

# WATER MATTERS

VICTORIAN WATER INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION NEWS

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## VICWATER 2006 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

*"LOOKING BEYOND...NEW TECHNOLOGY,  
NEW CAPABILITIES, NEW PROCESSES,  
NEW CHALLENGES"*

The program and registration to this year's VicWater Annual Conference is now available. The Conference will be officially opened by the Minister for Water, the Hon John Thwaites MP and the key note speaker is Professor Ian Lowe, Chairman of the Australian Conservation Foundation. The program also includes presentations on climate change, increased population pressures on water resources, demand management and unbundling with speakers including Mike Young (former Chief Research Scientist at the CSIRO Land and Water) and marathon swimmer Tammy van Wisse.

The theme for this year's Conference is 'Looking Beyond....New Technology, New Capabilities, New Processes, New Challenges' and relates to the need for continual reflection and improvement of water industry practices, focusing on the key areas of technology, people, process and



challenges. The Conference brings together leaders from all of Victoria's water businesses, together with many other delegates who work, or have an interest in the industry.

The Conference will be held at the Four Points Sheraton in Geelong on Thursday 28th and Friday 29th September 2006.

For a copy of the program please email [vicwater@vicwater.org.au](mailto:vicwater@vicwater.org.au) or download a copy from our website [www.vicwater.org.au](http://www.vicwater.org.au).



“from  
the CEO's  
chair”



**W**elcome to the winter edition of Water Matters. With one of the driest June's on record, many parts of the State, in particular western and central Victoria continue to face ongoing drought conditions. These conditions continue to place further pressure on our water resources and leave us all now hoping for some significant spring rains.

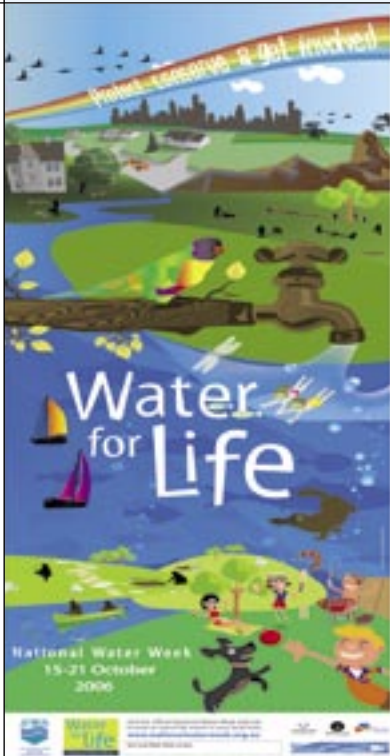
Recent VicWater activities have primarily concentrated on professional development and information sharing. The VicWater Sustainability and Finance Managers workshops provided an

excellent opportunity for the water industry and its stakeholders to be kept up to date on sustainability and finance issues respectively. The recent VicWater Regulation Workshop also provided an opportunity for the water industry's Regulators to provide feedback on issues from the 2005 price determination, as well as providing direction to assist water businesses prepare for their next water plan.

With the onset of the new financial year, VicWater is busily implementing its 2006/07 Business Plan with key projects for this year including National Water Week, the Annual Conference and the coordination of VicWater's Task and Working Groups. Work will also commence shortly on the revised Victorian Water Review for 2005/06.

Finally, I am looking forward to the upcoming VicWater Conference on the 28th and 29th of September 2006 in Geelong. The Conference will be officially opened by the Minister for Water, the Hon John Thwaites MP and we have arranged a number of prominent speakers including Professor Ian Lowe, Chairman, Australian Conservation Foundation, Mike Young, former Chief Research Scientist for CSIRO Land and Water and marathon swimmer Tammy van Wisse. The conference promises to provide an insight into the future water challenges for the Victorian water industry.

I look forward to seeing you at the Conference.



## NATIONAL WATER WEEK 15-21 OCTOBER 2006

*'PROTECT, CONSERVE & GET INVOLVED!'*

**T**he launch of National Water Week (NWW) will be at Scienceworks, Spotswood on Sunday 15 October 2006, 10.30-11.30am. National Water Week (Victoria) spokesperson and marathon swimmer Tammy van Wisse will be presenting the winners of the NWW competitions from around the State. All invitees are welcome to bring their families and spend the day at Scienceworks following the launch.

As part of the week, water businesses across the State will be conducting a range of activities. The Melbourne Museum and Scienceworks are holding a range of programs including Aqua Profunda, Water Discovery Trail, Water Smart Homes and Gardens Tours and Water Power – The Williamstown Environmental Neighbourhood Cluster.

If you would like to learn more about NWW contact VicWater on (03) 9639 8868 or [vicwater@vicwater.org.au](mailto:vicwater@vicwater.org.au) or visit [www.nationalwaterweek.org.au](http://www.nationalwaterweek.org.au).

## WATERAID BALL

**T**he annual Victorian WaterAid Ball will be held on Friday 17th November 2006 at the Melbourne Town Hall. Building upon the success of last year's event, this promises to be a prestigious occasion with excellent food and wine, superb entertainment

and opportunities to participate in fundraising activities for WaterAid's important work. It also offers outstanding networking, marketing and promotional opportunities for your organisation. You can support this gala event by purchasing a table of 10 for

your company and guests at a cost of \$3,600 (including GST). Tickets are available from Ann Wilde on 9872 1100 or [awilde@yvw.com.au](mailto:awilde@yvw.com.au). Don't miss out on the opportunity to attend the water industry event of the year!

## VICTORIA'S SUSTAINABILITY ACTION STATEMENT LAUNCHED

Victorian Premier Steve Bracks has announced his government's \$200 million Environmental Sustainability Action Statement Our Environment, Our Future. The 150 sustainability initiatives would help put water and energy consumption on a sustainable basis, reduce waste and would save at least 3.5 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year.

Key initiatives in Our Environment Our Future include:

- Introducing a Victorian Renewable Energy Target (VRET) which will require electricity retailers to purchase 10 per cent of their power from renewable sources such as wind and solar by 2016. The

Government will invest \$1.5 million to establish the scheme.

- Legislation to enable a ban of lightweight plastic bags, unless retailers charge a minimum fee of 10 cents per bag, from 1 January 2009, if voluntary measures don't successfully phase-out bags by then. Exemptions to apply for biodegradable bags, small retailers and where bags are required for health and safety reasons.
- A legislated ban on dams in 18 heritage rivers in Victoria, including the Mitchell and Upper Yarra;
- Twelve new recycling centres across Victoria will be established

to enable more Victorians to safely dispose of potentially harmful materials including computers, paint, batteries and household chemicals;

- An industrial scheme to help the State's 250 biggest energy and waste users reduce their impact on the environment. These companies will be required by law to do an energy, waste and water audit and implement subsequent cost effective environmental measures. Any initiative identified that will lead to an overall cost saving within three years must be implemented.

The Sustainability Action Statement 2006 is available at [www.dse.vic.gov.au](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au).

## GEMBROOK STRATEGY HONOURED AT ENVIRONMENT AWARDS

Yarra Valley Water's Gembrook Sewerage Servicing Strategy has been recognised at the prestigious United Nations Association of Australia - World Environment Day Awards, in the Lincolne Scott Triple Bottom Line Award category. The strategy is currently being implemented to connect Gembrook's septic tank systems to a reticulated pressure sewer system. It is based on a 'Triple Bottom Line' approach which involves balancing financial, social and environmental considerations.

Due to extensive community consultation undertaken on the strategy, Yarra Valley Water Managing Director, Mr Tony Kelly, believes the Gembrook community should share in the project's recognition at such an important forum. "The Gembrook community originally approached Yarra Valley Water to request a sewerage system in 1998 and we are proud to have developed such a sustainable solution with their input," says Mr Kelly.

"This recognition highlights the viability of projects that are built around

long-term environmental sustainability. "The Gembrook Sewerage Servicing Strategy is a great example of balancing Triple Bottom Line principles; it was developed through community engagement and models that identified the township's most appropriate servicing solution."

A pressure sewer system solution was chosen over a traditional gravity sewer system based on expected lower overall costs to the community (requiring less energy-intensive pumping stations) and as a more suitable alternative for Gembrook's hilly terrain and environmental sensitivity. This is because the pipes are laid at a much

shallower depth than conventional gravity sewers. "Yarra Valley Water is committed to being a sustainable organisation. This means delivering our services within the carrying capacity of nature," says Mr Kelly.

The United Nations Association of Australia - World Environment Day Awards focus on the theme: 'Think Global, Act Local.' The Awards aim to recognise businesses, individuals, communities, school groups and media whose work serves to protect, manage or restore the environment.

*David Esmore from Cardinia Shire Council; Bob Farr, Gembrook Township Committee President; Glenn Wilson of Yarra Valley Water; and Merle Mathisen, local resident.*



## WORKSHOP - FIRST PRICE DETERMINATION LESSONS LEARNT AND THE WAY FORWARD



**V**icWater, in conjunction with Psi-Delta conducted a Regulation Workshop on the 11 May 2006. The workshop provided an excellent opportunity for Regulators (David Downie, DSE, Greg Wilson, ESC, Mick Bourke, EPA Victoria and Jan Bowman, DHS) to provide feedback on issues from the June 2005 price determination and also identified issues for water businesses to address when preparing for their next water plan.

*Jan Bowman, Assistant Director Environmental Health,  
Department of Human Services*

## REGIONAL MATTERS AN ATLAS OF REGIONAL VICTORIA 2005

**T**he Department of Sustainability and Environment recently released 'Regional Matters – A regional Atlas of Regional Victoria'. Regional Matters 2005 builds upon the previous edition released in 2002. Like its predecessor, the 2005 Regional Matters publication aims to highlight

issues of the impact of change on regional areas. The publication comprises eight themes: changing populations; community wellbeing; servicing communities; industry and skills; water in a dry land; land and people; coastal development, and energy choices. Recognising the

interrelatedness of many of the issues within these themes is a key objective of the publication.

For more information on the Regional Atlas please email [spatialanalysis.research@dse.vic.gov.au](mailto:spatialanalysis.research@dse.vic.gov.au) or phone on (03) 9637 9441.

## VICWATER ANNUAL SUSTAINABILITY SEMINAR



**T**he Annual VicWater Sustainability Seminar, held on the 23rd May 2006 was well attended by 90 participants from across water businesses, EPA Victoria, Department of Sustainability and Environment, and consultants. Speakers addressed critical sustainability issues and case studies on demand management, greenhouse issues and the latest technology in decentralised sewage treatment. Keynote speaker Janine Benyus (author of "Biomimicry") provided a valuable insight into the role biomimicry could play in improving the performance of the water industry. Positive feedback on the Seminar was received by all participants.

*Sustainability seminar workshop conducted by Janine Benyus*

## VICWATER FINANCE ISSUES WORKSHOPS

The Annual VicWater Finance Issues Workshops were held on the 25th and 26th May 2006 and enabled the water industry to be kept up to date on finance related issues by the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Department of Treasury and Finance, Auditor General Victoria, Treasury Corporation of Victoria, CPA Australia and the Australian Tax Office. The Workshop was well attended and

provided valuable networking opportunities for all attendees. The Financial Issues Steering Committee (FISC) received excellent feedback from participants who attended.

*VicWater Finance Issues Steering Committee (FISC) Panel Discussion*



## RECOGNITION FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE

Twenty-one Western Water employees were recognised for their commitment to customer service at a special graduation ceremony on Tuesday, 27 June 2006. The employees recently completed the nationally accredited Customer First program, which promotes the

professional development of people working in the water industry.

Eighteen staff members received their Certificate 3 in Water Operations, two graduated in Certificate 3 in Business and another employee was awarded a Diploma of Business - Quality Auditing. They join 30 other Western Water staff

members who completed the program last year. Western Water Chief Executive John Wilkinson described the graduation as fitting recognition for employees prepared to further their skills in the critical area of customer service.

"The Customer First program acknowledges the existing competencies and experience of staff in delivering Western Water's services on a day-to-day basis. At the same time, the program requires them to build on these skills to meet high industry standards," he said. "The ultimate goal is to ensure our people provide excellent service to customers, which is consistent with the strong focus of our organisation," Mr Wilkinson added.

Guest speaker at the graduation ceremony at Western Water's Gisborne offices was Jim Stynes, co-founder of the Reach Foundation, which assists young people in developing life skills. Stynes, an AFL Brownlow medallist and former Victorian of the Year, assisted Western Water Chairman Terry Larkins in presenting the certificates.



*Jim Stynes with Western Water graduates*

## GROUNDWATER INFORMATION MEETINGS FOR LANDOWNERS IN SOUTH WEST VICTORIA

In June 2006 Southern Rural Water held a series of groundwater information meetings for landowners in SW Victoria. These meetings were an opportunity for us to share information about groundwater – where it comes from, how licence applications are assessed and how a groundwater management area is established. The

meetings also provided landowners with an opportunity to ask questions about the use of water from a specific aquifer or groundwater management area.

The meetings were held over three days in three locations, Nullawarre, Hawkesdale and Camperdown, and over 110 people attended and stayed for a

BBQ lunch. Feedback from landowners confirmed that they appreciated the opportunity to ask questions about local water use and groundwater management issues – and that the meetings helped to increase their understanding of the importance of groundwater and how it is managed.

# TRAINING AND OH&S MATTERS

The final phase of the Review of the National Training Package is now underway, following a national meeting in Melbourne in June which included participation by VicWater, Goulburn-Murray Water, Thiess Services and the Water Training Centre representing Victorian interests. The review is due to be completed by the end of this year for implementation in 2007.

In a parallel development, the first meeting of the Water Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) was held in July 2006. IAC will advise Government Skills Australia on the implementa-

tion and maintenance of the National Water Training Package. David Roberts Goulburn-Murray Water and Paul O'Brien, VicWater have been nominated as the Victorian water representatives to the IAC with Mark Wilkin of Goulburn-Murray Water as an alternate. Stephen Wilson of the Water Training Centre will represent private Registered Training Organisations on the IAC.

There are some interesting developments underway in regards to training providers. Consideration is being given to the development of

a water industry training facility at the Cranbourne Campus of the Chisholm Institute of TAFE. This facility, if it proceeds, will provide a new service to the water distribution sector of the industry. The Centre for Environmental Technology at Gordon TAFE in Geelong is working with the Department of Education to scope training for the water industry targeted at water recycling.

VicWater is currently planning a major Training Seminar in October 2006 in conjunction with Government Skills Australia. Details will be available soon.

## SMART WATER FUND ROUND 4 FUNDING NOW AVAILABLE

**T**he Smart Water Fund has just launched the Round 4 Funding Program. The Smart Water Fund is part of a commitment by the Victorian water industry and the Victorian Government to encourage and support individuals, community groups, businesses and research bodies in the development of innovative ideas that will make a difference to the way that we use our water resources. The Fund encourages innovative approaches to water recycling, water conservation and sustainable biosolids management that will help secure our water resources now and for the future. The Smart Water Fund, including additional funding made available by the Victorian Water Trust, now has \$6 million available for innovative and sustainable water use projects, over three different funding streams. The three different funding streams available are:

- ◆ Up to \$3 million for Victoria-wide urban community and business innovations (funded by the Smart Water Fund).
- ◆ Up to \$2 million for metropolitan Melbourne research and development into some of the key challenges facing the water industry (funded by the Smart Water Fund). Detailed project descriptions that address these key challenges are available on the Smart Water Fund website: and
- ◆ Up to \$1 million for Victoria-wide urban research and development (funded by the Victorian Water Trust).

To obtain an Application Pack and for further information visit [www.smartwater.com.au](http://www.smartwater.com.au) or call 1800 882432. Applications close on 6 September 2006.



*Dennis Cavagna, Managing Director, South East Water*

## DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL OBLIGATIONS FOR THE 2008 PRICING DETERMINATION

**E**PA Victoria has released Draft Principles to Establish EPA Environmental Obligations for Water Businesses for the 2008-2013 Pricing Determination. The draft

'Principles' are an important initiative in providing clear direction to the Victorian water industry on actions and priorities for delivering sustainable water planning for the 2008 price

determination. The draft Principles are available on EPA Victoria's website ([www.epa.vic.gov.au](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au)) and for further information contact Amanda Smith on (03) 9695-2629 or [amanda.smith@epa.vic.gov.au](mailto:amanda.smith@epa.vic.gov.au).

# TASK GROUP TOPICS

## PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT TASK GROUP (PMTG)

The VicWater Board at its June 2006 meeting approved the production of a "Summary Report" for the 2005/05 Victorian Water Review. The new format will consist of 12 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) covering economic, social and environmental issues together with a series of best practice case studies. The PMTG is currently determining the KPIs to be used in the 2005/06 Report. Production of the Report will commence in September 2006.

## FINANCE ISSUES STEERING COMMITTEE (FISC)

Following the successful Finance Issues Workshop (26th and 27th May 2006), FISC is now currently exploring the possibility of running a Financial Model Training Course (in Excel) to take place in late October or early November 2006.

## SUSTAINABILITY TASK GROUP (STG)

Mary Crooks from the Victorian Women's Trust presented to the STG and the wider industry on 4th July

2006. Mary provided an update on the Watermark project, in particular the model, process and challenges of community participation on water issues. Watermark is currently developing their Customer Charter for water (expected to be released later in 2006), which is essentially the product of the Watermark participation process. Mary also addressed some of the wider issues of water reform.

The STG in conjunction with RMIT conducted the Sustainability Training Course on the 27th and 28th July 2006. Further details on the outcomes of the training course will be provided in the spring edition of Water Matters.

## WATER EFFICIENCY TASK GROUP

The Water Efficiency Task Group is currently implementing its Business Plan for 2006/07. One of the projects includes the development of 'Shoestring Solutions for a Water Smart Home', a brochure that will present simple and concise information about low cost and effective water saving options in the home and garden. This project will be undertaken in conjunction with Museum Victoria. Other important projects include providing the water industry and its stakeholders on water use in the irrigation sector and imbedded water.

## VICTORIAN WATER EDUCATORS TASK GROUP

The Victorian Water Educators Task Group is busily planning for the National Water Week, 15-21 October 2006. This year the event will be launched at Scienceworks, Spotswood on Sunday 15 October 2006, 10.30-11.30am. Marathon swimmer Tammy van Wisse will once again be the spokesperson for National Water Week.

## DAMS WORKING GROUP

Chris Massey of Goulburn Valley Water is the new Chair of the Water Industry Dams Working Group (WIDWG). The WIDWG has been addressing the training of operators by both revising the units of competency in the National Water Industry Training Package and by assisting Holmesglen Institute of TAFE with the development of a new course in Dams Emergency Exercising.

At the next meeting of the WIDWG, DSE will present the Dams Decommissioning Guidelines to the Group for endorsement prior to their release.

## PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY FROM FAILING SEPTIC TANKS

In June 2006 the Auditor General Victoria released 'Protecting Our Environment and Community from Failing Septic Tanks'. The Audit attempted to assess the effectiveness of the metropolitan and regional sewerage backlog programs in reducing the environmental, public health and amenity risks caused by failing septic tanks. Whilst the Audit was not able to conclude on the effectiveness of the sewerage backlog programs, a number

of aspects relating to the management of the backlog programs were identified that adversely impacted on their effectiveness. These included incomplete and/or inaccurate records of the location, age and condition of septic tanks in use, the potential risks of failing septic tanks are not always adequately managed by local government and the inconsistent application of planning controls by local governments has resulted in a number

of property developments being approved even though it is likely the septic tanks will fail and increase the size of the backlog.

The Audit identified a clear need to improve backlog planning and prioritisation processes, the legislation regulating septic tank management, and reporting and accountability mechanisms. Copies of the report are available at [www.audit.vic.gov.au](http://www.audit.vic.gov.au).

## RALLY WITH A CAUSE – WATCH OUT FOR CAR 77

What do you do if:

1. You're a bit of a rev-head;
2. You want to see Australia by road; and
3. You've got a social conscience?

Well, you join The Great Escape, the annual major fundraiser for Cystic Fibrosis Australia.

Now in its fourth year, The Great Escape sees car buffs get together and drive off into the wild blue yonder, all the while knowing that they're doing their bit to help Cystic Fibrosis (CF) sufferers. North East Water's CFO, Craig Heiner and his brother Darrel are preparing a bright orange Ford XD Falcon wagon for the bash. The car will have a strong water industry theme, with ITT Flygt and Environmental Group Limited (EGL)

joining forces as the gold sponsors of car number 77.

Greg Pratt, national sales manager for ITT Flygt, said the company was proud to support a great cause like Cystic Fibrosis. "It is encouraging to see the water industry taking an active role to raise funds for such worthy recipients," he said. Similarly, Mike Williamson from EGL said: "We are happy to assist in this project, and would encourage everyone in the water industry to get behind the cause." CF is the most common life-threatening recessive gene disorder affecting Australian children today. The disease seriously affects breathing and digestion, and has no cure. Sadly, many sufferers die before reaching adulthood. Cystic Fibrosis

Australia receives no government funding, and all funds raised from The Great Escape go to Cystic Fibrosis Australia. This year The Great Escape will travel from Leeton to Mildura via a roundabout route that takes participants through Birdsville (in time for the famous races). It leaves Leeton August 28th and returns on September 7th.

Between now and the departure date, Craig and his brother are working hard to convert the car from a road vehicle to a lean, mean rally machine. Stay tuned for future instalments of this heart-warming story – next up is the paint job! Also, if you have any ideas or can offer your support, contact Craig on (02) 6022 0594.

## GREENHOUSE EMISSION REDUCTION DISCUSSION PAPER

The Greenhouse Emissions Reduction Working Group (formerly the Sustainable Energy Working Group), coordinated by Peta Maddy (Sustainability Victoria) have produced a draft 'Greenhouse Emissions Reduction Strategy' Discussion Paper. The working group is a joint initiative of VicWater and Sustainability Victoria. The draft 'Discussion Paper' aims to provide recommendations around five key goals:

- ◆ Demonstrate leadership in greenhouse gas reduction
- ◆ Set realistic stretch greenhouse gas reduction targets for a benchmarked water industry
- ◆ Influence 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

For further information on the 'Working Group' and Discussion Paper contact Peta Maddy on (03) 9655 3231 or [peta.maddy@sustainability.vic.gov.au](mailto:peta.maddy@sustainability.vic.gov.au).

## DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES WATER FLUORIDATION PROGRAM

Currently, around 75 percent of Victorians receive a fluoridated drinking water supply, with most of these people living in metropolitan Melbourne. School Dental Service data show that children living in fluoridated areas of Victoria experience considerably less tooth decay than those in non-fluoridated areas. In the 2004-2005 State budget, an extra \$97.2 million was allocated for dental health prevention and care initiatives, including \$3.8 million to extend water fluoridation throughout rural and regional Victoria. The ensuing process involved collaboration with

Dental Health Services Victoria and the Australian Dental Association to develop and publish online and in print, a suite of balanced, evidence-based resources about water fluoridation; and engagement with the health sector and communities in Sale, Morwell, Moe, Traralgon, Warragul, Wangaratta, Wodonga and Horsham. This engagement included provision of information directly to households in each of these towns and cities, briefings and presentations to the health sector and community groups and active use of local media.

In late 2005, under the Health (Fluoridation) Act 1973, the Secretary requested that North East Water, GWMWater and Gippsland Water fluoridate the drinking water supplies in Wangaratta, Wodonga, Horsham, Sale, Moe, Morwell, Traralgon and Warragul. Morwell was the first town to be fluoridated in early July, with the others scheduled to be fluoridated by the end of this year.

For information about the water fluoridation program please contact Sandra Falconer from the Department's Environmental Health Unit on (03) 9096 5157.