

WATER MATTERS

VICTORIAN WATER INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION NEWS

Volume 7 Issue 2 Autumn 2006

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Suite 1, Level 6
2 Collins Street, Melbourne,
Victoria 3000
T: (03) 9639 8868
F: (03) 9639 8860
E: vicwater@vicwater.org.au
www.vicwater.org.au

If you'd like to have an article considered for inclusion in Water Matters, email the finished article to vicwater@vicwater.org.au
Due dates: 15 January, 15 April, 15 July and 15 October or call T: (03) 9639 8868

WANNON WATER'S GRADUATE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Wannon Water has implemented a Graduate Development Program for engineering students to encourage local talent to take up future employment opportunities in the south west region of Victoria. Over a three month period from November 2005, Grant Cozens from Hawkesdale in western Victoria was one of two undergraduates to participate in a structured development program exposing him to all aspects of the businesses technical operations.

Wannon Water Chief Executive, Grant Green said "Wannon Water established the Graduate Development Program to provide undergraduate engineers the opportunity to gain an understanding of what engineering careers are available within the water industry. Regional water authorities have had some difficulty in recent years in attracting engineers into the industry and Wannon Water developed this new program to stimulate interest. Wannon Water sees this program as a valuable experience for student engineers and is committed to encouraging them to

return to the local region once they have completed their Degrees. As well as gaining exposure to all technical operations, the students are also being mentored throughout the process for encouragement and support."

Grant Cozens has completed three years of his four year Environmental Engineering course at the University of Melbourne and has enjoyed his experience with Wannon Water. Grant said "the past three months have allowed me to spend time in the different areas of the business, including water and wastewater treatment, design, development and water reuse. These experiences have enabled me to achieve a better understanding of the water industry and have put me in a better position to tackle my final year of studies."

Wannon Water plans to run the program on an annual basis each summer. Any undergraduate engineers interested in participating in next year's program can contact the Wannon Water on 1300 926 666.



Grant Cozens at one of Wannon Water's sewerage treatment facilities

“from
the CEO's
desk”



Welcome to the autumn edition of Water Matters. Hopefully, we are heading to a few months that will bring some rain to the areas most in need. The State's storages are still extremely low with some areas still in a critical condition.

I would like to welcome Denis Brockenshire to the Board of VicWater. Dennis attended his first Board meeting recently and showed that he will bring a lot of additional skill and knowledge to the Board. Dennis was appointed following the resignation of Mike Paine who has taken the position of Executive Manager, Customer Services at Barwon Water.

On behalf of the industry I would like to thank Mike for his contribution for the time he was on the VicWater Board.

The recent release of the Draft Central Region Sustainable Water Strategy will require significant input from the industry over the next two months as businesses prepare their comments. The strategy is a plan to secure water supplies for the next 50 years for all users in the face of future pressures such as climate change, population growth, economic development and land use change.

Recent activities by VicWater have included the completion of industry submissions on the Code of Practice for Timber Production and the Alternative Water Supply Framework. We are currently working on the Review of Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals and, over the coming weeks, will

prepare comments on the Draft Central Region Sustainable Water Strategy. We are also organising three workshops over the next few weeks and have commenced planning for the 2006 VicWater Conference to be held in September.

At the last Board meeting the Directors considered possible changes and the future of the Victorian Water Review. The Board discussed a number of possible options in light of the National Benchmarking Framework that has been initiated by the National Water Commission. Naturally, it is essential that any duplication in reporting is eliminated and any effort required produces an appropriate outcome required by the industry. The VicWater staff are currently considering additional options which will be discussed by the Board in June.

WATER AUTHORITIES OF GIPPSLAND GROUP CERTIFICATE III GRADUATES

Water industry professionals from across the Gippsland region have celebrated the achievements of 169 graduates who successfully completed the nationally accredited Certificate III in Water Industry Operations. Graduates who had completed the program received their qualifications on Wednesday 5 April 2006. A joint effort by Gippsland Water, East Gippsland Water, South Gippsland Water, Westernport Water and Southern Rural Water (the Water Authorities of Gippsland Group or WAGG) saw the appointment of The University of Ballarat and Goulburn-Murray Water as training providers and the Victorian Employer's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI) as the New Apprenticeship Centre. The aim was to deliver a structured approach to training for employees in the local water industry, whilst recognising the current knowledge and skills of professionals in a range of disciplines.

Gippsland Water WAGG Graduates.

Participants undertook a range of core subjects, including customer relations, environmental procedures, and occupational health and safety, as well as electives relevant to their area of work. Gippsland Water Chief Executive Officer John Mitchell said he was proud of the participant's achievements and of what the WAGG initiative had achieved since its inception. "The implementation of this nationally accredited program has enabled local water authorities to provide highly effective and targeted development programs for staff".

"WAGG's partnership with its training providers gives water industry professionals in Gippsland the ability to attend locally based training courses, reducing the travel and cost barriers that previously existed." The success of the project – believed to be the largest of its kind in the Australian water industry – has been reflected in the strong staff involvement shown over the past two years. WAGG is looking to build on the success delivered during the first two years of the project by continuing to provide new training and development opportunities for local water industry professionals.



VICWATER ANNUAL CONFERENCE CALL FOR PAPERS AND SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

VicWater has issued a 'call for papers' for our Annual Conference to be held on Thursday 28th and Friday 29th September 2006 at the Four Points Sheraton, Geelong. The theme for this year's conference is:

'Looking Beyond...

New Technology, New Capabilities, New Processes, New Challenges'

The theme relates to the need for continual reflection on and improvement of water industry practices, focussing on the key areas of technology, people, processes and challenges. VicWater 2006 will showcase how new technologies are improving the way we do business, how people and their capabilities are critical to our success, how new processes are affecting the way in which we operate

and finally how we hope to meet future challenges.

Papers are invited from the water industry and its stakeholders pertinent to the conference theme. Interested persons who would like to present a paper and invited to submit a one page abstract to vicwater@vicwater.org.au by the 16th June 2006.

There also exists a range of sponsorship packages available for those companies wishing to increase their prominence in the water industry. Sponsorship provides the ideal opportunity to demonstrate your company's interest and commitment to the industry in Victoria, while having the opportunity to network and meet key industry representatives and decision makers.

To discuss the range of sponsorship opportunities please contact VicWater on (03) 9639 8868.

Contact VicWater on (03) 9639 8868 or vicwater@vicwater.org.au for a copy of the 'call for papers' and 'sponsors' brochures or visit www.vicwater.org.au



YARRA VALLEY WATER HELPS HEALTHY SEWER MESSAGE "SINK IN"

In a bid to raise community awareness of the disposal of inappropriate waste into the sewer, Yarra Valley Water has embarked on a 'Healthy Sewer Campaign' incorporating a Healthy Sewer Station at community events, new web content, and their latest initiative, innovative cinema advertisements.

The aim of the 'Healthy Sewer Campaign' is to:

- ◆ Reduce the amount of waste that is disposed of down house hold drains
- ◆ Reduce the incidence of blocked domestic sewers

- ◆ Educate customers and increase awareness of how easy it is to reduce the environmental impact that this waste creates.

As part of the Yarra Valley Water Community event series promoted at more than 15 local events and festivals, the Healthy Sewer Station teaches the whole family how to protect the sewerage system and the environment by being careful of what is put down the sink or toilet. The interactive station utilises bright colours, the illusion of bubbling water, visual and sound effects to capture the interest of children and parents while communicating the key message.

Complementing the 'Healthy Sewer Station', two separate advertisements are currently being shown in cinemas in Yarra Valley Water's area to portray the messages:

- 1 'You wouldn't use your bin for a toilet, so don't use your toilet for a bin'
- 2 Fats and oils clog more than your arteries, they also clog your sinks and drains, causing costly blockages that can damage the system that protects our creeks, rivers and the ocean.'

New content on Yarra Valley Water's website www.yvw.com.au also provides tips on improving sewer health.

The Wimmera Mallee Pipeline Project in Western Victoria paves the way for regional development through the secure, improved quality water supply that it will bring to the region.

This major infrastructure project, which has been in the planning phase for many years, is about to start. The project will involve about 8800 kilometres of pipelines supplying water to about 9000 rural property service points and 36 towns in the region. GWMWater will call for tenders for the first stage of construction in May 2006, with work on stage one expected to take 12 months to complete from construction commencing. Project planners have allowed 10 years for construction of the project, but it is hoped that the pipeline will be built much sooner.

The main benefits that a piped system will bring to the region are a secure, reliable and quality water supply. It will end the annual loss through

evaporation of 85 percent of water that is currently released through the existing open channel system and will bring water savings of up to 103,000 ML to the region. This secure supply of better quality water will lead to increased business and investment opportunities throughout the region. It will open the way for more intensive livestock industries such as feedlots, piggeries and poultry farms and will open up possibilities for more innovative developments such as fish farms or hydroponically-grown vegetables. Up to 83,000 ML of water savings will be returned to government for a range of uses including environmental water releases to rivers and streams. Up to 4000 ML will provide for a top-up supply to 11 nominated recreational lakes and other local water bodies with high conservation value.

To ensure the region maximises the economic benefits of the project, communities, local councils, economic

development associations, government and non-government agencies and industry need to be well prepared. All these groups are working together to ensure the region capitalises on the great economic opportunities both during and after pipeline construction.

GWMWater is also working to ensure farmers are aware of their responsibilities in connecting to the pipeline. It has produced a comprehensive On-Farm Water Reticulation Guide to provide farmers with information to plan, design and install piped on-farm systems. GWMWater has also set up pipeline offices in several small communities along the pipeline path for stage one, to provide a central location for information during pipeline construction.

For the latest information about the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline Project, visit our website: www.pipingit.com.au

VICWATER BOWLS CHAMPION

On the 14 March 2006, the VicWater Bowls Team won the inaugural WaterAid Lawn Bowls fundraising event at the Richmond Union Bowling Club. Proceeds from the event will contribute towards a drinking water project in Mozambique.



CITY WEST COMMUNITY SHOWERHEAD EXCHANGE

City West Water customers queued up bright and early to make sure they didn't miss out on their free showerhead on 8 April 2006, when City West Water hosted its second Community Showerhead Exchange. The showerhead exchange aims to raise awareness about water conservation and help people change their behaviour to reduce water use in the home. More than 1,000 people came to City

West Water's Sunshine office to trade in their old, inefficient showerhead for a water-efficient AAA version. A person using the AAA showerhead during a four minute shower can save more than 8,000 litres of water per year. In total, the 2,800 customers who swapped to the AAA version last year have saved enough water in 12 months to fill about 10 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

Participants completed a survey on the day so that City West Water can measure water-savings from the program and to gauge their understanding of water conservation and their water using habits, for example how long they spend in the shower. The survey also captured their thoughts on other water-saving ideas such as rain water tanks, and recycled water.

NEW PIPELINE TO BENEFIT MACEDON RANGES

More than 18,000 people in the Macedon Ranges area will benefit from duplication of the Melbourne to Sunbury pipeline. Speaking at the official commissioning of the Macedon Ranges Water Supply Project in Gisborne, Western Water Chairman Terry Larkins said "inter-connection would boost supplies to one of the driest yet fastest growing regions in Victoria". He told community, local government and business leaders that residents of Gisborne, Riddells Creek, Macedon and Mount Macedon would now receive quality

drinking water from the metropolitan system under the \$6.1 million scheme.

Mr Larkins said the project was a key initiative under the Regional Action Plan for the Western Water area and it will meet the future water needs of these local communities." Released last year, the plan was a strategic blueprint for responsible urban water management. It targets issues and challenges specific to our region, including a decade of low rainfall, stressed rivers, climate change and unprecedented growth. At the same time, it encompasses the objectives of the State Government's

visionary Our Water Our Future program, which addresses Victoria's water needs over the next 50 years."

Mr Larkins paid tribute to Member for Macedon Joanne Duncan, MP, who he described as a "driving force" behind the project. Ms Duncan, in conjunction with Western Water, had initiated a comprehensive review into the region's water resources following nearly 10 years of drought. This review led to the decision to permanently connect the Macedon Ranges region to the metropolitan supply network.

'WATER WHEELS' CARAVAN READY TO ROLL

Communities in Goulburn-Murray Water's irrigation areas can expect an unusual visitor bearing important water information over the coming months. Goulburn-Murray Water's 'Water Wheels' information caravan has been unveiled. Chief Executive Russell Cooper said "the caravan will tour Goulburn-Murray Water's irrigation areas over the coming months to provide customers with information on the new water tariffs that come into effect from 1 July 2006, as well as 'unbundling' and water shares. Water Wheels is basically a mobile information office and is designed to take these very important messages about the new tariff structure directly to our customers," Mr Cooper said.

From 1 July this year, the water pricing structure for our irrigators will change to provide a fairer system for sharing the costs of the channel system between all users and Goulburn-Murray Water is keen to ensure that all water users are well

informed and prepared for these changes. The caravan has information on the tariff changes, unbundling and water shares, and our onboard computer can instantly calculate individual customers' charges to show them how the new tariffs might affect them.

Mr Cooper said "that It is important to note that most customers will be unaffected by the new structure. However, we are particularly keen to speak with the few customers who plan to trade water entitlements permanently next year, and those casual users who plan to use more than 270% of their water right, to provide information to help them plan their future water

use." The caravan launch follows an intensive program of more than 30 public information sessions held across the Goulburn-Murray Water region in March. Goulburn-Murray Water has also previously mailed 'fact packs' to customers to provide information on the necessary complexities of the new system. Dates and locations of the caravan's regional tour will be advertised in local newspapers and all customers are encouraged to speak to the friendly staff onboard when it visits their area.

Further information on the tariff changes is available at www.g-mwater.com.au



TRAINING AND OH&S MATTERS

VICTORIAN WATER INDUSTRY OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY NETWORK MEETING

The Victorian Water Industry Occupational Health and Safety Network met at Goulburn-Murray Offices in Tatura on 3-4 April 2006. Items discussed included Working Near Overhead and Underground Services, Traffic Management Training, OH&S Benchmarking Project and Energy Safe Victoria requirements on Meter Replacement. The Network also participated in group sessions and feedback on the WAOHS Network 2010, Effective OH&S Internal Compliance and Auditing programs, Statutory Risk Assessments Opportunities for

Synergies and Occupational Hygiene Monitoring.

Presentations to the 'Network' were also made by John Flett of Goulburn-Murray Water on in-house Competency Based Training Systems and Andrea Shaw on Managing OH&S Change in your workplace – the OH&S professional's perspective.

TRAINING CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

The Training Consultative Committee met on 10th April 2006 and supported the inclusion of State based processes to determine nominations to the

proposed Industry Advisory Committee for the water industry which will advise the new Government Industry Skills Council on technical matters such as the review and maintenance of the National Water Training Package.

SKILLS SHORTAGES WORKING GROUP

The Skills Shortages Working Group met on the 10th April 2006. Following that meeting contact was made with the Government Skills Council regarding the careers advisor project that they have been funded through the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST).

NATIONAL WATER COMMISSION VISITS GOULBURN-MURRAY WATER

Goulburn-Murray Water highlighted various key developments in water management in the Goulburn Valley to a party of Federal Government representatives with a key interest in water issues earlier this week. The National Water Commission, represented by Chairman and CEO Ken Matthews and Commissioner Peter Corish, visited Goulburn Murray Water to discuss local water management issues and to view

innovative farming practices first hand. They were accompanied by the recently appointed Federal Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull.

Goulburn-Murray Water Chief Executive Russell Cooper said "he was very pleased to have the opportunity to host the delegates and to discuss several water issues important to Goulburn-Murray Water's region with those responsible for the National

Water Initiative. The visit was very positive and a terrific opportunity to discuss issues of importance to our customers and communities, and to demonstrate why the Goulburn Valley is known as the "food bowl of Australia."

Much of the discussions involved detailed explanations of where water is sourced, how it is applied and the production from irrigation water in our region, as well as trading issues, tariff reform and salinity management issues. It was also an excellent opportunity to discuss other exciting developments at Goulburn Murray Water, such as key water savings projects, channel automation technology and the expansion of Goulburn-Murray Water's trading exchange, Watermove.

Mr Cooper was delighted with the level of interest that the National Water Commission representatives and Mr Turnbull showed in our region and in the importance of innovative water management practices to our regional communities.



(from left to right): Peter Corish, Malcolm Turnbull, G-MW Chairperson Don Cummins, Ken Matthews, Russell Cooper and Garry Smith.

TASK GROUP TOPICS

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT TASK GROUP (PMTG)

The review of the Victorian Water Review (VWR) which began in February 2006 has been put on hold following the release of the 'draft' National Benchmarking Framework by the National Water Commission. The draft 'Framework' proposes to duplicate the information currently reported in the VWR. Over the next two months VicWater will consider a range of alternative performance report to the Victorian Water Review, addressing the key issues of data integrity and duplication of reporting.

FINANCE ISSUES STEERING COMMITTEE (FISC)

The FISC group have been active in organising the annual Finance Managers conference to be held on 25th and 26th May 2006. FISC are also currently addressing two issues identified by the VicWater Board as requiring a consistent approach within the water industry. These are the review of dividend policy for regional water businesses, and Government's policy regarding the treatment of Community Service Obligations (CSOs).

SUSTAINABILITY TASK GROUP (STG)

The Sustainability Task Group (STG) has been busily organising two major events for the water industry; the Annual Sustainability Seminar (23rd May 2006) and the VicWater/RMIT Sustainability Training Course (25th and 26th July 2006).

The Task Group has also been proactive in organising key industry speakers present to the 'Group' and the wider water industry. At their meeting on the 8th March 2006, Stephen Mills, Chairperson of the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA) presented and provided an overview of the major responsibilities, issues and projects of the GBCMA giving a valuable insight into the challenges faced by CMAs in managing water resources in Victoria.

WATER EFFICIENCY TASK GROUP

The Water Efficiency Task Group finalised its business plan for 2006/07 at its April 2006 meeting. A key focus of the Task Group will be the influencing of government on the development and implementation of water conservation

and demand management policy promoting water efficiency. The Task Group will also provide an important role in advising industry on current practices in water conservation.

VICTORIAN WATER EDUCATORS TASK GROUP

The Victorian Water Educators Task Group has commenced planning for the National Water Week, 15-21 October 2006. The new Governor of Victoria Professor David de Kretser, AO has been invited to be Patron of National Water Week, a role the Governor of Victoria has held for the past four years. Marathon swimmer Tammy van Wisse will once again be the spokesperson for National Water Week. Further details will be provided in the next edition of Water Matters.

DAMS WORKING GROUP

The Dams Working Groups is currently working with VicWater and Holmesglen TAFE to produce training resources for Dams Emergency Exercises. It is envisaged that the outcomes of this project will be incorporated into the National Water Training Package.

CITY WEST WATER'S TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

City West Water has embarked on an ambitious program of developing its technical staff in response to growing concerns with the availability of suitably experienced staff to deliver on its obligations as a metropolitan Melbourne retail water company

The technical staff development program comprises four parts:

- Gaining experience through participation in a rotation scheme;

- Training through attending a technical training program;
- Recognition through achievement of defined competencies linked to a promotion and reward system;
- Possible future links to the Engineers Australia Professional Development Program.

The rotation scheme will provide five one year placements initially within

City West Water to consolidate the training. The technical training program comprises 15 lectures of from one to four days duration which focus on core business technical requirements of the water industry. Discussions are also being held with learning institutions to arrange accreditation of the technical training coursework with the objective of providing a path to a post graduate qualification. In time City West Water hopes to involve other water businesses and the consulting industry in the program.

DHS ANNUAL REPORT ON DRINKING WATER QUALITY IN VICTORIA 2004/05

The Department of Human Services (DHS) has released the "Annual Report on Drinking Water Quality Report" (the Report). This annual report provides an overview of the operations and implementation of the Safe Drinking Water Act 2003 ('the Act') and the performance of water businesses in respect to 'the Act' for the 2004-05 year, in particular the performance of water businesses (and other responsible authorities i.e. Parks Victoria) in providing safe drinking water.

For the first year of operations under the Act, data provided to DHS by water businesses indicates that Victoria's drinking water is generally of a high

standard and that water across the Melbourne metropolitan area showed 100 per cent compliance to all the draft water quality standards. All 473 drinking water localities over the reporting period were monitored for E. coli and 451 of them met the benchmark standard. 473 drinking water localities were monitored for turbidity with 459 meeting the standard.

The non-potable supplies of regional businesses were highlighted throughout the report as an area where improvement by the industry is required, in particular that non-drinking supplies are not consumed or confused with a drinking water supply. VicWater is in the process of

developing an 'Industry Guide to Supply by Agreements' that will address this issue.

Where non-compliance has occurred, water businesses are undertaking programs, in particular undertaking capital works programs (e.g. upgrading treatment plants or augmentation of new supplies) to address these issues. The report provides details of individual performance of water businesses across the State and their programs to improve the quality of drinking water to consumers.

The report is available on the Departments website at www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/water/d-report.htm

VICWATER WEBSITE UPGRADE

VicWater has recently completed an upgrade of its website (www.vicwater.org.au) to improve its structure and functionality to water

businesses and our stakeholders. A key component of the upgraded site is a water industry event 'calendar' that will allow stakeholders to view and add

water industry events. This function will assist in the planning of water industry meetings, workshops and conferences.

DEVELOPMENT OF A GREENHOUSE EMISSIONS DISCUSSION PAPER FOR THE VICTORIAN WATER INDUSTRY

The 'Water Industry's Greenhouse Emissions Reduction Working Group' Chaired by Dr Gillian Sparkes (CEO Australian Sustainable Industry Research Centre Ltd. and Board member of South Gippsland Water) and coordinated by Peta Maddy (Sustainability Victoria) is developing a greenhouse emissions reduction discussion paper for the Victorian Water Industry. The 'Working Group' is made up of representatives from the Victorian Water Industry, VicWater, Sustainability Victoria, EPA Victoria and the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE). When developed, the Discussion Paper aims to provide recommendations on the following:

- ◆ Demonstrate leadership in greenhouse gas reduction
- ◆ Set realistic stretch greenhouse gas reduction targets for a benchmarked water industry
- ◆ Influence the behaviour change based on communication and education
- ◆ Influence the adoption of a whole of system method to infrastructure design, operation and new markets
- ◆ Incorporate an industry wide collaborative and cooperative approach

The working group aims to complete the Discussion Paper by July 2006. Peta Maddy (Sustainability Victoria) will be providing an overview of the Discussion Paper at the VicWater Annual Sustainability Seminar on the 23rd May 2006.

For further information on the 'Working Group' contact Peta Maddy on (03) 9655 3231 or peta.maddy@sustainability.vic.gov.au