

WATER MATTERS

VICTORIAN WATER INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION NEWS

Volume 6 Issue 4 Spring 2005

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Due dates: 15 January, 15 April, 15 July and 15 October or call T: (03) 9639 8868

NATIONAL WATER WEEK 2005 PROTECT, CONSERVE AND GET INVOLVED!

National Water Week (NWW) for 2005 was a fun and exciting event with people focusing on water and participating in water activities around the nation. The week was officially launched in Victoria on Sunday 16 October at the Immigration Museum. The Lieutenant Governor, Lady Southey AM, the Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment, Mrs. Elaine Carbines, MLC and Tammy Van Wisse, marathon swimmer and NWW spokesperson provided inspirational addresses on the importance of water during the formal proceeding of the launch.

Primary school children from both metropolitan and regional areas participated in the NWW Poster competition. The state winners were presented with their certificates by the Lieutenant Governor and prizes by the Parliamentary Secretary for Environment during the launch.

The 2005 NWW poster competition winners and VIP's. Photo by Jon Augier, Copyright held by Museum Victoria

Congratulations to the following winners:

Years 5 & 6 Category

Winner: PETER DE VOS
New Gisborne Primary School

Runner-up: MARINA DI CARLUCCIO
Devon North Primary School

Years 3 & 4 Category

Winner: EMILY MCHENRY
Surfside Primary School

Runner-up: BRENDA PREMAN
Dingley Primary School

Years 1 & 2 Category

Winner: BAILEY BEDELLA
Waubra Primary School

Runner-up: LACHLAN CHRISTOPHER
Mansfield Primary School

Year Prep Category

Winner: ZEMI HILL
Winters Flat Primary School

Runner-up: GEORGIA LONGNEY
Bolwarra Primary School

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“from the CEO's desk”



Welcome to the Spring edition of Water Matters. There has certainly been an increased level of rainfall recently but the storages in some areas across the State are still much lower than we would all like. Hopefully, late spring rains and summer showers will provide a boost to the catchments in the near future.

Two of the key VicWater activities that have occurred recently have been National Water Week and the annual VicWater conference. The official launch of National Water Week was successfully held at the Immigration Museum and saw the commencement of a week of activities across the State. The VicWater annual conference was also a great success

and well received by participants. It is important to thank all the presenters at the conference for their efforts in providing high quality and interesting information to the industry. I would also like to thank all those from the industry that provided their support by attending. I am sure that next years will be just as successful.

The success of both events is a direct result of the efforts of the VicWater staff that organised them and I would like to formally pass on my thanks to – Fiona, Paul, Beatrice and Owen – well done.

On the staffing front we are very pleased to welcome Nathan Smith as our new Project Officer. We have also been fortunate to have Jason Walker return on a temporary basis for a few months. It is the first time in over twelve months that all the VicWater

positions have been filled and we look forward to catching up on a number of issues and tasks.

The last three months again saw a significant amount of activity associated with the Essential Services Commission as we continue to work through the issues still to be resolved. We all need to extend our thanks to those from the industry that have provided input to the numerous working groups and committees trying to resolve the issues. I am sure that the continued collective efforts will assist in an appropriate resolution.

This is also a good opportunity to thank Greg Wilson for his assistance over recent years and to congratulate him on his appointment as Chairperson of the Essential Services Commission. I am sure that we all look forward to continuing our relationship with Greg in his new role.

NATIONAL WATER WEEK 2005 PROTECT, CONSERVE AND GET INVOLVED! continued...

A large number of water focused community and school events

occurred across that State during NWW, 16 - 22 October 2005 hosted by Water Authorities, Catchment Management Authorities, Councils and Museum Victoria.

Both events aimed to raise awareness of local water quality, conservation and river health issues. Tammy spoke about her experiences while swimming in the Murray River and other Australian waters and reflected on some of her more 'unpleasant' swimming challenges overseas. Tammy described how difficult it was swimming past sewerage outfalls in Manhattan, and being dreadfully sick from the water afterwards; the importance of protecting our water ways was clear to all. National Water Week for 2006 will be the 15 -21 October, 2006. To learn more about NWW contact your local water authority or VicWater on 9639 8868.

Highlights of the week included Tammy's two regional visits. Tammy attended the Water Expo in Buronga, near Mildura and the Gippsland Integrated Natural Resources Forum in Sale.



Photo by Jon Augier, Copyright held by Museum Victoria

L-R Tammy Van Wisse, Elaine Carbines, MLC, Lady Southey, AM, John Barnes, Padmini Sebastian.

CELEBRATION FOR THE FUTURE OF EILDON DAM

The Eildon Dam Improvement Project has been officially opened by the Premier, Steve Bracks, and the Minister for Water, John Thwaites, providing a terrific endorsement for the success of this major upgrade and its importance to Victoria.

The 2 October opening of the \$48 million project was part of a very successful family day held at the dam wall and commemorated a substantial safety upgrade to the dam for the benefit of northern Victoria.

A crowd of about 2,000 people listened to a series of endorsements from the Premier and Minister for Water, as well as Goulburn-Murray Water Chairperson, Don Cummins, before taking part in the first official walk across the new dam wall.

Eildon dam is operated and maintained by Goulburn-Murray Water and is the largest state-owned dam in Victoria. It can hold 3,390,000 megalitres of water, which is more than six times the volume of Sydney Harbour and nearly twice Melbourne's storage capacity.

The water supplied from Eildon supports over \$1.4 billion in agricultural production and a regional economy of \$8 billion per annum. It also produces

hydroelectricity, provides urban supplies for communities and industry, and underpins the local tourism industry.

The dam improvement project was undertaken through an innovative partnership known as the Eildon Alliance (Goulburn-Murray Water, John Holland, GHD and Hazell Brothers) and is one of six dam risk reduction projects undertaken by Goulburn-Murray Water to date.

The works included strengthening the spillway and reconstructing the upper 10 metres of embankment, which was then raised by 5.5 metres to greatly improve safety for the dam and communities during extreme floods and provide greater certainty of water supply and continued economic growth.



Premier Steve Bracks officially opening the Eildon Dam Project.

The project was delivered within agreed time and budget, and with a terrific safety record. The Alliance has also been commended by the locals for its excellent performance and for consulting closely with the community.

As part of a legacy of the project, Goulburn-Murray Water and the Eildon Alliance also constructed a boat ramp at the dam for the community.

The cost of the project has been shared between the Victorian Government and Goulburn-Murray Water via its customers.

WELCOME TO NATHAN SMITH

Nathan Smith commenced working with VicWater in October as a Project Officer and will be focusing on sustainability issues. He will be involved in the Sustainability Task Group, the Performance Measurement Task Group and general planning issues.

Over the last 2 years Nathan worked at Green Collect, a small social and environmental enterprise that delivers environmental services and is dedicated

to providing employment to people experiencing disadvantage. His role there included the development and delivery of services and memberships as well as coordinating staff in their roles. Before Green Collect, Nathan also worked for the Department of Sustainability and Environment (South West Region) in Planning.

Nathan has studied the environmental field holistically including a Bachelor of Social Science (Environment),

a Bachelor of Applied Science (Planning) and a Postgraduate diploma in Environment.

I am sure that you will all make Nathan feel welcome as he learns the issues of the water industry.



VICWATER CONFERENCE 2005



The VicWater 2005 Annual Conference held at the Sheraton 4 Points Geelong in September, was a resounding success. The theme for the Conference was Sustainability and Accountability focusing on delivering water reform.

Professor John Langford, AM set the tone of the Conference with his Keynote Address on Future Challenges for the Victorian Water Industry providing a

thought provoking insight into the future water challenges.

The Conference contained a large number of speakers. Participants were able to choose between concurrent streams on Dealing with Uncertainty or Engaging with the Community on the first day followed by an entertaining dinner with comedian Elliot Goblet. The second day featured concurrent technical and water resource streams

which concluded with a very interesting presentation by the Chief Scientist of the NSW Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Resources, Dr John Williams, on natural sequence farming. Natural sequence farming recently featured on the ABC's Australian Story.

The Conference provided numerous networking opportunities both during the day and over dinner on the two nights.



WESTERN WATER SUPPLY BOOSTED THROUGH \$6.1 MILLION PIPELINE PROJECT AND REGIONAL ACTION PLAN

Water supplies in the Western Water Area are being secured for the future with a new \$6.1 million Macedon Ranges Water Supply Project to increase capacity in the existing system, Water Minister John Thwaites announced.

Mr. Thwaites released a Regional Action Plan to secure water supplies in the Sunbury, Melton, Bacchus Marsh and Macedon Ranges region.

The Macedon Ranges Water Supply Project, which is a key part of the plan, will duplicate the Melbourne to Sunbury drinking water pipeline and upgrade

pumping facilities to supplement supply to Rosslynne Reservoir which supplies Gisborne, Macedon, Mt Macedon and Riddells Creek.

'Recognising the unique challenges faced by the Western Water Area, the Government's Western Water Regional Action Plan provides a comprehensive overview of water security in the region'.

'Nine years of below average rainfall has reduced water levels in the Western Water Area to record low levels,' Mr. Thwaites said. 'Although the Yarra-Thomson supply system has

provided Sunbury since April 2000 and Melton since April 2004 with an extra 11,250 megalitres of water per year, more water is needed particularly in the towns supplied by Rosslynne Reservoir, which is currently at 14.17 per cent of capacity.'

Member for Macedon Joanne Duncan said it was expected that by December 2005, the additional connection with the Yarra-Thomson drinking water supply system would enable all of these communities' water needs to be met from the metropolitan system.

The Sunbury - Melbourne pipeline duplication is just one of a

comprehensive range of actions outlined in the Regional Action plan developed by the Bracks Government, water authorities and catchment management authorities.

Other major projects and initiatives include:

- ◆ The recently completed \$12.5m Melbourne to Melton-Bacchus Marsh drinking water pipeline
- ◆ \$341,000 Sunbury-Melton recycled water pipeline extension, between Diggers Rest and Toolern Vale
- ◆ Exploring the potential for using recycled water to support more agricultural activities
- ◆ Examining water recycling opportunities for the West of Melbourne
- ◆ A Bacchus Marsh Water Supply Feasibility Study
- ◆ Projects at Sunbury, Gisborne and Woodend funded under the \$10 million Stormwater and Urban Water Conservation Fund
- ◆ The statewide \$10 million Water Smart Gardens and Homes Rebates Scheme available until June 2006
- ◆ Allocation of Lake Merrimu's remaining storage capacity to Western Water

- ◆ Metering of the Lancefield and Merrimu Groundwater Management Areas by 2006

- ◆ Inclusion in the Central Region Sustainable Water Strategy process.

Member for Melton, Don Nardella said the Regional Action Plan focused primarily on urban water management issues, but it also presented clear actions to protect the health of the area's rivers, waterways and aquifers and ensure safe and reliable water supplies for the area's growing population.

'The Plan presents a comprehensive set of directions which will help every member of the community – from individuals to business – continue to play their part in securing our water future, together,' Mr Nardella said.

Western Water Chairman Terry Larkins said the communities of the Western Water region had already demonstrated a strong commitment to saving water and that they should be proud of reducing their average water consumption by 34 per cent.



Mr. Larkins said Western Water was well on its way to securing the region's water supplies including reducing demand for drinking water by 850 megalitres per year through substitution of recycled water where it is fit-for-purpose.

'We have already made significant progress in saving existing water supplies and demonstrating that wastewater can be a vital and useful resource – with recycling now reaching more than 90 per cent,' Mr. Larkins said.

'Western Water's achievements to date have been made in partnership with our customers, community members, local councils, members of our customer and Community Reference Groups and other regional stakeholders.'

Copies of the Western Water Regional Action Plan are available on: www.dse.vic.gov.au/waterfuture or by calling DSE on 136 186 or Western Water on 1300 650 425

L-R: Terry Larkins, Minister John Thwaites and John Wilkinson.

WANNON WATER CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER APPOINTED

The Chairman of Wannon Water, Mr. Harry Peeters has announced the appointment of Mr. Grant Green as Chief Executive Officer of Wannon Water. Grant commenced at Wannon Water on the 26 September.

Mr. Green has previously held senior executive roles with Melbourne Water and Barwon Water. At Melbourne Water, he was in charge of the Yarra Region, which is now Yarra Valley Water, and held positions at Barwon Water as Executive Manager - Business Performance and Executive Manager - Customer Services.

Mr. Peeters said: 'We are very fortunate to be able to attract the services of an executive of Mr. Green's calibre. 'There has been a great deal of interest in this position by high-quality executives both from within Victoria and interstate.

'This is a very positive sign for the region as it indicates that people have recognised the many lifestyle and career benefits of coming to the south west.' 'Wannon Water has an ambitious capital works program for the next three years. 'Mr. Green's previous experience will be invaluable to us in putting that program in place, his

previous customer service roles will also enable us to maintain the high service standards set by the Board.'

Mr. Peeters also paid tribute to the previous CEO of South West Water, Mr. Russell Worland.

Mr. Peeters said, 'Russell Worland was a driving force in getting the merger of the three authorities up and running.

He can be well proud of his achievements at South West Water and has laid a solid foundation for the new Authority to build on.'

TRAINING AND OH&S MATTERS

WATER AUTHORITIES OH&S NETWORK MEETING

The OH&S Network convened at the Western Water Office in Gisborne for a day and a half meeting in September. The meeting was very well attended with most Water Authorities and large contractors attending as well as a guest from the North Central CMA.

The Manual Handling CD which was developed by the Network with funding from 18 participating Authorities was launched at the meeting by Peter Attwood of Hazcon, the project contractor.

The Network also had reports from its Working Groups on Working Near Overhead and Underground Services,

OH&S Benchmarking Project, Working at Heights and Roadside Worksite Safety.

Special thanks to Western Water for hosting the meeting and to Grant Anderson of City Safety Supplies for sponsoring dinner for the Network.

Members of water authorities OH&S network.



TASK GROUP TOPICS

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT TASK GROUP

The VicWater Performance Measurement Task Group recently met to review the information to be published in the 2004/05 Victorian Water Review. The report to be published in December 2005 will continue to display how far the industry has progressed in the quality and level of service it has provided to its customers. Importantly, the report highlights areas of concern for the industry and where improvements in performance need to be made and maintained.

For the first time, this year's review will be available in CD format only. Copies to non-VicWater members are \$88 (including postage and handling to anywhere in Australia). To order

a copy, please contact VicWater on (03) 9639 8868 or vicwater@vicwater.org.au

FINANCE ISSUES STEERING COMMITTEE (FISC)

FISC continues to be actively involved in finance issues affecting the water industry. FISC is currently addressing two issues identified by the VicWater Board as requiring a consistent approach within the water industry.

'Dividend Policy' was identified by the VicWater Board as an important issue that required a consistent application by regional businesses. FISC is currently preparing a discussion paper for distribution to water businesses on a 'Review of Dividend Policy for

Regional Water Businesses'. In order to address all of the issues associated with dividend payments, FISC will consult with key stakeholders including the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Department of Treasury and Finance.

FISC has also written to the Secretary of the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) seeking clarification on the Government's policy regarding the treatment of Community Service Obligations (CSOs) within the water industry. This is another issue identified by the VicWater Board as requiring further clarification given the diversity of views within the industry regarding the Government's views of CSO's. FISC is looking forward to working with DTF to provide a clear definition.

TASKGROUPTOPICS

SUSTAINABILITY TASK GROUP

The Sustainability Task Group has finalised its business plan for 2005/06 and is busy implementing projects to assist businesses on their journey to improved sustainable decision making and performance. To view the Task Groups projects for 2005/05 or to access useful sustainability resources visit www.vicwater.org.au/sustainability

In September the Task Group organised for Dr Paul Tebo, former Vice-President of DuPont to share his experiences with the water industry of running a couple of DuPont's billion dollar global businesses and how he integrated environmental concepts into business terms and sustainable growth concepts to turn the company from environmental villain to a renowned leader in sustainable business practices.

The Task Group continues to publish 'Sustainability News' that keeps the water industry and its stakeholders up to

date on water businesses projects and initiatives in the area of sustainability. If your business would like to contribute articles please send them to sustainability@vicwater.org.au

UPCOMING SUSTAINABILITY TASK GROUP EVENT

The VicWater Sustainability Task Group invites you to attend a presentation by Gavin Dufty, Manager of Policy and Research, Society of St Vincent de Paul, Victoria on the 7th December from 12.30 – 1.30pm.

Gavin is a high profile campaigner on social welfare issues, particularly in the area of financial hardship and has worked in the community welfare sector for over 15 years. He is a representative on a number of energy and water industry customer consultative committees. As an important stakeholder of the water industry Gavin will provide his perspective on these critically important issues. If you are working on social issues, this is a must

for you. Seats are limited so if you would like to attend please contact Fiona Ould at VicWater on 9639 9969 or vicwater@vicwater.org.au

WATER EFFICIENCY TASK GROUP

The Water Efficiency Task Group has recently been recreated and approved by the VicWater Board. The Water Efficiency Task Group will finalise its revised Terms of Reference and its 2005 /2006 business plan before the end of the year.

WATER EDUCATORS NETWORK - TASK GROUP

NEW TASK GROUP

The establishment of the Water Educators Network (WEN) Task Group was recently approved by the VicWater Board. The Terms of Reference and the group's business plan will be developed over the coming months.

NUNTIN PIPELINE WATER SAVINGS AUCTION

The Nuntin Pipeline Water Savings Auction, conducted in Maffra by Southern Rural Water on Wednesday 3 August, marked the first new water entitlements in the Macalister Irrigation District since the early 1990s.

With the total volume that Southern Rural Water is allowed to divert for irrigation from the Macalister and Thomson Rivers capped by their bulk entitlement, the 790 megalitres of new water entitlements has been made possible by water savings in its channel system.

In the Nuntin Pipeline project Southern Rural Water replaced a 4.5 kilometre section of old concrete channel with a new pipeline. Because the channel was in poor condition up to 30% of the water was being lost, and before and after studies showed that enough water had been saved to create the new water

entitlements without taking any extra water from the two rivers or affecting existing irrigation rights. Consequently, the Minister amended Southern Rural Water's bulk entitlement to create the new entitlements.

The project has generated substantial triple-bottom line benefits.

Pipelining by itself means that existing irrigators receive better service and the environment gains because channel leaks will no longer contribute to rising watertables, and the risk of salinity. However, the water savings add two further benefits. Firstly, local agriculture, and the community that depends on it, will have an extra 790 megalitres of high-security water entitlement. This means additional production and income. Secondly, the proceeds from the Auction, some \$1.5

million, will be reinvested in the Macalister Irrigation District to help renew other channels and structures in the District, thus helping ensure that irrigators continue to have a reliable and sustainable service.

Southern Rural Water have identified that there is considerable scope for other water savings in the Macalister Irrigation District. Alongside the Nuntin project the Victorian Water Trust is investing some \$7 million in channel automation at the moment, to recover water for the Thomson and Macalister Rivers, and the National Water Initiative will provide \$20 million for similar works over the next couple of years.

And the result of the Auction itself – 20 bidders, from a range of farming enterprises, purchased between 1 and 136 megalitres of water entitlement each, at an average price of \$1,980 per megalitre.

GEELONG 'GREEN HOME' WINS NATIONAL AWARD

Barwon Water congratulated project partners Third Ecology Architects and Daran Constructions on winning the Housing Industry Association's National GreenSmart Project Display Home of the Year award.

Barwon Water's Sharland Oasis, the region's first ecologically-sustainable display home, was designed by Third Ecology and built by Daran Constructions.

The HIA GreenSmart Awards are national awards that recognise innovation in developing cost-effective environmental solutions in the building, development and renovation industries.

Barwon Water's Sharland Oasis display home was judged on a number of criteria, including design and construction innovation, quality of work, energy management, visual appeal, cost-effectiveness and overall environmental performance.

Barwon Water Chief Executive Dennis Brockenshire said Sharland Oasis had also recently won a Master Builders Association of Victoria Regional Award for Daran Constructions as the best sustainable energy home.

'These awards confirm the status of Sharland Oasis as one of the best environmentally-friendly display homes in Australia,' Mr Brockenshire said.

'I congratulate not only Third Ecology and Daran Constructions, but everyone associated with the home's design and construction, including product suppliers and manufacturers and other project partners Gordon Institute of TAFE, the Plumbing Industry Commission and EcoRecycle Victoria.

'Thousands of people have visited the home since it opened in April. I urge those who haven't seen the home first hand to pay a visit to see an eye-opening example of what can be

achieved when clever ideas and sustainable technologies combine,' Mr. Brockenshire said.

Developed at Sharland Park Estate in Hamlyn Heights, the home features a tank-to-toilet rainwater system, greywater recycling, water saving appliances, extra insulation and even doonas made from recycled plastic bottles.

A water-efficient garden is also a highlight.

Designed to provide ideas and inspiration for new home builders, renovators and people interested in the latest water and energy saving technologies, the home is open from noon to 5pm every Saturday, Sunday and Monday.

More information on the home can be found at www.barwonwater.vic.gov.au or telephone 1800 656 007.

TONY'S MISSION TO THE MALDIVES

Twelve months on a tropical island may sound like an idyllic dream, but Tony Belcher knows he has a busy and challenging time ahead.

Tony, one of North East Water's Senior Engineers, left Australia in August for the Maldives as part of a Red Cross team working to resurrect the tsunami-devastated nation. Tony has volunteered as a Water and Sanitation Delegate and will assist the international Red Cross team clear debris left by the tsunami as well as develop essential infrastructure. Tony volunteered his services to the Red Cross soon after the tsunami hit, having been affected by the scale of the tragedy. 'The tsunami will not be making as many headlines from now on, but works to re-establish those devastated areas will continue for years to come,' he said. 'I will specifically be providing clean-up assistance on 79 islands in the northern half of the country.'

Tony, who has worked on developing North East Water's assets base over the past 7 years, underwent a rigorous selection process to gain a position on the Red Cross team. He said he would have been pleased for any assignment, but is happy to be going to the Maldives, which is re-establishing itself as a popular tourist destination after the tsunami.

'The Maldives is made up of over 1,000 islands and has a population of around 300,000. They were right in the path of the waves,' he said. 'It's good to know that as Australians we are able to help in times like these.'

North East Water has fully supported Tony's endeavours, and has granted him the necessary leave. Chief Executive, Jim Martin, said the Authority believed Tony's intentions were noble and aligned with the company's philosophy of good citizenship. 'We are extremely proud of

Tony and what he is about to undertake. This is definitely not about making money for him – in fact he'll earn very little while he's there – so this commitment speaks a lot about his character,' he said. 'He is a valuable employee for us, and I have no doubt he'll be a valuable contributor to the Red Cross's efforts in the Maldives.

'We wish him well.'



Tony Belcher pictured centre