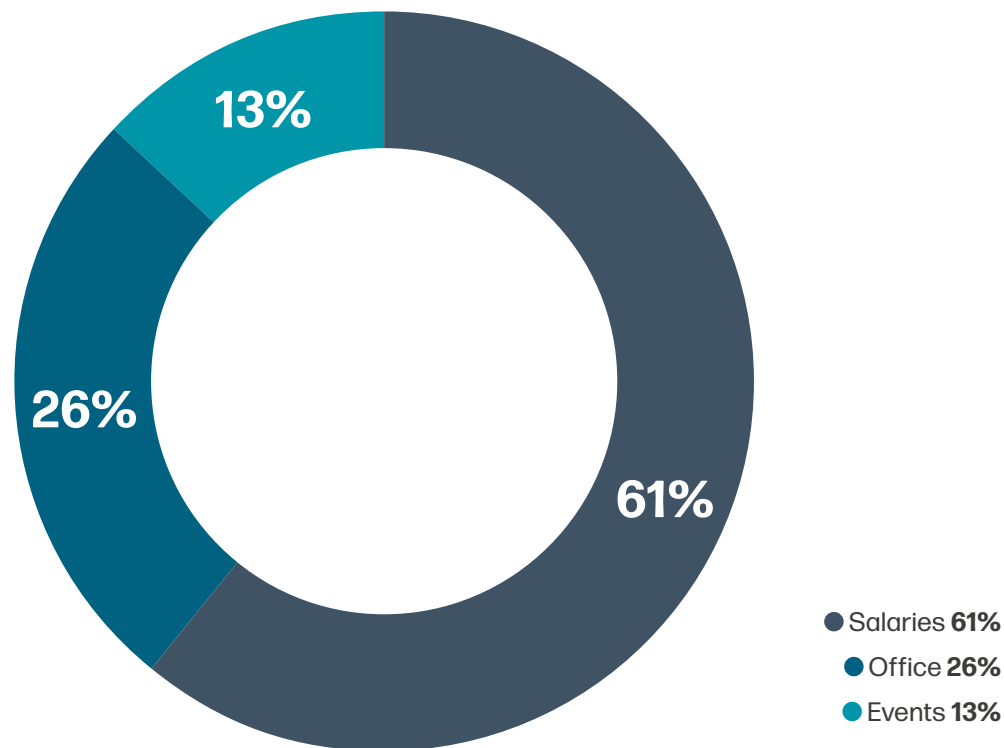
CORE INCOME



Expenses and cash flow

Salaries account for the majority of VicWater's expenses. While cash flow is generally steady across the year, variations relate to planned events and the payroll cycle. Retained earnings are used to fund capital works.

CORE EXPENSES



Capital works

VicWater's capital needs are \$7,500 in 2026-27 to fund the cyclical replacement of computers and office equipment.

CAPITAL PROGRAM	\$
Computers	5,000
Office equipment	2,500
Total required	7,500

Cash reserves needed in the event of VicWater winding up

A minimum of \$519,935 is required in the event of VicWater winding up. This accounts for staff entitlements based on current contracts and leave liabilities, liabilities covered under the office lease agreement, administrative arrangements for transition and an allowance for contingency.

WIND-UP COSTS	\$
Staff entitlements	62,435
Office rental ¹	280,000
Transitional administration	45,000
Miscellaneous	75,000
Total	482,435

- 1 Allows for 2 years of rent and assumes the ability to sub-lease for the remaining term

Our estimated ordinary capital expenditure per year is \$7,500. With a forecast of five years of capex in addition to the wind-up costs, our minimum cash position is \$519,935.

MINIMUM CASH POSITION	\$
Capex - 5 years	37,500
Wind-up costs	482,435
Total	519,935

Our estimated end-of-year cash holdings is \$1,401,984 (excluding grant funding). Allowing for a minimum cash position of \$519,935, our estimated available cash is \$850,834.

LIQUIDITY	\$
Cash holdings at 30 June 2026	1,401,984
Minimum cash position	(519,935)
Total	882,049



IWN finances

At 30 June 2026 IWN membership includes 16 Victorian water corporations and TasWater.

IWN PROGRAM BUDGET

	2026-27	2025-26	
	Budget \$	Budget \$	Forecast \$
Income			
Members fees	1,134,713	1,084,811	1,084,811
Sponsorship	40,000	40,000	47,822
DEECA WMCIC funding	0	260,000	235,000
Other program funding	26,000	211,000	130,000
In-Stream funding	0	195,000	150,000
Program surplus (FY24-25)	0	121,258	159,966
Interest	35,000	35,000	54,252
Other ¹	0	50,000	285
Total income	1,235,713	1,997,069	1,862,136
Expenses			
Program allocations ²	1,198,000	1,681,000	1,103,914
Staff employment	372,500	353,000	355,527
Events	43,000	43,000	55,932
Office and administration	90,750	91,850	89,442
Total expenses	1,704,250	2,168,850	1,604,815
Net total	(468,537)	(171,781)	257,321

NOTES

1 Non-DEECA grants and funding opportunities

2 Budget allocated to programs but not committed

