VicWater
BETTER TOGETHER



Annual Achievements Report

2025-26

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

We are Victoria's peak industry association representing all 18 Victorian water corporations and related 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 2025–26 we farewelled board directors Helen Symes and Victor Perton, and welcomed new directors Tom Mollenkopf, Marcus Stewart and Dona Tantirimudalige.

Lucy Hall joined the VicWater team as Project Support Officer, bringing our total number of staff to eight (6.9 FTE) working across governance and administration, policy and regulation, events and member engagement, project management, and the Intelligent Water Networks (IWN) program.

Our strategy

During 2025–26 we continued 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

Our Advocacy Strategy provides 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.

Government and regulator engagement

During 2025–26 VicWater undertook regular engagement with the office of the Minister for Water, the Shadow Minister for Water, 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), Treasury Corporation of Victoria (TCV), Energy and Water Ombudsman of Victoria (EWOV), Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO), Valuer-General Victoria (VGV) and other agencies.

On behalf of our members, we provided industry views and input on a range of policy and regulatory issues impacting the sector, including:

- the independent review of the *Essential Services Commission Act 2001*
- the Productivity Commission's National Water Reform 2026 inquiry
- DEECA's Industry Water Connection Guide for large non-residential urban water users
- DEECA's draft Water Sector Emissions Transition Plan
- the EPA's draft Guidance on the Definition of Waste
- Safe Work Australia's proposed new Workplace Exposure Limits for chlorine and hydrogen sulphide
- DEECA's Regulatory Impact Statement on proposed updates to the Water Fixture Efficiency Standards
- the introduction of a 'best endeavours' process for water corporations when access to water meters is not available.

Collaboration

Carbon offsets

During 2025–26 VicWater completed our work with 15 members on a collective approach to the carbon offsets market to help them meet their net zero emission targets. Achievements included obtaining ACCC approval for the collective approach to the carbon market, obtaining approval from the Minister for Water to establish the company Zero Emissions Water Carbon Offsets (ZEWCO), and appointing an initial board of directors for the company.

Climate adaptation

VicWater delivered a DEECA-funded project to provide an assessment of both the sector's and individual water corporation's maturity with regards to climate change adaptation. Work also commenced on developing a principles-based guidance document to assist water corporations when performing climate risk assessment.

Safety and wellbeing

VicWater's Safety Executive Group supported the OHS Network to run several short knowledge sharing sessions on key topics of interest to the sector including psychosocial risk management, and assurance for OHS Management Systems.

Diversity and inclusion

With the assistance of VicWater's Diversity & Inclusion Steering Committee, we published the second annual performance report against the Water Industry Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (E,D & I) Strategy 2023–2028. The Practitioners Network continued to meet regularly to share and collaborate on E,D & I initiatives in particular focusing on the development of joint actions for Gender Equality Action Plans.

WaterAble Network

A program of VicWater, WaterAble has evolved to create greater impact for disability inclusion across the water sector nationally, and to ensure long term sustainability through private and public sector membership. This year's highlights included celebrating 2025 International Day of People with Disability, welcoming new WaterAble Committee members and commencing the third round of the WaterAble Leadership program.

IWN Program

IWN continued to deliver trials and pilots to support the exploration and adoption of innovative approaches and new technologies, with positive results in the program areas of circular economy, data and analytics, and asset intelligence. IWN members actively participated in the In-Stream program, the 2025 Hackathon, circular economy site tours, leadership workshops and other networking and development opportunities.



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. The annual joint Chairs and MDs Forum was held as part of the 2025 VicWater Annual Conference, which provided a dedicated space to canvass strategic, sector-wide issues and to provide guidance and oversight for VicWater's advocacy activities.

New Director Webinar, November 2025

VicWater and Vic Catchments hosted a webinar for non-executive directors who were newly appointed to water sector boards in October 2025. Attendees heard from DEECA, VicWater and Vic Catchments, who provided key introductory information, and there was also a panel discussion with former water corporation and CMA directors, who shared insights and reflections on their board journeys and first years in the boardroom.

Director Development Forum, March 2026

Specifically designed for non-executive directors in the Victorian water sector, the Director Development Forum ran for one full day with dinner. The program provided an opportunity to network, participate in peer-to-peer learning and gain insights into current issues relevant to public entity directors. Professor Marcia Langton AO was the keynote speaker for the event.



Economic and Financial Regulation Seminar, March 2026

The Economic and Financial Regulation Seminar was held alongside the Director Development Forum and was designed for both newly appointed and continuing board members of water corporations. The seminar provided a 101 session on economic and financial regulation in the water sector and included presentations from ESC, DTF and TCV, who offered valuable insights to support sound governance, strategic planning and informed decision-making in an evolving regulatory environment.

Events

IWN Members Conference, July 2025

The one-day IWN members conference was attended by employees of member organisations from across the Victorian water sector and Tasmania. The conference theme 'Future-Ready: Resilience through Innovation' focused on why innovation is critical for predicting and preparing for tomorrow's challenges. Sami Mäkeläinen and Michael Licenblat gave keynote presentations and attendees enjoyed a variety of industry presentations throughout the day. The conference dinner featured a fireside chat with outgoing MD of South East Water, Lara Olsen.

VicWater Annual Conference, September 2025

The two-day conference was attended by senior leaders from the Victorian water sector including board chairs, directors and executives across all 18 Victorian water corporations. The conference theme focused on being future ready, highlighting the importance of innovative solutions, forward-thinking strategies, and a positive outlook in addressing today's challenges and unlocking tomorrow's opportunities. Will Sarni and Lucinda Hartley gave keynote presentations, there was a circular economy interactive session, a number of topical presentations and panel sessions, which all took a closer look into the challenges and opportunities for the sector.





Water Minister's Climate Innovation Challenge (WMCIC), December 2025

The third round of the WMCIC, delivered through the IWN program, attracted submissions from 10 Victorian water corporations, with projects centred on emissions reduction, resource recovery, network efficiency, and the creation of circular value streams. The winners were announced at a celebration event in December 2025 and a funding pool of $280,200 was allocated to four strategic projects that will deliver climate action opportunities.





Consult Australia x VicWater Forum – Building a Resilient Water Future, June 2026

Co-hosted between Consult Australia and VicWater, this forum was designed to bring water authorities, broader government and industry together to create space for an open exchange of perspectives on priorities, constraints and opportunities shaping the next phase of water investment, recognising that the scale and complexity of the challenge requires alignment across the full supply chain.



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Our supporters

VicWater's ongoing success and impact relies on the effort and good will of our members, sponsors and partners. We are fortunate to work with so many passionate and purposeful individuals who want to make a positive difference in the Victorian water sector, and we extend our sincere thanks for their continued support and contribution.



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